


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.

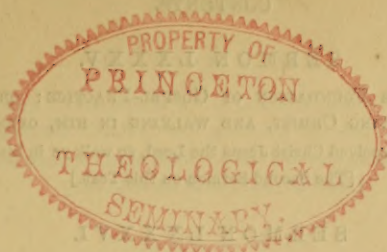
"By these he, being dead, yet speaketh."—HEB. xi. 4.

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RALPH ERSKINE'S SERMONS.

SERMON LXXX.

THE HAPPY HOUR OF CHRIST'S QUICKENING VOICE.¹

"Verily verily I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live."—JOHN v. 25.

I THINK there is no lover of Christ here but will wish, in his heart, upon the hearing of this text, that this may be indeed the day and the hour wherein this word may come to pass. There is not a dead soul, nor a dead case amongst all this company, but this scripture opens a door of hope to it. The communion-table, we have in view, is not for the dead, but for the living; this sacrament is called the EUCHARIST, a thanksgiving, a song of praise; but, who are capable to sing it? Why, it is said, Isa. xxxviii. 19, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee." But if we be a dead company this day, the end and design of the sacrament will be lost, and God will not get praise amongst us. If any hear be fearing lest this be the case, and saying, O minister! is there any ground to hope that such dead and dry bones shall live? We answer: Yes, yes, there is hope; for the Lord of life hath given you this word for it, on which you may build your faith and hope, both that a quickening hour is coming, and a quickening hour is come, "Verily, verily I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

Our Lord's having cured a man here of his thirty-eight years infirmity on the Sabbath day, the Jews maliciously persecute him

(1) This Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, August 5th, 1744, together with Discourse both before and at the tables, and also after the solemn action was over.

as a Sabbath-breaker, because he ordered the man to rise, and take up his bed and walk, that thus the work of God, in this miraculous cure, might be manifested to the onlookers; but, under a mask of zeal for the Sabbath, they sought to darken the light of that miraculous work; not being able to disprove the work in itself, they quarrel the circumstance of time, and represent it as being a violation of the Sabbath. Religion was never more violently persecuted than under a mask for religion. Men pretend, yea, and think they do God service, even when they kill the servants, as they did the Master himself. Our Lord having answered his accusers, by saying, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work, verse 17, they were yet more enraged and exasperated, because he said, "God was his Father, making himself equal with God," verse 18. Christ was so far from refusing this charge they laid against him, that he thence takes occasion more plainly to assert this truth; for, he proves himself to be the natural son of God, by solid arguments, of which this is one in the words of our text; wherein he ascribes to himself another work, which none but the Son of God, equal with the Father, can effectuate.

The words contain two general points. 1. The serious matter here asserted, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." 2. The solemn manner in which it is asserted, "Verily, verily I say unto you," it shall be so.

1st, As to the matter here asserted, it relates to the spiritual resurrection of souls; this is evident from the context; in the preceding verse it is said, "He that hears my words, and believes on him that hath sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life." This seems exactly to agree with what is here said of hearing his voice, called, in the former verse, a hearing his words. Verses 28, 29, speaking plainly of the second and general resurrection, of which he says not it *now* is, as here, but it is coming; but this verse, together with the former, speaks of that spiritual resurrection, called the first resurrection, Rev. xx. 5, and the quickening mentioned, Eph. ii. 1, which comes by hearing the voice of Christ in the gospel, so as to believe in him; neither is this verse a vain repetition of what was said in the former, though the matter is very serious and momentous, and deserves to be resumed; yet the repetition is with a variety of different circumstances; for,

2dly, As to the solemn manner in which it is asserted, it is

under the form of an oath, with an AMEN, AMEN: *Verily verily*, and with an express mention of the time and season wherein his word shall have this effect: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is *coming*, and *now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," &c. It is observable, that this is the third time that Christ uses this asseveration, *Verily, verily*, in his answer to the cavil of the Jews here, against his being the Son of God, ver. 19, 24, 25; and each of these asseverations are brought in with a relation, especially to his being the God that quickens the dead, that quickens whom he will, verse 21; that quickens dead souls by his word; and that makes them hear his voice, and live, as in the text. Such a solemnity of speech is not used about the resurrection of dead bodies at the last day, spoken of, ver. 28, 29. Why, it seems to point out how much his heart is set upon the work of raising dead souls from death to life, wherein his power, and the exceeding greatness thereof, is more exerted, than it will be in raising the dead out of their graves; and he speaks with repeated solemnity, both to shew the greatness of the subject he speaks of, and to excite the assured faith of these that have ears to hear, "Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

More particularly, in the words you may observe these six things following:—

1. The sad case sinners are in, they are dead; so are all by nature.

2. The suitable relief and notable privilege promised, namely, Life; they *shall live*.

3. The powerful means of this spiritual life, namely, "the voice of the Son of God."

4. The method of the application of this blessed mean, namely the *hearing* of this voice of the Son of God.

5. The certainty of this relief, or the assurance given that it shall take effect; we are assured of it by a double oath, *Verily, verily*; and a double promise out of the mouth of Jesus, "I say unto you, the dead *SHALL* hear, and they that hear *SHALL* live."

6. We have the happy season fixed for all this, or the time set to an hour; and that faith and hope may not be faint and languid, but have something in hand, as well as in hope, something in hand, as well as something future to look to; therefore, the happy hour, on which depends a happy eternity, is represented, both as a *coming*

hour, and a *present* hour, "Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Here is a good foundation for faith and hope this day. I might here

Observe, "That the happy time wherein the dead shall certainly hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live, is a time set to an hour."

It is not only set to a year, called, "The acceptable year of the Lord ; and to a *day*, called "a day of power," but in a manner to an *hour* of a day ; yea, to a *moment* of an hour ; we read of "watering every moment." There is no moment of time, wherein we may not look to Christ for life, and for a quickening power, and a quickening hour, for, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

But, because the particulars here are many, I pass over the formality of a doctrinal proposition, and design only two things.

I. A short explication of the particulars in the text.

II. The application thereof.

I. For the explication thereof, I shall, as the Lord may assist, offer a word upon each of the six particulars I have just now mentioned, as contained in the text.

1st, Here is the sad case we are all into by nature : we are dead men, and in a state of death. "You shall not surely die, said Satan, though you eat the forbidden fruit," but he is a liar ; for, behold we are all surely dead ; and that in a twofold sense, viz., both relative and real.

1. In a relative sense, by virtue of our relation to the first Adam, and the violated law or covenant of works ; we are relatively and legally dead, being under the sentence of death, Rom. v. 12, 15. We are guilty, cursed, condemned creatures ; and the curse of the law and wrath of God, pursue us as an enemy.

2. We are dead in a real sense ; the sentence of the law being in part executed, and that both as to body and soul. As to the body, it is now subject to death, and to all the miseries and maladies that are the fore-runners thereof ; yea, and in hazard of hell fire, and the torment of the second death for ever ; "The wages of sin is death." And as to the soul, it is many ways dead ; dead

in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3: spiritually and eternally dead; and liable to everlasting separation from God; for death may be viewed, as either external, that makes the body lifeless; or internal, that makes the soul graceless; or eternal, which makes both the soul and body for ever comfortless.

In natural death, the body is without the soul; so we are dead men, because our souls are without God. Death defaces the body; so hath sin defaced our souls, and deprived us of the image of God. In death a man loses his natural heat and warmth; so our soul hath lost all heat and warmth of affection towards God. In death, a man loses all right to his goods: they pass to the next heir: so by sin, we have lost all right to any blessing; far less have we any right to the heavenly inheritance. A dead body hath not the use of understanding in natural things: so the dead soul has not the use of understanding in spiritual things; "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." A dead body hath no fitness for natural actions; so dead souls hath no fitness for spiritual actions; they are just a burden to them. A dead body can take no pleasure in natural things; as little pleasure can a dead soul take in spiritual things. A dead body cannot raise itself to life; as little can a dead soul.

Christ will have little employment here this day, as a quickening Spirit, among these that do not know and believe that they are surely dead. All the saints that are quickened by the Son of God, in so far as they know they are passed from death unto life, 1 John iii. 14; in this they acknowledge they were surely dead. All true believers, according to the verse preceding my text, do, by faith, pass from death to life; which declares, that while they remain in unbelief, they are surely dead. The necessity of regeneration, and of being born again, John iii. 3, declares that we are surely dead, and need to be created a-new in Christ Jesus. The end and design of the gospel, which is the word of life, proclaims that we are surely dead. The end and design of faith, and all the exhortations to come to Christ for life, do proclaim that we are surely dead. And the end of Christ's death, which we celebrate the memorial of this day, proclaims that we are surely dead; 2 Cor. v. 14, "If one died for all, then were all dead." Why, the devil is proved to be a liar with a witness; and if we believe in Christ this day, we will first believe the contrary of the devil's lie, even that we are surely dead; yea, twice dead, viz., both by original sin imputed and inherent; "The guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the

corruption of your whole nature ; and also by innumerable actual sins, miseries, &c." Perhaps there is scarce any here that hath formerly been made alive in Christ Jesus, but they are fallen into a dead case again, though delivered from a state of death, a dead state ; yet, perhaps, they are in a dead frame, and need a new quickening hour. Are we surely dead ? Then,

2dly, The next thing to be considered, is the suitable relief, exhibited and promised, namely, LIFE ; "The dead shall live." The case is sad and deplorable, that we are all dead men ; but the cure is suitable, the privilege is great, and agreeable to the case ; "Life and immortality is brought to light by the gospel," exhibiting Christ as the life ; and the life that is to be had in him, answers exactly to the death, or dead state that we are into by nature. Are we in a relative sense legally dead, and in a real sense spiritually dead ? Here, in answer thereto, there is,

1. A relative life here imported : a life of justification in Christ, as "The Lord our righteousness," giving the pardon of sin ; "To him gave all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall have the remission of sin," Acts x. 43. Removing the curse of the law ; "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13—"Being made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. Delivering from the sentence of the law, so as "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ," Rom. viii. 1. Reconciling us to God, and making peace by the blood of his cross, Col. i. 20. Taking away the curse of all temporal plagues, and making all things work together for their good : taking away, also, the sting of death and victory of the grave ; and making us heirs, according to the hope of eternal life, by being justified by his grace, Tit. iii. 7.

2. A real, spiritual life is here imported, whereby we pass from real, spiritual death ; "We, who are, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, are quickened." Eph. ii. 1, For we come by faith to be united to Christ, who is our life ; and, being united to this living head, we must live : "He that hath the Son hath life ; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life," 1 John v. 12. This life is the contrivance of God the Father ; the purchase of God the Son ; and the alone work of God the Holy Ghost, by the means of gospel-ordinances ; it is a spiritual change upon the soul ; Whereby the shape of iniquity and sin is in every faculty partly removed, and the

shape of holiness and righteousness put on : it carries in it deliverance from the power of sin and corruption, and being possessed of the new heart, the new Spirit, and all spiritual blessings : it is the Spirit, and his graces dwelling in the soul, "As a well of water springing up unto everlasting life," John iv. 14. This relative and real life is just that everlasting life spoke of in the verse preceding ; "He that hears my words, and believes on him that sent me, hath everlasting life : and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life." It is a restoration of all, and more than we lost in the first Adam, by the second Adam : his being made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We lost the knowledge of God, this is restored in Christ, as our wisdom : we lost the favour of God ; it is restored in Christ, as our righteousness : we lost the image of God ; it is restored in and by Christ, as our sanctification : we lost the enjoyment of God : but it is restored both in grace here, and glory hereafter, in Christ as our complete redemption. Here is that blessed pass from death to life ? "The dead shall live," and live for ever ; for, all these parts of life are everlasting : they are but the beginnings of eternal life, which will be consummate in heaven ; for as Christ is the bread of life, so he that eats this bread shall live for ever, John vi. 58. The dead shall hear and live ; as it is said, Isa. xxvi. 19, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise," and live for ever ; for, every property of this life bends towards and stretches forth unto everlasting happiness and glory ; where there is life there is motion, appetite, and growth : this spiritual life moves to, and breathes after, longs for, and grows up to glory. Christ's dead body mystical must arise, and live for ever with the glorious Head ; for he hath said, in the forecited Isa. xxvi. 19, "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust ;" and his word must take effect. Therefore,

3dly, The next thing in the words is, The powerful means of this spiritual life ; and this is, "The VOICE of the Son of God." Here are two things observable.

1. The person speaking, the glorious Preacher ; namely, the "Son of God ;" the second person of the glorious Trinity, clothed with our nature, and clothed with the office of a Prophet, that he might preach good tidings to the meek, Isa. lxi. 1. He is, "The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," sent to declare the Father's mind ; for, "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath

declared him," John i. 14, 18. And for this end he was declared to be the Son of God by the Father, with an audible voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased: hear ye him," Matt. iii. 17. This was repeated several times; and then after all, "He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," Rom. i. 4. The preacher here then is the Son of God, equal with the Father; which here he is proving himself to be, against the Pharisees, who accused him for asserting it; but though he was clothed with his Father's commission, yet he and his Father are one; and none of them ever thought it robbery, that he should be equal with God; even he who was born King of the Jews, "Of whom, concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all blessed for ever." Here is the person speaking, the glorious Preacher.

2. Here is the joyful sound of his words, namely, "The VOICE of the Son of God:" by which I understand, The word of his grace, accompanied with the power of his Spirit. And so his voice is to be considered either as external; that is, his ministerial voice, in the preaching of the gospel, which is his word; and the gospel minister is called his mouth, Jer. xv, 19, "Thou shalt be my mouth;" hence it is said, "He that heareth you, heareth me:" or as internal and efficacious, while the gospel comes not in word only, but in power. The external ministerial voice of Christ is the organ and instrument of conveying his almighty voice through the ear to the heart: there is here a voice within a voice; an internal efficacy, giving life and power, as it were to the sound of ram-horns, to make the walls of Jericho fall to the ground, even all high towers of sin and enmity in the sinner's heart to give way; thus the weapons of the gospel are not carnal, but mighty, through God, for the pulling down of strongholds, 2 Cor. x. 4.

But more particularly, by the voice of the Son of God, I understand his word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, Eph. i. 13. The whole word of God, in the scripture, is his voice; as also the voice of the rod, the voice of the Spirit, the voice of conscience, the voice of providence, is his voice as God; yet there is a voice of his in the gospel, that is peculiarly his voice, as he is the Son of God, and the Sent of God, to be our Saviour; by which he makes way to the heart of sinners, and opens it, Rev. iii. 20, "It is the voice of our Beloved that knocks, saying, Open to me,"

Song v. 2. It is called the *joyful sound*, which whosoever hears and knows, are pronounced blessed persons: "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound," Psalm lxxxix. 15. It sounded sweetly afterwards in the ears of Abraham, saying, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xii. 3, which is called the "gospel preached to Abraham," Gal. iii. 8. And, indeed, here is a part of spiritual wisdom, to distinguish betwixt God's voice in the law, and Christ's voice in the gospel; betwixt God speaking in the law, by commands and threatenings, and the Son of God, the Christ of God, speaking in the gospel of grace and promise. The voice of God in the law, is like a voice of grumbling thunder; by this is the knowledge of sin and wrath, and so of the need of a Saviour; wherefore the law is called a schoolmaster, to lead to Christ, Gal. iii. 24. But the voice of Christ in the gospel, is like the calm still voice that Elijah heard; and it hath neither law, nor death in it, but mere grace, and life, and salvation. Mercy and truth meet together and kiss each other here: for, "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," John i. 17. The law is a word of wrath and condemnation, opening up the sentence of death passed against a sinner, saying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. But the voice of Christ in the gospel hath not a word of wrath or condemnation in it, but life, and salvation, and absolution; for, "God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved," John iii. 17.

Indeed, ordinarily the Lord makes use of the law, in a subserviency to the gospel, and so conveys fear and dread, and conviction of sin and wrath, by which he paves the way; but the proper voice of Christ, as he is the Son of God, the Saviour and Redeemer come to Mount Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, is a voice that sounds nothing but love, grace, mercy, salvation to the greatest sinner that hears the gospel. The voice of the Son of God here is a voice of pardon to guilty sinners, saying, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquities, and will remember thy sins no more." It is a voice of healing to diseased sinners, saying, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." It is a voice of salvation to lost sinners, saying, "Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost." It is a voice of cleansing to polluted sinners, saying, "Behold there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.

"The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." This voice is the voice of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and committing to us the word of reconciliation. It is a sound of good news to all people, that to us a Saviour is born, which is Christ the Lord. It is the voice of a Friend in heaven, and a wonderful Lover; a voice to be heard sounding over the top of all the mountains of sin, and guilt, and separation: "The voice of my Beloved, behold he cometh, skipping upon the mountains, and leaping upon the hills," Song ii. 8.

I cannot now stand to give the properties and effects of this voice, which may afterwards occur. We may be sure, it is a voice full of majesty, divine majesty, declarative that it is the voice of the Son of God; when it is heard, it fills the soul with awful impressions of the majesty of God. It is a voice full of mercy divine mercy; also, it is a joyful sound of mercy to a miserable sinner; salvation is conveyed with it. It is a voice full of power, divine power; for, it is the rod of his strength sent out of Zion, whereby his people are made willing in the day of his power. And so it is a voice full of life; it is a vital voice, even the vital breath of the Son of God, whereby the dead are made to hear and live; for, it is the living and life-giving voice of the Son of God; why, this voice is no less than the Son of God himself, speaking by his word and Spirit, and issuing out his royal orders, his powerful command, and sovereign will, that the dead rise and live; and it is the animating vital breath of the omnipotent God in Christ, quickening dead souls.

4thly, The fourth thing then that the text leads to, is, The method of the application of this powerful mean of life, namely, HEARING of this voice: "The dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live." The hearing spoke of in these words, is not the outward hearing of the ear, but the inward hearing of faith; a hearing the voice, not of men, but of God; nor of God absolutely, but of God in Christ, the voice of the Son of God. It is a hearing accompanied with that believing spoke of in the preceding verse; and the hearing spoke of, Isa. lv. 3, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." And it imports these four things.

1. The objective external revelation in a divine testimony: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom. x. 17.

2. It imports an internal revelation of what is outwardly revealed; for, "God reveals them to us by his Spirit, whereby we

know the things freely given us of God, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 12. He revealed his Son in me, says Paul, Gal. i. 16. The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our heart, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory."

3. It imports an assent of faith to the divine testimony, in the truth and goodness of what is revealed ; either concerning the person of the Mediator, the promised Messiah, saying, with the Samaritans, John iv. 42, "They say to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, but we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world," or concerning his doctrine and promise. It is an assent to the truth and goodness of Christ's doctrine, as it is the message of God ; it is a receiving his testimony, and a setting to the seal that God is true ; and that what is true, is also good, and worthy of all acceptation, 1 Tim. i. 15. This is a receiving of the truth in the love of it, 2 Thess. ii. 10. And this hearing is also an assent to the truth and goodness of the promise, as Yea and Amen in Christ ; not staggering at it through unbelief, but being strong in faith, giving glory to God. And it is an assent with cordial, close, particular application ; for, it is with the heart man believes unto righteousness, Rom. x. 10. And being persuaded, we embrace the promise, Heb. xi. 13 ; and believe the message of life and salvation to us in particular, saying, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved," Acts xv. 11. And rest upon the power and faithfulness of God, for the accomplishment of all his words of grace ; being fully persuaded that he that hath promised is able to perform, Rom. iv. 21.

4. It imports such a hearing of his voice, as to apprehend and acknowledge the divinity of that voice ; as a voice declarative of his Deity, and declarative of his being the Son of God, equally with the Father : "It is the will of God that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father," John v. 23. A believing ear, who hears his voice, honours him in the divinity of his person, as the Son of God ; in the divinity of his offices, as the sent and sealed of God ; in the divinity of his blood and righteousness, as the blood of God, and the righteousness of God ; in the divinity of his word, as the word of God ; and thus the divinity of his voice, as the voice of God, the voice of the Son of God.

Concerning this hearing of the voice of the Son of God, we offer the following six remarks :—

(1.) The voice of a man strikes the ear with an external sound ; but the voice of the Son of God strikes the heart with an internal efficacy and energy. To hear the voice of the Son of God, then, is not only a hearing with the ear, but a believing with the heart : " The dead shall hear ; and they that hear shall live."

(2.) All that hear shall live ; but, indeed, all that are dead will not hear : for, many have ears, and hear not ; and hearing, they do not hear in the sense I have explained ; but, " All that the Father hath given me (says Christ), shall come unto me ;" all whose ears God bores and opens, to take up the voice of his Son Jesus Christ, which quickens them.

(3.) Yea, Christ here distinctly commends and extols a twofold grace and virtue of his voice ; the dead shall hear the voice ; and, it being heard, they shall live. It is no less preternatural for the dead to hear, than it is for the dead to live ; it is equally above nature to effectuate the one as the other ; but it points out the method of the application of divine grace, and the order of the Spirit's operation. Sovereign efficacious grace makes first the dead to hear the voice of the Son of God, and then the hearer shall live : the almighty hand of God first bores the ear of the soul, and then, by the bored ear, lets in life to it.

(4.) But these are the secret effects of divine power ; the Lord speaks as he did to Isaiah, chapter viii. 11. " With a strong hand," making the voice sound to the centre of the soul. What is spoken only to the ear, dies in the ear ; but this still voice of the Spirit makes its entrance by secret passages into the heart, on which it leaves a stamp and impress of God. Others hear the sound of words and syllables as well as they ; but they do not hear the voice of the Son of God, touching and reaching, catching, quickening, and captivating their whole soul.

(5.) It is no delusive oraculous voice, sounding into the natural ear, and giving an imaginary idea and representation of Christ, as a man, so and so glorious and comely : no, no ; may God deliver his people from such Satanical delusions, too much supported by some in our day ; but here there is no sound of human voices, no sight of human shapes, but a spiritual view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, as he is the wisdom of God and the power of God ; and a spiritual hearing of his quickening word of grace in the gospel, coming not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and much assurance, 1 Thess. i. 5.

(6.) It is God's prophecy upon the dead and dry bones, saying, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord," Ezek. xxxvii. 4. "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," ver. 6. The same words are heard by others, but not with the same power and efficacy, for now the secrets of the heart are manifest; and God is acknowledged to be in that word of a truth, 1 Cor. xiv. 25. The power of Christ comes along with the voice of the preacher; and there is no more power to resist, because in the voice of men they hear the voice of God; and till it comes to this, the word hath no saving operation on the soul; yea, till it come to this, people have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not, Isa. vi. 9. Yea, the gospel to them is the savour of death, not of life.

5thly, The next thing is, the certainty of this relief, of this quickening of dead sinners; or the assurance given that it shall take effect. And now a door of faith and hope is here opened to all the dead souls in this house; none of the dead are here excepted in this dispensation of gospel grace, assurance is given that the dead shall hear and live, and that,

1. In general, with a "Thus saith the Lord, it shall be; I say it unto you," saith Christ. Why, who is the speaker, but the Son of God, equal with the Father, with whom are the words of eternal life! He that spake the world out of nothing into being is the speaker here; and shall not his word take effect? Here is a foundation for the assurance of faith, namely, the testimony of God speaking in his word. God is invisible, and there is no other glass wherein we can savingly see him but the word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. God is an infinite Spirit, and cannot be seen with bodily eyes, nor heard with bodily ears, nor felt with bodily hands; sense cannot perceive him, and reason, darkened by the fall, gives but obscure, imperfect, and unbecoming thoughts of him; for God, and the things of God, are foolishness to the natural man. We must look to God, therefore, in a word, a saying, a faithful saying; such as, "That Christ came to save sinners," and to quicken dead sinners; and here he says it, "That the dead shall hear his voice, and live." Our faith stands not upon the wisdom of men, but the power of God; that is, upon the divine testimony, which proves itself to be powerful, by commanding the assent of the soul to it, upon its own authority, as being the word of God.

2. This assurance is given not only thus in general, with a

"Thus saith the Lord," but also with a solemnity of speech, where-with his word is accompanied for bearing it home upon our hearts; why, here he delivers his word with two *verily's*, and with two *shall be's*.

(1.) With two *verily's*. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." He that is the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, makes frequent use of this form of an oath; it is the holy oath of a holy Jesus, saying, Amen, Amen. Amen is his name, and Amen, Amen is his doubled oath; and we may say, because he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself, that the dead shall hear his voice, and live. We may be assured of what he says, and shall we not be assured of what he swears? We have sometimes God swearing by his life; or, as he lives, that he hath no pleasure in the death of sinners, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. And here we have the Son of God swearing by himself, that dead sinners *shall* live.

(2.) With two *shall be's*. Assurance is here given, for there are two *shall's* in the text; "The dead *shall* hear, and they that hear *shall* live." Here is a twofold promise, with a twofold Amen. We have not only elsewhere his commanding word, to found our duty and warrant, "Hear, and your souls shall live," but here we have his promising word, to found our faith, hope, encouragement; "The dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live." There is a necessity; the promise must be accomplished upon a number of dead sinners; "Other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice," John x. 16. I must bring them, and they shall hear, and they shall live. Here is more solemnity than in that creating word, that said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" that was but one word, Let it be, and the effect followed; but here there are two words, it shall be, it shall be; two *shall be's*; they shall hear, and they shall live. Why did God speak but once, and it was done, when he made all things out of nothing? And why does he speak more than once when he is to make all things new? Why, indeed his heart is more set upon this new creation work of redemption than upon that of the old creation, and his glory is more concerned in it, the glory of his power, mercy, and truth, and all is here concerned. In that work he was an absolute God, having nothing to oppose or resist him; but here is the concern of a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; reconciling a rebellious world, and reviving a dead world; therefore

it is not only a command, but a promise, repeated many a time ; and here repeated twice in one text, "The dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live ;" and undoubtedly it shall take effect ; "God hath spoken once, yea, twice have we heard this, that power belongeth to the Lord ; also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy," Psalm lxii. 11, 12. It is a God of power that utters this word of grace and mercy. O may dead souls here lay hold upon the double assurance he gives, that they shall hear, and shall live ! But when may this be expected ? Why,

6thly, The sixth and last thing I observed in the text is, the happy season fixed for all this work of his, who says in the context, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," ver. 17. The time is set to an hour ; "The hour cometh, and now is, when it shall be."

1. To take a more general view of this. Our Lord here speaks, as it were, of a thing unknown and unusual ; and, indeed, the new promulgation of the gospel, in the New Testament dispensation of it, and the sudden resurrection of a dead world by it, was a new thing, and we find the world was amazed at his unusual doctrine. It is said, Mark i. 27, "They were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this ? What new doctrine is this ? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they obey him !" And when Paul preached the resurrection of the dead, Acts xvii. 2, 3, some of the philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics, said, "He seems to be a setter forth of strange gods," ver. 18. Why ? "Because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection." If it be asked here, did not the Word of God always give life unto men, even under the Old Testament dispensation ? The answer may be this, that the doctrine of the law and prophets, since it was destined for the people of God, the office of it was rather to nourish up those that were already quickened, and made his people, than to recover them from death as a visible church ; but, with reference to the gospel dispensation, there was a different reason for it ; the Gentiles, that were not the people of God, but aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and quite without God, were to be made his people ; and in this respect, to be brought from death to life, Eph. ii. 11, 12. But then,

2. To take a more particular view of the time and season spoke of in the text. It relates not merely to the gospel dispensation, whereby people are brought to be a visible church, and so enjoy an

hour of grace, or a day of salvation ; but it relates to the glorious ministration of the Spirit, accompanying the dispensation of the word, 2 Cor. iii. 8. It is not only an hour that he sets to us, saying, Now is the accepted time of coming to Christ, but it is an hour that Christ sets to himself, for his coming in the power of his Spirit to quicken dead souls by the vital breath of his word, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," &c.

Here is a twofold hour for the faith and hope of gospel hearers to work upon, a future hour and a present hour.

(1.) Here is a future hour, or a coming hour ; "The hour is coming ; verily, verily, I say unto you," the quickening hour is coming, I am on my way. O poor soul, that hath been long looking for a remarkable hour of life from the dead, and a day of power, and thinks it is never yet come, the hour is set from all eternity, the time is fixed, and he who waits to be gracious doth patiently wait for it, Isa. xxx. 18. He that gave wisdom to the storks and swallows, the turtles and the cranes, to know their appointed seasons, and observe the time of their coming, he well knows the fittest season, and most proper time for his coming. Christ said, in some other cases, "Mine hour is not yet come ;" this says he hath his hour, for which we are to wait upon him in the use of appointed means ; he hath his calling hour, in which he calls his sheep, as it were, by name, and calls them effectually ; his quickening hour, his saving hour, his sealing hour, his assisting hour, his comforting hour, his strengthening hour, his restoring hour, and at last his glorifying hour, when he comes to receive them to himself, to be for ever with him.

Our Lord many times defers many of his gracious actions ; yea, always defers them to the fittest season ; and that for the manifestation of his majesty and sovereignty ; that it may appear to be the hour that he hath fixed, and the day he himself hath made ; "This is the day that the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice in it," Psalm cxviii. 24. And for the manifestation of his infinite power, that it may appear, "This is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes," Psalm cxviii. 23. Also he does so, with reference to us, that his quickening mercy may be the more wonderful, and the more welcome to us ; he comes when he sees our power is gone, and there is none shut up or left. He comes in a time of need, in the nick of extremity ; that when he remembers us in our low

estate, we may see and say, That his mercy endureth for ever : " I was brought low, and he helped me." Yea, he defers many times his coming to exercise his people's graces, and excite them to their prayers and duties. O poor drooping soul, the voice of Christ is indeed worth the hearing ; but what think you if he be wanting to hear your voice ? " O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, let me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice," Song ii. 14. He defers sometimes your sweet and sensible hearing of his voice, till he hear your voice ; let your hearts then cry for his coming.

And since he says, " Verily, verily, the hour is coming," O wait his hour ; it is a great sin to limit the holy One of Israel to your time and hour ; waiting gives glory to God's sovereignty, who comes when he pleases. It gives God the glory of his power, who works when he will ; it gives him the glory of his truth and faithfulness, knowing that all things, even the delaying his coming, will work together for good, while we judge him faithful who had promised.

You see, then, what advantage it is to our faith, that our Lord Jesus here speaks of a future hour, " The hour is coming." O then let us wait his time, without limiting him, and believe that he that shall come will come ; but he that believes makes not haste.

(2.) He speaks of a present hour : " The hour is coming, and *now is*, when the dead shall hear, and live." And now it is the hour, says Christ. This is a part of the voice of the Son of God to us just now ; and therefore, though we may not limit him to our time, yet when, by his own word, he limits himself, as it were, to this present hour, then we may venture to put him in remembrance, that he hath limited himself to a present hour, and gives us allowance to take him at his word, and say, " Now, now, now, it is the hour wherein the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

If any be thinking, it is a long time, even so many hundred years, since Christ uttered these words, and said, " Now is the hour ;" and therefore, how shall my faith view it with respect to the present hour ? Let it be remembered, That as our Lord Jesus lives for ever, so " the word of the Lord endureth for ever ;" and as he hath said, " Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world," so, as long as time is not swallowed up in eternity, and as long as his hour-glass of time is running, and his silver trumpet of the gospel blowing, so long you may conclude, that *now* is the hour ; yea,

there is not an hour of this present day, nor a moment of this present hour, wherein you may not warrantably look up to the Son of God, through the glass of this word, and expect a quickening word from him, and a hearing of his life-giving voice. And now, while he is just saying, The blessed hour that was coming, is *now* come, for quickening the dead ; it is well, if any dead soul here, that knows its dead state and case, be taking the advantage that the word of the Lord is giving, and taking him at his word, saying, " AMEN ; Lord, let this be the hour : Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, with the living and life-giving word : And, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Do your hearts say, AMEN, that this be the very hour and moment of a powerful quickening ; then we hope, that now shall it be verified in deed, as well as in word, that " The hour is now come when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

II. The second general head proposed, was, To make some application of these particulars. I might apply all these six particulars at length, if time allowed ; but I only offer a short inference from each.

1. Hence see the deplorable case of sinners out of Christ, before they meet with him, and before he meet with them, by his quickening word ; they are just lying dead in the grave of sin and sloth, though naturally alive ; and it may be living in pleasure, yet spiritually dead : dead in sin, and dead in law. Many such dead men are among us. O that the Spirit of God would convince you that you are surely dead ! Yea, even the case of believers is a heavy case, while they are not hearing and listening to the voice of their Lord : when he is speaking to their hearts, they are alive ; but whenever he forbears, and they forget his quickening word, deadness seizes them, till he speaks again another word of life, or restore their souls, and bring them back again from the gates of death.

2. Hence see the marvellous grace of God, in providing a suitable remedy for such dismal and desperate maladies as that of spiritual death, and a sentence of eternal death. The God that quickens the dead, and calls things that are not as though they were, hath manifested this name of his, in providing for us a quickening Head, a living and life-giving Saviour. He hath anointed and appointed Jesus, his eternal Son, to give life to whom he will. He hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel ; opening a fountain of living waters with a free proclamation : " Whoso-

ever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely." O what a fit match is Christ for us ! A living and life-giving Saviour for dead sinners, in order to their being quickened to a life of grace here, and glory hereafter. But though life be provided in Christ, the Lord of life, yet we have neither life nor power, nor will to come to him for life, till drawing power come from on high. Therefore,

3. Hence see where we ought to go, or to whom we ought to look, for the powerful application of that life and salvation that is provided in Christ. Why, where should we go, but to him in whom all the treasures of life, as well as all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are laid up ? "To whom shall we go (says Peter) ; thou hast the words of eternal life ?" Even thou whose voice can make the dead to hear and live. He only is the powerful Preacher that preaches to the deaf and dead, and makes them both hear and live. Without this quickening voice of the Son of God, we will be like so many dead corpse and carcases about a communion-table, incapable to eat and drink spiritually : let us look to him for a quickening word. I have read of the lioness, when her young are brought forth dead, that she roars over them till they revive. It is true of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he roars over these that are born dead, and awakens them to life. O sirs, do you believe that he is able to speak you to life ? "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." All power in heaven and in earth is given unto him. His voice is a just word of power. Therefore,

4. Hence see how we are to go to him for life : why, just by hearing his voice with a believing ear. This is the method of the application, *hear his voice* : you need not go out of your seats, he is near in this word of his ; he is speaking to you. O give him a hearing ; for God requires you to hear him : "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased ; hear ye him." Listen to a voice within a voice ; to the voice of Christ within the voice of the minister. This hearing implies faith or belief ; and it is a suitable mean for his quickening a dead soul. 1. Because it is the outgoing of the soul from itself to what it hears. 2. This mean suits the forlorn case of the dead man, that can do nothing for his own quickening, but just hears what the Lord will speak, and is speaking, and what the Lord will do, and is doing ; and heartily welcomes him to come, and do as he hath said. Hear what the Almighty will say and do ; hear not the minister only, but hear the Master : "Hear, and your soul shall live."

5. Hence see, what ground there is to hope for a quickening word, though the disease be death itself, when such assurance is given out of the mouth of Jesus with a double *verily*, and a double *shall be*, with a double oath, and a double promise: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." The apostle Paul said in another case, "O death! where is thy sting?" So may we say, in the case of spiritual death and deadness, "O death! where is thy power?" Art thou able to stand before the voice of the Son of God? O dead soul! art thou able to resist the quickening voice of the Son of God? Do you know who is here speaking, and how he is swearing and promising, That the dead shall hear and live? If thou knowest that it is the voice of the Son of God, then, how art thou able to withhold thy assent to what he is so solemnly affirming? Yea, but I know not, say you, that it is to me he is speaking. Why, what art thou? Art thou truly dead, and free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave? Then thou art the man of whom he speaks, and to whom he says, "The dead shall hear." Behold! the Master calls you, O dead man, dead woman, dead and hardened sinner, who hath been long dead, and rotting, and stinking in the grave; to you he is saying, "Lazarus, come forth." O poor soul! dost thou hear the voice of the Son of God? Then thou shalt live. Nay, but say you, I do not hear his voice; I only hear your voice. Well, but remember I am speaking to you in his name: therefore, his voice is to be heard within ours; the minister's voice alone will be but a killing voice; a deadening voice; but when you will hear Christ's voice within it, it will quicken, and beget you to a new and living hope. And O sirs! Is there not a door of hope you see open in his promise, "The dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live?" Why, say you, here is some ground of hope; and, I think, I have some hope of quickening, but I am not quickened. Why, perhaps there is a mistake you are in; one may be quickened to a living faith, and to a lively hope, upon the ground of God's word, and yet think they are not quickened, because they want a lively feeling, and sensible fruition and enjoyment; but as it is matter of praise, if faith comes by hearing, though feeling is not yet come; and if one be begotten to a lively hope, though sensible fruition is not yet come: so, in as far as faith and hope are quickened, so far the heart and soul are quickened; therefore, do not think it a small

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thing, but indeed a great matter, if by the assurance here given from the voice of the Son of God, that the dead shall hear and live, you that was before a dead sinner, and ready to despair of life, be so far quickened by his word, as to be begotten to the hope of life. Why, but say you, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick," Prov. xiii. 12; O when, when may I hope to be made alive? Why,

6. And, lastly, See here the time set to an *hour*; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the *hour* cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Here is, (1.) A door of hope for the future; "The hour is COMING." (2.) A door of hope at present; "The hour is coming, and NOW IS;" and therefore wait his coming hour, and take his present hour. 1. Wait his coming hour; for he says, "The hour is coming;—the Lord is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him." If you do so, you are so far made to hear and live; the waiting soul is a living soul. 2. Take his present hour; for he says, *It now is*; then take his hour, and believe it is come while he is speaking to you.

Is not the Son of God opening to you just now, and to you in particular, the door of faith and hope, while he is saying, "Now the hour is come, when the dead shall hear and live?" What are you? Are you among the dead? Is that your name? Are you a dead man, a dead woman, a poor dead creature, that neither men nor angels can make alive? Are you deaf as well as dead, so as you cannot hear any other voice but a man's voice? Is this your case? Is this your name that he is telling you of? Then he is speaking to you by name. What think you, is it you that he is pointing out, as it were, and picking out among all this multitude? Is it your case that he is speaking to? Are you conscious to yourself that the watchman hath found you? that the word hath found you out and named you?

Who, then, but the Son of God is speaking a word to your case just now, when the hour is come? O, sirs, do you hear the voice of the Son of God? Then part of his word is here accomplished, *now* is the hour when the dead are hearing the voice of the Son of God.

What! is the Son of God making you to hear, that it is you he is speaking to just now? Neither men nor angels know what a dead state and case you are into, nor can relieve you. But the Son of God is speaking here; "I who know both the case and cure,

am speaking to you, man, woman ; what a dead heart is that of yours ? What a dead sleep is that you are into, that neither word nor rod hath been able to awaken you ? But now, since I am speaking to your case, know that ' I who speak unto thee am he ; I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' I am come to give life, and to give it more abundantly." O, tell me, do you hear his voice ? Then, " they that hear shall live." Do you believe the hour is now come when the Son of God himself is speaking to you, as a dead sinner ? Then the hour is indeed come when the dead shall hear and live ; " Said I not unto thee, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God ? "

Now is the hour of the day wherein we live that requires his powerful life-giving presence ; now, when the devils are raging, and delusions abounding ; now, when defections are growing, and damnable errors increasing to a dreadful pitch ; now, when the bottomless pit is opening, and the sun and the air are darkened with the smoke of the pit ; now, when the great guns are firing from presses and pulpits against a little essay at witnessing and covenanting work ; now, when reproaches and bitter calumnies are spreading, and enemies crying, " Where is your God ? " now, when in this generation it is just an hour and power of darkness, the hour and power of death, shall we expect a reviving ? That now is the hour wherein the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and now, when so many dead souls are here present before the Lord of life, the God that quickens the dead, shall we think that now is the hour when the dead shall hear and live ? What shall we say ? We may even speak to God what we would say, " It is time for thee, O Lord, to work ; it is time for thee to speak to the dead and dry bones, when death is riding in triumph : come from the four winds, O breath ; breathe upon these slain, that they may live ; " that God may be glorified in exerting his power over death and devils, when matters are brought to an extremity.

Now is the hour for acting faith upon the word of life, when it is the dead hour of night ; when Christ in his cause is crucified, when the grave-stone is laid upon his truth ; it is said, " At midnight there was a cry, Behold the Bridegroom cometh." It is at midnight he comes in mercy as well as in judgment ; the midnight hour is his quickening hour : the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, commands life to arise out of death. If the

question be, "Watchman, what of the night?" What hours is it? Oh! it is not the dead hour of the night with you? Why, then, now is the fit hour for faith and hope to act upon this great promise of life from the dead. Man, woman, the Master calls you; though you be dead, and lying in your blood, he says unto you, "Live; yea, he says unto you, while lying in your blood, Live." Though you have been lying dead in sin all your days to this very hour, yet behold now is the accepted time, now is the hour, the happy hour, on which may depend a happy eternity, therefore listen to the voice that speaks from heaven, "O, earth, earth, earth! hear the word of the Lord;" and if, in hearing with the outward ear, there is a stirring among the dry bones, a shaking, and yet no breath in them, O refuse not him that speaks from heaven; turn not away your ear, if you be not a refuser and rejecter of his call; the work of faith with power is a beginning; you cannot contribute a mite of help towards spiritual life in you, but give way to him, who can do all without your help; give way to him while he is yet speaking to you this very hour, and this hour it is done. Let your heart say AMEN to his word, while he is saying, with a "Verily, verily, the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live."

May the Almighty Speaker say AMEN, and let all the people say AMEN. To his name be praise.

A PART OF THE DISCOURSE BEFORE SERVING OF THE TABLES.

My friends, public ordinances are of two sorts, teaching ordinances and sealing ordinances; the word is for teaching, the sacrament we have in view is for sealing; the word is for quickening, or giving life to the dead; the sacrament is for nourishing, or maintaining life in the living. These that remain dead in sin, lying still in the grave of their natural state, are not capable to eat and drink spiritually at the Lord's table, no more than a dead corpse, set down at a table, can eat or drink naturally. This sacramental feast, therefore, is only designed for these that have been made to hear the

voice of the Son of God, and live ; they only have life to be maintained, and a capacity, through grace, to be fed with the flesh and blood of the Son of God ; therefore this table of the Lord's must be fenced, &c. The dead are to be debarred, &c. These that are made alive by the word to be invited, &c.

“ Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.” Examine if you have been raised to life by the hearing of Christ's voice, for this is the mean by which dead souls are raised to life.

If you have been thus raised then the voice of Christ hath been a wakening voice to you, making you see your dead state, and see your sin, and guilt, and filthiness, and folly ; it hath made you turn in in order to turn out, to turn in to yourself and consider your ways, and then turn out towards the way of the Lord,—“ I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies.”

Again, if you have been raised to life, by hearing the voice of Christ, then his word hath been a heart-searching word ; it hath opened the door of that sepulchre, and let you see into some of the dark chambers of death, and set your secret sins before you ; you have found the word of the Lord to be quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, Heb. iv. 12.

Again, if you have been raised to life by hearing Christ's voice, then this word hath been a heart-affecting, heart-breaking, heart-melting word ; it hath brought you to that, “ Oh ! what shall I do to be saved ! ” Alas ! what have I been doing ? How have I been provoking the wrath of God against me ? It hath broken your heart for sin, and from sin ; your sin hath been set before you, and made to lie heavy upon you. The man child of grace is not born without some pangs and throes.

Again, if you have been thus raised to life, it hath been an enlightening word ; discovering this to you, that though there is no help in yourself, yet God hath laid help upon One that is mighty, One that is able to save to the uttermost. This light bears up the soul.

Again, it hath been a heart-opening word ; whenever spiritual life is begun the heart is opened, the soul sees its absolute need of a Saviour, and the willingness of Christ to save and receive poor sinners. A sight of Christ has been like a key, to open your hearts to him, as the heart of Lydia. It hath been a heart-winning

and heart-gaining word ; a heart-drawing voice is the mean of raising a dead soul to life, making it to close with him, and follow him ; His sheep know his voice, and follow him : they were never made alive, that were not made to follow him.

Again, They are made alive by his word ; they live by faith upon him, and cannot live without him ; and hence, there is such breathing of the soul towards him, such panting and longing after him, "O when wilt thou come unto me? Haste, my Beloved ; be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." Hence also, they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

Again, the voice of Christ, speaking in his word, will be most sweet to you ; "Sweeter than the honey, and the honey-comb:" why? Because his word is not only the word of truth that begets his people : "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth ;" but also it is a word of life ; and so nourishing them up to everlasting life : therefore, as new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. It is the food they live upon : "Men live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God:" they embrace the promises, hugging them, as it were, in their arms, as being their treasure of securities for heaven and eternal life in Christ, "In whom all the promises are Yea and Amen."

Where the soul is made alive, by the voice of Christ, the word leaves a stamp and impress of itself ; the soul is cast into the mould of the word, Rom. vi. 17. It is a voice that hath an abiding efficacy ; the soul that is made alive by the word of Christ, never dies again. He may fall into a dead frame, and think himself in a dead state again ; but, as the word of the Lord endureth for ever, so the effect of it remains for ever : they can never altogether forget it ; "I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me." The quickened soul can never forget the word of grace, or promise that quickened him : he may lose the sweet and sensible relish of it ; but while he is in his wits, he can never quite lose a dark remembrance of it.

Is there any soul here complaining, and sensible of deadness, and ready to exclude itself, because dead? This you ought not to do ; for there is some life where there is some sense of deadness ; and they that are wholly dead have no sense of it at all.

It may be, some here have known the time when their souls were quickened by the word of Christ ; but now that liveliness is

quite gone. O believer, why say you it is gone, when this moment you have a living remembrance of it? Do you not remember how he met with you in Bethel, and there he spake with you? What a quickening visit he gave, in such and such a place, with such and such a word? Perhaps I no sooner mention this, than you have a quick and lively remembrance of it: why then, thou art not quite dead; "The God of Bethel liveth:" and because he lives, you shall live. O come and get your life recovered and nourished at his table.

What though you have no life nor liveliness at present; yet, are you content that you have life in your glorious Head; that your life is hid with Christ in God; that your whole stock is in his hand, and not in yours; and that you have his promise, his word, his bond, though you have nothing? O sirs, come, come; for the Lord's sake, come; your life is secure enough; a lively faith in his word is better than a lively frame in your heart.

THE DISCOURSE AT THE SERVING OF THE FIRST TABLE.

Now, my friends, as the word of life hath been set forth to you as a word to be heard believingly; so the same word is now set before you to be handled and tested sacramentally: our eyes may look upon, and our hands may handle the word of life, while Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us. In his death we have a fountain of life opened to us: here is the word of life, the bread of life, the water of life; and, may we not add, the Spirit of life, we hope, is here? And under his influence, and according to his warrant, we are to administer to you the symbols of his broken body and shed blood.

"Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, in the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and having blessed it," &c. You that have heard the voice of the Son of God to the quickening of your dead souls, the same bread of life that you had in the promise, you have now among your hands, in a pledge for the confirming of your faith, and for the nourishing of your life; while you take the bread in the hand of your body, and eat it with your mouth: take the word in the hand of faith, and hide it in your heart.

"After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood," &c. Let faith now drink, and drink abundantly of the blood of the covenant; and, it is a covenant whereof one great promise is, That the dead shall hear and live. This, among the rest, is a promise sealed with the blood of Christ; and there are two things in it that relate to dead sinners. 1. A blessed hearing. 2. A blessed living: "The dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live."

The blessed hearing, is a hearing the voice of the Son of God: this voice is not a passing sound, but a perpetual word; "The word of the Lord endureth for ever:" as it lasts for ever in the fruit and effect of it; so you may be ever hearing and rejoicing in the faith of his word, saying, "The Lord hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice: thy word was found of me, and I did eat it, and it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." His voice raises the dead; and therefore, whenever you find deadness coming upon you, remember his word, and it will restore your soul. Remember how he spoke to you while he was yet in Galilee; when you was under the fig-tree, he saw you, and spake with you by his word and Spirit: and though he will see you again, and speak with you again, yet, even in the interval of his visit, his word may be your continual, comfort, support, and cordial.

Again, the blessed living here promised; "They that hear shall live." You are not to understand by it a lively passing frame at a time, nor a quickening gale, that is soon over and gone; this life or living imports infinitely more; it imports everlasting union with the living Head; it imports everlasting righteousness that you have in him, for your having a life of justification; everlasting strength you have in him, for a life of sanctification; everlasting fulness that you have in him, for supplying all your needs, according to his riches in glory, until you come to the full enjoyment of himself in glory. This is the blessed living, for time and eternity, imported in the promise, "They that hear shall live." They that have a little interest in this world are said to have a living; but, O believer, that is not worthy to be named, in one day, with this blessed living you have in Christ and in the promise.

But, for the confirmation of your faith, as there are two things here promised in behalf of the dead, "The dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live;" so, besides the consideration of the Speaker and Promiser here, who is the Son of God, equal with the Father,

so as you may be fully persuaded, that what he hath promised he is able to perform; the manner in which he speaks is such, that you have three pair of strong pillars to build your faith and hope upon, two Verily's, two Hours, and two Shall be's; for there is not a syllable in that text spoken in vain.

1. The first pair of pillars to build your faith upon, is two Verily's; "Verily, verily, I say unto you." These two you have to secure you in the blessed hearing and the blessed living here promised to you. One Verily had been too much condescension, for confirming this word, whose bare word is enough to warrant your faith; but, for more security, he solemnly swears what he says; "Verily, verily, I say unto you."

2. Another pair of pillars, is two Hours spoke of, for fixing the time wherein you may expect these blessings, namely, a coming hour, and a present hour; "The hour is coming, and now is." There is no word of a past hour: whatever blessings you have got out of his hand, and whatever experience you have of his goodness, that is nothing to what is a-coming; and you are to forget these things that are behind, and reach forward to these things that are before, pressing forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But the coming hour lays a foundation for a waiting faith, and the present hour a foundation for a taking faith.

What better ground can you have for a waiting faith than this that Christ says, "The hour is coming?" Though deadness of heart and frame should again seize you, "The hour is coming, when the dead shall again hear the voice of the Son of God, and live." More and more of this blessed hearing and living is to be expected, as long as his word lasts, and as long as he himself liveth; and behold his word endureth for ever, and he lives for ever and ever: therefore, wait his hour; and expect always more and more a-coming from him that says, "The hour is coming."

Again, what better ground have you for a taking faith, or a present applying faith, than his saying, the hour is not only coming, but that now it is; now when he is speaking to you, and now when you are sitting at his table. Now is the hour, the present hour, for taking what he is giving; take his word for it, though death and deadness be in the way, that the dead shall hear his voice. Is it a present hour of deadness and darkness with you? Why, but he is saying, "The hour is come, when the dead shall

hear," take his word, by hearing his voice, and believing his word, "Hear, and your souls shall live." Is it his present hour of giving you his word? Then it should be your present hour of taking his word. The communicating hour is his giving hour, and your taking hour; you have been taking the sign, and, I hope, you are for taking the thing signified, his word and himself; and the life and living that he gives. As long as he is saying, the hour is now come, you have the warrant for the present acting of faith. "Now is the accepted time," and as long as Christ is saying, Now is the hour, there is room for present faith, present receiving, present application to the throne for present help.

3. Another pair of pillars to build upon is, two *shall's* or *shall be's* in the text, "The dead *shall* hear, and they that hear *shall* live." If God had given you but a may-be, faith might rely upon it, as when he says, "It may be you shall be hid in the day of his wrath. It may be God will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph." His may-be is a foundation for faith, but when he says, It shall be, and doubles it, there is no room for doubting.

The two *shall's* here seem to relate to two lives, or two parts of life, "The dead shall hear;" there is one life, namely, life to hear; for the dead cannot hear till they get life; so that it is a promise of the Spirit of life, putting life into the dead soul, that it may hear the voice of the Son of God. Again, "They that hear shall live;" there is another life, namely, life to live; life to live a spiritual life, and an eternal life. Though life be given you, you cannot live, unless the same power maintain life that at first infused it. Here, then, is hearing life and living life promised; life to hear, and life to live; and, therefore, there is a *shall be* for each of them, "The dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live."

And, O believer, how great is the goodness of God to you, that under these shall be's in the text, are comprehended all the sweet shall be's in the covenant of promise, that you stand in need of. You have a double shall be for your provision and support in the wilderness, "Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." You have a shall be for your protection in dangerous times, "The place of your defence shall be the munition of rocks." You have a shall be for the Spirit to quicken you from time to time, in the way of duty, and in case of decays and deadness, "The water I will give you, shall be in you a well of water springing up to everlasting life." You have a shall be for a cordial to you when you

pass through the valley of the shadow of death, That death shall be swallowed up in victory. You have a shall be for your happy welcome at the day of judgment, "They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels." And a shall be for a happy eternity, for the word says, "So shall we be ever with the Lord." Here is good food for the present, and food for the time to come. Here is feeding for you in evil days, in days of error, corruption, defection, reproaches, blasphemy, snares, temptations, and delusions, and threatened desolations. O sirs, is it not good to have some of God's shall be's to look to, such as that, "Upon all the glory there shall be a defence. Again, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will be found. And again, a man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." They shall have, as we use to speak, the calm side of the bush whatever way the wind bloweth, whatever airth the storm beats, that live by faith upon this man, this IMMANUEL, God man, "For this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land," when the bloody sword, that is drawn abroad, may pass over, and our apostate land become a field of blood, it is safest resting in the bosom of a promising God.

SOME NOTES OF A DISCOURSE, AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SOLEMN WORK, ON THE SAME THEME.

O BELIEVER, when you want sensible quickenings, yet you may live well enough, by listening to the voice of Christ, and giving credit to what he says. He is not always the strongest believer who hath most of sensible presence; weak faith may need these stilts and supports, while strong faith can stand without a staff, and walk without crutches. Indeed the life of the best saints, in this world, is but a falling and a rising; but they stand most firm who stand by faith upon the promise of life they have in Christ Jesus, even when they want the feeling of life, or liveliness; they live nobly who have even a feeling of death in themselves, and yet a faith of life in Christ, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we

should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead," 2 Cor. i. 9. Many never think they have sensible joys and comforts, but if that were all their life that they have, what a little, short, transient, passing life is it? But they that live by faith, they live upon the fulness of grace and life they have in Christ, and upon his word that endureth for ever. They live more upon what they hear, than what they feel; yea, most upon what they hear, for, as "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," so faith lives by hearing the voice of the Son of God; and therefore it lives in the sight of death, and in spite of death, "For the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live." Therefore, when the shadows of death surround you, the shortest cut to a new reviving, is to hear the voice of Christ, and to listen to what he says, That the dead shall hear, and live. Look not into yourselves, or your own heart or frame, to seek for life there; that is but a seeking the living among the dead; it is to seek life in the house of death, but listen believingly to the voice of Christ, who says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." He can speak you to life in a moment, therefore, still remember who he is that speaketh to you from heaven; that he is the Son of God, who hath all the grace of God, the fulness of God, the wisdom of God, the power of God, and the life of God. This hearing of him, as the Son of God, and the Sent of God, to give life to the dead, is God's mean and ordinance for quickening the dead; the hope of life is begotten in a moment this way; and, I hope, some are conscious this day that it is so.

What, have you no hope, that you who are dead shall be made alive? Is this such a great matter? But, O sirs, you will not think so much of that, if you hear the voice of the Son of God, from heaven, saying, "I was dead, and am alive." I, the eternal Son of God, co-equal with the Father and the Spirit, I borrowed your human nature, that I might die for your sins, that I might be the death of living sins, and the life of dead souls, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I live for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death," Rev. i. 18. I have the power of the keys, to shut the gates of death, and open the gates of life; therefore, when I am uttering my voice, and speaking to you, think it not strange, that the dead shall hear and live; therefore, "Hear, and your souls shall live. Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust of death."

O may we hope that some ears have been opened to hear, and

some hearts have been quickened by hearing, the voice of the Son of God this day! O happy hour, wherein this life-giving voice is heard!

The voice of the Son of God, in the gospel, is not a killing but a quickening voice; it neither destroys souls nor bodies, and hence it cannot be the voice of the Son of God, that casts down bodies into dead fits, and dead-like distortions and disorders: whose voice can this be? O how awful is the delusion of the day! that work cried up for a work of the Spirit of God, that, instead of quickening, hath a killing influence upon bodies and souls both!

How delusive is the work that dashes people down into dead fits, and then raises them with raptures, and yet leaves them as they were before, if not worse, enemies to God, and to the work of God, the most glorious work of reformation that ever God wrought for this land, and carried on by solemn covenanting! The quickening voice of the Son of God never tended to destroy the life of bodies, nor to destroy the concern of souls about his declarative glory, and about confessing him and his cause.

The gospel of the grace of God it cannot be, (whatever legal thunders may do) that tends to destroy the life of the body, and also to kill the life of the soul, by destroying all soul concern about public reformation, and the declarative glory of God, and to turn people desperate enemies to the present covenanted work, and witnessing work, against the two palpable defections of the day.

O seek, my friends, to be delivered from the strange delusions, the strange deities, the strange gods of the time wherein you live. Besides, the evident errors of the time, some that profess to be contending against errors, which is so far right and well done; yet are plunged over head and ears, in the gulf of new imaginary doctrines of their own, particularly that strange doctrine of imaginary ideas of Christ as man. O beware, beware, of an imaginary idea of Christ as man, and of reckoning this to be knowledge or faith! For, that is nothing but a dead image of Christ in the brain, and is no part of rational knowledge, far less of revealed religion. As long as you have but an imaginary idea of Christ, as man, you have no view of the person Jesus Christ; for Christ, as man, was never a person; the eternal Son of God, in our nature, is the person of our IMMANUEL. While you look to a Christ painted in the fancy, as man, his voice will never quicken your dead souls; but when, by faith you look to the man Christ, as IMMANUEL, God-man, and listen to his voice, as

it is the voice of the Son of God, then the dead shall hear, and hearing, shall live.

O cry mightily to God, that the hour which Christ says is coming, and now is, may not pass over without your hearing the voice of the Son of God. The hours of the natural day are passing; and so are the hours of the gospel-day. The conjunction of the word and Spirit of Christ makes up that blessed hour, that happy nick and season of salvation, the time of love, and the time of life; "There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God; this river of the water of life, that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb: every thing liveth, whithersoever the river cometh," Ezek. xlvii. 9, 10. Therefore, cry for the promised Spirit, the promised run of that river; I will pour waters on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground," Isaiah xlv. 3. There are signal periods of the Spirit, and happy seasons wherein Christ utters his almighty voice in the word. When such a season cometh, it is an hour that is ever to be remembered; it opens up secrets that were in God's bosom from eternity, and brings to light the cabinet councils of heaven; "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost," 1 Thess. i. 4, 5. This is the hour of spiritual resurrection; a greater and a more glorious resurrection than that of your bodies at the last day; even as much greater as the value of the soul is above that of the body; and because the blessedness of your bodily resurrection depends upon this spiritual resurrection by the voice of Christ: and terrible will the voice of Christ be at the resurrection of your bodies, unless you first hear this vital voice of Christ quickening you to a spiritual life. Therefore, O cry to God, that the gospel-hour may not pass over without a quickening power coming along with the word, making it sink deep into your heart, as well as sound in your ear. If a heart-concern of this sort were created in you, it would argue some beginnings of life from the dead, and some hope in Israel concerning you.

SERMON LXXXI.

THE BEST SECURITY FOR THE BEST LIFE; OR, A LIFE HID
WITH CHRIST IN GOD.¹

“Your life is hid with Christ in God.”—Col. iii. 3.

THOUGH the communion-table of the sacramental supper is covered openly with visible elements of bread and wine; yet by these are represented such hidden mysteries, and spiritual provision, as none are capable of apprehending, or feeding upon, but those who have a hidden and spiritual life, and who are pointed out in this text; and, as it were, signled out from all the rest of the congregation, so as it can be said to them, You, man, woman; you that have a right to sit down at this table of the Lord, you that can feed upon this hidden manna, you have, through grace, got a life that bears some suitableness to, and that can only be maintained by, such hidden food and provision; “Your life is hid with Christ in God.” The text, then, may soon be seen to be suitable to the work of the day; and it bears also a great sibness and relation to the subject treated on last occasion of this sort here. The text spoke to the dead, or of them, saying, “The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live,” John v. 25. This text speaks of the living: yea, and particularly to them; and describes the life they are brought unto by the quickening voice of the Son of God: “Your life is hid with Christ in God.”

I have, in providence, been led to preach, for some Sabbath-days bygone, upon the preceding context, from the beginning of this chapter: where, verses first and second, the apostle exhorts believers to seek and mind those things which are above: and also I have insisted, for some days bygone, upon the first branch of this verse, “For ye are dead;” where I have taken occasion to characterize the believer, by his being dead to the world, dead to sin, dead to self, and to the law, as a covenant; and now this part of

(1.) This Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Dunfermline, August 11th, 1745. Together with the Discourse before the tables, and at the service of the first table, and at the conclusion of the work.

the verse remains to be treated, "Your life is hid with Christ in God."

The verse contains some of the motives and arguments, by which the apostle presses the preceding exhortation: and the motives here are such as shew, 'That the Christian's life is composed of divine paradoxes; they can do nothing, and yet they can do all things; they are dead and yet alive.

In the words we have two things observable; an account of the believer's death and his life.

1st, Here is the Christian's death; "Ye are dead." 1. Not dead in sin; for so they were by nature; and so are all that remain in a state of nature. 2. Not dead for sin; our Lord Jesus Christ had the sole honour of that undertaking. But, 3. Dead to sin; and everything in the world that is an occasion to sin, Romans vi. 11.

2dly, The Christian's life; "Your life is hid with Christ in God." This is not a natural life; for this we have, and Christ came to restore what man had lost: it is not a carnal or sinful life; for thus we are alive without Christ; but it is a spiritual and supernatural life; a life hid with Christ in God.

Here are some precious properties of the believer's life: it is hid with Christ, and it is hid with Christ in God. And more particularly we may observe here a treasure, a treasurer, and a treasury.

I. A treasure, and that is Life; a hidden treasure, to the believer, to whom Christ came to restore it: and it is a hidden treasure both in respect of secrecy, that it cannot be seen; and in respect of safety, that it cannot be lost.

2. A treasurer, with whom it is hid; it is hid with Christ; it is in his hand; he is the dispenser of it; for, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." It is hid with Christ.

3. The treasury, or treasure-house, in which it is hid with Christ; why, it is hid with Christ in God.

From this comprehensive view of the words, the doctrinal proposition that natively offers itself from them, is the following:—

OBSERV. That the believer's life is closely hid, and safely laid up with Christ in God.

In speaking to this observation we shall essay, through divine assistance, to do the following things.

- I. Speak a little of the treasure itself, the believer's life.
- II. Speak of its being hid ; and shew in what respect it is so.
- III. Shew with whom it is hid, and what is imported in its being hid with Christ.
- IV. Where it is hid, namely, in God : and what that imports.
- V. Make application of the whole subject.

I. We are to speak a little of the believer's Life. As he is a believer in Christ, all the life he has, is in Christ ; and his life is Christ in him, who says, " Because I live, ye shall live also : " and in the verse following our text, Christ is called the believer's life. And this life the believer has in Christ may be reduced to these three kinds, namely, the life of righteousness, the life of grace, and the life of glory.

1. The life of righteousness, or justification, whereby all his sins are pardoned, and he accepted as righteous in God's sight, through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, Rom. iii. 22. By this means all his long-tailed account, that he owed to the law and justice of God, where original sin was written down *imprimis* and then all the *items* of actual transgressions, are fairly cancelled and blotted out of the book of God's remembrance, with a " Thus saith the Lord God, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," Isa. xlii. 25. By this life the curse of the law is abrogated, and the sentence of condemnation reversed ; so as there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, Rom. viii. 1, and so as the believer may say triumphantly, without fear of death, hell, or wrath, " Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died ; yea, rather that is risen again," ver. 33, 34. For as he died for our sins, so he was raised again for our righteousness, or justification, Rom. iv. 25. This life of righteousness, or justification, is equal in all believers ; " The righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, is upon all them that believe ; for there is no difference," Rom. iii. 22. It is perfect, everlasting, and uninterrupted ; because the righteousness of Christ, is still upon them, ver. 21, and their union with Christ standeth firm.

2. The life the believer in Christ has, is a life of grace, or sanctification ; which, though it be inseparable from the life of justification ; yet it is vastly different from it. Justification is the

sentence of a judge; sanctification the work of a physician. God, as a judge, justifies the person; but, as a physician, he sanctifies and heals the nature. And though justification and sanctification flow both from Christ; yet he is not our sanctification and justification one and the same way. Both are purchased indeed; but sanctification flows not so immediately from the priestly office of Christ. Sanctification flows immediately from the Spirit of Christ, but justification from Christ in the execution of his priestly office; and his righteousness is not only the meritorious, but also the material cause of it. The life of grace and sanctification is that whereby the soul is garnished with the graces of the Spirit of Christ, and the King's daughter is made all glorious within, and her clothing of wrought gold; and surely it is well wrought, when the workman is God himself, who never put his hand to an ignoble work, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, Eph. ii. 10. This is a life, of which Christ is the food, the medicine, the pattern, the author, the preserver, and the perfecter. By this we are partakers of the divine nature; by this we glorify God, and are useful and serviceable in the world, and it is the sweet beginning of heaven; and that it is,

3. The life of glory, of which the following verse speaks, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, ye shall also appear with him in glory." The life of grace is the same specifically with the life of glory; though the gradual difference is as great as between the life of a child in the womb, and the life of a man come to the full exercise of sense, reason, and judgment. However, grace is the seed of glory, and is called glory, "Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory," 2 Cor. iii. 18. Every believer in Christ has, according to the measure of faith and hope, the beginnings and first fruits of glory; the faith of glory, the hope of glory, the Spirit of glory, and sometimes joy unspeakable and full of glory, when he has joy and peace in believing. "He that believeth hath everlasting life and glory." He hath it in the promise of it; he hath it in the title to it; and he hath it in the seed and root, which will spring up to glory; for, he hath the Spirit in him, as a well of water, springing up to everlasting life. This life Christ prepares for them, and prepares them for it. These three comprehend the kinds of the believer's life. But then,

II. The second thing proposed was, To speak of this property

of the believer's life, that it is HID, "Your life is hid." It is hid, both in point of secrecy, and in point of safety.

1st, In respect of secrecy, it is wholly hid from the world, and partly hid from believers themselves.

1. It is wholly hid from the world; from the wicked and unregenerate world this life is altogether hid. The author of this life is hid, Jesus Christ, for, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not," that they cannot see him. In all ages he has been hid; hid from ages and generations. Few under the Old Testament beheld him in the types and sacrifices of old. The Jews, under the New Testament, who saw him in the flesh, yet in seeing they saw not; they took him but for the carpenter's son. How few still are there of these that hear of Christ, who know him in the power of his resurrection! The subject of life is hid, for, "He only is a Jew that is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, whose praise is not of men, but of God," Rom. ii. 29. The believer's life of grace is in the hidden man of the heart, 1 Pet. iii. 4. The means of this life are hidden; for the believer may say as Christ did, "I have meat to eat, the world knows not of;" his life is maintained by the word and Spirit of God; now the word is a hidden word, not indeed as to the history, but the mystery of it; nor as to the letter of it, but the operation of it upon the souls of believers; hence the word of the gospel is called hidden wisdom, 1 Cor. ii. 7, and ver. 4, it is said, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Natural wisdom, improved to its utmost, cannot see them; hence Augustine once said, *Sergent indocti, et rapient cœlum*. Many learned wits, with all their learning, will drop into hell, when others take heaven by violence. But as the word, so the Spirit is a hidden Spirit; hence compared to the wind, "None knoweth whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." It puzzles the learned to tell what the wind is, and how much more hid are the operations of the Spirit! Again, the actings of this life are hid. O! what hidden things are the pangs of the new birth, the work of conviction, the way how sin is a burden, the way how the soul receives Christ, and rests upon him, the inward longings and desires of the soul after Christ, the heart-embracings of the promise, and the out-pourings of the heart before the Lord, under the out-pourings of the Spirit upon the soul! A person may be sitting at your side, and you know not what a sweet work is upon his soul; it is like the white

stone and the new name, that no man knows but he that receives it. Again, the privileges of this life are hidden privileges; the seal of the Spirit is a hidden privilege, when after they believe they are sealed with the holy Spirit of promise; the pardon of sin is a hidden privilege, intimations thereof are secret; peace with God, and communion with God, are hidden privileges. In a word, the comforts of this life are hidden, "Strangers intermeddle not with these joys."

2. It is partly hidden from believers themselves. Their life is hidden from themselves. Sometimes through the remainders of sin in them; the spark of grace is so covered with the ashes of corruption as to be hid from their sight. Sometimes, through the temptations of Satan, when he sifts them as he did Peter; when the wheat is sifted, the chaff is uppermost, and the wheat is hid. Sometimes, through the pressures of affliction, and winter storms; then their life may be hid from them, as the life of the tree is hid in the root, during winter. And sometimes, through desertion, their life and comfort is hidden; when God hides his face, they are troubled; they may walk in darkness and have no light, Isaiah l. 10. Their life of righteousness and grace both may be hid under the dark clouds of unbelief, doubts, and fears. And as to their life of glory, this more especially is hid from them in time; for, though they are now the sons of God, yet it does not appear what they shall be, 1 John iii. 2.

2dly, The believer's life is hid in respect of safety; it is hid so as it cannot be lost. Though they may lose sight of their life sometimes; yet their life cannot be lost; it is well hid and secured, as you see, John x. 28, 29, 30, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." And what can encourage a poor soul in troublous times more than this, that he has a life that cannot be lost, a treasure that cannot be stolen, a better part that cannot be taken from him. Well, but how is this life secured, where is it hid and kept in safety? It is hid with Christ in God. This leads me then,

III. To the third head, With whom it is hid; it is hid with Christ; and that in many respects, which I only mention, and leave it to faith and spiritual understanding to enlarge upon.

1. The believer's life is safely hid with Christ, in respect of indissolvable union. There is a close, spiritual marriage union

between Christ and the believer; Christ is in the believer, by his Spirit; whence it is said, "Christ in you the hope of glory; and, He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." The believer is in Christ by faith; hence Christ is said to dwell in their hearts by faith. This union can never be dissolved, for he has said, "I will betrothe thee unto me for ever. This union with Christ secures the believer's life in Christ; for it flows from a twofold gift of God, namely, his giving them to Christ from eternity, and his giving Christ to them in time. God's giving them to Christ in the covenant-transaction before time, John xvii. 6. This is the ground of their federal union with him. And then his giving Christ to them, in the dispensation of that covenant of grace in time, and making them to receive him, John vi. 44, 45. This is the ground of their actual union with him. And from this everlasting union flows an everlasting vital influence from this glorious Head. For,

2. Their life is hid with Christ, in respect of safe custody, he having the believer's life a keeping. The Father has made him the keeper of their stock, their store, their life; for, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand," and particularly has intrusted him with them and their life, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; 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, 6. The believer also makes him the keeper of his life, saying, as it is, 2 Tim. i. 12, "I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." The believer commits his life, and every thing related to it, unto Christ; and Christ reckons himself obliged to keep it for him, as being both the Father's trustee and his.

3. Their life is hid with Christ in respect of federal security, whereby this life is well secured to them in Christ, as the Head of the new covenant. Their life is hid with Christ; that is, with his finished work, whereby he hath fulfilled all righteousness, and so fulfilled the condition of the covenant, and thereby secured their eternal life. Their life of faith and hope here, by the way, is hid with Christ; that is, with and in his death, resurrection, and exaltation; 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. Their life is hid with him in his victory over sin, death, and the devil; for therein their life of triumph and

victory for evermore is hid, "Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." In a word, their life is hid with Christ in his life; because he liveth, they shall live also. Here their life is absolutely safe and secure; their life being hid with Christ says, that their life is as sure and safe as the life of Christ, that has succeeded to his death. We use to say, Such a thing is as sure as death; meaning death to come; but the believer's life is as sure as death past and over; even as sure, as it is sure that Christ was dead and is alive, and lives for evermore, having the keys of hell and death.

4. Their life is hid with Christ, in respect of his mediatorial station and relation to them particularly.

(1.) Their life is hid with him as the Lord of their life, the Lord-treasurer, the Lord-dispenser, who came to give life, and to give it more abundantly; and who begins their spiritual life, by giving them the Spirit of life, whereby they are born again, and born to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them. The Spirit is the earnest of the inheritance.

(2.) Their life is hid with Christ, as the purchaser of it. He is the meritorious cause of it; he has paid for it with the price of his own blood: "They are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot."

(3.) Their life is hid with Christ, as the root where the sap is hid in the winter time; hence, says Christ, I am the vine, ye are the branches," John xv. 1.

(4.) Their life is hid with Christ, as he is their representative. He is gone to glory, and has taken possession of these mansions of glory for them, and in their room and stead, John xiv. 23; and there they sit together in heavenly places, Eph. ii. 6; hence they drop the anchor of their faith within the vail, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, Heb. vi. 12. Thus their life is hid with Christ.

In a word, our life is hid with him, as he is the Prince of life, with power and authority commanding life to the dead soul; as he is the tree of life, quickening all that take and eat; as he is the bread of life, enlivening and reviving all that feed upon him: "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever;" and their life is hid with him, as he is the resurrection and the life, John xi. 25, "I am the

resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ;" and as he is the God that quickens the dead. Hence,

IV. The fourth thing was to observe, That this life is hid with Christ in God. There is certainly some depth here, that we have not yet looked into, even the fountain-head where this life is hid : it is hid with whom ? With Christ. In whom ? In God ; " with Christ in God ;" so that both Christ and the believer are hid together in God. May God open our eyes to see what is here ; though there be more than men or angels can tell, yet we may dip a little into it, as far as we have scripture ground to set our feet upon, that we sink not out of sight into the depth. And,

1. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such acceptance with God, as belongs to Christ himself : " He hath made us accepted in the Beloved," Eph. i. 6. Christ, having finished the work the Father gave him to do, was justified in the Spirit, and accepted of God the Father : " Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again : this commandment have I received of my Father," John x. 17, 18. Christ being accepted of God, believers are accepted in him, and favoured in him ; their life is a life of favour with God, upon the ground of the favour he bears to Christ. They that are without God in the world, are without hope, without mercy, without the favour of God, being out of God ; but to be in God, is to be in favour with him through Christ, or accepted and favoured in Christ ; and thus the believer lives in the love of God, and is filled with the fulness of God.

2. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such union to God, as Christ the Mediator lives, who is one with him. This wonderful life is spoken of as a thing that will be better known in the other world than it is now : " At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you," John xiv. 20 ; and it is a branch of the Mediator's prayer, John xvii. 21, " That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ;" and verse 22, " That they may be one, even as we are one." Here is an ocean too deep for you and me to dive into in time ; O may we swim in it to eternity.

3. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such dependence upon God, as Christ the Mediator hath upon him. The divinity hides the humanity of Christ ; the divine nature hides, supports, and

maintains the human nature. Christ, as man, is indeed personally (by such a hypostatical union as is peculiar) hid in Christ as God; yet Christ, as Mediator and Head of the new covenant, is sustained and upheld of God in his mediation and mediatory work: "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold," Isa. xlii. 1. Thus the believer's life is upheld, supported, and maintained by God; it is his God that holds his soul in life. Christ, the Head of the new covenant, and all his seed and members, subsist in, and depend on, God as their covenanted God: "I have made a covenant with my chosen; I have sworn to David my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever," Psalm lxxxix. 3, 4.

4. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such dignity, glory, and honour, as Christ himself lives and is advanced unto. Christ is exalted to sit at the right hand of God, and they, being quickened together, are said to be raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places, Eph. ii. 5, 6. This glorious life of the believer in Christ doth not now appear to any eye, but that of faith; however, the day cometh when every eye shall see it: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory," says the words following the text. O what a high and honourable life is that of the saints in Christ! He lives in the glory of God; and the believer, whose life is hid with Christ in God, is said to be received into that glory of God: Rom. xv. 7, "Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." Hence the church invisible is called, "A woman clothed with the sun (Rev. xii. 1), with the moon under her feet;" sitting, as it were, in the throne of God, who has heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footstool. How do they resemble God in his glory, who have also heaven for their throne, and the moon, the earth, for their footstool, which they tread upon! Again,

5. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such perfect security and stability as Christ lives; for he lives in God, and their life is hid with Christ there, where it cannot but be safe and secure; as sure as the very life of God. It is hid in all the attributes of God, as glorified to the highest in Christ, whose throne is established upon all the magnified perfections of God: Psalm lxxxix. 14, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne;" or, as in the margin, the *establishment* of it: "Mercy and truth shall go before thy face; for mercy and truth have met together, righteousness

and peace have kissed each other." Hence the believer, whose life is hid with Christ in God, is said to dwell on high; the place of his defence is the munition of rocks. The meaning is, God is a rock round about him; a rock on every hand of him; all the attributes of God, like so many strong ramparts and bulwarks, do surround him.

6. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such rest and happiness as Christ lives in. God lives in himself, Christ lives in God, and the believer lives with Christ in God, who rests in the Father's bosom, and so in the blessedness of God. It is the happiness of God to enjoy himself; and it is the happiness of the soul to enjoy God. God is called the resting-place of his people. God rests in himself, Christ rests in God, and the believer rests with Christ in God. When, through unbelief, he is out of his resting place, he is like a wandering sheep, or like Noah's dove, when sent out of the ark, that could get no rest to the sole of her foot till she returned. Let the wandering soul therefore say, "Return to thy rest, O my soul;" for, when he rests here, he partakes of the same happiness and felicity, the same joy and satisfaction, with God himself; he lives in God; and, O what a joyful and pleasant life is the life of God! "In his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Hence,

7. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such duration as Christ lives in God. God lives for ever, Christ lives in God for ever, and the believer's life is hid with Christ in God for ever. God is the eternal God; and to live in God is to have eternal life. Christ who was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore; yea, Christ is the true God and eternal life, and being the true God, he cannot but be eternal life. When we distinguish Christ from God, we only speak of Christ as Mediator between God and man; but Christ as God, is eternal life; and the life that is hid with Christ in God, is eternal life. O believer in Christ, your life is hid and secured to eternity; you may lose your friends, and lose your means; you may lose your name, and lose your fame, but you cannot lose your life, that is hid with Christ in God: it is hid with him who lives for ever and ever.

8. A life hid with Christ in God, is a life of such unspeakable nearness to God as the life of Christ is: it is not only a living with God, but in God; that is, a life of communion with him, and conformity to him, flowing from a living in him, so as to live, as it

were, a life of God. Natural men are said to be alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, Eph. iv. 18; but the believer, by virtue of union to Christ, and acquaintance with him, may be said to live the life of God, because he lives with Christ in God, and so a life of as great perfection as a finite creature is capable of.

In a word, a life hid with Christ in God, is a life not only of him, and through him, and to him, but also in him. It is said, Rom. xi. 36, "Of him, and to him, and through him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever." Now, this life is,

(1.) Of God, as the efficient cause; it is hid in God, as the cause hides the effect, or as the effect is hid in the principal cause. Christ is hid in the meritorious cause; God is the prime original and efficient cause of it; therefore Christ is said to be made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Thus it is of God.

(2.) It is a life through God, as the disposing and conserving cause; and it is hid in God as the conserved is hid in the conservor, or the preserved is hid in the preserver; so believers are called the preserved in Christ Jesus. The God that quickens the dead, is the God that supports the living.

(3.) It is a life to God as the final cause; and hence all the promises of God, relating to this hidden life, are said to be Yea and Amen, to the glory of God. But not only is this life of him, and through him, and to him; but also,

(4.) It is in him, as the material cause; it is a life in God, who is the very matter of our life: the life of our life, the all of our life, the substantial life. The life of God is the life of the believer in Christ; hence such language as that comes natively from a believing soul; "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God, the God that quickens the dead: Say to my soul, thou art my salvation;" thou art not only my Saviour, but my salvation; not only the author of my life, but my life itself; "In God is my salvation and my glory," Psalm lxii. 7. "Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid," Isa. xii. 2.

But for further clearing this great point, it may be a question, How are we to understand God here, when contradistinguished from Christ, "Your life is hid with Christ in God?"

ANSW. We are to understand God here, either or both these following ways, viz., either personally, for the first person of the

glorious Trinity; or essentially, for God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God. And,

1. If we understand it of the first person of the glorious Trinity, God the Father, then a life hid with Christ in God is a life hid in God, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as he is the giver, and sender, and sealer of Christ; him hath God the Father given, for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son: that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" him hath God the Father sent, and him hath God the Father sealed. Now, our life is hid with Christ in God, as he is the God and Father of Christ, giving, sending, and sealing him to be the resurrection and the life to us.

2. If it be understood of God essentially, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, then the import of the text is, Our life is hid with Christ in God, as he is a God in Christ; I say, it is hid with Christ in God, as he is a God in Christ. A glorious Deity, the three-one God, is a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; a reconciled God in Christ, and a reconciling God in Christ. Thus our life is hid with Christ in God, as he is a God pacified and well-pleased in Christ; as he is a God in love with Christ, and with us in him; as he is a God in promise to Christ, and to us in him; as a God in covenant with Christ, and with us in him; and a covenant is more than a promise, it is a paction; and according to paction with Christ, who has fulfilled the terms of the paction, the covenant blessings must be communicated; the faithfulness of God is engaged to make out all the promises.

Thus our life is hid with Christ in God, as he is a God in Christ, a God dwelling in Christ, and making all his fulness to dwell in him; "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" yea, that all the fulness of the Godhead should dwell in him bodily; and our life is hid in that immense treasure that is hid in Christ.

Thus also our life is hid with Christ in God, as he is a God in Christ, or rejoicing in Christ, in whom his soul delighteth. O sirs! is it not enough to secure our eternal life, which is hid with Christ, that Christ is in God, and God is in Christ, insomuch that God's life, and Christ's life, and our life, are wrapt together? "Your life is hid with Christ in God."

V. In the fifth place, I proposed to make application; but I must confine myself only to some few inferences. Is it so, that

both in point of secrecy and safety, the life of the believer is hid with Christ in God ?

1st, If it be so, in respect of secrecy, then hence see,

1. The difference between the righteous and the wicked, which yet is hard to discern, because the life of the righteous is hid ; they are not of the world, and therefore the world hates them ; their life is not a natural, but a spiritual life ; not a visible, but an invisible life ; not an exposed, but a hidden life : the best part of it lies in the hidden man of the heart ; therefore many times their religion goes for a sham, and their sincerity reproached and reviled as hypocrisy. Their hidden life will one day appear, when Christ their life shall appear. Hence,

2. Many believers have doubts and fears about their own state, because their life is so hid that it doth not always appear to themselves. Their life is a life of faith, not of sense or sight ; and it is the faith of things not seen. Herein God designs the glory of his invisible perfections, his faithfulness and truth particularly, when we trust in him for more than we see. Herein appears the excellency of faith. The apostle speaks of three precious things, the precious promises, the precious blood of Christ, and precious faith ; why, it will be able to live comfortable, when all outward props are gone, even upon an unseen Jesus ; " In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice : " hence compared to an anchor, Heb. vi. 20. When the anchor is cast out, it keeps the ship in the midst of the sea stable, by taking hold of something not seen by the mariner ; thus faith and hope enter within the vail. The believer casts out his anchor, and it takes hold of things unseen, and as invisible as Christ in God, and God in Christ. Thus,

3. The believer's hidden life bears some conformity to the life of Christ ; " We are predestinated to be conformed to his image." When Christ was on earth, his divinity was much veiled by his humanity ; though rays of divinity sometimes shone forth in his miracles to convince the world ; yet the wicked world said, he did what he did by Beelzebub ; his divine person and glory was hid from the world, and so is the believer's spiritual life ; and, as Christ had meat to eat, the world knew not of, when it was his meat and drink to do his Father's will ; so believers have hidden meat, hidden manna, a hid and secret feast, Prov. ix. 17, " Bread eaten in secret is pleasant," or bread of *secrecies*, as it is in the Hebrew. Our Lord Jesus, shewing the excellency of the things of his kingdom, does it

by the secrecy of them ; therefore it is compared to a treasure hid in the field, which, when a man hath found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he hath, and buys that field, Matth. xiii. 44.

4. Hence let none satisfy themselves, then, with the external part of religion, and seek no more ; this is not the hidden life. The true believer values outward means, indeed, as the channel of life, but he sees this is not the water of life ; therefore, he cannot be satisfied without union to Christ, for his life is hid with Christ ; or without communion with God, for his life is hid with Christ in God. The hidden part of duty is the best part ; and they have only a shadow of life that want this hidden life.

2ndly, Is their life hid with Christ in God in respect of safety ? Hence see, not only what hidden provision believers have for maintaining their hidden life, but also what good security they have for their life to all eternity. O, believer, your life of righteousness or justification is secured, your life of grace or sanctification is secured, and your life of glory is secured, for it is hid with Christ in God. When you are to celebrate the Eucharist, do it with a song of praise, for Christ as your life, and for the security of it, as hid with Christ, and hid in God. O, sirs, how great is the blessing of eternal life, secured in the hand of the eternal God ! Had God left our life and salvation in our own hand, we had certainly lost it ; but O what cause have we to bless God, that has done this for us, to lay up our life where neither men, death, nor devils can reach it ; and where the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against us or it ! Happy they that have fled to Christ, and are born again : they were born children of wrath, but now they are children of life ; whose life being hid with Christ in God, is as safe and secure for ever as the life of Christ in God, and consequently as the life of God himself. But who may lay claim to this life, and so to the seal of this security in the sacrament ? This leads to another inference.

3rdly, Is the believer's life hid with Christ in God ; here, then, is a hidden mark of these who shall be worthy communicants in God's sight ; they have that spiritual life, which I told you consisted in a life of righteousness, a life of grace, and a life of glory. The last of these I need not speak of, except in so far as the two former, being the beginning and first fruits of it, afford them ground for the hope of glory ; but all believers in Christ, for whom this

communion table is covered, they have actually a life of righteousness, and a life of grace hid with Christ in God. Therefore, try and examine whether you are brought from a state of death in the first Adam, to a state of life in the second Adam. And,

1. Are you brought to a life of righteousness and justification before God? If not, then you are dead in law, and under condemnation; but, if otherwise, then tell me, where is your life of righteousness hid: where lies it? Can you say it is not in you? It is not in your works, it is not in your duties, it is not in your graces, it is not in your frames, it is not in your experiences; where, then is it? Can you say, before God, I have been shaken out of all hope of life and justification upon any other ground but the righteousness of God, the doing and dying of the Son of God, his obedience and satisfaction? "For now, without the righteousness of God, the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe," Rom. iii. 21, 22. Have you been made to fly from the wrath of God, which is revealed from heaven in the law, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, to the blood of God revealed from heaven in the gospel, to cover you from that avenging wrath? For it is said, Rom. v. 9, "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Are you begotten to a lively hope of justification, through the resurrection of Christ; and have no life at all this way, but by faith, saying, "In the Lord have I righteousness?" I have no righteousness for acceptance with God, but in him, who is "the LORD my righteousness." Then you have a life of righteousness, hid with Christ in God; and a right to the sacramental seal, which is a seal of the righteousness of faith.

2. Are you brought to a life of grace or sanctification? If not, you are dead in sin, and under the power and dominion thereof; but, if otherwise, then where is your life of grace hid and stored up? Some find all their life in their hand, as it is said, Isa. lvii. 10, but the true believer has his life in his Head, even in Christ "The Head of the body the church," Eph. i. 22, 23. The life of grace is indeed in us subjectively, yet so as Christ only is the fountain of it. This life of grace makes a change of nature, heart, and life, in all that are the subjects of it. Restraining grace only ties up the wolf, but regenerating grace makes him like the Lamb, having some likeness to the holy Lamb of God. Christ, by his Spirit,

is the life of this life of grace, according to the promise, John iv. 14, "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." Christ is the root of this life. Separate the branch from the root, or break it off from the root, and then the life of it is gone, it dies; "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. Christ is the fountain of this life; just as the sun is the fountain of light, and the fountain of these beams that shine into the house. Can the beams have any subsistence if they were kept by themselves, separate from the sun? Nay, you cannot shut the windows and keep the beams, or preserve them by keeping them by themselves, separate from the sun; take away the sun, and the beams perish for ever. Thus your life of grace has no bottom itself; the separation of it from Christ is the destruction of it. Self dependence, then, is self destruction, for the new creature has no dependence on itself without Christ, no more than a beam has on itself without the sun.

Well, have you such a knowledge and experience of this, with reference to the life of grace, as you see that this life is not in your hand, but in your Head, Christ Jesus? Are you content and well-pleased with this divine disposal, even when you find no life or liveliness, no strength or ability in yourself, that you have it to say by faith, in the Lord is my life and strength; "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength?" When you find yourself empty, can this satisfy your heart, that, "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," and not in you; that your stock should be in his hand, and not in yours; that he should be the glory of your strength, the Lord of your life, and the dispenser and disposer of it as he pleases? Even when you find yourself dead, yet can the faith of this, that Joseph is alive, or that Jesus lives, bring in more contentment to your heart than if you had life at your own command? Dare you say, with David, Psalm xxvii. 1, 3, "The Lord is the strength of my life; in this will I be confident?" This says, your life of grace is hid with Christ in God; and that you, dead as you are in yourself, shall be welcome to his table, who says, "Because I live, ye shall live also,"

4thly, Passing other inferences, I would close with this, that hence we may see the duty both of all these who want this life, that they may get the possession of what they want; and these who

have this life, and are possessed of it, that they may get the comfort of what they have.

[1.] To you who want this life, I would say a word about your duty. If you would not wish to remain for ever in a state of death, destitute of righteousness and grace ; and if you have a life of righteousness, grace, and glory secured, then you must come to Christ, that you may have a life hid with Christ in God. And, in order that you may comply herewith, we shall, 1. Lay before you some motives to excite your compliance with the duty. 2. Offer some directions for your acceptable doing thereof.

(1.) We are to lay before you some motives to excite your compliance with the duty.

1. Consider, by way of motive, that while you remain in unbelief, you remain dead while you live. True believers, who have a life hid with Christ in God, they are dead to sin, and dead to the law, as a covenant ; but you are dead in sin, and dead in law, under the curse and condemnatory sentence of it ; and therefore you must be made alive, or else be miserable for ever.

2. O consider, that life is a precious thing, even natural life is very precious ; " Skin for skin, and all that a man hath, will he give for his life," Job ii. 4. I have reard of a Roman drowning, that took hold of the boat with his right hand ; and when that was cut off, he held with his teeth, till his head was cut off. Men will do much for their life ; and, if natural life be so precious, what must spiritual and eternal life be ?

3. Consider, that better you had never had natural life, if you have not this hidden life ; better Judas had never been born, than to have betrayed the Lord of life ; better you had never been born, than not to be born again to this life, or not to come to Christ for life, or that this should be a part of your doom, out of the mouth of Christ, " Ye would not come to me, that ye might have life."

(2.) We next offer some directions for your right complying with this duty. Therefore, by way of direction, we exhort you,

1. To know and be persuaded of it, that you cannot have life in yourselves, nor quicken your own souls, you are surely dead ; and it is as sure, you cannot raise yourself, no more than dead carcases in the grave can put life into themselves. It is the God that quickens the dead who can breathe this life into you, and make you live this supernatural life, by faith ; which faith sees there is no life

but in Christ, saying, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." The life of faith is a mysterious living upon life in another, a life hid with Christ in God; and yet it is not only his life, but ours in him, for it is said, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." What is this? A life not in ourselves, but hid with Christ in God, and yet must be yours by faith, that it may be said of you in particular, "Your life is hid with Christ in God."

2. Hear and believe the word of Christ for it, his word is the word of life; "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life," John vi. 68. Now, neither men nor angels can give life by their words, for no minister on earth, nor angel in heaven, has the words of eternal life; but, if Christ has warranted me to speak them in his name, then he can make them the powerful channel of life to your souls, who are dead sinners hearing me: and I must tell you these words of eternal life, that Christ only has, are put in my commission to speak unto all and every one within these walls, according as the angel of the Lord says, Acts v. 20, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Why then, since there is a warrant given by him who says, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature;" and a warrant in his name to speak to you all the words of this life, that is hid with Christ in God; then he that hath ears to hear, let him hear the voice of the Son of God, who has the words of eternal life, so as to be able to convey life by a word; and who saith, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live," John v. 25.

Your dead and lifeless state is no valid objection; your dead and lifeless heart is no objection here; a dead and lifeless frame is no objection; it is quite out of purpose to make these objections, when that is the very case he takes in hand to cure. Dead and lifeless souls are these he is speaking to. Life can answer all; and it is the Lord of life who is speaking. Death can be no bar in his way; nay, death is the desperate case itself, which he has come to cure with his word; what word? "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," John xi. 25.

O sirs, "Do you now believe?" Alas! say you, I do not feel life coming into my soul. O mistake not the matter, poor soul, you speak as if you were called to believe that there is life in you, or that you should first feel that there is life in you, before you

believe. This is cross to believing. The question is not, if you feel life in you; it is better that you feel death and deadness, and sin and misery in you: the question is, if you will believe there is life in another, even life hid in Christ for you. Do you believe, that the life you need and want is in him, and that he will give it out as he pleases? Though you had been dead and stinking in the grave of sin and death for four days, yea, four years, four-score of years, it is all a matter to him, when he, as the Lord of life and death, is speaking to you, and saying, "Lazarus, Come forth: Arise, the Master calleth you. Said I not unto you, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God?"

If the eternal life of your souls were not hid in Christ and unseen, it would not be the object of faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, but the object of sense and feeling, like things visible and sensible; and therefore, if ye now believe, though you have no sense or feeling of life in yourself, and believe that this life is hid with Christ in God, and that God is infinitely wise and merciful to you, in storing up your life and salvation in such a sure hand for you, then I will assure you, that, in due time, after ye believe, ye shall be sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, and shall experience the power and efficacy of his believed word. Therefore,

[2.] We should now speak to those who have this life, and are possessed of it by faith, that they may get the comfort of what they have hidden and laid up for them in Christ. Referring what I would say to you till afterwards, I shall only now say, your special duty is to believe yet more and more, and to be strong in the faith of what life you have in Christ, and strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Though you were never so dead and lifeless, dark and destitute of yourself, yet, having no confidence in the flesh, your duty is to rejoice in Christ Jesus, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; all the treasures of light, life, grace, truth, and fulness of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and all that is hid with him in God, for maintaining your spiritual life in time and eternity; saying, "In this will I be confident;" and, in this confidence, it is your duty to go to his table, praising him, and confiding in nothing that can be either seen or felt in you by sense; but looking to him through the glass of his own word by faith, and relying on that which is hidden and unseen; because your hidden life must be maintained with hidden manna; and thus believing, ye shall have the witness in yourselves, that "Your life is hid with Christ in God."

A PART OF THE DISCOURSE BEFORE SERVING OF THE TABLES.

THE sacramental supper, which now we are to celebrate, is an open seal of an hidden life, a visible seal of an invisible life; and these who are to be admitted with God's allowance, are only these who have a life hid with Christ in God, who have Christ for their life; therefore, all the *dead* are to be debarred, &c.; and all the *living* are to be invited, who live by faith, &c.

That believers in Christ may go with the more confidence of faith to a communion table, I shall lay a few evidences before you of the life hid with Christ in God, both in point of secrecy and in point of safety. And,

1. You may know that you have a life hid with Christ in God, if you truly judge your life to be more safe in the hand of Christ, than when you have life and liveliness in your own hand. Do you think your own life safer in his hand than in your own? and can you bless God for putting all things into his hand, and your life also? Do you think the Father ought to be loved and adored, because he loved the Son, and hath given all things into his hand? John iii. 35.

2. You may know that your life is hid with Christ in God, if you reckon your hidden security your best, and even better than felt enjoyments. Though felt enjoyments be sweetest for the time they last, yet, do you know and believe that your hidden life in Christ is the surest? And hence, can you not live upon a promise believingly, even when you find not the performance sensibly, because you know that "all the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God?" If you can do this, through grace, then you have a life hid with Christ in God.

3. You may know this mysterious privilege by this evidence, namely, your believing in him, as a Christ in God, even when you cannot feel him to be Christ in you. It is true, they are happy to whom God makes known "what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory," Col. i. 27. Christ in you is a great matter; and yet Christ in God is a greater and deeper part of the mystery. Christ in us spiritually is a great mystery; Christ in God, hypostatically and

super-eminently, is a deep and adorable mystery ; and Christ in God federally, as Christ's God and your God, is a profound mystery. I confine myself to such a way of speaking about it, as I hope ordinary believers may understand. When you cannot feel him to be Christ in you, in respect of his gracious, comfortable presence with you, can you believe him to be Christ in God, in respect of glorious, ineffable presence with the Father, as your representative, knowing you have an Advocate with the Father? Then you have a life hid with Christ in God, if you can live by faith upon the fountain of life, when the streams of sensible enjoyments are dried up.

4. You may know if you have a life hid with Christ in God, if you see Christ in God's light, and God in Christ's light ; Christ in the light of God, and God in the light of Christ : I mean, if you are brought to some knowledge and acquaintance with God in Christ, by the light of the word, which is the light of God ; and in the light and illumination of the Spirit, which is the Spirit of God. God is not known but in the light and revelation of Christ : " No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. Christ is not known but in the light of God, by the Father's teaching : " No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him," John vi. 44. And how doth he draw to acquaintance with Christ? Why, " It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God : Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me," ver. 45. Tell me, then, has the Spirit been sent from the Father and the Son, so as to testify of Christ in the word to you, as you have seen his glory in that glass, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ; making him matchless in your eye, and so as, beholding his glory, you were changed into the same image? This says, " Your life is hid with Christ in God."

5. You may know this mysterious privilege, that your life is hid with Christ in God, if you know where your life is hid, or if you know with whom, and in whom it is hid, by knowing the mutual union and relation between Christ and God. Indeed, it is one of the most deep points of knowledge that can be spoken of, to know Christ in God, and God in Christ ; of this our Lord speaks to Philip, John xiv. 9. When Philip had said, " Shew us the Father, Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the

Father." And verse 10, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works. And verse 11, "Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." Why, what is it to believe that? It is even to believe that Christ is in God, and God is in Christ: to know this, is to know where our life lies.

But one may justly allege, That the time is not yet come for knowing this mysterious point of knowledge, since Christ speaks of another day for knowing it: "At that day ye shall know, that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you," John xiv. 20. Indeed, the day of glory will make it known in another manner; but yet the day of grace makes it known, so as to make it the object of faith, though not the object of sight and vision; and of this knowing of it, as the object of faith here in time our Lord seems to speak; for he is promising the Spirit of truth, ver. 16, 17, to be sent after his ascension, by whose illumination they should see him: for, "yet a little while, says he, and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also;" and then it follows, "At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." So that this hidden life is hidden in this knowledge, even as that word, "Because I live, ye shall live also," stands between the seeing that is before, and the knowing that is after it: "Ye see me; and because I live, ye shall live also: at that day ye shall know." When the Spirit lets you see me, in whom your life is hid, then "Ye shall know that I am in the Father."

QUEST. How shall a person know that he understands such a deep mystery as this?

ANSW. As it cannot be known but by believing it, so then you believe it truly, when, though you must confess your ignorance about it, yet your faith of it brings in a kind of pleasure to the soul, as it exhibits to your view the ineffable sibness and oneness between Christ and God, the near and dear relation between them; yea, such a natural, federal union between them, as that their life and interest is inseparably wrapt together, and your life wrapt in, as it were, between them while it is hid with Christ in God, as his God and your God, his Father and your Father. This is life eternal, to know God in whom our life is hid: "Ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you." This is such a great matter, that Christ speaks of it to his Father, as well as to his brethren,

"This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3.

6. You may know your life is hid with Christ in God by this evidence, namely, your knowing that the things of Christ are the things of God, John xvi. 14, 15, by the Spirit's being sent to glorify Christ, and shew these things of Christ unto you, and thereby guiding you into all truth, and so to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and all the lines of truth relating to Jesus, the Saviour and Redeemer, centering in God, so as to be seen as the truths of God in Christ, and of Christ in God; then you may conclude your life of faith, upon these truths, is a life hid with Christ in God.

To make this more plain and particular, tell me, Have you seen all Christ's mediatorial actings to be in the name and authority of God? And do you, on this account, depend upon him, and lay the weight of your eternal life upon him, knowing that all his works were wrought in God, according as it was prophesied, Mic. v. 4, "He shall stand and feed," [or *rule*] even the babe of Bethlehem, there spoken of, "In the strength of the Lord, in the name of the Majesty of the Lord his God." Have you seen that Christ, in his doing and suffering, was sustained of God; that is, both by the power of his eternal Godhead as the second person of the glorious Trinity, and by the power of his eternal Father and eternal Spirit, as one God with him, and thus strengthened and upheld of God, who said, Isa. lxii. 1, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles?" Do you see the blood and righteousness of Christ to be the blood of God, and the righteousness of God? and that therefore your life of justification is happily secured with Christ as he is JEHOVAH our righteousness, and so a righteousness hid with Christ in God? Do you see the grace that is in Christ, to be the grace of God, and the fulness that is in Christ, to be the fulness of God? and that therefore the life of grace that you have is not so much life and grace handed to you, as it is life and grace hid in Christ, and with Christ in God; knowing that grace and life communicated to you is but water in a vessel, soon spent and spilt; but the grace and life you have in Christ is water in the fountain of living waters, still flowing and overflowing, still unchangeable and inexhaustible; and therefore, are you brought off from leaning upon any grace received, and from relying on any grace, life, or liveliness in you, so as not to be

desperate and hopeless, even when, to your sense, you are dead and lifeless ; but can bless and adore him that your life is secured elsewhere, and can leave it to his infinite wisdom to let forth and send the Spirit of life as he pleases, and in a way and time that shall be most for his glory and your good? If so, then, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." And, therefore, in his name and authority, I invite you to come to his table, that you may get your faith confirmed, perhaps your soul filled with joy and peace in believing.

THE DISCOURSE AT THE SERVICE OF THE FIRST TABLE.

Now, my dear friends in Christ, you whose life is hid with Christ in God, whether ye are sitting at, or coming to this table of the Lord, though your life, as to secrecy, is wholly hid from the world, and much hid from yourselves ; and, as to safety, is well hid and secured for you ; if you know where your life is hid, you may know that your life is not far to seek ; your God is essentially everywhere, and your head, Christ Jesus, is personally everywhere, though his human nature is in heaven ; his divine person is wherever God is, because he is God-man in one person ; and may we not hope he is graciously and spiritually present by his grace and Spirit, when now also he is symbolically present in the elements of bread and wine. Your life is not far to seek, if you knew but the place where it is hid. It was once said by an angel, after Christ was risen, and not yet ascended to heaven, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," this was spoken of his human body ; and the place where he lay might be seen by the eye of the body ; but now that Christ is ascended to heaven, I have a greater word to say, relating to his divine person, and that is, Come, see the place where the Lord lies ; come and see him in the bosom of the Father ; come and see Christ in God ; this you cannot see but by faith, and believing that he is Christ in God, or that he is the Christ of God. If, with your bodily eyes, you look upon the elements of bread and wine ; yet, look to them no otherwise, but as they are the place not

where he lay, but where he now lies. Why, say you, how can this be understood? Is the bread and wine the place where he now lies, when you enjoin us to come and see him in God? I will tell you how you may see the bread and wine to be the place where he lies; why, it is just by opening of the eye of faith to see that this bread is the bread of God, and this wine is the blood of God; that this bread is the bread of God that came down from heaven, that this is the blood of God shed for you; then will you see where your life lies hid, even with Christ in God, and that it is not far off. Faith has not far to go to see where your life is hid.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, &c., saying, Do this in remembrance of me: remember I am the bread of life, the hidden manna for maintaining your hidden life. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

After supper, he took the cup, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood, &c.

Now, this new covenant of promise, sealed with the blood of Christ, is the glass wherein to see that "Your life is hid with Christ in God; and, therefore, now let your faith be confirmed in this, O believer, that your life is hid with Christ in the promise of God; or, in a promising God, for, "All the promises of God are in Christ, Yea, and Amen, to the glory of God," and this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life, the life of righteousness, the life of grace, and the life of glory.

See now, your life hid with Christ in the bosom of God; for he is the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father. O what a well secured life is this that you have, when hid with Christ in God's bosom, even in the bosom of his everlasting love, which led him to say, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

Your life hid with Christ in God, is a life hid with Christ in the blessing of God; for, God hath blessed him, and made him most blessed for ever, Psalm xxi. 6, or, as in the margin, Set him up to be *blessings*, saying, "Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed." O believer, God has blessed him and you; God has blessed him, to be a blessing to you; he has blessed him for the love he bore to him and you; he has blessed him for his love that he bore to you; and he has blessed his doing and dying for you, and accepted of it; he has blessed his flesh and blood, to be meat and drink to you."

See now, your life hid with Christ in the seal of God, the privy seal appended to his commission, and to his names, and offices, and relations to you; for, "Him hath God the Father sealed," and sealed to be the food of your life for ever, and to be the meat that endures to everlasting life.

See now, your life hid with Christ in the purpose and decree of God, "Who hath saved and called you with a holy calling, not according to your works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which were given you in Christ Jesus before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. Now, you may see your calling and election sure, in the calling and election of Christ, who was called and chosen of God to be your Saviour and Surety; according as he hath chosen you in him, before the foundation of the world, that you should be holy.

Now, also see your life hid with Christ in the relations wherein he stands unto God, as he is the Son of God, and the Sent of God; for, while his Son-ship stands good, your life of adoption and sonship stands, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Do you know and believe, that the Son of God is the Sent of God? This is much to be observed; for, what you thus know and believe upon the words of Christ, as they are the words of God, Christ in his prayers commends you to his Father for it, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known, surely, that I came out from thee, and they have believed, that thou didst send me," John xvii. 8.

Again, let faith be confirmed, O believer, that your life is hid with Christ, as in the relations wherein he stands unto God, so in the relations wherein God stands unto him, even as he is Christ's God and Father, according to the new covenant prophecy, "Thou art my Father, he shall cry, thou art my God alone," and accordingly, he went up to heaven, crying, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God." O happy life, hid with Christ in God, as his God and your God, his Father and your Father, "And because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, ABBA, Father."

Again, let faith here see, that your life is hid with Christ in the favour of God. It is said, Psalm xxx. 5, "In his favour is life," and, Psalm lxxxix. 17, "In thy favour shall our horn be exalted." What favour? Even the favour he bears to Christ, for,

ver. 33, where (though it is promised, that he will visit our iniquities with rods, yet) it is said,

My favour I'll not take from him,
Nor false my promise make;
My covenant I'll not break, nor change
What with my mouth I spake.

Your life is hid in the favour that God bears to Christ; you are favoured and accepted in the Beloved.

O believer, eat and drink; yea, drink abundantly of the strong wine of consolation, so as to be filled with joy and peace in believing, that your life is hid in the wisdom of God; and, indeed, infinite wisdom cannot contrive a better hiding place for your eternal life, nor a better security for it.

Your life is hid with Christ in the power of God; for, as Christ is the wisdom of God, and made of God wisdom to you; so he is the power of God, and made of God your strong Redeemer, mighty to save, and able to save to the uttermost: and a life hid in the Almighty power, is it not well secured against all the power of earth and hell? The life of many, even of our countrymen abroad at this day, is not secured, you hear, from the power of a bloody sword. The life of this generation in Britain is not secured from the power of France and Spain; we know not how soon the life of thousands may be a prey to the devouring sword; but, O here is comfort in threatening times; for, I cannot only tell you, "It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger," if you live by faith upon these hidden securities you have with Christ in God, but without all peradventure, your spiritual life, come what will, is securely hid with Christ in the power of God; and you shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation.

Again, feed upon this meal, that your life is hid with Christ in the holiness of God, who has sworn by his holiness that he will not

(1.) We had formerly occasion to observe, that this nation was engaged in an open war with France and Spain: and Germany becoming the seat of the war, occasioned many of our forces to go over thither; numbers of which fell a prey to the devouring sword, in the several bloody engagements they had with the enemy. And France, the better to effectuate her designs in Germany, was at this time (viz., 1745) meditating an invasion upon Britain, in favour of the Pretender. His son accordingly undertook the enterprise, and had even before this time (viz., on July 18th) privately landed on an island in the north-west of Scotland with a small party, and was soon joined with a number of disaffected persons at home, which was the beginning of a very unnatural rebellion, and soon involved the whole nation in confusion and intestine disorder; and terminated, in the issue, with the effusion of much blood.

lie unto David, his seed shall endure for ever : yea, his holiness in Christ secures your being holy as he is holy, and the perfection of holiness at last.

Feed upon this meal further, that your life is hid with Christ in the justice of God. It is true, sin-revenging justice secures the eternal death and destruction of all the wicked ; but, O believer, the satisfied justice of God in Christ secures your eternal life, your life of justification and freedom from eternal death and condemnation, and from all obligation to vindictive wrath ; for, " God is just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus."

Again, your life is hid with Christ in the mercy of God, as it vents through the blood of Christ ; and the grace of God, as it reigns through the righteousness of Christ unto eternal life. Yea it is hid with Christ also in the faithfulness of God : for " Mercy and truth have met together in him, righteousness and peace have kissed each other ;" and God says, Psalm lxxxix. 24. " My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him." What ! are these perfections of God hid with him, and your life hid with him in these perfections of God ? It says, your life is bound in the same bundle.

In a word, your security, O believer, is such, that your life is hid with Christ, in all the other attributes of God, that I have not yet enumerated, and shall not now insist upon farther : but shall only add, that the cup of strong consolation you have to drink has this in it, that your life is hid with Christ in God, as he is one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost : for, as you are joined to Christ by the Spirit, of which he says, Isa. lxi. 1, " The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me ;" so, he being anointed for you, and you anointed with the same oil of gladness, wherewith he is anointed above his fellows, when, by virtue of this unction and union with him, your life is hid with Christ the second person, the middle person of the Godhead, then is it not hid, as it were, in the centre of the glorious Trinity ? O drink at this cup of consolation ! Can you wish for, or imagine better security for your life in time or eternity ? My text allows me to give you all the comfort and assurance that is imported in a life hid with Christ in God.

You have now got some food for your faith ; live therefore a life of faith, that by faith, ye may live a life of holiness and comfort to the praise of his name. Has he provided so well for your life,

and seen to the security of it? O then live to the honour of his name, a witnessing and warning life against all your sins, and against all the enemies of his glory. Be not ashamed of him nor of his words in this adulterous and sinful generation, but appear for him now: for, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory:" whereas, these that are ashamed of him, and his words and truth, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them will he be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels.

A DISCOURSE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SOLEMNITY.

I SHALL close with a word, First, To those who are dead in sin still. Secondly, To those who are made alive in Christ, and have a life hid with Christ in God.

1st, To you who never yet were made alive by the hearing the quickening voice of the Son of God, and are strangers to this life hid with Christ in God; I would offer two advices to you before you go.

[1.] Be sensible of these things which relate to your present case, your dead state.

(1.) Be sensible of the signs of a dead state about you; you want the signs of spiritual life: I name a few of these, particularly four.

1. Heat and warmth is a sign of life, which you want. Every one that is made alive in Christ, they have something of a warm breath toward God and man; toward God in prayer, toward man in conference, and speaking of divine things; but in these things ye are key-cold; and your cold breath evidences that ye are dead in sin; for where life is, there is heat. If you be made alive, by a spiritual life, then there will be some spiritual heat and heart-burning in love toward the Lord Jesus; "Did not our hearts burn within us?" Where the mind is enlightened with some saving insight into the things of God, the heart is heated with love to them; they receive the truth in the love thereof.

2. Life may be known by appetite and desire after nourish-

ment ; spiritual life is attended with spiritual hunger after Christ, the true bread of life. The living soul pants and breathes after the living God : but your want of appetite shews you are dead in sin.

3. Growth is a sign of life ; but ye are not in case for growth, unless it be to grow worse and worse ; you do not grow in grace, nor in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That which lives, grows till it come to full maturity ; so, where spiritual life is, there is growth and progress. It is true, believers are sometimes under a decay, and corruption remaining, and lust prevailing, may, like a thief in the candle, waste his graces : but, if they be living Christians, they strive against them, and recover again ; and grow, if not in the bulk of grace and duties, yet in more sweetness ; like apples at their full growth, if they grow not bigger, yet they grow riper and sweeter ; so a believer, if he grows not more to the bulk of duties and graces, yet he grows more to the substance and sweetness of duties, and more to a rootedness in Christ : he grows in grace and in humility : and hence, though he grows in knowledge, he grows in a humble sense of ignorance ; he grows in faith, and yet in a humble sense of unbelief ; in love, and yet in a humble sense of remaining enmity, &c.

4. Motion is a sign of life : the believer is in a perpetual motion, even when he is steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; unwearied in the service of Christ. Life has a twofold motion, a forward motion to every thing that tends to advance it ; and a backward motion from every thing that tends to destroy it ; so the believer has a forward motion, a propensity, habitually to every thing that may contribute to the advancement of his spiritual life ; hence the word and ordinances, and means of grace, are loved and prized by him : also a backward motion from, or habitual hatred of every thing that may contribute to destroy his spiritual life ; hence sin and error, temptation and delusion, will be abominable to him : and the more life, the more hatred of sin, which is destructive to it. As nature shuns its own dissolution ; so the new nature, the new creature, shuns whatever tends to the destruction of it ; and hence sin is most hateful to the believer, when he is most lively, or, when spiritual life is most active ; but, this sign of life, this spiritual motion is what you want. It is true, hypocrites move ; but it is as the clock moves, only by weights that hang at it ; so hypocrites may move in some duties by the weight of law-threatenings, or the weight of credit, custom, and the like ; but the

believer moves from an inward principle, "The water that I give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life," John vi. 14. This inward principle of spiritual motion you want, that are in a dead state; your duties are dead duties, your faith is a dead faith.

(2.) Be sensible of the evils of this your dead state. Particularly,

1. Be sensible of the sinfulness of your dead state. To be dead in sin is the worst of deaths; to be dead in the grave is nothing; for Christ was once there; but to be dead in sin, is a death he could never die. To die a shameful, painful, ignominious, and cursed death, is consistent with the favour of God, and with the holiness of God; for, Christ died such a death; but a sinful death is every way opposite to God.

2. Be sensible of the dreadfulness of your dead state; you therein are under the loss of all things that are desirable; as when a man is dead, he loses all right to his goods, they pass to the next heir; so you being dead, have no right even to temporal blessings on earth, nor to the heavenly inheritance in the life to come. You have no right to any thing but hell and divine wrath; and, indeed, you have a manifold right and title to everlasting wrath; a title by your first father's treason; a title to it by your original and universal corruption of nature; a title by your innumerable actual sins, and acts of rebellion; and a title to it by refusing God's indemnity, and rejecting the remedy God has provided in the gospel.

3. Be sensible of the deformity of that dead state; as a dead carcase, ready to putrify, is a loathsome sight, so are you loathsome in God's sight, and in the sight of all living Christians; your person and prayers are abominable to God, and you are an abomination to the just.

4. Be sensible that it is a destitute state. A dead body is destitute of the soul; and a dead soul is destitute of God. You are destitute of the holiness of God, the image of God, the grace of God, the favour of God; destitute of, and alienated from, the life of God; destitute of strength and ability to help yourself; yea, destitute of the will of God, that should help you. You are not so much as willing to be saved from your sin, from your carnal walk and carnal company: having no life, you have no will to be delivered from death, "I would have gathered you, but thou wouldst not. Why will ye die?"

[2.] Be restless in the use of the means of life, till you partake of this spiritual life, and having a life hid with Christ in God. What means, say you? Why, there is a hearing that is attended with life, "Hear, and your souls shall live;" there is a reading that is attended with life, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life;" there is a praying that is attended with life, "Your hearts shall live that seek the Lord;" there is also a coming, a way of coming to Christ, that is attended with life; for want whereof Christ complains, "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life."

O then, dead sinner, come to Christ for life, for eternal life is hid with him, "And he that hath the Son hath life."

Object. Why do you desire a dead man to come to Christ?

Ans. Because we do it in the name of the living God. The God that quickens the dead. Why did God command Ezekiel to prophesy to the dead and dry bones? Ezek. xxxvii. 4. Because God, in whose name he prophesied, could make the spirit of life to enter into them; therefore hear who speaks to you, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," John xi. 25.

Object. But what if he be not willing?

Ans. Why, indeed, I can assure you from his word, he is more willing to give life, than you are willing to ask it; and if you be made willing and ready to ask, he is willing and ready to give, John iv. 10, "If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldst have asked of him and he would have given thee living water, even the Spirit of life." Luke xii. 13, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Therefore, O sinner, as you would not die for ever, go away from this occasion to a secret corner, and ask of him this living water, this living Spirit, lest you never get such an occasion, or such an offer again.

2dly, We tender a word to you who are made alive in Christ, and have a life hid with Christ in God. I would essay this by offering you a few advices,

1. Give God the glory of your life, even though you have a life of death about you, Rom. vii. 24, 25, and chap. viii. 1, saying, I thank God, through Jesus Christ, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

2. Be much in the actions of spiritual life, much in the exercise

of spiritual graces, and in the performance of spiritual duties, "Be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," 1 Cor. v. 58.

3. Are you risen with Christ, and brought to life? Then, "Seek the things that are above, Col. iii. 1, 2. Set your affections on things above," there is your life hidden.

4. When you come under any decay or deadness, take still a faster hold of Christ, and live by faith on him, and you shall not want life, "He that hath the Son hath life," and the more the Son you have the more life.

5. Improve your life to the quickening of others, and, by your example, your walk, your talk, your whole deportment, let the world understand that you live a better life, and have better joys, than these vanities they take pleasure in.

6. Beware of every thing that may mar your spiritual life, or mar the comfort of it. Beware of spiritual pride; beware of carnal company; the dead and the living cannot be good company to one another; beware of unwatchfulness, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

But the main advice I designed was, that you maintain the comfort of your life, by rejoicing in Christ Jesus, so as the joy of the Lord may be your strength. This then is your duty and privilege both, to rejoice in the Lord, Phil. iii. 3, iv. 4. Rejoice in his love, that he hath loved you, and given himself for you. Rejoice in his merit and righteousness, as the ground of your access to, and acceptance with God. Rejoice in his strength and ability to save you to the uttermost, to subdue all your sins, to heal all your diseases, to supply all your wants. Rejoice in his covenant, as well ordered in all things, and sure. Rejoice in his victory over the world, and the God of this world; and over death, "Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and which always causeth us to triumph in Christ," Spiritual joy in the Lord, is a part of the life you have to live. And, finally, rejoice in this, that "Your life is hid with Christ in God."

Many topics of consolation I have already offered upon this; and shall close with some more. Many times have we spoken of God in Christ, but never so directly of Christ in God. The reason of the variation of that phrase in scripture flows from the close union betwixt God and Christ, as Christ says, I am in the Father, and the Father in me," that is, Christ is in God, and God is in

Christ. This ineffable union is both natural and federal, as Christ is both the Son of God, and the sealed of God; and hence arise these following grounds of strong consolation to believers:—

1. Is it not comfortable, that your life is hid with Christ, in the will and pleasure of God, who says, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?” Our salvation is owing to the will of God, and the will of Christ, who came to do the Father’s will with goodwill, saying, Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O my God. By which will we are sanctified and saved.”

2. Is it not matter of comfort, that your life is hid with Christ, in the glory of God, or in his design of glorifying all his excellencies and perfections to the highest, by giving and securing your life this way, that you might be to the praise of his glory, as it is said, Eph. i. 12? Your life cannot be lost any more than God will lose his glory; and so his loss will be infinitely greater than yours.

3. Is it not comfortable, that your life is hid with Christ in the unity and individuality of God, not only in the Trinity of persons, as I said above, but in the unity of the Godhead, the persons being distinct, yet not divided, but united in Christ? Christ speaks of the security of his people’s life and happiness, as in his Father’s hand, and his own hand, from this argument, That He and his Father are one, John x. 30; for, being one in essence, they are one in interest and design.

4. How comfortable is it, that your life is hid with Christ in the spirituality of God; or, as he is a Spirit, the Father of spirits, and the fountain of spiritual life, and of all spiritual blessings? Spirit and life are joined together, “My words, they are spirit, and they are life.” Our life could not be hid with Christ, if it were not in God as a spirit.

5. How glorious is the mystery, that our life is hid with Christ in the infinity of God, as he is an infinite spirit, whose understanding is infinite, and who is infinite, in his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and faithfulness! Though we are finite creatures, yet our happiness and life cannot lie in finite things, because they have bounds and limits; whereas, the cravings of the rational soul are boundless and insatiable. Again,

6. How comfortable is it, that your life is hid with Christ in the eternity and immortality of God! And therefore, says he, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” And hence we may say, “This God is our God for ever and ever.”

7. What comfort is here, that our life is hid in the immutability of God, or in God as he is the unchangeable God, who says, "I am the Lord, and change not; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed!" Hence, whatever changes come, sword, famine, and pestilence; come darkness, and desolation; come death and judgment; yet your life is secured in him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

8. O what comfort is here, your life is hid with Christ in the invisibility of God; or in God, as he is the invisible God! Things visible and temporal are transient and vanishing; but things invisible and unseen are durable and permanent: therefore, says the apostle, "We look not to the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 18. The more we live upon the invisible God, the more we out-live all the visible turnings of time, and master all the difficulties of our way, and overcome all adversaries and adversities, were it the wrath of men and devils: hence it is said of Moses, "He endured as seeing him who is invisible," Heb. xi. 27.

9. Is it not also good and comfortable, that your life is hid with Christ in the omnipresence and omniscience of God, as well as in the omnipotent power, as I said formerly? It is hid with Christ in the God that is everywhere present; and therefore says, "Lo, I am with you always; Do not I fill heaven and earth?" Wherever you go, I will go with you, were it through fire and water; wherever you dwell, I will dwell. He who inhabiteth eternity, dwells everywhere, and can be with his people, in a fiery furnace, in a lion's den, in a whale's belly, in a dungeon; and he will always know their case, and hear their cry, and bottle their tears, and hearken to their most secret sighs and groans, because he is the omniscient God.

10. In a word, O how comfortable is it, that your life is hid in the very life and being of God! For, Christ is in God, and God is in Christ; "I am in the Father, and the Father in me:" their life is wrapt together, and your life is wrapt in with theirs. O what is this; You will never reach to the bottom of this cup of consolation: here is a depth you may dive in to eternity.

A life hid with Christ in God, has all these things, and infinitely more than I can tell, included in it: all the springs of everlasting comfort are here, and that on four accounts.

(1.) Because Christ himself is God, equal with the Father and Spirit, in power and glory : and therefore has life in himself, and can quicken whom he will, John v. 21, 26.

(2.) Because, as Mediator, God-man, he is fully furnished to quicken his members ; for “ In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” Col. ii. 9.

(3.) Because this stock of life he has, is communicative ; hence it is said, “ Of his fulness have all we received,” John i. 16. He got it that he might give it out to dead sinners ; for, “ He is the bread that came down from heaven, and giveth life to the world,” John vi. 35.

(4.) Because you who are believers are, by faith, united to the fountain of life, and to the Lord of life, who says, “ Because I live, ye shall live also. Your life is hid with Christ in God.”

O then, sirs, go away rejoicing in the life you have ; not merely in the life you have handed to you, or communicate, which is but a filling of the vessel ; but mainly in the life you have secured for you, and hid with Christ in God : for, this is the fulness of the fountain. Bless God for what is handed to you : this may be the object of spiritual sense and experience ; here you taste that God is gracious ; but glory in what you have hid and secured for you ; for, this is the object of faith, which you may always live upon, by believing that he who is your life is Christ in God, even when you cannot feel him to be Christ in you : and thus you shall live by faith upon the fountain of life, even when the streams of sensible enjoyments are dried up ; and this ye shall be always able to do, so long as you believe that “ Your life is hid with Christ in God.”

SERMON LXXXII.

HEAVEN POSED AND PRESSED WITH QUESTIONS AND DEMANDS ;
OR, FAITH'S FREEDOM WITH GOD WARRANTED.¹

“ Thus saith the Lord, the holy One of Israel and his Maker, Ask me things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the works of my hands, command ye me.”
—Isa. xlv. 11.

THEY that truly seek Jesus who was crucified,² have liberty and allowance to seek any thing that is agreeable to the will of God, and

(1) This Sermon was preached at Glasgow, on Monday, July 21st, 1746, after the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered there : And enlarged at Burnt-island, on Monday 28th of the same month, after an occasion of the same nature there.

(2.) Which was the subject of the Action-sermon preached the preceding day, by the Rev. Mr. FISHER.

that is promised in the new covenant. The ground of this liberty and freedom that God allows his people, is the righteousness of Christ,¹ which is the ground of justification before God, God is so well-pleased for this righteousness's sake, that all who lay hold upon it are allowed the greatest freedom with God; such as this, "Ask me of things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the works of my hands, command ye me."

From the beginning to the 9th verse of this chapter, we have an historical account of God's delivering Israel from their captivity, by the hand of Cyrus, an eminent type of Christ, our great and glorious Deliverer. From the 9th verse and downward to the text, we have God asserting his sovereign authority over all the rational world, and thereupon challenging their submission to him, and also claiming employment at their hand, such as is spoken of in this verse.

We may therein observe two things, 1. The employment that God challenges. And, 2. The authority by which he doth so.

1. We have here the employment which God challengeth: it is wonderful employment; "Ask me, command ye me. Ask me things to come:" consult my word, my prophets and their prophecies, with reference to these things; for, "Things to come (so far as they are revealed) belong to us, and to our children." And *command ye me*; I present myself, as it were, at your service; and you are allowed, by faith and prayer, to use such freedom and liberty as if I were at your command. Here is, indeed, a wonderful thing; the Great God commanding us to command him!

Again, the matter about which the employment here is challenged, is concerning his sons, and the works of his hands: his church, his children, which are the special works of his hand, and wherein he is more concerned than any thing else in all the world. It is as if he had said, If any thing trouble you concerning yourselves, or any other of my children, directly or indirectly, so as you are puzzled and diffculted therewith, then come and put the question to me, and I will satisfy you; and if you would have any thing done for you, or any of my children, come and put it upon me, and put me to it, as confidently as if you could command me.

I know some read this text with an interrogation, as carrying

(1.) Which was the subject of the sermon delivered immediately before this, by our author's brother, the Rev. Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE.

on the proof in verses 9th and 10th, as if the meaning were, *Are you so bold as to ask me concerning things to come? Or, dare you be so impudent as to command me concerning the works of my hands? Will you prescribe to me?* But with the current of interpreters, we take the words in the former sense, as our translators also have done, viz., God's calling here for employment at his people's hand. Though God doth not allow us to strive with him by sin and unbelief; yet now he here tells us, how we may wrestle with him by faith and prayer, for all things, for which he said he would be enquired of by the house of Israel.

2. We have the authority by which this employment is challenged: "Thus saith the Lord, the holy One of Israel and his Maker." He challenges this employment; he calleth us to this freedom by his own lawful authority: (1.) As he is the sovereign Lord, the great JEHOVAH. (2.) As he is the holy One of Israel, our covenanted God. Yea, (3.) As he is our Maker, who made us and not we ourselves.

I enlarge not upon the farther explication. My purpose is to speak a little to the following doctrine, namely:—

That such is the unspeakable condescension of God in Christ, that he not only allows his people, but charges them, in all regular ways, to pose him with their questions, and press him with their commands.

In the prosecuting of this subject, we propose, through divine aid, to essay the following things:—

- I. To confirm the doctrine.
- II. To touch at some of these questions that he allows us to ask him concerning his sons, and the work of his hands.
- III. To shew how and wherein he allows us to press him with our commands.
- IV. To give some reasons of the doctrine.
- V. Make application of the whole subject.

I. We return to the confirmation of the doctrine, viz., That such is the condescension of God, as to allow poor sinners to pose him with questions, and to press him with commands: "Ask ye me; command ye me." No creature durst have spoke in this language, unless God

himself had put it in our mouth. And that God condescends this way may be proved from these several steps of divine condescension I shall mention.

1. Such is the condescension of God, that he allows people to cry to him, and encourages them with a promise that he will answer, and that he will be, as it were, at their command. Read that word in the same prophecy of Isaiah, chap. lviii. 9, "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here am I." Here I am, what is your command? What service have you for me? O the wonders of divine condescension, saying, Here I am to give what you want, and to do what you desire!

2. Such is the condescension of God, that he allows us not only to come to him and cry, but also to come boldly and confidently; Heb. iv. 16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need." Again,

3. This may be confirmed from the experience of those that have entreated the Lord, and he hath been entreated of them. Isaac is said to have entreated God for his wife, when she was barren, and the Lord was entreated of him. The disciples going to Emmaus, Christ made as if he would go away from them, but they constrained him, and he was entreated of them; yea, Manasseh, one of the greatest rakes that ever was, and one in compact with the devil, when he was caught in the thorns and briers of Babylon, and brought under afflictions, it is said, "He besought the Lord," and the Lord was entreated of him.

4. It may be confirmed by considering this. Such is the condescension of God, that he is content to be held, as it were, in the arms of his people; "The King is held in the galleries; I held him, and would not let him go," says the church. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," said Jacob. Yea, he subjects himself sometimes so far, as to let his servants hold his hands, when they are lifted up in justice, to avenge the highest treason; see a remarkable instance, Exod. xxxii. 10, 11, 12, 14, "Let me alone, that I may consume them," says God: No, says Moses; and so he fell an arguing with God, why his wrath should not wax hot, &c. When God is, as it were, upon horseback, ready to ride them all down with a vengeance, he gives his servants leave to hold the bridle. Again,

5. Such is the condescension of God, as that he grants to satisfy

his people sometimes about the great mystery of his providence, and the equity of his procedure, as in the case of Abraham, when God was about to destroy Sodom; "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?" Gen xviii. 17. And, O what wonderful freedom did Abraham use with reference to Sodom and Gomorrah? "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? If there be fifty righteous there, wilt thou destroy it?" No, says God. If there be forty-five, wilt thou not spare them? Yes. Then he uses more boldness yet, and comes down by degrees, till he comes to ten; if there be ten righteous persons in Sodom, wilt thou spare it for their sakes? Yes, says God, ver. 22-33. God continues granting as long as Abraham continues seeking. Abraham thought shame to go farther down; but it seems, if there had been but one good person among them all, Abraham might have got Sodom delivered for that person's sake; however, you see, he satisfies him to the full concerning the equity of his judgment, as far as he demands.

6. Such is the condescension of God, that he is pleased to communicate the secret of his covenant to his people; "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," Psalm xxv. 14. He says to his disciples, "Ye are no more servants, but friends; the servants know not the master's will, but ye are friends; for whatsoever I have heard of the Father, that I make known to you," John xv. 15.

7. The condescension of Heaven is such, that he is pleased to allow, as it were, his affections to be ravished with the act of faith, or with the prayer of faith; "Thou hast ravished my heart." O! it is a wonderful word that Christ says to the church in the Song, chap. iv. 9, "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." And again, chap. vi. 5, "Turn away thine eyes from me; for thou hast overcome me." O! what is that! The Lord knows where our eyes are looking; he takes notice if you give but a kindly look towards him at his call; and if you give but a greedy look to him, you overcome him. One glance of the eye of faith has like a commanding influence; it commands salvation, as it were, to come out of God's hand; yea, such pleasure does he take in it, that he not only allows, but commands you thus to look; "Look to me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved: for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22.

8. Such is the condescension of God, as that he puts the keys of heaven into the hands of his people, that they may open the gates of heaven both for themselves and others; sometimes for

themselves, for he says, "Whatsoever you ask in faith, it shall be given you;" sometimes for others, as Samuel, by prayer, opened, as it were, the gates of heaven, and brought down rain from thence. "Ask of me things to come," &c.

9. Such is the condescension of God to his people, that he allows them to press him, even after a refusal; or after he seems, by harsh answers, to refuse their suits, yet he allows them to press him with their commands, with their affairs; as the woman you read of, Matth. xv. 22-28. When she was refused at first, and when she was told in effect, that she was not within his commission, "I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and then rejected like a dog; yet she presseth forward, presseth even after a refusal, and this was so acceptable to God that you see how he commends her faith, "Great is thy faith, O woman; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And, in a word,

10. Such is the condescension of God, that he allows poor sinners to come into his bosom with their polluted feet; "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me, saith the Lord," Jer. iii. 1. Unbelief would say, Oh! how can I make so bold as to go in, as it were, into the bosom of God; stay till I get my feet washed? No; he allows us to come with our foul feet, that he may wash us himself; "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." It is the language of the unbelieving legal heart, we may not come to Christ till so and so qualified; let me be so and so well adorned, as it were, like a bride, and get on robes to deck me like a queen, and then, perhaps, I may be reckoned a fit match for him. But, O proud sinner, this pride must come down; God condescends to wash you, and do not you take his work out of his hand: it will not do; he allows you to come even into his bosom, polluted and defiled as you are. Say not, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man;" but rather say, Lord come to me, for I am a sinful creature. By these and the like instances, you may see the doctrine confirmed. I go on,

II. To the second thing proposed, namely, To touch at some of these questions, that he allows us to ask him concerning his sons, and the work of his hands. Here we shall, 1. Condescend on a few questions he allows us to ask at him. 2. Propound a variety of such as he allows us to ask him concerning his sons, and the work of his hands.

1st, We are to condescend on a few of these questions he permits us to ask at him,

1. The Lord allows us to come to him, and ask him, Where he dwells? As in John i. 38, "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" This is a question that concerns his sons, his children; for their language many times is, "O that I knew where I might find him!" Job xxiii. 3. God complains of people, that they do not ask this question, Job xxxv. 10, "None say, Where is God my maker, that giveth songs in the night?" Jer. ii. 8, "The priests said not, Where is the Lord?" It is a question that the church proposeth, Song i. 7, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon." And the Lord answers the question, ver. 8, "If thou knowest not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." And we find afterward, the church was in case to tell where he was, and where he feeds; "My Beloved feedeth among the lilies, until the day break, and the shadows fly away," chap. ii. 16, 17. She is in case to tell where he dwelleth; "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice, cause me to hear it," chap. viii. 13.

2. He allows us to come to him with such a question as that, not only, where he is? but who he is? Isa. lxiii. 1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" &c. This is a question also that concerns his sons, his children. They need further discoveries of his name and glory; they want to know more and more of him, Who he is? And he is ready to answer the question in this manner, "I am he that speaketh righteousness, mighty to save, &c. I am the way, the truth, and the life; I am the resurrection and the life." Many ways does he satisfy them with reference to this question; sometimes at a communion table he makes himself known to them in the breaking of bread.

3. It is lawful to ask him humbly, What hour of the night it is in Zion? Isa. xxi. 11, saying, "Watchman, what of the night?" We may go with it to the chief Watchman, that slumbers not, nor sleeps: It is a question that concerns his sons, his church and children, after a long night of sin and security, to know if it be not high time for people to be raised and awakened out of sleep and security, and to know if there be any hopes of the day dawning. The Lord answers this question by his watchmen, saying, "The morning comes, and also the night; if you will inquire, inquire ye; return, come." And this answer hath both a prediction and a direction in it. The prediction is, "The morning

cometh, and also the night." Both a bright morning of peace and comfort, and a black evening of crosses and calamities, may be expected in succession: after a morning of gospel-light, we may prepare for an evening of darkness. The direction is, "If ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come." Be inquisitive persons; go on in your inquiry: "Ask me things to come, concerning my sons;" and be penitent believers: "Return, come." Repentance here required, is a turning from sin to God, through Christ, by faith: "Return, come." It is not time to delay; no time to trifle; the night is coming on, the night of trouble, the night of trial, the night of death. If it be asked, What hour of the night it is with us in Scotland, may it not be said, It is the dead hour of the night? O what dead hearts, dead frames, dead preaching and praying, dead Sabbaths and sacraments! Is it not a night of division, wherein the anger of the Lord hath divided us? A night of delusion, wherein the darkness of error abounds? Gospel truths are trodden down, and the gospel way of salvation little known, even by some that are teachers of others. Therefore,

4. We may come to God, and ask him this question, Jer. xiv. 8, "O Hope of Israel, and Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" And, as it is, verse 19, "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? Hath thy soul loathed Zion? Why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us?" This is a question that concerneth his sons, when they are complaining before him, Alas, wherefore is the Lord such a stranger to me, and to the land? Wherefore is he angry at the prayers of his people? And whence are these tokens of his anger? Now, the Lord gives a suitable answer to this question, when he says, "Behold his hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated betwixt you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear," Isa. lix. 1, 2.

5. He allows us to come to him with another question, Amos vii. 2, "Lord, by whom shall Jacob arise, when he is small?" This is a question that concerns his sons, and the works of his hands, especially when his work seems to be brought under any decay: "By whom shall Jacob arise?" And he will answer the question, by saying, Isa. xiv. 1, "The Lord will have mercy on Jacob." And, Isa. x. 21, "A remnant shall return, even the remnant of

Jacob, to the mighty God ;" that a " Redeemer shall come out of Zion, and turn away transgression from Jacob," Isa. lix. 20 ; Rom. xi. 26. " O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself ! but in me is thy help," Hosea xiii. 9. It is only by the God of Jacob, that Jacob shall arise.

6. He allows us to come to him with such a question as that, and to ask him, When will he come ? As in Psalm ci. 2, " O when wilt thou come unto me ? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot ? Why so long ?" &c. This is a question also that concerns his sons, and the work of his hands. They are oft times solicitous to know when he will come ; but the Lord's answer to the question is, as in Hab. ii. 3, " The vision is for an appointed time ; but at the end it shall speak, and not lie : though it tarry, wait for it ; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." God hath bound himself to accomplish his promises, but not to our time of it ; therefore, we are to wait upon a promising God. Again,

7. He allows us to put to him such a question as that, Psalm lxxxv. 6, " Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee ?" This is a question that concerns his sons and children under their lamentable decays. And his answer to such a question may be expected to this purpose : " I will be as the dew to Israel, Hos. xiv. 5. They that dwell under his shadow they shall return, and revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, and shoot forth their roots as Lebanon ;" or, as it is, chap. iv. 2, " After two days he will revive us ; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." By virtue of Christ's resurrection shall dead and dry bones be revived.

8. He allows us to come to him with such a question as that, Psalm lxxxix. 46, " How long, Lord, wilt thou hide thyself for ever ? Shall thy wrath burn like fire ?" And I have mine eye here upon the four *how longs* of the Psalmist, Psalm xlii. 1, 2. He allows them to come to him with their *how longs*, and he is ready to satisfy the longing soul. His answer many times is like that of the angel spoke of, Zech. i. 12, 13, " The Lord answers with kind words, saying, For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather," &c. Isaiah vii. 8.

9. It is a question of great concern he allows sinners to come to him with, viz., " O what shall I do to be saved ?" And again, " Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?" Acts ix. 6. It concerns all his people to know what and how to do ; and they may expect

his answer, according to that promise, Isa. xxx. 21, "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." When you turn to the right hand, or to the left, and when Christ says, "I am the way," what should you do but come to him, and walk in him? "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent."

10. There is another question he allows them to put to him, and that is, "Lord, what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" Josh. vii. 9. It is said from verse 8, "O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs upon their enemies? For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth; And what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" Oh, how will thy name be dishonoured! What wilt thou do for the honour of thy great name? When his people come by faith, and pose him with a question to this purpose, what will be his answer? It is a question that concerns his sons mightily; this is their great argument in pleading with God for any blessing, That he would do for his great name's sake; and his answer is, Ezek. xxxvi. 21, 22, "I had pity for mine holy name," &c. "Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake will I defer my anger," Isa. xlvi. 9. And, O it is a great matter to get hold of God's name! We ought always to take hold of it; they that urge him with his name, may ask what they will. The Lord learns his people to make his holy name their plea, saying, "Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, yet do thou for thy name's sake." They that learn the way of interesting the name of God in their favours, and who, if they want grace, are seeking it for his name's sake; and, if they want more grace, are seeking it for his name's sake; and, if they want pardon, are seeking it for his name's sake; O it is a promising thing! God would not let you lean upon his bosom in this manner, if he had not loved you with an everlasting love. An hypocrite or legalist may fall about duties, and think thereupon that God loves him, and is pleased with him; but if God loves you, he will stop your mouth, Rom. iii. 19, and make you, on your bended knees, to know and acknowledge that there is no reason for his love, but in his own bosom; nay, that there is all reason against it; and so plead only for his own name and glory's sake; and then you build upon a rock higher than all the powers of darkness, when your heart rests here. Being solidly persuaded of this,

that if God will glorify his name, in saving you, none will be so much beholden to free grace, making the glory of his great name your plea, your hope, your resting place. This is a sign that you are lying in the lap of God's love. What will he not do for his name? This obliges him to work for his own sake, Ezek. xx., compare verses 6, 14, 22, 24. He cannot work against himself.

In a word, you may go through all you can find in the Bible, that the children of God can ask in faith concerning his sons, and the work of his hands, and may humbly put them to him; and whatever answer you can find in the Bible to them, that is God's answer to you that ask him duly. Again,

2dly, Questions concerning things to come, may be put to the Lord. He allows you to ask him of things to come, concerning his sons, not excluding yourselves. And to this purpose, such questions may be put as follow:—

Would you ask, "O what is to come of a poor creature, that is sensible of great guiltiness, and is oppressed with the sense thereof, and apprehensive of the great wrath of God upon the account of his great sins and innumerable provocations, and dare not so much as think that God will have mercy on him?" Alas! what is to become of such a one? God's answer is, I, even I, am he that blotteth out your iniquities and your transgressions, for my own name's sake; I will be merciful to your unrighteousness; your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more."

Again, do you ask, "What will become of a poor soul, sensible of its great and gross ignorance, saying, "I have been brought to God's school, and he hath been at much pains with me; and yet I am grossly ignorant of God, and the things of God; and blind like a mole?" God's answer is, "I will teach you to profit. They shall be all taught of God." Let such a soul plead that promise, "It is written in the prophets, They shall all be taught of God: whosoever, therefore, hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to the Son."

Would you ask, "What will become of a poor soul, that sees its infinite distance from God, and fears it shall never be brought near unto him?" O! his answer is, That Jesus Christ hath brought down the middle wall of partition betwixt God and you; and by his death, "The vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom," that you may have boldness to enter into the holiest by his blood.

Would you ask, "What will become of a poor sinner, crossed with the power of sin, and of indwelling corruption, so as he fears hell will be his portion?" God's answer is, "I will subdue your iniquities. Sin shall not have dominion over you." Let such believe and embrace the promise of divine mercy through Christ: the promise of the Spirit, for sanctification; and take God's word for it, and they are safe.

Would you ask, "Alas! what will become of a poor soul, that is destitute of all good things, that finds its want of God, and Christ, and holiness; and want of every thing that is good; and made up of wants, both temporal and spiritual?" Why, his answer is, "The young lion shall want, and suffer hunger; but they that fear the Lord, shall want no good thing." But, oh! there is something in that word, say you, that cuts off my relation to such a promise; it is conditional to these who fear the Lord; and I am none of these. But I advise you, whenever you find such a promise, take hold of it as your own; and if you find a want of the condition, take hold of Christ for the condition, and take him and the promise both, and there will be no fear.

Would you ask again, "What will become of a poor impotent creature, that hath no ability to perform any duty, or resist any temptation?" God's answer is, that "He will give power to the faint; and to them that hath no might, he increaseth strength. My grace is sufficient for you; my strength shall be perfected in your weakness." Rest on his word, and it shall be well with you.

Do you ask again, "What will become of a poor tempted soul? The fiery darts of Satan are flying about my ears, and I am not in ease to resist the darts of the enemy." The answer that God gives, is, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Therefore, O! rest on his word; and there is no fear of you.

Again, do you ask, "What will become of a poor deserted creature? I find God hiding his face; I have not met with him at this occasion; the Lord hides; he is far from me: what will become of such an one?" God's answer is, "Though weeping endureth for a night, joy shall come in the morning." I cannot stand on all these, so as to cite every chapter and verse; but all that know the scripture, will know scripture language when they hear it.

Again, do you ask, "What will become of such a poor afflicted one as I am, surrounded with waves on all hands, or inward and

outward troubles : Oh ! what will become of me ?" God's answer is, Isaiah liv. 11, " O ! thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted ; behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires," &c. Precious things are there promised ; and if you depend upon a promising God, your tribulation will end in a kingdom : " Through much tribulation, we enter into the kingdom of heaven."

But would you ask this question, " Oh ! what is to become of one that finds such a power of sin taking place, as that he fears he will be a cast-away, and become just a reproach to the way of the Lord ?" God's answer is, " I will make an everlasting covenant with you, that I will not turn away from you, to do you good ; I will put my fear into your hearts, and ye shall not depart from me."

Oh ! say you, " What will become of one that is terrified at the king of terrors ? What will become of me at death ?" What is God's answer ? " O death ! I will be thy plague. O grave ! I will be thy destruction : I will ransom thee from the power of the grave. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Death shall be swallowed up in victory." Just rest upon his word, and there will be no fear.

Again, would you ask, " What will become of one that is black like hell, that hath just the blackness of the devil upon him, and that is all deformed and defiled with the smoke of the bottomless pit ?" Oh ! a poor soul sighing, and asking such a question, What does God say to it ? He says, " Though thou hast lain among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver ; and her feathers with yellow gold ; 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."

Would you ask, " What will become of one that hath no will to come to Christ, but finds a power of enmity and ill-will prevailing ?" Why, if your enmity be your disease that you would have healed, God's answer is, " Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." It is good to see your enmity. Others think they love Christ well enough, who are yet in the gall of bitterness.

Would you ask, " What will become of one whose heart is the most hardened heart in all the world ; harder than a stone, so as nothing can break it, nothing can touch or affect it ?" God's answer is, " That he is able, out of these very stones, to raise up children to Abraham. I will take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of

flesh." O take him at his word, and his word shall take effect upon you.

Well, are these your questions? and are you satisfied with God's answers? Have you any other sort of questions to ask?

Do you ask, "What will become of such and such a wicked man, that is an enemy to the cause of God, and to the King of Zion?" Why, what says God of the wicked? His answer is, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." What says he of those who go on in their sin? Why, he saith, "He will wound the head of the wicked, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses."

Do you ask, "What will become of the enemies of Zion, the church's adversaries?" Why, God's answer is, "The enemies of the Lord shall become as the fat of rams; they shall consume into smoke, they shall consume away."

Again, would you ask the question, "What will become of Zion itself, the city of our solemnities? What will become of the work of God, his witnessing work, covenanting work among the hands of professed friends, and of reformation-work, when the glorious beauty thereof is as a fading flower in a day of snares, temptations, and divisions, and dividing questions, among them?" O! where shall we expect an answer, but just from that God who says, "That he hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it:" even this, That he is the Founder, and will be the Builder; and who says, "When he appears in his glory, he will build up Zion." We may rest upon what he hath said, that "The hand of Zerubbabel, that hath laid the foundation, his hand also must finish it." Time would fail me to propose all the questions that God condescends to answer in his word. But thus you see some of these questions that he allows his people to pose him concerning his sons.

III. The third thing is, How, and wherein he allows us to command him: "Concerning the works of my hands, COMMAND ye me." This word holdeth forth such a depth of divine condescension, as we durst not have uttered, unless he had said it, "Command ye me;" he enjoins us to command him.

(1.) How may we command him? It is soon said, but not so soon done; for in one word, it is to be done by faith. Why, is it possible to command God? (Let us speak of it with reverence and wonder.) Yes, "All things are possible to him that believeth," Mark ix. 33, and so this thing among the rest. But how can faith

do this? Even because it engages the almighty power of God, and so sets God against himself, as it were, to overcome himself: thus the prayer of faith wrestles with God and prevails. How? Faith takes hold of such and such an attribute of God, and makes his own attributes to press him, and command him. For example,

Faith takes hold of the faithfulness of God who hath so and so promised. What, says faith, hast thou not promised this and that, and wilt thou not be as good as thy word? Hast thou not faithfulness for the girdle of thy loins? Are thou not a God of truth and veracity? Will the strength of Israel lie? No, no, says faith; it is not possible. And so faith puts God's own faithfulness on work to press upon him, and thus commands him.

So again, faith takes hold of the justice of God, that most dreadful attribute, which formerly was like hell to the poor sinful creature, when it thought upon it; but now the poor trembling soul comes to God and says to this purpose, Lord, I hear there is a ransom which thou hast found out; a ransom in the bloody sacrifice of a glorious Christ, which satisfies justice to the full; I have no hope of mercy, but only upon the account of this ransom; to this I fly for refuge; and thou hast declared that thou art well pleased for this righteousness' sake of Christ; his giving obedience to the death, in the room of such lost sinners as I am. Hath infinite justice any more to demand than this infinite ransom? No, says God; then, says faith, I look for salvation upon the score of justice as well as mercy; for, justice, thou canst not refuse to give it, since thou hast taken complete satisfaction of Christ my Surety. Thus the Lord is bound by his own justice and commanded.

Thus faith presses him by setting his own glorious perfections to press upon him, and so it commands him; and I assure you, there is nothing more pleasing to God than this all commanding faith; God loves to be commanded by it, and will not be pleased with any of you that will not by faith thus command him. Enoch, before his translation, had this testimony, that he pleased God. How? It was by faith; for, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God," Heb. xi. 5. As it is impossible to command him in any sense without faith, so it is impossible to please him, unless by faith ye thus command him. But,

(2.) Wherein does he allow himself to be commanded? Wherein does he enjoin us to command him? I answer in general, We may command him in all things wherein he can be serviceable

to us, according to his promise. Whatever be in God that can do you service, ye may command it. As,

1. Have you any service for his power? He allows you to press his power to your service; you may command it. Are you not by nature without strength, man, woman; without strength to believe, strength to repent, strength to pray, strength to communicate; without strength to do anything acceptable to God? Now, poor impotent creature, I assure you, that the power and strength of God is at your service and command, if, under a sense of your own utter impotency, you will but give God any employment; and therefore, his call to every one of you is, Isa. xxvii. 5, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." Take hold of this strength, and say, Lord, dost thou offer thy power and strength to be at my service? I am sure, I have much service for it; and therefore, I accept of this power of thine to renew my corrupt nature, to subdue my strong lusts, to beat the devil out of his old quarters in me; I accept of this power to work grace in me, and to strengthen any grace thou hast wrought, and to fit me for my work and warfare in this wilderness. O give employment to this power of God, while he is telling you it is at command; or that, if you have ought ado with his power, you may freely command it.

2. Have you any service for the wisdom of God? You may command it. Are you poor, senseless creatures, as well as weak? Indeed, the natural man thinks he has wit enough: "Vain man would be wise, though he be born like a wild ass's colt." But you lost all your wisdom since your head was cracked with the fall: Christ who is offered to you, is the very wisdom of God; "In him dwelleth all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:" and this wisdom is communicable; therefore, pray for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; and employ his wisdom, saying, Lord, dost thou offer a poor fool thy wisdom to be at my service; I am sure I have much service for it, for I know not a step of my way unless wisdom lead me, I understand not a word of thy scripture unless wisdom teach me; if you would give this employment to the wisdom of God, it is at your service in that promise, Isa. xlii. 19, "I will bring the blind in a way that they know not, and in paths which they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Thus, if you have ought ado with his wisdom, you may command it.

3. Have you any service for the righteousness of God? You may command it; it is at your service in that promise, Isa. xlv. 12, 13, "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, and far from righteousness: behold, I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry: I will place my salvation in Zion for Israel my glory." If you saw God's law right, my friends, you would perceive such a perfection and spirituality in it, as that no man living can now fulfil it, and get righteousness and life by it. Now, the gospel tells you good news, namely, That perfect righteousness, answering all the demands and commands of the law, hath been wrought out by Christ, that this righteousness of Christ, is the righteousness of God, of him who is God as well as man, and a righteousness of God's providing and of God's accepting: the gospel tells you, that this righteousness of Christ, is freely and fully offered to all the hearers of the gospel; "To you is the word of this salvation sent;" we offer it to you all; this offer is the ordinary appointed means of faith, Rom. i. 16, "The gospel is the power of God to every one that believeth." Why? "Because therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith." If we could preach more of this righteousness, we might expect more of the power of God to go along with our preaching. You have but a poor trade of it, that are hunting after justification and acceptance with God by your own righteousness; if you seek it in the works of the law, you must still be doing, and never have done; yea, in this way you are but undoing yourselves, dishonouring Christ, frustrating the grace of God, and making your own justification both imperfect and impossible, for "By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified." Now, the perfect righteousness of God is in your offer; if you have any service for it, you may command it: O! wilt thou refuse it, poor, guilty soul, that hast nothing of thy own but filthy rags! Know you not that this was the ground of God's rejecting of the Jews, because they rejected the righteousness of God, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they would not submit to the righteousness of God. They thought it below them to be beholden to another for righteousness; they thought themselves good enough, and that they might make a shift to win to heaven by their own good works, good wishes, good desires, and endeavours. Now, if any here see the absolute need of this righteousness of God, you may command it; God is not holding it from you, but offering it

to you ; take it, and his blessing with it ; take it, and say, Lord, I have no righteousness of my own, nothing but guilt and sin ; but, seeing in the gospel offer thou dost exhibit this everlasting righteousness of Christ to be at the service of such a bankrupt ; I desire to look with disdain and abhorrence upon all my own righteousness in point of justification ; and I would not be found in it for a thousand worlds, but would be found in Christ, having his righteousness, which is by faith ; and I desire to say, “ In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” Thus, if you have ought ado with his righteousness, you may command it.

4. Have you any service for the Spirit of God ? You may command him. O sirs, have you no need of the Spirit to convince you, to comfort you, to sanctify you, and to seal you unto the day of redemption ? If you have any such employment for the Spirit, he is at your service in that promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, “ I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.” Accept of this promise of the spirit ; and he shall be in you as a well of water springing up to everlasting life. If you think you have need of the Spirit, then put God to his word. It is said of the Galatians, “ Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ? ” Importing that there is no way of receiving the Spirit but by the hearing of faith ; that is, by embracing the promise of the Spirit when you hear it made to you ; as when God says, “ 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,” &c., let your heart say, Amen, Lord, even so be it. Now, when you have the Spirit of God at your command, or at your service, what want you ? O ! blessed be God that ever there was a promise of the Spirit. As I know nothing more frequently and fully promised in the word than the Spirit of God ; so, I know nothing you can want if you have the Spirit. Do you want grace ? He is the Spirit of grace. Do you want faith ? He is the Spirit of faith. Do you want love ? He is the Spirit of love. Do you want holiness ? He is the Spirit of holiness. Do you want a heart to pray ? He is the Spirit of prayer and supplication. Now, welcome, poor soul, who wants all these things, to take the promised Spirit ; you have all these things at your command when you have the Spirit. Are you complaining you have a dead heart ? He is the Spirit of life. Have you a passionate spirit ? He is the Spirit of meekness. Have you little wit ? He is

the Spirit of wisdom. Are you a fool, and know not what to choose? He is the Spirit of counsel. Sit down and devise wants, and he hath names to answer them all.

Now, the Spirit of God, and all his grace, all his influences, and saving operations, are at your service, and at your command; and, if God's rich offers of grace have so far prevailed against your natural enmity, that your whole soul is content to take what he offers, it is your own; whosoever will, let him come and take all this grace freely, it is your own fault if you go from this without an ample supply this day. If you have ought to do with the Spirit, you may command him; you may have him as a Spirit of all grace.

5. What shall I say to sum up all? Have you any service for God himself? You may command him; he offers himself to be at your service, in that promise, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people," Heb. viii. 10. Some will, perhaps, make other terms to you in God's covenant, and tell you, if you be his people, he will be your God, but that is not the gospel; the gospel says not, I will if ye will; but it is absolute and sovereign, I will and ye shall; "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." This covenant does not only give life upon the terms of believing, but it gives, it promises faith and believing also; "Thy people shall be willing: Ye shall be my people." Let the most unworthy wretch in the world who hears this gospel, say, Amen, Lord, be it so as thou sayest; and if you cannot say Amen, beg that God would help you to say it.—I know no terms or conditions on your part, but to consent that God may work in you all the terms and conditions you want. If I understand the gospel at all, sirs, I understand this, that I cannot go as low with the terms of the gospel as Christ allows; Christ will go lower, and seek less qualifications than we can do for our hearts. If ever some of us got good of the gospel, God behaved to reach as low as hell to take us up.

Well, all of you that think this promise can do you any service, take it to you, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." This is the sum of God's covenant; and if you take hold of it, and welcome these news, you shall be happy in time and through eternity; for God's word of grace hath taken you by the heart.

Now, thus I have told you, in a few particulars, wherein God

allows you to command him. I might expatiate here, and tell you, that as far as the promises go, which you are called to embrace, God and all his attributes, all his perfections, all his fulness, is at your service; Christ and all his offices, purchase, blood, merit, and grace, is at your service to make use of, as you need them: when you command God, you command all; and he commands you to press him, and put him to it; "Concerning the works of my hands, command ye me." You may put him to it concerning yourselves: are ye not the work of his hands? And you may put him to it concerning his church and people; and press him with what he hath promised to them. Where God hath bound himself voluntarily out of love, do not ye loose him by unbelief; but receive his gracious promise, and take him bound as he offers himself: believe his promise, and engagements by promise; and thus you will set a seal to his truth and faithfulness. But I come now,

IV. To the fourth thing in the general method, viz. The reasons of the doctrine, That God allows us, yea, with all authority enjoins us, to pose him with our questions, and press him with our commands. Here I would essay these three things. 1. Give reasons why he allows us to pose him with questions. 2. Why he allows us to press him with commands. 3. Why he not only allows, but with all authority enjoins, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, the holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask of me things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the works of my hands, command ye me."

1st, Why doth he allow us to pose him with questions? To this we reply,

1. Because he knows people are ready to consult hell, and their own hearts, when they should consult God; and he knows, that when we consult the devil, or our own hearts, we get but a desperate answer from the devil, and a deceitful answer from our own hearts, and neither of the two to our advantage. The proof of this reason is couched up, Isa. xlv. 25, "He frustrateth the tokens of liars, and makes diviners mad, that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish," &c. We are ready to believe a lie rather than God's truth: therefore he allows us to ask him.

2. He allows us to ask him questions, and pose him with them, because our questions are very defective, both for matter and manner, and are very subject to be mistaken; and God only under-

stands them : Yea, such is the exercise upon the spirit of his people sometimes, that many of their questions are incommunicable to any other but God himself. A child of God will go and ask his heavenly Father a question, that he will not ask the nearest friend in the world. Now, their questions being unintelligible to others, and incommunicable to others ; therefore, God allows them to ask him.

3. He allows us to pose him with our questions, because many of them are unanswerable by any other but God himself. All the wit in the world cannot answer some questions that concern God's people, in a satisfactory way ; and I have little skill of that Christian, that is not exercised now and then with some doubts, that all the ministers in the world cannot answer. Thus you have the reasons, why we are to pose him with our questions.

2dly, Why, in condescension, he allows us to press him with our commands ; "Command ye me." God was at vast pains, in the former verse, to make the people know their own place, so as not to strive with him ; and here he obtests them, in their own place, to be bold with him : "Command ye me." And, indeed, a child of God is never helped to more boldness in pleading with God than when his heart hath been brought, by an awful impression of divine sovereignty, to know his own room, his infinite distance from God. Why doth he allow us to press him with our commands, and with all our adoes ? Why,

1. His allowing us to press him thus, flows from the full ben-sail of his own love ; for, "His delights were with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 31. And therefore, he delights to be pressed and employed by them. His kindness makes him love to have men courting his kindness.

2. Because he knows what jealous spirits and unbelieving hearts we have ; therefore he allows us to press him, and put him to it. Through unbelief we are ever ready to jealous that God is not in earnest with us ; we are apt to think, that God, with Naph-tali, is cheating us with goodly words. We look upon his offers as idle tales, and believe them not ; therefore, he enjoins us to press him so hard, as if we would command ; for he knows that no less than this will satisfy our incredulous hearts concerning his kindness ; and hardly this will do it.

3. He calls us to press him, that he may thus make all unbelievers inexcusable. They that reject such condescending offers of

grace, shall have heaven and earth, and their own consciences, to witness against the corruption and enmity of their own hearts, when such amazing tenders of grace are rejected: this testifies that nothing but the rebellious obstinacy of your own will is your ruin; though, in the meantime, by these condescending offers, he draws out the heart-love of his chosen to himself. Thus you have the reasons why he allows us to press him with our commands.

3dly, Why does he not only allow, but with all authority enjoin us to pose him and press him thus, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, the holy One of Israel and his Maker, Ask me of things to come, concerning my sons and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me?" Where you see he charges us by his sovereignty, as he is the Lord; by his particular relation to the church, as he is the holy One of Israel; and by his general relation to all, as he is our Maker, he charges us to ask him, and command him. Why does he interpose his authority for this effect?

1. Because he knows people are averse from doing it. "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" and much of this enmity remains even in the hearts of the regenerate, though their aversion from coming to him may many times be covered with a mask of humility; they may be jealous of their allowance, and doubt if God allows them to be free with him, because they are conscious of their own naughtiness.

2. He authoritatively enjoins it, because he knows that his people are hopeless and desperate many times, as to several things that concern them; therefore he enjoins them to ask him, and command him concerning these things. And the reason why they are oft-times desperate and hopeless, is because they find that formerly they have had so many fruitless vows, fruitless resolutions, fruitless desires, fruitless prayers, that sense and reason make them think, "Why should we wait on the Lord any longer?" Therefore, that faith may not lose its feet in fruitless despair, he interposes his authority to stir them up again. And therefore,

3. He charges us with all authority, that we come to him, and employ him with all confidence, that we may hope against hope, and believe against unbelief; seeing he charges us as he is the Lord, the holy One of Israel, and his Maker.

He takes three titles or designations here to himself, because of three sorts of persons he hath to deal with.

(1.) There are some that know him by his name JEHOVAH,

the Lord ; the great Sovereign, whose will is a law ; though they dare not say they have any interest in him. To such he saith, " Thus saith the Lord, Ask me things to come, and command me."

(2.) There are some that know him to be the *holy One of Israel* ; a God in covenant with Christ, and in him with them, to make them holy and happy ; and a God in covenant with Israel, to be their Saviour and Sanctifier. To these that know him thus, he says, " Thus saith the holy One of Israel, Ask me, command me."

(3.) There are some that dare say no more of God, and their knowledge of him, but that he is their Maker, the God that made them : To such he says, " Thus saith the Lord, his Maker, Ask me, and command me ;" ye that know him to be the Lord, ye that know him to be the holy One of Israel, ye that know no more of him, but that he is your Maker, he obtests and charges you, by all that he is in himself, by all his relations to you, and interests in you, that you boldly credit him with all your concerns, and ask him of your doubts, and command him with your adoes. So much for the doctrinal part. I come now,

V. To the fifth thing, which was the application, in an use of information, caution, trial, and exhortation.

1st, For information. Is it so, That God allows and commands us thus to pose him, and press him ? Then,

1. See the wonderful grace, condescension, and good-will of God towards the children of men : " He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ;" and therefore he not only makes a most rich and glorious offer of Christ, and all his fulness to us, but he calls and commands us to ask him, and press him : that we may know he is in earnest with us in his offers, he charges us to be in earnest with him in our suits, and to force all needful blessings out of his hand : " The kingdom of heaven suffers by violence, and the violent take it by force." This holy violence is most pleasing to God. You are not straitened in God, for the external revelation of his will ; but miserably straitened in your bowels through the internal corruption of your wills.

2. Hence I infer, that the children of God may come to him with boldness, and can never be at a loss what to do in their straits, as long as in all doubts they may ask him, and in all their difficulties they may command him. " It is below a Roman spirit, said one, to say, I am undone, as long as Cæsar lives : " much more is it below a child of God to say, I am undone as long as Christ lives ;

and as long as he may ask and command what he will, or rather what he needs. He can never be in such a strait, but he may know what to do, and where to go, "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." We may go to him, and get a word for our relief, whatever is the matter with us. It was said of Luther, That, in prayer, he got what he pleased from God; and there is something of this power with God, that every believer hath, according to that word, Job xxii. 27, 28, "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee; and thou shalt pay thy vows: thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall also be established to thee; and the light shall shine upon thy ways." I mind a word of Tertullian, *Cælum tundimus et misericordiam extorquemus*: we knock at heaven, and the merciful heart of God flies open, which we bring away with us.

3. If God allows us to pose him with our questions, then hence I infer, that well may we allow him to pose us with his questions; if we may ask God questions with all humility, then God may ask us questions with all authority. You will say, What questions does God ask of him? There are some questions he is asking at the wicked; some he is asking at the godly.

(1.) I will tell you a question or two that he is asking at the wicked, who live in the contempt of all his rich offers of grace. He asks you, "O fools, when will you be wise?" (For gaining of time, I shall not cite all the scriptures I will mention). He asks you, "How long will ye love vanity, and follow after leasing? How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?" Prov. i. 21. He asks you, "O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?" He is asking you, O fallen sinner, saying, "Adam, where art thou?" What a sinful miserable state art thou now into? He is asking you, O unconverted soul, "What concord hath Christ with Belial? What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? Can two walk together except they be agreed?" You have no communion with God in that state. He asks you, O liar and swearer, "What shall be given to thee, thou false tongue?" Will it not be sharp arrows of the mighty, and coals of juniper, if thou repentest not? He asks you, O debauched drunkard, "Who hath woe, who hath redness of eyes, who hath sorrow?" Is it not they that tarry long at the wine? He asks you, O whoremonger, adulterer, Sabbath-breaker, and otherwise profane persons, "What fruit had you in these things whereof ye are now ashamed?" He

asks you, O rebellious sinner, "How oft would I have gathered you, as a hen doth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" He asks you, O ungrateful sinner, "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise? What iniquity have you found in me, that ye have departed far from me?" He asks you, O self-justifying sinner, "Why perceivest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thine own? For there is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, yet are not washen from their iniquities." He asks you, O idle sinner, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" &c. He asks, O hypocrite and formalist, "When you fasted, did you at all fast unto me? When you did eat and drink, did you not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" Was it not for yourselves, and not for my honour? "If I be a Father, where is my honour? If I be a Master, where is my fear?" He asks you, O lukewarm Gallio, that cares for none of these things, standing, as it were, betwixt heaven and hell, in a suspense; he asks you, "How long will ye halt betwixt two opinions? If God be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him." He asks you all, impenitent Christless sinners, "What will ye do in the day of visitation, in the desolation that shall come from far? To whom will ye fly for help? and where will ye leave your glory? How shall ye escape the damnation of hell? How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?" See what answer you give to these questions that God is asking you, and which he asks for your conviction, that ye may turn at his reproof, and answer with a "Behold, we are vile!" and, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." If you will not think of answering these questions thus now, I will tell you what God will say, "Because I called, and ye would not answer; the time cometh, when ye shall call, and I will not answer; yea, I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolations, and your destruction as a whirlwind," Prov. i. 23, &c.

(2.) I will tell you a question or two that God is asking his people; for as they ask him, so he asks them, time about, as it were. He asks you, O doubting believer, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" What reason have you to doubt of my love, and to doubt of my kindness? He asks you, O strong believer, "Who made thee to differ? By grace ye are what ye are." He asks you, O secure believer, "What, could you not

watch with me one hour? Is this your kindness to your friends?" He asks you, O careless believer, "What do you more than others?" Should you not study to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect? "Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, to end in the flesh?" He asks you, O untender believer, that takes not so much heed to your walk before the world as you ought, his question is, "Ought you not to walk in the fear of the Lord, because of the reproach of the heathen your enemies?" Will you cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme? Should not the love of Christ constrain you? He asks you, O dark believer, of little knowledge, "Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" Might you not by this time have been teachers, yet, "You need to be taught what are the first principles of the oracles of God?" He asks you, O legal believer, that art seeking comfort in your duties more than in Christ, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" For much of this legal temper is even in the best, seeking comfort in their own duties, privileges, attainments, enlargements, and experiences, more than in Christ. His question to you is, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Are you not married to Christ, and so your old husband, the law, is dead? "We are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, and married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God," Rom. vii. 4. Should you not seek your comfort in your living Head and Husband, and in his righteousness? Again, he asks you, O mourning believer, "Woman, why weepest thou, whom seekest thou?" Man, why weepest thou, whom seekest thou? Fear not ye, if ye be seeking Jesus who was crucified. He asks you, O inquisitive believer, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request? It shall be granted to the half of the kingdom, yea to the whole of the kingdom. Go tell him what you are seeking, and seek his grace to answer his questions, as you would wish his condescension to answer yours.

Are you seeking great things for yourselves? That is but a sorry matter. Are you seeking a good frame, a tender frame? That is but a little thing. Are you seeking heaven and salvation? That is not much for God to give; but he would have you seeking more. Are you seeking a new heart, and a supply of all your wants? That is something; God may get some glory this way, but he would have you seeking more. Are you seeking grace and

glory, and every good thing, even all the purchase of Christ? Well, that is much, but God hath more to give, and would have you seeking more yet. What then? Are you seeking God and Christ, and the Spirit, and all the fulness of God? That is an errand indeed. Where sits that person that would have God and all his fulness? God is saying of that poor creature, My blessing be upon him, for I will get great honour and glory by that seeker, "Your hearts shall live that seek God." Thus I say, seeing God allows you to pose him with your questions, you may expect that he will pose you with his questions, and see what answer you can make to them.

4. If God allows you to press him with your commands, hence I infer, That there is infinite reason, that he press you with his commands, and that you obey them. He commands you to believe, "This is his great commandment, that ye believe in the name of his Son." He commands you to love him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, strength, and mind." He commands you to love one another. If any thing engage you to obey any of his commands, it will be the love he manifests in condescending to let you pose him with your doubts, and press him with your adoes; and in condescending to send the Son of his love out of his bosom, to purchase by his blood this freedom and boldness that you may use with God, who, among other commands, doth command you to ask him, and command him.

5. Hence see, what things we are especially to ask of God for ourselves and others, namely, "Things to come." Future things that are always to come. Things of this world are vanishing and perishing things, they are not things to come, but all spiritual blessings, are things to come; and these we should seek for ourselves and for our children. I give instances of some of them,

(1.) Regeneration is a spiritual blessing, and it is a thing to come, for, though a child of God be but once born again, yet this blessing is never lost again, "The seed of God abideth in him, and abideth for ever."

(2.) Justification is a spiritual blessing, and a thing to come; for once pardoned, and always so. The ground of justification is the everlasting righteousness of Christ, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ," they stand for ever justified in him.

(3.) Adoption is a blessing among the things to come, the children of God are still so, he is their everlasting Father, and they are heirs of God and eternal glory.

(4.) Sanctification is a blessing that is always to come; they that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, they have the Spirit of Christ in them as a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

(5.) Spiritual consolation is a thing still to come; it is called *everlasting consolation*; it grows upon an everlasting root: though it is not still flourishing here, yet it issues in rivers of pleasure that are at God's right-hand for ever.

(6.) Communion with God in Christ, by the Holy Ghost, is a thing to come. This, and all the rest of these spiritual blessings, have a beginning, but they have no end; "The Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

In a word, the great leading blessing we should ask of God, is God himself, and all these blessings in him, because they are things to come, and all in him, "Who was, and is, and is to come. This God is our God for ever and ever. Thus, I think, the things to come here, may be viewed as meant of future things, that are in their nature permanent and everlasting, being the better part that cannot be taken from us; as well as of future events in the course of providence, and the spiritual acts thereof, which God exercises towards his church and children.

6. Hence see, that these things to come, are to be asked of God, who only hath the giving of them at command. When he enjoins us to ask these things of him, he tells us we cannot command them: when he enjoins us to command him, he wills us to know that he hath all blessings at his command only; and to plead that he may command the blessing: "Command ye me." It is not a command of prescription, but a command of petition and supplication, concerning the work of his hands. We are not to take it out of his hand, seeing he calls it "the work of his hand:" it is not the work of our hands. We have no capacity for spiritual work; yea, we are under a manifold incapacity for it. (1.) We are under a natural and physical incapacity, in regard we are dead in sins and trespasses, Eph. ii. 1. (2.) Under a legal incapacity, as being dead in law, and under the curse and sentence thereof, Gal. iii. 10. (3.) We are under a moral incapacity, by reason of our defilements and pollutions, and being, by nature, without strength. (4.) Under a judicial incapacity, by the righteous judgment of God for our original apostacy; we are in the hand of Satan, the jailor, who worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience: we are led captive by him at his pleasure. (5.) We are under an habitual contracted in-

capacity for the work of God, by reason of our customary sinning ; “ Can the Ethiopian change his colour, or the leopard his spots ? No more than we that are accustomed to do evil, can learn to do well.” (6.) We are under an universal incapacity. Universal, subjectively ; in regard the whole man is corrupted ; “ The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint ; from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, we are all full of wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores : and universal, objectively ; for, whatever spiritual work it is we are called unto, we can do nothing at it. Disciples themselves can do nothing of themselves : “ Without me ye can do nothing,” says Christ, “ We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves,” says the apostle. If this be the case, that we are under an utter incapacity for spiritual work, what a mercy is it, that God enjoins us to put the work in his hand, saying, “ Ask of me ; and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.” But,

The second use is for caution, or dehortation. Does God allow you, in all regular ways, to pose him with your questions, and to press him with your commands ? Then beware of irregular ways of doing it. There are two ways wherein people may be irregular in their demands ; that is, either, 1. When the matter of their demands is unlawful : or, 2. When the manner wherein they make their demands is wrong, though the matter were right.

[1.] I say, we are to beware of irregularity as to the matter of our questions or demands ; that is, coming to God with sinful questions ; such as these following :—

1. We are not to ask such a question as that, “ How doth God know ? And is there knowledge in the most High ?” Psa. lxxiii. 11. Indeed, whenever you indulge yourselves in secret sins, which you would not have the world to see ; the language of your heart is, “ How does God know ? But, He that made the eyes, shall he not see ? He that gives man knowledge, shall he not know ? Yea, His understanding is infinite. The Lord is the God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. He searcheth Jerusalem as with a lighted candle.” Do not question his omniscieny : for, as he sees in secret, to reward openly them that fear him ; so he sees in secret to punish openly them that fear him not.

2. We are not to ask him such a question as that, “ Who shall ascend to heaven, to bring down Christ ? or, who shall descend into the depths, to bring up Christ ?” Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. We are dis-

charged to say it in our hearts ; and yet the heart is ready to say it when we are hearing the word, and hearing Christ offered in it : Oh ! he is far away : he is in heaven ; there is no winning to him ; nay, but we are not to say so ; for he is nigh when his word is nigh ; “ He is in this word of faith which we preach.” Now, this word, says the Holy Ghost, is even in our mouths, and in our hearts. The word is in our mouths ; and when we find it there we should eat it ; “ Thy words were found of me, and I did eat them,” Jer. xv. 16. And when the word is in your mouth, Christ is there ; and you should feed upon him in the word as well as in the sacrament. And as the word is in your mouth, so it is in your heart that you may embrace him. But,

3. We are not to ask such a question as that, “ Can God furnish a table in the wilderness ? Can he give us bread to eat ? Can he provide flesh for his people ?” Psal. lxxviii. 19. This is the question of unbelief, Can God provide supply for my temporal or spiritual necessities ? Can he pardon such sins as mine ? Can he subdue such corruptions as mine ? Can he supply such wants as mine ? “ How can these things be ?” Oh ! blasphemous unbelief ! What cannot a God of infinite power do ? This infidelity hath a mouth full of blasphemy. What answer gave God to this question to Israel ? It is said, “ God heard and was wroth : so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger came up against Israel, because they believed not in God, nor trusted in his salvation.”

4. We are not to ask such a question as that, “ Wherefore have we fasted, and thou hast not seen ? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge ?” Isa. lviii. 3. This is the language of the hypocrite and legalist, who hath an over-rating thought of all his duties ; “ Wherefore have we fasted, and thou hast not seen ? Wherefore have we prayed, and thou hast not heard ?” They challenge God of injustice, for not giving them what they think they merit ; “ I thank God,” said the Pharisee, “ that I am not as other men, no adulterer, no murderer, nor like this publican ; I fast twice a-week, I give alms of all that I possess.” This was no prayer ; but a proud boasting of what he had done for God, and what obligations he laid upon heaven : a poor believer is of another spirit, let him do never so much, he sees all his righteousness to be rotten rags, a menstruous cloth ; my tears need to be washen in the blood of the Lamb. Again,

5. It is not safe to ask such a question as that, “ Lord, what

shall this man do?" John xxi. 21. Some that are attached to a respect of persons, in order to follow them, may be ready to say, What will this man or that man do? What course will this minister or that minister take? What side will this or that man turn to, when debateable things cast up? But such a question is justly answered with another, such as Christ put to Peter in that place, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." Take you the plain road of duty, without troubling yourself with what this or that man will do. Blessed are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; follow none but as they follow Christ.

6. We are not to ask him such a question as that, "Where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Peter iii. 4. This is the language of the graceless and profane, who would wish, with all their hearts, that Christ would never come again, and put the evil day far from them, that they may take leave to indulge themselves in all manner of sin, because sentence against evil works is not speedily executed; but know, that Christ will come to judgment, as certainly as if you just now beheld him; "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him; and they also which have pierced him, and all nations shall wail because of him."

7. We are not to ask such a question as that, "Who will shew us any good?" though there be many that say so, Psal. iv. 6. This is the question of the covetous worldling, and which Christ cautions his disciples against, "Say not, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? Be careful for nothing; but cast all your care upon him, who careth for you." But, if you will fill your hearts with anxious cares and covetous questions to that purpose, "Who will shew us any good?" Then see what answer you will make to that question that Christ asks you, "What shall a man profit, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

8. We are not to ask such a question as that, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?" Matt. viii. 29. This is the language of the devil; and yet such devilish hearts are among us that say the same thing. Some say it more closely and hiddenly under the shadow of humility, What have I to do with Christ, that am so unworthy of him? What have I to do with his blood, his righteousness, and merit, his Spirit, his promise, his grace, his fulness? Is it for the like of me? Have I any concern or interest therein? Yes, you have to do with all these; and you

are called to make use of them, unless you will rank yourselves with the devils to whom they were never offered. Again, some say it more grossly and profanely, What have we to do with Christ? What have we to do with his ordinances? What have we to do with his sacraments? What have we to do with his Sabbaths? What have we to do with so many sermons? We are wearied to the heart with them; and we care not a fig for these things, "What a weariness is it?" "Take a carnal man, says one, tie him to a post, and you may kill him with praying and preaching." We are not so foolish as to trouble ourselves about these things? What have we to do with them? Lord pity such creatures, for they are as like the devil as they can look, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?"

[2.] As we are to beware of irregularities as to the matter of our questions or demands, so likewise, we are to be cautious, the manner wherein we make our demands. We are allowed to ask questions, such as I mentioned in the doctrinal part, and to make demands, so far as the promise goes, and do it regularly; that is, in a way of acknowledging God's sovereignty, and in a way of submission thereto. I mention these two, because they seem both to be pointed out to us in the preceding context here.

1. Our demands ought to be in a way of acknowledging God's sovereignty and power, which we have expressed here, Isaiah xlv., from the beginning of the chapter, where you see the great God raising up Cyrus to accomplish his merciful purpose concerning Israel, in delivering them from their Babylonish captivity; wherein he was an eminent type of Christ, our great Redeemer; he names Cyrus here, as the instrument of Israel's deliverance, two hundred and ten years before it came to pass; and God puts honour upon him, by calling him his shepherd, chap. xlv. 28; his servant, his anointed, that was to perform all his pleasure, intimating to us, by the by, that it is the greatest honour of the greatest men to stand up for the deliverance or defence of the church and people of God; for, though they were Pagans, as Cyrus was, God will put some honour upon them, and take some notice of them; and whom God honoureth we ought to honour. But Cyrus, meantime, was only the instrument; a sovereign God was the efficient cause of their deliverance, he armed Cyrus with invincible power, see ver. 1, 2, 3, 4. Here we see the sovereign power of God asserted, that though there should be nations and kings, and crooked places, and iron

gates, in the way of the deliverance of God's people; yet when his time comes, he will shew his irresistible power in creating salvation for them, ver. 5, 6, 7, 8. Let God's children beware of thinking their case desperate, for God will create deliverance when it is needful, and nothing can withstand him. When we would come to God with our questions and demands, about the delivering of his people, or the recovering of his work, we are not to think it can be a difficulty to God, though there be mountains in the way. How easily can he effectuate what he allows us to demand? He can as easily bring about his work, as he can make the dew to fall down upon the grass, saying as here, verse 8, "Drop down, ye heaven, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it. He shall be as the dew to Israel," Hosea xiv. 5.

2. As our demands ought to be in a way of acknowledging his absolute power and sovereignty; so also in a way of submission to him, and not in a way of striving with him, as you see, ver. 9, 10, "Wo to him that striveth with his Maker," &c. God allows us to wrestle with him; but it is a sin to strive with him, nay, we must stoop to him, and ask and have what we will.

QUEST. When do people strive with God, instead of endeavouring to ask and demand regularly?

ANSW. We strive with God, when we live in sin, contrary to the challenges of the word and Spirit; when we resist the motions of the Spirit, we strive with him when we come to ask counsel of him with our idols in our hearts, and with a resolution to hug them; we strive with him, when, notwithstanding of his large promises, we will not believe what he says; we strive with him, when, instead of pressing him with our demands, according to his word, we prescribe to him; and, instead of waiting on him, limit him to our time and way; we strive with him, when, instead of walking in his light, and according to the rule of his word, we follow our own light, or any false light, and not the word, but our own views and interpretations of the word, without explaining the word by the word.

'Now, we see here two things, viz., that it is both dangerous and unnatural to strive with God.

(1.) It is dangerous, for it brings a wo upon men that do so, "Wo to him that striveth with his Maker." It brings even a wo

upon the children of God themselves when they want due submission to him ; it brings much mischief upon them, for, though the Lord pardon their sins, yet he may take vengeance upon their inventions. And they bring several woes upon their own heads. Wo to them, for thus they want still peace of conscience, and much sweet access to God with boldness, that otherwise they might enjoy. Wo to them, for they cut themselves off from many sweet expressions of God's love which otherwise they might have. Wo to them, for they bring heavy judgments, both temporal and spiritual, upon themselves ; for though he will not take away his loving-kindness from his own, yet he will visit their iniquities with rods, and their transgressions with stripes," Psalm lxxxix. 32, 33. But again,

(2.) As it is dangerous, so it is unnatural. For a thing that is made to strive with its Maker ; for a creature to strive with its Creator ; for the clay to strive with the potter—what more unnatural ! God hath more superiority over us than the potter hath over the clay ; are we equal matches to strive together ? It is as if clay should strive with the potter, and blame his hand for not framing it aright. And further, how unnatural is it, as verse 10, for one to say to his father, "What begattest thou ? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth ?" Shall a child call his parents to an account for his generation and birth ? A child hath not so much its being of the parent, as we have ours of God, in whom we live, move, and have our being ; and the mother doth not bear about the child so long before the world sees it, as God did bear about his children, in the eternal decree, before ever they came to the world.

Thus it is odious and unnatural to strive against God. When God, therefore, enjoins us to ask and command, surely it is in a submissive way he requires us to do so ; and when we see his sovereignty, and submit to it, then we ask and demand regularly and successfully. So much by way of caution.

The third use is for examination and trial. You should examine yourselves before you go to, and after you come from, a communion table. Now, the best way of examining is to put the work in God's hand, and let him examine you. Ask God some questions concerning yourselves, the works of his hands, and see what he says of you. Put all questions that concern immortal souls upon God ; and if you will put him to it, he will answer them. Here I will tell you of a few questions, both for the natural man, and for the spiritual man.

[1.] For the natural man there are these two or three questions may be asked of God.

1. What says God of that man that thought himself well qualified for going to the Lord's table, and thinks himself something, while yet he never saw himself to be a child of the devil by nature, nor ever knew what it is to be filled with self-abhorrence upon a view of the glory of God? The Lord says to that man, "He that thinks himself to be something, while he is nothing, deceiveth himself," Gal. vi. 3. Self-conceit is self-deceit, and such a conceity person was not fit for God's table.

2. What says God to that man, that thinks it an easy thing to communicate; that can do it as easily as he can sit down at his ordinary meal; and never found any difficulty in it; and wonders to hear God's people complaining of difficulties, oppositions, and temptations; but is ready to bless himself that he was never troubled with any of these things? God says of him, that while the strong man keeps the house, the goods are at peace, Luke ii. 21. The devil was never banished out of that man's heart, otherwise he would find, as God's people do, all the devils in hell, and corruption of their bosom, opposing him; he was never yet in the straight way that leadeth to life.

3. What says God to that man who never saw any thing of the mystery of iniquity that is in his heart, nor knows the plagues of his own heart; but thinks always he had a good heart to God, and who thinks he was always so strong in holiness, that he was never such a great sinner as other people have been; that was always so strong in the faith, that he hath trusted in God all his days; and so strong in grace, that he was never afraid for the devil, or his works? The Lord says of that man, that he is an utter stranger to God and himself both. As to his good heart, God says, "He that trusts in his own heart is a fool," for, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And as to his strength, that he boasts so mightily of, God says, "That even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the strong and the young man shall utterly fail," Isa. lx. 30; while "They that wait upon the Lord (under a sense of their own weakness) shall renew their strength." Such as thus put confidence in the flesh shall fall into ruin.

4. What says God of these people, who think they do a great deal, when they go about the outside of ordinances and duties, and

go to sermons and sacraments to keep up their good name, and the credit of a profession before the world? God says, "They have a name to live, and are dead;" and "That they have a form of godliness, but want the power of it;" and that "Many shall say to him in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence? to whom he will say, Depart from me, I know you not," Matt. vii. 22, 23.

5. What says God of that man that ventured to a communion-table, and yet is grossly ignorant of the principles of religion, and immoral in his walk and conversation; being a habitual drunkard, swearer, liar, whoremonger, or the like? God says, "What hadst thou to do to declare my statutes, or to take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my law behind thy back?" Psalm l. 16. Yea, God says, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body," 1 Cor. xi. 29.

6. What says God of these that venture to the Lord's table, and yet never knew anything less or more of a work of grace upon their hearts; that know nothing of a law or gospel-work upon them; and that were never dead to the law, nor divested of their own righteousness in point of justification; that never were made to fly to the righteousness of Christ alone, as their only claim for heaven, and their only ground of acceptance with God? What says God of these that never knew any thing of this, and yet ventured to God's table? God says, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having the wedding-garment? Take him, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness," Matt. xxii. 12, 13.

7. But what says God of all them who despise all these ordinances, word and sacraments, and give not a fig for them? God says to such, "Behold, ye despisers, wonder and perish! If they that despised Moses' law did perish without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy, who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith Christ was sanctified and set apart, an unholy thing?" Heb. x. 29. Do you thus spit upon God's face, and tell him you care not for his kindness, you care not though Christ had never died, and though his death were never remembered in the world? You thus excommunicate yourselves from grace and glory, and all the privileges of the Christian church.

[2.] There are some questions that concern the spiritual man,

and which the poor believer would gladly ask God, if he durst. But seeing you cannot be satisfied till you hear God's mind about them, bring them forth.

1. Then, what says God to a man that would gladly take hold of Christ, but fears there was never such a vile, base, ugly monster in all the world that came to Christ and got a welcome? God says, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me: And he that cometh, be what he will, I will in no wise cast out. Though your sins be as scarlet, and crimson, ye shall be as white as snow." Though there was never one in the world like you, yet it is not the matchlessness of your condition that shall keep you out of heaven, it is unbelief. Therefore, be the case what it will, come, and welcome, to Christ. When you come to Christ, God gets satisfaction for all your sins, though they were a thousand times greater than you can imagine they are.

2. What says God to a man that would willingly have Christ, and strike a bargain with him, but hath such experience of a deceitful and desperately wicked heart, that he fears he shall fall away again to the scandal of religion? God says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, that I will not turn away from you to do you good; but I will put my fear in your heart, that ye shall not depart from me." He says that, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins;" and therefore, "Though you fall, you shall arise; and though you sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto you;" only bargain honestly with him, and take him honestly, for holiness as well as for heaven; and sure I am, every honest believer will take him for sanctification as well as consolation. "No temptation shall take you, but such as is common to man; but 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, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13.

3. What says God to a man, that, upon solid grounds, maintains his interest in Christ, and hath gotten it sealed to him now and then at a sacrament, yet the heart of him still goes a-whoring after some idols and sins, not only through infirmity, but oft-times with some degree of presumption, while he turns slothful and unwatchful? God says, "Though he will pardon their sins, yet he will take vengeance on your inventions. He will visit your iniquities with rods," and bruise you in the mortar of tribulation, till the juice

of the old Adam be squeezed out of you : “ yet his loving-kindness will he not utterly take away, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail ; his covenant he will not break, nor alter the word that is gone out of his mouth,” Psalm lxxxix. 32, 33, 34.

4. What says God to a man that, with a humble boldness and holy fear, and brokenness of heart, is venturing, upon good ground, to own his interest in Christ, saying, “ I am my Beloved’s, and he is mine ?” God says, “ His desire is towards you. But let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.” Go up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved.

5. What says God to a person that is daily judging himself for an hypocrite and an atheist, and thereupon persuades himself that God will condemn him ? God says that person is a liar ; for, “ He that judgeth himself shall not be judged ;” God will never judge him, nor condemn him with the world, 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32. Do you find yourself to be a self-condemned creature, and law-condemned, and see no shift in all the world for you, but Christ, as a ransom and propitiation, and think it a good shift too, and thereupon hath fled to him for refuge ? There are two immutable things, the word and oath of God, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that stand firmer than the pillars of heaven for thy strong consolation.

6. What says God to a person who, upon examination, finds all wrong with him, and yet ventures upon the mercy of God in Christ, against all hope, and against all appearances ? God says, That you are one of the most trusty friends that he hath in all the world ; you are a true child of Abraham, the friend of God. “ They that trust in the Lord shall be like mount Zion, which cannot be removed,” &c. Put all these, and such like questions to God, and he will answer them.

The fourth use I designed was for exhortation, which I only offer in a word. If God allows you, and enjoins you to pose him with your doubts, and press him with your commands, then let all know their privilege here, and make use of it. Obey his call, “ Ask of him things to come, concerning his sons, and concerning the work of his hands, command ye him ;” press him, and put him to it, for his church, for her children, and for yourselves.

1. For his church. Plead with him that all lands, to which he hath a mind to do good, may have breasts, and may be spoken for, Song viii. 8. O let your desires be enlarged both for your elder and younger sisters, Ezek. xvi. 61 ; your elder sister the Jews, and your younger sister the Gentiles. Plead with him that all the ene-

mies of Zion may be put to shame, Isa. xii. 11, 12, &c. O sirs, lift up a prayer for the remnant that is left; and plead with him, that he would raise up a generation of faithful pastors in this land, and send them out of his own bosom; such as may not think shame to own a covenanted work of reformation, but may zealously appear for the reviving and restoring of it, and that will keep the good old way, and not disturb the church of Christ with new notions and principles; and since witnessing work and covenanting work is the work of God, the work of his hands, therefore put his own work in his own hand; let us not take it out of his hand, nor take it into ours, or put it into men's hands; it will be marred there: but put him to it, to carry on his own work with his own hand of power. He must build the temple, and bear the glory. Plead that heavy yokes may be taken off the church's neck, such as yet she groans under; and deliverance may be commanded for Jacob. It is true, God hath delivered us from the dreadful disturbance that was in this country by a wicked insurrection, since the last year; but this deliverance, if we be not duly thankful, is but a blink before a shower, as long as no reformation takes place, and the power of godliness is under such a dismal decay among us: "There was silence in heaven for half an hour," Rev. viii. 1, rest in the church for a little time, but quickly followed the sound of the seven trumpets," verse 2. But,

2. As you would press God, and put him to it for the mother, so also for her children. Plead for the spirit of love and unity among ministers and people. Plead that the Lord may save his servants and people from every temptation that tends to the marring of his work. Satan's assaults to undermine reformation-work may be busked up with high pretensions to zeal for the honour of Christ; that, for example, he may not suffer shame or dishonour in the world; as when Peter said, Matt. xvi. 22, "Far be it from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." But Christ, who saw the devil's black and foul hand under this white and fair glove, says to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan." No doubt, it was out of real love to Christ, and zeal for his honour, that Peter spake, while he was not aware of the enemy; but it is to be remarked, that when Satan prompts any to speak for Christ's honour in one respect, he means and designs to dishonour him in another.¹ But this

(1.) The affair which our author here has in his eye, was well enough understood at the time when delivered. We will have occasion in some subsequent discourses, where he touches more directly at the matter, to lay it open.

I wave. Again, plead that the spirit of sleep and slumber may be put off the children ; that a drooping, drowsy generation may be awakened. Plead that the children may get all an insatiable desire to gain others that are without. Alas! sirs, are there not vast numbers of graceless, Christless, unconverted sinners among us, together with formalists and hypocrites, in whom God is not in all their thoughts, and in whom the strong man hath his lodging? Should we not, by our prayers and pains, endeavour what we can to spoil hell and fill heaven?

3. Let us press him, and put him to it, for ourselves. Let us “seek the Lord and his strength; seek his strength for evermore.” Plead that you may be cleansed from all idols, according to his promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you.” And plead the pouring out of the promised Spirit; “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.—I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.” There will never be good days amongst us till the Spirit be poured out from on high.

Now, these are things that concern his sons, and are according to his will, being things that he hath promised; therefore, let us command our King to command these things for us; “Thou art my King, O God: command deliverance for Jacob.” Why, say you, it is only his people and children that are thus charged: and I do not know if I be among the number of these. I tell you, sirs, you are all welcome to put God to his word; shift not the call; God here directs his speech to all who are capable to know or understand it. 1. It is directed to all such as understand that God is *the Lord*; “Thus saith the Lord.” 2. It is directed to all who look upon him as a *holy God*, and a God in covenant with Israel; “Thus saith the holy One of Israel.” 3. It is directed to all that know God as their *Maker*; “Thus saith thy Maker.” 4. It is directed to all that have any questions to ask. 5. It is directed to all that have any concern about God’s sons, and the work of his hands. 6. It is directed to all that have anything ado with God, or any service for him; “Command ye me.” All these he presses to employ him; and if you do it not, you sin against him, as he is *the Lord*, as he is *the holy One of Israel*, and as he is *your Maker*; you sin against him in all the relations in which he stands to you. Therefore, in his lawful authority, I charge you to ask him, and put him to it, who is both powerful and willing to do all for you.

It may be, you have essayed this work formerly, without success, and now you conceive things to be desperate, and any more essays to be needless. Know, sirs, that God is not bound to keep your time; but he hath bound himself to fulfil his own word of promise in his own time. Therefore, do not limit him, but press him, and put him to it; and, for what you know, his time may be at or after this occasion, to give you all that you ask and demand.

If you would ask and demand with success, I give you only this direction. There is one whom he heareth always—that is, Christ the Mediator, to whom he hath given a commission, to ask and command what he will concerning his sons, and all the works of his hands, saying to him, as in Psalm ii. 8, “Ask me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for thy possession.” Therefore, put all your demands and commands in this Mediator’s hand; send a letter of faith and prayer to him, even though, when you are writing the letter, the devil may come and jog your hand, and make it all full of blots and blurs, yet he can read it, and make sense of it; yea, he will write it over, as it were, in a fair hand, and let his Father see all the questions and commands you have in it; he will make them his own requests; he will ask and command for you, and so you shall have what you will.

SERMON LXXXIII.

CLEAN WATER; OR, THE PURE AND PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST
FOR THE CLEANSING OF POLLUTED SINNERS.¹

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.”—EZEK. xxxvi. 25.

THIS text is a precious promise uttered by the mouth of God, and it hath a reference to a certain time, even to a sad and sinful time, when his great name was polluted and profaned; and his people, to

(1) This sermon was preached immediately before the administration of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper at Dunfermline, August 10th, 1746. To which is subjoined, the Discourse before and at the first Table, and also at the conclusion of the Solemnity.

whom he speaks, had been polluting his name, had polluted themselves, and were over-run with all abominations; and yet, even then, instead of drawing his sword of wrath, he, in sovereignty, utters a word of grace to them, and opens a door of hope; let men and angels wonder at it! "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," &c.

In this, and the following context, you may observe these six things. 1. What God will do to them; "I will sprinkle you," &c. 2. What he will give them; "A new heart will I give you," &c. 3. What he will take out of them; "I will take away the heart of stone." 4. What he will put in them; "I will put my Spirit within you." 5. What he will cause them to do; "I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." 6. What he will be unto them; "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." Every one of these promises are uttered out of the mouth of God, the undertaker for them; they are ascertained unto our faith, as declarations of the degree of heaven, and acts of his sovereign will, by which will we are sanctified and saved, and which will our glorious Redeemer came to execute with infinite pleasure in his heart, saying, "I delight to do thy will, O my God:" q. d. "It is thy will that I seal all these promises with my blood? Then, 'Lo, I come:' Let heaven and earth, men and angels, witness that, Lo, I come, with infinite delight in this work, for thy will is my will; therefore, Lo, I come to subscribe thy will with my blood; and let this blood of mine run like clean water amongst a company of unclean sinners, for purging and cleansing them." Why, then, may the Father say, "I am pleased with what thou hast done; and, in testimony thereof, I take this clean water in my own hand, and turn my speech to these polluted sinners, with this gracious proclamation, Hear and believe, O sinner, what my will is, '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.'"

Interpreters generally explain this text of justification and pardon in the blood of Christ, and it seems reasonable to do so on two or three accounts.

1. Because the promise of sanctification immediately follows; both habitual sanctification, in the promise of the new heart and the new Spirit; and actual sanctification, in the promise of putting his Spirit in us, and causing us to walk in his statutes. And,

2. Because the clean water here is said to be sprinkled upon us, and the blood of Christ is called the blood of sprinkling ; and though not the blood of Christ, but the Spirit of Christ, is most frequently in Scripture expressed by water ; yet that water is not ordinarily said to be sprinkled, but poured upon sinners ; “I will pour water on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, even my Spirit :” but the sprinkled water is the blood of Christ. Besides,

3. The Spirit is not said to be water upon us, but water within us, John iv. 14, “The water that I give, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life ;” and so in the context here, besides this water to be sprinkled upon us, the promise of the Spirit is to be within us ; “I will put my Spirit within you.” These blessings go together, but yet they are distinct ; the one is put upon us for our justification, and the other put within us for our sanctification. And so,

4. The sprinkling of this clean water upon us answers the account given us of justification by the blood and righteousness of Christ applied and imputed to us, or sprinkled and put upon us ; “Even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe,” Rom. iii. 22. So that, by the clean water here, we are to understand the precious blood of Christ. Here is the application of it promised ; “I will sprinkle it upon you.” Here is the effect and efficacy of it ; “Ye shall be clean.” And here is the extent of that efficacy ; “From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.” Here we may distinguish betwixt legal defilement and moral ; legal defilement is only cleansed by the blood of Christ, moral defilement by the Spirit of Christ, though purchased also by that blood that justifies, yet effectuate by the Spirit, whose work is to sanctify ; but all legal defilement, in the eye of the law and justice of God, is removed only by the righteousness or the blood of Christ, imputed to us, or sprinkled upon us ; “We are justified by his blood,” Rom. v. 9.—I have spoken to several doctrines from the words—another at present is this.

OBSERV. That the blood of Christ is clean water, which God himself promises to apply, with his own clean hand, for cleansing of the unclean.

Here you see that God, of his sovereign good will towards a

number of unclean sinners, hath provided clean water, and brought it near to you in this promise, "Here is water; what hinders you to be baptized and washen? He that believes shall be saved and cleansed." Here we may inquire,

- I. How the blood of Christ is compared to water.
- II. In what respect it is clean water.
- III. What way it is applied or sprinkled upon the unclean, for cleaning and cleansing of them.
- IV. Speak concerning that cleanness or cleansing, that is the effect of this sprinkling of clean water.
- V. Make application of the whole subject.

I. The blood of Christ may be compared to water in several respects. In general, as water rises from the ocean, so does the blood of Christ from the ocean of the love of God in Christ, who loved us, and gave himself for us, to be a bloody sacrifice for our sins. More particularly,

1. Water, being liquid, when poured out, it runs abroad and spreads; even so, the blood of Christ, that was poured out upon the cross at Jerusalem, it spread about, and spread abroad, as it is said, Zech. xiv. 8, "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them this way, and half of them that way." This blood spreads abroad as far as the gospel-dispensation doth, of which Christ says, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature: publish remission of sin in my blood."

2. Water is penetrating; when poured out, it runs into all the secret caverns and pores of things it meets with; it sinks and sweeps through all the open gaps and chinks of the dry ground on which it falls; even so doth the blood of Christ run in through all the open gaps of a guilty conscience, it "cleanseth from all sin."

3. Water is soft and penetrable; men may easily dip their whole body into it; even so, whosoever comes to this fountain, may find it as easy to put in their whole man as to put in only a finger of the old man, a single member of the body of sin; nay, as it is easier and better for a man that would be wholly washen, to cast in his whole body into the water all at once, than to step down and put in his hand or his head, or even to wade in by the side of the water with his feet; so, when faith is acted on the blood of Christ, it is acted best when it plunges wholly into this fountain opened for

sin and for uncleanness. Besides particular acts of faith in improving the blood of Christ for removing this and that particular sin, there is warrant, in the text, for a general plunge into this great depth for washing all sin away; "From ALL your filthiness, and from ALL your idols will I cleanse you."

4. Water is common; every one may come and draw at a public well; even so, the blood of Christ is a common good, a fountain opened for the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Christ is a Saviour of sinners by office; "We have seen, and do testify, that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," John iv. 14. Hence, whosoever will, is welcome to come and take, to come and wash, &c.

5. Water is useful in many respect. It is a bath to nature, that the God of nature hath appointed for purifying things that are polluted; clothes, and other things that are polluted, are usually washed in water; thus the blood of Christ is for washing and cleansing from all soul-filthiness here. Water quencheth fire, so does the blood of Christ quench the fire of God's vindictive wrath. Water quencheth thirst; God's justice thirsted for satisfaction, and was fully satisfied with this blood; and the awakened conscience cannot be satisfied anywhere else but with a drink of this warm blood of the sacrificed Lamb of God, this water that gushed out of the smitten rock. Water softens the earth, it is said to be made soft with showers; O! nothing softens a hard heart like the water of the blood of Christ; "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn." Water heals wounds in the body: O sirs, the blood of Christ is the healing water; "By his stripes we are healed." Water makes the earth green, flourishing, and fruitful; even so the blood of Christ, applied by the Spirit, makes all the trees of righteousness bring forth their fruit in their season.

6. Water is a mean of life, we cannot live without it, many perish for want of it: even so, the blood of Christ is the mean of spiritual and eternal life, we cannot live without it, and multitudes perish for want of it, and for not making use of it when it is offered to them; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you; he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day," John vi. 53, 54.

7. Water is free, cheap, and easy to be had; it is a common element, and none are barred from it but such as debar themselves;

even so, the blood of Christ, and the blessings thereof are free, they will cost you nothing ; “ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come unto the waters ; he that hath no money, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price,” Isa. lv. 1. If you would have water out of a corked bottle, you must draw out the cork, or else want ; but this water sends forth streams of blessing sfreely, without our labour or merit.

8. Water is plentiful ; we may have enough of water if we will ; even so, there is plenty of blood that Christ hath shed, here you may all drink and be filled, here you may all wash and be cleansed, there are waters in abundance here ; “ I will sprinkle clean water upon you.” In the original, it is in the plural number, *waters* There is plenteous redemption here ; plenty of merit, plenty of efficacy in the blood of Christ, enough for you and for a thousand worlds.

II. The second thing proposed was, To shew in what respect it is clean water. This question is of the more moment and concern to us, in regard that, if the blood of Christ had not been clean water, it could never have removed our uncleanness, or made us clean, but God here says, “ I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.” To make us have clean souls, clean hearts, clean consciences, it behoved to be clean water, for foul and muddy water would never have done it. Now, the blood of Christ is clean, pure, and holy water, in the following respects.

1. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the contrivance of it, and the fountain head from which this water issued, namely, the council of peace from all eternity betwixt Jehovah and Christ, wherein it was decreed that our Surety should have blood to shed ; and, for this end, a body should be given him, Heb. x. 5, “ Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast prepared me ; ” that is, a human nature, to be a sacrifice for sin.

2. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the conveyance of it, for he was “ conceived by the power of the holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin ; ” therefore it was said, “ That holy THING which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God : ” that holy THING contracted no filth by coming of the first Adam, no contamination by being born of a sinner, as will further appear by what follows.

3. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the subject of it, or the person in whose veins it runs, and from whose pierced

side came blood and water. In his person there was a perfect cleanness, both in respect of his divine and human nature, united in one person ; he was naturally clean, as man ; and infinitely clean, as God.

(1.) I say he was naturally clean, as man ; “ He, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot,” Heb. ix. 14. The spotlessness of his human nature was necessary to his being a sacrifice, and its union with the eternal Godhead was necessary to his being a valuable one. As the legal lambs were to be without blemish, so was Christ a Lamb without spot, 1 Pet. i. 19. He had no sin naturally imputed to him, because he was never federally in Adam, so as to be liable to the imputation of his sin as we are, who descended from him by natural generation. It is true, sin was imputed to him when he was made sin, to take away the sin of the world ; but this was not in the covenant with Adam by a legal imputation, but in the covenant of grace or redemption, by his own voluntary susception ; as the promise of the seed of the woman was not till after Adam fell ; so, if Adam had stayed in innocency, Christ had not been incarnate, to have been a Mediator for sinners ; therefore, in that capacity, he was not federally in Adam, though he was in Adam in a natural sense. Besides, he had no sin personally inherent. The pollution of our nature was prevented in him from the instant of his conception ; the portion whereof he was made of a woman was sanctified by the Holy Ghost, so that he was naturally clean as man. The purity of the snow is not to be compared with the whiteness of this “ Lily of the Valley ;” he is the spotless Lamb of God ; never was there any spotless or innocent flesh in the world but his own since the fall of Adam ; the second Adam took our nature, but not our defilement. He was naturally clean as man.

(2.) He was infinitely clean as God ; as man, he was “ The Holy One of God ;” and as God, he was the infinitely holy God ; his human nature was holy, and could not but be so, by virtue of the union of the divine with it, and holy by the effusion of the Spirit upon him above measure ; hence he was elevated as Mediator, God-man in one person, to the highest degree of holiness. It was impossible that any spot of sin or uncleanness could be upon him who was God in our nature ; if there had been any spot, which was impossible, his sacrifice could not have been for our sins, but must have been for his own ; yea, his spot had been infinitely greater than ours : it had not only been objectively

infinite as ours ; but subjectively infinite also ; which is infinitely more than ours, because the person sinning had been an infinite person : yea, in such a case, which is impossible, the rights of God, and his honour, had been more invaded, instead of being repaired ; the guilt would have been as great in the sinner, as the satisfaction could have been in the sufferer ; even a subjective infiniteness in the sacrifice. But none of this was possible ; Satan could not charge him with any sin, but confessed him to be holy, Mark i. 24. The all-seeing eye of God could see no unholiness in him, but justified him as holy, and pronounced him clean : " For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," Heb. vii. 26. His blood, then, is clean water indeed, cleaner than the heavens. Impurity had been contrary to the dignity of his person : God could as well be unholy, as the person of Christ unholy ; his holiness therefore and cleanness was infinite ; though the holiness of his human nature could not be of itself infinite, yet it derived an infiniteness from his person ; as well as his blood and sufferings derived from it an infinite value. Here was clean water indeed, which God himself could drink, and did so to the satisfaction of his justice ; and therefore he glories in it, and enjoins us to drink of it to the satisfaction of our hearts and consciences, that we may have joy and peace in believing.

4. The blood of Christ is clean water, in respect of the effusion of it. This water was drawn out of that clean vessel, with the Father's clean finger : for, " It pleased the Lord to bruise him," Isa. liii. 10. It is true, the Jews shed his blood with defiled hands : " Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23. Godly men could not have been employed in such an action as that of crucifying the Lord of glory. An artificer uses a crooked tool to do that which he cannot do with a straight one ; but this does not justify their wickedness ; no more than a fair and perfect child born, doth justify the adultery in which it was begotten. God may bring about his holy purpose by wicked instruments ; and indeed, the awaking of the sword of justice against the man that was God's Fellow, was one of the most holy actions of God, as well as a most glorious work of grace and love. And when God put to his holy hand to draw this clean water, and smote the rock that the water might run out, Christ himself, the living rock,

poured out the water voluntarily ; and therefore it is said, that when his soul was made an offering for sin, that in his passion he was active ; for, "He poured out his soul unto death," Isaiah lv. 10. Hence it is clean water in the effusion of it.

5. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the channel in which it runs ; I mean, the gospel dispensation ; this water runs purely and powerfully here ; for, "It is the power of God to salvation, because therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith," Rom. i. 16, 17. Gospel promises, and gospel doctrines, are both pure and clean basons, or conduits, wherein this clean water is brought to our hands, Psalm xix. 8, 9. It is true, the gospel dispensation outwardly may be puddled with foul feet, or perverted with foul mouths, Gal. i. 7. But it is not the fault of the waters of the sanctuary, but the drawers of the water : it is not the gospel that is to blame, but the preacher that understands not the gospel. However, this water cannot, in itself, be defiled, no more than the sunbeams can be by shining on a dunghill. Error may be mixed with truth, but it will not incorporate with it ; a river may be muddied and defiled, but the water will not incorporate with the mud : the mud will sink gradually, and the water will clear itself natively ; so corrupt doctrine puddles the water of the sanctuary : but the water will not incorporate with the mud ; hence it is not muddy error, but cleanly truth, that is the vessel wherein this clean water is conveyed unto us ; it runs in the channel of the divine declaration here, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you."

6. The blood of Christ is clean water, in respect of the application of it : not only the clean heart from which it is poured, but also the clean hand by which it is applied. Such was the cleanness of his heart, that was pierced and broached to let out this blood, that he could say, "I delight to do thy will ; thy law is within my heart." This water was his heart-blood ; and the blood of a holy heart, that never had a vain, sinful thought ; that never had any thing written in it but the law of God, nor engraven upon it, but "Holiness to the Lord." Such is the clean hand that applies it, that it is no other than the holy Spirit of God, to whom as the efficient, the sprinkling of the blood of Christ is appropriate, 1 Pet. i. 2. And here the Spirit of God, speaking in his word, puts his infinitely clean hand in this clean water, and says, "I will sprinkle it upon you." And again,

7. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the design

nation and institution of it ; it is sanctified of God, for the purpose of our purification. Hence their sin is said to be dreadful, and their guilt egregious, who tread under foot the Son of God, and account the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, Heb. x. 29. It is a holy ordinance of God, who appoints no other blood but this to purge away sin, and satisfy justice ; nor could any other do it.

8. The blood of Christ is clean water in respect of the intrinsic value, and cleansing virtue and efficacy of it. O ! how infinite is the value of this water, this blood of Christ, as it is the blood of God ; not the blood of the Godhead, but of that person who was God ! Hence it is called, " The blood of the Son of God," 1 John i. 7. And that it was God that laid down his life : " Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us," 1 John iii. 16. See also Acts xx. 28. The blood of God must be valuable blood : it was not the blood of a man only, but of him, who, from all eternity, was constitute Surety ; and who, for four thousand years, was our Surety as the Son of God, before he was our Surety as the Son of man. O ! what a word is this, " The blood of God !" Can men or angels speak forth the dignity of it ? Or can men or angels declare the virtue and efficacy of it ? O poor guilty sinner, trembling to think of the greatness of your guilt and defilement, though you had the whole guilt of all the men on earth, and devils in hell, and all the guilt that finite creatures are capable of contracting, yet it cannot stand before the infinite value, virtue, and efficacy of this blood, which is the *blood of God* ; it is infinitely holy water, flowing from the pure fountain of living waters ; it is clean, clean water ; it hath a cleaning and cleansing virtue and efficacy ; it is not designed, indeed, for unclean devils in hell, but for unclean sinners of mankind, that are yet out of hell. Here is clean water, ready to be applied for your cleansing. And hence,

III. The third general Head proposed, is, To shew what way it is applied and sprinkled upon the unclean, for their being cleaned and cleansed. This sprinkling is spoken of in allusion to the many typical sprinklings under the law : such as the sprinkling of the lamb's blood upon the door-posts of the house, Exod. xii. 7, as a sign of God's passing over and delivering the Israelites ; and the sprinkling of the blood upon the leper that was to be cleansed, Lev. xiv. 7. Thus the sprinkling of the clean water doth signify the application and imputation of the blood of Christ to the sinner, who

believes in him for the forgiveness of sin, and cleansing of him from all legal guilt. The blood of Christ, here represented by clean water, is the blood of his sacrifice, with the power, virtue, and efficacy thereof.

The blood of the sacrifice falls under a double consideration.

1. As it is offered to God, to make atonement and reconciliation.
2. As it was sprinkled on other things, for their purging and sanctification. Part of the blood, in every propitiatory sacrifice, was still to be sprinkled round about the altar, Lev. i. 11. And, in the great sacrifice of expiation, some of the blood of the bullock was to be sprinkled before the mercy-seat seven times, Lev. xvi. 14. This the apostle, Heb. ix. 19, 20, 21, 22, expresses in a single instance ; therefore the blood of Christ, as it was the blood of his sacrifice, falls under this double consideration, and hath these two effects : (1.) As offered by the eternal Spirit, to make atonement, and procure eternal redemption. (2.) As it is sprinkled, by the same Spirit, on the conscience of believing sinners, to purge them from dead works. See Heb. ix. 12, 13, 14. Hence it is called the " blood of sprinkling," Heb. xii. 24. " For we have the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus," 1 Peter i. 2.

Now, what way this sprinkling is effectuate, may be found out in the text.

1. It is by a gracious God, as the efficient cause : " Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you ;" I WILL do it. It is God himself that undertakes this work, by the immediate efficiency of the holy Spirit, who is the great Applier of the blood of Christ, and redemption purchased by him, Tit. iii. 5, 6.

2. It is by a gracious *word*, as the instrumental cause, that the application is made : " Thus SAITH the Lord, I will sprinkle." It is his word of promise, and it is his word of power, that does the business : " He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith in this word." The Spirit takes the clean water of the blood of Christ in his hand, as it were, and applies it by a word of power to the conscience : " Awake, O north wind, come thou south, blow upon our garden." By the north wind breeze, may he convince of our defilements ; by the south wind gale, may he apply the clean water, and breathe upon the joyful sound of this word, so as faith may come by hearing it, and then joy and peace in believing.

3. It is by a gracious *will*, as the moving cause, that this ap-

plication is made: "I WILL sprinkle clean water upon you.—Of his own *will* begat he us by the word of truth.—By this *will* we are sanctified.—By this *will* we are saved." It is my will to sprinkle this clean water upon you. This is a reason *without me*, the clean water of Christ's meritorious blood, that hath purchased your remission and cleansing from all sin and guilt. This clean water I bring in my hand, as a good reason *without me*. Why? I promise to pardon and purge you, but I have a reason *within me*, and in my very heart; and it is my own sovereign will, and even my good will to you, O sinner; it was my will to smite the rock, and provide this clean water for you; and now it is my will to sprinkle it upon you, and make you clean, and to cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols. Now, O sinner, it is to you, and you, and you, that he is publishing his will; and, O sirs, shall not a willing God make you a willing soul? "Wilt thou be made clean?"

4. It is by a gracious *act* of this gracious will, namely, the sprinkling itself, which is the formal cause of the application, and so of justification in the blood of Christ; that is, just God not imputing your sin to you, but imputing the blood and righteousness of Christ to you, or sprinkling the clean water upon you. And this application being expressed by *sprinkling*, seems to point out, 1. A real and actual application or imputation of the blood of Christ for cleansing the soul, and purging the conscience, as water is applied for cleansing the body. 2. A close application to meet with the defilement, in order to the removing thereof. 3. A full application, spreading the clean water over all the spots, to cleanse from all our filthinesses. 4. A liberal application, for sprinkling imports many drops; and though one drop of the blood of Christ is sufficient, yet abundant application is made by this sprinkling. 5. It points out a kindly, careful, and tender application, such as you are best able to bear. 6. A skilful and gradually repeated application; and hence, mention is made here of sprinkling, then of cleaning, and then of cleansing. 7. Here is pointed out a personal, and particular application, "I will sprinkle clean water upon *YOU*," the pronoun *you* is five times come over in the text, "I will sprinkle *you* with clean water, and *ye* shall be clean; from all *your* filthiness, and from all *your* idols will I cleanse *you*." 8. Here is pointed out a divine and an effectual application, for it shall gain its end, "Ye shall be clean, and I will cleanse you." And it is remarkable that,

in this cleaning and cleansing business, that respects remission and justification from the guilt of sin, it is expressed passively with respect to us, but actively with respect to God; I will take the whole business in hand, only "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." Why? herein you shall be passive, and I will be active; when I sprinkle this clean water upon you, ye shall be passive, for, YE SHALL BE clean, but I will be active, "I WILL cleanse you," you will have little ado here; yea, nothing ado; for I will do all. Why? are we not called to act faith? Yea, but yet in the matter of justification, faith is not so much an actor as an onlooker? It is not here an agent but an instrument, faith here stands in opposition to works; it hath nothing to do, but all to believe; nothing to give, but all to receive. Faith is not here a builder, but a beholder; God undertakes all the business here, "I will sprinkle, and I will cleanse you."

Now, the Spirit of God, in sprinkling this clean water, or applying this precious blood for cleansing a sinner, does four things.

(1.) He convinces of the pollution and guilt of sin, and of our spiritual defilement; for, the uncleanness here treated of, is not physical or corporal, but moral and spiritual only, and it is the work of the Holy Ghost, John xvi. 8, to give that conviction of sin that maketh the soul ashamed before a holy God, and afraid before a just God; so that, without application to the blood of sprinkling, it cannot appear before him without shame and fear.

(2.) He discovers the clean water, and cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ as the only remedy, the only mean of purification, "For, by the Spirit we know the things that are freely given to us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12; and, "He glorifies Christ, by shewing the things of Christ to us," John xvi. 14. The Spirit is not sent in vain, to shew us the things we can see of ourselves; it is he that gives the spiritual discerning thereof; even of the excellency and efficacy of these things.

(3.) He works faith, wherewith we receive Christ himself, and his benefits as tendered in the gospel; and particularly acts upon the blood of Christ for cleansing the heart and conscience; this faith of the operation of God comes to the fountain for sin and for uncleanness, and addresses to God with that prayer, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean," Psalm li. 7. It is spoken in allusion to that general institution for the purification of all legal uncleanness, by the water of separation made by the ashes of the

red heifer, Num. xix. 4, 5, 6, which the apostle refers to, Heb. ix. 14, pointing out that application made to the blood of Christ, by which alone we can be justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. And till this believing application of this blood, or washing in this clean water, we cannot be freed from a conscience of sin, spoken of, Heb. x. 2, that is, a conscience condemning us for sin, and filling us with shame and fear. But faith applying to that blood, 1. Takes a spiritual view of it, as proposed in the gospel promise and offer, "Look to me and be saved." 2. It relies on that blood for cleansing, because "Christ is set forth of God to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." 3. It works herein by fervent prayer, because, "For all these things he will be sought by the house of Israel," and this we are directed unto, Heb. iv. 16, "Having such an High priest, let us come boldly to the throne of grace," &c. 4. Finally, faith acquiesces in the truth and faithfulness of God for cleansing by the blood of Christ, and so is freed from perplexing shame, and hath "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

4. The Spirit, in this sprinkling, actually communicates the cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ to our souls and consciences, whereby we are freed both from damping shame, and discouraging fear. And the ground of this actual communication is three ways expressed in the text, 1. By an application or imputation of the blood of Christ, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you." 2. By a pronouncement of the effect, "Ye shall be clean," upon the sprinkling of the leper he is pronounced to be clean. 3. By an actual operation of the effect, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." These three things answer to other three things, that are in sin as it is opposite to the just and holy law of God, namely, guilt, filth, and shame; it is attended with guilt that makes us obnoxious to justice; with filthiness that makes us loathsome to God; and with shame in us.

Now, the purifying virtue of the blood of Christ does three things. 1. It takes away guilt and obnoxiousness to wrath, as it is applied and imputed; the imputation of that blood and righteousness, fences from the stroke of offended justice, for, "Being justified by his blood, we are saved from wrath through him," Rom. v. 9. 2. It takes away all loathsomeness in the sight of God, not from sin, in the abstract, but from the sinner, so that he is as one absolutely washed and purified before him, and so pronounced clean

and fair, "Thou art all fair, my love." 3. It takes away shame out of the conscience, and gives the soul boldness in the presence of God, Heb. x. 19. This is effectuate by that operation here mentioned, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." And thus the clean water of the blood of Christ purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." But this leads me next to speak,

IV. To the fourth head, concerning that cleanness or cleansing that is the effect of this sprinkling of clean water, or imputation and application of the precious blood of Christ. Here I may touch at the properties of it in the text. I only premise, there is a cleanness before God in point of justification, and a cleanness in point of sanctification. It is the former that this text speaks of, as I shewed before ; the latter seems to be the subject of the following verses : these two, though they are distinct, yet are inseparable. Now, the cleanness, spoke of in the text, hath these two properties assigned to it here. 1. It is perfect, "Ye shall be clean." 2. It is universal, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." And the reason of both is here suggested, namely, The cleanness of the water sprinkled upon you.

1. It is a perfect cleanness. If the sprinkled sinner were not perfectly cleansed, it would detract from the value and cleanness of the water ; all cleansing is the fruit of this blood ; the perfect cleansing from guilt is wrought immediately by it ; the gradual purging from filth is mediate by his Spirit, but it was the purchase of his blood.

Quest. How is this cleanness perfect, for God pronounceth it so, "I will sprinkle, and ye shall be clean?"

Answ. We may reply to this both negatively and positively. Negatively, This clean water of the blood of Christ doth not clean perfectly in time from sin, in respect of the sense of it ; some sparks of the fiery law, will sometimes flash in the conscience, even of a sprinkled believer, and the peace of the gospel may be under a vail ; evidences may be blurred, and guilt revived, and the clean water appear as if it ran low ; perfect peace, and rest, and sense of divine love, remains for the people of God in the higher house. Nor doth the blood of Christ perfectly cleanse from sin here, in respect of the stirrings of it ; the old serpent will be sometimes stinging us, and sometimes foiling us ; the most righteous man will be vexed with corruption within him, as well as the abominations of others with-

out him, the Canaanites in the land ; and therefore the virtue of the blood is more expressed here in our wrestling with principalities and powers, than in the glory of a triumph as yet ; it is in heaven the saints shall be presented without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

But positively, The blood of Christ perfectly cleanseth from sin even here, in respect of condemnation and punishment. Though the nature of sin doth not cease to be sinful, yet the power of sin ceaseth to be condemning ; for the sentence of the law is revoked, a right to condemn is removed, and sin is not imputed to them, 1 Cor. v. 19. Where the crime is not imputed the punishment is not to be inflicted : it is inconsistent with the being of God to be an appeased, and yet a revenging Judge : for, justice hath accepted of a satisfaction made by Christ : the man is legally discharged, and put in the state of an innocent person, by the imputation of the blood and righteousness of Christ ; hence, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, Rom. viii. 1, " Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

2. As it is a perfect, so it is an universal cleanness : " From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." This clean water washeth from all guilt ; for, since it is the blood of the Son of God, it is as powerful to cleanse from the greatest, as from the least sin ; the particle *all*, is but a rational consequent upon the mentioning of such a rich treasure of blood : " Christ was delivered for our offences : " not for some few, but for *all* : and as he was delivered for them, Rom. iv. 25 ; so he was accepted for them, as a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, Eph. v. 2. The sins of all that shall believe, in all parts, in all ages of the world, God made them to meet at the cross of Christ, and laid them all upon him, Isaiah liii. 6 ; even the sins of all sorts and sizes. The first sin we read of cleansed by this blood of Christ, after it was shed, was the most prodigious wickedness that ever was committed in the face of the sun, even the murder of the Son of God ; " Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," Acts ii. 36, 38. " So that suppose a man," as one says, " were able to pull heaven and earth to pieces,

to murder all the rest of mankind, and destroy the angels, these superlative parts of the creation ; he would not contract so monstrous a guilt as these did, in crucifying the Son of God, whose person was infinitely superior to the whole creation," God then gave here an experiment of the inestimable value of Christ's blood, and the inestimable virtue of it ; it cleanseth the guilt of all sin, so as it shall not be found, Jer. l. 20. By this blood and righteousness of Christ we stand before God, not only as innocent persons, but as these who have fulfilled the law, both as to precept and penalty, Rom. viii. 4.

Now, this perfect and universal cleanness or cleansing, is grounded upon the cleanness of the water sprinkled on us in the day of believing ; infinite cleanness is necessary for the removing of an infinite filthiness : infinite goodness, necessary to the satisfaction of an infinite wrong ; the infinite value and purity of his blood flows from his Deity ; it was the same person who was the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person ; and who upholds all things by the word of his power ; who did by himself, in that person, purge our sins, Heb. xiii. 12. This divine person wrestled with the flames of wrath, and took hold of the tribunal of justice ; and by the value of his sufferings, smoothed the face of a frowning God, assuaged the tempest of provoked justice, and placed before the tribunal of judgment, a strong and everlasting righteousness of his own composure, as a vail between the piercing eye of divine holiness, and the guilty and filthy state of the sinner. So great a person, one equal with God, was necessary for restoring his honour, and sanctifying his name. So great a person's blood was necessary for the purging the fallen creature from his guilt and filth.

In short, the reason of this perfect and universal cleanness of the sprinkled soul, is the perfect and universal cleanness of the water wherewith it is sprinkled : it is perfectly clean, and wants nothing of infinite perfection : it is universally clean ; it never had a foul spot in it : it is the spotless blood of the spotless Lamb of God. Hence, the text makes the cleanness of the washed soul to quadrate and correspond with the cleanness of the water ; "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."

V. The fifth general head proposed, was the application. Is it so, that the blood of Christ is clean water, which God, by the hand of the Spirit, applies for cleansing of the unclean ? Then,

1. Hence learn the great need of spiritual discerning for taking

up spiritual things under outward signs ; and spiritual mysteries, under common metaphors : for, here the clean water represents, as in baptism, the pure and precious blood of Christ ; and the blood of Christ is not to be considered materially, but morally : even so the sprinkling here, is a spiritual sprinkling ; and the cleansing a spiritual and moral cleansing. The blood of Christ, materially considered, as it ran from the veins of his body, though Papists pretend to have enough of it in reserve, this is a vain, vile, useless, and imaginary conception of it ; this corporal and carnal consideration of it, is of no more avail than the corporal and carnal application of it ; for, as Christ says, “ The flesh profiteth nothing ; ” so, in this sense, the blood profiteth nothing. The proper use of blood is not to cleanse ; for it defiles and bespots anything whereon it is dropt ; but morally considered, as the shedding of blood implies loss of life and punishment for a crime ; so blood is the expiation of a crime, and a satisfaction to the law for the offence committed against it. As the shedding of innocent blood does morally pollute a land ; so the shedding the blood of a malefactor or murderer, doth morally cleanse a land. It is said, Num. xxxv. 33, “ Blood defileth the land ; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.” Without the shedding of the blood of Christ, there would have been no remission of our sins ; but “ The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.” There is a cleansing from guilt, and a cleansing from filth ; both are the fruits of this blood : the guilt is cleansed by justification, the filth by sanctification ; the former by the merits of Christ, the latter by his Spirit ; but the proper intention of the blood of Christ was, to take off the curse of the law, and free us from our guilt. When we consider the blood of Christ, we consider Christ as a sacrifice ; and sacrifices were called purifications, not in regard of washing away the filth, but expiating the guilt of sin ; but yet the justifying virtue of this blood is never exerted without the sanctifying virtue accompanying it. When this blood is sprinkled in the conscience, it purges from dead works. We need then the spiritual discerning of these things.

2. Hence see the excellency and preciousness of the blood of Christ : and the value and virtue of it. God himself here calls it clean water ; and pronounces them clean who are sprinkled with it. It is clean and spotless blood ; clean and clear water, wherein we may see clearly the infinite evil of sin, that cannot be washed away but here ; the infinite justice of God, that could not be satisfied with

any other water ; and see the glory of God here in all his perfections. The righteousness of Christ is a clean, a perfectly clean righteousness : it is clean in God's eye, and in the sight of all that have their eyes opened ; neither men nor angels can tell how clean this water is.

(1.) It is so clean that it cannot be stained or corrupted. It was not stained either upon the cross, or in the grace. It was impossible that God's holy One could see corruption, Psal. xvi. 10.

(2.) It is so clean, that it makes all clean that are cleansed in it ; their robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. vii. 14 ; this is the fine linen clean and white, Rev. xix. 9.

(3.) It is so clean, that God cannot see a drop of mud in it : his omniscient eye could not see a spot in it. It is the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot, and without blemish, 1 Peter i. 19.

(4.) It is so clean, that God cannot see a spot of filthiness in any who are washen in it. Hence, he can see no iniquity in Jacob ; he pronounces them clean, "Thou art all fair, my love ; there is no spot in thee," Song iv. 7.

(5.) It is so clean, that infinite holiness boasts of it, and requires all the world to come and be cleansed in it ; "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world ;" the immaculate Lamb, John i. 29, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt. iii. 17. "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake," Isa. lxii. 21.

(6.) It is so clean, that it is cleaner than the cleanest things in the whole creation of God. It is cleaner than the heavens above your head ; for, it is said, Job xv. 15, "The heavens are not clean in his sight ;" but the God of heaven pronounces this water to be clean ; and he puts his infinitely clean hand in it to sprinkle us with. It is cleaner than the holy angels above ; for, it is said, Job iv. 18, "That he chargeth his angels with folly ;" and chap. xxv. 5, "That the stars are not pure in his sight." It was necessary, therefore, that he in whom God's infinite holiness and justice should rest satisfied, should excel not only the dignity of angels, but transcend the condition and dignity of any infinite being. The sacrifice was of infinite value ; and therefore worthy of the acceptance of an infinite nature, his person being of as great dignity as the Father's : for, though there be a distinction of order among the persons of the

Trinity; yet no distinction of dignity, but a perfect equality of power and glory. His blood then is of more worth, than the souls of all men, and their bodies too, cast in one scale. O what clean water is here!

(7.) It is so clean, that it is perfectly so, and cannot be cleaner than it is. It is like the pure river of water, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, spoken of, Rev. xxii. 1. The blood of Christ is the pure, infinitely pure river of water, proceeding out of the loving heart of God, and the pierced heart of the Lamb.

(8.) It is so clean, that it is universally so. The Lord our righteousness is clean every whit, and hence, he that is washed here, is clean every whit. His nature was a clean nature; his heart was a clean heart; his thoughts were all clean thoughts; his lips were clean lips, no guile was found there; his actions were all clean and holy actions; his obedience a clean obedience; his suffering and satisfaction altogether clean. The perfect and universal cleanness of this water, is the reason of the perfect and universal cleanness of the saints even here in point of justification, and of their perfect universal cleanness even in point of sanctification in heaven, which is begun on earth, and carried on to that perfection.

3. Hence see and consider the polluted, vile, and hopeless state of all these that are not sprinkled with this clean water. The state of all by nature, and the present state of Christless sinners, is a state of filthiness, "They are altogether filthy," Psal. xiv. 3, Rom. iii. 10. And this state is a dismal state. They who were legally unclean of old were separate from the congregation, and so from all the pledges of God's presence, Num. v. 2. Every leper was to be set without the camp, even so all that are unwashed from their spiritual leprosy are abhorred of God, and separated from him. Thus it is with us all by nature, whatever we do of ourselves to be quit of it; it does but hide and not cleanse it. Adam cured neither his nakedness, nor the shame of it, with his fig leaves. If we die in this condition, unwashed, uncleansed, unpurified with this clean water, it is utterly impossible that ever we should be admitted into the blessed presence of a holy God, "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth," Rev. xxi. 27. Unless you are sprinkled with this clean water from the pollution of your nature, you shall not inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 10, 11. Nay, you cannot be fit for a communion table, nor compass the altar of God,

unless your hands be washed in innocency, even in this clean water, which alone can make clean hearts and hands, and a clean conscience, purged from dead works to serve the living God. You must be excommunicate doctrinally from the lower table, and will be excommunicate actually and everlastingly from the upper, if you love your defilement, and are proud of your pollutions, and not ashamed of them ; if you satisfy yourselves with your outward or inward ornaments. Some have no other covering of their natural filth, but the outward ornament of the flesh ; a fair skin, or a fine suit of clothes, a natural or artificial cover. Others have a moral covering of gifts, duties, profession, and a blameless outward behaviour. But such puddle water will not wash you ; there is no remedy if you remain there ; you must perish for ever in your filthiness ; you remain under wrath and subjected to the curse of the law, till sprinkled with this clean water. All the indictments that your own conscience has against you ; yea, which is incomprehensibly more, all the indictments the omniscience of God can charge upon you, remain in their full force, and are unanswerable ; and you must inevitably sink under them, till the blood of Christ, apprehended by faith, cancel the bond, and raze out the accusation. There is no other sacrifice for sin but this ; and never can a sinner have any joy in God, but through Jesus Christ ; nor receive peace and comfort before God, but in a way of receiving the atonement, Rom. v. 11.

4. Hence see, that there can be no purgation from the guilt of sin by the mere mercy of God ; for, God says not here absolutely, I will make you clean ; or, Ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you ; No, no, but he says it relatively, with respect to, and in a way of sprinkling with this clean water of the blood of Christ, " I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." The mercy-seat was not to be approached by the high priest without blood, Lev. ix. 7, 18. Christ himself, typified by the high priest, expects no mercy for any of his followers but by the merit of his blood. Mercy comes only by the smoke of this sacrifice. Justification implies not only mercy, but justice ; and more justice than mercy in a proper sense ; for justification goes upon a propitiation, Rom. iii. 24, 25, 29 ; and to be justified, is to be discharged in a legal way, or in a way of compensation. By the means of this clean water, this cleansing and atoning blood, a *not guilty* is entered in the court of God, when this

blood is pleaded; and a *not guilty* is inscribed in the book of conscience when this blood is sprinkled. No mercy but in this way.

5. Hence see, and away with all the unclean water of your own righteousness, and of any other merit or purgatory for washing away sin but this blood of Christ, this clean water, this true holy water. Away with the abominable blasphemy of the church of Rome, their sprinkling their material water outwardly, with a water brush upon the people, and calling it holy water. Such horrid abominations deserved to be ranked with diabolical delusions. Glory to God that this late popish insurrection, as well as a former one in our day,¹ is quelled, that sought the introduction of such antichristian abominations. To make use of any other water for cleansing the unclean sinner, is a blasphemous contempt of the wisdom of God, in ordaining this only for our purification. It is a charging of a holy and just God with folly, as if he had mistaken himself, in accepting of the blood of Christ alone, as the only purification, as if it were not available for this end, without being mixed with some defiled water of our own; and as if the righteousness and blood of God needed some additions from creatures their doing and suffering. O! how can that be infinite, which needs a finite thing to strengthen it, and make it efficacious? He that goes to a muddy stream to wash himself, disgraces the pure fountain of clean water that God hath opened. "We can never be saved, said Luther, unless God turn his eyes from our *virtues*, as well as from our *sins*." That which needs cleansing can never cleanse us. Our own works, our own prayers, our own tears, are but filthy water. Water out of the earth is but foul and muddy water; the only clean water is out of the smitten rock. No mere creature can pardon sin, but only God; no blood is available for this, but the blood of God. No water mixed with the merit of men or angels will wash us. It is not mixed water, but infinitely pure water, that God here presents, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you."

6. Hence see, that washing from the guilt of sin, in justification, is not by water put *within* us, but by water sprinkled *upon* us. Indeed, God, in sanctification, he puts his Spirit within us; but, in

(1) A Popish party abroad, joined with a disaffected party at home amongst ourselves, made two different attempts to place the popish pretender upon the throne of Britain; the first, A.D. 1715, and the second in the year 1745. Both which attempts, the Lord was graciously pleased to frustrate; which prevented the Nation from being enslaved with arbitrary government, and antichristian principles.

order to justification, he puts his blood upon us. There is no justification by the law, but upon a perfect righteousness, answering both the precept and penalty thereof ; and this righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, is unto, and upon all that believe, Rom. iii. 22. As our sins were upon him, not inherently, but by imputation ; so his blood and righteousness is upon us, not inherently, but by imputation ; and it is equally reasonable, that the believer in Christ be accounted legally righteous, as it were reasonable that Christ was accounted legally a sinner ; for, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we who knew no righteousness, might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. He, the Surety, was made sin, as if he had sinned all the sin of men ; and we are made righteous, as if we had not sinned at all. Some have compared this way of imputation to the sun's shining upon a wall, through a green or blue glass, whereby the true colour of the wall is indiscernable, while the colour communicated by the glass is upon it ; yet this colour is not the colour of the wall, but the colour of the glass, and inherent in the glass, only reflected upon the wall ; so, the blood and righteousness, whereby we are justified and washed, and which covers our sins from the sight of God, is inherent in Christ, but transferred to us. This pure water of the blood of Christ runs in his veins ; it is not physically or corporally applied to us, but in a judicial or juridical way ; and hence we are said to be justified by his blood, Rom. v. 9, that is, meritoriously. The merit of that blood is imputed to us, or that clean water is sprinkled upon us ; and we, upon the account of it, pronounced clean. No inherent righteousness is without works ; but this righteousness is imputed without works, Rom. iv. 4, 6 ; and therefore it cannot be a righteousness inherent in us ; for hereby he justifies the ungodly. As we were made sinners, by one man's disobedience, so we are made righteous, by one man's obedience, Rom. v. 19.

7. Hence see the perpetual efficacy, and continual virtue of the blood of Christ, for cleansing of polluted sinners ; for, it is always clean water ; and here it is pronounced to be so, before it was shed. The price of redemption promised under the Old Testament, and the price of redemption paid now under the New, was of equal virtue and efficacy. This blood was sprinkled and applied from the foundation of the world, though it was not shed till the fulness of time ; the credit which it had for the expiation and cleansing

of guilt, was as firm a foundation for the faith of believers, before it was actually shed, as after. We are to distinguish betwixt the work of redemption, and the virtue of it; the work was restrained or appointed to a certain time, but the virtue of it is extended to all ages, past, present, and to come. The ancient patriarchs had the same Spirit of faith as these that live in the time of the gospel, 2 Cor. iv. 13. Christ is, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world:" and, as he is "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever:" so his blood is always clean water, and has always a cleansing virtue. This sacrifice is continually in the same condition, and of the same force and efficacy it was in that hour wherein it was shed. Blood was appointed to make atonement, under the law; for the life was in the blood, Lev. xvii. 11: the animal spirits were in it. Well, the blood of the sacrifice of Christ is always hot and warm, having the same spirits of life, and the same virtue still moving in it; and this blood is opposed to corruptible things, 1 Peter i. 18. Hence, the way of our approach to God by it, is said to be still the new and living way, Heb. x. 20. Whatever was done legally, carnally, and typically, by any of the sacrifices of old, for the expiation and purification of sin, that was all done really and spiritually by that one sacrifice, that is the offering and sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and abides to be so done continually. The ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean spoke of, Num. xix., and to which the apostle refers, Heb. ix. 14, it was a standing ordinance, whereby one, who was any way defiled, might immediately be cleansed; and he that would not make application thereto was to be cut off, from his people: and so it is with respect to the blood of Christ, in our spiritual defilement. As it is called "A fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," Zech. xiii. 1: so he who neglects to make application thereto, shall perish in his uncleanness and that eternally.

8. Omitting other uses at present, hence see the duty of all that would be cleansed from their soul defilement, and would have remission of sin, and access to God, and fellowship with him at his table, even all that would ascend to the hill of God; and stand in his holy place; and for this end, would have clean hands, and a pure and purified heart and conscience; they must come to the clean water here exhibited, the pure fountain here opened; they must come and build their house by the water side, and wash here, and have recourse to this blood on all occasions, seeing it only is able to

cleanse from all sin ; and there is no fellowship with God, or with the saints, but in the improvement of this cleansing blood of Christ, 1 John i. 6, 7.

Alas ! sinner, you have, by sin, treasured up wrath, and wounded conscience ; and nothing can pacify divine wrath, or calm the stormy conscience, or purge it from guilt, but this blood, this clean water. Every infinite wrong must have an infinite satisfaction. The uncleanness of your soul cannot be expiate but by the cleanness of this water. God is opening this fountain for sin and for uncleanness ; slight not his grace by refusing to drink. The glory of purging iniquity is reserved to this clean water ; if you come not to it for cleansing, you deny it the glory of its cleansing virtue. This, and this alone, will do the business : let no muddy water of your own be mixed with this gospel-wine. As none died with him to expiate your guilt ; so he will suffer nothing to be joined with his blood in justifying your person. Christ bears this blood only in his hand, when he pleads for you ; and you must bear this blood only in your heart, when you plead for yourself.

QUEST. But, O ! what warrant have I to believe, or hope for cleansing in this clean water ? Surely I need to be in a better case than I am. Why, man, would you be cleansed before you come to the blood of Christ for cleansing ? In what case think you sovereign grace comes to sinners here ? Behold, it is even when they are lying in the mire of filthiness, and among the feet of their idols ; then even “ then will I come and sprinkle clean water upon you ; from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.” Grace comes to you when you are lying in your blood, a loathsome sight. Is your name a vile, filthy, black sinner ? Then you are named here ; and therefore put not away the grace of God from you. The text speaks five times to YOU : “ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon YOU, and YE shall be clean ; from all YOUR filthiness, and from all YOUR idols will I cleanse YOU.” O then, sinner ! wilt thou not be made clean ? “ To you is the word of this salvation sent.” It is spoken to all indefinitely ; and to you that know yourselves to be in this loathsome case in particular.

QUEST. “ But, Oh ! how shall I believe that it is to me that this word of salvation, and offer of remission comes ?” For my sins are of a peculiar sort ; the pollutions of my heart and way are not of a common stamp ; for, I am blacker than hell, blacker than the devil ; I am just a devil for blackness. But, O sinner ! what think

you of this clean water, this incorruptible blood? It is not spoiled or corrupted to this day. Do you measure the value of his blood by the greatness of your sin; when yet the merit of his blood is as far above the merit of your sin; as the person of Christ is above your person, or God above man? O! let me tell you, poor sinner, if you measure his grace by the height of heaven, it is a narrow measure; for, it is higher than the heaven of heavens: if you measure it by the height of God, then you take a right measure of it; but it is a measure infinitely higher than the conception of men or angels, who can never fly up to the height of divine grace, which is as high as the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity."

Be your sins and pollutions what they will, for multitude and magnitude, a sprinkling of this clean water can purge them away, all of them, in a moment. As a crumb of the bread of life is able to quicken you; so a drop of the blood of Christ is able to cleanse you. This fair water is designed of God for washing foul souls. This spotless blood is for purging spotted sinners. This clean water is Heaven's antidote against unclean spirits.

It seems an unanswerable question, Job xiv. 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" But here is God's answer to that question, which men and angels cannot answer; "I will sprinkle you with clean water, and ye shall be clean." Oh! say you, but I cannot believe; I cannot apply and appropriate this clean water to myself for my purification. But, let me tell you, the faith of this blood doth not consist in your undertaking to do any thing which God himself here undertakes to do; for, behold, he undertakes all the work: the question therefore is, if you will let the clean hand of God sprinkle this clean water upon you, that you may be clean. The hand of faith itself is not clean, except in so far as it allows the clean hand of God to lay the blood of sprinkling unto you, and in so far as ye do not resist, but give way to it, and welcome a willing God with a willing heart. Now is the day of grace, wherein God is declaring that he is willing to apply this clean water, saying, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." And, O sirs, tell me, is it also a day of power, wherein you are made willing, willing that all your filthiness, and all your idols be cleansed, that all the guilt, and all the filth of all your idols and lusts be removed, both by the pardoning and purifying virtue of this clean water. Are you peremptorily willing, and presently willing, saying, "Lord, thy sovereign grace and good-will, in pro-

viding such clean water for my cleansing, hath conquered my wicked will, and won my hard heart ; but if in this matter there be any hidden deceit in my deceitful heart, that needs to be washed also, I bring that with all the rest of my filthinesses and idols, to be cleansed and purged away in this clean fountain ?” Are you brought to this, “ Lord, hast thou told me what clean water this is ; and art thou saying, “ I will sprinkle it on you ? Lord, let thy will be done ; AMEN, AMEN, AMEN ; even so let it be : according to thy will let me be cleansed.” Why then God is saying, “ I will, be thou clean !” I WILL ! O forget not who is the speaker : it is not the minister, it is not the prophet, it is not a man nor an angel ; but, “ Thus saith the Lord. It is I—I that speak unto thee, am he.” Therefore, let the word enter into your heart, in the name and authority of God, and it shall take effect, and be the power of God to your salvation ; for, herein is revealed the righteousness of God, and the blood of God. He that made heaven and earth with a word, can make you clean through the word which he has spoken unto you : and his word is, “ 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.”

A PART OF THE DISCOURSE BEFORE SERVING OF THE TABLES.

WE now proceed to the especial work of the day, the commemorating the great sacrifice of Christ’s death, and the work of redemption, purchased by his precious blood. And, as under the law, the leper that was not washed and cleansed, was to be expelled from the congregation of Israel, and only these that were cleansed were to be admitted into fellowship with them ; so, in like manner, we must excommunicate from the table of the Lord, all that are not sprinkled with the clean water of the blood of Christ, and cleansed ; and admit to it only these that are justified, sanctified, and washed.

On the one hand, then, I debar, in the name of the Lord, from this table of the Lord, all unwashed, unsprinkled sinners, who give evidence, that they are not washed by the pardoning and justifying grace of God, by their remaining unwashed by the purify-

ing and sanctifying grace of God; that they are not washen from the guilt of sin, and their legal pollution, by their being not washen from the filth of sin, or from their moral pollution; and, consequently, all the impenitent breakers of the moral law, &c.

On the other hand, I invite to the Lord's table all who are sprinkled and made clean by the application of the clean water of the blood of Christ, and thereby cleansed from all their filthinesses and from all their idols.

QUEST. Who are these?

ANSW. 1. You that have got a sight of the filthiness of your heart and nature in the glass of God's word, and in the light of the Spirit of conviction, making you cry out, "Behold, I am vile!" I am filthier than the filthiest of all this congregation; I am viler than the vilest, and blacker than the blackest; yea, I think there is not a devil in hell so black as I am. Poor soul, who told thee that thou wast naked? It was not the devil that told you that you was a devil, or made you know the plagues of your own heart. You I invite to the table of the Lord, because the clean water has been so far sprinkled on your eyes as to make them clean and clear, "Like the fish pools in Heshbon, by the gates of Bethrabbim." You clearly see what a monster of sin and pollution you are.

2. You that have gotten a sight of the open fountain of the blood of Christ for your cleansing, and see it to be clean, infinitely clean and pure water; and thus have been not only convinced of sin the malady, but of righteousness the remedy, and see it to be the righteousness of God. Have you seen that Christ is the spotless Lamb of God? Has the Spirit convinced you, not only of the personal righteousness of Christ, and of his perfect innocence, but also of the sufficiency and acceptableness of the righteousness he has wrought for us; that the sacrifice of his death was of such a sweet-smelling savour to God, as was able to take away all the unclean savour of your sin; and here alone your guilty conscience has found quiet rest, namely, by a drink of this clean water, whereof infinite justice drank to satisfaction; and never could any other water give satisfaction to you, because you see all other water to be but foul and muddy, and this only to be perfectly clean, perfectly clear and spotless?

3. You that are purged and washed in this clean water have got your eyes opened, not only to see the preciousness of the blood of Christ, and its meritorious value, but also its victorious virtue;

and that, as Christ, by his death and blood, did overcome death, and destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil ; so your victory over sin and Satan must be owing to that same blood ; for, as freedom from the guilt of sin is owing to the price of that blood, so freedom from the power of sin to the purchase of it ; hence, when the Spirit is sent to sprinkle this clean water upon us, or to apply the blood of Christ, he convinces not only of sin and of righteousness, but also of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged, condemned, and destroyed by the death of Christ, and drowned in the red sea of his blood. The least drop of this water to this day chokes the foul spirit, and quenches his fiery darts ; and hence all your hope of victory over your lusts and idols is just to overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Hence,

4. You that are sprinkled with this clean water, you will desire to be clean every whit, from all your filthinesses and from all your idols ; you will seek after sprinkling from the guilt, for the sake of sprinkling from the filth of sin, purification of heart and life, justification in order to sanctification, and pardon in order to purity and holiness ; and, because you cannot of yourselves apply this blood, or wash in this clean water, you are made content that Christ wash you, who says, " If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me," and hence the sprinkling here is ascribed to the hand of God : " I will sprinkle clean water upon you." True believers are active here only by yielding themselves passive, for all the activity is ascribed to the name, and blood, and Spirit of Christ ; " Such were some of you ; 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," 1 Cor. vi. 11. You that are sprinkled, what God has joined, do not ye put asunder, but desire with your heart all the washing that accompanies this sprinkling, the washing of regeneration, justification, and sanctification.

5. You that are sprinkled with this clean water, you will boast of no other cleanness before God but the cleanness of this water that is put upon you, the perfection and purity of Christ's righteousness ; your language with reference to yourselves is, " We are all as an unclean thing ; and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ; and we do all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away," Isa. lxiv. 6 ; but your language with reference to Christ, and the cleanness of his blood and righteousness, will be like that, " I will greatly rejoice in the Lord ; my soul shall be joyful in my

God : for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation ; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels," Isa. lxi. 10. As a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments ; the word in the Hebrew, according to the margin, is, As a bridegroom decketh as a priest. Here, indeed, the mystery opens. The poor believer, however unclean in himself, yet by faith decks himself as a priest ; " He that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father," Rev. i. 6. Yea, the poor believing soul is decked as the great High Priest himself, being clothed with the Sun of righteousness, and accepted in the Beloved, not only for his sake, but in him as the Head ; hence the language of faith is, " In the Lord have I righteousness." You have no other righteousness but the Lord himself, JEHOVAH our righteousness ; and hence, as he was made sin for you, so ye are made the righteousness of God in him, insomuch that, when you win to the lively actings of faith you are then assured in yourselves that you can appear in the judgment of God, and before his awful tribunal, with the self-same security wherewith you would have appeared if you had lived with that innocency wherewith Christ lived, and had, by the will of God, suffered what Christ suffered ; yea, more than this, can appear before God as one that is become the righteousness of God in Christ, " He made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." You may think this an extraordinary acting of faith ; but yet some degree of it is imported in every acting of faith, when you come boldly to the throne of grace, or have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, for this is just a falling upon the clean water, and venturing your unclean soul into the presence of a just and holy God, upon the credit of the cleanness of that water. Again,

6. You that are sprinkled with this clean water will always be wanting a new sprinkling of it. Though all true believers are perfectly justified, yet but imperfectly assured of it ; therefore need a new application of it, and new intimations of peace and pardon on that ground. Because you contract guilt every day you must apply to this medicine every day. You defile yourselves every day, and if you go not every day to the fountain that is opened for sin and for uncleanness, you will be quickly all over leprosy ; your conscience will be filled with dead works, so that you will be unable to serve

the living God, unless they be still purged out. Is this therefore your course, being filled with self-abasement under a sense of your own defilement, to apply to God in Christ for cleansing, and that continually, with a fervency of prayer answering that conviction? Then the Lord pronounces you clean, and I invite you, in his name, to his table. Come and bring all your filthinesses, and all your idols to the clean water, even all your plagues and leprosies, all the defilements of your heart and conscience; say not, stay till I be clean, when he is saying, "I will make you clean." Come, as you would not defile yourselves more and more, and dishonour God, for here his glory is concerned. Here is clean water, even the blood of God. Here is the clean hand of God ready to sprinkle it on you. Here is the promise of God, that he will sprinkle, and ye shall be clean. Here is the undertaking of God, to do the whole work for you; "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Here is the good-will of God in Christ manifested toward you poor defiled monsters, and his will doubled to you, "I will sprinkle, I will cleanse you." Here is the word of God declaring his will that ye may know his will by his word; for, "Thus saith the Lord, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and ye shall be clean." Yea, finally, here is God's time and season that he takes for this: even when you are lying in your blood and pollution, sovereign grace comes to you even at your worst; for then, says the text, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you."

May the Lord draw you by the power of his Spirit.

THE DISCOURSE AT THE SERVICE OF THE FIRST TABLE.

Now, my friends, I will put you in mind of a promise, Isa. xxxiii. 16. It is said of every true believer, "He shall dwell on high; bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure. Whatever reference that may have unto temporal provision, yet I may say, God hath provided the best of bread, and the best of water for you, and presents it to you under the elements of outward bread and wine upon this table. Here is the best of bread, the bread of life.

"Our Lord Jesus, the same night wherein he was betrayed, took bread," &c. Here is clean bread : it came from a clean place ; it is the bread that came down from heaven ; it is clean, wholesome, and excellent meat : "My flesh is meat indeed." There was no innocent flesh in the world since Adam fell, but the flesh of Christ. But that which made the flesh of his human nature perfectly clean and pure, yea, infinitely so, was the personal union thereof with his divine nature.

"After the same manner also after supper he took the cup," &c. Now, here is the clean water of which God says, 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." This water, being the cleanest that ever men or angels heard tell of, is a truly medicinal water ; it is a salve that suits every sore when applied ; and therefore, you may now come with all your sores and sad cases. Bring all your filthiness here ; for, this blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, it is now speaking and saying, "From all your filthiness will I cleanse you." Bring all your idols here ; your lusts are engrained in your nature ; but this clean water is able to cleanse you from all the unclean devils that, like the strong man, keep the house ; yet here is blood that can make a clean house ; it says, "from all your idols I will cleanse you." Bring your diseased case here ; for this clean water is the healing blood of Christ : "By his stripes we are healed." Have you, poor soul, as many diseases as all the rest of the congregation ? Yet if he be saying, "I am the Lord that healeth thee," then you may well say, "He healeth all my diseases." Bring your blindness and ignorance here ; for this clean water is the enlightening blood of Christ to open your eyes : for, as the Spirit of light and illumination was purchased thereby, so it is a glass wherein you may see both the infinite evil of sin, the infinite hatred of God against it, and the infinite love of God to your soul. Is deadness of heart your case ? O know and believe that this clean water is quickening water ; it is living and life-giving water. The blood of Christ is living and speaking blood ; it speaketh better things than death and vengeance, that Abel's blood spake for. Why, this blood of Christ purchased life on the cross, and pleads for life on the throne. It is sin-killing and soul-quickening blood : "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my

blood, hath eternal life," John vi. 53, 54. Whenever you believe the quickening virtue of this water, it will cure your dead soul, and quicken you to a new and lively hope ; it will put spirit in you, for the Spirit of life runs in this channel. Are you in a weak case ? O mind this clean water is strengthening water ; when you can do nothing, and are not able to look up through the pressure of sin and guilt, and many burdens on your back, your soul is weakened : but as bathing in water is strengthening to the body, O bathing in the blood of Christ is strengthening to the soul ! " I will go in the strength of the Lord God ; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only," Psalm lxxi. 16. Intimating, that the way to be strengthened is just to mind his blood and righteousness : " In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." When you act faith upon his blood and righteousness, then you will see your strength to be in him also. Is your soul scorched with the flames and fear of God's wrath ? O ! this clean water is cooling and refreshing water. When this water was poured out, justice was satisfied ; when it is poured upon the conscience, the soul is satisfied. The blood of Christ speaketh peace : " Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Is your case a hardened case, and your heart a hardened heart ? Can nothing melt it ? Perhaps you cannot mourn, you cannot shed a tear ; but, O here is the remedy : the clean water, which God says he will sprinkle on you, is softening water ; the blood of Christ is softening blood ; but seeing it cannot soften unless it be applied, O then give way to the Spirit of God his applying it ; welcome him, saying, " I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." Whenever the blood of Christ is applied, the adamant is dissolved, the heart of stone is melted ; and hence the promise of taking away the heart of stone follows upon the promise of sprinkling here. The sprinkled soul is the soul that hears God saying, " I am pacified toward you for all that you have done ;" I am so pacified, in the blood of Christ, that I have no charge against you. What ! can you hear this and not melt ? O ! is this clean water dropping down upon me, and clean remission of all my sin in the midst of it ? O then, heart of stone, melt, and be ashamed and confounded for your sin. O mercy, mercy running in the blood of Christ, is a heart-melting thing ! O sirs, I think if infinite mercy were knocking at the gates of hell, the hope of mercy would melt the very heart of devils ; but mercy was never designed for them, it was never promised, never offered to them ; and so they

remain hardened in their enmity and malice against God. But mercy, through the blood of Christ, not only comes to your door, but knocks to be into your heart ; you have mercy promised through the sacrifice of the precious blood of Jesus, running like clean water round your heart.

But, alas ! say you, I cannot get away my filthiness ; I cannot put away my lusts and idols. Oh ! what mean you, poor soul ? Do you think to put away your own sin, and take God's work out of his hand ? I tell you, in his great name, he never laid such an intolerable burden upon you ; for, the cleansing from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, is harder work than the making of a world. It is only the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He enjoins you "To take with you words, and say, 'Take away all iniquity,'" Hosea xvi. 2. All your work is to put the work in his hand. Many think they cannot come to Christ, till first they put away all their sin, and give up with all their lusts ; but all your pains, before you come to the blood of Christ, will be like pouring oil upon the fire, that will inflame it the more. Therefore, welcome, welcome a promising God, saying, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you ;" for I have got clean water in my hand for that purpose : "I have found a ransom." By the blood of the covenant, I will send forth these prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water ; but here is water enough.

Now, if you have got a sprinkling of the clean water, O pray that others may get a sprinkling also : pray that your seed may be sprinkled, and your seed's seed, if you have or may have them ; for his righteousness is unto children's children. Pray for a sprinkling of this clean water to the black and backsliding generation ; a sprinkling to ministers and people here ; and to all the witnessing ministers and people in the land, that Satan may not get advantage against them, but that God may bruise Satan under their feet. O sirs, a sprinkling of this clean water would make the established church a witnessing church. Pray that this clean water may be sprinkled all around you, that, from all their filthiness and idols they may be cleansed, and glory may yet dwell in our land. And lay yourselves constantly under the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. You may need it anew before you sleep ; because you are still contracting new guilt, new defilement. Take the clean water along with you ; and go in peace, and the God of peace go with you.

A DISCOURSE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SOLEMNITY.

YOU have heard of a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness ; a fountain of clean water for cleansing the unclean : some are ready to go away with all their defilements about them ; others, I hope, are washed. I would speak a word concerning the duty of each.

1st, To you that are defiled sinners, yet in your blood and pollution, if you would not go away from this occasion in that case, and live and die in your sin, I would direct you to the cleansing fountain. O poor souls, labour to be acquaint with this fountain of clean water and cleansing blood ; and, in order thereto,

1. O sirs, see and consider your corrupt and polluted nature : if you search the scripture, you will see what it declares concerning it : it says, that every one is become altogether filthy, or stinking, Psalm liii. 3. Contemplate yourselves in this glass, and not in the self-flattering mirror of your own proud imagination. He that will not learn, from the word, his natural deformity, will live polluted, and die accursed. Pray that God, by his word, may discover you to yourselves.

2. If you would be purged from your pollution, endeavour to be affected with it suitably to the discovery which you get of it. As the proper effect of the guilt of sin is fear, so the proper effect of the filth of sin is shame. Many, instead of being ashamed of their filthiness and defilement of nature and way, are senseless and stupid ; they may be ashamed of some particular facts, but, for any thing in their nature, they slight and despise it. If they can but preserve themselves from the known guilt of such sins as are punishable among men, as to all other things they are secure ; they have no inward shame for any thing between God and their souls. Some, instead of being ashamed, are bold and confident in their condition, as pure enough : " There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes ; and yet is not washed from their filthiness," Prov. xxx. 12. Though they were never sprinkled with this clean water, yet they please themselves with their pollution. Some, instead of shame, do boast and glory in their sin ; they proclaim their sin as Sodom ; boast of that which afterwards will fill them with confusion of face, Jer. vi. 15, chap. viii. 12. Others go to a greater height, even of

taking pleasure in these who follow the same trade of sinning with themselves : " Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them," Rom. i. 32. Here is an open defiance to the holiness of God. Now, such persons as these will never seek after cleansing ; for, why should they do so, who are sensible of no spiritual pollution ? It is necessary, therefore, that these that would be cleansed, know, and be ashamed of their natural defilement ; for, where there is no sense of this, it will be but lost labour that is spent in inviting them to the cleansing fountain.

3. I would advise you to be assured and persuaded, that you can never cleanse or purify yourselves by your best endeavours. Men, in a state of nature, when brought under any convictions, are no way able to purge themselves ; though believers, in the faith of the promise, are called to it, 2 Cor. vii. 1, " Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit ;" yet natural men are quite unfurnished for any purifying exercise. Many make vain attempts this way, Hos. v. 13, Jer. ii. 22, Job ix. 30, 31. Their own sorrow, repentance, tears, and sorry amendments of life, they but thereby plunge themselves into the ditch, and keep themselves at a greater distance from Christ.

4. Seek to be acquaint with the only remedy for cleansing. This cleansing is a weighty matter ; for all the sacrifices of old were instituted for cleansing ; all the promises of old had a special reference to cleansing ; and the great design of the blood of Christ is for cleansing ; therefore, you see God himself making this a matter of great moment. This is also a difficult matter ; it is a leading part of the mystery of the gospel, which the world reckons foolishness. It is not easily admitted nor received, that we can no otherwise be cleansed from our sin, but by the sprinkling of that blood which was shed so long ago ; and yet this, and no other way, doth God hold forth to us.

5. Know, that the only way wherein the clean water of the cleansing blood of Christ is presented and exhibited unto us, for its effectual application to us, is in the promise, 2 Peter i. 4. And the only way to be partakers of the good things presented in the promise, is by faith, or trusting and confiding in the fidelity of the Promiser ; and whereas God hath given us great and precious promises, sealed by the blood of Christ, and confirmed by his oath, you

are to know that they are profitable to you only as they are mixed with faith, Heb. iv. 2.

6. This faith is to be sought and acted in a way of fervent prayer to God, for the Spirit of faith, and of all grace, Luke xi. 13 ; for, in this way the Lord communicates the purging efficacy of this blood, Psal. li. 7. Therefore, O pray, pray ; and set time apart to seek of God in earnest the application of the clean water, and the cleansing here promised. A good account may be expected of you, if henceforth it may be marked of you, as of Paul, "Behold, he prayeth."

2dly, We come now to speak a word to you that are washed and sprinkled with this clean water. These following duties are incumbent on you ; particularly,

1. Continual self-abasement in remembrance of the defilement from which you are delivered. You are called to be still abased as one that was born a leper, and in the view of the holiness of the God you have to do with.

2. The begun cleansing from your filthiness and idols, is matter of everlasting thankfulness, and should be celebrated with that song, "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever," Rev. i. 5, 6. Still maintaining a high value for the cleansing blood of Christ, and the holy Spirit, that makes the application of it. Had you not been washed in this fountain, you must have died in your pollution, and lain under it to eternity ; for the fire of hell will never purge the defilement of sin, much less will the fictitious fire of purgatory cleanse any from it.

3. Watch against sin, and all the secret motions of it, for they defile the conscience. There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared. Are you washed ? O believer, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall you. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation."

4. Walk humbly with your God. Every man, of himself, drinks in iniquity like water ; and our own clothes are ready to defile us every day. Our best works and duties, brought into the presence of infinite holiness, are but as filthy rags. We cannot perfect holiness, but in the fear of God.

5. Be still making new application to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, by faith and prayer. O sirs, surely no true

believer in this world is a stranger to this duty ; and the more any abounds therein, the more genuine is their faith evidenced to be, and the more humble is their walk before the Lord.

6, Abide in Christ, maintaining union and communion with him. But, perhaps, some may say, Seeing daily defilement will remain while in time, and seeing he is so absolutely pure and holy, how can fellowship be maintained betwixt clean and unclean, a holy God and a defiled sinner? To which we may reply, There are many sins whereby believers are defiled ; but the way of cleansing is still open to them in the promise ; and it is not merely the remains of defilement, but the neglect of purification, that is inconsistent with the believer's state and his fellowship with God. The rule of communion with God is expressed by David, Psalm xix. 12, 13, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins ; let them not have dominion over me. Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." God requires of all his people, that they walk uprightly before him, in a dependence upon his almighty power to enable them : "I am God almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect." Now, to this uprightness four things are requisite :

1. A constant humble acknowledgment of sin : "Who can understand his errors?"

2. A daily cleansing in the blood of Christ from those defilements, which the least secret sins are accompanied with : "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

3. A fear of sinning with a high hand, flowing from a sense of natural proneness thereto, and an ardent desire to be restrained therefrom : "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sin."

4. Deliverance from, or deprecating the dominion, notwithstanding the prevalency thereof : "Let them not have dominion over me ; then shall I be upright and innocent from the great transgression." Where these things are, then there is a man upright, and may have daily communion with a holy God. And while believers are preserved within these bounds, though they are defiled by sin, yet communion with God may be maintained ; for, our fellowship with Christ, while in this world, is with him as he is a Saviour, and we sinners ; as we have sin to be cleansed, and he hath blood to cleanse us ; and your sins and defilements, which you go to him with, and complain of, and want to be cleansed, instead

of casting you away for them, they draw out his compassions towards you. And know that he never united you to himself, or drew your heart to him, because you are perfect, but that in his own time and way he may make you so ; nor because you are clean, but that he might cleanse you, according to his promise : " I will sprinkle clean water upon you ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you."

In a word, take along with you that clean water which is the only laver for cleansing you from all your sins. Keep in your remembrance the perfect cleanness of it, the infinite power and efficacy of it. How great is that blood that must have more value, seeing it is the blood of the Son of God, than all sins can have guilt, seeing they are the sins but of the sons of men ! All sins are, compared with it, but like a drop of the bucket to the ocean. The more that you carry of this clean water in your heart, the more will it rid you of all unclean devils within and without. This clean water will never purify or corrupt ; hence, the blood of Christ is opposed to corruptible things : " We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without spot," 1 Peter i. 18. Intimating, that the blood of Christ, in regard of its power and efficacy, does not corrupt ; as the sun sheds his light every day about the world, yet remains a fresh spring of new light in the air every morning, so the blood of Christ shed upon the cross, loses not its virtue, but is as operative as ever, and remains a propitiation for ever. Hence, though the sacrifice was but once offered, yet it is often commemorated, to shew the perpetual virtue of it ; in regard that Christ, who was a Priest in his person, a sacrifice in his humanity, was also the altar in his divinity ; and this sanctified the sacrifice, and derived infinite dignity to it ; as gold which hath a lustre in itself, yet hath a greater when the sun shines full upon it. Christ was both the offerer and the sacrifice : " He offered himself," Eph. v. 2. His blood was offered by his person. Let this clean water, then, be highly prized, and daily improved, by faith and prayer, for the purpose for which it is here promised of God in the text : " Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."

SERMON LXXXIV.

GOSPEL-PRINCIPLE, THE FOUNDATION OF GOSPEL PRACTICE; OR,
THE GREAT DUTY OF RECEIVING CHRIST, AND WALKING IN
HIM, OPENED.¹

“As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”—Colos. ii. 6.

You have here such an ordinary text, that perhaps there are few present but have heard sermons preached upon it; and yet it is such an extraordinary text that we can never hear enough upon it, nor ever reach to the bottom. There is more in it than ever yet we saw or felt. It contains a sum of heart and life religion, and of all that concerns either faith or manners; a GOSPEL-PRINCIPLE, which is believing in Christ; and a GOSPEL-PRACTICE, a walking in him: “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”

The apostle here, in this epistle, gives a good copy to all the ministers of Christ to follow in their preaching and teaching, 1. To inform the judgments of people, and lay a good foundation in the knowledge of Christ. 2. To excite their affections after Christ, and to rouse and awaken them to a walk and conversation suitable to their knowledge and faith; knowing that there can be no sure building erected in a gospel walk, unless there be a sure foundation laid in a gospel principle. That the believing Colossians were well informed and instructed, the apostle observes, to the commendation and praise of free grace; and he exhorts them to persevere in the doctrine wherein they were taught by Epaphras, a faithful minister of Christ, chap. i. 7. However, there were false teachers that had crept in among them who were ready to beguile them with enticing words, chap. ii. 4, and that had actually seduced and carried away the Galatians from their true faith which they formerly professed Gal. i. 6, 7; yet he would have the Colossians to stand fast in their faith, and in that doctrine which had been truly and honestly delivered to them. The apostle commends the Colossians for their steadfastness, as you see in the verses preceding our text; and yet he

(1.) This subject was entered upon on a Thanksgiving-day, after the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Kinglassie; and afterwards finished in a series of discourses, in his own church in Dunfermline, in the year 1724.

exhorts them more and more to this duty, as you see from the verse following the text ; which may let us into something of the intent of the text itself ; intimating that the doctrine of Christ had been brought to them, and they had believed it, and received it, and Christ in it, and that though this was well, yet it was not all ; they were therefore, through grace, to persevere in that doctrine, to walk forward in the knowledge of Christ, and his gospel, and in the practice of what they knew.

The verse that goes before the text sets before us two things, that denote the good constitution and temperament of a right church, such as the church of the Colossians was. 1. The first is its order ; O but it makes a beautiful church when all things in it are ordered according to the pattern seen in the mount, with respect to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government ! When the doctrine is sound and lively, the worship pure and spiritual, discipline powerful and impartial, and the government beautiful and regular ; but it is a very unpleasant appearance in a church when confusion with respect to all these doth take place. 2. The second was stedfastness in the faith. The apostle rejoiced to behold in the church of Colosse, not only their order, but their stedfastness in the faith of Christ, in the doctrine of the gospel ; for, when a church fails in this, then all goes to wreck. If the apostle Paul were on earth, and to write an epistle to the Church of Scotland, would any think that he would have this to commend us for, our order and stedfastness in the faith ? O for such a prospect of affairs in this island, that we who have been Corinthians in respect of our disorders and divisions, and Galatians in respect of our unstedfastness in the right faith of Christ, and the revolt of many from reformation truth, may become Colossians in respect of our order and stedfastness in the faith, "I joy to behold your order and stedfastness," saith the apostle.

Now, as there are two things in that preceding verse that shew the good constitution of a church in general ; so, in this text, there are two things that shew and set forth the good state of any church member in particular, or of a true Christian. The first is, the receiving of Christ Jesus the Lord ; the second is, a walking in him. And we may conceive these two as having a reference to two things mentioned in the preceding verse, namely, order and stedfastness ; for, as there is no order, but all in confusion in that soul where there is no faith, or receiving of Christ ; so there is no stedfastness in faith where there is no walking in him. And as the text stands

properly connected with the former verse by the particle Therefore ; “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” From the connexion of these two verses, I say, you may observe, “That churches of the best constitution, both for the order and stedfastness of their faith, had need to be exhorted to hold fast their principles, and to keep their way.” This observation, I think, may be obvious to you at the first view ; it is the scope of the apostle all along in the chapter to fortify this church against swerving and declining from the truths of Christ ; and why does he so ? even because truth is but one, and when received is all reducable to this one word, the receiving of Christ Jesus the Lord, who is the centre of truth. Truth, I say, is but one, let all the men of the world say what they can about it, or the several branches of it, truth is simple and one ; but error is many. And the apostle, in order to fortify them from swerving from the truth, offers several caveats in this chapter.—One is verse 4, “And this, I say, lest any man beguile you with enticing words.” Enticing words are the bait wherewith credulous and simple sort of people are taken ; such as the apostle notices, Rom. xvi. 17, 18. The simple are they that are caught with this bait of enticing words, like merchants that put off slight and corrupt wares with the finest words.—Another caveat is ver. 8, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men ; after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ ;” and as the former is a bait to the simple ; so here is a bait to the more learned, where human philosophy, and natural reasonings are set in opposition to scriptural truth, as it is in Christ Jesus. A third caveat is ver. 16, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath day.” Where he cautions them against all legal ceremonies, the errors of Judaizers, and these that are symbolizers with ceremony-mongers. A fourth caveat he gives, even to this church of Colosse, is, verse 18, 19, “Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up with his fleshly mind ; and not holding the head from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” Where the apostle cautions against strange paradoxes and opinions in religion. Although some, for maintaining the faith of their forefathers, have been calumniated as if they were bringing in

new schemes of doctrine,¹ we could shew how some, in opposition to them, have brought in strange opinions that were never before heard tell of in this church, such as gospel repentance before faith and justification, a new scheme and principle that may be charged with not holding the Head, Jesus Christ, and faith in him, as the head of all other gospel graces. Of this nature is that of maintaining the believer's obligation to take the law out of the hand of a God out of Christ. How is this, and many other points that I could name, chargeable with not holding the Head Christ, from which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God? A fifth caveat is against all superstitious ordinances of men, ver. 21, 22, 23. These superstitious ordinances of men are but a tempting of God, Acts xv. 10, "Why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of disciples, which neither we, nor our fathers, were able to bear?" The apostle there speaks of legal ceremonies that were instituted of God, after they came to be abolished; and the argument is the stronger, for if it was a tempting of God to make use of these ceremonies that God himself had instituted of old, then what prodigious tempting of God is it to bring in such a superstitious and ceremonial service into the worship of God, as is entirely of human invention? In a word, the sixth caveat is against all deviations whatsoever from Christ and his truth, and this is the scope of the whole chapter; he fortifies them against all deviations and declinings; and how does he that? just as you would do a house that leans to the one side; what would you do? surely you would labour to get it upright and perpendicular to its foundation: Even so, the apostle strives to make the church here perpendicular, and upright upon their foundation, and that is Christ and his doctrine; exhorting them, under the phrase of holding the head, ver. 19, and getting a full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God. And so in the text, and immediate context, it is expressed by a walking in him, a being rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught.

The apostle here useth similitudes; and there are these three comparisons couched here. 1. That Christ is the way, and this is implied in these words, "walk ye in him." 2. That Christ is the root, and this is implied in these words, "rooted in him." 3.

(1) These who espoused the Marrow Doctrine, at this time controverted, were thus unjustly accused.

That Christ is the foundation, and that is implied in these words, "built up in him." Why, say you, how can a man stand rooted and stable, and yet walk? Why, you may walk, and yet keep your way stedfast; you may build, and yet build high in Christ; you may be rooted in Christ the true vine, and yet grow in him. And hence that emphasis, in the 6th and 7th verses, "As ye have received," and "As ye have been taught." Why, some may think they cannot grow unless they change and overgrow their principles, as a child does over-grow his old clothes. But why cannot a man mend his pace, and yet go on in his right path still? Cannot a man build high and yet build upon the foundation still? Cannot a man grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, and of the truth of Christ, and yet grow upon the everlasting root still? Yea, surely; we are to walk as we have received, and to be established as we have been taught. And here is comfort to believers that are of the lowest form, such as have no great stock of knowledge to trade with in difficult questions; here there is comfort, that fundamental points are few and clear; so few, that a weak capacity, in any measure divinely spiritualized, may bear them; and so clear, that a dim eye, in any measure divinely enlightened, may see them. Would you know what is the field where all the flowers of truth grow? It is the word: Therefore says Christ, "Search the Scriptures, for these are they that testify of me." The Scripture is God's word, God's field; and Christ is the treasure hid in the field: search in that field till you find the treasure, and then you will find all truth treasured up in them. Hence the apostle, Eph. ii. 20, sums up all fundamental truths in two words to believers; "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head-corner stone." There is the sum total of doctrinal fundamentals, or fundamental doctrines. Yea, the very same apostle hath learned us to sum up all in one word, PANTA KAI EN PASI CHRISTOS, "*Christ is All, and in all.*" God can, with one glance of Christ's glory, in the light of his word and Spirit, give you a view of all. Why, the Scripture is to be believed, because it is inspired by God, it is a garden of God's planting; but there is a garden within that garden; the gospel is the paradise of the whole scripture, and Christ is the tree of life in the midst of that gospel-paradise.

But besides the doctrinal fundamentals, there are what we may call practical fundamentals, which pertain to the state and being of

a true Christian, and these are two, and they are both in our text; the one is a "receiving of Christ Jesus," and the other is a "walking in him." The former, viz., "the receiving of Christ," is necessary to the essence and being of a Christian; the latter, viz., "walking in Christ," is necessary to the progress, growth, and well-being of a Christian.

Now, in the words, you my notice these four things. 1. The believer's character and privilege; he is one that hath "received Christ Jesus the Lord." 2. The believer's duty, namely, to walk in him. 3. The rule of his duty, which is to walk in him as he hath received him. 4. The connection betwixt the character and the duty, the one being supposed to the other, gospel-faith being the ground of gospel practice; no walking in Christ, unless there be a receiving of him: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

Now, I shall, as the Lord may assist, explain these parts of the text, in the prosecution of this doctrine.

OBSERV. "That as true believers are these that have received Christ Jesus the Lord: so they ought to walk in him as they have received him.

The method may be according to the several parts of the text.

- I. To speak of the believer's character and dignity as a receiver of Christ Jesus the Lord.
- II. To speak of the believer's duty, namely, to walk in Christ.
- III. To speak of the rule of his duty, and the proportion it should bear to his reception of Christ, namely, that he is to walk in Christ as he hath received him.
- IV. To speak of the connection betwixt the character and the duty, or between receiving Christ and walking in him; where we may inquire into the order of this connection and the reason of it.
- V. Draw some Inferences for the Application of the whole.

I. The first general Head is to speak of the believer's character; he is one that receiveth Christ Jesus the Lord. Receiving Christ and believing in him are equivalent terms; John i. 12, "To as many as recieved him, to them gave he power to become the sons

of God, even to them that believe in his name." And as they have power, or privilege, to become the sons of God, by believing in him, or receiving him ; so they have power to receive him by virtue of their receiving the spirit of faith, by the means of the doctrine of faith, or the gospel-doctrine. Gal. iii. 2, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" But that I may speak more closely to this point, the receiving of Christ Jesus the Lord ; the text leads me to inquire into three things. 1. The act of faith, as it is a receiving. 2. The object of it, Christ. 3. The capacity, or respect, under which this object is received, namely, as he is Christ Jesus the Lord. These points being very great and momentous, I would touch at them severally.

First, The ACT of faith, it is called a receiving of Christ. Now, to explain this act of receiving Christ ; as distinctly as, through grace, I can, you may notice that it hath something supposed that it relates to, and something imported that it consists in.

1st, It hath something supposed that it relates to. This receiving then does refer or relate unto some offer or tender that is made of Christ to him that does receive him. For Christ is unknown to nature, he is unknown to reason, and unknown to the wisdom of the wisest men upon the earth, until he be revealed and offered, there being no footsteps of the gospel in the heart or nature of man ; whatsoever there may be of the law, there is none of the gospel. Now, therefore, receiving relates to offering ; a receiving-hand hath relation to an offering-hand, holding forth Christ to be received, and that is the hand of God's free grace in the dispensation of the gospel. And this offer of Christ unto sinners in the gospel, in order to their being believers, is sometimes in scripture called a giving of Christ, John iii. 27, "A man can receive nothing, unless it be given to him from heaven." And therefore we maintain, that as it is the duty of all that hear this gospel to receive Christ, and believe in him ; so it is the privilege of all that hear the gospel, that Christ is given to them in the offer thereof. It is true, the giving in possession follows faith ; "My Father giveth you the true bread." The taking-hand of faith, pre-supposes the giving-hand of God. God's promise in the gospel is the offering-hand, that offers Christ ; a saving faith of God's operation, is the receiving-hand which goes forth to the hand that offers ; and when these two hands meet together, then the work is done, there is a receiving. But that you may the better understand this point of receiving Christ, by

considering this offer that receiving relates to, there are three things that may be observed. 1. To what kind of persons the gospel offers Christ. 2. Upon what grounds. 3. For what ends. Mark these three then in the offer of Christ.

1. To what kind of persons the offer is made. To whom doth the hand of the promise hold them out? The person to whom he is held out, is no other than a lost sinner, a lost soul: Christ came to seek and save them that were lost: I mean not only these that are sensible of their lost state, but these that are in a lost state, whether they be sensible of it or not; if the gospel comes to them, the offer of Christ comes to them: "To you, O men, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." We are warranted to preach the gospel to every rational creature, Mark xvi. 15. The offer of Christ comes to you. Why, may not sin exclude us from the offer? By no means; for Christ came to save sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15. If sinners were excepted, all mankind would be excepted; for all have sinned. But is it to gross sinners? Yea, Isa. i. 18, "Come let us reason together—though your iniquities were like scarlet, I will make them white as snow; though they be red, like crimson, I will make them as wool." To murderers of the Lord of glory was the offer made, Acts ii. 41. But are mockers and scorers under the offer? Yea, they are, as you see, Prov. i. 22, 23. But what if a person cares not for the offer, and thinks himself happy enough without Christ, and believes himself well enough as he is without him; is the offer of Christ to such? Certainly it is; "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread; and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good; and let your soul delight itself in fatness," Isa. lvi. 1, 2. But if a man be neither convinced of sin or misery, nor see any need of Christ, is Christ offered to him? Yea, undoubtedly he is; Rev. iii. 18, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich: and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed." Let them venture to shut the door of the gospel-offer who will, we must open it in God's name to all who hear this gospel, and tell them that Christ is offered to them, that he may be received by them: and if there were no offer, it would not be their duty to receive, and so unbelief would not be their sin. Again, let them shift the offer of the gospel who will, and think Christ is not offered to them, this offer will rise up in judgment against them, if they do not answer it; for, "He that believeth not, shall be

damned." And one of two shall take place upon this universal offer, either ye shall receive him as offered, or ye shall all be made inexcusable that receive him not; I am pretty sure, though we reach not the first, yet the second shall take place, though I should say no more than I have said. The gospel-offer does not tell who will come; for many get the offer who will never receive the gift offered to them: but it tells who should come, and that is all: But though all should come, whether they be sensible of their lost state or not: yet these that see themselves lost, are in the fairest way to receive the offer of a Saviour; and none will come, till God make them see themselves lost and undone without Christ, as all of you are lost indeed, though few are sensible of their lost state. However, I say to lost souls, Christ is offered to these that are spoiled by the sentence of the law, arraigned, convicted, condemned, and accursed; the hand of the gospel promise holds out Christ to you; for where Moses leaves you, there Joshua finds you, where the law ends, there the gospel begins; the law ends in the shipwreck of the sinner in splitting him upon the rock of its terrors and curses, drowning him in the ocean of divine wrath, and sinking him into the depths of despair; and just there the gospel begins; it comes to the bottom of the pit of sin and misery, and offers a Christ, a Saviour. Thus, where Moses leaves you, there Joshua finds you. When the law ends, Christ begins; and when the soul is so shipwrecked by the law, that he is, as it were, all to pieces, to such an one is the gospel offer most welcome; for the hand of grace holds forth Christ, like a plank after shipwreck, a plank to swim ashore upon. Such a soul is encouraged to see no other qualification required of him to come to Christ, and receive him but just that he is lost, which he finds himself to be; and there is no other condition or qualification required, but that you be a lost man, a sinful miserable person. Some will offer Christ upon such and such terms, saying, you must be so and so humbled, so and so penitent, before Christ can be offered to you; so that a man that finds himself a lost, sinful, unhumbled, impenitent, wretched creature, can never come to their hand, or meddle with what they offer; just like a man holding out a cup of excellent wine to his friend, and offering him a drink, but in the mean time he hath made the wine scalding hot upon the fire, so as the man, to whom it is offered, dare not touch it with his lips, even so, many offer Christ, and hold forth the cup of salvation to the people, but they heat their gospel

liquor, as it were red hot upon the fire of the law ; I mean, with so many legal terms, conditions, and qualifications, that the poor soul that finds himself a lost sinner, every way sinful, destitute of all good qualifications, dare not come near, and thinks he may not, he ought not to come near with his lip to taste it. We need be at no pains to hinder sinners from coming to Christ, to receive the offer, for they are unwilling enough of themselves. Besides that, they will never have a good qualification till they come to him and receive him ; and all good in him ; all grace and glory, all holiness and happiness. Thus you see to what kind of persons the offer of Christ is made which the receiving of Christ doth relate to.

2. Upon what ground is the offer made? Or, what is the ground upon which Christ is offered? To this I answer, only in general, It is just upon the ground of free grace ; sovereign grace in Christ crucified. And hence the gospel is called by the name of GRACE, Tit. ii. 11, " The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men ;" or, as in the margin, " The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men," it brings the offer of Christ, and so of salvation to all men to whom the gospel comes ; and it is grace that does it, without the consideration of any condition, or qualification in us. Sovereign grace is a thing that can neither be promoted by our goodness, or hindered by our badness. Free grace, that makes the offer, looks neither to the worthiness, nor unworthiness of the receiver ; neither to his merit, nor demerit ; neither to the merit of his virtue, nor the demerit of his vice. It is the hand of the promise that offers Christ to the lost sinner, upon the ground of free grace alone ; and here is the most inviting encouragement to a lost sinner that can be, that as he hath no worthiness to plead for him [which if he had, grace would be no grace,] so his unworthiness is no bar against him ; for, if it were, then grace would be no grace also in this respect ; for if your worthiness did work it, then it would not be the work of grace ; or, if your unworthiness did hinder it, then it would not be the doing of grace ; yea, grace would never do any thing at all ; for all are unworthy. Here there is encouragement to all sinners to receive an offered Christ. But, what is the obstruction? Why, when a man should take hold of Christ, then his heart goes about to mar the freedom of grace, before he dare venture his soul upon it? and how is that? Even by seeking some qualifications in himself that Christ should be offered unto him ; why, I should be so and so holy, before I meddle

with Christ; so and so humble and penitent, before I reckon the gospel offer belongs to me. Thus a man naturally would be looking after something in himself, and he would gladly find it, that he may thus build the gospel upon the law; God upon the man; Christ upon self; and free grace upon works; for it is no better than so; and thus the soul will not come to free grace; he will be obstructing himself; and in this mire he lies till free grace teach him how to come to the market of free grace, without money, and without price; till then all is but nothing; the ground of the offer is free and sovereign grace. What a great deal of latent obstructions are there that hinder our receiving this offer of Christ made by free grace! Why, when a lost sinner comes ever to find himself a lost sinner, then he stands aback because he thinks either he is too much lost, or too little lost. Either,

(1.) He thinks he is too much lost, his sins are so very great; and so the man secretly says, that he would buy his pardon with his own goodness, if he had it, and will not be obliged to free grace for it; or by this means he magnifies the demerit of his sins, above the merit of the blood of Christ, which is a great affront poured upon the infinitely glorious bargain that is in his offer. Or,

(2.) He thinks he is too little lost, his sense of sin and humiliation is so very little; and this is another obstruction. He would be more broken and more humbled, before he thinks the offer belongs to him; and this shews the fulness of his heart, that though he thinks he cannot buy Christ at the gospel market, with his good works, yet he would buy and purchase Christ with his humiliation, deep down-casting, and the like. Now, this cannot be, it is but a rotten excuse; for, what though you should sink as far into the deeps of legal convictions, as despair itself; yet, will that despair merit any thing at the hand of God, or yet make God better pleased with him? No: to despair is to displease him, as well as to presume. And as you cannot presume, if you come to take him in the tenor of our text, namely, as a Christ, as a Jesus, as a Lord, (of which afterwards), so you cannot despair, if you know that the ground of the offer is free grace. Would you be humbled to despair in yourself, and of all your excellencies, and of recommending yourself to God by any good, any humility of yours, it were a good despair; but if you would be humbled for sin, so far as to expect thereupon the favour of God, and forgiveness of sin, this can never be. But here a question may be proposed, What measure of

humiliation should I have? We answer, So much humiliation as makes you see your want of humiliation, your want of all good, all grace, all conditions, and qualifications; so much as shall oblige you to relinquish your own fancied goodness, and make you come to Christ for all, and accept of him upon gospel terms, and the term of the gospel is free grace. I will tell you, by a comparison, the true level of humiliation. When is the metal sufficiently melted in the fire? It may be burnt in the fire, and it may be melted to little; but when is it enough? Why, it appears to be melted enough when it runs easily into the mould; but now, it is not the melting that gives it the shape, the form, or fashion; but the melting makes it run into the mould, and the mould gives it the form or shape; so I say here, When is the soul melted enough? It is when it runs into the gospel mould. There are some that have, as it were, too much of the fire; there are these that apprehend themselves such great sinners that they dare not come to Christ. There are others that have too little of the fire; these are they that only think they are not so good as they ought to be, and therefore they should not come. There are others that have nothing of the fire at all; and these are they that think they are good enough already, and they need not come to receive Christ. But then only is the soul melted enough in the fire, when it runs into the mould. What is the gospel mould? It is even Christ. And when the melted soul, like melted lead, or other metal, runs into this mould, then, and not till then, does it get a good shape; it is not the melting that gives it the shape or fashion, or form, but it is the mould that gives the form. And so never expect to have any good form, any good shape, any good qualification, till your soul run into this mould, by receiving Christ Jesus the Lord, thus offered to you upon the ground of free grace. And thus you see the ground of the offer.

3. For what end is the offer made? Why, Christ is offered to the lost sinner, upon the ground of free grace, to be both a Jesus and a Lord. As he is to be received as such (of which we may afterward speak), so he is offered as such, even as a Saviour and a Lord; that is, he hath coupled the salvation of Christ, and the dominion of Christ together; and it shews that all whom he saves he will sanctify; that whom he saves, by the price of his blood, he will conquer by the power of his Spirit; he being the Christ of God, Anointed of God, Sealed of God, to be both a Saviour and a Lord; and he is offered for this end to be both. This shews what

a suitable offer it is to the poor sinner that is both under the wrath of God, the curse of the law, condemned to hell fire, which makes him stand in need of Christ as a Saviour ; and also, he is under the power of sin, the slavery of lusts, the bondage of Satan, which makes him stand in need of Christ as a Lord ; and here is encouragement to the poor soul, that would be sanctified as well as justified, Christ is offered for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ; he is not offered as a Saviour only, to save from hell ; but as a Lord also to deliver from sin. Now, what is the great obstruction here, that hinders the receiving of the offer ? Why, it is even the false heart that would divide salvation from dominion ; would be content to have his soul saved, but not to have the sin conquered, would have Christ as a Jesus, but not as a Lord ; the man would be under his garment, and yet not under his government. In this case, the man is not so much out of love with sin, as out of love with hell ; not so much in love with Christ, as with his benefits : while his guilt craves Christ's salvation, his lusts oppose Christ's Lordship. If Christ were offered as a cloak to your lusts, then the false and bloody calumny of some would be true, that we call men to believe, and then live as they list. Why, If Christ were offered as a Jesus, a Saviour, and not as a Lord, then such a thing might be supposed ; but let the mouth of calumny be stopt : we offer Christ to sinners, upon the ground of free grace, both as he is a Jesus and a Lord ; and I defy any man in the world to receive this offer, and yet desire to live as he lists. It is not possible in nature : For if the language of man's heart be, Lord let my soul be saved, but let my lusts reign ; in this case the offer is not received ; for then the man says, Let me have Christ as a Saviour, but not as a Lord : and so, the offer not being received, it is not faith, but a fancy, a delusion ; for, at the same time that he desires such a latitude, he refuses the offer of Christ as a Lord ; yea, and betrays the rottenness of his faith in him as a Saviour, while he would divide salvation from dominion, and Christ's priesthood from his lordship.

When God brings a man therefore to receive his offer in the gospel, he makes him to pass under three convictions, which three you read of, John xvi. 8, " When the Spirit is come, he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." 1 He passes under the conviction of sin ; both of his general sin, in rebelling against and contemning the authority of a commanding God in the law ; and of his particular sin of unbelief, in despising the

grace as a promising God in the gospel. 2. He passes under the conviction of righteousness; that is, of the righteousness of Christ as a Saviour, a Priest, a Sacrifice, and as the Lord our righteousness, for justification: he is convinced that he is lost for ever without an interest in this righteousness. 3. He passes under the conviction of judgment; that is, of the government of Christ; making the man willing to be subject to him, as well as justified by him; to be under the dominion of his grace, as well as under the covert of his blood. Now, till a man hath passed these three convictions, he is still blocked up, and concluded under unbelief.

There are two things, which when they do appear, tend mightily to draw out the heart toward the gospel-offer; the one is in us, the other is in Christ. The first is, the necessity of the sinner; and the second is, the excellency of the Saviour. The necessity of having Christ upon pain of death, and the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. The one makes the man willing to be saved by him, the other makes the man willing to be subdued by him. Such is my necessity, Oh I must have him for a Jesus to me! Such is his excellency, Oh I must have him for a Lord to me! And thus he is brought to go in to the proper ends of the gospel-offer, namely, to receive Christ as Jesus the Lord.

Thus I have shewed you somewhat relative to the offer which this receiving of Christ relates to. And from this manner of offering Christ, it appears, that though the offer be to sinners, and grounded upon free grace, yet what a hard thing, yea, how impossible it is, without the almighty power of God, to receive the offer, or to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. What a mighty hard work it is, when there are such obstructions in the way! Many think it is an easy thing to be believers; and so it may be said indeed of a multitude of ordinary, superficial, dogmatical believers in the world. But saving faith, though it be the easiest and sweetest thing in the world, under the conduct of divine grace, and the drawings of the divine Spirit, yet, without that, it is the hardest thing in the world. Why?

1. For a lost sinner, under the curse of the law, to believe that God should be as good to him, as the promise of the gospel tells him, is hard; nay, he is afraid the promise be too good to be true, and this argues his want of faith; for whatever unbelief does, faith never questions the truth of God's promise.

2. For a proud man to be beholden to free grace, when he hath been building his hope all his days upon some good work or deed

of his own ; for such a sinner to strip himself of his own righteousness, and look upon it as a filthy rag ; how hard is this ! nay, publicans and harlots go to heaven sooner.

3. For a sinner filled with self-love, self-ease, self-will, self-wisdom, self-sufficiency, self-estimation, self-justification, to deny himself, his sinful self, his natural self, moral self, worldly self, religious self, and go wholly out of himself, and wholly in to Christ for all ; all this is very hard : and yet for this end Christ is offered, that he may be thus received, even for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all ; for wisdom, that is, as a Prophet to teach you ; for righteousness, that is, as a Priest to justify you ; for sanctification, that is, as a King to sanctify you ; and for complete redemption, that is, for your all and all ; even the whole of your salvation, in time and through eternity. Now, the hardness and difficulty of believing and accepting of this noble offer, does not lie in some great work that you have not power to do, for faith and works are opposite here ; believing is not working : He that believeth, is he that worketh not but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5, but the difficulty rather lies in some great worth, and apprehended good, that you have no will to quit, till a day of power make you willing ; such as, your own wit and wisdom, which you oppose unto Christ as a Prophet : your own works and righteousness, which you oppose unto Christ as a Priest : your own strength and power, together with your own self-love and sin-love, which you oppose unto Christ as a King. In receiving this offer, the man not only quits his sin and lust, which is very hard ; but quits his righteousness and works, which is yet harder. Need I to explain this, for preventing mistakes, in this critical age and day of reproach ? When I speak of quitting our works, I mean, a quitting them, not in point of performance, but in point of dependence ; it is a quitting of the law, not as a rule of obedience, but as a rule of acceptance, or as a covenant of works. Now, I say, it is the hardest of all for a man to quit his works and righteousness, and have no hope of any favour or acceptance with God for them ; for the light of nature, will tell him, that he should quit his sins ; but the light of nature, and the remainders of the legal covenant in him, will never tell him that he should quit his works and righteousness ; nay, it will tell him, on the quite contrary, that he must do, or be damned ; that he must do and live ; and work so and so well, and God will accept of him. This is the way of the covenant of works,

the natural way ; and to quit that way is right hard, so as to venture all upon the works of another, the righteousness of another : Indeed it is not so hard for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, with his hunch on his back, as for a rich man ; I mean one that is rich in his own conceit, rich and increased with goods, and standing in need of nothing ; nay, it is impossible for him with his hunch of duties and works of righteousness on his back, to enter into heaven. Some by the needle-eye, understand the wicket of the gate of Jerusalem, no camel with his burden could go in ; so it is here. Others by the camel, understand a cart-rope, as they think the word we translate camel, may be rendered ; and as a cart-rope cannot go through the eye of a needle, unless it be untwisted, and put through the needle's eye thread by thread ; neither will any get to heaven, unless the cart-rope of his righteousness be untwisted and dissolved piece-meal ; for otherwise his cart-rope will be fit for nothing, but casting anchor on the sandy bank of the law, where his vessel will be broken to pieces, and his soul will sink into the sea of God's wrath, for "By the deeds of the law, no flesh living can be justified."

So that, I say, the difficulty here lies not so much in some great thing that you have not power to do, but in some great thing that you have not will to undo : and so the greatest knack of true religion lies in being made willing ; and the great power of God is necessary for that end ; "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power ;" and when this day of power comes, then to receive the offer of Christ for the ends for which he is offered, becomes as easy as ever before it was hard ; why, the offer takes hold of the man's heart, and the offering hand takes hold of the receiving hand : like a child, that never had a pen in his hand, and cannot write a word, the father takes the child's hand within his, and leads it ; so here, the Lord takes the man's hand, and leads it to write down his name, to sign the offer, saying, I accept.

Now, what shall we say ? Is there any here to whom the offer is come with power ? The external dispensation of this gospel, and revelation of this offer, make it the unquestionable duty of every one of you to accept and receive it ; but it is the internal effectual revelation of it only, that will determine you actually to accept and receive it freely, without money, and without price : without terms and conditions on your side ; renouncing all the good qualifications you dreamed of having to recommend you to him, and coming to

him for all ; like a black and ugly monster coming to accept of an offer that can make you fair and clean. It is an offer of all things in Christ : and nothing makes it hard and uneasy but yourself, that you will not quit an all, that is nothing, and take an all, that is all things. The natural man finds it hard, because it is a quitting all the good that he has ; but the enlightened soul finds it easy, because it is just a taking all the good that he wants ; and when he is taking all things in Christ, he does not find it hard to quit all in himself ; why, he sees all things loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ ; and when he sees that, he finds it is not hard to relinquish a heap of jewels, and a pearl of infinitely great price in the midst of them. O ! is there any here welcoming God's offer ? Here is his offering hand, where is your receiving hand ? Here is the hand of grace offering, where is the hand of faith accepting ? Is any here taking God's offer off his hand ? Do you see the offer is to you ; to you, man ; to you, woman ; whether young or old ? "To you is the word of this salvation sent." The greater gift it is that is offered to you, the less will you be ready to take, as long as you think, it cannot be to me. But to you, I say, it is, man, woman ; whoever you are, the promise is to you ; the offer is to you, be who you will. Now, are you receiving, are you taking God's offer ? Why, if you be doing so, it is easy, through grace, to know that you are doing so. How do you know when you are taking a gift that a man offers you, in an outward sense ? The man holds it out in his hand, saying, Take it ; and if you receive, then you hold out your hand to his, saying, Content, I will take it ; or, if your hand be short, and cannot reach his, yet you will hold it out in testimony of your acceptance, saying, Well, come and give it. So here, in a spiritual sense, if you be taking God's offer off his hand, then your heart will be determined to say, Content, Lord ; even so I take the unspeakable gift that thou offerest ; or, if your hand be short, or withered, that you think you cannot get the offer embraced as you would, yet you will be stretching out heart and hand as you can, saying, Come, Lord, and give what thou offerest ; even a whole Christ to be wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all to me. O ! is this the language of your soul, I have nothing, but let Christ come and be all for me ; I can do nothing, but let Christ come and do all for me ; I have a world of self-enmity, and innumerable evils, that oppose Christ within me, but let Christ come in and put all to the

door that hold him out ; I cannot take him, but let him take me, and take my blessing for ever ? Why, if that were the language of your heart and soul, I hope there hath been some secret power working in you to make you thus far to receive the offer of God. And thus I have considered the offer which the receiving of Christ relates unto. Now, I told you that as to this act of receiving we would consider what it relates to, and what it consists in. Having then shewed what it relates to, namely, the offer, I come to shew,

2dly, What it consists in. Here I need not tell you, that receiving and believing are all one, according to John i. 12 ; and this believing is not a mere notional persuasion, or dogmatical opinion concerning Christ ; for that is too slight a thing to be accounted a receiving of Christ ; but this receiving of Christ,

(1.) In general, to express it in a word, if possible, it may be called (as one of our renowned commentators expresses it) a fiducial knowledge ; that is, such a knowledge of Christ as leads the soul to an assured confidence in him. Our Shorter Catechism defines faith to be, a receiving of Christ, and resting on him, for salvation, as he is offered in the gospel. And this resting is not so much a different act from that of receiving, as it is a continuation of that act of receiving ; for when we receive him for salvation we begin our resting on him ; and when we rest upon him for salvation, we continue our receiving of him, or believing in him. The reception is the rest begun ; and the resting, is the reception continued. And therefore whatever application of Christ is imported in resting on him, the same is imported in receiving of him. And as Christ is offered to every one in particular, that hear the gospel ; so it is the duty of every one to receive the offer by applying Christ to himself, for his own particular good, benefit, and salvation. I could here lay before you several terms or expressions whereby this faith, or receiving of Christ, is held forth in the scripture, but I confine myself to the text. Receiving of Christ is “ a going out of the whole soul, to close with Christ for complete salvation to a man’s self, as he is offered in the gospel,” and so the language of faith is, Here is an offer made by God to me myself ; and therefore I receive Christ for salvation to myself, according to the offer, and that with my whole heart and soul, for, “ With the heart man believeth unto righteousness : My heart trusteth in him, and I am helped,” said the psalmist. Some make faith to be only an act of the will, that they may exclude from the nature of faith that persuasion which yet can-

not be excluded. In opposition to such we assert, That, according to scripture, faith is an act of the whole soul; the understanding, will, and affections; and hence these and the like scriptures, make faith to be an act of the soul, Psalm lvii. 2, "O my God, my soul trusteth in thee." Psalm xvi. 2, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord. O my soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him. My soul maketh her boast in the Lord. My soul thirsteth for the living God. Return to thy rest, O my soul." All eminent expressions of faith. Now, I say, this receiving of Christ is the soul's closing with him; the soul's going out towards him; or going in to him as offered, so as to become one with him. As you see how grafts are knit to the stock, so as to become one with the stock, and one in the stock, or else it cannot live in a vegetative manner; so the soul is by faith knit and unite to Christ, the root, to be one with him, and one in him; for true faith so closes with Christ, as not merely to have a Christ without the man, but a Christ within the him; and therefore the soul by faith goes in to Christ, so as not only to unload his debt, and leave his sin and guilt upon him, but also to surrender himself into his possession and property.

But that I may further open up this act of receiving Christ, I would,

(2.) And more particularly consider the nature thereof, in the following qualities of it:—

1. This act of receiving Christ is a spiritual act, in opposition to all natural acts done by natural wit and strength; men may believe that way with a cradle faith, a natural faith, a common faith, and believe unto perdition; but will never believe to the saving of their souls. True faith is a spiritual act, under the conduct of the Spirit of faith; and therefore faith is called a fruit of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22; and of the power of the Spirit, even the exceeding greatness of his mighty power, Eph. i. 19. It is a fruit and effect of the day of God's power, and the revelation of his arm, Isa. liii. 1. It is the gift of God, and a fruit of his free grace; and hence we read of some that through grace believed, Acts xviii. 27. The power of the Spirit of Christ creates it where it is not; and that same power of the Spirit excites it where it is, It is a spiritual act.

2. This act of receiving Christ is a judicious act, in opposition to darkness and confusion. The man being acted by the Spirit of

faith doth act judiciously and distinctly, as in a matter of the greatest concern with judgment and understanding, saying, as John vi. 68, "To whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life? We believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." The man believes the promise, and the doctrine of grace and salvation so judiciously, that, as his judgment approves it as a truth, so the will accepts it as a good; "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief," 1 Tim. i. 15.

3. This act of receiving Christ is a warrantable act, in opposition to presumption and delusion. True faith acts upon a sufficient warrant. It acts upon the warrant of an objective sufficiency; there is a sufficient Christ presented to him. O the sufficiency of his person, being God-man, in one person! the sufficiency of his offices, whether his general offices, as a Mediator, a Surety, a Redeemer; or his particular offices, as a Prophet, Priest, and King; the sufficiency of his righteousness, his doing and dying, his obedience and satisfaction; the sufficiency of his power, being able to save to the uttermost; the sufficiency of his will, while he proclaims his good-will towards men, and that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Besides, faith acts upon the warrant of a general dispensation of grace, through Christ, in the external revelation of the word, where the elect are not characterized more than others, but life and salvation through Christ held out to sinners of mankind, without distinction of nation, state, or condition, and so in an indefinite way. Thus run all the promises, except these that are made to believers, or such as have grace already; to them indeed the promises are definite, as also they are definite to the elect in the purpose of God; but in the external dispensation of the gospel, they are indefinite and general, Acts ii. 32, Rom. ix. 4. And as the promise is indefinite, so the call is universal, whether by exhortations, invitations, counsels, or commands, to all and every one to come and receive Christ, and all his sure mercies, freely. And upon such like warrants as these does faith act.

4. This act of receiving Christ it is an adventuring act, in opposition to despondency, diffidence, and distrust; hence it is called a boldness, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus." It is a venturing our souls, our life, upon the blood of the Son of God, and upon the promise of God in Christ. To receive Christ, and believe, is in effect to say, I adventure my

soul upon nothing in the world, but, upon the promise of a God that I have provoked, and been an enemy to, all my days; I have nothing but the word of this God, and yet I must venture upon it my everlasting all. It is an adventuring grace, like Peter upon the boisterous water, with this in his mouth and heart, "Master, save me," Matt. xiv. 30. To venture upon the promise of a provoked God, and to believe him to be a God in Christ reconciled, according to his word, upon the account of the ransom he hath found out, and the propitiation he hath set forth; here is the boldness of faith. It is a venturing act.

5. This act of receiving Christ, it is an evangelical act, in opposition to a legal faith. It is evangelical in the ground of it; legal faith acts upon the ground of a legal inherent strength, and personal righteousness; but true faith upon a borrowed strength, and an imputed righteousness of another, saying, "Surely in the Lord only have I righteousness and strength;" and it is a self-emptying grace, stripping the man of his own righteousness, of his own strength, and taking him entirely off his own bottom. It is evangelical in the order of it, receiving him as a Jesus, and then as a Lord; first for justification; legal faith perverts that gospel order, seeking sanctification first, that upon that bottom it may build its justification: "Seeking righteousness, as it were, by the works of the law," Rom. ix. 32. It is evangelical in its fruit; legal faith is a fruitless faith, it brings forth no acceptable fruit, either from a right principle or to a right end; and so all its fruits of good works are rejected, as unprofitable and vain; but true faith brings virtue and good from its object; such as, ease to the conscience, quiet to the mind, holiness to the heart, and holy lustre to the whole life; when faith touches, if it were but the hem of Christ's garment, virtue comes out and heals the soul; grace comes forth, and purifies the heart; yea, it brings forth all the good fruit of gospel-grace: "Out of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace," John i. 16. Faith is the receiving grace, and other graces are received by it; it fetches them out of Christ's fulness; it brings out repentance, and then it is a penitential faith; gospel-repentance is in it, and with it, and after it, but not before it. As true faith is a penitent faith, even so it is a humble faith, a joyful faith, a thankful faith, an obediential faith, a working faith; yea faith is the root of all these fruits that natively grow upon it, and go along with it.

6. This act of receiving Christ, it is a particular, appropriating,

fiducial act, in opposition to the general doubtful faith of the Papists, which we have abjured in our National Covenant. The man that believes truly, believes applicatively. The man that receives Christ rightly, receives him with a particular appropriation to himself; just as a man eats and drinks for his own particular benefit; and hence faith is called an eating of the flesh, and drinking of the blood of the Son of God; that is, he takes home Christ, his merit, righteousness, mediation, and the benefits thereof to his own soul. And thus it is also a fiducial act, importing an assured confidence according to the measure of it, in opposition to an uncertain faith. A doubtful, wavering faith, is not the faith that receives Christ; nay, it is a faith that receives nothing, if we will take God's word for it, James i. 5, 6, 7, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, 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." Why then, a doubtful faith receives nothing, far less such a prize as Christ. I know some have been reproached on this head, notwithstanding of this plain scriptural doctrine, as if they asserted, that they had no pity upon doubting believers. Really we should have no pity upon ourselves if we should say, that no believers have their doubts. Well, say you, may not a man that hath faith have doubts? Yea, to be sure he may; but his doubts are not his faith, but his unbelief; and whoever said but a believer may have much unbelief? I would ask such persons, May not a man that hath grace, have corruption? And yet you will own that his corruption is none of his grace; nay, it is the direct opposite of grace; even so, a man that hath faith, may have doubts, but yet his doubts are not his faith, but his sin, his unbelief, and the quite opposite of faith; there is no doubting in his faith, even as there is no corruption in grace; they are antipodes. And it is not by his doubting, but by his believing, that he receives any thing from God. The Lord deliver us from justifying a doubtful faith which Christ reproves: "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" Some make doubting a mark of faith; but it is such a mark of faith as corruption is a mark of grace, as in the following sense: Why, say you, there is a notorious profligate sinner, that says he never doubted all his days, but still had a good hope; that is indeed a sign that he hath no faith; whereas the poor soul that finds a world of doubts may yet be a true believer. Very true; and

therefore I say it is such a mark as corruption is a mark of grace, in this sense there is an impenitent wretch that says he never saw what they call corruption within him all his days ; nay, he blesses God he is a good Christian, a good neighbour, and hath always had a good heart to God ; there is an evidence that he hath no grace ; whereas the poor soul that finds corruption working, and sin raging within him, may yet be a true saint. Thus as corruption felt may be a mark of grace, because grace fights against corruption, even so, doubting felt may be a mark of faith, because faith fights against doubting, and opposes it, as being quite contrary to its very nature. But will any therefore put doubting into the nature of faith, as if it were essential to faith to doubt ? Or, will any therefore exclude persuasion from the nature of faith, as if it were not essential for faith to be persuaded, because the man that hath faith is sometimes doubting ? Just as if it were not in the nature of the eye to see, because the man that hath eyes is sometimes sleeping ; nay, we say, it is in the nature of faith to see, and be assured, and persuaded, because it is a fiducial act ; hence these and the like scriptures, Rom. iv. 20, 21, " He staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God ; being fully persuaded, that he that had promised was able to perform." And Heb. xi. 13, it is said of all the Old Testament believers, to whom notwithstanding the revelation of the object of faith was not so clearly made as under the New Testament, that they received the promises ; well, but what sort of an act was that receiving act of theirs ? Why, it follows, " they were PERSUADED of them, and embraced them."

The common sense of mankind usually takes faith, or believing, for a persuasion : I believe such a thing ; that is, I am persuaded, or assured of it ; I do not doubt it ; I believe such a man ; that is, I am persuaded it is truth that he says ; if the honest man give me his word, his oath, his bond, this fortifies the persuasion, and certifies the person that hath ado with him. So here, to believe, is to be persuaded, assured, and certified upon the word, the oath, the bond, the promise, the covenant, yea, the blood and righteousness of God ; and he that believeth upon such a ground, as all true believers do, must believe with persuasion, according to the measure of faith ; if it be a weak faith, it is a weak persuasion ; if a strong faith, a strong persuasion. And it is not a natural persuasion, a man's persuading himself, and so no more of it ; nay, it is

supernatural, and comes of God, which the former does not ; Gal. iv. 8, " This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you ;" intimating, that right persuasion cometh of God.

This act of receiving Christ, then, is a fiducial act, a fiducial persuasion, which some call a fiducial assurance. I know that one great ground of mistake in this point is the confounding of fiducial assurance with evidential assurance. The former is the assurance of faith, and in the nature of it ; the latter is the assurance of sense, and the effect of faith, and is not properly faith at all, but sense. They differ in their acts ; by fiducial assurance, we receive Christ as ours ; by evidential assurance, we know him to be ours ; the former every believer hath, when he acts faith ; the latter, many believers want, even when they act faith ; because, though they may be conscious that they are acting, yet they may not be conscious of the quality of the act, if it is saving or not. Again, this fiducial and evidential assurance differ, as in their acts, so in their order ; we first believe by a fiducial persuasion, and then we are sure by an evidential persuasion ; the one is the cause, the other the effect ; the persuasion that is in faith, is like heat in the fire ; the persuasion that is after faith, is like fire in the room, that is the effect of the other. They differ in their object ; the object of fiducial assurance is without the man, and looks to the promise of God, and righteousness of Christ ; but the object and foundation of evidential assurance is within the man, and looks to the work of God within ; such as graces, attainments, and experiences. They differ in their effects ; the effect of judicial persuasion is justification, the effect of evidential persuasion is consolation ; a man is not justified by his evidential knowledge, or by knowing that Christ is his ; but he is justified by his fiducial knowledge, or his receiving and resting upon Christ for salvation, as he is offered in the gospel. " By his knowledge, shall my righteous Servant justify many." Faith is a fiducial act.

7. In a word, It is an interesting act, whereby a man is interested in Christ and all that he is worth ; insomuch, that upon his believing, all his debts are paid ; as a woman that is in debt, upon her marriage to a rich man, all her debt is paid ; because, by her marriage, all her debt is transferred upon the husband that hath married her ; so the soul being married to Christ, hath all his debt paid ; the soul being now under the covert of its husband, is not answerable for its own debt, nay, hath not its own sins to answer

for, but Christ the husband answers for them. And thus much concerning the act of faith in receiving Christ; it is a spiritual act, a warrantable act, a venturing act, an evangelical act, and a fiducial act, as also an interesting act. I come now to consider,

Secondly, The object of this act, namely, Christ; "As ye have received Christ;" which admits of a double interpretation. 1. By Christ may be meant, Christ doctrinally considered, or the doctrine of the gospel of Christ. 2. By Christ may be meant, Christ personally considered, or Christ himself received in and by that doctrine.

1. I say, by Christ may be meant Christ doctrinally, or the doctrine of the gospel of Christ, as Eph. iv. 20, "Ye have not so learned Christ:" that is, ye have been otherwise taught the doctrine of the gospel. And whoever views accurately the context here, both the verse preceding the text, and the verse following, as formerly explained, will find that by Christ here may evidently be understood the doctrine of Christ, or the gospel. And indeed none can receive Christ and reject his doctrine; but, in receiving Christ, must first receive his doctrine, and so Christ therein: and so he that receiveth Christ is said to believe the gospel, and every true receiver of Christ is a receiver of his doctrine, because that is the seed by which he is conceived and born, and it is the milk by which he is brought up and nourished to eternal life, 1 Pet. i. 23; chap. ii. 2. I need not here stand to commend the gospel doctrine; it is enough to say that, by the Lord's blessing upon it, it is the seed to conceive and the milk to nourish all the children of God. Why? it is the channel in which the Spirit runs; "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Gal. iii. 2. It is the organ of the almighty power of God; "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth;" his power in working faith, his power in measuring faith, and his power in saving sinners in a way of believing, is put forth in the gospel; Why? "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith," Rom. i. 16, 17. The law hath convinced many, but never converted one to this day; and a gospel minister may preach the law for many good ends, but it is the gospel part of preaching that doth the business, if the power of God be going along with it; for the gospel only is the channel wherein the converting power of the Spirit runs; "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:" Christ is revealed therein in

order to his being received. It is not the gospel of itself, but Christ revealed therein that heals the sinner. It is like the serpent lifted up upon the pole in the wilderness; the pole did not heal, but the serpent upon the pole, that healed the sting; but the pole held it up to be seen. Even so, it is not the pole of the gospel that heals, but Christ lifted up upon the pole. It is Christ that is to be received, but he is to be received as offered in the gospel, and the gospel holds out Christ to the eye of faith; it is with respect to Christ what the pole was with respect to the serpent, and therefore they that pull down this pole of the gospel in any respect, they take away Christ from the eye of the wounded soul, the stinged sinner; they that pull down the pole, they take away the serpent out of view that the sinner cannot see it. Cast down Christ they cannot, but they will pull pown the pole, and so take him out of sight. They that are concerned to have, or to give others a sight of Christ, will be concerned to have the pole straight that holds him up; I mean, the gospel sound and clear, that holds him forth.

Now, there is no good merchant for the kingdom of heaven but for the treasure's sake that is hid in the field, will buy the whole field, Matth. xiii. 44, "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hid in a field; the which, when a man hath found, he hideth; and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Well, did the man buy the treasure only, and not the field, as many think they can take Christ, and reject the gospel? No; he went and bought the field where the treasure was. The treasure is Christ, the field is the gospel; and he bought, he received the gospel, and so had the treasure in it. Every true believer values the gospel at a very high rate; and the reason is, because it is the field where the treasure is hid, where Christ is to be had. And yet withal many may receive the gospel doctrine by a dogmatical faith, an opinionative faith, and not receive Christ himself. This is a faith that thousands perish by, but true faith receives the gospel, and Christ in it. Therefore,

2. By Christ here, as the object of faith, we are to understand Christ himself to be received, Christ personally considered. The object of faith is Christ the Son of God, not excluding the Father, and the Holy Ghost, for each person of the glorious Trinity is the object of faith; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God; but this God would be as inaccessible to us as to the fallen angels, were it not

through Christ. Christ, you know, signifies anointed, and to receive Christ is to receive him as the Messiah, the Sent, Sealed, and Anointed of God, Isa. lxi. 1. His anointing signifies his singular ordination to be our Redeemer, and to perform the work of our redemption; for, "Him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 27; sealed, by the supereminent unction of the Holy Ghost, and authorised of the Father to it; he did not undertake this work presumptuously, without a call, but by the ordination and appointment of God. His being the Christ points out his eminent qualifications for the work of our redemption; as he is a Redeemer of God's sending, so of God's qualifying; "He hath laid help upon One that is mighty;" One that is able of himself, and enabled of his Father to work out our salvation and redemption work: and so to receive Christ is to receive God's Sent, God's Anointed, God's Sealed One. And here faith views the divine authority of his commission, in that he is given of the Father to be a Prophet, Priest, and King, and came from the Father in his name and authority. And hence there is nothing that Christ commends more in the New Testament than this faith that believes his divine mission, his divine ordination to this mediatory work; as John xvii. 8, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest unto me, and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me." To receive Christ, then, is to receive God's Ambassador, God's Anointed; and that is a noble faith.

But, again, to consider the termination of faith upon this glorious object; the man that receives Christ receives him as a living root, and as a glorious head, as a living root in whom he is implanted, and as a glorious head to whom he is united. Faith goes into him; and so by faith there is a saving implantation in him, a spiritual union to him; and so this receiving of him makes all that is in Christ yours. If a man should look for life and righteousness from Christ without union to Christ, it is as if a woman should look for an estate from a man by conveyance, and not by marriage; now God gives not any saving benefit to sinners by conveyance, but by marriage and union with Christ. Many, indeed, have a great deal of gifts, parts, and abilities, and such knowledge as peradventure you may call it revelation; these things are given to men through Christ, but with this difference; some, they receive these things from Christ as a steward that may dispense them, but not from him

as a head, flowing into them as members To natural men, and wicked men, these things come from Christ as a steward ; but they come not from him as a head of union ; for these only that are united to him by faith, have spiritual blessings flowing to them from Christ, as the head, to them as members. It is true that unions are great mysteries ; the union of God and man into one Christ is a great mystery ; the union of Christ and all his members into one body is a great mystery ; the apostle calls it a great mystery, saying, " I speak concerning Christ and his church," Eph. v. 32. The believer receiving Christ, is in him as a member is in the head, and as a branch is in the root ; and in him so as that he lives by the life of Christ, and is righteous by the righteousness of Christ and is acted by the Spirit of Christ. Neither is this union to Christ by receiving him lessened by this, that Christ is in heaven, and we upon earth ; for, as the union between man and wife is not lessened, the one towards another, though they be a thousand miles asunder (though the communion is not so much) ; so here, the union that we have to Christ, by receiving him, is not lessened by his being in heaven, and we upon the earth. It is true, the communion is not so close, nor so intimate as it would be if we were in the same place with him, but the union is not lessened ; they are united and married to the person of Christ by receiving him.

Now, the object of faith being Christ's person, and the receiving of Christ, a-closing with this person, here is the honour of all the saints. What a comfortable and honourable station is it, to be a member united to this glorious head ! And therefore, before I pass this, I would acquaint you with a thing which you will find true in your experience, namely, many are very much troubled and tried in seeking this and the other benefit from Christ, such as the pardon of sin, and mortifying of corruption ; they seek and are never the better, and what is the reason ? Even because they begin at the wrong end of the gospel, at the wrong end of religion and Christianity ; they seek the things of Christ, but not the person of Christ ; they look out for his graces and benefits, without closing with his person. O ! says one, for such and such a benefit from Christ, and such and such graces of his Spirit ; very well : but would you have them from Christ without union to him ? Would ye have blessings from Christ without Christ himself ? Why, what though you should get some blessings from him, if you live and die without him. O, says one that goes to a sacrament, O for some

communion with Christ! very good; but here is a falsity; you would have communion without union to him, and that cannot be. Union to his person is the foundation of true communion with him in his benefits; and therefore you may seek communion with him, and yet neglect the foundation. You cannot have true communion without union by faith, receiving Christ himself; for, as the graft cannot have sap from the root, unless it be set into the stock, if it be not ingrafted, it cannot have communion with the root; so, neither can you have these graces and comforts that you would have in a way of communion with him, unless it be first in a way of union to him. And, therefore, let it be your great business through grace to close with Christ himself, the person of Christ, as he is handed to you in the doctrine of the gospel; never rest till the offering hand of the gospel and the receiving hand of faith meet together, for when Christ is received, then, and not till then, is there a real union, and this is the foundation of all true and spiritual communion. Thus much shall suffice concerning the object, namely, Christ doctrinally and personally considered.

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

“As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”—COLOS. ii. 6.

[The Second Sermon on this Text.]

IN the illustration of the first head of method, which was to speak of the believer's character and dignity as a receiver of Christ Jesus the Lord, we propose to consider the act of faith, as it is a receiving of Christ; next, the object of it, Christ; and then the capacity or respect under which this object is received, viz.: as he is “Christ Jesus the Lord.” We have considered the first two, the act and object. It remains,

Thirdly, That we consider the CAPACITIES or respects in which Christ is to be received, namely, as a Jesus and a Lord, which will still farther clear the object. There are three letters of Christ's name here that point him out beyond all other names in the world. I have formerly told you that Christ is offered in these capacities,

and I have just now spoke of the first letter of his name, viz., Christ the anointed of God ; and indeed it is not sound faith that doth not take him as the Sent of God, and qualified of God for the whole redemption work. But the other two letters of his name remain yet to be touched at. And you may consider them under this view as the two-fold capacities in which we are to receive Christ, namely, as "Jesus the Lord." 1. As he is Jesus. 2. As he is the Lord.

1. As he is Jesus, that is, a Saviour. This is the first name given Christ in the New Testament, Matth. i. 21, "His name shall be called Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins ;" and it is the best name that sinners can hear tell off ; it is a name above all names, both for the glory of him that bears it, and the comfort of them that hear of it. Now, to receive Christ as a Jesus, is to receive him as a singularly mighty Saviour, that is able to save to the utmost, as appears by his doing, dying, suffering, satisfying, conquering ; and surely, he that was able to atone God, and conquer the devil, is able to save sinners. To receive him as a Jesus is to receive him as an universal Saviour ; I mean not only in the apostle's sense, 1 Tim. iv. 10, that he is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe ; but I mean in respect of the salvation that he brings to them whom he makes to believe in him ; and so I mean, in the sense of the same apostle, Acts xiii. 39, "By him all that believe are saved and justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." What law of Moses ? Why, as his ceremonial law could not do the business, for it was impossible that the blood of bulls or goats should take away sin, satisfy offended justice, or pacify a wounded conscience ; so his moral law could not justify, for we having broken and transgressed it, instead of justifying us it condemns us ; therefore, what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, that Christ by the gospel does ; he justifies from all things, from all guilt, so as the believer can never become liable to the sanction of the law. Some would have the believer justified only from some things, as it were, and still liable to the lash of the law ; but we maintain the apostle's doctrine, that the believer is justified from all things, so as nothing can be laid to his charge ; and seeing, "It is God that justifieth, who is he that can condemn," or make him liable thereunto ? To receive him as a Jesus, then, is to receive him as a complete Saviour, a perfect Saviour ; that saves meritoriously, by the price of his blood, and his mediation for us ;

and efficaciously, by the power of his Spirit, and his effectual operation in us, that saves from the law as a covenant, both in its commanding and condemning power: that saves from death, hell, and wrath. But salvation is a great word that we cannot now enlarge upon; only, to receive Christ as a Jesus, is to receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, and all the salvation that we need, temporal, spiritual, or eternal, in a suitableness to his promise and offer in the word.

2. As he is the Lord; which imports a desire to be subject to him, as he is a King, and to be conquered by him, as well as saved by him. Christ hath upon his vesture and thigh this name written, "KING of kings, and lord of lords; he is the King and Head of his church; the government of all is upon his shoulder, particularly the government of Zion, where he hath left officers to rule under him, according to the laws of his kingdom, and in a suitableness to the liberties of his subjects pointed out in his word; and to have any hand in marring the beautiful order of his government that he hath appointed, or encroach upon the liberties of his people, doth ill become any that profess to receive him as a lord; as little doth it become them to say in effect, "Our Lord delays his coming," and so begin to smite their fellow-servants and so fall out with one another, especially when a common enemy is creeping in that would subject the government of Christ's house entirely to a secular power, whether it be patrons or prelates, princes or popes. Surely they that receive Christ as a Lord and King over themselves, will not be careless or indifferent about his lordship and government over Zion, as a King and Head of his church; for if they be careless about his government that way, whether it stand or fall, they give evidence of their never truly receiving him as a Lord.

But, more particularly, to receive him as a Lord, is to close with him for sanctification as well as salvation, and to welcome him in his kingly office, to subdue sin, conquer Satan, and destroy the works of the devil. A true believer does receive Christ not only as he is a Saviour, but as he is a Lord. Consider both these capacities jointly, and they may search every corner of your heart. The eye of a lost sinner is first upon Christ as a Saviour; so God propounds him, and so we may come to him; but observe, there may be much self-love in seeking Christ, a Saviour, for salvation; for salvation may be desired merely out of self-love, which is evident if we are for dividing Christ, for taking the Saviour, and leaving out the

Lord. Many would divide between his salvation and his dominion, they would have Christ as a Saviour, to save from wrath; but not as a Lord, to destroy their lusts and sins. But herein true receiving of Christ will discover itself; the Lord makes the man as weary of his load of corruption as he is weary of his load of condemnation. The man that is weary of condemnation only, would have Christ as a Saviour; but he that is weary of corruption also would have Christ as a Lord. But when the heart would have water as well as blood, then it is in a right temper; when the man would have water to purify the heart, as well as blood to pacify the conscience. Our desire of Christ for salvation, may be tried with this touchstone, whether we have the same desire for Christ the Lord as for Christ the Jesus.

I think it is utterly impossible there can be any more uprightness in your desire after the salvation of Christ, then there is of a desire after the dominion of Christ. Faith, whatever it is, will bring a man out from under the commanding power of sin, as well as from under the condemning power of it. And however a believer may lie in darkness, yet I conceive that soul is out of danger, who is made willing to receive Christ both as a Saviour and a Lord; and so, willing to receive out of his hand poison to kill his lusts, as well as pardon to remove his guilt; the desire of pardon of sin, and the desire of purification of heart, bear proportion; none can truly take Christ as a Saviour for justification, but they will also truly take him as a Lord for sanctification. This we maintain, let calumny say what it will; as if our doctrine were an enemy to holiness! ¹ What can be the ground of the calumny, I cannot

(1) It hath been the fate of the witnesses for the truths of God, in every period of the church, especially since the commencement of Christianity, to be traduced and reproached with the most scurrilous epithets and opprobrious names. The blessed Author of the Christian religion himself did not escape the obloquy, contumely, and censures of the world; and his disciples were accused with being turbulent and pestilent fellows, and such as turned the world upside down. When it fared so with them, we need not be surprised that their successors should be flouted at, maltreated and evil spoken of by those who do not favour the truth as it is in Jesus.—About the time when our author delivered these discourses, an irreligious disposition, and legal spirit was like to spread universally, and had arrived to such a pitch that many could not endure to hear sound doctrine; and the teachers and defenders thereof were the objects of the resentment both of the infidel and legalist. As our worthy author was sincerely attached to the doctrines of the gospel, he could not but be sincerely affected and truly alarmed at every encroachment upon the sacred truths of his ever glorious Master, so this led him frequently to notice, in his public appearances, the aspersions

know, unless it be that men cannot distinguish betwixt saving faith and justifying faith ; for saving faith (of which we are now speaking) respects Christ in all his offices as a Prophet, Priest, and King ; but when we speak of faith merely as it is justifying, we maintain against all the subtile Popery in the world, that it respects Christ only as a Priest, as a sacrifice and propitiation ; but not Christ as a King. For, to make that act of faith, that receives Christ as a Lord, to be the justifying act of faith, is the very soul of Popery, that builds justification upon sanctification, or upon sanctifying faith ; whereas it is the receiving of Christ as a Priest, that alone justifies before God. It is true, faith in Christ as a Saviour and a Lord, go hand in hand together ; they are inseparably connected ; even as the eye and ear are both joined together in one head ; yet it is not the office of the eye to hear, or of the ear to see ; no, but it is the office of the eye to see, and of the ear to hear ; even so, though faith in Christ as a Jesus and as a Lord go together in one and the same believer, and at one and the same time, yet they have their different offices ; Christ, as a King and Lord, is not the object of justifying faith, but only Christ as a Priest and Saviour. It is not Christ as the Lord, subduing my sin, that is the matter of my justification before God, but Christ, as a Priest, paying all my debt ; it is not my personal righteousness, even in my gracious subjection to Christ as a Lord, that can be the ground of justification ; but it is the righteousness of Christ alone as a Priest, his doing and dying, that is the ground of justification. And therefore it is not faith dealing with Christ as a Lord that justifies, but faith's dealing with Christ as a Priest, a Saviour, and a complete Righteousness. This is the doctrine of the word ; which, when our Reformers began to publish, they were branded as enemies to holiness and good works ; and if something of this be not at the root of many reproaches in our day, I know not what it is ; and if this be the ground of these reproaches, we may gladly bear them as our glory.

But now, we are speaking of the object of faith, more largely taken, in its latitude, as it is saving faith ; which, we say hath a respect to Christ in all his offices, and particularly, as in our text, it

cast upon him and others, in inculcating the most important truths of the gospel of Christ, particularly their being derided as favourers of Antinomianism, and enemies to holiness, for their befriending the freedom of the doctrine of grace, in asserting the necessity of sinners dying to the law in point of Justification, in order to their living to God in point of Sanctification.

receives him as a Saviour and a Lord both ; and truly, the receiving of Christ as a Lord, for sanctification, is the best mark imaginable of right receiving of Christ as a Saviour, for justification. You may measure your faith and interest in Christ, not by the degree of your persuasion concerning him as a Saviour, but rather by the degree of his virtue and power in you as a Lord ; it is better to measure it by the depth of his work in you, than by the height of your confidence in him, which may be too proud and bold. If you should meet a man travelling upon the way, and should ask him how many hours high the sun is, you need not marvel, if, instead of looking up to the sun to see how high it is, he should look down to your shadow to see how short it is ; for he can tell that way better than looking upon the sun itself ; even so, if a man would judge how much of Christ is in him, the best way to try is rather to look downward than upward ; look in to your heart, and see what dash your pride hath got, and what abatement your corruption is brought under ; for the shorter these dark shadows are in you, the higher is the Sun of righteousness. Now, the grand corruption of the heart of man, the great root-sin, which sets itself against Christ as a Lord, I will tell you what it is, it is that lord of all mis-rule, SELF ; that is the lord that lords it over you ; and all other sins are but the brats of Self ; they are but sub-servants, under-servants to this great lord of self-love, self-pride, and self-righteousness. Now, a true believer is righteous by the righteousness of another ; he lives by the life of another ; he is acted by the spirit of another ; and therefore he, of any man in the world, should have least of self in him ; because Christ, as Lord, doth absolutely set himself against this great corruption. And therefore, if you would know one excellent way of judging of Jesus Christ the Lord, his being in you, it is by the breaking and casting down of self ; for the more full that a man is of self, the more empty is he of Christ ; and the more full he is of Christ, the more empty he is of self ; for the lord-self, and the Lord-Christ, cannot stand together ; the lordship of Christ and the lordship of self are inconsistent ; when you receive the Lord-Christ, then the lord-self is unthroned and thrown down. Thus much of the believer's character and dignity as a receiver of Christ Jesus the Lord.

II. The second general head is, To speak of the believer's duty, having received Christ Jesus the Lord, then to "walk in him." You have heard of the two tables of the law, and if you never heard

of the two tables of the gospel, you may see them in our text ; the first is to " receive Christ," and the second is to " walk in him." Though I make not the gospel, strictly taken to be a doctrine of commandments and precepts ; yet where the law is in the hand of Christ, and where Christ is the ALPHA and OMEGA, there we will find the two tables of the gospel : " Christ is All in all ;" and these two ALLS make the two tables of the gospel. Or, if the two tables of the gospel must answer to the tables of the law, then consider the law as a covenant, or as a rule, and we get both fulfilled in Christ ; the law as a covenant is fulfilled by " receiving Christ ;" the law as a rule is fulfilled by " walking in him ;" and so the two tables of the law in either of these respects, are answered by these two tables of the gospel ; for, " Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

I must only here touch a little, 1. At the denomination of the duty, it is a walking. 2. The qualification of it, it is a walking in Christ. As to the

First, The denomination of this duty, it is a walking. I know many things might be said in running the parallel ; but I do not design to squeeze the metaphor beyond the scope of the text, but just to observe what is intended therein. And there are these three things that I apprehend are intended. It plainly denotes, 1. Practice. 2. Progress. 3. Permanency.

[1.] It denotes practice, or practicalness. And this is opposed to a dogmatical faith where there is no practical religion. These that have received Christ they ought to be practical Christians, practical believers : " As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so WALK ye in him ;" let your faith be a working faith. As by the same hand that we receive a thing, by the same hand we work ; so your faith, if it be saving, then as it receives Christ in the promise of the gospel, so it will work by love in the precept of the law ; if it receives Christ in the covenant, it will work by love in the commandment : Gal. 5, 6, " In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that works by love." Why ? his commandments are not grievous.

QUEST. If we have received Christ, what need we more. Christ hath done all, and therefore we need do nothing.

ANSW. Indeed many good principles are abused in the world, *e.g.*, Christ hath done all for his people in point of merit, and he does all in his people in point of power ; and so without him we

can do nothing ; here is a good principle ; but thence to infer, that the duty and lawful use of means is not ours, is to abuse this good principle to licentiousness. " When sin abounds, grace much more abounds ;" there is a good principle ; but thence to infer, Let us sin that grace may abound, is to abuse that good principle, and a turning of the grace of God to wantonness. We are justified by faith, without the works of the law ; there is a notable gospel principle : but thence to infer that a justified man needs not be conform to the law, here is a good principle abused ; for, " Do we make void the law, through faith ? God forbid ; nay, we establish the law."

There are two things concerning a justified person, which call for practical religion : the one is, God glorifies him ; and the other is, he is to glorify God. God glorifies him : for, " Whom he justifies, them he also glorifies," Rom. viii. 30. But then God is to be glorified as well as he, and will be glorified by all that are justified ; and therefore, that they may glorify God, they are to bring forth good fruit. And, on this account, may the Lord deliver us from a dead, unfruitful, and unprofitable faith.

There are four great reasons why they that have received Christ, by a gospel-faith, should walk in him, by a gospel-practice, namely, because hereby the power of faith is seen ; hereby the trial of faith is made ; hereby the beauty of it appears to others ; and the comfort of it accrues to ourselves.

1. Hereby the power of faith is seen, in that it leads to a gospel-practice. How is it that its power is thus seen ? Why, even in opposing many and strong lusts ; though it should not conquer them, yet it opposes them, and to oppose and fight against sin, in scripture-language, is to conquer it ; this is a fighting the good fight of faith. The power of faith is seen in a gospel-practice, while faith is thus exercised in souring the sweetest sin, in bearing the greatest burden, and making easy the hardest commandment. When Christ speaks of doing the greatest things, then he compares faith to the least things ; when he speaks of removing mountains, then he compares faith to a grain of mustard seed ; and indeed, faith makes a man to remove mountains of pride, and sets a man's hatred upon that which he loved ; and sets a man's love upon that which he hated. How shall a heavy weight of lead be made easy to a child ? Why, if you do not pare the lead to make the weight less, then you must add strength to the child ; and if he has more strength, though the

weight be not pared, yet it makes no matter, because the child hath strength to bear it; even so, God in the gospel makes the command light and easy. How so? Not by paring or abating the commandment, or diminishing the rule (that is our corrupt way;) but God does it by giving more of faith, and more of Christ. And so the power of faith is seen in carrying a man through the greatest duties and trials.

2. Hereby the trial of faith is made; I say, by a gospel practice. Many judge of the truth of their faith by the degrees of their confidence; but the best trial is by the degrees of their conquest over sin; the degrees of their conquests over their lusts and corruptions. As I said before, you may know the height of the sun by the shortness of your shadow, more than by the degrees of altitude. How much doth a man believe? even as much as his faith purifies his heart, and mortifies his lusts; so much does he believe, and no more. It is true a man may be believing in Christ for justification, and coming under the covert of his blood, while in the mean time he sees no measure of sanctification; but, on the contrary, his heart full of hell, and enmity and corruption; yea, but in the meantime what is that light wherein he sees his own vileness, but sanctifying light? And what is that grace whereby he is loathing and abhorring himself, but sanctifying grace? And so when justifying faith is busy flying under the covert of blood, sanctifying grace is not idle; nay, the more that faith acts upon Christ for justification, the more will it act in purification. Again,

3. Another reason why a gospel faith should have a gospel practice is, because hereby the beauty of faith appears to others, and our light shines before men, so as they, seeing our good works, do glorify God. The beauty of faith is seen by others, not in faith itself, but in the gospel walk and practice that it produces. If a man would know in the morning whether the sun be risen in the east, he will readily look to the west, and see whether he can notice the reflection of the sunbeams upon the top of a house, or the top of a hill; he looks the quite contrary way from the sun; and yet he does it ingeniously enough; even so here, if a man would know you to be a believer, he will not look into your faith, but will look out to your life, or look back to your conversation, and see what marks your faith makes there; hence, saith the apostle, "Shew me thy faith by thy works." Faith and works are contrary in point of justification, and yet when a man would see your faith, he will look

to the contrary part, and see how it appears in your walk and work ; and if it appears not there, the beauty of faith is not seen.

4. Hereby the comfort of faith accrues to yourselves ; even by a gospel practice you have the comfort of faith ; for, " Great peace have all they that love his law : the fruit of righteousness is peace." There is no greater comfort in the world than for a man to get, by faith, mastery over sin, and grace to do duty for God. Whatever a man does for God, leaving self behind him, it carries the sweetest relish in the world with it. All duties, and sufferings both, are made sweet by this, that is done for God. Self, in any duty, doth sour the duty be it never so admirable, " Let every man prove his own work, saith the apostle, then shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another," Gal. vi. 4. These are some reasons why gospel faith, in receiving Christ must be attended with gospel practice in walking in him.

Many talk of practical religion in our day, but few know what it is to walk in it ; they are like the lark that sings with the highest, but builds with the lowest ; some sing with the highest, as if they were almost angels : but where do they build ? where are their affections ? where are their hearts, their aims, their ends ? They are low, earthly, and sensual. You that profess to be friends to the gospel, O let the mouths that reproach religion be stopped by the power of religion in your walk. If the world call us Antinomians, " It is the will of God, that by well doing we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," 1 Pet. ii. 15. We account them the greatest stars that give the greatest light ; so men will account them still the greatest Christians that give the greatest light, by their gospel practice in holiness toward God and righteousness toward men. If you be not a better servant, a better child, a better parent, a better master, than you were, or than others are, what credit will religion get by you ? Therefore, seek a practical faith, leading to a gospel practice.

[2.] This walk imports not only practice, but progress ; to stand still is not to walk. Walking imports progress and growth from faith to faith, from strength to strength, from glory to glory. For the truth is, by reason of corruption, we are like the boat in a stream ; if we go not forward by the oar, we go backward by the tide ; so, if we go not forward, by the strength of grace, we will go backward, by the strength and power of corruption ; even as the boat in the stream cannot stand, it must go backward. It is true,

people may be at a stand in religion, and yet seem to walk ; men may go the round of duties, and yet not be walking ; like a spinning wheel, it goes round, but yet it is in the same place still. Many may be called old job-trot professors ; they are the same now that they were twenty years ago ; no more holiness, no more knowledge, no more experience.

QUEST. What is this growth and progress ?

I answer, It is not like a wheel that runs round, and stands still in the same place ; but where there is more knowledge of Christ, more insight into the mysteries of the gospel, more feeling of the power of the gospel, more victory over lusts and corruptions, &c., there is growth and progress. It is true, a child of God may fall, and he may relapse, and fall again ; his feet may be benumbed that he cannot walk ; but here is the happiness of a true child of God, one that hath truly received Christ, that his sins are always beneficial to him ; he will gain more in holiness by one sin, than a natural man will gain by an hundred duties ; for his fall is like the stumbling of a horse that makes him ride the faster ; so the believer may stumble, but when he gets to his feet again, he runs the faster, makes quicker progress in the ways of God ; his fall humbles him, and makes him more dependent, more watchful, more circumspect, &c.

[3.] This walk imports permanency both in the way and doctrine of Christ, according to the following verse, "Rooted and established in the faith." A single step is not a walk, it is a permanent motion ; therefore it is called a being established in the faith, as we have been taught. Why, how can a man walk, and yet be rooted ; walk, and yet stand stable ? these are very inconsistent, 1 Cor. xv. 58, "Be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," STEDFAST, and yet abounding in the work ; MOVING, and yet unmoveable ! like the two feet of a pair of compasses, the one foot of the compass stands fast in the centre, and the other draws the line, and goes round ; so it is with the believer, his faith is like the foot of the compass, that stands fast in the centre, Christ and his doctrine ; but his gospel practice is the part that is like the other foot of the compass, it never stands, but ever moves in the way of the Lord. He "stands fast in the faith, and yet walks." As in walking, one foot stands while the other moves, or else a man is leaping and not walking ; so while we go forward in the way of gospel obedience, we must stand fast

in the faith; that foot must stand while the foot of obedience moves, or else we are like them that leap, rather than like these that walk; I mean, there are some who will leap out of one doctrine into another, not being established in the faith of Christ, which was a stedfastness which the apostle commends in the Colossians here, in the verse immediately preceding our text. But as a tree that is planted in one place to-day, and transplanted to another place to-morrow, and so on from place to place, cannot bear fruit; so the soul doth not stand fast, but leaps from doctrine to doctrine; from principle to principle; from profession to profession; and is unsettled in the principles of religion, cannot be fruitful. Therefore the apostle exhorts, Eph. iv. 14, 15, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ." And, Heb. xiii. 9, "Be not carried about with strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." And thus you see what may be imported in walking.

Secondly, the qualification of this duty is, it is a walking in CHRIST. Here is a great word, and many things might be said upon it; but all that I offer shall be in two short words on it at the time. To walk in Christ is not to walk in ourselves, but out of ourselves. Now, there is a two-fold self-denial; a self-denial in point of sin; that is, a denying ungodliness and worldly lusts; this the grace of God that brings salvation teaches effectually, as the law teaches preceptively. Again, there is a self-denial in point of grace. Now, there is a two-fold denial of grace, the one is in point of justification, and the other is in point of sanctification. Consider these two a little, in order to know what it is to walk in Christ.

1. There is a denial of grace in point of justification; a self-denial with respect to grace in point of subsisting with God in justification. I would ask you, How do you subsist in a justified state? Are you justified by faith in Christ without the works of the law? Doth your grace, or sanctification, justify you, or expiate your sin? Nay, that which brought you into the favour of God at first must keep you there still. You that are brought into the favour of God, how do you stand in favour with him? It is not because of your savoury venison, but your elder brother's clothes; it is not your graces or best holiness, but the garment of Christ's

righteousness that brings you, and keeps you in favour with God. Now, to walk in Christ in the matter of justification, or looking for acceptance with God, is to be denied to your graces in point of acceptance ; but to let Christ have his proper room, put not grace in the room of Christ and his righteousness ; be as holy as you can, but never a whit more justified are you thereby ; grace hath its place in sanctification, and walking before God, but it must have no place here ; for a man doth not subsist in a justified state by his graces, or holiness ; hence, though Paul could say, Rom. vii. 22, "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man," but behold how denied he is to this, saying, verse 24, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of sin and death ?" What then does he ? "Thanks be to God, says he, through Christ ; for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ." He sets not sanctification in the room of Christ's righteousness.

2. There is, in some sort, a denial of grace, even in respect of sanctification : that is imported in a walking in Christ thus ; even because a believer doth not walk in Christ merely by the strength of habitual grace : nay, he cannot do it but by the operation and motion of the Spirit of Christ that cometh down from above ; for, as we use to say, the ship does not go by its sails, but by the wind, the sails indeed take in the wind, but it is the wind that makes the ship to go ; so, when a believer walks in spiritual obedience, either active or passive, in doing or suffering, it is owing to grace that comes down like auxiliaries, which makes him walk in him. This is what the apostle calls grace sufficient for him ; "My grace shall be sufficient for thee:" and this makes a weak believer strong, in a moment, both for work and warfare. "My grace shall be sufficient for thee;" why, had not the apostle grace within him ? Yea, but the scripture gives ground for this distinction ; there is grace in a man, and grace with a man ; grace in the believer, that is, habitual implanted grace ; grace with the believer, that is, actual assisting grace, that comes and carries him on in his course, and by this means he walks in Christ being denied to his own habitual grace, and resting on him for actual constant supply. To walk in Christ in both these respects, is for a soul to say, "In the Lord only have I righteousness and strength : In the Lord on'y have I **RIGHTEOUSNESS** : there is the denial of grace, in point of justification : "In the Lord only have I **STRENGTH**," there is the denial of grace, in point of sanctification.

SERMON LXXXVI.

“As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”—Colos. ii. 6.

[The Third Sermon on this Text.]

BUT that I may a little more fully consider the qualification of this duty of walking in Christ, we may consider, 1. What it supposes. 2. What it excludes. 3. What it includes. 4. What it infers.

1st, What this walking in Christ supposes. These two things especially are supposed to a walking in Christ. 1. That Christ is the way. 2. That we have got into that way.

1. It supposes that Christ is the way. To walk in Christ says plainly that Christ is the way; and therefore Christ says himself, John xiv. 6, “I am the way,” &c. There was one other way to heaven before the covenant of works was broken, namely, perfect personal obedience; but now there is no other way to heaven but Christ, Acts iv. 12, “There is no name given under heaven, whereby to be saved, but the name of Christ.” What sort of a way Christ is, we may afterwards shew, in pursuing of this text; but here I shall only add, that whatever else be called the way, such as the commandments of the law, and holy obedience thereto; yet, take Christ out of that way, and behold it will never reach half way to heaven; take Christ out of the Bible, and you will find no way for a sinner there, but what will land him in hell. Christ is the good old way, the new and living way, and the way of holiness itself; for there is no holiness but what is contained in him, and derived from him: and hence some eminent divines explain that scripture of Christ himself, Isa. xxxv. 8, “An high way shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness.” There is no holiness where there is no walking in Christ. Never believe the tongue that says the preaching of Christ is a discouragement of holiness; for to walk in him is the only way of holiness: it is a holy walk, for he is the holy way. It supposes that Christ is the way.

2. Our walking in Christ supposes that we have got in to that way. We cannot walk in him unless we be in him. And therefore receiving Christ is here presupposed to a walking in him. By

receiving Christ we get in to him; and then, and not till then, are we in case to walk in him. The union of matter and form makes a body; the union of soul and body together makes a man; the union of a man and Christ together makes a Christian; and till then empty is he of Christ, and of all true good works or spiritual walking. A man may bring forth the fruit of good works, morally good and materially so, and may bring them forth as a tree upon his own root, upon old Adam's root; but he can never walk in Christ, or bring forth fruit in Christ, till he be in Christ: for what is fruit that grows upon a tree but the sap of the root concocted into fruit: so, what is walking in Christ, or working in him? it is just the sap of the Spirit of grace putting itself forth, into the fruit of new obedience; and this supposes union and implantation into the root. Many err in this matter; they resolve to walk in the way of duty before ever they have received Christ, or got in to him; and by these means they think they will get in to Christ and receive him; they walk so and so devoutly that they may receive Christ. Thus they invert the order of the text, and put the plough before the horse; for, receiving of Christ, must go before walking in him; yea, it is impossible there can be a walking in him, before there be a receiving of him. Walk as you will before you receive Christ, it is a walking on your own legs: and to think that these will bring you to Christ, is as if a branch, by bearing fruit upon its own tree, could be thereby transplanted upon another tree; no, it is not by bearing fruit upon its own tree, but it must be cut off from its own root, ere it can be ingrafted into, or bring forth fruit upon another; even so, it is not your bearing fruit on your own old stock, or doing many good works that will bring you to Christ; nay, you are mistaken; you must be cut off from your old stock, and from your own works, and ingrafted into Christ. Thus walking in him supposes union to him. Therefore,

2dly, What this walking in Christ excludes. It excludes sin and self; a sinful walk, and a selfish walk. So far as a man walks in Christ he cannot walk in sin, nor walk in himself.

1. It excludes a sinful walk, a walking in sin or in the flesh; for, they that are in Christ, they walk not after the flesh; but after the Spirit, Rom. viii. 1. Though they have sin in them yet they do not walk in it, like the rest of the world: because so far as Christ comes in, sin goes out. Some speak of forsaking sin, in order to, and before coming to Christ; but never will you forsake sin evan-

gelically, till once Christ come to you, and you come to him. When Christ comes in to the temple, he drives out all the buyers and sellers; and therefore let him in, and he will make the house clean. His coming is like the coming of light; as the light comes in to the house, the darkness goes out; even so as the Sun of righteousness shines in to the soul, the shadows of sin and darkness evanish. When a man walks, he leaves something behind him, which he turns his back upon; so he that walketh in Christ, he turns his back upon his old master, the devil, saying, Wo is me that I have been so long led captive by him at his will! He turns his back upon his old acquaintance, the world, saying, O vain world! I have seen something of the matchless glory of the Son of God, and therefore look upon all worldly glory as nothing, and less than nothing and vanity. He turns his back upon his old lusts and idols, saying with Ephraim, "What have I any more to do with idols?" Fain would he be rid of sin; Lord take vengeance on this lust and that lust; give it a dead stroke that it may never revive again. He turns his back upon his old religion, that he may serve the Lord in newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. He leaves his cradle-faith behind him, and gets a faith of God's operation: He leaves his old hope behind him, which had no foundation but sand, and is begotten again to a new and lively hope: He leaves his old legal way of performing duty behind him, and learns a new obedience influenced by new-covenant grace, and by the love of Christ constraining him. And therefore,

2. It excludes a selfish walk. This walking in Christ excludes a walking in self; for the more that a man walks in Christ, the more does he walk out of self; as Christ comes in, self goes out; when Christ is received, self is expelled. The self-righteous sinner is like an empty bottle filled with nothing but air; but pour wine into the bottle, and as the wine goes in, the air goes out; so, the soul is filled with nothing but airy speculations, and a light, vain esteem of himself; but let Christ in, let the wine of the Spirit be poured into the soul, as that wine goes in, the air will go out. The selfish sinner is like an empty stomach, filled with nothing but wind; but if wholesome food be received and digested, then the wind is gradually dispelled; so here the sinner is filled with the wind of pride and self; but if Christ, the bread of life, and water of life, be received and digested, then it dissipates the wind of pride: his self-estimation is turned to self-abhorrence; his self-justification

is turned to self-condemnation ; his self-love is turned to self-loathing ; his self-dependence is turned to self-renunciation ; his self-seeking is turned to self-searching, and self-examination, and to a seeking of God and his glory. Instead of serving himself, his desire is now to serve God as his only Master ; instead of exalting himself, his desire is now to glorify God as his chief-end ; instead of pleasing himself, his desire is to please God, not to satisfy his justice, as a Judge, for that the Surety hath done, but to please his heart as a Father ; he dares not venture on any thing that will displease such a kind Father : instead of resting in himself, his desire is to rest in the Lord, and enjoy him, saying, O to enjoy him in his grace, and in his glory ! to enjoy him in this and that duty ; in this and that ordinance ; until I enjoy him fully in heaven ?

Now, when a selfish walk is excluded, it excludes at the same time, a natural walk, a legal walk, and a pharisaical walk. It excludes a natural walk, which being grounded only upon the light of nature, amounts to no more but a natural righteousness. It excludes a legal walk, which being grounded only upon the light of the law, and that as a covenant, makes but a legal imperfect righteousness. It excludes an hypocritical walk, which being grounded only upon the external light of the gospel, makes only a pharisaical righteousness, where the man hath the form of godliness but denies the power of it. Many things here might be added as to what this walking in Christ doth exclude, which may afterward fall in upon the application. I come, therefore,

3dly, To consider what this walking in Christ doth include. Not to multiply particulars here either ; there are two things more especially that it seems to include. Walking in Christ is, 1. A walking in a conformity to him. 2. In the improvement of him.

1. It is a walking in a conformity to him, and so to walk in Christ is to be like him. In heaven the saints shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is. Even so here, when we behold his glory, and are changed into the same image, then it is that we walk in him ; even as the body walks wherever the head walks ; and where the head and the body walk, there the feet walk ; all that is in the head walks. This then is a walking in him who is the glorious Head, when the members follow the Head, and walk in a conformity to him. It is a walking in a conformity to his nature, being holy as he is holy, perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, merciful as he is merciful, &c. It is a walking in a conformity to

his way of walking, 1 John ii. 6, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought to walk even as he also walked." Did he walk in love to God and man? Did he walk in zeal, so as the zeal of God's house did eat him up? Did he walk in meekness, patience, humility, and activity, always going about doing good, never weary of well doing? We are to walk as he thus walked. It is a walking in a conformity to his ends that he set before him; his end was the glory of God, the advancement of his kingdom, the ruin of Satan's kingdom, and in all the praise of his rich and free grace; and surely we will walk in him, when we have these for our ends which were his ends. It is a walking in a conformity to his law, which is a transcript of his communicable nature for our practice; he walked in a conformity to his own law, in all its holy, just, good, and merciful ways; and we will walk in him, when we walk in a gospel conformity to the same. It is a walking in a conformity to the relations that he comes under to us; and so it is a walking in him as our Redeemer, by price and power, which we do when we walk as these who are not their own, but bought with a price, therefore glorifying the Lord in our souls and bodies which are his. It is a walking in him as our Head, by living as members of such a Head, and deriving spiritual virtue from him. It is a walking in him as our Father, depending on him as children upon their Father. It is a walking in him as our Judge, Lawgiver, and King; and so a walking as these that are accountable to, and as we shall answer at the tribunal of this Judge; sitting at the feet, and receiving the law from the mouth of this Lawgiver, and yielding the tribute of praise, obedience, and subjection to this King. In a word, it is a walking in conformity to the privileges we receive from him: Hath he enlightened us in the knowledge of himself? Then to walk in him is to walk as children of light, and not as these that are in the darkness of ignorance. Hath he called us effectually? Then to walk in him is to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. Hath he given us grace? Then to walk in him, is to walk, not as graceless, but as gracious persons; not as these that are in a state of nature, but in a state of grace. Hath he pardoned our sins, justified our persons, brought us into peace with himself? Then to walk in him, is to walk so as to stand fast in the liberty wherewith he hath made us free. Hath he poured in the promise into our hearts? Then to walk in him, is to walk so as having these promises, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,

perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Hath he made us heirs of glory? Then to walk in him, is to walk as candidates for heaven, as pilgrims and strangers in the earth, and so having our conversation in heaven.

2. It is a walking in the improvement of him. To walk in Christ is to improve him by faith, as we receive him thereby. It is to improve and make use of him for light, life, strength, motion, acceptance, and all in him. And so to walk in him, is to walk as these that have their life in him, and cannot live without him, no more than the body can live without the head, "Without me ye can do nothing," John xv. 5. To walk in him, is to walk as these that have their light in him, saying, "The Lord is my light; and though I walk in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me." To walk in him, is to walk as these that have their strength in him, saying, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God. And, I can do all things, through Christ strengthening me;" hence they are called to be strong in the grace that is in Christ. Art thou in Christ? Then the grace that is in him is forthcoming for thee; as the life that is in the heart is in the toe, the foot, the outermost member of the body; so is the believer's grace in Christ; and if the grace that is in Christ were not in the believer, also in his measure, how could he be strong in the grace that is in Christ? To walk in Christ is to walk as these that have their acceptance in him; we are accepted in the Beloved; not merely for his sake, but in him as our Head: who having fulfilled the law, and satisfied the justice of God, his doing is ours, because we are in him; the Head having done it, the body is reputed as having done it; and so we are accepted in him. To walk in Christ, is to walk as these that have their motion in him; we cannot move spiritually, but by the Spirit of Christ; and indeed if our life and strength be in him, our motion must be in him also. To walk in Christ, is to walk as these that have their fulness in him; their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and are complete in him by virtue of their union to him. You see what a vast field is here, and how much lies in this walking in Christ. It is an improvement of him for all, as having our all in him.

And yet further, this walking in Christ imports such an improvement of Christ by faith, as I told you before this walking did import. Walking, I said, did import these three things especially;

namely, practice, progress, and permanency ; so here, this walking in Christ imports a practical improvement of Christ ; a progressive improvement of him, and a permanent improvement of him.

(1.) A practical improvement of Christ ; that is, not only a receiving of Christ, and then suffering it to lie sleeping, as it were, in the dull habit ; but it implies faith in practical actings and vigorous exercise of it, and laying faster and faster hold upon him ; and reducing your faith into practice, that you may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, in all things.

(2.) A progressive improvement of Christ ; a following on to know the Lord. It is not a standing still, a sitting down, or going back, but a walking in Christ, a going forward, "Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to the things that are before, and pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God," Phil. iii. 13. The man that walks in Christ can never get enough of him.

(3.) It is a permanent improvement of Christ. A man that takes a step or two forward, and then sits down again, he cannot be said to walk ; so, some take a start of devotion, a fit of zeal and concern for religion, perhaps about a communion, but it dies out. These cannot be said to walk in Christ ; for walking in him is a constant, permanent, preserving, and continued improvement of him. It is true, this constant progress is not always discernable ; saints themselves may have their winter withering, as well as their summer fruit ; and we are not to judge of the growth of a tree by looking to it this day from what it was yesterday ; for there may be no sensible alteration ; but stay till the spring come, and then you will discern the flourish and the fruit ; yea, let some years pass, and then you may see some sensible growth of the whole tree ; so, the children of God are not always to judge of their continued growth, by comparing what they are this day, with what they were the former day ; or what they are this month, with what they were the former month, lest there be no discernable advance ; but let them (at least, if they be of any standing in Christ) judge by what they are now, from what they were at their first engraftment into Christ, and they will find that they have attained more knowledge of Christ than at first, more experience of his favour, more outlettings of his grace than they understood before ; more insight into the gospel, more strokes that their corruptions have got, and so more fruit and growth.

This improvement of Christ is permanent ; it is a walking in Christ, and abiding in him : John xv. 5, “ He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit ; for without me (or SEPARATE FROM ME), ye can do nothing. And, verse 6, If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and they are cast into the fire, and are burnt.” To receive Christ, is to enter upon the bridge ; and to walk in him, is to keep the bridge ; for a downfall on either side is dreadful. Some fall down, as it were, on the right side of the bridge, as hypocrites and self-righteous persons ; some on the left side of the bridge, as these that give themselves over to profane practices. There is a few that keep the bridge, and these are true believers and receivers of Christ ; or, if they happen to fall, they are like a man that falls half down, as it were, and is kept up by a chain fastened to his body ; he may get a hurt by the fall, and be put to a terrible fright by it, lest he drown and perish ; but the chain pulls him up again ; even so, the believer, he is tied, as it were, to the bridge by a chain, a double chain, namely, the spirit of faith dwelling in him, and the grace of faith wrought in him ; for, “ He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit ; and of this faith Christ hath said, “ I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not ? ” yea, there is the chain of a sure promise, the chain of divine faithfulness, the chain of an everlasting righteousness. However if he do not keep the chain, he may fall so as to be put in fear of perishing, in the gulf of everlasting wrath ; and he may hing at the chain, as it were betwixt hope and despair : he may hurt his peace and comfort by his unwatchfulness ; and God may visit his iniquity with the rod, and hing him over the gulf, till the chain pull him up again. It is therefore dreadful in any case not to keep the bridge. I come now to consider,

4thly, What this walking in Christ doth infer. It infers and brings along with it especially two things, namely, a walking with his Father, and a walking in his Spirit.

1. A walking with his Father. “ Enoch walked with God. Walk humbly with thy God.” And what is it to walk with God, but to walk in communion with him, and comfortable enjoyment of him ? In communion with him ; in a constant contemplation of him, sanctifying the Lord in our hearts ; in a constant affection to him, having his love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost ; and in a constant dependence on him, receiving our all from him by

faith, and returning our all to him in duty and gratitude. It is a walking in the comfortable enjoyment of him, as all our portion of happiness, all our salvation, and all our desire; renouncing all things in heaven and earth, as our portion, but a God in Christ alone; and indeed to enjoy God, is to enjoy all, and more than words can express, or thought conceive; it is to enjoy BEING itself, in whose nature is engrossed all possible perfections.

2. It infers a walking in his Spirit; Gal. v. 16, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." And to walk in the Spirit is, in short, to walk in the light of the Spirit, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. It is to walk in the love of the Spirit, as a Spirit of love in the soul, working love towards God and man. It is to walk in the liberty of the Spirit, with enlarged hearts towards God, and the things of God. In the comforts of the Spirit, Acts ix. 31. In the strength and power of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 2. And in all the graces and fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22, 23.

SERMON LXXXVII.

"As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."—COLOS. ii. 6.

[The Fourth Sermon on this Text.]

THERE are two things which the scriptures principally teach (as you may all know by your Catechism), viz., "What we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." Faith and practice are the two great things in it; what we are to believe, and what we are to do. This text then is a short compend of the whole scripture; for it contains all that concerns first our faith, and next our practice: yea, it not only teaches what we are to believe, and what we are to do, or practise, but also how we are to believe, and how we are to practise. How are we to believe? Even by "receiving Christ Jesus the Lord;" for believing and receiving is the same thing, John i. 12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." And so to believe aright is to receive Christ, and to receive him aright is to receive him as a Jesus, and as a Lord; as

a Jesus, that we may be saved by the price of his blood; and as a Lord, that we may be governed by the power of his Spirit. Again, how are we to practise; even by walking in him; and walking in him as we have received him. Now as to the rule of the believer's walk, it lies most emphatical here in the *as* and the *so*, in the text; As ye have received, So walk: which, in the general imports, that a gospel-walk is a walking by faith; for as we receive Christ Jesus the Lord by faith, so we are to walk in him, namely, by faith. There can be no right walking, or working, but by faith: this is the spring of the spiritual life; "The just shall live by faith," Rom. i. 17, Heb. ii. 4, Gal. iii. 11, Heb. x. 38. And this walk is expressly called a walking by faith, 2 Cor. v. 7, "We walk by FAITH, and not by sight. As ye have received Christ, so walk ye in him:" Did you receive him by faith? So walk in him by a continual receiving of him, and drawing virtue from him to enable you to hold on your way. But this leads us to the next general head of the method.

III. The Third general head of the method is, To speak of the rule of the believer's duty, and the proportion it should bear to his reception of Christ, namely, That he is to walk in Christ, as he hath received him.

More particularly, seeing the great emphasis of the text lies in the *as* and *so*, importing, that the walk is to be suitable to the reception, we would inquire what proportion and suitableness this walk should have to the receiving of Christ: And here consider, 1. The proportion and suitableness of this walk to the act of receiving or the manner wherein we receive Christ. 2. The proportion and suitableness thereof to the object received, or to the capacities wherein we received Christ, namely, as he is "Christ Jesus the Lord."

First, The proportion or suitableness of this walk to the act of receiving: or the manner wherein we received him. Here then I must address the believer, who only is capable of this work, because he only hath received Christ, and must inquire at him how he hath received Christ, that he may be directed how to walk in him.

1. Then, Did you receive Christ obedientially and warrantably, upon the warrant of the call and command of God, requiring you to come to him, and receive him? Did you see the authority of God interposed, saying, "This is his commandment that ye believe in the name of his Son?" And to this authority you was made to

stoop in a day of power. Why then, as ye have received Christ obedientially, so walk ye in him, namely, obedientially; from a regard to the sovereign will and authority of a God in Christ. And this is the will of God in Christ concerning you, even that you receive the law from Christ's mouth, and out of his hand; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased, hear ye him."

2. Did you receive Christ humbly and meekly? Was your soul humbled to the dust when you received him? Did you lie prostrate before him, under a sense of your own emptiness, weakness, and wickedness? Did you trample upon yourself as a beast, a dog, a devil, a lump of hell, having no confidence in the flesh? Well, as ye have received him humbly, so walk in him; "Walk humbly with thy God," Micah vi. 8. Walk in a humble dependence upon him, receiving your all from him by faith, and returning your all to him in duty and gratitude.

3. Did you receive him deliberately and resolutely, with due deliberation, judgment, and consideration, resolving to take your hazard with him, to part with all for him, and to follow him whithersoever he goes, to welcome his cross and his crown? Why then, so walk ye in him, namely, with deliberation; weighing the advantages in one scale, and the disadvantages in another, of walking in him or not. You will meet with nothing in this way, but what you was made to weigh, if you rightly received him. Even though losses, and crosses, and martyrdom should be in the scale where Christ was; and the world, and all the profits, pleasures, and preferments of it, in the other scale; yet you was made to choose Christ. Why, then, so walk in him, by evidencing it in your life, that whatever reproaches you suffer for his name, or whatever trials you may suffer, you are at a point. Having deliberately received, deliberately walk.

4. Did you receive Christ uprightly, with the utmost integrity, sincerity, and exactness? Why then, so walk ye in him, evidencing in your life the same uprightness and integrity: "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely," saith Solomon: "See then that ye walk circumspectly," saith the apostle, Eph. v. 15, the word is *AKRIBOS*, that is, exactly, accurately, and precisely. Some are censured as if they were too precise in their religion; but it is the command of God, that we be as exact and upright in the way of walking in Christ, as in the act of believing in him, and receiving of him.

5. Did you receive Christ cordially, cheerfully, and lovingly?

Did you receive him with the heart, and with a thousand good-wills? And oh! how sweet was he to you in the day that God revealed him in you, and that you was made to strike hands with him. Then so walk ye in him; that is, endeavour, through grace, to keep up that frame of heart that you had in closing with him, and to bring up your conversation to the way and manner in which ye received him, by walking in him cordially and cheerfully; having the joy of the Lord for your strength, rejoicing in Christ Jesus; for, he meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; and entertaining a sense of his love which you had in the day of believing, so as his love may constrain you to obedience; and you may fear the Lord and his goodness. In the day of believing, was you not more elevated, and more cheerful, than ever the bird that sat upon the brier? Was you not filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Away, then, with sinful discouragement in your walk, saying, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God," Psalm xliii. 5.

6. Did you receive him spiritually; that is, in the strength, and under the conduct of his own Spirit, without whose influence and assistance you could do nothing? Then, so walk ye in him spiritually, depending on the grace, strength, conduct, and influence of his Spirit, for strengthening you both for your work and warfare; and so, with the true circumcision, worshipping God in the Spirit, praying in the Holy Ghost, and walking in the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit is in every believer according to his measure; and when the believer is in the Spirit, then it is well with him, Rev. i. 10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." The man that walketh in Christ as he hath received him walketh not carnally, but spiritually just as he received him; and hence he cries for the Spirit, saying, "Lord, hold me with thy free Spirit; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me: thy Spirit is good, lead me to the land of uprightness."

7. Did you not receive Christ speedily? Yea, none can tell how speedily the poor soul that saw himself ready to drop into hell, doth flee to Christ in a day of power. Oh! with what eagerness and earnestness doth the convinced sinner flighter after him? and how actively he runneth in to him? Well, did you receive him speedily and actively? So walk ye in him, by endeavouring, through grace, to be speedy in your motion, ready and active in his

service. This is to have a walk suitable to the manner of your receiving of Christ. To be lazy and inactive doth not answer the right reception ; but to run in the way of his commandments, and to run without wearying, this is suitable ; for, in a day of believing, the soul is far from wearying, nay, then he flies on the wings of faith and love.

8. Did you not receive him fiducially and confidently, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and drawing near with full assurance of faith, and with some measure of application, appropriation, and persuasion ? Whatever unbelieving diffidence took place, yet according to the measure of faith, such was the measure of holy confidence, trust, and persuasion, founded upon the truth and veracity of God in the promise. Well, then, so walk ye in him, whatever opposition be in the way ; saying, with Job, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." "Cast not away your confidence," saith the apostle to the Hebrews, "which hath great recompense of reward," chap. x. 35 ; and, "Hold fast the confidence," chap. iii. 6 ; for, "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end," ver. 14.

9. Did you not receive Christ wholly and undividedly, in all his three offices, and in all the four excellencies that the apostle puts together, 1 Cor. i. 30, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ? Did you receive him for wisdom, to make you light in the Lord ; for righteousness, to make you accepted in the Beloved ; for sanctification, to make you holy ; and for redemption, to make you happy ? Why, then, so walk ye in him. Ye cannot walk wisely if ye do not improve him for your wisdom, ye cannot walk acceptably unless ye improve him for righteousness, nor holily unless ye improve him for sanctification, nor safely unless ye improve him for your complete redemption.

10. Did you not receive Christ orderly and evangelically, or in the gospel order, namely, as the Lord your righteousness and strength ; first, to be your righteousness for your justification ; and then to be your strength for sanctification ? The legal order is just the reverse of this ; the man would do by his own strength, and then be justified by his own doing. But true faith receives Christ in the gospel order ; that is, first to be justified by his righteousness and then sanctified by his grace and strength ; knowing that his performances cannot be accepted, nor acceptable service, until his

person be accepted in the Beloved. Now, have you received Christ orderly, then walk in him orderly; for, "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God," Psalm l. 23. And walk in him evangelically, as he have received him; that is, from a gospel principle; the love of Christ constraining to a gospel end, the glory of a God in Christ; and in a gospel manner, going on in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness and his only.

In a word, did you not receive him irreversibly, so as never to part with him? Why, then, so walk ye in him, saying, as Ruth to Naomi, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; nothing shall part thee and me," Ruth i. 16, 17.—And thus we see the proportion that this walk should bear to the receiving of Christ, with respect to the manner of receiving him.

Secondly, The proportion or suitableness of this walk to the object received, or to the capacity wherein we receive him, comes next to be spoke to. Here we may consider, 1. The three generals mentioned in the text, Christ, Jesus, the Lord. 2. The manifold particulars that are comprehended under and deduceable from these, and in all these we may view the proportion that our walk should bear to our faith objectively considered.

1st, Notice the three generals in the text holding forth the object of faith, Christ, Jesus, the Lord. And,

1. Have you received him as the Christ, the Anointed of the Father? so walk ye in him, even in him as the Christ. Now, as I observed in the former part of the doctrinal heads, Christ is to be considered both doctrinally and personally.

Consider Christ doctrinally; that is, the doctrine of Christ, which you, believer, have received, while you received Christ in his word, and in the doctrine of the gospel. As ye have received, or believed the doctrine of Christ, or the truth of the gospel, so walk ye in it. If you consider the text with the context, both preceding and following, you will see that Christ, doctrinally considered, is particularly here intended, not excluding but including Christ personally considered. And indeed none can receive Christ and reject his doctrine. If a man profess to take Christ and yet neglect the gospel, he is a liar, for he that will have the treasure must buy the field where the treasure is, Matth. xiii. 44. Now, did you receive Christ

doctrinally, by receiving the truth as it is in Christ? Then so walk ye in him; that is, walk in the truth, 2 John 4, "I rejoiced that I found thy children walking in truth. I am the way and the truth," says Christ. If we walk in this way we must walk in the truth. And this intimates to us,

(1.) That they cannot be walking in Christ, who are not zealous for truth, and against error; zealous for Christ, the Truth, in opposition to all error; and so to walk in Christ, is to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints; for, if we have received the truth, as it is in Christ, then to walk in him, as we have received him, is to maintain his truth, and persevere in the true doctrine of the gospel, in opposition to all error on the right and left hand, not holding the head, Col. ii. 19. If a man be careless whether truth sink or swim, he is not one who walks in Christ, or holds the head. Some, instead of holding by the head, they hold by the foot; it is enough to them that such a good man or such a learned man says so and so, concerning this or that truth; and so they that let the head go, and hold by the foot, not regarding the truth as it is in Christ, but the truth as it is delivered by such a man, whom they esteem, and such another man, that hath this and that good character. Why, sirs, if ye have received Christ as the Truth, then ye are to walk in him as the Truth; as the head and heart of the Truth, and not to hang your faith on the belt of any man or angel; for, "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach another gospel, let him be accursed." Again,

(2.) It intimates to us that they cannot be walking in Christ, who are not zealous against all abolished ceremonies; for Christ is the truth, in opposition to types and ceremonies; these were shadows of things to come, but the body is Christ, ver. 17-23. The false apostles joined the doctrines of Christ with the ceremonies of Moses, but the Colossians are exhorted, that as they have received Christ, the substance of all the shadows and ceremonies, so they should walk in him, not in Moses; "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And if they that profess to receive Christ as the substance and body of all the ceremonies, and yet do walk in conformity to the Mosaical ceremonies that were instituted of God, do not at all walk suitably to their profession of receiving Christ; much more they that profess to receive Christ, and yet conform themselves to ceremonies that were never instituted of God at all, but are the mere inventions of men; such as the ab-

jured ceremonies of the church of Rome and England. Though ceremonial service and superstitious worship had never been abjured by solemn National Covenant, as it was, yet we stand obliged by the word of God to renounce and reject the same; because we are obliged to walk in Christ, and to walk in him as we have received him; and, if we received him aright, we have received him doctrinally as he is the Truth; the Truth in opposition to error, and the Truth in opposition to shadows and ceremonies. Again,

Consider Christ personally, as he is the Anointed of the Father. Now, believer, have you received Christ as the Anointed of God? that is, not only have you been made to believe that he is sealed and authorized of the Father to his mediatorial work, and qualified for it of the Father by the supereminent unction of the Holy Ghost; but also, have you, by faith, gone in to him, and closed with him as such, and so are made a partaker of the same anointing of the Holy Ghost, by virtue of union to Christ; for, "He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit?" Why then, so walk ye in him, that being in him you may abide in him by a lively faith, John xv. 5, be rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith; ver. 7, of this chapter where the text lies, "Even in Christ in whom we are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit," Eph. ii. 22. Have ye received him as the Christ, the Anointed of God? Then so walk in him, by improving him and employing him still to anoint you with the same anointing. Have ye received him as the Christ, the authorised of the Father? Then so walk in him, by employing him as one that hath a warrant and authority to save, to heal, and help you in time of need.

2. Have you received him as a JESUS, a Saviour? This is another title he hath in the text, as one that saves from the guilt of sin, the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and from all things from which ye could never be justified by the law of Moses. Why, then, so walk ye in him, even in him as a Jesus, in which capacity ye have received him. Be daily looking to him for daily salvation, and daily flying into his saving arms, and taking shelter under the shadow of his blood and righteousness; and let your walk and conversation before God and the world, evidence that you have received him as a Jesus, a Saviour.

(1.) Have you received him as a Jesus? so walk in him before God, by resting on him for complete salvation; and rejoicing in him as God's Salvation, as old Simeon called him, "Now mine eyes

have seen thy salvation." Look not for any salvation you need from God, by any other means, but only in and through this Jesus; for the excellencies and perfections of God do all stand against you and your salvation by any other way; but in this Jesus, he can save you to the honour of all his truth, and the praise of all his other perfections: "I am the way, says Christ, no man cometh to the Father but by me;" and to walk in this way, as ye have received him, is just having received him to be the way to the Father, to be still coming nearer and nearer to God in this way, till salvation be complete, and till you come to the end of your faith, the salvation of your soul.

2. As ye have received him as a Jesus, so walk in him before the world, by giving evidence in your conversation that this Jesus hath saved you, and called you with a holy calling; and by setting him forth, as you can, to all that are about you, that he is an excellent Saviour, the chief among ten thousands; that he is an able Saviour, mighty to save; and that he is a complete Saviour, a perfect Jesus. Tell your children, families, friends, and all that you can have regular access to do good unto, that religion is no fancy; but that which you have heard and seen, and handled, of the word of life, declare unto them, that they may have fellowship with you, if they hear; that you have seen a glory in Christ that they never saw, and felt a sweetness that they never felt, a joy unspeakable, and a peace that passeth all understanding, which they are strangers unto; it may stir them up to say, as it is, Zech. viii. 23, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." Sirs, a servant will commend his master that may be little worthy of commendation; and will you not commend a Jesus who have received him as such, and walk in his name? Micah iv. 5, "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." Again,

3. Have you received him as a LORD? This is another letter of his name in the text; and these three letters of his name, Christ, Jesus, the Lord, point him out beyond all other names in the world. Have you, I say, received him as a LORD? Then walk in him as a Lord, otherwise you walk not in him as you have received him. The true believer doth not only receive Christ as a Jesus and Saviour, but also as a Lord and Governor. Many would divide betwixt his salvation and his dominion; they would have Christ as a Saviour, to save them from wrath, but not as a Lord, to destroy

their lusts and sins ; but the true receiver of Christ is as weary of the load of corruption, as he is weary of the load of condemnation ; and therefore not only being weary of condemnation, would he have Christ as a Saviour, but being weary of corruption he would have Christ as a Lord ; and indeed when the heart would have water as well as blood, then it is in a right temperature ; when the man would have water to purify the heart, as well as blood to pacify the conscience, this argues honest receiving ; for Christ comes by water and blood, 1 John v. 6. He comes not only to justify, but also to sanctify ; he comes not only as a Jesus, to save by price, but also as a Lord, to save by power.

Now have you received Christ in the capacity of a Lord ? Then so walk in him as he is a Lord, and as ye have received him. The rest of the world give evidence that they never received him as a Lord, by their practically saying, that they will not have this man to reign over them ; but know, man, that he will never be a Jesus to save you, if he be not also a Lord to conquer you, and reign over you ; and you can never receive him as a Jesus, and reject him as a Lord, without being rejected of him in both these capacities ; for he will not be a Jesus where he is not a Lord. But you, believers, who have received Christ as a Lord, are you walking in him as these that have thus received him, and giving evidence that ye have received him as a Lord, before God and the world ? Surely, if it be so, it will some way appear by the language of your hearts, and the language of your lives. The language of your hearts will be, " O Lord, other lords have had the dominion over me ; but now by thee only will I make mention of thy name." Oh ! may Christ be the Lord of my heart, and of all the thoughts of my heart, so as they may be captives to the Son of God ; and of all the affections of my heart, so as they may terminate upon him alone ; and of all the desires of my heart, so as that they may go out after him. Why, the rest of the world shew they never received him as a Lord, because the devil, the world, and the flesh, have the whole of their hearts, their thoughts, affections, and desires, being wholly taken up with vanishing worldly lusts, idols, and trifles. But though the world may have much of a believer's heart sometimes, yet it hath but the white of the egg, as it were, Christ hath the yoke of the heart of that man ; his top and superlative thoughts and desires, because he hath taken Christ for the Lord of his heart. Again, if you have received Christ as a Lord, then you will so desire to walk in

him, by saying, O let him be the Lord of my tongue ! while others are saying, " Our tongues are our own, who is Lord over us ?" and so loosing their tongues against heaven, by cursing, swearing, railing, reproaching ; but, O says the man that hath received Christ the Lord, May Christ be the Lord of my tongue, and may it be occupied in his service, in praying, praising, and edifying discourse upon all occasions, Sabbath and working days. Many by their carnal discourse and conversation, and by their evil and unprofitable communication, give evidence that it is not Christ, but the devil, that is lord of their tongues. Again, if you have received Christ as a Lord, then you will so desire to walk in him as to make him Lord of your time, so as not to squander it away with idle company, idle visits, idle diversions ; as if it were good for nothing but to be cast away upon any trifle ; but you will desire and endeavour to " Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time." Many show that Christ is not their Lord, by living as if they were lords of their own time and talents, which yet are but lent of the Lord, who says, " Occupy till I come." If you have received him as a Lord, then so to walk in him is to make him Lord of your life, so as to live to him ; the Lord of your souls and bodies, so as to glorify him in your souls and bodies, which are his. Others live as if they were lords of their own life, lords of their own souls, and might cast them away at random ; and lords of their own bodies, and might defile them with drunkenness and whoredom as they please ; an evidence that Christ is not their Lord. If you have received him as a Lord, then so to walk in him is to make him Lord of your consciences, and the Lord of your light, so as not to enslave your light and conscience to any man on earth, any devil in hell, or any idol in the world. Many give evidence that Christ is not their Lord, by crossing their light and consciences for a trifle ; whereas if Christ were the Lord of their light and consciences, they would die in his cause rather than put out his candle which he hath kindled in their breast. Again, if you have received him as a Lord, you will so walk in him as to make him the Lord of your wills, he having made you willing in the day of power ; whatever remaining enmity or rebellion of will take place, yet your habitual desire will be to have your will in subjection to his will, whether preceptive or providential, without fighting against his precept, or fretting against his providence ; at least every fighting and fretting thought will be matter of exercise to you, while your soul's desire will be to have a

due subjection to his precept, and submission to his providence. The rest of the world give evidence that Christ is not their Lord, because they are such as carry as if they were lords of their own wills ; their wills were never subdued. Again, if Christ be received as a Lord, you will so walk in him as to make him the Lord of your comforts and enjoyments in a world, so as to bless him when he gives or takes, saying, "It is the Lord that giveth, the Lord that taketh, blessed be the name of the Lord." Take worldly comforts away from a man that never took Christ for his Lord, he will cry, "O ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" But the believer will say, even with respect to spiritual, as well as outward comforts, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good to him." If he himself be my Lord, let him dispose of me and mine as he will. If you have received Christ as your Lord, then so walk in him as to make him Lord of your graces, who gives grace, and the exercise of it, as he pleases ; and so your desire will be to be strong, not in yourselves, or your own grace, but strong in the grace that is in Christ, saying, if you want any grace in exercise, O ! he is the Prince exalted by the right hand of God, to give it, and therefore to him will I look for it ; or if you have any grace, O ! it is not of me, it is by grace I am what I am. You will own him also as the Lord of your duties, and the Lord of ordinances, that only can put a blessing in them for your good, and as the Lord your righteousness, in whom alone you can have acceptance ; and the Lord your strength, from whom alone you can have assistance ; they that perform all their duties in their natural strength, and so think to have acceptance of God, and favour with him upon their doing so. they both put themselves in the room of the Lord their strength, and their duties in the room of the Lord their righteousness. In a word, if you have received Christ as the Lord, you will walk in him, by making him the Lord of your faith. The false apostles made Moses the lord of their faith and obedience equal with Christ ; and therefore they joined the Mosaical ceremonies with the doctrine of Christ ; but the Colossians had received Christ Jesus the Lord, and so they are called to walk in him as they had received him. Some make the church lord of their faith ; they believe as the church believes, or as this or that man believes, which shews that Christ is not their Lord. Some make the devil the lord of their faith, they believe the devil rather than the God of truth ; and the devil, the Father of lies, learns them to believe a lie ; see 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. Some make

their reason the lord of their faith, they believe no more than their carnal reason can digest. But the true believer makes Christ the Lord of his faith, and the veracity of Christ the ground of it, and the doctrine of Christ the rule of it. It is true, the devil, and the believer's remaining unbelief, wage war against his faith, and seek to be lords of his faith; and it is a shame that the believer, in the day of battle, should yield to any other lord, and let his faith, hope, and confidence fall to the ground. It is a marvellous fault in believers to call the love of God and the truth of God in question upon every occasion, by unbelief. Faith is the believer's shield, and hope his helmet, Eph. vi. 16. Now, would they not be very foolish who would wear their shield and helmet when there is no war nor stir; and as soon as ever they see an adversary coming, or a battle beginning, then to cast away their shield and helmet, and to do so usually? Why, even so it is with many, perhaps, true believers; they will talk of their faith and hope in a time of prosperity and ease, when all is in peace, and no seeming war from heaven or hell; then they wear their shield and helmet; but when war comes, when affliction comes, and temptation comes, then they childishly cast away both their faith and hope, both their shield and helmet; and till their sense and reason be satisfied, they will not be persuaded. Oh! how dishonouring is this to the Lord, whom ye have taken to be the Lord of your faith, the Captain of your salvation. To walk in Christ as ye have received him for a Lord, is to make him the Lord of your faith, in spite of the devil and the world, who seek to lord it over you and your faith. Finally, if you have received him as your Lord, you will so walk in him as to make him the Lord of your obedience. Others, by obeying the devil, by obeying their lusts and idols, and by obeying the sinful commandments of men, show that Christ is not the Lord of their obedience. But, believer, if you walk in Christ as you have received him, you give evidence that he is the Lord whom you obey and serve; saying, with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And then, let it be the language of your life and conversation before the world, that Christ is your Lord. If you would judge of yourselves that Christ is your Lord, it is even to be tried by your subjection to him, and his subduing of sin in you. The higher the Sun of righteousness is risen, the shorter will the shadows of your sin and corruption be. If the world judge of your receiving of Christ, as a Lord, and of your faith, they will judge it by your walk and conversation, and by your works, as I said before, upon the second head.

2dly, I come, as I proposed, to observe all the manifold particulars comprehended under, and deduceable from, these generals in the text; and in all these we may further view the proportion that our walk should bear to our faith objectively considered. Now, these generals in the text comprehend all the particular capacities wherein he is held forth in the gospel; and to name all these, at present were impracticable; we offer but some of them for instances, and yet shall endeavour, through grace, not altogether to scrimp or scroof over the matter, that we may hold forth this Lord Jesus Christ as a full Saviour, answering all the cases that any poor sinner can be brought into.

Now, you know, that Christ is to be received as he is offered in the gospel, according to your Catechism, which says, "That faith in Jesus Christ is a receiving and resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered in the gospel." The receiving relates to an offering; and he is to be received as he is offered, and then walked in as he is received. The question then is, How is he offered in the gospel, or in what capacity, that we may know further how he is to be received, that so being thus received, he may be thus walked in? Well, his being offered as a CHRIST, a JESUS, a LORD, as I have shewed already, comprehends these following particulars; and while we are telling you in what capacity Christ is offered, O look to the Lord to give you grace to receive him as he is offered; that having received him in these capacities, you may walk in him.

1. Christ Jesus the Lord is offered in the gospel in the capacity of a Prophet and Teacher, that being thus received ye may so walk in him. Are there any poor, blind, ignorant souls here, that know nothing of God or Christ, or the covenant of grace? Behold Christ is offered to you in the capacity of a Prophet that hath compassion on the ignorant, saying, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," Matt. xi. 29. Never will you learn till you be bound and entered to Christ; for "Who teacheth like him?" Job xxxvi. 22. Ministers may preach but they cannot give you a capacity to learn; but Christ can give you a heart to know, as well as an ear to hear; for he gives eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, and understanding to the simple. What is the reason that there is so much preaching, and so little spiritual profiting and spiritual life? It is even because Christ the great Prophet is so little with us, 2 Kings iv. 31. There was neither voice nor hearing by the prophet's staff, until the prophet came and stretched himself upon the dead child; even so it

is here, the staff of a preached word does not the business, till the great Prophet come. Now, have you entered yourselves to be his scholars? Have you received him as a Prophet? Then, so walk in him by daily improvement of him in that capacity, to enlighten your understanding, saying, Lord, I have heard by the hearing of the ear, but little have mine eyes seen of thee; I have been long in Christ's school, but made little proficiency; O come and teach me to profit! let my eyes be opened, that in the ordinances of thy institution I may see the glory of God, the vileness of sin, the beauty of Christ, and the excellency of his righteousness. Thus having received him as a Prophet, so walk ye in him, by coming always for more and more instruction from him.

2. Christ Jesus the Lord is offered in the gospel in the capacity of a Priest, that being thus received ye may so walk in him. How sweet is this offer of Christ to all poor things that are wrestling with the guilt of sin, and the debt they owe to the justice of God! for it is only in Christ that God is well-pleased, even in him "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus." They that believe in Jesus, the propitiation, have gotten all their debt paid; and God's honesty and fidelity is such that he will never crave the debt over again. Christ is offered as a Priest for reconciliation, and a Priest for intercession. They that take hold of Christ as a Priest, they have nothing ado in heaven but they are sure to have it done; for there he makes continual intercession for us. Are you so vexed with temptations that you cannot get a composed thought in duty? Here is refreshment from the presence of the Lord, even a Friend in heaven, who never gives over to make intercession. Now, have you received Christ as a Priest? Then, so walk in him, by daily improving him, his satisfaction and intercession, as the ground of your peace with God, pardon of sin, and acceptance in every performance.

3. Christ Jesus the Lord is offered in the gospel in the capacity of a King and a Captain, that being thus received, ye may so walk in him. Behold! he is held forth as a King, to subdue, by his power; to conquer, by his grace; and defend, by his providence, from all temptations without and corruptions within; and as a Captain, even the Captain of our salvation, who hath good skill to lead on in the battle, and victory is still upon his side. In Ps. xci. 4, there you see he hath wings wherein you may trust, and his truth

shall be thy shield and buckler ; thou shalt not be afraid of terrors by night, nor for the arrows that fly by day. He is a Captain whose name is, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace ; a Prince exalted by the right hand of God, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. Now, have you received him thus as a Prince, a Captain of salvation ? So walk in him, by employing him still to subdue all your sins, and to defend you from all spiritual and temporal evils. To defend you from all spiritual evils ; for, you wrestle not against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places ; therefore, be strong in the Lord, Eph. vi. 10, 12 ; “ For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds,” 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. To defend from all temporal evils : but here a question may be moved, How doth this Captain defend his soldiers from temporal evils, calamities, and afflictions ? To which we reply, it is even by taking away the sting of them. Some may think how are the Lord’s people supported under the temporal evils they are meeting with ? Why, the everlasting arms of JEHOVAH are underneath them, and that is enough. If the Lord see fit that temporal goods be taken from them, he makes it up an hundred fold in giving them spiritual goods. They would count it good interest who get ten of the hundred ; but, behold ! the people of God get a hundred-fold in this life ; and for any loss in temporals they get it repaired in spirituals, as in the intimation of the pardon of sin, and there is gold for copper. Many know not how the Lord supports his people under the difficulties they are brought into in this world ; but he hath pledged his word to defend them from all temporal and spiritual evils, and he never failed in his word, wherein he hath said, “ The place of their defence shall be the munition of rocks.” Now, to receive Christ as a King and Captain to rule and defend, is to receive him as he is offered, and to improve him daily for this end is to walk in him as we have received him.

4. Christ Jesus the Lord is offered in the gospel in the capacity of an Ark and a Refuge, that being thus received, we may so walk in him. He is held forth as an Ark and a Refuge. Now, have you received him as an Ark, that only can save you from drowning by the flood of God’s wrath, saying, “ Lord, there is no other ark to save me but thee, for I am shipwrecked in Adam, and there is no plank but Christ to bring me to shore ? ” Have you therefore

clasped to him by the hand of faith, saying, Lord, save me, or else I perish? Why, then, having thus received him, do you so walk in him; keep within your Ark, and abide in him, seeking no other ark, and reposing confidence nowhere else; this is to walk in him as ye have received him. Have you received him as a refuge and hiding-place, Isa. xxxii. 2, saying, "Lord, I flee to thee to hide me, for the avenger of blood, the law and justice of God, are at my heels pursuing me; and if they find me afar off from thee, I am slain without mercy; the clefts of the Rock are my only hiding-place, which I take to be a safeguard to me?" Well, then, so walk ye in him, by taking shelter still in this sanctuary.

5. Christ Jesus the Lord is offered in the gospel in the capacity of a Cautioner or Surety, that being thus received we may so walk in him. There are two things requisite in a cautioner, and both are to be found in Christ: the one is that he be *solvendo*, able to pay all the debt; and the other is that he be willing, as well as able to undertake the debt. Now, Christ is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, Heb. vii. 25, and all comers are welcome; "Whosoever will let him come:" *q. d.*, the will shall not be wanting on my side. Now, have you, as a bankrupt-debtor, received Christ as a Surety, saying, "Lord, I owe many thousands more than I can pay, but thou hast a sufficient ransom to pay all my debt; and I flee to thee as my Surety, that I be not seized by justice, and dragged to the prison of hell." Have you thus received him as a Surety? Then so walk in him, by employing him still as a Surety for debt and duty both; for clearing your conscience with respect to all your debt, and for carrying your soul honourably through every duty, and doing all your works in you and for you.

6. Christ Jesus the Lord is offered in the gospel in the capacity of an Advocate, that being thus received we may so walk in him; "These things I write to you, that ye sin not; but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. Well is it with the poor soul that hath many challenges for sin and guilt, and is sadly exercised therewith, when yet it can put its case in the hand of him who is an Advocate with the Father; he can fully answer and propose able defences against all challenges from conscience. But, alas! I fear there are many sleeping consciences among us. However, freedom from all challenges is only by the blood of Christ, and the faith of his advocating our cause with the Father; and well is it

with us that we have a righteous Jesus, a sinless Jesus for our Advocate, who can comfort under the saddest discouragement, and relieve from the saddest intricacy, for he understands all heart-secrets, his understanding being infinite; and he is not lordly in his employment. There is much lordliness among earthly advocates, and great men of that profession; you must come and wait at their gates with hat in hand, and perhaps never be the better, for advocates with us may be honest, and yet lose a good cause; but here is an Advocate in your offer, to be received by you, who never lost a cause that was put in his hand. Now, have you received him as an Advocate? Then so walk ye in him, by still employing him in that capacity, saying, "Lord, my crimes are great, my cause is bad, but never a cause miscarried that thou didst take in hand: oh! let every one of thy wounds be as so many open mouths to plead for me; let thy blood speak, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel."

7. Christ Jesus the Lord is offered in the gospel, in the capacity of a Physician, that being thus received we may walk in him. We are full of plagues, maladies, sores, and spiritual diseases. Christ is exhibited to us as a Physician that hath skill of all diseases, and can heal them all, be what they will, Psalm ciii. 3.—Who healeth all thy diseases, he knows the right time of applying the healing word, Psalm cvii. 21. He sent his word and healed them and delivered them from their destruction: he heals with his own blood, and mixes his own blood with the word, a strange mixture and compound to be a healing potion, for he seals the word with his blood. Many are whole, and see no need of the Physician—they are whole-hearted, their hearts were never pierced with an arrow of legal conviction. But, if you have seen your malady, and prized the remedy; if you have received Christ as a Physician, then so walk ye in him, by coming still with your broken bones to his door, saying, "Lord, here lies a Job full of boils, a Lazarus full of sores at thy gate; here a paralytic hand; here a blind eye; here a hard heart; here is a plague, and there is a wound; here is my atheism, ignorance, enmity, unbelief; Oh! heal, heal; let me have a touch of thy garment, and I shall be whole."—Now, if you have received Christ as a Physician to continue in the improving of him thus, is to walk in him as ye have received him.

8. Christ Jesus the Lord is offered in the gospel in the capacity of a Head and Husband, that being thus received, we may so walk

in him. Christ is offered in the gospel as a friend in the room of all friends, a friend that sticketh closer than a brother; a husband to the widow, a father to the fatherless, and a stay to the orphan; "When my father and mother forsaketh me, the Lord will take me up," Psalm xxvii. 10. And Jer. xlix. 11, "Leave thy fatherless children upon me, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me;" and again, "Thy Maker is thy husband." Our Lord hath a kind heart to the widow and orphans; for he is an ocean of love and a fountain of mercy, and he hath a liberal hand towards them; for he gives durable riches and righteousness; "And I will fill their treasures," Prov. viii. 21. All the silver and gold in the world cannot fill one's heart; but, says Christ, "I will fill their treasures." Let a graceless man have the greatest substance in the world, he is but a poor miserable wretch; but the poorest soul married to Christ hath durable riches; yea, unsearchable riches, Eph. iii. 8. Take the greatest prince and monarch in the world, a few figures in arithmetic will count all his wealth, and all that he is worth; but all the arithmetic in the world cannot count the believer's stock, who hath Christ for his Friend and Husband, for it is the unsearchable riches of Christ. They that are ill-friended in the world may be supplied here; Christ is offered as a Friend, a Head, and Husband.—Now, have you received him as a Head and Husband? Then so walk in him. Have you received him as such, some time a-day, when you was brought to say, "Lord, though I be the most deformed, black, and unworthy bride that ever was, having nothing but poverty, debt, and danger to recommend me to thee; yet since thou, who art the chief among ten thousands, art content to match with me, behold! I say Amen to that marriage covenant, desiring to assent to all the articles of it."—Have you thus received him, I say, as a Head and Husband? Then so walk ye in him by maintaining the relation, and saying, my Beloved is mine, and I am his; and again, I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine, Song vi. 3. Let me see more and more, that neither death nor hell, sin or Satan shall be able to loose the marriage knot; and let me have sweet communion and fellowship with this glorious Head, and love-communications and love-visits from this glorious Husband. Thus you may come to walk in him as he have received him.

9. Christ Jesus the Lord is offered in the gospel in the capacity of a Helper and Reliever, that being thus received we may so

walk in him and improve him. He is offered, I say, as a Helper of the needy, and a Reliever of the burdened soul; he is therefore declared to be a present help in time of trouble, who gives grace to help in time of need; and with respect to all burdens says, "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee." Now have you received him as a Helper? Then so walk ye in him by still taking his help, and employing him to help you saying, "Lord, I have destroyed myself, but in thee only is my help; help me in respect of deliverance from the mire of sin and misery into which I have cast myself; help me in respect of supply out of thy fulness, for never a poorer wretch came to thy door than I; not a penny of grace is there left to help me, nor a crumb to keep in my life: Oh! let me not go from thy treasure-house without an alms; for, "There is bread enough in thy house and to spare:" though I be a dog, let me not go without a crumb. Thus by faith and prayer you may walk in him as a Helper, if you have received him as such. Again, have you received him as a Reliever? (to put both these together that are so nigh of kin) Then so walk in him by employing him still to relieve you of your burdens, saying, "O! sin is heavier than a millstone, and how many of these millstones are on my back! Angels cannot free me of my burdens; for the burden of one sin sunk many thousands of them to the bottomless pit: saints cannot do it, they have burdens enough of their own; nay, the whole creation cannot bear my burden; for it groans under the weight of me and it: but, Lord, art not thou the Rock, the mighty Rock, on whom God hath laid the help of poor sinners? 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all;' and there I roll my burden, even upon this Burden-bearer: let me be eased, for the Rock can bear it without any difficulty." In this way, having received him as a Reliever and a Burden-bearer, you are to improve him, and so to walk in him.

10. Christ Jesus the Lord is offered in the gospel in the capacity of a Shepherd, that being thus received we may so walk in him. See Isa. xl. 11, "He shall feed his flock like a Shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." Christ is held forth in the gospel as the wise Shepherd, that knows his sheep, and puts his mark upon them, and seals them; "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his:" "They are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. He is the

careful Shepherd that hath a fold for them ; “ Other sheep I have that are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.” He is the faithful Shepherd, that rejoiceth in the thriving of his flock, and will give a good account of all the sheep ; hence he says, “ This is the will of my Father, that of all he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day,” John vi. 39 ; and he will at that day separate the sheep from the goats. He is the kind Shepherd that feeds, and leads, and heals, and watches, and waters, and defends, and gathers his flock. Now, have you received Christ as a Shepherd to perform these kind offices towards you ? Then so walk ye in him by depending on him for the continual communication of that pastoral care. Faith is called a returning to the Shepherd of our souls, 1 Pet. ii. 25, “ Ye were as sheep going astray, but are returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” Now, the life of faith, and walking in him in this capacity, is just a remaining with him and depending on him as a Shepherd. It is depending on him as a Shepherd to feed you ; for, he feeds his flock as no other shepherd doth ; he feeds them upon a green pasture, and the pasture is himself ; John x. 9. “ I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved ; and he shall go in and out, and find pasture :” compare this with John vi. 51, “ I am the living bread that came down from heaven ; the bread that I give is my flesh which I give for the life of the world.” It is a depending on him as a Shepherd to lead you ; “ The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He leadeth me by the still waters ; he leadeth the blind in a way they know not ;” he maketh darkness light before them ; he guides them by his counsel, and brings them to his glory : and if you walk in him, you take him for your guide, and employ him as your guide to give you counsel, because he is the wonderful Counsellor. It is a depending on him as a Physician to heal you ; but of Christ as a Physician I spoke already. Again, it is depending on him as a Shepherd to watch over you ; for he is the watchful Shepherd that watches his flock night and day ; “ the watchman of Israel slumbers not nor sleeps ;” he never gives so much as a nap, for then we were undone, in regard Satan never sleeps, and enemies are never idle. It is a depending on him as a Shepherd to water you ; he waters his flock as well as feeds them ; and as he feeds them with his flesh, so he waters them with his blood, and with the influences of his Spirit ; here is the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God ; he pours water on him

that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. It is a depending on him as a Shepherd to protect you; for he defends his flock from all wolves, from all harm and injury: know you what the devil said of Job? Though he be the father of lies, yet he spake a truth, when he would gladly have had God's hand of protection removed from Job, chap. i. 10, "Doth Job serve God for nought? Hast thou not made an hedge about him and his house, and all that he hath on every side?" I believe there are many of you know not that the devil is going about your doors, seeking to devour you: but here is the mercy of all the flock of Christ, that their Shepherd hath set an hedge about them, that nothing may harm them; neither can violence touch them without his special permission and order, and that for their advantage; for, "All things shall work together for their good." Finally, it is to depend upon him as a Shepherd to gather you: "He gathers the lambs with his arms:" they go astray many times, and wander so far away, that they seem to be quite lost; but, "He seeks and saves that which is lost:" And he hath a long arm to gather them and bring them back to himself, that they may get a mark answerable to his gracious care in reducing them; Isa. lxii. 12, "Thou shalt be called, Sought out, a city not forsaken." Have you received him then as a Shepherd? So walk ye in him, as to employ him to gather you from all your far wanderings; your wandering thoughts, your wandering words, your wandering affections, your wandering conversations; saying with the Psalmist, Psalm cxix. 176, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek thy servant;" verse 10, "O let me not wander from thy commandments: And if I wander, O bring me back, and let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, the Son of man, whom thou hast made strong for thyself; and henceforth I will not go back: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; draw me, and I shall run after thee."

Have you received him in the capacity of a Mediator and Peace-maker? Then so walk in him, by employing him still to take up all quarrels between God and your soul, saying, "Lord, stand betwixt me and the flaming sword; and let me have the sense of the Father's love, the atoning blood of the Lamb; and bring the news of peace to my soul."

Have you received him as the Ransomer of captives? Then so walk in him, by employing him still to assert your liberty, to knock off your fetters, to loose your bands, and to bring your souls out of prison, that you may serve and praise him.

Have you received him as a Saviour ? Then so walk in him, by employing him to carry on your salvation to perfection ; and to save you from sin, from the law, from death, and wrath.

Have you received him as a Sun, as the Sun of righteousness ? Then so walk in him, by rejoicing in his light, and shunning all the darkness of ignorance and error ; “ O house of Israel, walk ye in the light of the Lord.”

Have you received him as your righteousness and strength ? Then so walk in him, by going in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, and of his only.

I may add to all that has been said, that Christ is offered as a pattern and example. Have we received him in that capacity ? Then let us so walk in him. The body must walk where the head walks ; the body and head must walk where the feet walk ; and the head having influence upon the body, the feet must walk in a conformity. They that have received Christ as a pattern and example, if they walk as they have received him, must, through grace, follow his example ; that is, they are to follow him in his faith ; for he trusted in his Father ; so must we beware of casting off the profession of our faith, or deviating to error and heresy. They are to follow him in his love, Eph. v. 2, “ Walk in love, as Christ also loved us : being followers of God, as dear children.” They are to follow him in his holiness ; “ Be ye holy as I am holy.” In his zeal ; “ The zeal of God’s house hath eaten him up ;” even his zeal for the glory of God. He walked in a conformity to the will of God ; did always the things that pleased him ; sought the glory of his Father in all that he did. In his activity : he went up and down doing good ; never rested till he said, “ I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” So we are not to weary in well-doing. In his meekness, patience, and humility ; “ Follow me, for I am meek and lowly.” In his boldness and constancy, in adhering to the truth in spite of all opposition ; “ For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame.” So we are to take up the cross and follow him. This is to walk in him, as we have received him.

You may see what a large field of matter is here ; there would be no end of speaking of the way or the walk here, because Christ is the way, and the walk suitable thereto is accordingly most extensive.

Thus you see the rule of the believer’s walk, and what propor-

tion and suitableness his walk should have to his receiving Jesus Christ the Lord, and suitable to all the capacities wherein he receives him.

SERMON LXXXVIII.

“As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”—COLOS. ii. 6.

[The Fifth Sermon on this Text.]

WE have, in the preceding discourses, essayed to point out, in a great variety of particulars, in what capacity Christ is offered in the gospel, and shewn what it is to walk in him, in these different capacities. We now go on,

IV. To the Fourth general Head proposed in the method, which was, To speak of the connexion betwixt the believer's character and the believer's duty, or betwixt receiving Christ, and walking in him; where we promised to inquire into the order of the connexion, and the reasons of it. Now, in speaking to this head we may consider, first, in general, how this text, and the duties therein called to, are connected with the context; and secondly, in particular, how the parts of the text are connected one with another, and so come more closely to the order of this connexion.

First, Let us consider, for clearing this matter the more evidently, how this text, and what we are called to therein, are connected with the context. The short text is somewhat longer, if you take it with what went before, and what follows: for, texts of scripture are like the links of a chain that are fastened together, some before, and some after. Look before, and then you will see, that the apostle speaks to believers; in whom he notices their order, and the stedfastness of their faith in Christ; look after, and then you will see, that this receiving of Christ, and walking in him, are joined with a being rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith. And thus looking to the scope round about the text, and viewing both sides of it, I notice these two remarks for your edification.

Remark 1. That those whom the apostle commends, for their stedfastness in the faith, yet he doth exhort to walk in Christ. See

verse 5th, compared with the text. And this teaches us this excellent lesson, That Christ is to be lived as well as known ; to be lived in, as well as believed in. The best of believers hath need of the spur of exhortation still to walk ; proportionable to the knowledge and faith that a believer hath in Christ, answerably will he find the need of Christ, and of living and working in him ; and so proportionable to his knowledge and faith, should this living and walking in Christ be. A man may have much of the knowledge and faith of the Son of God, and yet walk very unanswerable to that measure of faith and knowledge that he hath ; and a man may have a little measure of faith and knowledge of Christ, and yet live in very much of that little knowledge and faith, by walking in Christ proportionably thereto. There are lusts to be mortified in the believer, as long as he lives ; there are passions to be subdued by the Spirit, and graces to be quickened and blown up by the Spirit, that they go not out : This may take up the whole man, and there is no end of this work, till sin be quite abolished, and grace be perfected. And so there is work enough for the believer all his days ; though he be established in the faith, he will find work enough still to be working and going on. Therefore, the best believers need the spur of exhortation, to quicken them to practical obedience. Suppose a man be highly advanced in the knowledge of Christ, surely the more knowledge he hath, the more doth he see into himself, and the more corruption will he see in himself than he saw before ; as by the bright sun that shines in at the window, we will see those motes fly up and down, that we cannot see by the clear day light. The more light, the more a man sees into himself, and so the more corruption does he find in him, than before he thought of. Yea, take any man that walketh in Christ, and he hath this property, the further he goes, the less he thinketh he hath gone ; and it is a certain truth, a man that hath gone a great way forward in religious exercises, the less he thinks he has done ; for the nearer he comes to God, the greater doth he find this God to be, and the knowledge of him still the more mysterious ; and the farther he dives into this depth, the deeper doth he find it to be. And therefore, even those, that are commended for their stedfastness of faith, need to be exhorted to walk in Christ ; here is walking, and walking further and further. If any man should say, I care for no more than will bring me to heaven ; this very thought shews the corruption and rottenness of his heart ; and that he seeks grace to be saved,

and not to be fruitful. It is a great flaw in a man's heart, in the very desiring of grace itself, when he desires grace to be saved, so as he may be glorified in heaven ; and not to be fruitful, so as God may be glorified on earth. I shall not say but something of this naughtiness may be in the heart of a true believer ; but surely, wherever it is in its full power and dominion, it evidences the man to be no believer, to seek grace merely as it is a beneficial grace, to get heaven for himself ; but not as it is a serviceable grace, to be laid out in the service of God in Christ. This is one remark from the precedent text.

Remark 2. Is from the subsequent context, That walking in Christ, and being rooted, built up in him, and established in the faith, are coupled together ; compare the text with verse 7th. And so we are taking a look of the other side of the text, " Walk in him, rooted, built up in him, and established in the faith." And these are coupled together two ways, both as to the manner of walking, and as to the end of walking ; the manner of walking in him, so as to be also ROOTED in him ; and the end of walking in him, so as to be ESTABLISHED in the faith.

(1.) They are coupled as to the MANNER of walking in Christ ; for it is a walking in him, so as to be also rooted and established in him. Why, here is walking, and yet a standing still, a being rooted. It is here just as it is with the foot of the compass ; the one foot of the compass stands fast in the centre, and the other goes round, and draws the line ; so it is with the believer ; as to his faith, he stands fast and unmoveable in the matters of doctrine, that is the foot of the compass that keeps the centre and stands fast ; but as to his gospel obedience, or obediential walking, according to the command in the law, in the hand of Christ, that is the part that moves forward, and indeed never stands. And thus the believer moves, and yet stands fast ; walks, and yet is rooted and established. As it is with a man in walking, there is still one foot stands, while the other moves, or else a man does not walk, but leap ; so, many do not stand fast in the faith, with one foot ; nor walk in the truth with the other foot, as it were ; but they leap out of one doctrine to another, not being established in the faith, nor walking in Christ, so as also to be rooted in him. And thus we may understand the scriptures that sometimes enjoin us to go forward, and sometimes command us to stand fast ; you may thus reconcile the scripture that says, " Stand fast in the faith," and another scripture

that says, "Run the race set before you;" Why, in the way, run; in the truth, stand. If a man stand still in the way of obedience, such a man stands when he should run; but if he runs out of the faith or doctrine of the gospel, this man runs when he should stand. If a tree be removed to-day from this place, and transplanted to-morrow to another place; and so on from place to place, it dries, and cannot bear fruit; even so, the Christian that changes from doctrine to doctrine, decays in fruitfulness; he is loose, and not established in the faith, and so cannot walk in Christ; for these two are coupled together, namely, walking in him, and being rooted and established in the faith. Thus they are connected as to the manner of walking in Christ.

(2.) They are coupled as to the END of walking in him; for the end of walking in Christ, is to be rooted and established. It is a remarkable promise made to poor feeble ones in Christ's house, John vii. 17, "If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God." This doctrine is not man's, but God's. Now, how shall I know whether the doctrine be of God, or not? Why, if you do his will, you shall know it; that is, by walking in Christ he shall get much experience; for, as true knowledge makes way for practice; so gospel practice makes way for more knowledge and experience. O but a practical Christian is the most experienced Christian in the world! You may very easily observe, that a tree is not rooted in a day; but the more it grows upward, the more it is rooted; and the more it is rooted, the better it is; so, they that walk in Christ shall be confirmed and established in the faith. You will never find a man of mere notional knowledge, that hath any rootedness or stedfastness; nay, but the practical Christian comes to be more and more an experimental Christian. "He that doth his will, shall know the doctrine:" the meaning is not, that our knowledge and experience is owing to our work; but that, where a man, through grace, is helped to practical religion, so as not to satisfy himself with notions and speculations, but so as to subject himself to the preceptive will of the Lord, that man is in the high way of growing in knowledge, and further experience. Thus the text stands connected with the context.

Secondly, Let us consider how the parts of the text stand connected with one another, "As ye have received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk ye in him." Here you see, receiving of Christ, and walking in him, are coupled together: what God hath joined, no

man should put asunder, otherwise it is at his peril. And though these two cannot be separated in reality, yet the most part of people separate them in effect: some pretend that they receive Christ, and yet certainly they do not walk in him; and so, on the other hand, seem to walk in him, in some outward good life and works, and yet certainly do not receive Christ. Now, if you sever these two sorts of professors from the rest in the visible church, those that profess to receive Christ, and yet do not walk in him, and those that seem to walk in him by their good works, and yet have not received him, you will find, that those that truly receive Christ, and walk in him, are very thin sown: for, as few of those in scripture, that called Abraham, father, were indeed his children; so our Lord tells us, as few of those that pretend to Christ, are indeed Christians. Look upon the greatest part of the world this day, it is unchristian; because they receive not Christ: look to the greatest part of Christendom, and they are unchristian too; because they walk not in him, though they pretend to receive him: these two must be coupled, and the dividing these two, mars the whole. He is no Christian that does not receive Christ; and he is no receiver of Christ, that doth not walk in him; and therefore he is no Christian that doth not receive and walk in Christ: in a true Christian these two meet, receiving and walking. It may well be said of many, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Their voice is the voice of a Christian, but their hands are the hands of an atheist, or an infidel. Where Christ is most named and professed, without being truly received, there he is dishonoured. Search the whole world over, and where will you find the most proud, the most cruel, the most selfish, the most carnal wicked, and worldly persons? It is even among notional and nominal Christians who, hearing of Christ, either profess to receive him, but never walk in him; or, fancy they walk in him, and yet never receive him.

If you ask me, Where is the most 'unsavoury dung-hill? I answer, it is where the sun shines hottest: so, in these days of the gospel, where in the world will you find the greatest sins committed or the most nauseous dung-hill of sinful corruptions? it is even where the sun shines hottest, and where the gospel shines brightest. Think not strange to see, that where the gospel shines most brightly there the devil works most spitefully, that he may break this chain, viz., the receiving of Christ, and walking in him: when these two are cut asunder, it spoils all. Thus much for the connection.

But now, the order of this connection follows to be considered : it is first a receiving of Christ, and then a walking in him ; receiving is first, inasmuch as the branch must first be in the vine, before it can bear fruit ; there must be an inbeing, before there can be a fruit-bearing, John xv. 1—5. There it is Christ's doctrine, and here it is the apostle's. Now, we must inquire into the reasons of this order, that there must be a receiving BEFORE a walking, and a walking AFTER the receiving. We would therefore shew, 1. Why there must be a receiving of Christ, BEFORE there can be a walking in him. 2. Why there must be a walking in him, AFTER the receiving him.

1st, Why there must be a receiving of Christ BEFORE there can be a walking in him.

1. Because receiving of Christ is that which constitutes and gives being to a Christian. Now, we have a common rule, *esse* must go before *operare* : that being must go before working, life before walking. Now, if you ask, What is it that constitutes and gives being to a saint, to a Christian, to a believer ? I reply, It is this receiving of Christ ; it is by this means that we become the sons of God ; John i. 12, " But as many as received him, to them gave he power [or PRIVILEGE] to become the sons of God ; even to them that believe on his name." It is by this means, that we, having union with Christ, have the righteousness of Christ ; Phil. iii. 9, " That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, but the righteousness of God by faith : " First, we must be found in him, before we can have any thing from him ; and this union is by a faith of his own operation : this gives the being and constitution ; for, till we receive Christ, we are not unite to him, and so have no spiritual life or being. It is true, in regeneration, the Spirit of life comes in to the soul ; but the first act of spiritual life is faith, whereby the soul closes with Christ, and so becomes a Christian indeed. As the union of matter and form, makes a body ; the union of body and soul together, makes a man ; and the union of a man and Christ together makes a Christian : and sap from this root makes him a growing one : so, it is not good fruit that makes a good tree, but a good tree that makes the good fruit ; and as it is sap from the root, and the reception of it, that makes the branch to bring forth ; so it is not the fruit of works and obedience that constitutes a Christian, or gives him a being, but it is the reception of Christ, the receiving of him as Jesus the Lord ; and therefore that must be first.

2. Because receiving of Christ is the rise and ground of walking in him ; and therefore receiving is first, as the cause before the effect. A man may bring forth the fruit of works morally good, and may bring forth upon his own root, as a natural man ; but he can never walk in Christ, until he do it in virtue of receiving Christ, and receiving sap from him. As the fruit of a tree is the sap of the root concocted ; so walking and working in Christ is just the sap of the Spirit of grace, putting forth itself into obedience ; and that sap must be received from the root, ere it can be produced in fruit ; and therefore receiving must go before walking. None can walk in Christ unless they be in him : as the branch cannot bear fruit in the tree, unless it knit to the stock ; so we cannot walk in Christ, without being united unto him. Works and duties, though they be performed in a conformity to the law, as the rule ; yet this is not walking in Christ, unless it be done by virtue from Christ, and drawn out of him. Conceive it thus ; a man may write a copy by his own art and skill, and a man may write with his hand by another man's guiding it ; even so, out of moral principles, a man may shape his actions according to the law and rule ; he may write this copy with his own hand : but then, as one that writes with his hand in another man's hand that guides it, so one that is in Christ, walks indeed in a conformity to the law as a rule, otherwise it is no walking aright in Christ ; but he walks in the life and Spirit of Christ, he writes after the copy with his hand in the hand of Christ, being acted by these influences and graces of the Spirit, that through his union with him, are always flowing to him. And thus a believer's walking is distinguished from all other walkings in the world, he being acted by the very Spirit and life of Christ : he bears fruit by the sap and life, which he receives from the tree of life, to which he is united ; and not upon the old stock from which he is transplanted.

3. The third reason, why receiving of Christ goes BEFORE walking in him is, because receiving of Christ is one of the principal things whereby any soul can honour God. The world little considers this, how God is honoured by their taking Christ off his hand ; how he is honoured by this act of faith in receiving of Christ : for, by receiving him, we renounce ourselves, and all confidence in the flesh. Now, while a man hath any thing to trust to in his own opinion, he will never seek after Christ the Saviour ; but when a man begins to count all his gain loss, and can throw himself over-

board, that he may come to Christ only ; how doth this glorify and honour God ! Again, when a great sinner, that lies under an infinite load of sin and guilt, notwithstanding all discouragement from the multitude and magnitude of his sins, though infinitely great, yet doth so value the truth of God's word, and lay such stress upon the veracity of his promise, as to break through all discouragements, and throw his soul upon God's promise, saying, " If I perish, I perish ;" what infinite honour doth this bring in to the crown of heaven ! Again, when a benighted soul sees no light of comfort in all the world, and yet can throw himself upon a God in Christ, saying, " Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him ;" this honours God greatly : for, still we may mark this at any time, the faith that carries the soul through the greatest difficulties and contrarieties to God, doth bring the greatest glory and honour to him. Men do not think they honour God, but by outward works of piety, equity, charity, and the like : but, however we ought to glorify God that way ; yet God gets the greatest glory by the strongest faith. " Abraham was strong in the faith, giving glory to God : " How did he honour God this way ? Even by trusting God, notwithstanding all unlikelihood, Rom. iv. 19, 20, 21. Yea, by faith God is so much honoured and glorified, that nothing pleases him without it ; " Without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. xi. 6.

4. The fourth reason is, because before a man receive Christ, he hath neither power nor will to walk in him ; but by receiving of him, he hath both : before receiving of Christ he hath no power nor ability ; but he is acted and enabled by receiving of Christ to walk in him. As it is impossible for a dead man to walk ; so it is impossible for a man that hath not received Christ to walk in him. No unbeliever, no unregenerate man ever did, or can walk in Christ ; such a man is not in him, all his works are out of him. But, on the contrary, every man that hath received Christ by faith, is in Christ, and being in him, he hath all righteousness and strength in him, and so ability to walk in him ; and he may be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus ; strong in the Lord : he hath also a new principle : the seed of God in him. And as he hath a power, so he hath a will to walk in him ; for his enmity and antipathy against God and Christ is broken ; so that it becomes as easy and pleasant to walk in Christ, as before it was uneasy, unpleasant, and hateful. If water be poured out, it will run downward to the centre ; but water metamorphosed and transformed into air, would mount

upwards, because of its new principle ; and it is impossible for it to come down ; so here, before you receive Christ by faith, whereby you are united to him, it is impossible but that you should go downward to your own centre to seek yourselves in what you do ; but when a man hath another principle, he goes the quite contrary way, with as much easiness as he did the other way ; so it is with every believer, as far as he is under the influence of the new Spirit, that is put within him. And so you see why receiving is first.

2dly, Why there must be a walking in him, AFTER the receiving of him ; and so we are to come to the reasons why believers should walk in Christ as they have received him ; or why a GOSPEL FAITH must have a GOSPEL PRACTICE. Why, it is every way reasonable and necessary, and that in respect of God, and man, and ourselves, and our faith.

1. The first reason, why they that receive Christ must walk in him, is in respect of GOD ; that he may be glorified ; and CHRIST, that he may be honoured. It is by walking in him that we glorify and honour him ; the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is concerned here ; for the glory of the FATHER, as the *end* ; the SON, as the *way* ; and the HOLY GHOST, as the *guide*, are all honoured by this gospel walk, John xv. 8, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." John xvii. 10, "And I am glorified in them," says Christ. And the believer being the temple of the Holy Ghost, surely he is glorified when his temple is not defiled, by a sinful walk. In a word, it is a great affront upon Christ, not to walk in him as we receive him ; it is the greatest injury done to Christ, "By this they give great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," 2 Sam. xii. 14. A wrong step in a believer, is very dishonouring to God, and makes enemies to blaspheme the name of the Lord, Therefore,

2. The second reason, why they that receive Christ are to walk in him, is in respect of MAN, that they may be edified, and brought to glorify God also, "Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify God." Men will not look into your heart, to see your faith ; nor up to your head, to see what knowledge you have ; but down to your feet, to see what for a walk you have ; they cannot look to the sap that is within, but they will look to the fruit that is without, and judge of the tree by the fruit and of your faith by your works.

3 The third reason, why they that receive Christ are to walk

in him, is in respect of YOURSELVES, who are believers, and receivers of Christ, that you may be confirmed; for you are to judge the truth of your faith, not by the degrees of your confidence, but by the degrees of your conquest over sin, Satan, and the world, in a gospel walk; even as you may know the height of the sun by the shortness of your shadow, rather than by the degrees of altitude; if the shadow be short, the sun is high; if the shadow be long, the sun is low; so here, if the shadow of sin and corruption be long, your faith is low; but if it is short, your faith is in a more lively exercise. How can you have the comfort of faith, if you do not rise and walk, as you have received him? If you do not walk, it is a sign you never received light, 1 John i. 7.

4. The fourth reason, why they that receive Christ are to walk in him, is in respect of FAITH itself; faith, wherever it is, brings in this walk in point of necessity, congruity, obligation, and encouragement.

(1.) In point of necessity: It is native, as I said, for a man that hath received Christ to walk in him; it implies a contradiction, not to walk in him, and yet to receive him, "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 2, The believer is dead, and his life is hid with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. If ye be dead and buried, united to Christ, in his death and burial, how can ye live in sin? You can no more live therein, than a dead man can come back, and eat and drink in the world. Therefore, if you do not walk in Christ, ye plainly declare that your pretending to receive him, was but a cheat and a sham; for, he that receiveth him must walk in him, and will walk in him, and cannot but walk in him. Why? he that receiveth Christ, receiveth him as a Jesus and as a Lord; which infers two parts of practical religion; the fiducial part, which is a receiving him as a Jesus, a Saviour; and the obediencial part, which is a receiving him as a Lord, and so walking in him as a Lord and Lawgiver; so that they who receive him, must walk in him.

(2.) In point of congruity: Is it not congruous to the soul's deed in receiving him? Did you not receive him as the way to the Father? Why then, if you walk not in him, you take another way, and look to another airth. Is it not congruous to the end for which you received him? Did you receive him only to look to him a while, and then to let him go? No: if ever you received him, it was that you might abide in him.

(3.) In point of obligation: there is the strongest obligation upon every man that receives Christ, to walk in him; even as in marriage, when two are married together, there is a mutual obligation they come under to those duties that are required of each of them; so a man when he receives Christ, he is married to him, and so comes under the strongest, and yet the sweetest obligations; for, in the day of espousals, the soul is made to say, as Jer. 1. 5, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten." It is a joining to the Lord as our strength, to carry us on in the way wherein we should go; so that we may be exalted to mount up with wings as eagles, run and not weary, walk and not faint.

(4.) In point of encouragement: the man that receiveth Christ hath the greatest encouragement, and incitement in the world, to walk in Christ; for he, receiving Christ, receiveth all things that can contribute for carrying him on in this way and walk. What does a man receive, when he receives Christ? 1. He receiveth pardon of all his sins, "In him we have redemption, through his blood, even the remission of sin," Col. i. 14. And what encouragement is this to walk in Christ! May not a man love much, who hath so much forgiven him? 2. When you receive Christ, you receive peace and reconciliation with God, "We have peace through the blood of his cross," Col. i. 20. And what encouragement is this, that we have to do with a reconciled God! O strong encouragement to walk in him! 3. When you receive Christ, you receive grace; for, "Out of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace." And what encouragement is this to walk in him, that you receive grace from him! Do you not receive him for this end, that you may have grace in him, and grace from him? And why then not walk in him as ye have received him? 4. When you receive Christ, you receive the promise; yea, all the promises of the new and well-ordered covenant; for, they are all Yea and Amen in Christ. He hath given us exceeding great and precious promises, saith the apostle Peter, 2 Pet. i. 4. And now, "Having these promises, saith the apostle Paul, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1, 5. When you receive Christ you receive the Spirit, and here is the principle of a holy walk, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my Statutes." Is not this encouragement, to walk in him as ye have received him, that you

have the Spirit dwelling in you as an inhabitant? 6. When you receive Christ, you receive the adoption of children; Rom. viii. 15, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption." And again, Gal. iv. 4, 5, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, ABBA, Father." John i. 12, "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Is not this encouragement to be followers of God as dear children? 7. When you receive Christ, you receive a right and title to eternal glory, John xiv. 2, 3, "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also." And what encouragement is this to walk in him, in the joyful hope of walking in him in white for ever! 8. When you receive Christ, you receive all things in him. I cannot tell what you receive, or how much you receive, when you receive Christ, for he is ALL IN ALL; and in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Col. ii. 9, "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19. "And in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. He is all for present support, and all for after happiness; and if he be yours, "All is yours." What more encouragement can be given to walk in him, and improve him as your all? Thus you see, why walking in him must go AFTER the receiving; and why believers in Christ are to walk in him.

Now, what say you of your Christianity, man? you that profess to be a Christian, that is, a receiver of Christ Jesus the Lord, do you so walk in him? I believe it to be a needful work to un-Christ many that pretend to be in Christ; you know Christ, in his preaching, went about to un-Moses some; to bring the Jews from under the wings of Moses, under whose name they did the works of the devil; and from under the wings of Abraham; he shows whose children they were, indeed not Abraham's, but the devil's. Even so, it were a needful work to un-Christ some persons, that pretend to be Christians, and to bring them from under the wings of Christ, under whose wings they do the works of the devil; Surely, if ever Christ was received by you, so as to be in you, he would produce these graces in you, which he himself had, and which he himself preached, while he was here; but while men bring arguments from Christ, to shelter their base lusts and idols, their base ends and purposes, it is the greatest dishonour done

to the name of Christ ; for, “ The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his : and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.”

Thus much for the fourth general head, viz. the connexion between the believer's character and his duty ; or, between *receiving Christ* and *walking in him*.

SERMON LXXXIX.

“ As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”—COLOS. ii. 6.

[The Sixth Sermon on this Text.]

IF believers, who have received Christ, do not walk in him, none in all the world will ; if they stand still, who will go forward ? Many there are in our day that are like the sun in Joshua's time, that stood still ; nay, many worse, like the sun in Hezekiah's time, that went backward ten degrees ; they have gone backward many degrees ; few there are like the sun, in its ordinary course, still going forward ; still walking in Christ, as the sun doth run in the firmament. It is true, as the sun once stood still, and another time went backward, so the saint may stand still, and through temptation, be driven backward ; but his denomination is to be taken from his ordinary course and habitual walk. It was the commendation of Enoch, that he walked with God ; and how shall one walk with God ? It is by walking in Christ. And how shall one come to walk in Christ ? It is by the means of receiving him, under the influence of heaven : “ As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”

V. The fifth thing was the application of the doctrine. Is it so, That it is the great and indispensable duty of all true believers, who have received Christ Jesus the Lord, to walk in him as they have received him ? then hence many things might be inferred, and many uses deduced : I shall confine myself to these four in a special manner. 1. For information, to instruct us in some precious truths. 2. For reproof, to convict us of some errors, both doctrinal and practical. 3. For examination, to try our faith and obedience. 4. And more especially, for exhortation, to excite and direct us, both to receive Christ and walk in him.

First, The first use is for information. Is it so, that a gospel-principle, or a gospel-faith, is the foundation of a gospel-practice? then hence see, .

1. The nature and excellency of the gospel: it is just that whereby God makes an offer of Christ to us, and all salvation in him; for the receiving of Christ here, hath a relation to the offer. A receiving faith presupposes an offering hand; now, Christ is offered to us in the gospel; there is God's offering hand; but where is our receiving hand of faith? Alas! whence is it that we cannot take Christ that is offered to us? Even because our hand is full; the empty hand is a receiving hand; but our hands are so full of sin, so full of the world, so full of self-righteousness, that we have not an empty hand to receive what is offered to us by the hand of free grace, in the gospel; and we have no will to quit our hold of that with which our hands are full; and hence cannot take a grip of Christ offered to us. However, herein lies the excellency of the gospel, that it is a Christ, a Jesus, a Lord that is offered to us therein; and the gospel is to be pressed on this account, because, as all that reject it, rejects Christ; so all that receives it truly, doth receive Christ in it. Human doctrine, however true, brings nothing, at best, but knowledge and speculation to us; but gospel doctrine brings salvation to us; yea, the Saviour himself to our hand, to be received; and, when the offering hand of the gospel, and the receiving hand of faith meets together, then the good work is begun.

2. Hence see the nature and excellency of faith: it is a receiver of Christ Jesus the Lord, as he is held forth in the word and sacrament. It is true, there is a difference between the receiving of Christ in the word, and the receiving of him in the sacrament, *i.e.* in the Lord's Supper. More generally, in the word, all sinners are welcome to Christ, as a Saviour and Lord; and in the sacrament, all believers are welcome to come to him anew. But more particularly, in the word we receive Christ under an offer and a promise; but in the sacrament, we receive him under a pawn, a pledge, and a seal. However, herein lies the nature and excellency of faith, that it is a fiducial reception of Christ Jesus the Lord. You say you believe, man; but, what is it that ye do believe? Is it only that God offers Christ to your faith? Why, surely there is more than a believing that Christ is offered to you; what is a poor man the richer for believing that one offers him a shilling? What is a condemned man the better for believing that a pardon is offered to him? But,

do you receive the offer? It is true, many come not this length to believe truly that God offers Christ to them in particular; and yet, where it is without any more, it is but the faith of the truth of the offer: you believe this to be a truth; and if you believe no more, that faith doth but serve to your just condemnation; it is not merely the truth-acknowledging, but the Christ-receiving faith that bringeth salvation. A woman may believe a man to be rich and honourable, and real in his suit, yet, that believed, doth not make marriage, but actual consent to take him for a husband. Even so, a man or woman may believe Christ to be a full, glorious, and suitable Saviour and Lord, and real in his suit and offer; but that believed, doth not make marriage and union to Christ, but actual consent to take him for your Saviour and your Lord.

3. Hence see what is the glorious object of faith, and therein also the difference between saving and justifying faith. Christ Jesus the Lord is the object of faith; and faith, as it is saving, doth embrace Christ in all his offices, and in all these capacities, as Christ, Jesus, the Lord. But now there are two special branches of salvation, namely, justification and sanctification; and these being two different things, faith acts upon Christ for them, in a different manner. Faith acts upon Christ for justification, as he is a JESUS, or by receiving him as a Jesus; faith acts upon Christ for sanctification, as he is a LORD, or by receiving him as Lord. In justification we receive him as a Jesus, to be saved from the guilt of sin; in sanctification we receive him as a Lord, to be delivered from the power of sin. Now, though both these acts of faith go together, to make up saving faith, though they be inseparable from one another, in the same faith, yet they differ, as the eye and the ear in the same head; for, as we do not see with the ear, nor hear with the eye, so neither are we justified by that act of faith that receives Christ as a Lord, for sanctification, but by that act of faith that receives him, as a Jesus, for justification; we are not justified by that act of faith that receives Christ as a King, but by that act of faith that receives Christ as Priest. However, when we speak of salvation in general, which respects both justification, sanctification, and all, the object of it is a whole Christ, both as a Jesus and a Lord; to be redeemed by him as a Jesus, and governed by him as a Lord. It is not true faith that blows hot and cold out of the same mouth; that cries, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and yet says, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

4. Hence see what is the root of right religion, and where it begins ; and what is the root of true obedience, and the principle of it. It is rooted in union to Christ, by the faith of God's operation ; for, there is no walking in him, till once there be a receiving of him. Men may have a moral walk, a fair outward life, a good complication of many excellent beautiful virtues, and the matter and metal of them may be very good, but, like coin that does not pass, they want the king's superscription upon them, having nothing of Christ in them. Yea, these moral virtues that some boast of, are, many times, the greatest obstructions against Christ that can be, while the man is puffed up with his self-fitness and self-righteousness. A bottle stopped with gold receives not so much as an empty shell will do ; even so, some may be filled and stopped with golden virtues ; and hence they receive not so much as an empty soul, destitute of all these, will do. But here perhaps you will say, Is there any need that a change be wrought upon a virtuous man—one that has lived a virtuous life all his days ? Yea, surely there is ; for there is as great a difference between a life of moral virtue, and a life of true grace, as there is between the light of the stars and the light of the day ; and, when grace changes such a man, it is a change from star-light to daylight. Let him have never so many virtues, all these stars will not make a day. It is true, religion is under a great eclipse in our day ; and, as a bright star will shine and make a figure in the eclipse of the sun, so will moral honesty, when true Christianity is under such an eclipse ; but yet, let me tell you, that this is not a gospel state. The true invisible church is a woman clothed with the Sun, the Sun of righteousness. There must be an implanting into Christ, a receiving of him, before there can be any true gospel-walk. Religion must begin at receiving ; and the walking that goes before receiving, is but morality at best ; and whatever use it may be of to others, it is not what will be for your comfort and salvation.

5. Hence see, that the doctrine of the gospel doth not give any room for licentious walking. They reproach the gospel, who slander it as a doctrine of carnal liberty and licentiousness ; for, it calls to receive Christ, and then to walk in him. Gospel-liberty is not a liberty to sin, but a liberty and freedom from sin. True believers are practical Christians ; as by the same hand we receive a thing, we also work ; so faith is the receiving hand that receives Christ in the promise ; and it is a working hand that works by love in the

commandment; and love makes his commandments not grievous. Why? Because faith's receiving Christ and the promise, is first; for, in the law, the obedience to the command is first, and this engages the promise; "Do this and live:" but, in the gospel, Christ and the promise is first received, and this brings in gospel-obedience to the law, and that in all duties, both of humility towards God, and righteousness towards man. In humility towards God, or walking humbly with him. What a scandal is it to hear it said, There goes a proud professor, there goes a drunken professor of religion, or the like? But a humble walk before God adorns religion, and self-denial is the glory of all our duties. The doctrine of the gospel is a doctrine according to godliness; it gives no toleration to sin or impiety towards God. In righteousness towards man doth this gospel-obedience also vent itself; duties of religion without righteousness towards man are hateful to God; "I hate your sacrifices," saith the Lord, "they are full of blood." True religion is practical; it doth not lie in profession, but gospel-practice; not in talking of Christ, but walking in Christ. Many, as I said before, are like the lark, that sings with the highest, but builds with the lowest; they sing with the highest, as high as angels in their profession, but they build with the lowest, as low as devils in their practice: in their profession they sing and mount towards heaven; but in their practice they build upon the earth, and their affections are low, earthly, and sensual; they build their nest in the earth.—Gospel-liberty doth not lie in some faint resolutions, but real performances, through the grace of Christ. Many, under convictions, will flee to their good purposes and resolutions, like a mariner in a storm at sea, who, for the time, will do any thing, but when the danger is blown over, he is just where he was. A man that hath the falling-sickness, in his lucid intervals may resolve to fall no more; but it is to little purpose without some application to the disease, that lies within: so it is with resolutions upon convictions of conscience, without application to Christ for mortifying grace to subdue their corruptions, and purifying grace to wash away their pollutions. Gospel-liberty doth not lie in legal conviction; for without union to Christ by faith there is no true sanctity or gospel-walking, whatever way a man may be bruised in the mortar of legal conviction and humiliation, and broken with the hammer of the law. Cut a bee in pieces, yet she puts forth her sting; so here, still the sting of enmity remains. Let iron be broken into pieces, yet still

it remains hard ; so, a heart may be broken in pieces, and yet remain hard and unhumiliated. But true humility is when the soul is melted, so as to run into this gospel-mould, so as to receive Christ and walk in him.

6. Hence see that true religion is a qualified motion; for it is a walk. It is a progressive motion, a moving forward, a pressing towards the mark, a going from strength to strength, from glory to glory, from faith to faith; we are like the boat in the stream, if it goes not forward by the oar, it will go backward with the tide; it cannot stand still. Many, as I noticed before, are like a wheel, they go round, yet still keep the same place; they go the external round of duties, but have no union to Christ, make no progress in the way of holiness. But this walk is progressive; the man grows in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ. It is a permanent motion; it is a motion, and yet a steadfastness, as I said before, for the man stands fast in the faith, and yet walks fast in obedience; he walks in Christ, rooted and established in him, as he hath been taught. The apostle guards the Galatians from declining from the simplicity of the gospel upon this argument, Gal i. 8. There is not another Jesus than he whom we have preached, there is not another Spirit than he whom ye have received, there is not another gospel than that which we have published; if there were another, then ye might receive it, but because there is not another, therefore keep by this Jesus. There is but one Christ, and truth cannot be but one; if there were more truths than one, or more gospels than one, the apostle could not have said there, "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach another gospel, let him be accursed." Whatever manifold articles of truth there be, yet truth itself is but one; and Christ the centre of truth is but one; if there were any more truths or gospels but one, why would the apostle curse the angels that shall preach another? For that which they preach may be truth too; no, says he, speaking of justification by Christ, and not by the works of the law, "If any man, or angel from heaven, preach another doctrine, let him be accursed." This doctrine we are to hold fast. It is a permanent walk.—And again, it is a perpetual motion, a persevering thing, a constant motion; to walk is not to make a step or two, but it imports constancy, "The righteous holdeth on his way." It is true, his sin may make him go halting; and this is what makes a saint continually jealous that he knows nothing of walking in Christ because he thinks it is not a constant motion that he makes, but is

many times and ways interrupted. But I would say, for the encouragement of the weak believer, that sin may be felt, and yet the walk in Christ may be constant; a man may be lame, and halt in his walking, and yet go on: Jacob wrestled with God, and yet went away halting; Paul had a thorn in the flesh that made him halt; however, he saw the use of that thorn, like a corrosive to eat away the proud flesh growing: "Lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given me a thorn in the flesh." Hence, says one of the fathers, "Proud hearts have need of sins, as proud sores of eating-plasters;" in this case it is better to feel a corruption than to be quit of it. A child of God will sometimes see his grace by looking to his sin: to apply to this a simile that I used for representing another thing:—A man may look for the sun's rising in the east, but he that looks for it toward the west on the top of a high tower or steeple may see it first: even so, a man may see and know his grace sooner many times by looking to his sins than to his graces, though they be contrary one to another; grace is more apt to see sin than to see itself, for the eye that sees other things doth not see itself; so, grace may not see itself, but it sees sin and corruption, and thus humbles, and so carries the man forward. Finally, it is a regular motion, it is a walking by rule, a walking in Christ, according as we have received him; of which I spoke at large, on the doctrinal part.

7. Hence see what is the way to heaven; Christ is the way, and holiness is the walk in it; and so, holiness is as necessary to heaven as a man's walking in a way is necessary to come to his journey's end; hence, "Without holiness no man shall see God," for it is just a walking in the way to heaven; and the excellency of holiness lies in this, that it is a walking in Christ by faith. Christ is the only way; he that thinks to reach to heaven out of this way, shall wander like a blind man and never come there. The text shews how faith and manners all centre in Christ. In our receiving Christ is the act of faith; in our walking in him is the life of faith: he is the all of our faith and obedience. In our receiving he is the object to be received, in our walking he is the way we are to walk in. Many pretend to be Christians; but, being strangers to Christ, they are monsters; for, to be a Christian without Christ is like a body without a head.

8. Hence see that true faith is never alone, but still joined with gospel-obedience: "As ye have received, so walk." He that would

disjoin faith from obedience endeavours to walk with one foot, which is impossible. Faith and works, faith and holiness, are the two feet by which a man doth walk in Christ; and when the Spirit of Christ doth promote the one, he doth promote the other also. If a man should essay to go upon one foot, he could not walk, but only hop, which would be impossible for him to continue long in; neither can obedience be without faith, nor faith without obedience; but according to the measure of the faith, such will be the measure of the gospel-walk. As the fuller a vessel is the faster will it run over at the top; so, the fuller views a man gets of Christ by faith, the faster will he run in the way of evangelical obedience. When Jacob had seen the sweet vision in Bethel, he lifted up his feet, Gen. xxix. 1, it put mettle into him; so here, when the poor soul hath once received Christ, and got the faith of his own operation, he is made cheerfully to run the way of his commandments. Therefore,

9. Hence see that the believer hath always much ado with Christ; having received Christ, he is still to make use of him by walking in him; habitual grace will not do his business, without actual grace. The believer is like the ship; it is not enough that he hath the sails of grace implanted, but he must have the wind of the Spirit filling his sails, otherwise he cannot make way towards the heavenly port. The believer is like a branch that had nothing of its own but what it receives from the root, even as itself doth so spring from the root; he is like the moon which, as appeareth from the eclipse, hath no light of itself, but increaseth and cometh to full as it receiveth from the sun. Let none think that believers have no further use for Christ after their first believing and receiving of him; nay, as Christ is the Author, so he is the Finisher of faith. Therefore, "As ye have received him, so walk ye in him."

10. Hence we may see what is the best fortification against all ungodliness, and antidote against apostacy. This inference I deduce from the text compared with the whole context, for it comes in with an antidote against defection; for the apostle tells, there were some that went about to burden them with vain philosophy, human propositions, and superstitious ceremonies, ver. 8, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23. You see, then, I would not go off from the scope of my text to speak upon this subject; for, how doth the apostle fortify them against these evils? It is even by this, "As ye have received Christ, so walk ye in him;" so that, receiving him and walking in him is the

only way to be kept from defection. Let a man receive Christ, and he will reject these things; let a man walk in Christ, and he will go of out the way of these dangerous rocks; if a man receive Christ, and walk in him, he will abandon and slight all the trash of hell and Rome. He that hath enough ado to get food for his family, he will not bestir himself to take in chaff and trash; but, if a baker come with an armful of bread, he will take in somewhat from him: so it is here, they that see a need of Christ, and receiving of him in to their house, their heart, as the bread of life, they will not be careful to take in empty chaff and superstitious trash. They that take in Christ, the body, the substance, will not regard the shadow and ceremony, ver. 17. "And why are ye subject to ordinances, or burdened therewith?" saith the apostle, ver. 20. Men will not willingly suffer under impositions in their freeholds in the world; and far less should they suffer the world to impose burdens upon their souls; such as the burdensome worship of Antichristian, prelatic, abjured ceremonies. You heard the last Lord's day, of the evil of such superstitious ceremonial worship, as it is a breach of Scotland's Covenants, and a profanation of God's name, and an incurring the judgment threatened in the third command; nay, as my reverend brother¹ told you the danger of it, so I would tell you the antidote against it, and it is just in my text, to receive Christ, and to walk in him. As Christ and Antichrist are opposites, so, if you receive Christ, you cannot but reject the trash of Antichrist. To walk in Christ, and to walk in the road of superstition, is irreconcilable: let Christ in, and Antichrist will go out; let faith take place, and superstitious fancies will evanish.

In a word, O see that your faith be a Christ-accepting faith, so as to receive him; and a Christ-improving faith, so as to walk in him. If your faith be not of this kind, it is not a saving, but a damning faith. Many have a faith that keeps them from faith; a believing that holds them fast in unbelief. All the terrors of the law draws no blood, all the invitations of the gospel moves you not. Why? Because you lie under the canopy and shelter of this faith and believing, which defeats the operation both of law and gospel till God open your eyes to see through it. O seek, that the Lord may bring you to a faith that receives Christ indeed, and so walks in him! The life of believers after conversion is an active life; none of them can say, Now I have no more ado, having received

(1) The Rev. Mr. James Wardlaw, our Author's Colleague.

Christ; I may walk at random, and live as I list. No, by no means: after Israel were come through the Red Sea, they had a wilderness to walk through, and so it is with every believer, while here in this world; but though he hath a journey to go, yet he hath the greatest encouragement to walk forward, for he is in Christ, in whom he hath all fulness; and therefore let duties be never so difficult, and his emptiness and insufficiency for them never so great, yet no ground of discouragement, while he is in Christ, and complete in him; and called to walk in him in the whole course of his progress; yea, to walk in him as he hath received him. And if believers were walking in Christ, so as to keep up the same frame of heart in their walk that they had in their closing with Christ, it would be the sweetest and pleasantest life imaginable. O what a holy, humble, sensible frame of spirit took place when you were receiving Christ! how precious! how sweet! how lovely was Christ every way to you then! What strong desires after him, and ardent love to him, and joyful delight in him, took place in the day when you joined hands with him! And now, what a sweet life would you have if this frame of soul were maintained, through grace, in your walk and conversation? Why, this is what you are here called to, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

Secondly, The second use is for reproof and refutation of errors, both doctrinal and practical. I begin with the former of these, namely,

1st, Doctrinal errors, which this doctrine doth refute and reprove. And,

1. It refutes the error of these that take fiducial application out of the nature of justifying faith, while our text makes faith to be a receiving of Christ Jesus the Lord. It is not only an assenting to the truth of the gospel, but "a receiving and resting upon Christ and his righteousness therein held forth for pardon of sin, and for accepting and accounting of a man's own person righteous in the sight of God for salvation," as our Larger Catechism describes justifying faith; and these divines confirm their description from Acts xv. 11, "We believe that, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved." So that a man's believing that he shall be saved through the grace of Christ, and receiving and resting on him for this end, is made the very essence of justifying faith by the purest standards of this church, in a conformity to the word of God; so much assurance and appropriating persuasion belongs to the na-

ture of faith, according to the doctrine of all our reformers, that take away unbelief from faith, and not a single doubt will remain behind. Whatever doubts may be in the believer, there is no doubt in his faith ; it is his unbelief that creates his doubts, and not his faith. The general doubtful faith of the Papists is not faith, but unbelief, and therefore no wonder that our forefathers abjured it in our National Covenant. It is not a woman's believing a man to be rich and honourable, but her actual consent to take him for her husband, that makes marriage ; so, it is not people's believing Christ to be a great and glorious Saviour, but actual reception of him for theirs, that makes a spiritual marriage and union to Christ ; the receiving of Christ hath as close and particular an appropriation of him to ourselves in it as a man's receiving of the meat and drink whereby his body is nourished ; and therefore it is called an eating and drinking of the flesh and blood of the Son of God, John vi. 53-57, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day," &c. What is more ours than the meat we eat ? Yet know, the best meat and drink doth no good except you make it your own.

2. This doctrine refutes the error of these who confound the covenant of works and the covenant of grace with the law and the gospel ; justification and sanctification. The gospel-order of things described in our text, while it makes justifying faith in receiving Christ to go before sanctification, or walking in him, doth refute the legal mixture that many make in our day, while they put doing in the same room it had in the covenant of works ; for the legal order was, Do and live ; first the duty, and then the promise ; and so the promise was made to doing and walking uprightly : but the gospel-order is, first the promise, and then duty ; first Christ is received, and the promise of life in him, and then the duty of walking in him follows, the soul being sweetly encouraged by the promise to the duty. The inverting of this order is legal doctrine with a witness. For men to make a promise of life to any duty or work of ours, though wrought by grace, is to turn the gospel-covenant to a covenant of works ; where the promise of life was made to man, upon his doing, by the grace and strength he had received from God in his first creation. It is a new mould of a covenant of works, to make the promise of life to our duty and work wrought by the grace of God in the new creation ; nay, the promise is not made to our

working now, but to Christ, and in him to us ; and this promise of life being made, and apprehended and received in Christ, then, and not till then, can a man evangelically work, and walk in Christ as he hath received him.

With the same breath, it refutes the inverting of the gospel-order of justification and sanctification : for, whereas our text makes justification by faith, in receiving Christ to go before sanctification, or walking in him. Some, now-a-days, will tell us of gospel repentance, which is a special part of sanctification, going before faith and justification ; yea, necessary in order to it. The repeating of our text is refutation enough to such doctrine, for it plainly informs us that justifying faith, receiving Christ Jesus, is requisite first, in order to sanctification, or walking in him ; and so to actual holiness, for habitual grace is infused by the Spirit in regeneration, at the same time that the Spirit enables the soul to receive Christ ; but actual holiness cannot take place till after this reception, and to this agrees the ancient saying of some of the fathers, *Fides facta justificat ante partum ; i.e.*, "Faith, however fruitful and big with child of good works, yet it justifieth before it bring forth any." All the promises are Yea and Amen in Christ, and made to him. It is true, godliness is said to have the promises of this life, and that which is to come, 1 Tim. iv. 8 ; but it is not to godliness of itself, but godliness in Christ. All that live godly do it in Christ, 2 Tim. iii. 12 ; no godly walking but in Christ, and therefore no promise to a godly walk but in Christ. To make a promise belong to our doing, then, or to make our works have a federal casuality, or conditionality, in obtaining life, is erroneous legal doctrine.

3. This doctrine refutes the error of those who bring the believer under an obligation to obey the law, as in the hand of God Creator out of Christ : Whereas, here he is laid under an obligation only to walk in Christ ; that is, to obey the law in Christ, not to have anything to do with an absolute God, but a God in Christ ; "As ye have received Christ, so walk ye in him." The believer hath nothing to do with a God out of Christ ; the authority and majesty of God is in Christ, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells. And, by the authority of God the Father, we are obliged to take the law only out of the hand of Christ, who, in regard of essence, is one with the Father, and who, as Mediator, God-man, is not divested of his essential glory : "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased, hear ye him : My name is in him," saith

the Father ; my authority, supremacy, sovereignty, and all ; and we dishonour the Father, if we put not this honour upon the Son, to receive the law from his mouth. It is so far from derogating from the honour of the Father, that we cannot honour him any other way than in Christ ; for there is no coming to the Father, but by him ; and no right walking but in him.

4. This doctrine refutes the error of those who would bring the believer in any respect under the yoke of the law, as a covenant of works ; while, “ being in Christ, he is wholly and altogether delivered from it ; so as his person is not under it, either as to its commanding or condemning power, so as it can neither justify nor condemn him,” as our Confession and Standards assert. It can neither justify him for his obedience, nor condemn him for his disobedience. Why ? he is justified by faith in receiving Christ, before ever he can obey by walking in him ; and so cannot be justified by his obedience to the law ; and being justified, his justification is perfect in Christ, and his perfect righteousness ; he is freed from condemnation, and no more liable to it for his disobedience, whatever contrary apprehensions he may have, than those that are already in heaven are liable to condemnation. It is true, he is liable to fatherly wrath and chastisement, while here, but being in Christ, his glorious Head, and a part of Christ mystical, he is no more liable to condemnation, so long as he remains united to Christ, which is to eternity, When a man receives Christ, he rejects the law as a covenant ; when he is married to Christ, he is divorced from the law, Rom. vii. 4, “ Ye are dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that he should bring forth fruit unto God.” Where also you see the believer’s freedom from the law as a covenant, strengthens his obligation to it as a rule ; for, “ Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth.” His righteousness of *merit*, for justification, is the end of the law as a *covenant* ; his righteousness of *spirit*, for sanctification, is the end of the law as a *rule* ; and both these are reached by receiving Christ, and walking in him.

5. This doctrine refutes the error of those who make the believer’s obedience to be influenced by the legal hopes of heaven, or slavish fears of hell. Why, to receive Christ as a Jesus, is to receive him as a Saviour, to save from hell, so as to bring the man to heaven ; and to walk in him as we receive him, is to walk

in him as a Saviour, and so to improve him for that salvation ; both negatively, in delivering from hell, and all things that lead to it ; and positively, in bringing him to heaven, and to all the means that lead to it ; and therefore, as far as we do not improve him, for both these ends, we do not walk in him by faith, but depart from him by unbelief. To walk in Christ, as we have received him, is to obey him as a Saviour ; and to obey him as a Saviour that hath purchased heaven for us, and satisfied vindictive justice in our room ; and yet to obey from a legal hope of heaven, as if our obedience was to obtain it, or from a slavish fear of hell, as if our obedience could procure freedom from it ; I say, to walk in him, and obey him as a Saviour, and yet to be influenced by such a legal hope or slavish fear, is inconsistent ; for the one is the believer's duty, the other his sin ; the believer may be guilty of it through his unbelief, but it can never be his duty. To have the faith of hell, is the believer's duty ; but to be moved by the fear of hell, is his sin, and makes his obedience so far slavish and servile, not filial ; to fear hell is to fear vindictive wrath, or the wrath of a terrible Judge, which is opposite to the holy fear of him as a loving Father, which is always his duty. And surely, to walk in Christ, and yet to fear the wrath of God out of Christ, are contrary ; for, to fear God in Christ, is to fear him as a God reconciled in Christ, and not as a judge dealing with us according to the tenor of the covenant of works, which is in vindictive wrath. There may be the fear of hell, where there is not a spark of grace, or true faith, as we see in devils and reprobates ; their fear of the punishment of sin may take place, while their willingness to sin lives ; and so, this fear no more changes the inclination of their wills, than the whip or chain doth the nature of the fox or wolf. It is holy fear that works a godly sorrow, and it is this godly sorrow that brings forth these seven fruits you read of, 2 Cor. vii. 11. And thus godly sorrow, which is the happy mother of so many good children, is caused, like Peter's weeping, by the looks of Christ ; the reproofs, the frowns, the offences of a gracious God, thaws the heart into melting fears, and would do so though there was no hell ; as a meek child needs no other house of correction than his father's looks. Again, hope of heaven is the believer's duty, when it is looked upon as a reward of grace ; for, he is to have respect to the recompense of reward, and may excite and influence him in his obedience ; but the legal hope of heaven, so as to expect to obtain it, by our obedience and good works, is a Christless doctrine ; for, to say that our works

doth save us, is to deny that Christ is our Saviour. How is he your Saviour, if you might save yourselves by your works? Or, wherefore should he die to save you, if any works might have saved you? Nay, says the apostle, "If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain." If you do good works to get the inheritance of heaven thereby, you do not walk in Christ; for, "Eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And if you seek to attain salvation that way, you would receive the good, not as the gift of God, but as a debt unto you; and make yourself fellow with God, because you will take nothing from him for nought.

6. This doctrine refutes the error of those that make good works and holiness the product of man's free-will, natural power; or at least, of the common and general assistance of God; or to proceed from him only as the moral cause, and not by way of powerful efficiency. Surely such do also herein err, that lay so much stress upon natural endeavours, and moral seriousness, as to connect the same infallibly with saving grace; surely none of those duly ponder that faith is the gift of God, and the work of God's almighty power, requiring the same powerful efficiency, that raised Christ from the dead; and that true obedience and good works, is a walking in Christ; and that walking in Christ is a walking by the strength and power of the Spirit of Christ, who says that "Without me ye can do nothing." Paul tells us, in his own name, and in the name of all believers, that they are not sufficient of themselves to think any thing, as of themselves, but that their sufficiency is of God; and that it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. All the working and walking that men are capable of, before they receive Christ, is but evil works before God; for, "Without faith it is impossible to please God; and, Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." "And surely evil works never make a good man; for good works themselves do not make a good man; no works, good or evil, make a man either good or evil. As good fruit makes not a tree good, nor is it evil fruit that makes a tree evil; but a good tree bears good fruit, and an evil tree evil fruit; so, good works make not a good man, nor evil works an evil man; but a good man bringeth forth good, and an evil man bringeth forth evil works. For, as the tree is good, ere it bringeth forth good fruit, and evil, ere it bringeth forth evil fruit, so a man is good, ere he

bring forth good fruit ; and evil, ere he bring forth evil fruit. So that our works make us neither good nor evil.¹

If a man hath not received Christ, he is not a good man, and cannot walk in Christ, or do any good work ; but if a man hath received Christ, then, and not till then, is he a good man, and so is capable of walking in Christ, and bringing forth good works ; yea, natively doth this good tree bring forth good fruit. Thus you see how this doctrine sets itself in opposition to manifold erroneous principles ; these are only a few of many that might be named, which this text and doctrine doth refute ; and too many of them are either directly or indirectly countenanced in our day, even by public acts,² and those that ought to contend most zealously for the truths of Christ.

The doctrine of the gospel is like a bridge, by which alone men can go from this valley of misery, to the regions of bliss and happiness ; and the principles of religion, or truths of the gospel, are like so many arches which, joined and united together, doth make up this bridge ; and therefore these errors, that doth overturn any of these principles, do, as it were, cut out an arch from the bridge, whereby a breach is made, and the passage by it unto heaven, is either cut off, if the error be fundamental, or greatly obstructed, if it nearly concerns the fundamentals of religion. Some perhaps will think, Whether or not am I making all these fundamental errors, and so all that maintain them to be cut off from heaven ; and consequently accuse the most part of the ministers of this church, except a very few ? To which I would reply, That as I do not desire to be like those that think all Blackamoors except themselves, so I presume, that the judgment of the generality of the church of Scotland is to be gathered from the public

(1.) These are the words, and part of the articles of that valiant and heroic champion for the truth, and famous martyr for the cause of CHRIST, the Rev. Mr. PATRICK HAMILTON, who was raised up by God to be a happy instrument of our Reformation from Popery, in contending zealously against the abominations of Rome, till he at last fell a sacrifice to his cruel and merciless enemies, by cheerfully yielding his body to the tormenting flames at St. Andrews, while, in that fiery chariot, through the ærial region, his soul ascended to the celestial country, to possess eternal blessedness, on the last day of February, 1527.—The famous Mr. GEORGE WISHART, suffered for the same good cause, in the very same place, and in the same manner, on the 1st of March, 1546.

(2.) Our author here probably has his eye upon the acts of Assembly, 1720, and 1722, condemning the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*.

Standards of doctrine, in our Confession, and Catechisms, deliberately enacted by this church, and to which all profess adherence ; and not from any particular Acts relative to doctrine, either made by an oversight, or maintained by mere human authority. And therefore, whatever may be the dangerous consequence of public deeds of that nature ; yet, I entertain charity for the most part of the ministers of the church of Scotland, that the latter Acts, that seem to clash with our Standards, hath nothing of their deliberate approbation. However, the least truth ought to be sacred to every one of us, who are called to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good ; for, the loss of the least truth, whether you reckon it fundamental or not, is of dangerous consequence ; the loss of the least divine truth, is as the loss of a diamond out of a ring ; or of a jewel out of the Mediator's crown. The gospel is like a ladder, that hath so many steps, or rounds ; every truth is like a round of the ladder ; and by these rounds we climb up to heaven ; if you break off any round, you are in danger of falling ; and your climbing up is rendered either difficult or impossible. The truths of the gospel are like stepping stones over a deep water ; take away any of these stones, and you make such a wide and dangerous step, that you are in hazard of falling into the deep. I now proceed,

2dly, To the other branch of this use of reproof, namely, to mention some practical errors that this doctrine doth reprove ; as,

1. Those that walk in darkness ; we read this of the wicked, Psalm lxxxii. 5, that they walk on in darkness ; even in the darkness of ignorance, error, sin, and security. Can they walk in Christ who walk in darkness ? No, " If any man say he hath fellowship with Christ, and yet walk in darkness, he is a liar," 1 John i. 6.

2. Those that walk in vanity, Jer. ii. 5, " Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they have gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain ?" O the vanity of mind, the vanity of thought, word, and action ? Is this to walk in Christ ? No, no, he says, " Follow me, for I am meek and lowly in heart."

3. It reproveth those that walk in profanity and lasciviousness, 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4, " For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquettings, and abominable idolatries ; wherein they think it strange that you run not with them

to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you. Do these walk in Christ, that walk in drunkenness, whoredom, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, and such like abominations? Oh! it is blasphemy to think it!

4. It reproves those, that instead of walking in Christ do walk in lies, Jer. xxiii. 14, "I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing; they commit adultery, and walk in lies," &c. They that walk in hypocrisy and lies, instead of walking in Christ, do rather walk in the devil, the father of lies, and who was a liar from the beginning. God's children are called children that will not lie.

5. Those that walk as slanderers, Jer. ix. 4, 5, "Every brother will utterly supplant, every neighbour will walk with slanders." O slandering tongue! Is that the way to walk in Christ? No, no. See what is the character of a godly man, that shall abide in God's tabernacle, and dwell in his holy hill; he is one that speaks the truth in his heart; he backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour, Psal. xv. 2, 3.

(6.) Those that walk in pride: such a walk you have described in the daughters of Jerusalem, Isa. iii. 16, "Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks, and wanton eyes, walking, and mincing, as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet." And you see how Nebuchadnezzar learned to preach this doctrine, after the Lord had humbled him for his pride, as low as the beasts of the field, "Those that walk in pride, he is able to abase," Dan. iv. 37.

7. Those that walk in carnality, or walk after the flesh, and after the imagination of their own evil heart, and so walk contrary to God. See such a walk described, Eph. ii. 2, 3, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." To walk in Christ is a spiritual walk; and surely they do not walk in Christ, who walk in the flesh, 2 Cor. x. 3.

8. Those that walk in superstition, even in superstitious worship and ceremonial customs, Acts xxi. 21. We read there of some

that walk after the custom, viz., the Jewish ceremonies that were abolished : Those walk not in Christ the substance, who walk in the shadow, Col. ii. 17.

9. Those that walk in self, or self-righteousness, " Going about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. Thus, some make works their righteousness ; some make faith their righteousness, and they walk in this faith, not in Christ by faith ; but it is not faith that saves merely, but Christ received by faith. As it is not the laying on the plaster that heals the sore, but the plaster itself that is laid on ; so it is not our faith, or receiving of Christ, but Christ received by faith that saves us. It is not our looking to the brazen Serpent mystical, but the mystical brazen Serpent looked unto by faith, Christ received by faith, that saves us. O but self is subtle ! But if we knew ourselves, self-knowledge would be a school master of humility. One of the first works which the word and Spirit works in men, is to give them light to go down into the dark cellar of their hearts, and make discoveries ; we are proud because we do not know ourselves ; he that knoweth himself loaths himself ; he that knoweth his wants prays in earnest ; he that knoweth his weakness, fears, and flies to the Rock ; he that brings knowledge of himself to a sermon, gathers out of the garden those herbs that are medicinal to him. It is true, the heart is deceitful, and who can know it ? but as we need not taste all the water of the sea, or every drop thereof, to know that it is salt and brakish ; nor taste every apple of the tree, to know the tree ; so, the tasting of some evils of our heart, may make us know what we are ; so as to make us flee out of ourselves to Christ.

10. This doctrine, in a word, reproves all Latitudinarians and Libertines, who think they believe, and so that they may do what they please, having received Christ they think there is no need of walking in him ; they please themselves with a superficial, opinionative, inoperative faith. Know, sirs, that men are not to judge of themselves, either by their faith without works, or by their works without faith ; but by their faith, as it works by love. The legal hypocrite judges himself, by his works without faith. But, as by fair and beautiful children, we cannot judge of lawful marriage ; so neither by the fruit of good works can a person judge of his marriage to Christ ; where there was never a formal consent, or receiving of Christ Jesus the Lord, all the professed walking in

him, is but hypocrisy. Again, the gospel hypocrite judges himself by his faith without works; he professes to receive Christ, but he walks not in him. A man may have a sound faith, and yet not a saving faith; he may be called an orthodox believer, but yet an heterodox practitioner, an erroneous walker; sound in his principles, but not in his morals; and this discovers the naughtiness of his faith; for, true faith works by love.

May the Lord bear home the reproof himself, and give us understanding in all things.

SERMON XC.

“As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”—COLOS. ii. 6.

[The Seventh Sermon on this Text.]

THERE is but one Being that we have most to do with, in all the world, who yet is most neglected by the generality of mankind, and that is God, the Being of all beings; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God. There is one of these persons of this glorious Trinity, that stands very nearly related unto man; and yet men are generally very little acquainted with him, and that is the second person, the Son of God, who is God-man in one person. God and man cannot meet together in peace, after our fall into sin, but only in this central place, this glorious person, God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ; without union to him, and communion with him, we cannot meet with God in mercy. Now, the way to have union to him, is by receiving him; and the way to communion with him, is by walking in him; and so, the whole mystery of true religion lies here before us, “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”

We now come to the third use of the doctrine, which is for trial and examination. There are two things that we all need to examine and try, namely, Our *State*, and our *Walk*; our spiritual being, and our spiritual well-being; both these are before us in the text. The state and being of a Christian lies in this, that he hath received Christ; the behaviour and well-being of a Christian lies in this, that he is one that walks in Christ. And therefore let us try

in both these particulars. 1. Let us try our faith, namely, if ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord; and so come to try our state and spiritual being. 2. Let us try our gospel-obedience: namely, if we be walking in Christ: and we may thus know our well-being.

First, Let us try our faith, whether we have received Christ Jesus the Lord; yea or not: and so, whether or not we be in a state of grace. O man, woman, poor dying mortals; according as you have this faith or not, so it will fare with you through all eternity: if you die in unbelief, "you die in your sins," John viii. 24. And better die in a ditch, and die like a dog, than die in your sins. If you die in your sins, you will rise in your sins, and stand at the tribunal of God in your sins: you can never receive remission of the guilt of sin, nor redemption from the power of sin, so long as you have not received Christ; and therefore reflect solemnly upon this matter, man, whether you have received Christ or not. If all that you are worth in a world, lay in one precious stone, and that stone was to be tried by a skilful jeweller, whether it were true or false, whether it would fly or endure, under the smart stroke of his hammer; surely your thoughts could not be unconcerned, about the issue of such a trial. Why, man, woman, all that you are worth in this world, and in the world to come, depends upon the truth of your faith, which now we call you to try, whether it will fly or endure the trying stroke of the hammer of God's word. Have you no concern in this matter? You would be loath to put to sea, though it were but to cross a short ferry, in a rotten leaky bottom; and will you dare to venture into the ocean of eternity, in a false rotten faith? O man! can you be too exact and careful about that, on which the determination of your whole estate depends, and that for ever? Well then, say you, How shall I know, If I have received Christ, by a saving faith? I do not incline to multiply marks. There are two questions, I would have you to examine this great matter by, whether you have saving faith, or not; such as hath received Christ Jesus the Lord. 1. Inquire how it was created by the Spirit. 2. How it was acted in your soul.

1st, How it was created by the Spirit? Many pretend to faith but can give no account how they came by it, or where they got the hand to receive Christ withal: but it is Christ that receives and embraces the soul, before the soul can receive or embrace him. Faith is the fruit of the creating power of the Spirit of God: and hence,

it is called the fruit of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22; so it is called the faith of the operation of God, Col. ii. 12. And such a powerful operation, as is called the effect of the exceeding greatness of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, Eph. i. 19, 20. But some have experienced the powerful working of the Spirit in creating faith, that yet cannot give a distinct account of his operation therein; and therefore I will tell you of these two or three things, that the Spirit doth usually in creating this faith, whereby the soul receives Christ.

1. He prepares his way by a work of conviction, John xvi. 8, and legal humiliation. The Spirit first convinces of sin, and then of righteousness; and surely the child of faith is not ordinarily born without pangs; some have greater pains than others, but all have their measure of conviction of sin, and deep concern about their lost state by nature. Now, were you ever deeply convinced, and stabbed to the heart, by the sharp sword of the law; and put to that plight, "Men and brethren, what shall I do?" Were you ever put to your wits-end, so as you knew not what to do in all the world, or what hand to turn yourselves to? Were you at that pass, that you would have given a thousand worlds for light and direction, where you might find outget and deliverance to your weary spirit? Were you ever deeply weighted and affected, with your guilt, sin, and danger, by the powers of the world to come; and the thoughts of your spiritual and eternal state actuating upon your soul, with such invincible force, that you could have no rest, no satisfaction, no contentment, till you have got some sovereign outget? Was you ever deeply wounded upon the account of your sin? Was it like a sword in your bones, and like a weight of iron, and a mountain of lead upon your soul? Surely, if ever you have received Christ, you have seen a need of him. When you are sick, you will readily see the need of a physician; when poor, you will see the need of riches; when naked, you will see the need of clothing; whatever temporal straits lie upon you, you will find your need of suitable supply: Even so, if ever the Spirit of conviction hath come in, surely you have seen a need of Christ, a need of mercy and pity, and of a sovereign antidote against your maladies and miseries, which have been discovered to you.

The Spirit having convinced the soul of sin, in order to make the soul see a need of Christ, having brought the man to conviction, doth next bring him to desperation: I mean, to self-despair: This

is imported in the language of those, Acts ii. 37, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They are a total loss about deliverance, and the way of escape. It is an emphatic word to this purpose, the apostle useth, Gal. iii. 23, "Before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed;" *shut up* unto the faith, ΣΥΓΚΕΚΛΕΙΣΜΕΝΟΙ, as men besieged and distressed in a garrison, in a time of storm, when the enemy pours in upon them through the breaches, and overpowers them; there is but one port or gate, at which they can escape, and to that they all throng, as despairing of life, if they take any other course: Even so doth convictions besiege men, and distress them, beat them off from all their holds and entrenchments, and shut them up unto Christ, as the only way of escape. The man once thought his duties would save him; his reformation would save him; that a little repentance would save him, or that a stricter life would do the business: but now there is no hope appears in the whole horizon of sense; there is no way but one, Christ or condemnation for ever. Now the man is brought to say, Oh! I cannot deliver myself out of the wretched state; men and angels cannot deliver me: all my former refuges will not secure me: I find the bed is too short, the covering is too narrow; and if I trust to these Egyptian reeds, they will not only fail me, but pierce and wound me too.

3. The Spirit, in working this faith, whereby the soul receives Christ, having wrought the soul to this conviction, this self-despair, doth next bring the soul readily to the greatest pinch and straits, and solemn concern, that ever it was under about anything in the world, as we see in the experience of the jailor, Acts xvi. 29. He came trembling, and asked, why the judgment of the great day, was acted by way of anticipation in his conscience? It was with no little concern, that people do revolve these and the like questions in their minds daily; What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and, how shall I and mine be fed and clothed? But surely, much deeper impressions upon the heart, when the soul is under the awakening influences of the Spirit of bondage, do these questions make in the man's breast; What shall I do to be saved? and, What shall come of me through eternity? The man is brought to a solemn and awful concern about his everlasting condition; and to be in sad earnest about his eternal state. All frolics and frothiness doth vanish, and here the man lies at God's mercy unable to help himself, and unworthy that God should help him; and owning that

he deserves to be thrown into the bottomless pit; and that it will be a wonder of grace, and a miracle of mercy, if God shall pity him. And then,

4. The Spirit in working this faith, whereby the man receives Christ, doth come into the soul by a powerful, saving, conquering illumination; even as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, Eph. i. 16. Some enlightening work, setting home the law, and discovering sin, makes way for what I have already mentioned: but now saving, powerful illumination takes place, for discovering the glorious object of faith, the Lord Jesus Christ; for there must be a seeing of the Son, ere there can be a believing in him, John vi. 40. As faith without works, so the consequent of it is dead; as faith without light, so the antecedent of it is blind: faith is the hand whereby we receive Christ, but knowledge is the eye by which that hand is directed. Now, hath ever God opened your eyes, and given you a heartsome view of Christ, the king in his beauty, as fairer than the children of men; as more glorious than mountains of prey: as brighter than the firmamental sun, in his meridian splendour and glory? Have you got such a view of him, that, suppose God should come to you with Christ in one balance, and ten thousand worlds, full of all imaginable pleasures and honours, in another balance, and said to you, Which of them will you choose? you would have rejected all those with disdain and abhorrence, and your soul would have flightered after a Redeemer, saying, "I count all but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord?" Have you got such glorious discoveries of the grace and love of God in Christ, in the gospel, as hath drawn out your heart to the offer thereof? It is by the shining of the gospel light, through the free promise into the heart, that the man is turned from darkness to light. The highest natural light will leave a man short of the discovery of sin, in its exceeding sinfulness; and of the riches of grace in Christ, for the recovery of lost sinners: these cannot be seen aright, till they be revealed by the divine Spirit; "For flesh and blood revealeth them not," Matt. xvi. 17. The heart stood immediately before, at an infinite distance from the Lord Jesus, and was full of opposition against him; but now a divine power being exerted by the word of the gospel, for drawing the soul off from all other objects, to pitch upon Christ alone for salvation in the way of free grace; then it accepts of the blessed offer when all arguments in the world before

could not prevail with it. Hath the Spirit of God cleared up to you the gospel offer of Christ, in order to your receiving of him? for, "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." It is in a gospel glass, that the soul gains a right discovery of the excellency of Christ, and that righteousness of his, without which there is no salvation. This first acquaintance with Christ doth make such a powerful alteration, by discoveries above sense, bringing the heart towards Christ beyond all other means, that it usually hath a mark upon it, insomuch that it is most evidencing, and carries its evidence along with it. Such first things have a mark upon them, and are of a most desirable nature; the state thereupon being so vastly different from what it was, how refined soever the nature was before. Thus try your faith by the way how it was created by the Spirit.

2dly, How was faith acted in your souls, when Christ was received? or, how did it act? To be sure in general, faith acts under the influence of the same Spirit that works it; for, as he works it, so he draws it forth to act and exercise; and, under this conduct, the soul, in receiving Christ, acts in the following manner:—

1. The soul, in receiving Christ, doth act humbly, Ezek. xvi. 63, "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done." O but a soul convinced of its unworthiness and desert of hell, and that scarce can expect anything but utter damnation, how doth the first dawnings of mercy melt and humble it! O whence is this to such a worm as I! He stands behind Christ weeping and washing his feet with tears. When one of the first works of the word and Spirit is, to give the soul a light to go down to the dark cellar of his heart, and make discoveries, so as he is standing amazed, and trembling at the sight of himself; and the next work of the Spirit is to lead him into the lightsome chamber of the King of glory to bring him from darkness to light; how he is melted with the sense of mercy!

2. The soul, in receiving Christ, doth act vehemently, and with ardent desire after Christ, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness; and crying for faith itself, which yet may be hid from the man's own sight, saying, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief: he sees his own inability to believe, and that the work of faith is wholly supernatural; and cries, O enable me to come to Christ! O give me Christ, or I perish for ever! It is thy work, O reveal thy arm!

O man, woman, where are the bed-sides, and secret corners where you have besieged heaven with such a cry? saying, O for a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem! O for a drop of that precious blood! O for a smile of a God in Christ! "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," Psal. xlii. 1.

3. The soul, in receiving Christ, acts entirely and undividedly; he receives him as Christ Jesus the Lord. As the three offices are undivided in Christ, so are they in the believer's acceptance; O my ignorance, says the soul, makes him necessary and desirable as a Prophet! O my guilt makes him necessary and desirable as a Priest! And my strong corruption makes him necessary and desirable as a King! To receive Christ as a Jesus, in submitting to his obediential righteousness, for acceptation unto life, is faith unto justification, Rom. x. 10. And to consent to have him for our Lord, to rule over us, by his Spirit dwelling in us, is faith unto sanctification, Rom. viii. 9, 10, 11. Is it thus that you receive Christ?

4. The soul in receiving Christ, acts confidently; for, in him we have boldness and confidence through the faith of him; for it acts upon an infallible testimony, the divine veracity and faithfulness; or, "Thus saith the Lord," is the firm foundation upon which faith is built; faith is a setting to the seal that God is true. When faith is acted, God gives the man a testimonial: Heb. xi. 5, 6, "Enoch had this testimony, that he pleased God: But without faith it is impossible to please God." But what is yet more strange, faith not only gets a testimonial from God, but gives a testimonial to him, as I formerly observed; John ii. 33, "He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal, that God is true." It is a receiving the record of God; here is the confidence and assurance of faith, according to the measure of it; and all acts of faith without this, are but as so many arrows shot at random into the open air.

5. The soul, in receiving Christ, acts violently, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." It acts peremptorily, saying, If I perish, I perish; at Christ I must be. It acts in a manner wilfully, "Although he slay me, yet will I trust in him. I will not let thee go, until thou bless me." The soul ventures upon the free grace and faithfulness of God, in the greatest distresses; and here it lies, as it were, at anchor, in such stormy days, Heb. vi. 19.

6. The soul, in receiving Christ, acts exclusively, excluding all other saviours, all other helps, all other props; receiving him, and resting upon him alone; saying, "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only, Psal. lxxi. 16. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 19. To depend partly upon Christ's righteousness, and partly upon our own, is to set one foot upon a rock, and another in the quick sands. Christ will either be to us *all in all*, in point of righteousness, or else nothing at all; as he did the whole work, so he will have the whole praise. If he be not able to save to the uttermost, why do we depend upon him at all? If he be, why do we lean upon any beside him? If we lean partly on Christ, and partly on ourselves, or our own good works, wishes, actions, or affections, we infallibly ruin ourselves. If a man set one foot upon dry land, and the other upon deep water, and lean to them both with equal weight; yea, if he give any of his weight to the water, he will sink there. So here, if a person rest partly upon the merits of Christ, and partly, or in any degree, upon his self-righteousness for salvation, he will inevitably perish. Man's righteousness indeed was once in himself; and because he was endowed at first with a perfect rectitude of nature, and ability sufficient to have yielded perfect obedience to the law, and thereby to have obtained eternal life, had he persevered in his integrity; so there is still a mighty bias in his heart, though now depraved, to seek righteousness by the works of the law; and all his best actions savour much of this legal turn of mind. It is with all Adam's posterity as with bees, which have been accustomed to go to their own hive, and carry all hither; if the hive be removed to another place, they will still fly to the old place, hover up and down about it, and creep about the sides of it, and rather die there than go to a new place; so it is with us, God hath removed our righteousness from ourselves to Christ, it is not now in ourselves but Christ; but, who is prevailed with to forsake self, and self-righteousness? Corrupt nature will venture to be damned rather than do it. The proud self-conceited heart will not stoop to live upon a stock of another's righteousness; but now, by faith, or in the day of believing, the man is brought to this, "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," and acts upon Christ exclusively, excluding all other saviours, all other righteousness, in point of

justification ; yea, and excluding all other lords in point of sanctification ; for, whereas unbelief says, " We will not suffer this man to reign over us ;" and hypocrites say, We will have this man, and the world ; this man, and our lusts both, to reign over us. Faith says, we will have none but this man, this God-man to reign over us. A man may as lawfully join saints and angels, in his mediation with Christ, as his graces, " It is gross idolatry, says one, [viz., Mr. Burgess,] to make the works of God, a God ; and it is but a more subtile idolatry to make the works of Christ, a Christ."

7. The soul, in receiving Christ, acts regularly, I mean, according to the gospel rule, and suitable to the gospel offer, " So we preached, and so ye believed," 1 Cor. xv. 11. Faith answers the gospel offer, as the impress upon the wax doth answer the engraving of the seal ; so Christ offers himself, and so faith receives him, namely, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

8. The soul, in receiving Christ, acts methodically, receiving first the *person* and then the *benefits* ; God gives *Christ*, and then with him *all things*, Rom. viii. 32. And so faith receives Christ, and then, in and with him all things. It is true, salvation must be most of all in the sinner's eye, at his first believing ; and thus many, in their acting faith at first, may be filled with much confusion, and are not distinct in their actings of faith ; but this is the proper order in believing, as will afterward be more and more clear to every believer, upon his repeated acts of faith, first to accept the person, and then the benefits.

9. The soul, in receiving Christ, acts freely ; he receives the water of life freely, Rev. xxii. 17, Isa. lv. 1. The man comes to receive Christ with an empty hand, as to one that justifies the ungodly ; Rom. iv. 5, " To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." " To him that worketh not," in the law sense : not to work, and not to work perfectly, is all one to the law. Now, the man is convinced that, as he cannot work perfectly, nay, cannot work at all, so he comes to Christ as one that is in himself ungodly, acknowledging that the righteousness, by which he can stand before God, is only in Christ, and not in himself, in whole or in part. The man comes emptied of all qualifications to recommend him to God ; he sees himself qualified for nothing, but hell and damnation ; and thus comes freely, to get all good out of Christ's

fulness : he is an empty-handed sinner : but he comes to one who is a full-handed Saviour ; for he hath such a stock of grace as cannot be exhausted ; angels have a fulness of sufficiency, but they have none to spare ; but Christ hath a fulness of redundancy, that hath been flowing over to sinners, near these six thousand years, and yet is not lessened : and it is he that lets out of his grace with the word you hear, or else you get no good of the sermon.

10. The soul in receiving Christ, acts successfully and fruitfully ; and by its fruit you may know it : for, true faith is a fruitful faith. It brings forth the fruit of gospel-repentance, Zech. xii. 10, " They shall look on him whom they have pierced and mourn." O but the apprehension of grace and mercy in Christ thaws and melts the heart ! It brings forth the fruit of love to Christ, his ways, his people ; " Faith worketh by love, Gal. v. 6. Again, To you that believe, he is precious. O ! Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee." It brings forth the fruit of the heart and life purity ; Acts xv. 9. " Purifying their hearts by faith." Morality may hide corruption, but faith purifies the heart from it ; and it cleanses the hands also ; the man is sanctified by that faith which is in Christ. It brings forth the fruit of zeal ; zeal for the Lord's name, and honour, and glory : O the man could wish, that all the world would come and admire him ; that all the world would come and adore him, and love him ! The man is made content to do and suffer for him, to live and die for him, so as he is a witness for Christ, at least in the intention, and a martyr in resolution : this takes place when faith is up. Zeal against sin : O the more sweet that Christ is to the man, the more bitter is sin ! O that abominable thing that God hates ! He now resolves to pursue it to death : he not only confesses, but forsakes ; not only forsakes, but hates ; and not only hates, but kills and crucifies ; and not only kills it, but desires to bury his dead out of sight : to have his seed buried in Christ's grave ; to be saved by him and rise with him. Zeal for God's house and love to the ordinances of his appointment : " O how amiable are thy tabernacles ! Thy words were found of me, and I did eat them." The word and ordinances are the very food of faith ; and the desire of the believer's soul is after the same ; and here he is painful and diligent in his attendance upon the same. If we weigh the pains for bodily food, with the pains that men take for their soul, in the balance of the sanctuary, many would discover their want of faith,

or their faith to be lighter than vanity : how do men, even without all sense of pain, undergo sore labour and toil, for the matter of a shilling? How, in the time of harvest, will they even melt themselves in the heat, and yet are merry and pleasant? How, will they in winter ride to markets, and stand in the open and cold air all day long, to vend their commodities, without fretting? But now compare this to the other ; see what vain and fleshly excuses men will have about the hearing of the word ; as, who can endure to go to church when the weather is so hot, there is such crowding? and what a misery is it to stand all the time of the sermon? and who can endure to sit an hour in the cold church? truly it is enough to make a man catch his death! Why, man, can you endure the summer-heat and winter-cold about your outward affairs, and stand a whole day in your shop, or in the market, in the coldest of winter? and do you excuse yourselves, or fret for an hour in the church? Can you be content to labour six days, for your bodily food; and think you it great pains to bestow one day in following the gospel-market for your souls? What does this argue in you, but that you have no faith to feed upon the word; no affection or desire after the bread of life, for your spiritual maintenance and sustenance? If you had a fervent zeal for the word, it would cool the heat of summer, and warm you against the cold of winter; you would little regard such trifles as cold and heat, wind and weather; these would vanish before this zeal, as the morning dew before the sun; these shifts and excuses could not stand the zeal of God's house; it would eat up and consume them. Now, try yourselves by these things.

It may be, some weak believer may be saying, Some of these marks I know to my experience; but others are dark to me, therefore I doubt of all. To which we reply, if indeed you have one saving solid mark, and can really close with it; it may satisfy you, though you be in the dark in others. If a child cannot go, yet if it can suck, if it cannot suck, yet if it can cry; if it cannot cry, yet if it can breathe, it is a mark of life: so, there may be breathings in the soul, that are evidential of life and faith, when other things are hid. O try yourselves, and look to God to search and try you! it is by his judgment you stand or fall.

Secondly, Let us try our *Gospel-obedience*, or our walking in Christ. Christ is the way to heaven, and faith is the way to Christ: This faith hath two offices, the one is acceptance, and the other is dependence: O! what a mercy is it that we, who are by nature out

of the way, have the way to heaven set before us, namely, Christ ; and the way to this way, namely, faith : and the nature and office of this faith : the first office of it is acceptance, or the reception of Christ : the second office of it is dependence on him, or walking in him : and both these are here before us in the text ; “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” Here is a very large field, and it is not possible to travel through it all ; for it concerns both the internal disposition, and the external conversation ; and to both these we must have a view, in the progress of this trial. This walk in Christ is just the obedience of faith ; and when we propose to try this, it is all one as to try, whether or not we be living the life of faith ; for, as to receive Christ, is to come to him by faith ; so to walk in him, is to live on him by faith ; for, to walk in Christ, is to walk by faith, as we have received him ; or suitably to the reception of him, as I shewed at length on the doctrinal part, and might resume it by way of trial ; but because I enlarged so much upon it then, shall offer some particulars distinct, at least in the enlargement, from what I then proposed and prosecuted. To be sure those do not walk in Christ, whom I spoke of in the use of reproof, that habitually walk in the darkness of ignorance and error, that walk in vanity and profanity ; that walk in lies and slander ; that walk in proud self and superstition : that walk in carnal liberty ; in rioting and drunkenness, chambering, and wantonness ; yea, these that never received Christ, are not capable of this walking in him ; and therefore the root of this walk is the reception of Christ, concerning which I offered some marks before. Now, I insist the longer upon this use of trial, not only because we may thereby try ourselves, but also therein be further instructed, concerning the nature and excellency of this walk. There are two general heads I propose in this part of the use of trial, whether we know or not, what it is to walk in Christ, namely, 1. To try by the scriptural qualities of it. 2. By the gospel provision for it.

1st, Try this Christian walk, or walking in Christ, by the scriptural qualities of it. And,

1. It is a mixed walk : this we may view concerning it more generally ; it is a mixed kind of a walk, interwoven with a great many vicissitudes : as long as believers are in this valley of tears, sometimes they walk in the light of God’s countenance, sometimes they walk in darkness ; Psal. lxxxix. 15, “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound ; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light

of thy countenance." Isa. l. 10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light?" It is a changeable kind of walk, not in respect of the believer's state, nor yet his habitual tendency towards God and heaven: but in respect of his inward frame and outward condition; he is like a man that, in a journey, is sometimes going up hill, and sometimes down; sometimes in a valley, and sometimes on a mountain; sometimes meets with a piece of dirty way; sometimes with a more plain and easy road. It is said of the wicked, "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God:" It is true, the wicked may have their outward changes, from prosperity to adversity; yea, and their inward changes, from an ill mood to a good mood; but as they are still always the same thing; so their most remarkable changes differ from the changes of God's people, whose mixed walk, and interchangeable circumstances, do mainly consist in their feeling sometimes the smiles, and sometimes the frowns of the Lord: now he shines, and then he hides; now he is present, and then he is absent: "I said, my mountain standeth strong; but lo, thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." The changes of the hypocrite, is like that of a stone put into the fire; it is changed from cold to hot, but it is a hard stone still; but that of a believer, is like gold put into the fire; it is tried and purified thereby, and purged from some dross.

2. It is a denial walk: To walk in Christ, is as much as to walk, not in ourselves; the man is denied to himself, and his own understanding and wisdom; to his own strength and righteousness. The disciple of Christ must deny himself, and have no confidence in the flesh: hence it is called a "walking humbly with" OUR GOD Micah vi. 8. Augustine being asked, What was the first grace? Answered, Humility: What is the second? Answered, Humility: What is the third? Answered, Humility. Indeed it is the varnish of every grace; and "God gives grace to the humble:" he loves to lay his wines in the lowest cellars. The motto of a humble saint is, *Poor and needy; poor in spirit*; and here the poorest are the richest: the man is empty in himself, but full in Christ; hath nothing in himself, but hath all in Christ; and is filled with self-debasing, God-exalting, grace-admiring thoughts, saying with Jacob, "I am less than the least of thy mercies," Gen. xxii. 10; and with Job, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And with Asaph, "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a

beast before thee." And with Agur, "I am more brutish than any man." And with Isaiah, "I am unclean." And with Paul, "I am the chief of sinners, and the least of saints." It is a humble and denied walk; the man is denied to himself, brought out of himself.

3. It is a dependent walk; it is a living by faith in the Son of God, and dependence on him, like the spouse, "Going up from the wilderness, leaning on the Beloved." As it is with a woman, she first gives her consent, and becomes a wife: and then, being a wife, she looks upon her husband as the only person to supply her, protect her, comfort her, and provide for her: so it is with faith, it first espouses the soul to Christ, takes him as a Lord and Husband, and then casts all the provision of the soul upon him, all supplies and helps; trusts on him for righteousness, for pardon of sin, for grace, for strength, for comfort, for eternal life; and commits all to him, 2 Tim. i. 12, "I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Though other things should all fail, faith depends upon Christ: when the spider's web is swept down, when the cob-webs of creature-confidences are swept down, faith will see a sure foundation to rest upon: "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab. iii. 17, 18. He that hath crutches, if he lean not on them in his walking, take away his crutches and he will walk still; but take away a cripple's crutches that goes upon them, and he comes to the ground presently: so, if we did not, like cripples, lean upon these outward things, or outward frames, we would not be so easy thrown down in their removal. To walk in Christ is to depend upon him; it is a dependent, a believing walk, leaning upon the word of God, his bare word; and, indeed, if a man of worth should be asked a pawn, and not credited upon his word, he would take it in ill part: what a shame is it, that we cannot credit God without pawn and caution!

4. It is an extensive walk; what is said of the commandment of God, we may say of this walk, "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandments are exceeding broad." It is a narrow and strait way indeed, in regard of its difficulty to nature, and the paucity of those that walk in it; but it is broad in itself, in respect

of its extent. This walk of Christ extends to all the commandments of God ; for the man that walks in Christ hath a respect to all God's commands. It extends to all the duties of religion, and to all the graces of the Spirit. It extends to all the motions of the heart, and all the actions of life ; to every thought, word, and deed. In all these, we are called to walk in Christ by faith. Yea, it extends to all the circumstances of the believer's life, to all the indigencies of his life, and all the exigencies of his soul ; for, " The just shall live by faith," Rom. i. 17. Where is the believer on earth, but hath the sensible feeling still of some distress or other, inward or outward ; whether it be sense of sin, or sense of guilt, or sense of corruption, or sense of temptation, or sense of desertion, or sense of wickedness, or sense of want, or sense of affliction from God, or sense of contradiction from the world ? Now, in all these, he is to live by faith, and to walk in Christ, knowing there is enough in him to answer all. The soul cannot be cast into any sea, but Christ is a sure ship and safe harbour. To walk in him, is to improve him in every case, and to trust in him for relief in every exigency. A man is said to walk not merely when he hath feet to walk with, but when he is making use of his feet to carry him on his way ; even so, a man walks in Christ, not merely when he hath faith, and hath received Christ, but when he is by faith improving Christ in every time of need, for pardon, light, life, liberty, comfort, and communication : the habit and quality of faith is one thing, the use and exercise of faith is another. A man is said to live by bread, not when he hath it in his cup-board, but when he takes and eats it ; so, to live by faith is to put faith to exercise, to bring the pitcher to the well and draw water. Why, says the man that is walking in Christ, there is corruption working again, but I will away to Christ again to subdue it ; Satan renews his temptations, but I will renew my address to Christ, he will again bruise Satan under my feet : my comforts are gone, but I will go to Christ, he will come again, and my joy shall be full. The life of faith is a multiplied work and a repeated work ; it leads the soul often to look, even for the same kind of supply. To live by faith is to keep house with Christ, and to be his daily guest ; to rely upon him as often as we have need, and to draw still from the same fountain.

5. This walk in Christ is a gospel-walk ; " Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ," Phil. i. 27. It is under a gospel-conduct, according to a gospel-rule, from a gospel-

motive, in a gospel-manner, to a gospel-end, and by a gospel-spirit, which were a large theme if I could insist upon it. This gospel-walk hath gospel-holiness in it, and so it is a holy walk, "Be ye holy as I am holy; holiness becometh his house for ever: and without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." It hath gospel circumspection in it, and so it is called a circumspect walk; "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." And a watchful walk, knowing that there is a deceitful heart within, a flattering world without, and a tempting devil going about us; therefore, what Christ says to one he says to all, Watch.—It hath a gospel-uprightness in it; and so it is called an upright walk, "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely: The way of the Lord is straight to the upright: He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."—It hath a gospel-order in it, and so it is called a well-ordered walk; "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." And as a walk is orderly when a man gives every duty its proper time and place, and suffers not one to clash with another, or one to shuffle out another; so, gospel-order in our walk will make a man bring all from Christ, and then improve all for him; it makes a man live upon him as the Alpha of his life, and to him as the Omega of it.—In a word, a gospel-walk hath a gospel-spirit influencing it, and so it is a cheerful walk, according to the measure of the Spirit; "The joy of the Lord is the man's strength;" and this joy is not inconsistent with gospel-sorrow, for it may be, and frequently is, both a joyful and mournful walk at once; for a man never begins to mourn as a child till he hath faith to see God as a Father; the gracious looks of Christ are the springs of gospel-repentance: "And blessed are they that thus mourn, for they shall be comforted."

6. This walk of Christ, it is a heavenly walk; the man that walks in Christ hath his conversation in heaven, where Christ is, Phil. iii. 20. There is here a heavenliness of thought: the man in this walk comes to be heavenly-minded; at least he is burdened that he cannot get his thoughts placed on heavenly things, and best pleased with himself when he gets his heart set in heaven. There is a heavenliness of speech that he endeavours when he is walking in Christ, a heavenliness of language, a heavenliness of affections; a heavenliness of trading by faith and prayer, drawing bills of exchange, as it were, upon Christ for whatever he stands in need of.

How unsuitable is it for them that have received Christ Jesus the Lord to have an earthly walk ! Like the bird they call a lapwing, that hath a crown upon his head, and yet feeds upon excrements. Hath the Lord crowned you with loving-kindness, and yet do you live upon the dung of this world ; made you an heir to a kingdom, and yet you lie tumbling among ashes ? If God hath given you the fountain of living waters, and yet you are anxiously careful about the drops, that are in the broken cistern ; surely you are not walking in Christ. The saint that doth not live above the world, he lives beneath himself.

7. It is a stedfast walk ; “ Be ye stedfast and immovable,” 1 Cor. xv. 58. It is progressive, and yet stedfast ; for, as I have formerly observed, the very word walking imports progress and permanency. There is a constant progress in it ; “ The righteous holdeth on his way, and he that hath clean hands waxeth stronger and stronger. The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” True grace is of a growing nature. It is true, the believer may not be sensible of his growth, as we do not see ourselves or others grow, but that we are grown is plain ; neither do we see how much the light increases by every step of the sun’s rising higher, it is by imperceptible instances or degrees. When power of resisting temptations, and mortifying lusts, which before were too hard for us, doth appear, we may see our growth, as we see our shadows are shortened when the sun rises higher, but how much in a minute we see not, yet it is a progressive walk. If the believer be not walking forward, he is not walking in Christ, for when he walks in Christ, he is always coming speed ; and this walking in Christ, or living by faith on him, is the only stedfast and abiding life and walk. Though the mariners, when they put to sea, may quickly lose sight of land, yet they never lose sight of heaven ; how far soever they sail, in whatever tempest, yet still, if they look up, they will see the same heaven : even so, the man that walks in Christ, and lives by faith, his faith never loses its sight of its rock ; he may lose sight of land, sight of friends, sight of relations, and enjoyments of time, and all human props, but faith acted will never lose sight of God and Christ, and the promise ; though all sensible enjoyments fly off, yet the man who lives by faith is at no loss. What can he lack, who hath him that is all in all ?

8. It is a familiar walk : “ So walk ye in him.” O ! who can

walk more familiarly, one with another, than this, for one to walk in another? "Walk in him! Two cannot walk together, except they be agreed." Here is the sweetest agreement and familiarity. There are several acts of familiarity by which this intimate walk is expressed in scripture; and each of them might also be matter for our trial, whether we know this familiar walk. There is communion between Christ and the believer: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son, through the Spirit. He sups with them, and they with him." There is communication: "The secret of the Lord is with them;" and they impart their secrets to him. There is a cohabitation; he dwells in them by his Spirit: "I will put my Spirit within you. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be one in us;" and they dwell in him by faith. There is no ambulation; he walks with them, and they walk with him: "He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks;" they shall walk with him all the day long. There is confabulation; he speaks to them, and they to him; they converse together: "Thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." There is mutual visitation; he visits them in a way of grace, and they him in a way of duty. There is mutual feasting and banquetting: "He brought me to the banquetting-house and his banner over me was love." There is mutual salutation and embracement; they greet each other with a holy kiss: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for his love is better than wine." And they learn to kiss the Son, lest he be angry. But I enlarge not upon these now; what know you of these things, when thus you see what sort of a walk it is this walking in Christ? Try yourselves, by searching into the scriptural qualities of it.

2dly, Try this walk by the GOSPEL-PROVISION for it. All that know this walk, and truly walk in Christ, they are provided for the journey; God sends none a warfare on their own charges; nor doth call any to walk in him, without providing them for the way. And there are these eight things that travellers need for their journey, and all these things spiritual travellers have in Christ; yea, and communicate from him, according to the exigencies of their journey.

1. The traveller must have a guide to direct him; even so, if ye walk in Christ, ye have a guide; Christ himself is the guide: "This God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide even unto death." He is a skilful guide, that knows every step of the way—a faithful guide, that doth not mislead his people—a tender

guide, that helps the weak traveller—and a continual guide, that never leaves them nor forsakes them. Now what know you of his guiding you by his word and Spirit? Do you ever hear the voice behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it,” when you go to the right hand or to the left? And have you been made to resign yourselves to his conduct?

2. The traveller must have light, for it is hard to walk in the dark; and sight, that his eye may be upon the road; for though a traveller have light, yet if he shut his eyes, or suffer them to gaud, or to wander, without noticing the way, he is ready to stumble, or turn aside; so the spiritual traveller, that walks in Christ, he gets light and sight; and indeed Christ himself is his light; for, He is the light of the world;” and his Spirit is given to the believer, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation; and it is he that gives him sight as well as light, and fixes his eye; hence prays the Psalmist, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in thy way,” Psalm cxix. 37. Right walking is influenced by the light of the knowledge of Christ; the more we know of Christ, the more will we walk in him; yea, and the more we walk in him, the more will we know him. He that doth his will, shall know his doctrine; they influence one another. Even as the body warms the clothes, and then the clothes warm the body, so the knowledge of Christ leads to gospel-practice, and gospel-practice leads to more knowledge.

3. The traveller must have a cordial that he faint not by the way! even so, they that walk in Christ have a cordial provided; and indeed Christ, who is the way, is also the cordial; for, he is the consolation of Israel; and he affords them sometimes strong consolation, so as the joy of the Lord is their strength. “Wisdom’s ways are pleasantness;” though the world reproach it as a melancholy way. Now, what know you of the gospel-cordial, or of the intimations of divine love, filling your hearts, at sometimes, with joy unspeakable, and peace that passeth all natural understanding. This is what he affords, now and then, to those that walk in him; he hath provided public inns for their refreshment and entertainment; and these are the public ordinances of his grace; the banquetting-houses, where he satiates and solaces his people with himself, on the feast of fat things, even the true bread that cometh down from heaven, and displays his banner of love over them.

4. The traveller must have a purse and money to bear his ex-

penses; even so, they that walk in Christ, they get unsearchable riches in him: "Out of his fulness they receive, and grace for grace;" they get what they need, though not always what they would; but he is a wise dispenser, and they have enough in him; yea, are complete in him; in whom is fulness of merit for their justification, and fulness of Spirit for their sanctification. *Money that answers all things*; yea, durable riches and righteousness; riches that will not rot in the grave, nor take the wings of the morning and fly away, as temporal enjoyments do; here is enough to pay all his charges, satisfy all his creditors, and answer all the law pleas of the devil, of conscience, yea, of justice and the law itself. Know you what it is, man, to be supplied out of this stock?

5. The traveller must have armour for his journey; even so, they that walk in Christ, they get weapons to defend them from robbers and wild beasts, that are ready to bereave them of their life and of their goods. See the Christian's complete armour, Eph. vi. 11-17. You have the several pieces of armour there mentioned; and Christ himself is the great magazine of this military provision; the traveller walks in Christ, and in him hath all these pieces of armour, therefore is called to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Are you acquaint with this way of travelling, and walking in arms, depending on the power of a Mediator, to fight all your battles against sin and Satan?

6. A traveller must have a girdle for his loins, to keep up his loose garments, and to keep his loins firm, that he do not weary with the length of his journey. Even so, they that walk in Christ need to gird up the loins of their mind, as the apostle expresses it, and to have their loins girt about with truth, Eph. vi. 14. Now, as Christ is the *way*, so he is the *truth*, and can give truth in the inward part; and therefore will provide them of a girdle: "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler," Psalm xci. 4. Spiritual travellers are therefore taught the truth, as it is in Jesus; both the truth, in respect of gospel-principles, and the truth of God in his promise.

7. The traveller must have shoes for his feet; even so, they that walk in Christ, they must have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; that is, with a heart prepared to adhere to the gospel, and abide by it; now, this preparation of the heart is from the Lord. Do you find your heart prepared, fortified, and strengthened by his grace, notwithstanding of difficulties that are in the way of adhering to his truth, his gospel, his cause, and his interest in the world?

8. The traveller must have a staff in his hand, to help him forward, and to lean upon ; even so, they that walk in Christ have a staff put in their hand : " Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me," Psalm xxiii. 4. And what is the staff they lean upon ? CHRIST himself is the main staff : " She goeth up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved." More particularly,

(1.) The staff of his all-sufficiency : saith God to Abraham, " I am God all-sufficient, walk before me." I have enough in myself, and enough for every creature ; as the sun hath light enough for a whole world, and a fountain of water enough for a whole country, " Walk before me." If you want light, you will look to the sun ; if you want water, you will go to the spring ; and so, if you want any good, will you not look up to me, who am goodness itself, and infinitely able to succour ; All-sufficiency itself, and infinitely able to supply ? There is a strong staff.

(2.) The staff of his promise : as when God says, " I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. Fear not, for I am with thee ; I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Not only have I all-good, all-sufficiency, but there is a promise, might he say, that all the good I can do, I will do it for thee, There is no particular want of the believer, but hath a particular promise. If you knew a man to be sufficient, and to have an estate worth ten thousand pounds, and all free, you would soon trust him for an hundred pounds ; but if he should tell you particularly, and say, Friend, I have a great estate, and I pray thee, if thou hast need of any thing, at any time, repair to me, I give thee my word, and if that be not enough, my bond and seal, that I will help thee ; it were enough, he needed say no more. Yet, thus saith the Lord to the man that hath received Christ. Not only am I an all-sufficient God, but I promise that I will give thee grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from thee ; as true as I am God, " I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee." Is not this an excellent staff to lean upon ?

(3.) The staff of his power : Whatever God promiseth, he is able to make good. Many a man is undone by suretyship ; he suffers himself to be bound beyond his ability ; but it is not so with God. If a subject promise to release and pardon a malefactor, it is nothing ; he is not trusted, because he hath not power of life or death. If a poor man promise to discharge a great debt, nobody will credit his promise, because his ability is not answerable to his undertakings. But behold here, Christ hath ability to make good

all his promises ; he hath promised great things ; to pardon great sins, to conquer great temptations, to subdue great corruptions, to convey great consolations. Well, but he is a great God ; is any thing too hard for him ? Do your particular wants still increase and renew themselves ? Well, as vessels which we fill to-day, need a new filling to-morrow, the stomach which we seem to satisfy just now, within a few hours is empty and craving again ; so here, the soul that hath once tasted and seen that God is good, sees that this taste is not sufficient to support him, and that created fulness will soon be diminished, if it is not daily supplied, and therefore still wants more, saying, "Evermore give us this bread." But here lies the comfort, that though the vessel be dry, the fountain is not ; though the vessel be empty, the fountain is full ; and his power to help is a creating power, such as can command things into being. O what a wonderful staff is this ! Do you know what it is to walk with this staff in your hand ?

(4.) The staff of his fidelity ; behold, the promises are sealed with truth ; it is God who cannot lie, who hath promised : "Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it." He takes his own time, but he will be true to his word : "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform the good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah."

(5.) In a word, Christ himself, and his everlasting righteousness, his meritorious obedience to the death, with which God is well pleased, and his valuable intercession, whom God heareth always, is the staff which the believer leans upon ; he that is the way they walk in, is the staff they walk with, and lean upon ; for in him are all the promises Yea and Amen ; and one word of promise from a God in Christ, is enough to faith. If a mariner can get to the top of the mast, and descry but a point of land, then he is glad, and all is well ; thus the believer by faith climbs to the top-mast, and sees the promise afar off, Heb. xi. 13 ; and rejoices in Christ, in whom it stands fast. Every believer is ordinarily brought to such circumstances, that, if he do not live by faith, he cannot live at all ; he is brought to Jehosaphat's plight : "We know not what to do, but our eyes are towards thee." It is with them, many times, as with a ship laden ; on a sudden it is broken to pieces, and now of necessity they must swim to the shore, to the rock ; so doth God dash all our lower confidences ; he cracks our full state, separates us from all our sensible enjoyments, and, it may be, gives not a heart to any to

show us compassion ; that, when sorrows are poured in on all sides, a man may have nothing in all the world left him but God's Bible, his word of promise, his Christ ; and here he may rest, when all means under heaven cannot give relief.

Now, here are the qualities of this walk in Christ, and here is the ordinary provision that is given believers for this walk : a guide, a light, a cordial, a purse, armour, a girdle, shoes, and a staff. What know ye of this walk in Christ ? These are some scriptural accounts of it, by which we may try ourselves. I fear this walk is a mystery to many of us ; these that never received Christ, know nothing of it ; and many that have received Christ, know but too little of this walk in Christ, this life of faith.

O man, woman ! what do ye think of Christ ? and what do ye think of this walk ? Is he not a better portion than all the vanities of time can be to you ? Yea, "The portion of Jacob is not like these ; for, he is the former of all things, and Israel is the rod of his inheritance ; the Lord of hosts is his name," Jer. li. 19. Is not this walk in him a better walk than the world are taking, who are walking in the broad way, and reject Christ ? Alas, sirs ! however lightly you think of Christ, and his way now, yet I will assure you, if you die not like a sot, you will think otherwise when the dead sweat begins to break upon you ; you would then give a thousand worlds to have saving acquaintance with this way and this walk ; and it may be, all that you will hear then, instead of this, will be, As you have given the devil the flower of your age, so give him the bran also. O seek in to Christ, that you may know him, receive him, and walk in him !

S E R M O N X C I.

"As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."—Colos. ii. 6.

[The Eighth Sermon on this Text.]

THERE are two excellent gifts which all men stand in need of ; and as God only can give them, so every one should earnestly covet them.

The first is CHRIST, who is expressly called "the gift of God," John iv. 10. This gift is the more to be prized, that when God gives it, he gives himself and his Spirit with it. When a man gets Christ, he receives God in and with him; and therefore Christ says to such, "My Father is your Father, and my God your God." And, when a man receives Christ, he gets the Spirit in him and with him: for, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

The second is FAITH, which is expressly called "the gift of God," also Eph. ii. 8. When God gives this latter gift, he just gives grace to receive the former gift. Infinite Majesty cannot give a greater gift than Christ; and infinite poverty cannot receive a greater, or more suitable gift; Christ is the greatest gift that heaven can give, or earth can receive. There is a giving of Christ in the gospel-offer, which is presupposed to, and constitutes the duty of receiving; for, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven," John iii. 27. Now, the whole life of religion lies in these two things, viz. faith's *reception* of Christ, and faith's *improvement* of him; both are in our text: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."—We are now upon the Application. And,

The Fourth Use of the doctrine is for Exhortation, which we shall tender to two sorts of persons. 1. To unbelievers, who never received Christ, that they receive Christ Jesus the Lord. 2. To believers, who have received Christ Jesus the Lord, that they walk in him as they have received him.

First, The first branch of the exhortation is to all unbelievers, who never have believed in Christ, that they believe in him, and receive him; this is the great call of the glorious gospel to all sinners that hear this gospel. And though believers, who have received Christ already, be called to receive him again and again, and so are not to exclude themselves, but are to improve the call that is given to unbelievers, in order to their further reception of Christ; yet their duty falling more natively in my way, upon the latter part of the text, and so in the second branch of the exhortation, I shall more especially now address myself, as the Lord may assist, unto those that never yet have truly received Christ. O unbelieving soul, who art afar off from God, be exhorted to receive Christ Jesus the Lord. And that I may the more enforce this exhortation, I would, 1. Shew who they are that I call unbelievers, that never re-

ceived Christ as yet. 2. Offer some motives and considerations to urge you to the receiving of Christ. 3. Give some directions, in order to the receiving of Christ. 4. Endeavour to remove some obstructions, and answer some objections against the receiving of Christ. What I here propose, will make me launch further yet into this gospel-subject than ever I proposed, when I entered upon it, though I have enlarged much upon the text already ; but yet, it being such a necessary comprehensive theme, containing, in a manner, the whole Bible in one verse, the whole gospel in one sentence, and so, being of the utmost concern, I think this may be sufficient ground and reason for my enlarging thereupon, as the Lord may please to assist. And,

1st, I am to shew who they are that may be called unbelievers, who never yet received Christ ; for, when I am calling all unbelievers, especially to believe, it is fit you know whom I mean ; for it is a great bar and hinderance to faith, in multitudes of people, that they think they are believers already, and that they have received Christ ; and hence they never take a word to them that is directed to them, and are proof against all the calls of the word, because they think they have faith already, they have believed already, and have received Christ already. But that they who never received Christ, may not deceive themselves, I will offer you some evidences of an unbeliever, that hath not received Christ. As the learned speak of twelve signs in the heavens, so I might tell you of twelve signs of unbelief, which, where they take place in their power, discover the man was never gained thereby, to the acceptance of Christ.

1. The first sign, or discovery of reigning unbelief, is total hardness of heart, when a man is not moved or affected with his own misery, nor the remedy provided by Christ, nor the invitations of grace in the gospel. It is said, Acts xix. 9, "That divers were hardened, and believed not." An hard heart is one of the devil's impregnable forts, standing out against the word, and slighting the offers of Christ. Hardness of heart is known by the foolishness of it : When seeing, we see not ; and hearing, we hear not ; when we have the grammatical knowledge of all things, but no spiritual discerning.—It is also known by the insensibleness of it ; when men have no feeling of fear and terror by the law ; no feeling of peace, joy, and hope by the gospel ; no taste of the good word at all ; but are as stones, unmoved with all that is spoken. This hardness shews your unbelief to be such, as that you have not received Christ.

Believers may feel much heart-hardness ; but this hardness I speak of is past feeling, being seared as with a hot iron.

2. The second sign, or discovery of unbelief, is the total neglect of spiritual and heavenly things, when men make it not their business to look after these things ; “They made light of it, and one went to his farm, another to his merchandise,” Matth. xxii. 5. Do not thousands bewray their unbelief, and that they never received Christ, in that the world hath engrossed all their care ? Would Christ and heavenly things be thus slighted, and lightly esteemed, if they soundly believed in him, or believed the word of God. Surely, when men make the world their main care, and take no heed to the great offers of the gospel, they do not look upon it as a certain truth, whatever faith they fancy they have.

3. The next sign, or discovery of unbelief, is a secret suspicion concerning the truth of the gospel ; like him that called the gospel, *Fabula Christi* ; they look upon it as an excellent fable, a golden dream, to make fools fond of it ; and that all opinions in religion, are but a *Logomachy*, a mere strife of words ; a doctrine to set the world together by the ears, and that they need not trouble their heads about it. They may have some understanding about the truth of the gospel, but no “assurance of understanding,” Col. ii. 2. It is true, such thoughts may rush into the heart of a godly man, but they are abominate and cast out with indignation ; but in wicked men they reign and dwell, they live by these kind of principles, natural atheism in them is not cured, and that faith they pretend to is but a loose and wavering opinion, not a grounded and settled persuasion of the gospel ; the “assurance of understanding” spoken of, Col. ii. 2, depends upon experience and an inward sense of the truth, and is wrought by the Holy Ghost, when the gospel comes not in word only, but in power, and in the demonstration of the Spirit.

4. The fourth sign, or discovery of unbelief, is a secret rejecting of the counsels of salvation, Acts xiii. 46. All natural men are children of disobedience ; out of pride scorning either the messages of God, for they are foolishness to them ; or the messengers of God, “Is not this the carpenter’s son ?” Is not this preacher of the word such and such an insignificant person ? Thus unbelievers fancy of the methods of grace used to gain them.

5. The fifth discovery of unbelief is unholiness of life and conversation ; the truth of faith brings in the obedience of faith, Rom.

xvi. 26. Where the prince is, there will his train be ; where faith is, there will gospel-obedience be ; and where unbelief is, there is disobedience : faith hath its train of gospel-services ; unbelief hath its train of ungodly practices. When men give themselves up to drunkenness, and whoredom, and Sabbath-breaking, and swearing, and lying, and backbiting, and live as carnally and careless as infidels, who will believe that they are believers, let them say what they will ?

6. The next discovery of unbelief is men's hearing the word without ever applying it to their own use ; without application it worketh not ; it causeth not a man to see himself involved, and inclosed, and included in the general promise or precept, so as to give a particular answer, as Psalm xxvii. 8, the call is in the plural, "Seek ye my face ;" the answer is in the singular ; "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The gospel-call is general, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and receive him ; the answer must be particular, "I believe ; Lord, help my unbelief." When people suffer truths to hover in the brain without application, or learn things as children do their catechism, by rote, never reflecting, What am I ? What have I done ? Where am I going ? What will become of me ? What effect hath this word upon me ? Unbelief remains undisturbed.

7. The seventh sign, or discovery of unbelief is total apostacy, or falling off from God ; for, as by faith we stand, and continue in well-doing, Rom. ii. 7, if we are believers ; so, by unbelief, or by reason of unbelief, men fall off from God, they tire and grow weary of his service, and so wholly give up with it.

8. The next sign, or discovery of unbelief, is final desperation, Jer. xviii. 12, "There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." When men think there is no hope, it is in vain to trouble ourselves ; when men think their damnation is fixed, and therefore resolve to go to hell as fast as then ; such desperate wickedness there may be in the heart of man, like those, Job xxi. 15, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him ? And what profit should we have if we pray unto him ?"

9. The ninth discovery of unbelief is people's distrusting all present means, saying, "If one come from the dead, they would believe." If we had oracles or miracles, or if God did speak to us from heaven, then we would believe ; but Moses and the prophets

are a sufficient ground of faith, and, "If we believe not them, neither would we believe though one rose from the dead." Extraordinary means will not work with them upon whom ordinary means doth not prevail.

10. The next sign and discovery of unbelief is demurs and delays as to a complete closing with Christ; here is a refined degree of unbelief; the man seems to approve the report of the gospel, hath nothing to object against Christ, but there is a secret, dilatory, procrastinating, delaying spirit in him; he hath a will for a future, but not a present choice of Christ, he cannot yet bid adieu to his beloved lusts; "A little sleep, a little slumber" more he must have, in the lap of his Delilah. Luke ix. 59, "Follow me," says Christ; Why, says the man. "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father;" excuse me for a while. Again, ver. 61, "Lord, I will follow," but let it be deferred for some time, "let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home at my house." Thus awakened sinners put off Christ as Felix did Paul, with delays; these delays are but a sly rejection of Christ, a will for hereafter is not a present will, your resolving will hereafter say you have no heart at present. But the longer you delay the more averse will you be from believing, and before your hereafter comes you may be in hell.

11. The next sign and discovery of unbelief is men's receiving a false Christ, an idol of their own fancy, instead of the true Christ; they that compound Christ, or add anything to him, make to themselves a false Christ; as they that would have Christ and the world both, Christ and their lusts too; Christ they must have to satisfy their consciences, and lusts they must have to satisfy their heart. Hence they meditate, and meditate a league between Christ and their darling idols; such a mixed Christ is a false Christ. Thus many would make their own righteousness, their tears and melting affections in part if not wholly their Christ. As the gospel hypocrite makes his very faith his Christ; so the legal hypocrite makes his duties his Christ. The political hypocrite will join his carnal prudence with Christ's wisdom, and so make it in part his Christ. The refined hypocrite will make the common assistance and influences of the Spirit rests to him, and put them in the room of Christ. Are not all these so many false Christs? Yea, a divided Christ is a false Christ, while men would receive him as a Jesus, to save them from hell, but not as a Lord to rule over their lusts; they would share in his benefits, but not in his person. There is something in Christ that they like, and something that they dislike; they like

the blood that came forth of his heart to wash their guilty consciences, but they dislike the water that came forth also, to wash their filthy hearts.

12. The last sign and discovery of unbelief is men's receiving a true Christ in a false manner, as when Christ is received, but not in his grandeur. A prince is, then, received aright when he is received according to his dignity; if a subject should receive his prince, and entertain him no otherwise than he would do a peasant, or country neighbour, this would be interpreted a contempt; so, if Christ be not received according to his grandeur, and dignity, and state, he counts it a contempt rather than a right reception of him. Christ will be received as a Lord, or not at all; he will be a King, or nothing. This was the sin of the Jews, they could be content to receive Christ as a great prophet, as the Mahometans do; but they did not receive him according to his grandeur, or that greatness and glory which he was invested with, and therefore they are said not to receive him, John i. 11, "He came to his own, but his own received him not." Whereas, John says of the believing Jews that received him, that they beheld his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; that is, they received him in all his grandeur, splendour, majesty, and glory. Thus men receive not Christ, but shew their unbelief, even in receiving the true Christ in a false manner. When Christ is not received as he is offered in the gospel, he is received in a false manner. He is offered fully, freely, cordially, and constantly; the right reception is also full, free, cordial, and constant; men may therefore receive him in a false manner, which is as good as rejecting of him, when they do not receive him fully without dividing him, freely without buying him, cordially without reluctancy, and constantly without repentance or being dissatisfied with the bargain.

Now, let all these twelve signs and discoveries of unbelief be considered, and they will shew how many pretenders to faith are yet unbelievers; even all that are under the power of heart-hardness, live in the total neglect of spiritual and heavenly things, in a secret suspicion of the truth of the gospel, and a secret rejecting of the counsel of God, in habitual unholiness of life and conversation, and that hear the word without any application suitably to themselves, who give themselves up to a total apostacy and a final desperation, a distrusting of all present means, to delaying and demurring about closing with Christ, who either receive a false Christ, or yet a true

Christ in a false manner. These are unbelievers, that have not yet received Christ the Lord. I now proceed,

2ndly, To the next thing proposed, namely, to offer some motives and considerations to urge you to the receiving of Christ. If any here would know what is that star, by which they may be led to the place where the Lord Jesus lies? why, it is just this everlasting gospel; it points out Christ, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." There are but two great requests that heaven makes to us all by this glorious gospel: the first request is to all Christless persons whatsoever, that hear this gospel, viz., That they receive Christ Jesus the Lord. The second is to all Christians that have received him, viz., That they walk in him: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Now, you would know before-hand, that no motive will move you, no argument will persuade you to receive Christ, unless it be backed with the almighty power of God: and therefore if you think salvation a business worth your while, O send up an ejaculatory prayer to heaven, that God would make this gospel, the power of God to your salvation, through Jesus Christ. We are now calling you in the name of the great and eternal God, to believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and receive him, so as you may walk in him, till you come to walk with him in white among the redeemed above; and there is this general motive, that should be instead of a thousand to you all; and which, if duly regarded, there would be no need of any more; and that is, the supreme authority of God the Father is interposed in this matter: "For, this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23. And, shall we think nothing to trample upon the authority, and condemn the command of that God, who can command us to hell in a moment? Here God sums up all the ten commands, as it were, into one: and says, If you obey this, you obey all; if you break this, you break all: the man that doth not believe in the Son of God, he breaks both the tables of the law at one dash; and violates every precept of the law in the most dreadful manner. You have heard sometimes, how the sin of Adam, in eating the forbidden fruit, was at once a breach of all the ten commands. But do you consider, that your unbelief, in not receiving Christ, is a trampling under foot the authority of God in every one of these commands, and that in the most grievous manner. The man that receiveth not Christ, he rejecteth God himself as his God; for he is not the God of any man, neither will be but

in Christ. The man that receives not Christ, all his worship is at best but idolatry and superstition; for God cannot be worshipped acceptably any other way than in Christ, who is the image of the invisible God. The rejecter of Christ is a profaner of the name of God; for God's name is in him: and it is in him especially that God maketh himself known. The man that doth not receive Christ he cannot sanctify the Sabbath-day, nor hallow it; for all the days of his life, wherein he lives without Christ, are unholy days; his whole time is a sinful time. The man in this case, is disobedient to his heavenly Parent, dishonours his heavenly Father; and so can never put due respect upon earthly parents. He kills his own soul, and crucifies the Lord of glory afresh, and so can never have a right love to man. He is guilty of the grossest spiritual adultery, in departing from the Lord, and cannot be otherwise clean. He steals and robs God of his glory, so cannot in other respects be altogether innocent. He bears false witness against God, by making God a liar, and rejecting the testimony that God gives concerning his Son, and having so little regard to God's name, he cannot have much for his neighbours. And, finally, he is guilty of covetousness, which is idolatry, and that of the most atrocious nature; for, he through unbelief, and rejecting of Christ as a Saviour, and thinking of salvation by his own means, doth covet that glory and honour which is only due to God and Christ, to be ascribed to himself: self is his God, and self-righteousness is his Christ; and what will he not covet, who covets to be in God's room?

Thus the sin of unbelief, in rejecting of Christ, doth at one stroke dash the whole commands of God to pieces; and, therefore, no wonder that this be his great command, that we believe in the name of his Son; seeing also that, by receiving him, we fulfil the whole law, namely, by receiving him for our righteousness and sanctification; for in receiving him for our righteousness, we fulfil the law as a covenant, and that personally in him, who hath yielded perfect obedience in our room, and paid the penalty also for its violation; and in receiving him for our sanctification, we fulfil the law as a rule, by a perfection of parts, through his sanctifying Spirit in us, which goes on to a perfection of degrees in heaven. Therefore, I say, when we reject Christ, we reject the great command of God, and contemn his authority in the most signal instance. Know then that, by the authority of the eternal God, you are obliged to believe, and let this general motive be in the room of all.

But I shall name some more particular motives; and there are these six considerations that should and would, if the Lord would powerfully concur with them, engage us to receive Christ. 1. Consider whom you are called to receive. 2. How few of the world do receive him. 3. What you shall receive when you receive Christ. 4. What you must receive, if you receive not Christ. 5. What is the malignity and danger of unbelief, in rejecting of Christ. And, 6, What is the excellency and necessity of faith, in receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, we would essay to open some of these at the time; and earnestly beg your attention to what may be said.

[1.] Consider whom you are called to receive. It is no less than the Lord of glory; the Lord, mighty in battle: we are exhorted from this very consideration, Psal. xxiv. 7, 8, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Who would not cast open these gates, to receive such an honourable guest: O let us open the gate of our understanding, to behold him; and open the gate of our will, to choose him; and open the gate of our affections to embrace him; and open the gate of our whole heart and soul to receive him. O what an excellent One is he! What excellent company for travellers! What excellent food for the hungry, and drink for the thirsty! What excellent medicine for the diseased, and excellent salvation for the needy! Man is the excellency of the creatures, grace is the excellency of man, glory is the excellency of grace; but Christ is the excellency of all. It is greater honour to be one of Christ's little ones, than one of the world's great ones. O consider whom you are to receive, it is not a man or an angel; but he that is Lord of men and angels; "The Prince of the kings of the earth: He is the plant of renown; the chief among ten thousand." His beauty and glory outshines the sun in its meridian splendour: "He is fairer than the sons of men; he is altogether lovely." He is "The desire of all nations;" and hence believers in all nations, both before and since his incarnation, have esteemed him most desirable; and shall we find in our hearts to reject and despise him? He is the consolation of Israel; and to all who believe he is precious: And indeed every thing in him is precious. What is in Christ? Why, if you duly considered what is in Christ, you would never reject or neglect him: for God is in Christ; 2 Cor. v. 19. "For God is in Christ reconciling the world

to himself." He is "God manifested in the flesh;" this is the great mystery of godliness," 1 Tim. iii. 16. A Godhead dwelling in flesh, is the world's wonder: it is such a wonder, such a mystery that the world cannot receive it; yet God is in him, so as in receiving Christ you receive God. But here it may be asked, What of God is in Christ? Why consider,

1. The authority of God is in Christ; "My name is in him," Exod. xxiii. 21. God hath authorised and sealed him; for "Him hath God the Father sealed, John vi. 27. He hath a commission, under the great seal of heaven, to save you; and therefore he comes in his Father's name, as well as in his own, to seek and save you. And this glorious One is come this day, in this gospel, to seek your acceptance of him, as a Saviour every way well qualified to save even the chief of sinners. Oh! shall such a One be rejected!

2. The wisdom of God is in him; "Christ is the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 24; and "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. Never did the wisdom of God display itself in such an illustrious and transcendent manner, before the eyes of men and angels, as it hath done in Christ: wisdom in uniting the most distant extremes, God and man, and God's glory in man's happiness: he is the centre of the union.

3. The power of God is in him; as he is the wisdom, so he is the power of God, 1 Cor. i. 24; and all power in heaven and earth is given unto him, Matt. xxviii. 18. He hath not only the wisdom of God to contrive, but the power of God to accomplish and perform whatever concerneth us, and our eternal happiness. In an essential way, he hath all power as he is God: and in a donative way he hath all power as he is God-man Mediator; therefore, he is able to save to the uttermost. You are called to receive a Christ, by the power of Christ; to receive One that can give you power to receive; as one absolutely feeble, you are invited to come and to take hold of his strength, that you may be enabled to go from strength to strength.

4. The Spirit of God is in him; "I have put my Spirit upon him," Isa. xlii. 1: God gives not the Spirit by measure to him. Men and angels, that have the Spirit of God in them, they have their measures; some more, some less of the Spirit: but the Spirit is in Christ without measure: "He is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows;" and he dispenses to every one their

share, as seemeth fit to him; for he hath the communication of the Spirit in his hand: "The Father hath loved the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." He received gifts for men, and he giveth gifts to men.

5. The righteousness of God is in him, by which only a poor guilty sinner can be justified before God; for he is JEHOVAH's righteous Servant, who brings in an everlasting righteousness; and brings it near to justify many; for, "We are made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. He is the Lord our righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6. JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU: the Lord that justifies us, and is our justifying righteousness. And this righteousness is meritorious of all blessings, being every way perfect and complete. And therefore in him is the righteousness and justice of God manifested; "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," Rom. iii. 25. Again,

6. The love and mercy of God is in him: the very yearning bowels of divine love are in him. What is Christ but the love of God wrapt up in a garment of flesh and blood? 1 John iv. 9, 10, "In this was manifested the love of God towards us. And herein is love, that God sent his son." This is the highest flight that ever divine love made, and higher than this it cannot mount. The mercies and compassions of God are all in Christ, Jude 21. God's mercy is the thing that poor sinners cry for, when breathing out their last, as the only thing that can do them good. O! what would a man give for mercy, in the moment of death, and mercy at the great day! Why, if you receive Christ, you receive the mercy of God; but out of him there is no mercy to be expected out of God's hand; for he will never shew mercy to the prejudice of his justice; and it is only in Christ that mercy and justice meet together, and harmoniously embrace each other.

7. The salvation of God is in him, "Neither is there salvation in any other," Acts iv. 12. Christ is the door of salvation; and faith is the key that opens that door; or it is just the man's entering in by it; and, therefore, they that receive not Christ, they exclude themselves from all hope of salvation; for the salvation of God is no where to be found but in Christ; for, "In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills or multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel," Jer. iii. 22. And such as

receive Christ for salvation, will, in the issue, take up old Simeon's song, "Now, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," Luke ii. 29.

8. The fulness of God is in Christ, "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19. And ch. ii. 9, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. The fulness of all God's attributes and perfections are in Christ." He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. And there is a meritorious fulness of blessings in him, to be communicated unto the members of his body, being full of grace and truth, John i. 14. O what a full Saviour! what a full Christ are ye called to receive! Thus you see what of God is in him, to induce us to receive him; and whom it is that we are called to receive: he is Christ, he is Jesus, he is the Lord; shall we reject such an One?

[2.] The second motive is: Consider how FEW in the world do receive him; notwithstanding of these glorious excellencies that are in him, yet the most part of the world do reject him, "He came to his own, and his own received him not," John i. 11. The language of the most part is, "Who is the Lord, that we should serve him? We will not have this man to reign over us." Now, is this nothing to you, all you that pass by? Do you think it a small matter to see the world crucifying the Lord of glory, and renewing the bloody tragedy again? And shall you have a hand in this interpretative murder also? The more they be that reject him, the more cordially should you receive him. What! say you? who would reject such an one as Christ? Is it possible that any will be so mad as to despise this plant of renown? Yea, there is a whole generation of Christ-despisers, and see that you be not in the midst of them. I will give you a representation of them, and shew what they are like, that you may know them, and know if you be among them that are rejecters of Christ, in these eight particulars.

1. There is a Gallio-like generation, that care for none of these things. Are there not many among us, that will not give a fig for the richest offers of Christ in the gospel? They will not give a fig for the ordinances of Christ; they will not give a farthing for the gospel; they will not give a farthing for a sermon concerning Christ; they will not give a straw for a week day's preaching, nor think it worth their while, to go the length of a street for it: so little do they care for Christ and his gospel, that they will not give

a straw to stay away from a Sabbath day's sermon; they care for none of those things. A senseless story of Thomas the Rhymer would go better down with them.

2. There is a Demas-like generation, who are over-fondly attached unto the things of this world: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." They discover their rejecting of Christ, by their putting the world in his room, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And they that love not the Father, they love not the Son, whatever they may pretend and profess to do; for, "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." It is not Christ but the world they are taken up with.

3. There is a Pilate-like generation, who, though they find nothing against the man, yet will cry, *Take you him, and crucify him*. They find no fault with him, and yet are content that he be crucified: they have no objection against him; and yet are content though the world trample upon and abuse him; they are easy and indifferent; they have nothing to say against him, and yet they are content to live without him. Surely they are rejecters of Christ.

4. There is a Felix-like generation, that will say as he did to Paul, "Go your way at this time, and I will hear thee at a more convenient season." They are not for hearing Christ to-day; they are for putting off to another season; and that season may never come, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," for all the world cannot promise you a to-morrow, or another offer of Christ. How sad is it, that the world should be still for delays! A delay for the future is a denial for the present. You reject him, if you do not presently hearken to him.

5. There is an Agrippa-like generation, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." They that are but half persuaded, are wholly lost and undone, unless they be wholly brought over to Christ, and altogether persuaded. They are but almost persuaded to receive Christ, are but almost believers; and they that are but almost believers, are but almost saved; and they that are but almost saved, they will be altogether damned; and more fearfully damned than if they had never been so near to salvation. O seek to have it to say, "Lord, thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded."

6. There is a Herod-like generation, who can hear the word

gladly, and do many things ; but an Herodias is dearer to him than a John the Baptist, whose head is served up in a charger, to please and gratify her. They are but rejecters of Christ, that, rather than be crossed in a Delilah, and touched in a particular lust and idol, will give up with all their pretended kindness to ministers and dispensers of the word : touch them in the sore heel, and then they are persecutors, either by tongue or hand, as well as in heart ; if they have not an opportunity of open violence, yet at least John Baptist's head is brought in a charger, by and by into every company : the minister will be beheaded of his good name, by reproach and ignominy cast upon him. If any faithful reproof, that reflects upon your honour, or crosses your carnal satisfaction, raise in you a persecuting spirit against the reprover, it is an evidence of your being but a rejecter of Christ.

7. There is a Judas-like generation, who betray the Son of man with a kiss ; with the kiss of a profession, with the kiss of a feigned subjection, with a kiss of flattery, or a kiss of bastard faith, that never had God for the father of it, nor the word of God for the mother of it : " They profess to know God, but in works they deny him, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." They want but an opportunity to betray Christ ; whatever profession of love to him they make, yet, whenever the trial of temptation comes they betray his cause, they betray his truth, they betray his people, they betray religion, and are ready to turn to any way, or do any thing that the world desires them, rather than lose the bag ; yea, they will sell Christ for thirty pieces of silver ; and, Esau-like, sell their birthright for a mess of pottage. They will give up with Christ, and with a good cause, and a good conscience too, for a worldly trifle.

8. There is a Balaam-like generation, that will desire to die the death of the righteous, and to have their last end like his ; yet they love not to live the life of the righteous. They would desire to die as saints, but to live like pagans ; they would desire to have Christ when they are dying, but they care not for Christ when they are living. But, how foolish is that desire, whereby they would die in the Lord, but live without him ! Yea, the life of many is a practical saying with the Jews, Away with Christ, away with him ; away with him, and give me Barabbas. The hearts of many say, Away with that Christ whom you call so glorious and transcendent, and give me the world, give me my lusts and idols.

In these eight particulars you see a sight of the world, the temper and disposition of the most part, and how Christ is despised and rejected of men; and shall that be your disposition too? Can you find in your heart to turn your back upon this glorious, matchless Prince of the kings of the earth, with the rest of the world? Are you content that he get no backing to follow him and praise him? O the more you have rejected him, the more should you receive him. Again,

[3.] The third motive is, consider WHAT you will receive if you receive Christ. I remember upon the doctrinal part, when I shewed the reasons, why they that have received Christ, are to walk in him, in shewing what encouragement a man that receiveth Christ, hath to walk in him, I told of eight things that a believer receives when he receiveth Christ, namely, that he receiveth pardon, peace, grace, the promises, the Spirit, the adoption of children, a title to heaven, and even all things, when he receiveth Christ; but this ALL, that he receiveth in Christ, will admit of infinitely more particulars. I shall, at this time, name a few things more that you will receive, if you receive Christ.

1. If you receive Christ, you receive light with him; for he is the light of the world; and in his light shall we see light clearly. You shall be in a case to say, Once I was blind, but now I see; once darkness, but now light in the Lord. If Christ be not received, you have no light in you. O poor ignorant soul, dark and blind creature, ready to fall into utter darkness! may not this be motive enough for you, to look after Christ and seek an interest in him, that if you follow him, you shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life; you shall see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? "Said I not unto thee, if thou wouldest believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?" And that sight will be an introduction to the vision of his glory for ever in heaven. Surely if you were not utterly blind, you would not reject this light. The light of the natural sun is desirable, to any that have eyes to see it: but ten thousand times more is the light of this Sun of righteousness; yea, infinitely more than the light of reason, or the light of learning and human wisdom; for you may have that light, and yet a dead man; but this is the light of life, John viii. 12. Therefore,

2. If you receive Christ, you receive life; spiritual life, eternal life; John vi. 47, "He that believeth on me hath eternal life." He

is the resurrection and the life; and he came to give life, and to give it more abundantly. He himself is the bread of life, that you should live upon; and for maintaining of your life, you should be fed with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock. Why, man, you would give much for your natural life if it was in hazard; but what think you of spiritual and eternal life? The life of justification and sanctification? The life of joy and consolation? The life of communion and fellowship with God? The life of begun glory? And to be in case to say, "To me to live is Christ." Christ is the ALPHA and OMEGA, the giver and restorer of this life; the maintainer and preserver of it; the food and medicine of it; and the very business of the man's life: "To me to live is Christ."

3. If you receive Christ, you receive liberty; John viii. 36, "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed." You shall have freedom from the iron yoke of the law, in its terrible threatenings, legal commandments, and dreadful curses, which now you are under: freedom from the wrath of God; freedom from your idols; for he proclaims liberty to captives; and he hath the key of the prison-house, to open your prison-doors. It is a dark prison in which you are, wherein you can understand no more savingly of God, than the stones of the wall: but he says to the prisoners, "Go forth, and behold the light." It is a fearful pit wherein you are, in which you will be surprised with the fear of death and hell, if conscience but awaken upon you: but he comes to deliver them, who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. Such freedom from the sting of death doth he give, that if you receive him, you may welcome death when it comes, saying, Come, stingless death; welcome, O friend!

4. If you receive Christ, you receive advantage by every ordinance, and particularly you receive the good of the word: "The word preached doth not profit, not being mixed with faith," Heb. iv. 2. But now, when it is mixed with faith, and receiving of Christ, then the word preached shall profit, and you shall pick out some spiritual advantage out of this word, and that word, as we use to pick out of every corner of the shell that is broken (as of a walnut), the kernel that is in it; so will you be in case to pick out the kernel of this and the other word and ordinance, and get food and nourishment to your soul. Out of the same rose there is honey to the bee, and poison to the spider; so, the word and ordinance that proves the savour of life to one, proves the savour of death to another.

5. If you receive Christ, you shall receive advantage by every providence; Rom. viii. 28, "All things shall work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Merciful providences will make you thankful, and cross providences will make you humble; and you shall have occasion to sing of mercy and judgment. And though under a temptation, or the prevalence of unbelief, you may come to say in an hour of distress, "All these things are against you; yet you shall find all moving for you, and that he hath done all things well."

6. If you receive Christ, you receive righteousness, even a robe of righteousness, in which you may appear boldly before the tribunal of infinite justice, and before the throne of infinite holiness, without being ashamed or afraid: because holiness is vindicated, justice is satisfied, and the law is magnified, by the active and passive righteousness of Christ, which shall be imputed to you; so as you shall be in case to say, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness."

7. If you receive Christ, you receive strength as well as righteousness: strength to enable you in all your duties; and also strength to support you in all your difficulties; "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Yea, you shall be able to do all things, through Christ strengthening you. You shall be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might: and strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Let this be an argument to those who are by nature without strength to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, that they may be strengthened to walk in him.

8. If you receive Christ, you shall receive supply of all your wants: when the Lord is your shepherd, you shall not want, Psalm xxiii. 1. You shall want no good thing; you shall receive the supply of all your spiritual wants; out of Christ's fulness, you will receive grace for grace: your God will supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ: Yea, you will get a supply of all your temporal wants and losses; you receive that which will be abundantly up-making to you in all your losses. Have you lost husband, wife, children, or any dear and intimate relation? Well, this may be very afflicting, but Christ can well compensate all losses of that kind; for he is, and will be to his people better than ten thousand wives, or children, or familiar concerns; for he is ALL IN ALL.

And, in a word, in your receiving Christ, you shall receive

more than eye hath seen, or ear heard, or heart conceived here, and an immortal crown of glory hereafter. Yea, he that receiveth Christ receiveth God; Matt. x. 40, "He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." And what can be more said? He is an heir of God. As he that receiveth a tree, gets not only the fruit, but all that is on the tree, and all that it can produce to himself; so he that gets Christ, gets not only the fruit that grows on the tree of life, but all that is in the tree to himself: and, since God is in Christ, he that receiveth Christ, receiveth God. A man may eat of the fruit of a tree, and yet have no interest in the tree: even so, many eat some of the sweet fruit of this tree, in common providence and grace; but he that receiveth Christ, hath interest in the tree itself, as well as in the fruit; yea, here the believing eater grows into the tree, being a branch thereof; "I am the vine, ye are the branches," John xv. 5. Yea, he hath the tree of life planted in his heart; Christ dwells in their hearts by faith, Eph. iii. 17. It were gross to ask, how Christ in heaven, and believers on earth, can be so closely united; for man and wife are one flesh, though a thousand miles asunder; much more Christ and the believer are one spirit, though the visible heavens intervene betwixt them, 1 Cor. vi. 17.

[4.] The fourth motive is, Consider what you RECEIVE, if you receive not Christ: Why there are four things you must receive, if you receive not Christ: you must receive lusts for your laws; the devil for your master; the curse for your comfort; and hell for your portion and reward.

1. If you receive not Christ, you must receive lusts for your laws: either you must receive Christ or Barabas. When you receive not Christ, you receive sin; and sin shall have dominion over you, while you reject the Saviour, who saves from sin: and what for a guest is sin, which you receive in Christ's room? It is a God-opposing guest; for, it is enmity against God. It is a God-provoking guest; for it exposes you to his fury. It is a soul-defiling guest; it defiles all the house where it is; nay, makes you abominable to God. It is a most expensive guest; it will cost you dear, even the loss of your immortal soul.

2. If you receive not Christ, you must receive the devil for your master; for there is no midst, either Christ or the devil must be your master: and when you receive such a guest as this in the room of Christ, do you consider what for a guest, a dreadful guest the devil is? He is a guest that will blind you; for, the god of

this world doth blind the minds of them that believe not. He is a guest that will harden you, so, as you shall be like the adamant, and get no good of word and rod, ordinances or providences. He is a guest that will deceive you ; either by persuading you that you have received Christ already, that you are a good enough believer ; or by persuading you to believe un-truths, and turn you into damnable errors to believe a lie. Whence come all the errors of our day, but from the devil, who is a liar from the beginning ? He is a guest that will not only delude you, but destroy you, and devour you ; for, " He goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." And as now he is your tempter, so afterwards he will be your accuser.

3. If you receive not Christ, you must receive the curse for your comfort : no comfort in all the word of God belongs to you that are rejectors of Christ, but only the curse of the law : " Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." You receive more and more of this sentence of condemnation ; the more you live in unbelief, the more doth this curse take place, binding you over to more and more of wrath, " He that believeth not is condemned already ; and the wrath of God abideth on him." You are under the wrath of God : and, oh ! what is that ? " The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion ;" but, oh ! what is the wrath of God like ! Surely, " The thunder of his wrathful power none can understand." Nebuchadnezzar was in great wrath and fury, when the visage of his countenance changed against the three children ; and he commanded the furnace to be made seven times hotter : but, oh ! what is the wrath of God, when he is as angry as Nebuchadnezzar was ! And truly he is angry with the wicked every day. Therefore,

4. If you receive not Christ, you must receive hell for your portion ; Mark xvi. 16, " He that believeth not shall be damned." Do not think it is a minister only that says it ; it is the word of God : and if you think not the SAY of a God, the word of a God of truth enough, he hath SWORN it, as well as said it ; you have the oath of God interposed in the matter ; Heb. iii. 18. He swears in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest. And to whom does he thus swear in his wrath ? Even to them that believe not. And, oh ! what think you of this damnation which God swears you shall receive, if you receive not Christ ? It will be damnation proportioned to the means you have enjoyed ; damnation proportioned

to the worth of the blood of Christ, which you have trampled under foot. And, O ! what think you of that debt, which is as great as the price of the blood of Christ ? Will you ever be able to pay it ? No, by no means : you will sink under it for ever. It will be wrath proportioned to the greatness of that salvation which you neglect. See Heb. ii. 3, and chap. x. 29, 30, 31.

And now, what do you think of all this, that I have been saying ? Is there no weight in this consideration, namely, whom you are called to receive ; and how the most part of the world are rejecting Christ, and what you shall receive if you receive Christ ; and what you must receive if you receive not Christ ? Do you think all these things fancies or realities ? If the devil be tempting you to think they are but fancies, I tell you, in the name of the great God, that they are realities : and you shall find them sadly to be so, when death's cold sweat begins to break upon you ; when your eyestrings begin to loose : and the union between the soul and body begins to be dissolved, and you called to go to the tribunal of God. O man then, to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your heart as in the provocation. Do you know that you shall hear another offer of Christ again ? Nay, all the world cannot assure you, that you shall have another Sabbath-day ; nor certify you that you shall have a to-morrow.

I think there is as much weight in what hath been said, as may, at least, engage you, when you go home, to go to your knees, and cry, " Lord, what a sad case am I in while without Christ ! O give me Christ, or else I die ! O give me the spirit of faith, that I may receive Christ ! for I perish eternally without Christ." May the Lord himself awaken and quicken you.

SERMON XCII.

" As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."—COLOS. ii. 6.

[The Ninth Sermon on this Text.]

As it is not safe walking close by the sea side, when the waves are tumbling out upon the shore ; so it is not safe to walk in this world, according to the course thereof, when the deluge of God's wrath is

certainly breaking out upon it; it is the safest course to get into the Ark, and walk therein. In this gospel there is an Ark provided, even Christ; and there is a window opened in the side of this Ark; yea, the hand of mercy put forth at this window, to pull in shelterless doves, that can find no rest elsewhere. Many hover without, till the flood wash them off from the sides of the Ark, and they perish eternally: but happy they that are taught to fly in, by the wing of faith; and this is what here we are called to, namely, to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and so to walk in him.

In the preceding discourse we mentioned four motives to engage you to receive Christ. We now proceed to the other two. The first of which we shall dismiss at the time.

[5.] The fifth motive we adduce is, Consider the malignity of unbelief in rejecting Christ, or not receiving of him, as he is offered to us in the gospel. Now, the malignity of unbelief will appear, if you consider both the sinfulness and the hurtfulness of it.

(1.) The sinfulness of unbelief in rejecting Christ, and not receiving him. If a man be guilty of murder, adultery, or the like, presently he is odious, and justly looked upon as a monstrous sinner; but yet your sin of unbelief goes a step beyond all these, if you duly consider it: for, when the Holy Ghost is sent to convince the world of sin, John xvi. 9, he pitches upon this sin, as if there was no other that the world needed to be convinced of: "He will convince the world of sin, because they believe not on the Son of God." Why? because there is more sinfulness in it, than any other. Oh! what an abyss of iniquity is in the bowels of unbelief! What made the old world so secure, before the deluge came and swept them away, but unbelief? And, how comes it that now, both wise and foolish virgins do slumber, before the coming of the Bridegroom, but from unbelief? Unbelief is virtually all sin. Scandalous sins have more infamy, but unbelief hath more of obliquity and guilt in it, it being against the greatest law, and strongest obligations. But, more particularly, we may take up the sinfulness of unbelief in the following particulars: such as these,

1. The sinfulness of unbelief in rejecting Christ will appear, if we consider it with respect to GOD; for, unbelief doth dishonour God more than any other sin, by calling in question all his attributes, and casting an affront upon all his perfections; no greater indignity can be done to the glory of God, than is done by unbelief; it hath a mouth full of blasphemy against God. Why, by unbelief

we trample upon the authority of God that commands us to believe; it is a proud contempt of the divine command, under the mask of humility: for, unbelief doth ordinarily pass veiled under the vizard of some refined virtue: and that is one of the reasons why it is so little seen, and that people are convinced of other sins and breaches of the commands of God, but not of this: besides that gross sins, the conviction of them may arise from a natural conscience, but the light of nature doth not lead men to the conviction of unbelief; it being a gospel, and more spiritual sin; however, the more spiritual it is, the worse, in trampling upon the authority of that God who is a Spirit. By unbelief, as we despise his authority, so we deny his faithfulness, and charge him with a lie, "He that believeth not hath made God a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave concerning his Son," 1 John v. 10. As he that believeth sets to his seal that God is true, so he that believeth not sets his seal to that dreadful untruth, that God is a liar. We may tremble to mention the evil of unbelief. To give the lie is reckoned the greatest injury among men; for, truth is the ground of commerce and human society; so that to say that a man is a liar, is as much as to say, he is unworthy, and unfit to keep company with men. And, alas! what an injury is this to God, who stands more upon his word than any other part of his name! Psalm cxxxviii. 2. He hath magnified his word above all his name: insomuch that we have more experience of God, in making good his word, than in any other thing. By unbelief we deny the wisdom of God, and charge him with folly. All the treasures of wisdom are laid up in Christ, and in the contrivance of salvation through him; here is the manifold wisdom of God, which the angels admire. Behold unbelief imputes folly to the only wise God, and that in the most signal instance of it. Again, by unbelief you deny the power of God and question his ability: "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Psalm lxxviii. 19, 20, "Can the son of Jesse give you vineyards?" says unbelief. Though he be able to save to the uttermost, unbelief supposes there is something too hard for God, that he cannot do, and which his power cannot reach. By unbelief we deny the love and mercy of God, and charge him with unmercifulness, and defect of goodness, as if he was an implacable Judge still, and not upon a throne of grace, nor a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,

that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. But unbelief contemns all the discoveries that God makes of his love and goodwill to men in Christ. God says, you need my Son, you are damned if you take him not; and I freely offer him to you that you may be saved, and yet we reject this grace. Yea, by unbelief we strike at the very being of God, and make an attempt upon God's life; so much atheism is in unbelief, that, at one stroke, we thereby take away the scriptures, God and Christ, and all the good things that belong to our peace. So much blasphemy is in it, that every unbeliever, by his secret and open murmurings against God, doth raise many black scandals upon God. So much idolatry is in it, that every unbeliever idolizes himself, his own carnal wisdom, pride, will, common gifts, self-sufficiency, legal righteousness, and seeming good duties, and by self-dependency maketh himself his God. Thus doth he deify himself and undeify the true God. As faith honours God, so doth unbelief dishonour him. What God doth to the creature, that faith doth to God; God justifieth, sanctifieth, and glorifieth the creature; and so faith doth justify, sanctify, and glorify God. Faith doth justify God, Luke vii. 29; acquit him from all the jealousies that the carnal world and the carnal heart doth cast upon him. Faith doth sanctify God, Num. xx. 12, by setting him above all, and believing that he can make good his word, when the course of all things seems to contradict it. Faith doth glorify God, Rom. iv. 20, declaratively giving him the glory of his excellencies; but unbelief, instead of justifying, doth accuse him; instead of sanctifying his name, doth but profane it; instead of glorifying, doth dishonour him. And therefore it is the most heinous and hateful sin.

2. The sinfulness of unbelief will appear if we consider it with respect to CHRIST. Unbelief reproaches him, betrays him, kills him, and curses him. By unbelief, in rejecting Christ, you reproach him as if he was a deceiver; for the native language of unbelief is, he is not the Saviour of sinners; he is but an impostor, and so we will have nothing to do with him; his words seem to you as idle tales, and you believe them not; as if he was like Naphtali, cheating you with goodly words. By unbelief you betray him, saying, *Hail, Master*, under a pretence of friendship. Many eat his bread, wear his livery, call him Master, and yet lift up the heel against him. By unbelief you kill and crucify him afresh; know it from the Lord, sirs, you may have a hand in crucifying Christ, that never

saw his face : Heb. vi. 6, " They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh." Yea, by unbelief you curse him, and call him accursed, whom God hath blessed ; and of whom it is said, that " Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed." It may be, you will ignorantly reject this charge and say, you never cursed Christ, or called him accursed all your days ; but in vain do you excuse yourselves, if you be an unbeliever under the gospel ; for, every one that hath heard the gospel, do either by faith say, that Jesus is the Lord, receiving him as such ; or else, by unbelief, do practically call him accursed, and reject him as an horrible impostor ; yea, every unbeliever doth trample on the blood of the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, Heb. v. 29. All unbelief hath something of this in it. The apostle shews how all that hear of Christ, do either by faith crown him, or by unbelief curse him : " Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed, and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. xii. 3. And, oh ! shall we reckon it a light matter, thus to tread upon the Son of God, and trample upon God's most precious jewel, wherein he is well-pleased, and to loath that which God loves above all things ? What horrible ingratitude is it to slight that remedy that the infinitely wise God hath been at so great pains and so much expenses to prepare for us ; and hath cost him more than the creating of ten thousand worlds would have done ! And that we should slight the works, which he prefers to all his other works ! How criminal must it be to undervalue that, and to prefer the devil and our lusts before it !

3. The sinfulness of unbelief, in not receiving Christ, will appear, if we consider it with respect to the SPIRIT ; for unbelief bears its cursed opposition against a whole glorious Trinity ; and seeing God, in the gospel, doth strive with people by his Spirit, and the motions thereof ; people cannot, by unbelief, reject Christ, but they must sin against the Holy Ghost, as well as against the Father and the Son. Indeed, every sin is a sin against the Holy Ghost, though every sin be not that which is called eminently the sin against the Holy Ghost ; for, there are manifold degrees of sinning that take place, before it comes to that dreadful and unpardonable sin. There are five or six degrees of unbelief, which all bear a reference to the Spirit of God, and every one of them is worse than another, and the last the most terrible. One degree of unbelief is that whereby the

Spirit is said to be grieved. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation." Another degree of unbelief is that whereby the Spirit is said to be vexed, Isa. lxiii. 10, "They vexed his holy Spirit." Oh! to vex God is a sad matter. A third degree of unbelief is that whereby the Spirit is said to be quenched: "Quench not the Spirit," 1 Thess. v. 19. We are apt to put out the fire that God would kindle within us.—A fourth degree of unbelief is that whereby the Spirit of God is said to be resisted: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," said Stephen to his unbelieving hearers, Acts vii. 51.—The fifth degree is that whereby the Spirit is reckoned to be despised; and when it comes to this, people are nigh unto cursing: "Behold ye despisers, wonder and perish."—But then the sixth and last, and truly saddest degree of all is, when unbelief comes to that pitch, whereby the Spirit is said to be despited, Heb. x. 29. The man is filled with horrible malice, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace; and this is an expression usually taken to signify the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost.—There is a black and dark stair, with six steps; and as we would not choose to go down to the lowest step, let us beware of the first; unbelief hath some ingredients of all these in it. And, oh! what sinfulness may we see from hence to be in it!

4. The sinfulness of unbelief will appear, if we consider it with respect to the GOSPEL, wherein Christ is offered to be received. Unbelief doth just frustrate the design and make void the importance of the gospel to man; for, "he receiveth the grace of God in vain," 2 Cor. vi. 1. As good, yea, better had it been for such a man, that Christ had never come into the world, or that he had never heard of him. By unbelief we frustrate Christ's glorious expedition from heaven to earth; and, in a manner, give him cause to repent of his death and bloody agony. You say, in effect, Christ might have remained in heaven, kept his blood in his veins, and that he died as a fool; and you give him no thanks for his pains. Alas! sad is the language of unbelief! By unbelief you declare a gospel-ministry useless; you, in effect, not only call ministers fools, that preach the gospel, but the gospel itself foolishness: "The preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness. We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness."

5. The sinfulness of unbelief, in rejecting of Christ, will appear,

if we consider it in the EFFECTS of it, with respect to other SINS. As it is the mother of all sin, so it is the mother of all misery. Many are ashamed of the daughter, but not of the mother; they are ashamed of theft, murder, and adultery; but not of unbelief, which is the mother of all these. The first sin was the fruit of unbelief, which opened the door to all sin and misery; for, had not Adam disbelieved the word of God, he had not believed Satan, nor eaten the forbidden fruit; and still it is the prodigious womb of all these. It is the mother of hardness and stupidity of heart: "He upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not," Mark xvi. 14. It is the mother of apostacy; it is big with child of defection from God: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God," Heb. iii. 12. Unbelief travails as in birth till that accursed child of apostacy be brought forth. Why, through unbelief; the man loses the thought of the excellency of Christ, and increaseth in thought of love to his idols; for, as love to Christ doth decrease, love to idols will increase. And again, as he that believeth not the threatening, will not stand to do any evil, so he that doth not believe the promise, will not be forward to do any good; hence unbelief makes apostacy.—Unbelief is the mother of lukewarmness. All our neglect and coldness in holy duties, comes from the weakness of faith, or the power of unbelief; there is a decay at the root. Faith makes a man earnest and zealous; but unbelief makes him coldrife and careless. Unbelief doth even turn duties into sin, and pollutes every duty, every action: "To them that are unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled," Tit. i. 15. "The ploughing of the wicked is sin; yea, the prayer of the wicked is abominable to God; for, whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And as it turns duties into sin and pollutes them, so it stops the mortification of all sin; it is impossible for one, in the exercise of unbelief, to mortify a lust or idol. You may allude to Matthew xvii. 20, when the disciples asked this question, "Why could we not cast out this devil?" Christ answers, "Because of your unbelief." So, why cannot you cast out that devil, that lust, that idol? It is because of your unbelief.—Unbelief is the mother of instability. Faith is a fixing grace: "My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." But it is through unbelief that the man is tossed to and fro: "If we will not believe, surely ye shall not be established," Isa. vii. 9.—Thus it is the sin of all sins, the prolific womb of every other sin.

6. The sinfulness of unbelief in rejecting Christ will appear, if we consider it more closely with respect to itself. It is the greatest act of folly to reject and not receive Christ; "They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" Jer. viii. 9. Though ye were the greatest heads of wit in the whole world, while ye reject Christ ye are but arrant fools; ye can never be wise unto salvation while this is your case. What a greater folly than to refuse a remedy when it is in our offer? For a wounded man to slight a physician, or a condemned man to slight a pardon, is an argument he is not in his right wits. He is as guilty of self-murder, who rejects a proper medicine against present death, as he that cuts his throat; and so is the case here. Nothing can be more foolish and unreasonable than to reject Christ; for, as he hath the only right to your souls, so he outbids all other merchants; he outbids sin, Satan, and the world. Can these give you more than Christ? Can the world give you more? Let them all declare their strength and treasure. Can any of them give redemption to you? Can any of them procure remission of sin to you? Can any of them satisfy God's wrath for you? Can any of them present you righteous before the judgment-seat, or settle eternal life upon you? All this Christ can do, and none else. How unreasonable is it, then, to reject him, and choose anything else beside him? But the grievousness of this sin, and its aggravations, may appear in considering further the folly of it, as it is a slighting the remedy, when you view what for a remedy you slight by unbelief. Why,

Your unbelief in refusing Christ is a slighting of a needful remedy. O sirs! you have extreme need of Christ. Doth not a sinner need a Saviour? Were you in a state of innocency, as at the first creation, then there would be no need, but you are fallen, and broken, and sold under sin. Had you a stock in your own hand, to set up your broken souls again, and to purchase peace and salvation, there would be less need, but you are by nature without strength. Could any plank bring you ashore but Christ, then there were the less hazard; but, oh! sirs, there is salvation in no other. It is not needful that you come to Christ with your burden. For otherwise the whole burden of sin and guilt lieth upon your back, a burden that will sink you to the lowest hell. Your soul is naked, and swarms with the vermin of filthy lusts; do you not need a garment to cover you, and a fountain to wash you? Your soul is enslaved to enemies and idols; do you not need a Redeemer to loose your fetters? You

are under the wrath of God, and do you not need a Reconciler? "God is angry with the wicked every day," every day of the week and every hour of the day; when you go out or come in, when you rise up or lie down, God is still angry with you. While in a state of unbelief, the flaming sword of justice is over your neck, and who can help you if Christ be neglected? If you remain Christless now, surely you will be speechless at the great day, when the wicked shall have none to pity them, for the judge will frown upon them, their own conscience will upbraid them, the saints will condemn them, their friends will forsake them, the angels will deride them, the devil will scoff at them, the heavens will thunder against them, earth will flame about them, hell will groan for them, and down they will go, roaring and howling for ever! Why, man, there is no remedy but one, and is not that a needful remedy? Yet, by unbelief, you reject it.—Your unbelief is slighting of a suitable remedy, a remedy fitted to your need; look upon your need aright, and then judge who but Christ is fitted for a sinner. Are you a blinded sinner? Here is a Prophet to enlighten you. Are you a guilty sinner? Here is a Priest to satisfy for you. Are you an enslaved sinner? Here is a King to proclaim liberty. He is well furnished and qualified for your case; he hath gold for your poverty, balm for your wounds, a fountain for your filth, a ransom for your debt: yea, here is a broad plaster for your broad sore, a deep fountain for your deep guilt, a great ransom for your great bondage, the chief of Saviours for the chief of sinners. And O what think you of unbelief, that rejects all this?—Your unbelief is a slighting of a gracious and merciful remedy. Ah! how would fallen angels value such a mercy! You slight your own mercy through unbelief, in rejecting of Christ: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son," and Christ so loved the world that "he gave himself." Is not Christ saying in the gospel, Behold me, behold me? Is he not stretching forth his merciful arms? And shall not divine love melt or move you? Why, says Christ, shall I vail my glory, die a cursed shameful death, and bear the scorn of men, the wrath of God, the curse of the law, the terror of death, and the pains of hell for you, and yet you care not a straw for me?—Your unbelief is a slighting of a near remedy, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8, 9. The remedy is brought to your very door; you need not say, "Who will ascend into heaven, to bring Christ down: or, who shall descend into the deep, to bring Christ again from the dead? The word is nigh thee,

even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." You need not say, "Who will roll away the stone from the mouth of the well?" for Christ hath done it for you; and now it is an open fountain, running by your door. Well, sirs, will it not be sad to have Christ so near, his righteousness near, and yet eternally to miss him! To perish, like the thief upon the cross, with a Saviour at your side! To be within a step of him, and yet never touch him! Yea, such is the nature of your unbelief, to suffer you to starve for want, beside infinite fulness at your hand in the gospel-offer.—Your unbelief is a slighting of an easy remedy, for the gospel lays no obstruction in your way of closing with Christ, and receiving of him; there is no impediment but your want of will, which you lay in your own way, "You will not come to me, that you might have life." The gates of the gospel are cast open to all passengers, and whosoever will are commanded to enter. Christ is the door, and the door is open, and you may come in; yea, if you look but in, you are saved; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," Isa. xlv. 22. Faith is indeed the effect of the almighty power of God, but your powerlessness lies in your unwillingness, the gospel-offer lays no obstruction in your way, and there is no hindrance on God's part. In this respect it is an easy remedy, but unbelief slights it, notwithstanding that the Lord says, "Whosoever will, let him come: and, him that cometh I will in no wise cast out."—Your unbelief is a slighting of a seasonable remedy, a timely remedy, and now is the time, now is the season: "Now is the appointed time, now is the day of salvation." You know not but your days may be at a close, so as Christ shall never be offered to you again; you know not but this is the last sermon, or the last Sabbath-day, and yet such is the nature of your unbelief that it neglects the opportunity which it may never enjoy again.—In a word, this remedy is pressed upon you; Christ is in earnest offering himself; "Wisdom cries in the streets," and what is his cry? See Isa. lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." You will notice three times Come in that one verse: he is crying, Come, come, come. O! is he not pursuing you with his gracious offers, even when you are running away from him? As the rock followed the Israelites in the wilderness, with its running streams of water, so Christ, the spiritual Rock, is following you with the streams of his mercy and blood, to wash and save you. O

how compassionately doth he complain of sinners! "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," John v. 40. As if he should say, Why run ye so fast away from me? Why will ye not come to me, that am come from heaven to save you? It is not an enemy, but a friend that you run from. Oh! what madness are you guilty of? Yea, you are busy going to the devil to get death and eternal damnation, but ye will not come to me to get life and eternal salvation. Alas! sirs, what horrid and unspeakable evil is there in unbelief!—Thus you see the sinfulness of unbelief. I should next speak of the hurtfulness thereof.

(2.) The hurtfulness of unbelief is another part of the malignity of it, and this will appear in these particulars following.

1. It is most displeasing to God, and so cannot but be most hurtful; as it doth most dishonour God, so it doth most displease him. Christ did never chide his disciples so much for anything as for their unbelief; "O ye fools, and slow of heart to believe; why do ye doubt? O ye of little faith!" When they were afraid of perishing in the storm, he chides them before he chideth the wind; the storm first began in their own heart. "Israel were cast off for their unbelief," Rom. xi. 20. If we would know what company are in hell, see Rev. xxi. 8—it begins with the fearful and unbelieving.

2. Unbelief is hurtful, in regard that final unbelief is an undoubted evidence of reprobation; "Ye believe not, because ye are none of my sheep," John x. 6. Unbelief is God's prison, wherein he keeps the reprobate world; "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief," Rom. xi. 21. He hath shut them up under unbelief; "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The elect shall obtain, and others are hardened. Why, then, by unbelief you put a seal to your own reprobation, and continue a black note upon yourselves. While you slight Christ you increase your immortal bonds, and are twisting a cord wherewith to bind your souls eternally in these unquenchable flames, therefore, "Be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong," Isa. xxviii. 22. There is no back-door to escape God's wrath if Christ be not received.

3. It is hurtful in that it hinders the tokens of God's love, and deprives us of much good. Nothing doth bar and shut out God's operation, in order to our relief so much as this sin; "He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief," Matth. xiii. 58. It is true, he could by his power destroy unbelief; but

while unbelief remained his hands were, as it were, bound ; “ Said I not unto thee, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God,” John ii. 40. It mars the comfort of ordinances ; “ The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it,” Heb. iv. 2. It bars the gates of heaven ; it excluded Adam out of paradise, the Israelites out of Canaan, and will exclude us out of heaven if it be not removed, Heb. iii. 17, 18.

4. It is therefore also hurtful in that it is the great murderer of souls ; “ If ye believe not, ye shall die in your sins.” The ruin of sinners is laid at the door of this sin, as if there were none other, and justly so ; for, if the malefactor was offered life upon his accepting the king’s remission, if he refused this, it might well be said his refusal hanged him ; even so here, “ He that believeth not is condemned.” Indeed, no other sin would condemn you if you were not guilty of this sin, but this is the sin that binds the guilt of all other sins hard and fast upon you ; because, by unbelief, you reject the satisfaction for all sin, by refusing Christ, and this will aggravate your perdition to the highest degree.—But having enlarged so much upon the sinfulness of it, the hurtfulness plainly follows thence.

SERMON XCIII.

“ As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”—COLOS. ii. 6.

[The Tenth Sermon on this Text.]

IT was a heavy challenge the Lord Jesus gave to the Jews, John v. 43, “ I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not.” He had challenged them for injuring themselves, ver. 40, saying, “ And ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life ;” and again, ver. 42, for their disesteem of God, saying, “ But I know you, that you have not the love of God in you ;” and now here, in this verse, for their not embracing Christ, though come in his Father’s name. Where we see that, though Christ be God over all, equal with the Father ; and Lord over his own house, and so acts in his own name, yet he condescends, as Mediator, to come into the world clothed with a commission and authority from the Father, to make offer of

himself, and life through him, Phil. ii. 5, 11; Matth. xiii. 17; Heb. v. 4, 5. Observe also, Christ, though thus coming, is to be received, embraced, and entertained; yet such is the perverseness of the world, as not to make him welcome. When Christ manifests himself to the world, it is usual with Satan to hound out seducers and false teachers, to study to bear him down, and make the way of truth odious. See Matth. xxiv. 5, 24; Acts v. 36, 37; John viii. 37. But the true disciple of Christ discovers himself at all times, by his firm attachment to his Master; and therefore is characterised by our Lord himself, as one that not only gives entertainment to the Father, but to the Son; "He that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me," Matth. x. 40. Though seducers may pretend to come in Christ's name, Matth. xxiv. 5, yet they come but in their own name, having no commission from the Lord; making themselves and their reputation an advantage, their chief aim in their undertakings, and speakings, and imaginations of their own heart and brain, without any warrant from God. Such as will not receive and embrace Christ, will easily receive and embrace seducers.

We now come to the last consideration to engage you to receive Christ.

[6.] The sixth motive is, to consider the excellency and necessity of faith in receiving Christ. Faith is as helpful and advantageous as unbelief is hurtful and disadvantageous.

All that I shall point at concerning the excellency of faith upon this head, shall be to discover these six advantages thereof, beside what I have said before. For I have told you what it is we receive when we receive Christ, which discovers the unspeakable advantage thereof. But besides what was then offered, let us view it,

1. With respect to Christ, and then the first excellency of faith in receiving Christ is that it advances Christ's name, and makes him very precious and very glorious in the man's eyes; "To you that believe he is precious; yea, more glorious than mountains of prey." And herein faith goes beyond sense, or spiritual sensation; for sense may take up the glory of his actings, but faith sees the glory of his person. Sense beholds the love that is in his smiles, but faith beholds the love that is in his heart, even when smiles are out of view. Sense looks to what Christ is for the present; but faith will look to what he hath been from eternity, before time, and what he will be to eternity, after time; and faith's long journey

from eternity to eternity makes it fall into an ocean of admiration, and raises the thoughts to a higher pitch of estimation of Christ. Sense, in a word, will follow Christ for his love and for the loaves ; but faith prizes him for himself. And surely this is the exercise of the higher house, to be dwelling upon the contemplation of Christ's beauty, and to be transported with love to him, and joy in him. By faith we view the matchless excellency and the transcendent properties of Christ. Faith makes long commentaries and precious encomiums upon Christ : " It is the faithful spy, as one calls it, that brings the good report of glorious Christ." Christ's and his Father's honour are both advanced at once by faith when we receive Christ.

2. The second excellency in faith is with respect to the believer, in that it advances the believer to the highest dignity, such as the dignity to be a member of Christ ; for by faith Christ and the believer are so united that they are no more two, but one spirit ; " He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." And herein faith keeps a sweet correspondency with her sister love ; for faith is that nail which fastens the soul to Christ ; and love is that grace that drives the nail to the head. Faith takes hold of him, and love helps to keep the grip. Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and he burns in the heart by love, like a fire melting the breast. Faith casts the knot, and love draws it fast.—The dignity of being God's children ; " We are the children of God by faith : and to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name," John i. 12. And is this a small thing to be a son to the King of kings, or to enjoy the privileges of his children ; " The son abideth in the house for ever : " to be heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ? O if we knew the excellency of this dignity, it would stir us up to more concern after this grace of faith !—The dignity of power with God, like Jacob, for he hath said, " Whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive it," Matth. xxi. 22. And, indeed, if ye receive Christ, ye shall receive whatsoever ye ask of God. It is strange to see his condescension, in that he puts a blank in the poor believer's hand many times, saying, " What wilt that I should do unto thee ? "

3. The third excellency in faith is with respect to other graces, in that it advances all other graces ; faith doth quicken every other grace.—It advanceth love, and hence faith and love are put together in Scripture so frequently ; for no sooner doth faith look to the

glorious object, than love delights in it; faith draws aside the vail, and love sits down and solaces itself in the discovery.—Faith advances mortification, for by this shield of faith we quench the fiery darts of the wicked; “And this is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith.” Faith makes the soul to esteem his idols to be as tasteless as the white of an egg; and that which formerly was sweet provision for their lusts, doth now become sorrowful meat and bitter herbs.—Hence faith advanceth humility. By what law is boasting excluded? It is not by the law of works, but by the law of faith; yea, faith sees such glory in Christ as makes the man vile in his own eyes.—Faith advanceth joy; for, “The God of peace doth fill with joy and peace in believing: in whom believing we rejoice.” The more faith the more joy.—And further, faith advances the grace of hope. We cannot hope for the thing promised, unless by faith we close with the promise itself; for faith lays hold on the promise, and hope to the thing promised.—In a word, all the graces of the Spirit are quickened and advanced by this grace of faith; as peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, and temperance.

4. The fourth excellency in faith is with respect to duty, in that it advances duties as well as graces; I instance in prayer and obedience.—It advances and excites to the duty of prayer; a believing person is a praying person; Lord, I believe, said the man, Mark ix. 24; there is the confession and profession of his faith: Lord, help my unbelief; there immediately follows his prayer. Faith excites to the greatest diligence in attending upon the Lord in this duty. Little faith makes little prayer: little sweet diversion from sleep in this spiritual exercise.—Faith advances obedience: it makes obedience easy and pleasant: Heb. ix. 8, “By faith Abraham, when called to go out to a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed.” Why are God’s commands a burden? Even want of faith is the reason; a pleasant obedience is impossible without faith. Faith discovers the invaluable excellencies that are in Christ, and this makes the person look upon his duty more as his dignity than his duty. Faith takes hold of that infinite strength that is in Christ, and draws virtue from him, and this makes him obey. No holiness without faith. It facilitates every duty, and makes it sweet; but unbelief makes every duty a burden.

5. The fifth excellency in faith is with respect to acceptance of every duty and action; neither our prayers nor services are accept-

able but in faith : " By faith Abel offered up a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain," Heb. xi. 4, intimating, that without faith, no acceptable sacrifice. And verse 6, " Without faith it is impossible to please God ;" intimating, that by faith we do exceedingly please him. Many prayers are nothing else but a breach of the third command, in taking the name of God in vain ; for which the Lord will not hold them guiltless. The duties of the most part are nothing but abomination ; because to the unbelieving and impure, nothing is clean, Tit. i. 15.

6. The sixth excellency in faith, is in respect of communion with God. Faith is that grace whereby a believer doth attain the most intimate communion with God, and correspondence with heaven : " for Christ dwells in the heart by faith," Eph. iii. 17. By the exercise of other graces, Christ is as a passenger that tarries at most for a night ; but, by the exercise of faith, he is as an inhabitant that comes and takes up house with us. The acts of faith are like the steps of a ladder, by which we go up to heaven, and converse with the higher house ; it ushers the believer to the throne. Faith is the grace whereby the believer attains the most sensible enjoyments ; for, it keeps the eye upon the most glorious object ; and seeing it is a sensible act, and faith is a seeing of him who is invisible, Heb. xi. 27, perhaps some may be saying, Whence so little seeing of the Lord ? Alas ! it is more than thirty days since I saw the King ; yea, some may be at that : I have lived these two years at Jerusalem, and yet have not seen the King's face ; yea, the complaint of some may go higher : these three years and six months, it hath not rained upon me, but the clouds have been restrained and bound up, and the heaven hath become brass ; and why ? it is the want of the exercise of faith ; many are less convinced of the neglect of the duty of faith, than of the neglect of the duty of prayer ; but if we knew the excellency of this grace, we would have a holy impatience till we believed. It is by faith the man hath a clear sight of the things promised ; the great things in the promise, as well as the promise itself ; by faith a man is brought within sight of God, and within sight of heaven : " Faith is the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. So by faith Moses saw him who is invisible, verse 27. Why, is it possible to see things that cannot be seen ? yea, faith's discoveries of God are as certain as the discoveries of our bodily eyes are ; and, by this means, it comes to have such communion with God ; for it is most mysterious and

sublime in its actings ; and therefore called the mystery of faith.—Hence faith can believe the word of promise, though sense seems to contradict the accomplishment thereof ; for, it walks not upon the low ground of sense and reason, but upon the high road of the sure word of prophecy, and the divine faithfulness is engaged in the promise ; as we see in Abraham's faith, Rom. iv. 19. Thus faith believed the falling down of the walls of Jericho, by the blowing of rams' horns, which was impossible to sense and reason.—Faith can believe the promise, though the providence of God seems to contradict the accomplishment, saying, with Job, "Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him." Notwithstanding of killing dispensations, yet he would believe the Lord's word.—Faith can believe a word of promise, even when the commands of God seem to contradict the accomplishment ; thus, when Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his Son, the promised seed, yet he believed the promise would be accomplished : "He had natural affection to wrestle with, and the command of God seeming to contradict the promise of God ; yet over the belly of all these, as one saith, believing Abraham gives faith to the promise, and brings Isaac to the altar," Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19.—Faith can believe a promise, though challenges for sin and conviction of guilt do seem to oppose and contradict the accomplishment of the promise ; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, "Though my house be not so with God," yet he believed the promise, saying, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Thus again, Ps. lxxv. 3, "Iniquities prevail against me ;" yet this doth not interrupt his faith : "As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." And surely it is a noble act of faith to believe, notwithstanding of unanswerable challenges of guilt. The best way, both to crucify idols and to answer challenges, is by receiving Christ, and hoping against hope. Now, the faith of a promise being the great medium, the grand mean of communion with God, and intercourse with heaven, we may see how it advances communion with God.—Yea, faith can believe a promise, though temptations, falls, and follies, seem to contradict the accomplishment. Satan aims at nothing more than to oppose and weaken faith ; but God turns his temptations, and their falls, to the further establishment of faith, which, like a tree, stands the stronger of its being shaken. True faith gets strength by every fall to the ground, it rises and fights more valiantly ; as we see in Peter, and other scripture examples. Temptation to faith is as fire to gold, 1 Pet. i. 7.

It makes the true gold more pure ; and instead of destroying faith, it is the occasion of refining it, and adding to its strength. I might enlarge this purpose, concerning the excellency of faith, to a great degree, from the consideration of the worthy Prince that faith receives, Christ Jesus the Lord, and the walk that issues from thence, and ends in glory.

3dly, The third thing here proposed, in this exhortation to receive Christ, was to give some directions, in order to the receiving of Christ. And the directions I would offer may be confined to these four :—1. Study the sad state you are in while without Christ, and faith in him. 2. Study the right use of the means of faith. 3. Study to have the obstructions and impediments of faith removed. 4. Study the art of pleading with God, for this grace to receive Christ.

[1.] Study the sad state you are in, while without Christ, and without faith to receive him. While you are destitute of faith, you are destitute of Christ ; yea you are yet in nature, and have neither part nor portion in him ; and therefore, O man, be deeply impressed with the sad case and state you are in, upon this account ; for, you will never seek after Christ, nor faith in him, till you see your need of him, by getting your natural state discovered to you. Though this be not the formal cause of faith, yet it is a forcible mean to engage the soul to be restless, till it get faith in Christ ; therefore the law is said to be our schoolmaster, to lead us into Christ. Study therefore, I say, the sadness of a Christless state. Why ?

1. A Christless state is a burdened state : you lie under the burden of all your sins, original and actual ; the burden of the guilt of all your sinful thoughts, words, and actions, lies upon your back ; because you never come to Christ with your burdens ; and if you never come, the burden will sink you down to the lowest hell.

2. The Christless state that you are in is a loathsome state. All your actions, whether natural, civil, or religious, are vile and abominable in the sight of God : the very prayer of the wicked is sin. You are full of nothing but putrifying sores, from the crown of your head to the sole of your foot. There is no mire so unclean, no vomit so loathsome, no pestilence so noisome, no carrion so offensive, as thou art in thy Christless state, in the sight of a holy God, who cannot look upon iniquity but with abhorrence.

3. Thy Christless state is a poor, blind and naked state. Your soul is naked, and you swarm with the vermin of filthy lusts ; you

are destitute of a garment to cover you ; of eye-salve to enlighten you ; and of gold to enrich you ; there seems to be an allusion to Christ's threefold office ; Rev. iii. 18, " I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." As a Prophet, he hath eye-salve ; as a Priest, he hath a garment ; and as a King, he hath gold ; but now you are destitute of all these, while you are without Christ, and without faith in him.

4. Your Christless state is an enslaved state. You are a slave to Satan ; he works in your heart, as in a shop, Eph. ii. 2. He says to you, Go, and you go ; do this, and ye do it. Your state is worse than the Egyptian bondage ; for, Israel groaned under theirs ; but, alas ! you are not sensible of yours, neither do ye believe it ; the devil knows, that if you perceived your slavery, you would seek to make your escape from him ; therefore he makes all sure. He does with you as the Philistines did with Sampson ; puts out your eyes that you may not see your chains, nor look to Christ for liberty.

5. Your Christless state is therefore a wrathful state, wherein God's wrath is burning against you ; the flaming sword of justice is always over your neck ; for, " God is angry with the wicked every day," Psalm vii. 11. Every day of the week, and every hour of the day ; when you go out, and when you come in ; when you rise up and lie down ; God is still angry with you ; he hath bent his bow, and made ready his arrows ; and you are the butt of these arrows of his indignation ; and if he let them fly, they will pierce you to the very soul ; and who will heal that wound ? Who can help you if Christ neglect you ? No reconciliation but through him.

6. Your Christless state is a cursed state. All the curses of the broken law are levelled against you, and a just God is engaged, by his oath, to ruin you ; to whom doth he swear in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believe not ? Heb. iii. 18. Should not the thoughts of this make you tremble ? Were it but the oath of a man, or a company of men, as these forty men that bound themselves with an oath, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul, it would bereave you of your night's rest and quiet, till you were made friends with your enemies. And will the oath of the great God have no effect upon you, nor move you to fly to Christ for protection ?

Study this sad state you are in ; for withal, it is a weak state ; since, by nature, you are without strength, and cannot help yourselves. You can by no means redeem your own soul, or pay your own ransom. Therefore,

[2.] Study the right use of the means of faith. Now, when we speak of means, you would know, that faith is not a flower that grows in nature's garden, "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Yea, though a natural man could gather together all the motives and arguments of the Bible, yet he could not make his own heart to believe, or receive Christ: God is the giver, Christ is the author, and the Holy Ghost is the efficient cause of faith ; yet notwithstanding there are means which the Lord uses to bless, for working faith. And, in general, the great mean and ministerial instrument is the gospel, which discovers a shore for a shipwrecked soul ; and it is the power of God to salvation.

More particularly, the ordinary means are especially these six, in so many words. 1. Mean is reading of the scriptures ; these are they that testify of Christ, the great object of faith. 2. Hearing of the word preached ; for, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." 3. Meditation : for if a man never think upon his way, nor consider matters, he will neither know God, nor believe in him, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Meditate on Christ's fulness, your own wants, the suitableness of the promises, and the freedom of grace. 4. Prayer ; waiting at Wisdom's gates, and crying for Wisdom to put forth her voice, to give understanding, to speak of excellent things ; and that the opening of her lips may be, that her mouth may speak of truth and righteousness. 5. Conversation with the godly ; for, "He that walketh with the wise, shall be wise." 6. Self-examination ; "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own-selves : know ye not your own-selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Many never believe, because they never examine nor put the question whether they have believed or not. These are some of the means. Now, I say, study the right use of the means of faith.

QUEST. What is the right use of these means? Indeed no unbeliever can rightly use these means : but you are to study to use them as rightly as possible : and to use them right is to use them,

1. Humbly, knowing that means will not do without the Lord's blessing upon the means. Never think that God is obliged to give you faith, upon the account of your using the means ; but use them, because he enjoins them as means : put them in their own place, not in Christ's room ; and do, as the mariner ; he cannot command the wind, yet he lies ready at the coast, and waits on the wind ; and when the gale comes, he hoists up the sails ; so, though you cannot command the wind of the Spirit, which blows where it lists : yet wait humbly upon his blowing, and till he come and move the waters.

2. Hopefully and believing : "It is good for a man both to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of God," Lam. iii. 26. If God looks upon no motive in us to induce him to give us Christ ; who then may not hope and expect against hope, and believe against unbelief ? People, in using the means, should do it as believingly as they can by trying what the Spirit of faith will help them to, pressing after faith, with an eye to the promised strength : and so study to mix faith with the use of the word ; for, "The word preached did not profit, not being mixed with faith in them who heard it." And the word read doth not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that read ; neither do we receive anything by prayer, but by believing. Therefore cry for the spirit of faith to accompany the means.

3. Means are to be used frequently : be often about the Lord's hand, in the use of the means : "Blessed is he that soweth beside all waters." We have a common proverb, A going foot is always getting : If you be much about God's hand, there will be some off-fallings now and then to be got. How frequent and industrious was Elijah in the use of the means ! He went up to mount Carmel, and there fell on his face, and prayed for rain ; but not a cloud appears : he sent his servant to go up and look towards the sea, to know if there was any appearance of rain ; he, on returning, tells there is nothing : he doth not leave praying ; he prays again, and sends his servant again, even to seven times, 1 Kings xviii. 42, 43. Thus use the means frequently and industriously. And so,

4. Use them fervently ; "Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," be earnest in this matter, as a matter of eternal life and death ; seeking the spirit of faith as what you cannot want : "Ask, and it will be given ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," Luke xi. 9. Why, all these words, *ask, seek,*

knock, intimate fervency, as well as frequency, in the use of means : and what are we thus fervently to seek ? Even the Spirit, ver. 13

5. Patiently ; “ Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord : behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain,” James v. 7. “ Wait patiently for him, Psalm xxxvii. 7. The Lord is a God of judgment, blessed are all they that wait for him,” Isa. xxx. 18. The word may seem strange, for there is encouragement in waiting on a God of mercy, but what comfort in waiting upon a God of judgment ; but judgment in this place is not to be understood as opposed to mercy, but to folly : he is a God of judgment ; that is, of infinite wisdom, who knows how to time and order his gifts.

6. Use means perseveringly ; Hos. xii. 6, “ Wait on thy God continually,” till he come in with regenerating grace : do not limit the holy One of Israel ; it is reasonable to wait God’s leisure, for he gives grace freely and sovereignly ; and if grace come in the end what though we have waited long for it ? Use the means honestly, “ And do not weary in well doing ; for in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not.” Give not over the use of means, but wait on him who waits to be gracious. We never heard of any that got this disposition, but they found their waiting on the Lord was not in vain ; the Lord pitied them, and gave them a heart to believe and receive Christ. This is the direction I offer then ; study the right use of the means of faith.

[3.] Study to get removed from you all the obstructions and impediments of faith and receiving of Christ ; and the impediments are these six,

1. One impediment of faith, that hinders the receiving of him, is natural atheism ; “ The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” And an atheistical spirit hath most sordid apprehensions of God : it doth not take him up in the greatness of his nature, nor in the authority of his word. God looks not like a God to that person ; the word of God is not like the word of God ; the sweet promises are but empty notions to the man : the sharp threatenings of hell and wrath are but terrible fables to him. O seek that the power of God may remove this impediment ; otherwise you will never believe, nor receive Christ.

2. Another impediment is gross ignorance ; ignorance of God and of Christ. Many foolishly question whether or not they have

an interest in Christ, before ever they know that there is a Christ : they are ignorant of Christ, and his excellency ; ignorant of the law and its severity ; ignorant of the gospel, and its condescendency ; ignorant of themselves, and their sinfulness, and misery, and their absolute need that they stand in of this glorious gospel-remedy. If they knew the disposition of God, toward sinners out of Christ, they would not take rest, while they are exposed to that consuming fire, and within the flood-mark of his wrath. If they were not ignorant of their natural state, they would not rest content in that state. If they knew Christ, they would not be content to live without him : " If thou knewest the gift of God (says Christ to the woman of Samaria), and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water, John iv. 10. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." O ignorant souls, you are nearer hell than others ; your state is darkness, and it borders upon utter darkness. You swear, and lie, and drink drunk, and break the Sabbath, and commit uncleanness ; you slight ordinances, you slight duties, you slight prayer, in secret and family ; you go on in sin without flying to Christ, and all is because of your ignorance : " They that know his name put their trust in him ;" but you know him not, and therefore believe not. Why, say you, many have knowledge that make no good use of it ; yea, they are more graceless and profane, than we that are poor ignorant creatures. I answer, That their knowledge is but head-knowledge, and not heart-knowledge ; or else it would influence their heart and life ; and they have a sad account to make, for sinning against so much knowledge ; but this will not help you, for profanity kills them, and ignorance kills you ; they die of one disease, and you die of another. Will you reject knowledge because some abuse it ? Why, that is as ridiculous as to say, Because many die, who have both food and physic, and plenty of means for preserving life : therefore I will use no means for preserving of my life at all. They that have food and physic may die, but they that have none of them cannot live ; so, whoever perish, ignorant persons, that slight the means, are sure to perish.

3. A third impediment of faith that you need to seek removed is presumption. Many presume they have Christ already, and thus they need not receive him : they will not confess that they want Christ. Many presume they have a righteousness of their own : Christ spoke a parable to certain persons that trusted in

themselves, that they were righteous. If a proud man hath money in his house, he will scorn to be obliged to his neighbour: so it is with the proud sinner, his language is, I have never wronged any man; none can say black is the eye of my head; I am neither whore nor thief; I have a good heart to God; and have done as well as I could. Alas! poor deluded creature, cannot the God, who charges his angels with folly, see a fault in you? yea, millions of deformities doth he see: and is this a sufficient bottom for you to sail in to heaven? There is a leak in the vessel that will sink you for ever into the bottomless pit: the soul is the passenger, graces are the sails, the Spirit is the wind, but Christ only is the bottom, in which you can sail safe to glory. It is said of some in the Acts, they came and burnt their books, whenever they came and believed in Christ: so, if ever you believe in Christ, that trash must be burnt: you must be forced out of yourselves, and obliged to relinquish every thing about you.

4. The next impediment of faith is earthly-mindedness and worldly dispositions. The vanity of the world so possesses the mind, that there is no room for Christ; the thoughts of the world shut out the thoughts of God. As Saul hid himself among the stuff, so many are buried and absorbed in the midst of the world. And yet, all the best things of the world are like the shadow of the sun, which the least cloud can remove; like a heap of chaff, which the wind can blow away; and like Jonah's gourd, which any worm can eat out.

5. A fifth impediment of faith is a heart-league with sin, which hinders the match with Christ: why, we are married to other lovers, and in love with sin; Christ comes as a Saviour to save from sin; well, he is welcome; yea, but it is to save from such a beloved sin, as your drunkenness, whoredom, lewd and carnal company: why, here the heart recoils; Oh! I cannot live without my nature; I cannot part with Benjamin. At the root of unbelief, try when you will, you will find the heart is in league with some lust, which it cannot part with. O sirs, seek the removal of these impediments.

6. Impediment of faith is, the cunning artifices of natural unbelief. The unbelieving heart hath a thousand deceits, whereby it keeps off people from Christ, and from the receiving of him. Sometimes unbelief presents impossibilities before the man: O it is impossible that God will have mercy on you: it is impossible that the

like of you can get to heaven. Unbelief will present a thousand difficulties and discouragements; "There is a lion in the way:" you will never be able to believe, never be able to pray, never be able to hold on in God's way. Unbelief doth harden the heart, and turn it so stupid, that they are no more moved with the word, than if they were a thousand miles from ordinances. Unbelief fills the heart with slothfulness, so as the man doth not put forth his hand, as it were, to receive the offered Saviour and salvation. Yea, unbelief presents a world of wrong objects of faith, and that hinders true faith, or believing in, and receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only true object.

There are four things that unbelief doth cunningly lead men to build upon, that seem good things, and are so indeed; but yet wrong objects of faith, namely, sense, duties, graces, providence.

(1.) Through the cunning of unbelief, a man will build his faith upon sense, and not upon Christ: thus, Thomas, "Except I put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into the hole of his side, I will not believe." O sirs, to believe in a bare word of promise, abstract from sense, is a great mystery: and therefore, when one makes sense and feeling his idol, God usually withdraws himself, and denies sensible tokens of his presence, that he may learn to build upon Christ only, or upon a bare word of promise, and not upon any sensible enjoyment.

(2.) Through the cunning of unbelief, a man will build his faith upon his duties, and establishing a righteousness of his own, not submitting to the righteousness of God. And thus he builds upon self; or, like the whorish woman, that divided the child, he makes the object of his faith half Christ and half self, when unbelief cannot prevail to exclude Christ wholly.

(3.) Through the cunning of unbelief, a man will build his faith upon his graces; and so lies open to that challenge Ezek. xvi. 15, "Thou didst put thy trust in thy beauty." And thus, through the cunning of the old serpent, and of unbelief, the man will build his faith upon his faith, and not his faith upon Christ; it is not Christ that is the righteousness of such persons, but their faith is their righteousness. Hence many can give no other ground of their faith, but just this, they believe: and what is the foundation of their faith? Why, they believe because they believe; they hope to be saved, because they believe: and whence do they believe, but be-

cause they believe? Alas! it is a fancy instead of faith: and a fancy built upon a fancy.

(4.) Through the cunning of unbelief, a man will build his faith upon providence: hence, ask at some people, what is the ground of their hope for heaven? O, say they, God hath been good and kind to me all my days; he hath many times protected me from danger, and provided for me in difficulties, and fed me in my straits; yea, perhaps, he is only feeding you for a day of slaughter: no man can know love or hatred by these outward providences. These wrong objects of faith, and grounds of believing, are great obstacles and impediments, in the way of true believing and receiving of Christ.

Now, O sirs, seek that all these impediments of faith may be taken out of the way; whether it be atheism, ignorance, presumption, earthly mindedness, a heart-league with sin, or the cunningings of natural unbelief, presenting wrong objects of faith. Another direction is,

[4.] Study the art of pleading with God for grace to receive Christ. It is true, God is not bound to hear an unbeliever's prayer, but he that hears the ravens when they cry, may hear you when you plead with him for the blessing. And, if you would learn the art of pleading, there are six pleas, or arguments, wherewith you may urge him to pity you.

1. Plead his promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." It is a free and gracious promise: cry to him to make good that word to you, seeing he hath said, "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," ver. 37. Tell him, that now you are come to inquire, and request him to do it.

2. Plead your own impotency and inability to help yourselves; this was the impotent man's plea at the pool of Bethesda, John v. 6, 7, "When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." So say you, Lord, I have lain many years with this dead plagued heart, beside the open fountain

of thy blood ; I am unable to move to it of myself ; I have none to put me in : ordinances cannot do it ; ministers cannot do it ; thou must put to thy helping hand, or else the work will remain unperformed.

3. Plead his power in a sense of your own impotency. Do you feel the power and multitude of your corruptions within you ? Say with Jehosaphat, " Lord, I have no might against this great company ; neither do I know what to do : but mine eyes are upon thee." With thee all things are possible. Though I may despair of help in myself and others ; yet thou hast forbid me to despair of help in thee. " Thou saidst, Let there be light, and there was light ;" O say, let there be faith, and it will immediately take place, for faith is thy work and thy gift : it is the WORK of God that we believe : By grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the GIFT of God. He is the author and finisher of faith.

4. Plead your necessity, your extreme need of Christ, and of faith in him. O man, there is not a starving man that needs meat so much as you need Christ : there is not an wounded man that needs a physician ; a ship-wrecked man that needs a plank ; a dying man with the dead rattle in his throat, that needs breath so much as thou dost need Christ. O then cry, " Give me Christ, or else I die." I may live without friends, without wealth, and honour, and pleasure ; but I cannot live without Christ and without faith. Plead his power ; how easy it is for him to help, saying, as in Psal. lxxx. 1, " O thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth !" It will cost thee no more pain to work faith in me, than it doth the sun to shine forth. Yea, he can more easily put forth his power and grace, than the sun can dart out its beams. It is no trouble nor loss to the sun to shine forth ; so neither will it be to him, to shew forth his power and mercy : a look, or a touch, will do it ; since he can so easily do it. You may cry with hope : he will never miss an alms bestowed on a beggar, out of the ocean of his bounty. Nay, as the sun, the more it shines, displays its glory the more ; so will he gain glory by putting forth his power to help you.

5. Plead his mercy, and the freeness and communicativeness of it. Plead the freeness of his mercy, that needs no motive, and expects no worth : it runs freely, so that the mountains cannot stop the current thereof, no more than the rocks can stop the ebbing and

flowing of the sea. Plead the communicativeness of his mercy to others; he had compassion on men's bodies, that came to him for healing, and will he not have compassion upon souls that come to him for life? Is not mercy the work that he delights in? that perfection of his nature that he takes pleasure to display?

6. Plead Christ's commission, Isa. lxi. 1, that he came to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of prison doors to them that are bound. Cry, Lord, here is a poor prisoner, a locked and bound up heart; here is employment for thee: O loose and knock off my fetters, and bring my soul out of prison. O here is a naked sinner for thee to cover, a wounded soul for thee to cure, a lost sheep for thee to seek and save; and, was not this thy errand? Thou didst come to seek and save that which was lost. And, wilt thou not be found of a lost sinner, that desires to seek thee, through thy grace? Plead his commission under the broad seal of heaven; for, "Him hath God the Father sealed." And plead the value of his blood, and merit of his righteousness; and upon that ground whereby all grace is purchased: plead for faith, and grace to receive Christ Jesus the Lord.

Thus I have laid before you some directions, in order to the receiving of Christ. O cry for grace to follow them, and put them in practice, so as you may indeed close the bargain with him. I should now answer some objections, but am prevented with your time. O shall all these directions be lost, and Christ be still slighted and rejected! O sirs, you cannot please God better, than by coming to Christ, and embracing the offer of him: and you cannot please the devil better, than by refusing the offer of Christ, and putting him off with delays, till you inevitably perish in your unbelief.

And now, after all that hath been said, what are you resolved upon? Will you receive Christ, or not? Our glorious Lord and Master hath sent us to pose you, man, woman: and demand whether you will receive him or not? O! What answer shall we return? Must we go and say, that all this people, upon no terms, will receive him: none of them are for precious Christ? Oh! God forbid! shall he not see the travail of his soul, who travelled through all the armies of God's wrath for you, and gave his soul an offering for your sin? O give your soul to him, saying, Lord, in spite of the devil and of unbelief, through grace I will open my heart and arms to receive Christ! The Lord himself help you to receive him, and walk in him.

SERMON XCIV.

"As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."—Colos. ii.

[The Eleventh Sermon on this Text.]

THERE are two things, that the sum of Christianity, and the whole of a gospel life doth consist in; and they both have a respect to Christ; and are these, in short: 1. To take him. 2. To use him. Now, behold Christ's name sounds in the ears of multitudes, that never yet could be persuaded to take him and use him: to take him as he is offered, and to use and improve him as he is taken; yet this is the great call of God in the words of our text: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him;" where the way to heaven is described by taking Christ, so as to receive him as Christ Jesus the Lord; and then by using and improving him, so as to walk in him suitably to that reception. The receiving of Christ being the leading thing here, without which there can be no walking in him; therefore, I have insisted a considerable time on this exhortation to receive Christ. But after all that hath been said for conviction, excitation, and direction, perhaps the hearts of hearers are filled with a thousand objections, against this great and necessary duty of receiving Christ Jesus the Lord. And this leads us,

4thly, To the fourth thing, upon this use of exhortation to receive Christ, which was to answer some objections. We cannot answer the half of them; yea, no man or angel can answer one of them without Christ. All objections whatsoever would vanish before the grace of the gospel, rightly understood, and powerfully displayed. Christ stands in the gospel, ready to hear and answer all your objections; and he can do it with a word.

If the soul say, I have no right to receive Christ, for I am a great sinner; his answer is ready: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." O, says the soul, my sins are red as crimson; Well, says Christ, "I can make thee white as wool." Oh! but I have no reason to hope, for I am a lost creature: nay, says Christ, "I came to seek and save that which was lost;" and

many a lost sheep I have sought and found. O but, says one, I am past cure, for I am dead and rotten in the grave of sin : nay, but says Christ, "I am the resurrection and the life." O but, says the soul, I am a slave to sin and Satan, and a prisoner to justice. Well, says Christ in his word, "I am come to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." O but I have many burdens of sin, and guilt, and confusion ; and innumerable burdens, that I cannot mention : well, says Christ, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." O but my hand is withered, I cannot receive Christ : well, in this case, Christ bids you stretch forth the withered hand, believing in him for grace to believe ; and coming to him for grace to come. O but, says the soul, I am lame, and cannot walk in Christ, or in his way ; well, says Christ, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Ah ! but he may withdraw his Spirit, and depart from me : no, says Christ, "I will make an everlasting covenant with thee ; I will not turn away from them to do them good." O ! but I may depart from him, and make apostacy : no, says Christ, Jer. xxxii. 4, "I will put my fear in your heart, that ye shall not depart from me." And Jer. iii. 19, "Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from me." Oh ! but I may be overcome with strong temptations : well, says Christ, "Fear not, for I am with thee ; my grace is sufficient for thee." Alas ! but I have been a great backslider already : well, says Christ, there is a word for you to rely on, in answer to that, "I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely." And thus Christ, in the word of grace, and gospel of salvation, stands ready to answer every objection.

But more particularly, we might open the grounds of manifold objections, that sinners make against believing in, or receiving of Christ.

1. Objections are drawn from the greatness and multitude of sins. It is true, there are some who have no such objection as this at all ; they are as secure, senseless, and stupid, as a stone of the wall ; there is no hope of saying anything, to move and effect such, unless the Lord himself awaken them. But if any here were objecting to this purpose, though it was but one in all this company : "Oh ! my guilt is so grievous, my sins are so great, and my transgressions are so multiplied, that you would tremble to think of the sins I have been guilty of, and what light I have sinned against ;

and this makes my heart sink : none knows, but God and my own conscience, what a sinner I have been ; and will Christ ever accept of me ?” *Answ.* The greatness of your sins should be a great argument to engage you to come to Christ, and receive him. Your sins are not greater than God’s mercies ; your guilt is not greater than Christ’s merits. It is hardly to be supposed that you are worse than some who yet have obtained mercy ; such as Paul, a persecutor and blasphemer ; Manasseh, a murderer and wizard, in compact with the devil ; Mary Magdalene, in whom were seven devils ; and many of the Jews that crucified the Lord of glory, who yet were washed in that blood of the Lamb, which they shed. The merit of Christ’s blood is infinite ; though your sins were greater than all sins, yet there is virtue in his blood to expiate them ; for, it cleanses from all sin. Though the sands be many and large, yet the sea can overflow them all : so, though your sins be numerous and great, the blood of Christ can cover them all. In a word, the question is not about the greatness of your sins, but your present duty : be your sin what it will the Lord calls you to come to Christ and receive him : and your unbelief, in your rejecting Christ, is greater than all your other sins ; for it is a refusal of the remedy, whereby you may be relieved of all your sin and guilt. Your other sins are but against the law ; but this sin, in rejecting Christ, is against the law and the gospel both. Other sins are against God ; but this sin, in rejecting Christ, is against God and Christ both. It is a great sin to think any sin little ; but it is a greater sin, to think the righteousness of Christ is not above all sin. Our disobedience is the disobedience of man ; but Christ’s obedience is the obedience of God : therefore, our believing in Christ doth please God better than if we had continued ‘in innocency, and never sinned. The least sin is unpardonable without this obedience and righteousness of Christ ; and the greatest is pardonable by it. Therefore, O seek in to Christ, to be clothed upon with this righteousness.

2. Objections are drawn from the justice of God : “ Oh, God is just, and will not hold the sinner guiltless ; therefore, though I should fly to the horns of the altar, there I fear justice would be avenged upon me.” *Answ.* This is also an argument why you should receive Christ. God’s justice indeed must be satisfied, and there is no way in the world, to give satisfaction to God, but by believing in Christ ; for, “ God is in Christ reconciling the world

to himself:" he hath endured the wrath of God, and so there is no way to answer justice, but by flying to that satisfaction he hath made; and if you do, justice will not demand a double satisfaction; one from thee, and another from thy Surety: no, he will deliver from going down to the pit because he hath found a ransom. It is contrary to the nature of justice, to demand a double satisfaction, when the satisfaction given by Christ is infinite.

3. Objection is drawn from the sinner's unworthiness. "Oh! I am utterly unworthy, and have nothing to move God to pity me; will he accept of the like of me?" Ans. What think ye is the strength of that reasoning? It comes just to this: I have no merit, therefore God will have no mercy: there is no salvation for me by the law; therefore there is no salvation for me by the gospel. If you look at God with a legal eye, the least sin makes you incapable of mercy: but if you look at him in Christ, or with an evangelical eye, the greatest sinner is capable of mercy; yea, the sense of unworthiness makes a man the more capable. It is an unworthy objection, and argues lamentable ignorance of the gospel. Come to him as deserving nothing but wrath, and flying to God's free grace, and Christ's full merit, and the covenant's rich promise. It is with faith, as it is with a bird cast into the water, it cannot fly, the element is so gross; it cannot clap its wings there; but cast it into the air, then it will clap its wings and mount: so faith is the wing of the soul; when it looks to the man's self, and his own worthiness, this is such a gross element, faith cannot mount: but let it out to the air of God's free grace and promise in Christ, then it will act and fly: yea, grace cannot act but upon an unworthy object, and without any cause from the object. Justice hath an eye upon the disposition of the person, in its rewards; but grace and mercy hath an eye upon itself. Thus, if a king execute a malefactor, this is an act of justice, and the cause of it is in the offender; but if a king pardon a malefactor, this is an act of grace, and the cause of it is in the king's breast, not in the worthiness of the delinquent: so here, if you was worthy, you were not capable of this free gift. If ever there was a gift freely given, it is Christ; and will you reject him because you are unworthy? Why, if you was worthy, it would not be a free gift. Nay, your refusing of Christ, and standing aback from him for your unworthiness, is great pride: you would have a bladder of your own, that you might swim to heaven, without being obliged to Christ. If you meet a poor beggar, and see nothing but

misery and poverty in his face, and draw your purse and offer him a shilling : would it not be strange to hear him say, No, I will not have it ; I am not worthy : yonder is a gentleman in gay clothing, give it him, for he is worthy ? Just as ridiculous is the case here, while you stand aback from Christ, because of your unworthiness. In a word, Christ is worthy enough of your taking. What if the greatest prince in the world should make suit to the poorest beggar, that hath neither beauty nor dowry, though she be unworthy to hear of the proposal, yet the person is worthy who hath made it, and the acceptance of the motion is reasonable : so it is here, if Christ, the Prince of life, and King of glory, be worth the receiving then reject not his offer that he makes of himself : and indeed never will you be worthy till you receive him.

4. Objection is drawn from a doubt and suspicion arising in the mind if Christ be willing : “ Oh ! I fear he is not willing to accept of me.” Answ. He declares, in his word, that he is not willing that any should perish ; and he swears that he hath no delight in the death of sinners. And, O sinner ! will you look up to God’s face and say, though he hath both said and sworn to that purpose, yet he is not willing ? His purpose of grace in saving some, doth not say that he is willing to destroy any ; it only says, that, as he is not willing that any should perish, so, he is resolved that all shall not get leave to destroy themselves ; as all would do, if he did not catch hold of some, and pluck them as brands out of the burning ; and his doing so says, that none are destroyed by him, unless they destroy themselves. None are willing to be saved by him, until his willingness prevents theirs. His not saving all, is no more an argument of his willingness that any should perish, than a king’s not pardoning all rebels, is an argument of that prince’s willingness that any should live in rebellion against him, and fall under his furious resentment : and though it were possible for that earthly prince to make them all willing subjects to him, yet it were not inconsistent with a merciful disposition, for him to suffer some to take their will ; that he may shew how obstinate their nature is, and how equal and just he is in the administration of his government : for, acts of justice toward some is not inconsistent with a will to shew mercy upon all. Carnal reason and unbelief still suspects the willingness of Christ ; especially because of a decree past in heaven, which the word mentions concerning the salvation of some, from which they know not but they may be excluded : but as this is a

powerful temptation of Satan, leading men boldly and arrogantly to meddle with the records of heaven, that are locked up from men and angels, till the decree break forth ; so it is an evidence of our cursed enmity against God, that we will not believe his good-will in Christ revealed in the gospel toward sinners, by so many commands and promises, calls and invitations. If you would observe instances of Christ's willingness, behold how he wept over Jerusalem, self-destroying Jerusalem, rejecting his offer, Luke xix. 41, 42, " And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace : but now they are hid from thine eyes." What a moving sight was this, to see the Son of God in a flood of tears for lost sinners ! Had he been enquired at, as he did Mary, in another case, Blessed Lord, what seekest thou ? Why weepest thou ? His answer readily would have been, " I seek not myself ; I weep not for myself ; for, I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, though sinners be not gathered ; but I weep to see sinners so mad, as to reject their Saviour and salvation, rather than part with their lusts, that have damnation attending them ; I weep to see them content, rather to cast themselves headlong into the devil's arms, than throw themselves into my arms of mercy, or receive and embrace me." Oh ! how did Christ's heart melt with pity for you, and will not your hearts melt with desire toward him ! Surely, all the rivers of tears, that flowed from his eyes, and the rivers of blood, that flowed from his pierced head, and feet, and hands, and side, will be standing monuments of his good-will to save sinners. How would you have him to discover his willingness ? Why, man, woman, he just turns a humble supplicant to you ; and, as it were, upon his bare knees beseeches you to be reconciled to him ; 2 Cor. v. 20, " We are ambassadors ; for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." O stupenduous and amazing condescension ! Behold, divine mercy, stooping down to a sinner, in the humblest posture, importuning him to receive a Saviour, and to receive a free remission through him ! Surely the humble intreaties of the great God should both convince us of his willingness to receive us, and shame us out of our unwillingness to receive Christ, and salvation through him.

5. Objection is drawn from a doubt or suspicion of our being prepared for receiving of Christ. " Oh says the sinner, that is any way sensible, I am not humbled enough ; Christ comes to bind up

the broken-hearted ; but my heart is not broken ; to give the oil of joy for mourning ; but I have not a mourning or melting spirit : therefore I may not believe, or receive Christ." Ans. You will never reckon yourself humbled enough, if you would have humiliation proportioned to your sin, which is an infinite evil. Legal humiliation, though never so deep, though your heart should be broken in as many pieces as the glass doth shudder against the wall ; and though you were roaring day and night, under the disquiet of a guilty conscience, and fearful apprehensions of God's wrath ; yet all this will not say, that you are now fit for Christ ; these humiliations may be merely judicial, and punishments of sin, as were those of Cain and Judas ; therefore, you cannot judge yourself by your legal humiliations, but only by the issue and event of them. Think not, then, to bring humiliation in your hand as a price ; this will but more unfit you ; the best humiliation is, to see your want of preparation, and your want of all good things about you : and to receive Christ is the only way to true gospel humiliation. The law is like a thunder-clap, that terrifies ; but the gospel is like a warm sun that dissolves the ice. Nothing melts the soul more than Christ apprehended by faith ; " They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn," Zech. xii. 10. Faith sees the greatest love, the sweetest kindness ; and this melts the heart. No doubt, the prodigal was more melted and broken by his father's embracing of him so kindly, than by all his former miseries. What ! art thou embracing me, a stubborn child, and unworthy spendthrift ! So Christ comes in the gospel, saying, Come thou, poor sinner, that hast done evil as thou couldest ; though thou hast wronged me, and my Spirit, and my Father and thyself, yet come and I will get you a pardon for all that ; fear not, I will be thine to save thee ; my blood thine to wash thee ; my righteousness thine to justify thee ; my Spirit thine, to sanctify thee. O this melts the heart ! What ! is this for me, guilty me, rebellious me ! Yea, it is for thee graciously and freely ! O ! how doth the soul now dissolve into tears !

6. Objection is drawn from fear that the day of grace is gone. " Alas ! I have refused many calls, invitations, and offers insomuch that Christ will not regard me ; I have often slighted the gospel-offer, trampled on this precious blood ; and with what confidence can I now claim it ? " Answ. It is to be hoped that while you have this call, yet to receive Christ, that now is the accepted time,

now is the day of salvation ; if your former refusals of Christ have not yet been malicious and deceitful, but rather timerarious and inadvertent, which, though a grievous sin, yet not unpardonable ; and now since Christ doth not yet exclude you from the gospel-offer, why do you exclude yourselves ? The more you have refused his offer formerly, the more you have need of a pardon. You should go to God, as David, saying, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." This would indeed be a strange argument with man, Pardon my crime, for it is great ; but it is a strong argument with God : Lord, it is great, and so I have more need of a pardon ; it is great, and so thou wilt have great honour in pardoning : even as a physician hath in curing a desperate disease. The sinning against Christ's blood, or slighting it, is indeed a heinous sin ; but the more heinous it is, the more need you have to hasten to this blood, as the only fountain that can wash away the guilt of trampling upon it. Nay, though you had shed this blood, as the Jews did, yet you are welcome to come to it for mercy ; see the commission that Christ gives to his apostles, Luke xxiv. 46, 47, "Preach repentance, and remission in his name to all nations, and begin at Jerusalem." O ! why at Jerusalem, where he was mocked, pierced, crucified ? Nay, begin there, for they have most need of my blood to wash them. If any thing could alienate Christ's heart from sinners, surely the consideration of their crucifying of him, and using him so deceitfully might have done it ; yea, says he, go make offer of my blood and mercy to these my murderers ; and, accordingly, it was done by Peter, Acts ii., and many of them got this blood applied to them. Again,

7. Objection is drawn from the long continuance in sin, "I am an old sinner ; my sins are of a very long continuance ; I have remained long in the grave of sin, and I am just an old rotten sinner." Answ. I fear there are some old sinners here very near to hell and damnation ; the devil hath got the prime of their age, and he is likely to get the dregs. Oh ! if gospel-grace would draw you, I would let down the cord of love, by telling you that, though your sins be old, yet they are not so old as Christ's mercies, which are everlasting mercies. It is not the first old distemper that Christ hath cured ; he raised Lazarus with a word, though he had been four days in the grave ; he stopped a bloody issue with the hem of his garment that had run twelve years ; he loosed a poor woman whom Satan had bound eighteen years ; he cured an impotent man

that had an infirmity thirty years; and can he not easily cure all your old soul-distempers? He received those that came at the eleventh hour; he received some that came at the last hour, particularly the thief on the cross, whom the devil thought he was sure of, having drawn him the length of the mouth of hell, just ready to cast him in; yet, even then, upon his look to Christ, did the arms of mercy take hold of him. This is encouragement to you to look to him.

8. Objection is drawn from a doubt or jealousy about our right to receive Christ. "Oh! says one, though Christ can save me, yet I have no right to receive him: though his blood is sufficient to wash me, yet I have no right to it." Answ. You have a full right and warrant from the very call of the gospel, to fly to it; see what Christ enjoins ministers to do, Mark xvi. 15, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" Make offer of me and my blood to all without distinction; whatever be their age, sex, or circumstances; man, woman, and child. Let no children hearing me think they are too young to be included in this call to come to Christ; nay, the gospel is preached to you as well as to old folk; you may die in your youth, and if you die without Christ, you will perish as well as old Christless persons. "Preach the gospel to every creature," even to the worst of sinners; every creature, be they never so wicked; even though they have sinned themselves into the likeness of beasts or devils; yet, if they be creatures, offer my blood, my mercy, my merit, my righteousness to them; invite and press them to come to me and receive me, and "Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." O sinner, let the gospel-offer be accepted; and you shall find, whatever you have been, that there is mercy enough in God's bowels to pity you, merit enough in Christ's blood to pardon you, and power enough in his intercession to procure and apply it to you. Look to him for a share of this grace offered to you, and receive not the grace of God in vain.

9. Objection is drawn from the power of sin. "Alas! I find sin to be strong in me; how should I believe or receive Christ? none have such an abominable heart: surely the Lord will loathe me." Answ. That as a sense of the power of sin is better than to be senseless and stupid under it: so, consider the nature of unbelief more than the strength of sin, for it is an evil heart of unbelief that gives strength to sin. There are two things you must be obliged to Christ for; his merit, to get the guilt of sin pardoned; and his Spirit, to get the power of sin subdued. There is no healing but

under the wings of Christ, and therefore you must go to him for it. What think you of faith, man? Is it an enemy to holiness? No, by no means; it is the only way to it. And do you find sin opposing you? Why, then, know that a time of contrariety is a time for faith to work. When a man sees death, then it is time for faith to believe life; when he sees the grave, it is time for faith to believe the resurrection; when he sees guilt, it is time for faith to believe pardoning mercy; and when he sees sin, it is time for faith to receive a Saviour; when he sees strong corruption, then it is time for faith to lay hold on Christ's strength, and cast yourself upon his faithful promise, for healing and pardoning of it. You may try other ways, but they will not do; you may wash in other waters, but they will not cleanse you; you may perplex your own thoughts with a thousand shifts besides this, but they will not avail you; in Christ, and the promises of the covenant, are the cures of your sinful nature; and faith doth apply the healing medicine. But now, to name no more.

10. Objection is drawn from the weakness of the creature, and of means. "Why, say you, I have no strength to believe, no strength to pray, no heart to duty; or, if I essay it at any time, I have no success in it, no benefit by it." Here are two scruples, and I shall divide them in order to give a more distinct reply.

Well, then, the first part of the objection is, "Oh! I have no strength to believe, no power to receive Christ; yea, no heart to pray for faith." Answ. It is fit you know your own utter impotency to believe; they who think they can believe well enough of themselves, they mistake the faith of God's operation for fancy, and strong imagination of their own brain. But, whereas you say you have no strength; see that the disease lies not rather in this, that you have no will; if you were made willing, you would undoubtedly find yourselves made able in due time; therefore, cry for one pull more of omnipotent grace, to make you willing in the day of his power. And whereas you say you cannot cry, you have no heart to pray; it is perhaps your mercy to be kept empty-handed that you may not make a Christ of your duty, or a Saviour of your frame, for perhaps you would not rest there. However, know that unbelief is the great cause of indisposition for duty; for it fills the man with hard thoughts of God: "Oh! says unbelief, God is so holy, he will never regard you; God is so just, he will never endure you." Unbelief makes God all full of frowns and anger; and so

the man's spirit sinks within him ; but faith would bring up the soul, Psalm xxvii. 13, " I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Faith shews God to be on a throne of grace, and this raises the heart ; and faith sets the soul upon prevailing motives in prayer, such as the name of God, the blood of Christ, the promise of the covenant, the intercession of Christ, the faithfulness of God. In the mean time, think not either to believe or pray aright without opposition from Satan, an evil heart of unbelief, the prevalency of sin, and an ensnaring world. You must wrestle, through grace, all the way to glory ; " The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The second part of the objection is, " That, though you essay, you find no success in duty, no benefit by it ; I am still where I was." Answ. True seeking comes always to something ; it is pride and impatience that says, " It is vain to serve the Lord." See Mal. iii. 14, 18, and Isa. lxiii. 22, 23, 24. " God is faithful, who hath promised." It is true, many ask and receive not, because they ask amiss, and do not ask in faith, nothing wavering. How should we speed, or what success can we expect, if we tell the true God to his face that he is a liar and a dissembler ; that he will not make good the word that he says ? Therefore, seek the removal of this unbelief.

Besides, remember that there is a twofold answer that God makes, real and sensible. A king may sign a pardon, and yet the criminal not know it for a time ; an answer may be given sometimes when we know not of it ; *e.g.* You seek, perhaps a heart to pray, and a heart to hate sin : well, upon this, perhaps, you find your heart harder, to your feeling, than it was ; and your corruption bursting forth upon you ; which makes you lie grovelling, with the most fervent importunity, at heaven's gate, and begets the most extreme loathing of your depraved nature : why, here you get the very thing you was seeking, yet you are not sensible that these things are answers : because the answer comes in a way contrary to your expectation, for the heart may have such thirstings after grace, such an abomination of sin, that these present answers from heaven may seem to be nothing ; there is something more the man would have ; present grants are not a satisfying of his desire ; yet something is

got by every faithful seeking ; the man gets either more addition to some grace, or more aversion to some sin ; or more grace to seek, or more strength to wait. But though ye get not so much as you desire, surely you get more than you deserve ; though not so much as to satisfy, yet as much as to help for the present. But suppose you be not answered at all, it is your sin to murmur, and your duty to wait ; and remember, that God never gives his people so large an alms here, but that they need to become beggars the next hour, at the throne of grace again ; and know, that God loves to be urged, but he does not love to be hastened. If God doth promise, it is your duty to believe ; if he delays, it is your duty to wait ; for, he waits that he may be gracious ; and, " Blessed are all they that wait for him." In a word, the Lord may keep his door bolted, that you may be provoked to knock the harder. The woman of Canaan took up the design of Christ's refusing to answer her ; therefore she turns the more importunate, and so gets all her will. Therefore, whatever discouragement you meet with, resolve never to quit the throne of grace, but always to lay yourselves in Christ's way, and never to go to another for help ; yea, that you will die waiting on him. Remember David's experience, Psalm xl. 1, " I waited patiently on the Lord, and at length he inclined his ear, and heard my cry." You may meet with discouragement and temptation, and be put to very hard thoughts, but you must be resolute in looking to Christ for help ; reasoning with yourselves like the four lepers at the siege of Samaria, 2 Kings vii. 4. If I live at a distance from Christ I will infallibly perish, there is no hope for me ; if Christ pity me not, when I am waiting on him, I but perish ; but yet there is hope he will have pity at length ; therefore, if I perish, I will perish at Christ's feet, still looking up to him, where never one yet perished ; and I hope he will not let me be the first.

Thus I have essayed to answer some objections ; but after all there may be thousands of objections that remain ; and it is the Lord only that can effectually and powerfully answer them, or any of those already mentioned. But whatever be your objections against receiving Christ, pray to Christ himself to answer them ; he is content that you receive him for this end, to answer all your objections, as well as to pardon all your sins, and subdue all your corruptions.

Notwithstanding of all that has been said, perhaps some are ready to think, my objection hath not been mentioned, my case has not been touched, for, it is a singular case ; I am no more moved

with all that hath been said, than a stone in a wall. Well, it might give some ground for faith, if you consider that Christ can, out of these stones, raise up children to Abraham; and that he hath promised to take away the heart of stone. O sirs, will ye put him to his word? Nay, say you, my heart is raging in enmity against him, like a devil. Well, say not, for all that, there is no hope; for Christ can cast out devils; and it is his work and business to put evil spirits out, and to put his own spirit within you; only give him employment; for it is one of the ways of receiving him, even to employ him to receive you, and to destroy the works of the devil within you. If Christ get no employment here, among all this large company, woe is us that you should all give such a vile slight to precious Christ, as that you prefer your base lusts to him, and will not so much as desire him to put the sacrificing knife to the throat of your lusts; and though he stand knocking at your door, yet you will not so much as desire him to come in, nor invite him to shut up the door. If anybody knock at your door, you will readily desire them to open and come forward; and shall not precious Christ get so much reception as that from you? O invite him, at least, to put in his hand by the hole of the door, and then your bowels will move for him, Song v. 4.—May the Lord persuade you to receive Christ, and answer all your objections against him.

S E R M O N X C V.

“As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”—COL. ii. 6.

[The Twelfth Sermon on this Text.]

GRACE is not an idle habit, but an operative principle; religion doth not make men loiterers, but labourers. After a man hath believed in Christ, and received him, he is not then to lie down upon a bed of slothfulness, as if he had no more ado; nay, he hath much work, relative to God's glory and his own good, to be employed about; he hath duties to be performed; many evils to be reformed; many ordinances to be improved; many heart-plagues to be healed; many temptations to be resisted; many enemies to be vanquished; many graces to be exercised; many corruptions to be mortified; much em-

ployment to give to Christ all his days ; therefore, *As* he hath received Christ Jesus the Lord, so he is to walk in him.

We have already handled, at a considerable length, the first branch of the exhortation, which was to unbelievers to receive Christ. We now proceed,

Secondly, To the second branch of the exhortation, which was to *believers*, who have received Christ, that they walk in him. It is a walking, and a walking in Christ, that they are called unto.

I have already, on the doctrinal part, handled this branch of the text at some length, and spoken of the duty of walking ; the qualification of it, as it is a walking in Christ ; and also the rule of this walk, or the proportion it should bear to our reception of Christ by considering the *AS* and the *SO* in the text : “ *AS* ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *SO* walk ye in him.” And therefore, all that now remains is (by way of exhortation and direction), to press, excite, and direct unto this walk. And in order to the more distinct pursuing of this exhortation, I would, 1. Offer some considerations for clearing our thoughts and conceptions concerning this walk. 2. Some qualifications, or properties of this walk, and of the way wherein we are to walk. 3. Some motives and persuavies that believers have to walk in Christ. 4. Some directions in order to our walking in Christ. If in prosecuting any of these particulars, any head shall occur, that may coincide with what was said on the doctrinal part ; yet the different enlargement will, I hope, make the whole tend to be of new usefulness.

1st, I am to offer some considerations, for clearing our thoughts and uptakings concerning this walk ; and for paving the way to what may afterward be offered upon this exhortation. And the

1. Consideration I offer is, that this Christian walk is not to be expected in any that are not Christians indeed ; yea, it is impossible for a man to have a truly Christian walk, if he be not truly a Christian. What is it to be a Christian ? Why, it is for Christ to be in a man by his Spirit, and the man to be in Christ by faith.—It is for Christ to be in a man by his Spirit ; and indeed Christ must be in us by his Spirit, as a Spirit of regeneration, before we can possibly come to him by faith ; and as regeneration is primarily supposed to this walk, none can walk in Christ if Christ be not in them, and if they be still in a state of nature and unregeneracy : the regenerating Spirit is the spring of this walk. Men, in their natural state, are dead, and cannot walk. I have heard of one that attempted, by art,

to make a statue to walk and speak ; but after all, when he found his art fail him, and the thing impracticable, he was obliged to cry out, *Aliquod deest intus* : " There is something wanting within." Why, there wanted a soul, a living principle within. So it is here : men in nature are but like dead statues, they want something within to make them walk in Christ. It is true, as watches may go right for an hour or two, but will not hold on if the spring be amiss, so natural men may take a pace or two in the ways of God, but they cannot walk unless the spring be right, the heart be renewed, and the Spirit of Christ be put within them.—Again, to be a Christian, it is for a man to be in Christ by faith ; there is no walking in him till there be a receiving of him, and closing with him ; if a man be not in Christ, he cannot walk in Christ. Without faith there is not so much as a good thought or consideration about a Christian walk. Now, serious consideration is requisite thereunto : " I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies. Without faith it is impossible to please God ;" but to walk in Christ is a walk that pleaseth God ; and therefore without faith it is impossible to walk in Christ. Faith takes in the strength of God to enable us to walk ; and without this strength we cannot walk ; for, " The way of man is not in himself ; it is not in man that walketh to order his steps." Therefore, without faith, drawing strength from him, we cannot walk in him. Why ? because we cannot walk with God, without God ; nor walk in Christ without Christ. In a word, it comes all to this : A Christian walk cannot be without a Christian state. O then, seek to be Christians indeed ; *i.e.*, To have Christ in you by his Spirit, and you in Christ by faith ; and not only to be in him by faith in the habit, but to abide in him by faith in the lively exercise thereof ; for, without this, you cannot bring forth fruit unto him, John xv. 5.

2. Consideration I offer is, that there are not a few professors whose walk doth give their profession the lie ; as those spoken of, Psal. lxxviii. 34-37, " They returned, and inquired early after God ; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer ; nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied to him with their tongues ; for their heart was not right with God, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." Many profess to know God, but in works they do deny him. Many profess the name of Christ who never set upon the business of renovation, to be renewed in the Spirit of their mind ; and so they are in the

case of those, Psalm l. 16-22, to whom God saith, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, and take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?" &c. Yea, many walk, of whom the apostle tells us, weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, and who mind earthly things, Phil. iii. 18, 19.

3. Consideration is, that they who profess to be Christians, and yet have no Christian walk, or know nothing of walking in Christ, they deceive themselves with their profession; they get no good of it, and God gets no glory by it. They deceive themselves. Professors, who are not practical, they are but soul-cheaters, self-cheaters; they are the worst of all cheats that cheat themselves: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain," James i. 26. And so, if any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his heart, but giveth way to all carnal thoughts, worldly thoughts, while God is not in all his thoughts, that man's religion is vain. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his appetite, but giveth way to gluttony and drunkenness, that man's religion is vain. If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his *passions*, but giveth way to anger, and wrath, and malice, and revenge, for every injury, that man's religion is vain.—If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his *lips*, but giveth way to lying, and swearing, and cursing, and obscene filthy talking, that man's religion is vain.—If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not the *faculties* of his soul, and members of his body, his hands and his feet from working mischief, and walking in the broad ways of whoredom, and Sabbath-breaking, and neglect of God's worship, in secret, private, and public, that man's religion is vain; he deceiveth his own heart. It is true, the godly have sometimes cast off the bridle, or kept very slack reins, and so stumbled greatly, and fallen foully; but this is not the tenor of their walk, nor the way that, as Christians, they can take pleasure in. And, therefore, the proposition remains thus ever firm: they that profess to be Christians, without having a Christian walk, they deceive themselves. Yea, they get no good of their profession, and are in the case of those, Ezek. xxxiii. 31, "They come and appear before God as his people; they sit before him, and hear his words, but they will not do them; for, with their mouth they shew much love, but their

heart goeth after their covetousness." They get no good of their profession, who know nothing of the life and power of godliness ; their religion is vain ; they please themselves with the empty shell, but never eat the kernel. And as they get no good by it, so God gets no glory by it, nor the gospel any credit. A profession without a Christian walk, is no ornament to religion ; we ought to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. "Let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." The man that hath nothing of this, deserveth not the name of a professor. Oh ! how many plagues are in our bosom, that make, instead of an ornament to religion, a stain to the Christian name, like those 1 Tim. v. 24, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment ; and some follow after." Which words seem to be spoken concerning church-censures ; some men's sins are open, and obvious, and evident, before ever they be brought under any censure ; others they follow after ; they are not reformed by any censure.

4. Consideration is, that those who, through grace, have a Christian walk, they have the happiest life of it, as well as the holiest ; hence says Christ to his disciples, John xiii. 17, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if do them." And Psal. cxix. 1, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." A Christian walk, indeed, is not the meritorious or procuring cause of this happiness ; but it is the character, property, and quality of happy men ; blessings, both spiritual and temporal, are entailed upon such ; yea, it is only such who have a well-grounded, well settled hope of heaven ; and hence this walk and this hope are joined together, Tit. ii. 11, 12, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ." Here they are knit and buckled together ; and if this buckle be loosed, the man will have little hope ; hence if a professor drink drunk, and swear, and lie, and whore, and cheat, he cannot have the hope of heaven in such a course ; for such folk do not answer Christ's design in the gospel : "To be a peculiar people, zealous of good works." For, though good works, and a Christian walk, be not the ground of the man's hope, (for that alone is Christ and his righteousness,) yet it is the garment wherewith true hope is adorned,

and by which it is known ; and therefore, " He that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3.

5. Consideration I offer is, that this Christian walk is many ways pressed and urged in scripture ; it is both commanded and commended ; and there are both threatenings and promises relating to it. The Lord doth command it, saying, " Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called," Eph. iv. 1. Believers in Christ are expressly commanded in this, " As they have received Christ, so to walk in him." And we may see the Lord commanding this very walk in his own name and authority, Jer. vi. 16, " 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." The Lord not only commands it, but commends it. Thus was Noah commended, Gen. vii. 1, " Come thou and thy house into the ark, for thee have I found righteous before me in this generation." Thus was Enoch commended : for, " By faith he walked with God, and was not, for God took him ; and before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." And indeed all that thus walk, shall be thus translated, though not corporally at the first, as he was. The body, like Elijah's mantle, stays a little while behind, to be locked up in a cabinet of dust, while the soul is translated at death, to be with God. What is that ? Never to sin more ; never to sorrow more ; always praising God ; always rejoicing in him ; and pressed down with nothing but a weight of glory. Thus it shall be with all who walk in Christ ; for they are made meet for this inheritance of the saints in light. Others are not fit for heaven, and so could not dwell in it. But I was saying, that God commends this walk ; and to give all the instances of commendation, that he gives this way, would lead me to enlarge too far. There are threatenings relating to this walk. God threatens to bring sad strokes upon such as are strangers to this Christian walk ; Lev. xxvi. 27, " If ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me, then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury ; and punish you seven times more for your sins." Yea, if God's own children step aside, and take not heed to their walk, they shall smart for it : though he take not his loving-kindness from them, yet, if they break his laws, and walk not in his commandments, he will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes, Psal. lxxxix. 30, 33. Again, there are promises relating to this walk. There are promises of it and to it.

Promises of it, like that, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." And indeed none would walk so much as a right step, without the Spirit to guide them. Then there are promises to it; hence godliness is said to be great gain, having the promises of this life, and that which is to come. This Christian walk hath promises, not in the way of the first covenant, when the promise was made to works itself; but here it is made to the worker, or walker in Christ; or to the walk, as it is an evidence of union to him, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen.

6. Consideration I offer is, that this Christian walk hath a reference to all the duties of religion, to all the graces of the Spirit, and to all the directions of the word, which is the rule of this walk. It hath a reference, I say, to all the duties of religion; and so they cannot walk in Christ, who neglect the duty of prayer, the duty of watchfulness, the duty of vowing, and paying our vows to the Lord, as David, Psalm cxvi. 9, 14, compared.—It hath a reference to all the graces of the Spirit. Christ is the way that the believer walks in: but, as in a highway there are several foot roads, some on this side, and some on that side of the way, which a person may conveniently walk in, and yet never go off from the highway; so here the several graces of the Spirit are like so many branches of the way and road, for believers to walk in, so many little walks by the wayside. There is the walk of faith, which we are daily to step into, acting faith on Christ's righteousness, for acceptance; acting upon his fulness for supply; acting upon him for grace to kill sin and to quicken the soul; and acting upon him for glory, and for another life to come. There is the walk of repentance: while the soul looks to him whom it pierced, and mourns. O sirs, when the soul looks to Christ crucified, it sees more of the cursed nature of sin, and more of the cursed desert of sin, than it is capable to express. He that was infinitely pleased with his Son, could not but be infinitely displeased with sin, that made him to bruise him, till he melted under the burden of these fiery mountains of wrath, that were heaped upon him: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." There is the walk of love, Eph. v. 2, "Walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour." O! here is a pleasant walk: "God is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 16. Many walk in doubts and fears, but if we were more in the sweet

element of love, we would doubt less; for, ver. 18, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment: he that feareth is not made perfect in love." And if we were more in this happy region of love to God, we would be more in love to one another.—There is the walk of joy, that the believer should be stepping into, "Rejoicing in Christ Jesus: rejoicing evermore." This joy is not only a privilege, but a duty; not only a part of our happiness, but a part of our holiness, a part of this walk, a commanded duty. This joy of the Lord is the strength of the soul, and this walk in holy joy is not inconsistent with a walking in holy fear; they are both put together, Acts ix. 31, "Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they were multiplied." Is the believer married to Christ, and should he not delight in his Husband? He delights in them, and should they not delight in him? Believers should mourn all their lives for sin, and yet rejoice all their life in Christ: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full," John xv. 11. It is Christ's joy to see his people rejoicing in him; in his love, in his death, in his resurrection and intercession, in his fulness and righteousness, in his merit and Spirit; for this holy and spiritual walk is from the Spirit, as the principle; in the Spirit, as the mover; and after the Spirit, as the guide.—But again, this walk, it hath a reference to all the directions of the word as the rule of it. The man that walks in Christ hath a respect to all God's commandments, and a respect to the whole word as the rule; for, "Whoever walketh according to this rule, peace be on him," saith the apostle, "and on all the Israel of God." Oh! how few discover a Christian walk from this very particular, that they are so unacquainted with the rule of the Christian walk; such strangers to the Bible! Many cast the rule of the Bible behind their back. Would she not be counted a whorish woman, who had received a letter from her long-absent husband, and when she had read it, she rent it in pieces, and tread it under foot? And, indeed, all of you are doing this while you are slighsters of the Bible from Sabbath to Sabbath, and make no conscience of walking by the rule of the word.

7. The seventh consideration I offer is, that this walk hath a preference beyond all other walks; even the best walk of any in the world that are but pretenders to religion and Christianity. As the worshippers of the beast have the mark of the beast: God's children have God's seal, 2 Tim. ii. 19, "The foundation of God standeth

sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." God's seal hath a double motto; the one denotes their security, "The Lord knoweth them that are his:" the other denotes their sanctity, "They depart from iniquity." There are many wild flowers in the field that bear a resemblance unto, and look like the flowers in the garden, but are really not the same; so, many things at a distance look like sanctification, and a Christian walk, but at a nearer view are quite different from it.

There is a threefold walk, that looks like a Christian walk, but yet it is not only different from it, but opposite to it; and this Christian walk is so far beyond it as heaven is above earth.

(1.) The walk of civility, which is nothing else but a fair shew in the flesh; rather a heathenish strictness than a Christian holiness. For mere civility is usually accompanied with ignorance of God and the mysteries of his kingdom. Men may be no drunkards, no swearers, no adulterers, no rude debauched persons, and yet grossly ignorant of spiritual matters: so Nicodemus, a ruler in Israel, a strict Pharisee, a civil man, and yet a mere ignoramus in the new birth, John iii. 10. Whereas a Christian walk begins with knowledge and with the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Jesus Christ is usually little prized by civil men: they are satisfied with their own righteousness; they do not hunger and thirst after Christ's righteousness. The law is more natural to men than the gospel; yea, the gospel is not at all what nature can duly imagine about; therefore, legal strains and moral maxims suit more with them than gospel doctrine; but, to the Christian, Christ is all in all. Some reigning lust usually keeps company with civility; such as covetousness, for ordinary. The young man in the gospel, that was a civil honest man, a fair dealer in the world, and could say, "I have kept all these things from my youth;" so he might, as to the letter of them; yet, behold, his possessions were a snare to him; at the narrow bridge of self-denial Christ and his soul parted.—In a word, the civilian usually takes more care about his actions than about his lusts; he can digest all the lusts of wrath, malice, pride, worldly thoughts, and unclean affections; because the conversation seems to be smooth and fair, these crawling vermin swarm in the heart without control; why, civility is all for outward carriage, it minds not the heart. But the Christian walker complains even of the law in his members, the sinful workings of the heart; his eyes like the windows of the temple, are broad inward; he looks

much within, and mourns over the sins of the heart as well as those of the life. But there is,

(2.) The walk of the Formalist, that hath but a dead form : this Christian walk is vastly beyond that. Why ? The formalist acts from foreign considerations, motives from without ; such as popular applause, carnal respect, worldly honours, preferments, and the like. Just like puppets, that want the natural motion of life within, and are artificially moved by an outward force. The Spirit of God may assist the hypocrite in some duties ; but he is not in him as an informing, quickening, renewing principle : but the Spirit is in the believer, like a living fountain, natively bullering up, " Out of his belly floweth rivers of living water," John vii. 27. Formalists are careless of God's sight and presence ; they can neither appeal to God for their sincerity, nor live in his presence, as in the eye of his omniscience ; but their great care is to blind the world. The Christian can appeal to God, with Peter ; " Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee." At other times he loathes himself at the sight of God's glorious majesty and purity, in the sense of his defects, " Now mine eyes seeth thee ; therefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and in ashes." The formalist is proud of his false grace, but the Christian walk is always attended with spiritual poverty. The more knowledge the saint hath, the more he is sensible of his ignorance ; the more faith, the more he bewails his unbelief ; the more love, the more he blames his heart for want of love. It is a good sign when the soul is kept hungry and humble, in the sense of its wants amidst the height of its enjoyments.

(3.) The walk of the temporary Christian seemeth excellent ; but this true Christian walk hath the preference. Some hypocrites are under the influence of restraining grace, chained up by their own fears ; but not moved by gospel-grace, nor restrained by love and mercy ; this restraining grace, where there is no more, never destroys sin, but only discharges the acts of it ; but true grace sweetly inclines the heart to hate every false way, and to run the way of God's commandments.—Other hypocrites are under the influence of common temporary grace : this hath a degree of excellency beyond all the former, and yet comes to nothing. It differs from civility because it is more Christian and evangelical. It differs from formality, because that is only a show, and this is a real work on the soul. It differs from restraining grace, for that avoids sin, and performs duty from slavish fear ; but this seems to have some

affection for Christ and his word : this a man may have, and yet fall away, like the stony ground hearers. This is the nearest to true grace, and it is called, Heb. vi. 5, an enlightening ; a taste of the heavenly gift, a partaking of the Holy Ghost, namely, in his gifts, that are common ; but yet the light here spoken of is not humbling, the taste is not ravishing, the gifts are not renewing ; all that they have puffs them up. The foundations sink that are not laid deep enough. The true Christian walk doth magnify Christ, and debase self ; this Dagon falls down before the ark. In a word, a formalist and hypocrite, or legalist, may have the Spirit, and yet not be born of the Spirit ; he may have the Spirit shining on him, like the glancing of the sunbeams upon a glass window ; but the saint hath the Spirit in him, like a well of water springing up to everlasting life. He enjoys his indwelling presence and his gracious working, not only in his inferior operation, but in effectual regeneration and spiritual transformation ; and so the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father, Gal. vi. 5, 6. But in order to clear this difference further,

8. The last consideration I offer is, that this Christian walk is different from all other pretenders to it, especially in its relation to Christ. And it hath chiefly a threefold relation to Christ. As of him, and through him, and to him are all things : so, this walk being a walk in Christ, is of him, as the author ; through him, as the altar, and to him, as the end : it is of him, as the Alpha ; through him, as the way of acceptance ; and to him, as the Omega : it is of him, as the efficient cause ; through him, as the accepting cause ; and to him, as the final cause.

(1.) This Christian walk is of him, as the Alpha, the principle, the efficient cause ; I live, says Paul, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Every step of this walk is an act of the soul, made alive unto God through Christ, and his quickening it by the supereminent influences of the Spirit of Christ, without whom we can do nothing. We have neither life nor legs, to walk without Christ : it is he that worketh in us, both to will and to do. It is he that giveth power to the faint, and increaseth strength to that have no might. Then they run without wearying, and walk without fainting. The man is able for all things, through Christ strengthening him : now he surmounts all difficulties, which before were insuperable. Though the soul be the formal agent, yet the power and efficiency, by which it acts, is from him :

as the soul animates the body; so Christ animates the believer's soul in this Christian walk. Here is a mystery which is but madness and melancholy to an ignorant world; and particularly to blind moralists.

(2.) This Christian walk is *through him*, as the ALTAR, the mean of acceptance, and the accepting cause; for, "We are accepted in the beloved." It is in him alone that God is well pleased: this is the altar on which the gift is to be laid. As the believer draws all his strength from him; so he expects all his acceptance through him: no action, no duty is accepted but as perfumed by the merit of his oblation. Though they should be melted down into tears of gospel-tenderness: yet they dare not present them to God, for acceptance; but only by Christ; they carry back these tears to be bathed in his blood; knowing that their salt water is of little value with God; expecting only to be accepted upon the value of the blood of the Lamb, and the virtue and efficacy of his intercession.

(3.) This Christian walk is to him, as the OMEGA, the final cause, and the end of it: it is all directed to the praise of his grace, and to the glory of God in Christ. The very thoughts of robbing God of his glory, and clothing himself with the spoils of his honour, are sometimes terrible to him: why, he is upon a God-exalting, Christ-honouring, and grace magnifying design. This is the very nature of the Christian walk, and that which completes the image of God, when his glory, and the exaltation of his grace, and the manifestation of his glorious perfections, is uppermost in the man's thoughts, desires, designs, and endeavours. When it is the man's greatest wish on earth, to shew forth the glory of his name: and his greatest errand to heaven, to see this glorious object, and be in case to extol him up for ever. This is the walk we are called to, and herein it is distinguished from all that moralists, formalists, legalists, and hypocrites can attain. May these considerations be indeed the matter of your consideration; and may the Lord acquaint you with this walk; that receiving Christ, you may so walk in him.

2dly, I am to offer some qualities and properties of the way. Having considered the walk already at some length, I shall now confine myself to speak a little of the way: and indeed every property, that I am to offer of this way, that you are to walk in, may be a strong inducement to those that are out of the way, to come

to it ; and those that come to it, to walk in it. All men are walking in some way or other : What is the way most part are walking in ? Why, they are walking after the flesh, Rom. viii. 1 ; walking in the way of their own heart, Eccl. ii. 9 ; walking after their own devices, Jer. xviii. 2 ; walking after vanity, Jer. ii. 5 ; walking after their own ungodly lusts ; this is far from walking in Christ ; and yet, this is the walk of the most part of the world. The lascivious man walks in his lusts ; the covetous man walks in his wealth, as in his strong tower ; the voluptuous man walks in his pleasures : the hypocrite walks in his formal duties, &c. Oh ! how few walk in Christ ! They who do so are a few persons by themselves ; and of another spirit, like Caleb, Num. xiv. 24. However, this is the walk of true believers ; and if they do not walk so, they do not act like themselves : “ As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” Christ says, “ I am the way,” John xiv 6 ; and here his apostle says the same : “ As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him :” in him, who is the way, wherein ye are to walk. And now, to shew what sort of a way this is, we need not be at a loss, if we were under the conduct of the word and Spirit of Christ, who is the way. There are these ten qualities and properties of this way, wherein you are to walk : all the conveniences that the heart of man can conceive or devise ; all the accommodations, that may either gain people to this way, or refresh people that are in this way : and therefore apply it still, as we go along, by way of motive to quicken you to set footing in this way, if you be out of it, and to make progress therein, if you be in it.

1. One property is, that it is a free way for all comers to enter into, and for all entrants to walk in. It is free for all comers to enter into. It is a way barred up to no person whatsoever ; a way whose gates are cast off from the hinges : Whoever will, may come freely to it, without money and without price. There are some ways, some bridges over certain rivers, which we cannot be allowed to pass without paying some little money, for defraying the charges of the building, or support thereof : but here is a way, a bridge built over the ocean of God’s wrath ; a way for sinners to get to God. And, indeed, it is a costly way, built at the greatest expense that God and Christ could be at, yet free to us ; nothing to pay for the passage. It was indeed a costly way to the Father, and cost him his own Son ; not so as to lose him for ever, but so as to kill him for a time. Though a man do not lose his child ; yet it goes

to his heart to see his child tormented ; much more when he himself is forced to be the tormentor. Christ was the Father's beloved Son, the delight of his bosom ; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him : he not only beheld the tragedy that was acted upon him by man, but allowed the suffering ; yea, and was the chief actor of it himself : it pleased him to bring about the salvation of sinners this way. It was costly to Christ ; he parted with the glory of his divinity, for a while, though not with the essence of it : and though he was King of kings, underwent the notion of a beggar, and took upon him the form of a servant ; yea, and died the cursed death of the cross. But yet it is a free way to us, without any cost or charge : Christ is freely given of the Father, to be the sinner's way to him : and it is by way of absolute free gift ; " I will give thee for a covenant of the people." Not for our sake doth he it, but for his own name's sake ; insomuch that the greatest of sinners may freely enter into this way ; " By grace ye are saved, through faith : and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." If any thing was to be done on our part, to partake of Christ, we might have whereof to boast ; Rom. iv. 2, " If Abraham was justified by works, he had whereof to glory." Therefore God gives Christ freely, without any consideration in us, to move him thereto ; yea, contrary to all the evil in us, that might move him to deny Christ unto us ; and all to the praise of the glory of his grace ; that we may come boldly to this throne of grace. If this way of access to God was not free, we could not come boldly. If God shewed a regard to any previous good in us, it would mar our boldness ; but we have boldness to enter into the holiest, not by his blood and our actions, but only by his blood. If a man hath a mind to step into the king's highway, out of his house, which is the subject's privilege, no man can say to him, you trespass in so doing ; it is made to be common for all : so Christ is a free common good ; a common way to all sorts of persons whatsoever, to whom there is a heart given to step into the way. Christ allows all sorts of sinners to come to him, and enter into this way : but he allows none to live in sin that have come to him : nay, he purges out their sin. Let none take it amiss that we say, the vilest of sinners are freely welcome to this way, that they may walk in it ; and then surely they will walk at another rate, than they have done : in this sense it is that Christ says, Publicans and harlots may enter into the kingdom of heaven before the self-righteous Pharisees, Matt. xxi. 31. Men's thoughts run another

strange way : if I have little holiness and righteousness, then the man thinks, now I may, in regard of that holiness and righteousness, without presumption, close with Christ : why, this is to overthrow the gospel of the grace of God in Christ, who says, that he came to save that which was lost : and came not to call the righteous, but sinners. It is a free way for all comers to enter into. And it is free for all that have entered into it to walk in, and to walk freely. Walking is a voluntary motion, and the regenerate soul walks freely, without force or compulsion, or a base mercenary spirit ; “The love of Christ constrains him :” love is a golden weight, that hangs upon the soul, and makes every wheel of it to move. Christ is such a free way, as makes all his people volunteers in his service ; “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” It is their choice, their delight, their option : “I have chosen the way of truth,” Psal. cxix. 3.

2. Another property is, it is a safe way to walk in ; and so as there is here the freest walking, so there is here the safest walking ; hence it is said of the man that walketh in this way, Isa. xxxiii. 16. “He shall dwell on high, the place of his defence shall be the munition of rocks.” In this way the man is so safe that he needs fear no evil. O how sweetly do they walk, who can sing the twenty-third Psalm in the very view of death. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil ; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” There is the greatest security in this way ; “He that walketh uprightly walketh surely. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, shall abide under the shade of the Almighty,” Psal. xci. 1. Let a man take any other way in the world to heaven, but Christ, and there are a thousand dangers in it, and hazards of miscarrying : but let a man take this way and walk in it, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against him. It is said of this way, Isa. xxxv. 9, “No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall be found there : but the redeemed of the Lord shall walk there.” Those that keep close to this way, they keep out of the reach of Satan, the roaring lion ; that wicked one toucheth them not. It is true, they are the objects of his greatest spite : but they are out of his reach ; he can do them no real hurt, while they keep close in this way. They that walk in their lusts, and in sin, they are in Satan’s way, and he hath them at his will : this is the way to hell. They that are walking in their own righteousness, as their way to heaven, Satan hath continual advantage against them ;

because there is so much sin in all their righteousness, and so much of the devil in all their goodness, they are not out of the reach of the lion. It is a safe way to walk in, you cannot be safe in any other way, that hath salvation at the end of it; for it leads to eternal glory and eternal happiness; Heb. xii. 1, 2, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Other ways lead to hell, this takes to heaven, for the promise is made to this way, and to the walkers in it; for, "All the promises are in Christ Yea and Amen." And those that live godly in Christ Jesus, have the promises of this life, and of that which is to come.

3. The third property is, it is a lightsome way to walk in: for there is much light in this way: hence, says the prophet, Micah vii. 8, 9, "When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me; he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness, Psal. cxix. 130. The entrance of thy word giveth light: it giveth understanding to the simple." It discovers sin to be sin, and duty to be duty. "It is a pleasant thing, (says Solomon) for the eye to behold the sun," and, Oh! it is a heavy thing for a traveller to be benighted and overtaken with darkness! And hence the summer seasons are the best seasons for travellers in the way, because it is lightsome. Now, sirs, all other ways but this are darkness: Christ is the light of the world; John viii. 12, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The light of knowledge, in opposition to the darkness of ignorance and error, is in this way: for he that is the way, teacheth all the travellers, according to his promise, "They shall all be taught of God," never a schoolmaster in the world, can teach the perfect trade of walking uprightly, but Christ, the God-man: they are all but unskilful, that are not taught of him, and by his Spirit, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. We that are ministers, we leave you all but unpolished dunces in Christianity, till the Lord himself come in to that ministry: and, by his Spirit, teach your spirits: and then, when he comes, he can make you wiser than your teachers. Again,

4. The fourth property is, it is a firm and solid way to walk

in ; there is no fear of sinking, while we keep this causeway, this road. Gluts of rain make some miry, boggy ways sinking, to both men and horses. But here is a way that is a firm rock ; all the rain that falls upon it runs away ; it is a sure foundation : it is firm in the foulest as well as in the fairest weather. Christ is a way that will deceive none that walk in him : some ways will look well enough to the eye, and yet deceive people : some places will look as green and fair as any other parts of solid ground, and yet they are such quagmires and bogs, that men and horses will sink to the neck therein : even so, there is a way of self-righteousness, and legal obedience, that seems to be a fair, green way, that promises firmness ; but he that walks there, will himself sink ; and if Christ come not to pluck him out, he will sink over head and ears. Paul durst not be found in that way of his own righteousness, but looked upon it as dung, Phil. iii. 8, 9. Now, you know dung makes both a stinking way, and a sinking way : even so, when men go about to establish their own righteousness, for justification, and so the way to the Father, it smells in the divine nostrils, as dung : and not only so, but, as it is unacceptable to God, so it is unprofitable to us, in point of acceptance ; for, it is a sinking way : we cannot keep firm footing upon it, but sink in it ; but Christ is such a firm way to walk in, that you cannot sink therein : for, he upholds with the right hand of his righteousness. The way of sin is a sinking way ; the man will sink to hell, that walks in it : the way of self-righteousness also is a slippery way ; all the righteousness of man is not able to uphold him ; for the sin that is in his righteousness is enough to trip up his heels, and lay him in the mire, and overthrow him. But the man walks firmly that walks and builds upon a rock. Though they that walk in Christ are not free of the filthiness of sin altogether ; but as water falling upon a rocky way, glides as fast as it falls, the way being as hard as before the rain : so, though the Lord hath laid on Christ the iniquity of us all, and the believer's sin falls still upon Christ ; yet he passed away all this iniquity from himself, by making full satisfaction : if Christ should have our sin remaining on him, he himself would be a sinking way to us : if Christ was sinful in the eyes of God, we could never be clean in his eye ; but when sin was laid upon Christ, how did he sweat it out, when he trode the wine-press alone ! Again,

5. The fifth property is, that it is a high and honourable way ; Isa. xxxv. 8, " An high-way shall be there, and it shall be called

the way of holiness ; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those : the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." It is an high and honourable way : if you walk in this way, you may debate with any man, in point of honour ; for therein you have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son. They that walk in this way, they dwell on high ; for it is the way of God : it is the king's high-way, the way of the King of kings ; " Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," Matt. iii. 3. It is the way of holiness, that makes it an honourable way also, of which God says, " Without holiness no man shall see God." Indeed, none can walk in holiness that do not walk in Christ ; and none shall ascend to heaven that are not sanctified in Christ. There is no man or woman, no king or queen, no lord or lady, no rich or poor person in the world ; no magistrate or subject, no minister or people, shall get to heaven without holiness, or being sanctified in Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. i. 2. It is high and honourable as it is the path of righteousness, " He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his own name's sake," Psal. xxiii. 3. And so it is the way everlasting ; Psal. cxxxix. 25, " See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting ;" *i. e.* the way that is everlastingly true, everlastingly good, everlastingly holy, everlastingly pleasing to God, and profitable to man, and ends in everlasting life. It is an high-way ; a way by itself, and distinguished from the ways of the world ; for, it is a way of separation from, and non-conformity to this world. " The unclean shall not pass over it," that is, the unregenerate, either to defile the way, or disturb those that walk there ; and they that walk in it shall be undefiled in the way ; and shall more and more escape the pollutions that are in the world. Why ? there is a river that runs along this way, the streams whereof not only make glad, but make clean, the city of God ; the river of the blood of Christ, the river of the influences of the Spirit : by these they are cleansed from all sin. Thus it is in every respect an high, holy, and honourable way. Again,

6. The sixth property of this way is, it is an easy way ; " My yoke is easy," says Christ : and saith the prophet here of this way, " The way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein ;" though of a weak capacity in other things he shall have such plain directions from the word and Spirit, that he shall not err therein ; not that they shall be infallible, and commit no mistake ; but they shall not be guilty of any fatal miscarriage ; nor so miss their way, but

that they shall recover it again, through grace, and get well to their journey's end. This way is easy to hit, "Knowledge is easy to him that understandeth," saith Solomon: to nature it is a most difficult way indeed; but, through grace, it is a most easy way, and such a way as wherein a man cannot be lost. In the way of the covenant of works, a man may presently lose himself: there is not one work he doth, but he commits sin in it, and so he presently steps aside; and, having thus lost himself, he must begin again, go about, and come where he was at the first; when all is done, it is as good as if it had been undone; for the law is not satisfied with any thing less than perfection: and this perfection of righteousness, we can only have in Christ. But further, there are these four things, that make this way an easy way to walk in.

(1.) It is an easy way in point of clearness; Christ maketh everything clear, to the man that comes into this way; for, the anointing which they receive, teaches them all things: he maketh himself evident to them, and giveth understanding to the simple; insomuch that the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err; the Spirit of truth leadeth them into all truth that is necessary for them: the gospel makes the simple wise.

(2.) It is an easy way in point of nearness; they that walk in Christ have a short cut to the Father, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." Other ways are like the crooked bow, but Christ is the even string: all other ways are compasses about; yea, they are labyrinths in which men lose themselves. How near a way Christ is, you have account, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8, "Say not, Who shall ascend into heaven? Or, who shall descend into the deep? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." The way to heaven is nigh; there is but one step to it, as it were, and that is to step in to Christ, and remain there, "He that believeth shall be saved." The old way of the law of works is a long way; for, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." If a man will run an hundred miles for money, which he may have just at his door, and but one step to it, sure his journey is vain; so it is here, Christ hath grace and salvation, and all in him, and he lays them down at our door; and what need all this travel with respect to legal working? Here is a near way.

But here a question may be propounded, Will not this discourage men to work, or to do good works? To which we might reply,

Indeed it may discourage selfish men, that work for themselves, and for their own justification and acceptance; which is a work that God rejects: a service of selfishness may be discouraged by this gospel-doctrine; but the service of thankfulness, which is the only true service, and is more cordial and sedulous than all the mercenary work in the world; this service will be furthered and encouraged thereby. True service to God in Christ, is not a serving him slavishly, to purchase salvation from him; but a serving of him thankfully, to glorify him who hath brought salvation to us. Thus it is an easy way in point of nearness: a great deal of labour and toil is saved.

(3.) It is an easy way in point of readiness and dispatch of business therein: whosoever chooseth Christ for a way to walk in, comes to a very quick dispatch of all the business of holiness, sanctification, and mortification, which they are to do, while they are in the way; for Christ, whom the believer chooseth for his way, anoints the wheels of their soul, and puts them into a nimble motion; 1 Pet. ii. 3, "To whom coming as to a living stone, ye as lively stones are built up." Christ, being the living stone, makes every one that cometh to him living; yea, and lively too: and we say a man is a lively man, that is quick in business. Why? Christ is their strength: he is the strong arm that draws the bow, and the stronger the arm is that draws the bow, the swifter is the flight of the arrow and the further it flies. Christ is the living principle within that makes them lively: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The larger that the root of the tree is, the more sap doth it gather, and the more fruit doth it bring forth: Christ is the large root, where he is once received, and so there are answerable spirits and sap coming from him; there will be a bringing forth of much fruit: hence believers are said to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might: there is the believer's stock. A poor maid servant or widow can do little for themselves in the world; why? because their stock does not reach far: but if married to a rich man, then they could do much, because they are interested in a large stock: so, when a person is married to Christ, that before was poor, the is now interested in a rich stock; for "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:" and when there is such, a great stock to trade upon, there may be a great deal of work done with much dispatch; "I can do all things, through Christ strengthening me; yea, when I am weak, then am I strong."

(4.) It is an easy way in point of largeness ; for it is a spacious way, wherein there is abundance of room and liberty : “ If the Son make you free, then are ye free indeed.” It is true, it is said, “ Strait is the way :” and it is strait, not only because of the strictness and exactness that is required, while the way will allow no toleration for sin ; but also that it is a way, that allows no room to anything else but Christ : there is no room for a man’s own righteousness for justification jointly, together with Christ : but now Christ, considered in himself, is a large and spacious way, both in respect of the number that are allowed to come into this way, and the liberty and freedom he allows them that walk in him ; they walk at liberty. There is a manifold bondage in every other way ; bondage to sin, Satan, death, hell, wrath, and to the law as a covenant of works. In a word, other ways are crooked, but this is a straight, even way.

7. The seventh property is, that it is the good old way ; Jer. vi. 16, “ 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.” This way you are to walk in, it is not a new up-start way, but the old beaten way, in which all the patriarchs and prophets have walked ; we are to consult the purest antiquity ; to ask for the path that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have travelled in, and all the saints these five thousand years, and more.” “ Ask for the old path ; where is the good way :” we must not be guided purely by antiquity, as if that plea was sufficient to justify our path : no, by no means : there is an old way, which wicked men have trodden, Job xxii. 15. But when we ask for the old way, it is to be for the good old way. The gospel is no new scheme : Christ is an old way in four respects.

(1.) It is an old way in respect of the contrivance of it ; it is no new invention, but as old as eternity : Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ; that is, from eternity : he was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. God’s way of saving sinners by Christ, is according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, before the foundation of the world was laid, Eph. iii. 11, 2 Tim. i. 9.

(2.) It is an old way in respect of the revelation of it ; for it was revealed immediately upon the back of the fall : “ The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.” Adam knew this way ; and Abraham saw Christ’s day, and Christ was before him ; “ Before Abraham was, I am.”

(3.) It is an old way in respect of the use and improvement of it: It is not of late use; it is long since the saints began to walk in it. There was never another way to heaven, since the covenant of works was broken and violate; and all that have walked to heaven since the beginning of the world by faith, they walked in this way, Heb. xi. And so,

(4.) It is an old way in respect that it was the Old Testament as well as the New Testament way. The Old Testament church had the same faith and hope in Christ, that the New Testament church have; only with this difference, their faith was to look forward, and our faith is to look backward; they upon a Messiah to come, and we upon a Messiah that is come. It is the good old way.

8. The eighth property is, that it is the new and living way. "Having boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way," Heb. ix. 19. But here two questions may be proposed.

QUEST. 1. Why called a new way?

ANSW. (1.) It is called a new way, because it is come after the old way of the covenant of works. God never designed to bring one man to heaven, by that old covenant of works; he erected that scaffold for a little while, that the glory of the new covenant might be displayed. The condition of that covenant was perfect, personal obedience, upon pain of eternal death; and now, by sin, this bridge is broken down; yet, such is the folly of a blind world, that they labour to build up that bridge again; but it is rotten, and will never bear us over.

2. A new way in respect of the new, clear, gospel-revelation thereof now under the New Testament; for, under the Old, the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, Heb. ix. 8. The brightest revelations of Christ, under the Old Testament, were in these or the like words; that he was to be the seed of the woman, the son of David, a prophet like unto Moses, a child born, whose name should be Wonderful Counsellor; but what are all these to that one bright word of the Baptist's, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world?" And therefore, John the Baptist is called greater than all the Old Testament prophets: and yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he, that can say with the apostle, "We have seen with our eyes, heard with our ears, and handled with our hands, the word of life," and can preach a crucified, dead, buried, risen, exalted, and glorified Christ, that hath

brought an everlasting righteousness; hereupon it was said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see," even what the Old Testament saints longed to see, and never saw, except one, who was the happiest of the Old Testament saints, viz., old Simeon; he was both an Old Testament and a New Testament saint: he got it revealed to him, that he should not see death, till he had seen the Lord's Christ. Again they had but types of Christ, and the shadows of things to come: "but the body is of Christ." What a great difference is there between a priest's cutting a lamb's throat, and Christ giving himself a sacrifice! Therefore it is called a new way.

(3.) It is new, because it is always new. The blood of Christ is but newly shed, as it were, and there is no abatement of the virtue of his death: his blood is as warm, and cries as loud this day as the day it was shed; yea, it is always new, so as it never gives place to another way: there will never be another way to heaven: and we need to take heed how we improve this; "For if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth," in rejecting this way, "there remains no more sacrifice for sin," Heb. x. 26; That is, God will never provide another way, to the end of the world, but this one way.

(4.) It is a new way, because it is well prepared, as new ways used to be, and we may walk confidently and comfortably in it; for it is such a well-prepared way, that one can hardly set his foot in this way, to walk in it, but he is almost at the end of the way; because "He that hath the Son hath life." We receive eternal life, by receiving of Christ: not the full enjoyment of it, but a right to it, and an earnest of it. When a man sees Christ, he sees heaven; "Those eyes shall see the King in his beauty, and the land that is afar off," Isa. xxxiii. 17. When a man sees him, he sees the land afar off: in regard none can take a believing look of Christ, but he must see heaven and salvation in his face. But,

QUEST. 2. Why called the LIVING way?

ANS. (1.) It is called a living way, because there was life in his death: the life of reconciliation; "We have peace by the blood of his cross;" for here he satisfied justice, fulfilled the law demands, and expiated sin, which was the ground of the quarrel.

(2.) A living way because he is the life of the world; and all that are in this way live; and no man can die in this way; no traveller upon it can die; "He that believeth in me, shall never die." When bodily death comes they but sleep in Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life.

(3.) A living way, because he lives for ever to be the way. Eternal life is one of Christ's names, "This is the true God, and eternal life," 1 John v. 20. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," Heb. vii. 25.

(4.) A living way, because travellers must live upon this way : the traveller lives as soon as he is in it, and he lives as long as he is in it, and he lives upon it : all his fare is Christ himself ; whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed. If the traveller be faint and hungry, he hath nothing ado but to fall upon Christ, by faith, and live upon him, "The life that I live is by faith on the Son of God." Never desire better entertainment for a child of God, than more of Christ, more of his grace, more of his fullness, more of his Spirit, more of the sap and virtue of a crucified Jesus.

9. The ninth property is, that it is a consecrated way ; Heb. x. 19, 20, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us," that is, dedicated to be the way. Now, Christ is consecrated.

[1.] By the FATHER, to be the way in which we are to walk.

(1.) He is consecrated by the oath of God ; "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedeck," Psal. cx. 4. Heb. vii. 28, "For the law maketh men high-priests which have infirmity, but the word of the oath which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." By the oath of JEHOVAH he is appointed to be the only way to bring sinners to glory. (2.) He is consecrated by the preparing him a body ; Heb. x. 5, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me." (3.) By the Father's commission and charge that he gave him about the work of redemption, to suffer in that body or human nature, "This commandment have I received of my Father," John x. 17. (4.) By the holy anointing ; Psal. xlv. 7, "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness ; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (5.) By getting all power and judgment committed to him, "For, as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them : even so the Son quickeneth whom he will, John v. 21, 22. 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.] Christ did consecrate HIMSELF to be the way for sinners to walk in to heaven. (1.) By willingly complying with the Father's will; Psal. xl. 8, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." A great part of his consecration lay in his compliance with the divine will; "By the which will we are sanctified." (2.) He consecrated himself by his willing death; John xvii. 19, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." So that sanctifying himself is just his consecrating himself: devoting himself to be a sacrifice for his sheep. We could never come to that sanctification by gospel-devotedness to God, unless Christ had devoted himself to death. (3.) He consecrated himself, by displaying his authority to save, and declaring his ability. For, as there is no Saviour beside him, Hos. xiii. 4: so, he came into the world to save sinners, 1 Tim. i. 18: and, "He shall save his people from their sins," Matt. i. 21, because he is able to save to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25. (4.) He consecrated himself by the exercise of his office, in bringing many sons to glory; For of all that the Father gave him, he lost none, John xvii. 12. Thus he is a consecrated way, and as such we are to walk in him. And, upon the whole,

10. The tenth property is, that this way we are to walk in is a pleasant way, a comfortable way: surely Wisdom's ways are pleasantness: for Wisdom itself is the way. What more pleasant than to walk in him, who is light itself, pleasure itself?

OBJECT. But believers are many times oppressed with sadness and heaviness of spirit, though they be in this way.

ANSW. It is only when they turn aside out of this way, that they are oppressed: they walk not in Christ as they ought, who rejoice not always in him; for, it is the believer's duty still to rejoice in Christ Jesus.

OBJECT. But, should not a believer mourn for sin?

ANSW. Yea, indeed; surely they ought; but true mourning, gospel-melting, is not without great pleasure: there is more pleasure in gospel-mourning, than in all the merriment of the wicked. There is much secret pleasure in an evangelically melted heart; for, God deals with believers as he desires us to deal with our enemies; Prov. xxi. 22, "If thine enemy hunger, give him bread; if thirsty, give him drink; so shall you heap coals of fire upon his head." *q. d.* Kindness is the best way in the world to melt the most obdured wretch: thus God deals with his people in Christ.

They are, by nature, enemies, as well as others : well, he gives them bread, when they are hungry ; and drink, when they are thirsty : and thus he heaps coals of fire on their head ; *i. e.* he melts them. What is true of drunkards and gluttons, in a sinful sense, that they are never better than when they are in a wine cellar, and at a banquet, always tippling and drinking, is true of the believer, in a spiritual sense : for, the church speaks in this language : "He brought me into his banquetting house [or, as it may be read, his CELLAR OF WINE.] Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love," Song ii. 4, 5. O the soul is no longer satisfied than it is with Christ ! the believer is never better, than when he is in the banquetting house, in Christ's wine-cellar ; and he cannot get enough, as it were, of this spiced wine ; "Stay me with flaggons : " it is not with cups, or half cups, but with whole flaggons. There is a holy kind of inebriating, whereby Christ doth, in a spiritual sense, make the believer that keeps him company, spiritually drunk ; he overcomes them with his wine : it is lawful to be drunk in this sense ; yea, it is commanded that we take our fill : "Eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." And again, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess," saith the apostle ; "but be filled with the Spirit." Christ hath rivers of pleasures, to satisfy his people with, that walk in him.

Here I might tell you of six things, that contribute to make this way a pleasant way ; namely, that they that walk in Christ, they have in this way, 1. A pleasant guide. 2. A pleasant guard. 3. A pleasant shade. 4. Pleasant company. 5. Pleasant entertainment. 6. Pleasant rest and quiet in the way. This way, as it is, on these accounts, pleasant to them ; so it is a pleasant way to God : this way pleases God ; for, he says of Christ, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And walking therein is what pleaseth God also ; hence Enoch, who walked with God, had this testimony, that he pleased God. Well then, this way is, and may be pleasant to the saints, on these accounts which I have only named.

1. A pleasant guide they have that walk in this way, "This God is our God for ever and ever ; and will be our guide even unto death," Psal. xlviii. 14. The Spirit of God is the guide, who not only sets them into the way, like a friend that leads one a mile out of town, and then leaves him to go alone, no ; but he leads them into all truth, and guides by his counsel, till he bring them to glory, saying, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

2. A pleasant guard they have that walk in this way. They have a guard of angels to secure them; "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him. They are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation." Yea, they have a guard of divine attributes about them, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about them that fear him." The Lord himself holdeth and upholdeth them with the right hand of his righteousness. What a pleasant walk is it to walk in Christ's hand, and to be coming up from the wilderness leaning on the beloved!

3. A pleasant shade they have who walk in this way; for it is a shadow way: a shadow place in hot weather is comfortable. How pleasant and comfortable was Jonah's gourd? But what a comfortable shadow hath the believer to walk in, or sit under, when the scorching heat of God's wrath breaks out into the world! "A man shall be as a covert from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," Isa. xxxii. 2. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste," Song ii. 3.

4. Pleasant company they have who walk in this way; for they that walk in Christ, they walk with God: and surely that is the best of company. It is encouraging to a poor traveller, that hath a long journey to go, to hear tell of good company to go with him to his journey's end: here is the choice of company, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee," Psal. lxxiii. 23. They have also all the saints to go along with them, and these are the excellent ones of the earth; for there is none excellent without grace, be they never so great: let them be never so great in this world, we must not walk with them, when they stray from the word of God.

5. Pleasant entertainment also they have, who walk in this way, and the best of refreshment on their journey; they are fed upon the green pastures, Psal. xxiii. 3; and they are fed with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock, Psal. lxxx. 16. They have noble dishes to feed upon, which others never tasted of: and a well furnished table to sit down at, far beyond the table of the great kings and monarchs of the world. There is the dish of the divine promises, that is sometimes set before them, "Man feeds not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." How sweet a dish this is, the Psalmist declares, when he says, "How sweet are thy words to my mouth!" There

is the dish of divine peace ; a peace that passeth all understanding : the peace of God quieting the mind through Christ : "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." There is the dish of divine pardon : "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own name's sake, and will remember thy sins no more.—Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." There is the dish of divine manifestations, John xiv. 21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father ; and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him." There is the dish of divine comforts : "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." There is the dish of a good conscience, which is a continual feast : "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." They that walk in Christ, they feed upon the rarities of heaven ; he makes to them a feast of fat things, and of wines on the lees, well refined. They have the white stone, and the new name, that no man knoweth but he that receiveth it. The delights in Christ are such as none can reach unto, but those that receive Christ, and walk in him ; therefore Christ thanks the Father, saying, Matt. xi. 25, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." He doth not thank him, that he hath revealed them to the mighty, the great and wise, in the world, but to the babes. A babe is the weakest of all sorts of men ; and it says, that the weakest of all believers, that are in Christ, the feeblest babe, shall partake of such delicacies in Christ, as all the world shall never be able to dive into, or comprehend ; and Christ himself takes such delight to entertain them, that he blesses his Father that he for his sake doth so much for them, over and above what he confers upon others.

6. Pleasant rest and quiet also have they who walk in this way ; they have not only such dainty fare and delicious entertainment to feed upon, but they have excellent chambers and ornamented apartments to lodge in. A king and prince that wants grace, hath not such costly-hung rooms to quarter in, as they have, nor such well-furnished chambers : "The King hath brought me into his chambers ; we will be glad and rejoice in thee," Song i. 4.

O the chambers of divine presence ! the secret of God's presence is agreeable quarters to lodge in ! and Christ's warm bosom is a sweet bed to lie down in ! " Our bed is green," Song i. 16. Christ and believers have but one bed between them ; and he covers them with his garment, which is so perfumed that it smells of aloes, myrrh, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces. And here they are sure to get rest in their quarters ; Psalm iv. 8, " I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." Nay, Isa. xxxii. 18, " My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places." Prov. i. 33, " Whoso hearkeneth to me, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." And Song i. 7, " He maketh his flocks to rest at noon." Thus while they walk in the good old way, they find rest to their souls, Jer. vi. 16. He warms them with the fire of his grace, and covers them with the robe of his righteousness, and causeth them to rest ; he makes their hearts to burn within them, and giveth his beloved sleep ; filling them with holy security in himself. And, O what more desirable to a poor weary traveller, than to be brought to an excellent inn or lodging ; than beside a well-covered table ; to get a good fire to sit at, and a good bed to lie down in !

Now, is Christ such a way as I have been describing you are to walk in, and particularly a living way ? Then, O what a sweet life is the believer's life, that is a walking in such a way ! To be for ever with Christ, is heaven ; our way, is walking IN him ; our heaven is walking WITH him in white. Oh ! what a sad case are they in, that walk in the way of death, and despise this way of life ! And, how sad and dismal is it, that men love death rather than life ! It is a mercy that few people do prize, that they have sinners to preach Christ to them ; if we had not experience of that rebellion of the natural heart, in ourselves, we would be mightily impatient in dealing with ungodly persons. What infatuates men that they refuse Christ, and will not walk in this way, but in the way of death ! What madness possesses the hearts of men, that they will rather go to hell with the devil, than to heaven with Christ ! Surely they deserve hell for ever that make such an abominable choice ; and yet every natural man doth so, every graceless man does so.

And now, what do you think of this pleasant way ? And how sweetly is it represented to us in the word of God ? What have you to say against this way, and the walking in it ? Is the way of

sin and the way of self-righteousness, the way of death, comparable to this way? Are your old sinful courses better than this way? If you imagine so, your own heart, your own tongues will fall upon you, and condemn you at the great day. Is this the best way? O then, why will you not take it? And have you taken it, believer, why then will you not walk in it?—May the Lord himself commend his Christ to you, that you may receive him, and walk in him; and commend his way to you, that you may walk in it, till you come to glory at the end of it.

SERMON XCVI.

“As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”—COLOS. ii. 6.

[The Thirteenth Sermon on this Text.]

THERE is a twofold garment wherewith Christ adorns his people. 1. The garment of imputed righteousness, for their justification. 2. The garment of imparted holiness, for their sanctification. Without the former, we can have no title to heaven; without the latter, we can have no meetness for heaven. Both these garments they alone are clothed with, and possessed of, who, having received Christ Jesus the Lord, do walk in him. The work of sanctification and holiness is the work of God: “I am the Lord that sanctifieth you,” Lev. xxi. 8. Grace is his own creature; man’s will contributes nothing to the work, but by resistance and rebellion against it; therefore, God makes the soul willing in the day of his power. Outward means work not, unless the mighty power of the Spirit work with them; otherwise, why should the same word, preached by the same minister, mollify some, and harden others? Nothing but the blood of Christ can purge the conscience from dead works. Christ must come from heaven and open a fountain, in his own side, for our purification and cleansing. Sanctification is not only expressed by a creation, Eph. ii. 10, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works;” but by a victory, a powerful overcoming of opposition, Luke xi. 21, 22; 1 John iv. 4. In creation, as there was nothing to help, so there was nothing to hinder; but when God comes to convert a soul, and make him holy,

and bring him to a Christian walk, besides a death in sin, there is a resistance against grace ; and therefore, the grace that is in Christ conquers the soul, enabling it to receive him ; and the same grace strengthens to a suitable walk in him ; out of him it cannot be ; for, *Without him*, and out of him, *we can do nothing*. And hence we are called to be strong in him ; and so here, to walk in him : “ As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” I now proceed,

3dly, To lay down some motives and persuasives to engage to this walk in Christ. Now, the scriptural motives, to engage us to this Christian walk, are innumerable ; I reduce them to these two heads. 1. The consideration of the concomitants of this walk in Christ, wherein we may see the excellency of it. 2. The consideration of the effects of this walk, wherein we may see the necessity of it.

[1.] The consideration of the concomitants of this walk in Christ, and so therein view the excellency of it. There are some excellent concomitants and attendants of this walk in Christ, especially what comprehends manifold blessed attendants, the Spirit of Christ ; for there is no walking in Christ, but by walking in the Spirit of Christ, and so it is called, Gal. v. 16, “ Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” And verse 25, “ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” And Rom. viii. 9, “ If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” This walk in Christ then, is attended with the Spirit, in his various graces and operations ; and this should recommend this walk to us. More particularly,

1. This holy walk in Christ is attended with the Spirit of humiliation, Eph. i. 17. If the Spirit of sanctification and holiness dwelleth in us, the same Spirit, as a Spirit of humiliation, dwelleth in us. They that walk in Christ, they receive the unction from the holy One, to know all things, 1 John ii. 20. Every man is brutish in his knowledge before conversion ; the god of this world hath blinded him ; but when he is brought to Christ, to believe in him, and walk in him, then he is made light in him, light in the Lord, Eph. v. 8, being turned from darkness to light. Sanctification and illumination are as inseparable as light and heat in the sunbeams.

2. This holy walk in Christ is attended with the Spirit of supplication ; for when he is the Spirit of grace, he will be the Spirit of supplication, Zech. xii. 10. Where he is the Spirit of holiness, he

will be the Spirit of prayer. Every new-born babe comes, for the most part, into the world crying; surely every spiritual new-born babe cries, ABBA, Father, Gal. iv. 6. The word ABBA signifies Father in the Syriac tongue, which the apostle here retains, and which also young children retain, almost in all languages and countries. If you never find the melting, moving, quickening, warming breathings of the Spirit, you do not look like one that walks in Christ; but to pray in the Spirit is a sign of translation from death to life, from nature to grace. And herein also appeareth the excellency of this walk, it is attended with the spirit of supplication.

3. This holy walk in Christ is attended with the Spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13, "We having the same Spirit of faith:" by which the man doth more and more believe that Jesus is the Christ, and believe on this Jesus. By which, on the one hand, he believeth that Jesus is the Christ; this was the grand test of a believer in the primitive times; because then it was little less than death among the Jews thus to own and confess Christ: "Shut your eyes and your ears (says Luther on Psalm cxxx.) and say, You know no God out of Christ; none but he that was in the lap of Mary, and sucked her breasts."—By this faith on the other hand also, we believe on the name of the Son of God, and rely upon him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; cleaving to him, drawing daily virtue from him, and laying all our wants and burdens upon him.

4. This holy walk is attended with the Spirit of repentance and humiliation; this follows the look of faith; "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn," Zech. xii. 10. The man that is walking in this way, and under the conduct of the Spirit, he is always weeping as he is walking; "Going and weeping, they shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward," Jer. l. 45. The man goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed, Psalm cxxvi. 6. Being humbled to the dust before God for his sin and iniquity, he loathes himself, and repents in dust and ashes.

5. This holy walk in Christ is attended with the spirit of joy and consolation. As Christ is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows; so his children have fellowship with him in this oil of joy. The godly sorrow and weeping mentioned just now, is not inconsistent with this joy and gladness: the Spirit of humiliation is not inconsistent with the Spirit of consolation; for, while he mourns before the Lord, he melts; and there is more joy in the believer's

melting before the Sun of righteousness than in all the mirth of the wicked. We may appeal to all believers who have had their hearts melted before the fire of divine love, whether they have not found a secret contentment and satisfaction, such as hath made them rather fear the change of that mourning than to be troubled at it; yea, the man many times weeps for joy, while he sees the fulness and free-
 h^{ness} of the grace of God toward the like of him.

6. This holy walk in Christ is attended with the Spirit of power, 2 Tim. i. 7, "For God hath not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power." There is the Spirit of power and victory that attends it, 1 John v. 4, "He that is born of God overcometh the world;" namely, the wicked of the world, the lusts of the world, the god of this world, the devil; the saints have a war with these enemies, but are enabled and prepared according to their measure to subdue their corruptions within, and vanquish temptations without. The believer gets, in some measure, above the fears, and frowns, and flat-teries of the world; so as he cannot be turned from the faith of Christ thereby. When some persuaded Erasmus to write to Luther, or against him, at the Reformation, to bring him back to Popery: Erasmus answered, "That Luther was too great for him to write to, or against." So a man that walks in Christ, is too great a spirit to be turned by the powers of the world; when he is himself, he cannot be drawn by force or fraud into a base compliance with them against the honour of his God, and the conscience of his duty.

7. This holy Christian walk is attended with the Spirit of love, 2 Tim. i. 7, "God hath not given us the Spirit of fear, but of love," love to God and to the brethren.

8. This love is made a special effect and evidence of spiritual circumcision, or sanctification, Deut. xxx. 6, there the Lord promises to circumcise the heart to love him. The man loves himself, and his relations and outward enjoyments with a common love; but he loves God and Christ with a special love. He loves God with a love of desire, panting after God with a love of union; with purpose of heart, cleaving to the Lord; with a love of benevolence, desiring all praise and glory to be ascribed to him: and with a love of delight and complacency, resting in the Lord as his only God and portion.—This Spirit works by love to the brethren also: there are brethren by name, by nation, by office: but especially by grace, that the man loves; "He that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten." A spirit of hatred and enmity between man and man, is inconsistent with this walk; and especially where there

is no love to the excellent ones of the earth. It is true, a child of God may love some of the children of God irregularly, when it is not merely because they have more of the image of God than others but because they are more their favourites, followers, and admirers ; if they be not such, then they will, perhaps, give them little of their company ; but, says David, "I am a companion to all them that fear thee." The apostle gives us a test of true love to the brethren, 1 John iii. 10, "Christ laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." A true believer is not only to lay down his life for Christ, and for his cause and the gospel, when called thereto ; but, in some respect, for the brotherhood ; and though this seems to be an high pitch, yet I think there is something of it in every true lover of Christ ; they so love the brotherhood as with John, they desire to decrease, if so be that Christ-mystical may increase : that the kingdom of Christ be enlarged, and the generation of the righteous multiplied, amplified, and preserved, though he himself, his name, his honour, his life should lie in the dust.

9. This holy Christian walk, or walk in Christ, is attended with the Spirit of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7, "God hath not given us the Spirit of fear, but of a sound mind." Sanctification is a soul-restoration ; "He restoreth my soul," Psalm xxiii. 3, not only to joy and comfort, but to singing, health, and vigour. What sickness is to the body, sin is to the soul ; a sick man cannot walk nor work ; so here, an ungodly person cannot walk in Christ, run the way of his commandments nor work out his salvation with fear and trembling. A sick man cannot take delight in meat and drink, or the enjoyments of life ; so, the unholy man cannot take pleasure in spiritual things, but when a man is sanctified in Christ, then he experiences unspeakable satisfaction in spiritual exercises ; he is sound in the faith, and his heart right with God. It is true, as a man that is healthy may catch cold, and labour under some infirmity ; so, a holy, spiritually healthy person may, through human frailty, and strong temptation, decay in grace for a time ; he may get cold, his love and zeal may grow cold, his faith weaken ; he may have an inordinate affection to the creature, and immoderate cares ; fall into sin, great sin : yet the immortal seed in him will, by the supplies of the Spirit of life, revive and corroborate the man again. Grace like leaven, will ferment the whole lump, and work out the disease of sin ; the withered principle of grace within, like a tree

planted by the river of life, will spring, flourish, and bud again.

10. This holy walk in Christ is attended with the Spirit of adoption and liberty, which are put together, Rom. viii. 15, 21. When a saint becomes a saint, that very moment a child of wrath becomes a child of God. They that are the children of God by regeneration are the children of God by adoption; and they that are born of God are free-born, they are born to a glorious liberty; "If the Son make you free, you are free indeed." The Spirit of adoption is a free Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; the man walks at liberty, and is at freedom for prayer and service; "Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds:" here is the honour of all the saints. According to the measure of sanctity that is conferred on them, such is the measure of liberty and freedom they have in the performance of religious duties.

11. This holy walk in Christ is attended with the Spirit of perseverance; for the Spirit of God rests on them, and never altogether leaves nor forsakes them. True holiness is an abiding principle; for, "The foundation of God standeth sure;" and, "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He that is the author will be the finisher of faith, he that hath the good work will perfect it. See Jer. xxxii. 40. Here God both undertakes for himself, that he will not turn away from them to do them good; and then for his people, that he will put his fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from him. Hence, though they fall, they shall rise; though they step aside into the ways of death, God will bring them back, and give them repentance unto life. Wherever the image of God is, it is progressive: the picture of a man in a frame doth not grow, it is always at a stand; but the picture, or image, of a man in his child, is far different; it is lively, vigorous, and progressive: so the painted holiness of hypocrites is vastly different from the image of God in a saint; "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. I give to them eternal life, saith Christ, and they shall never perish." See Song iv. 16, "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." Not only the wind of influences; the north wind of nipping and convincing influences of the Spirit; and the south wind of warming and comforting influences of the Spirit: but all the winds of providence; the north wind of adversity, the south wind of prosperity; the north wind of frowning providence, the south wind of smiling providence;

the warm summer of joy, or the cold winter of sorrow ; all the gales and blasts of divine providence shall sweetly conspire to open the spices of God's garden, to ripen and diffuse the savour of the graces of the Spirit in the hearts of his people.—Thus you see some of the concomitants of this walk ; it is attended with the Spirit of illumination, supplication, faith, humiliation, consolation, power, love, a sound mind, adoption, perseverance, &c.

[2.] We now come to the consideration of the effects of this walk, wherein we may see the necessity of it. When I spoke to this part preceding, I brought in what is above as another property of the way, namely, that it is a spiritual way ; because therein we find the Spirit in all these respects, as above : and so what now follows may be brought in, as the persuasive part of this exhortation : the two former parts being instructive, and the last being directive. What doth immediately follow, then, is the persuasives and arguments, for further engaging us to walk in this way. There are these three motives and persuasives to a Christian walk, which comprehend multitudes of other arguments, namely, 1. The glory of God. 2. The advantage of man. 3. The credit of the gospel.

1st, The glory of God is the grand motive that should persuade us to this Christian walk : though a Christian walk cannot justify us before God, that was never appointed as the design of it ; for our justification is founded only upon the perfect righteousness of God's beloved Son ; and to put our imperfect holiness, wrought in us or by us, in the room thereof, is to rob Christ of his title, as the Lord our righteousness : but though, I say, a Christian walk cannot justify us before God, yet it glorifies God before the world. And here is the glory of all the three persons of the glorious Trinity ; the glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost require this Christian walk.

(1.) The glory of God the Father calls for it, particularly from the hand of believers. Why ? Because they are chosen for this purpose ; “ He choosed you that you should be holy,” Eph. i. 4 ; and, “ He choosed you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit,” 2 Thes. ii. 13. Believers are ordained for this end ; “ We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” Eph. ii. 10.—They are called for this end by the Father, 1 Peter i. 15, “ As he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” They are corrected by him for this end, that they may be brought to a Christian walk, a holy walk ; “ This is all the fruit

to take away their sin, and to make them partakers of his holiness," Isa. xxvii. 9; Heb. xii. 10. This is sweet fruit, that grows upon the sour tree of affliction : we are threshed, that our husks may fly off ; tried in the furnace, that the dross of our lusts may be consumed. Many times the saints get such deep spots in their consciences, and stains in their garments, that so nothing but the water of the blood of Christ will wash away ; as nothing but the salt and vinegar of affliction will rub out. God would rather see his people in a suffering state than in a sinful state ; he had rather hear them cry than see them filthy ; and better, a thousand times better, to be preserved in brine than to rot in honey.—Thus I say, God chooses them, calls them, corrects them for this end, that he may sanctify them and bring them to this Christian walk, that by it they may glorify their Father that is in heaven : "Herein is my Father glorified," says Christ, "that ye bear much fruit."—We glorify his holiness, when we are holy as he is holy. We glorify his mercy, when we are merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. We glorify his righteousness, when we are righteous as he is righteous. We glorify his perfection, by studying to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, Matth. v. 48.—By this walk we glorify his sovereign will and authority ; for, "This is the will of God, even our sanctification," 1 Thes. iv. 3, and put honour upon his law, by yielding obedience to, and walking in his commandments.—By this walk we glorify his love and good-will to us in Christ, while we walk in love, and are followers of God as dear children, Eph. v. 12, and serve him from a sense of his love.—By this walk we glorify his faithfulness and power, in that this walking in Christ imports, as a special ingredient of it, the faith of his promise, and dependence on him for all necessary supplies of grace ; and hence this walk is called a living by faith, Rom. i. 17. By faith, believing that God is faithful, and will accomplish ; powerful, and can accomplish all his promises : "Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it."

Now, an unchristian walk dishonours God in all these respects, and shall not the people of God have a regard to the glory of God ? Should not all the children of God particularly have a regard to their Father's honour ? All grace begins with God the Father ; he is the first in order of being, and the first in order of working ; and it is the Father that flows out to us, in Christ by the Spirit. Whatsoever good Christ hath done for us, or in us, it is done with respect to the Father's love and grant ; and Christ, as Mediator, is the

Father's servant, his elect, and chosen, Isa. xlii. 2. And it is the Father that hath given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him, John xvii. 2. In the Father's acts of kindness, we have the freest and purest apprehensions of love : it was the Father that began the business, and sent his Son into the world, to accomplish the work of redemption : the Son, as Mediator, can have an higher motive than his own love, to wit, his Father's will ; but the Father can have no higher motive than his own love. The love of the Father is antecedent to the merit of Christ, and to the operation of the Spirit. O, then, what ground to glorify the Father as the original author of all holiness and happiness, and that by our walking in Christ ? Again,

(2.) The glory of God the Son calls for this Christian walk : as thereby we are to honour the Father, that his chosen be not disparaged ; so to honour the Son, that his members be not deformed : head and members should be proportionate to one another. It were monstrous that Christ should have such a strange body as Nebuchadnezzar's image which he saw in his dream ; the head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the thighs of brass, and the feet of iron and clay, Dan. ii. 32 : even so, it is not for Christ's honour, to be head of a monstrous body. So much as we retain of sin, so much do we dishonour Christ. Christ came for this very end, to make his people holy. He came to repair the ruins of the fall ; now, by the fall, we lost not only God's favour, but God's image also ; therefore, that the plaster might be as broad as the sore, he died, not only to reconcile us, but to sanctify us ; " That he might sanctify us by his own blood, he suffered without the gate," Heb. xiii. 12. His blood is not only a price to redeem us, but a laver to cleanse us. Now, by this Christian walk, Christ gets the glory of his mediatorial offices. We glorify his prophetic office by hearing his voice, receiving his instruction, and learning the law from his mouth. We glorify his priestly office by coming to God through him, seeking acceptance only in him. We glorify his kingly office by giving up our lusts into his hand, to be slain by him ; and by an entire and voluntary subjection of our souls to his government ; so as not to be without law to God, but under the law to Christ. By this Christian walk he gets the glory of his death and passive obedience ; while we live to him that died for us : the glory of his doing, or active obedience ; while we make honourable mention thereof, in all our course of holiness, saying, " I will go in the

strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only," Psalm lxxi. 16. By this he gets the glory of his work in us, as well as for us; while we work out our salvation, in the faith of his working in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. By this walk Christ gets the glory of his purchase; having purchased a peculiar people, zealous of good works: and having purchased grace and glory to that people, surely he is glorified then, when these graces shine in the practice of holiness. By this walk he gets the glory of his covenant and example; seeing it is by the grace treasured up in these promises, that this walk is begun, carried on, and perfected; therefore, "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1; and seeing from these promises believers bring all their comfort under difficulties; "Though my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, though he make it not to grow," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. By this walk Christ gets the glory of his way of walking in the world; in that it is a walk after Christ, as the most perfect example of holiness, in doing and suffering, according to the will of God: hence they that walk in Christ, are said to walk as he himself walked, and to be followers of the Lamb whithersoever he goes. In a word, by this walk Christ gets the glory of his grace and free favour; for, as this walk is a fruit and effect of his grace, so it hath a natural, as well as an instituted tendency to advance the praise of his glorious grace; and all the believer's walk should be directed to this end. Here is a strong motive, it is a walk necessary to the glory of Christ.

(3.) The glory of God the Holy Ghost calls for this walk; for the Father and the Son have committed the saints to the Spirit's charge, to this very end and purpose, that they might be sanctified and made holy. Sanctification of heart and life is made the Spirit's personal operation, "Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," 2 Thes. ii. 13. This holy walk doth belong, according to the economy of grace, to the Father, to purpose it; to the Son, to purchase it; to the Spirit, to work it: and it is not to the Spirit's honour that God's nursery and plantation, committed to his charge, should not thrive and prosper: it is not for the

Spirit's honour, to dwell in defiled temples ; it is not to the Spirit's honour, that any, committed by the Father and the Son to his charge, should miscarry or fall away, either totally, from all grace ; or finally, for all time ; nay, this, or anything that looks like it, it is so far from being to his honour, that it is to his greatest dishonour ; yea, it is a great grief to the Spirit, when the work of grace doth not go on and prosper in the soul ; for, it is he that worketh us to this very thing ; and therefore is called the Spirit of holiness. The Father hath left the Son in charge to be the Captain of our salvation, to bring many children to glory ; the Son hath left the Spirit in charge, with all his Father's children, to guide them by his counsel, and bring them to his glory. Father, Son, and Spirit are one, and agree in one, for our sanctification. Christ sends the Comforter for this end, to lead his people in all truth, John xiv. 16. And how is the Spirit glorified in his graces, glorified in his comforts, glorified in his influences, glorified in his operations, while we give evidence, by our walk, that he is perfecting his own work, and ripening our souls for heaven ! Whereupon this walk in Christ, is also called a walking in the Spirit. Now, believer, what think ye, or what shall you and I think of this great motive to this Christian walk, the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ? Surely when we speak to believers, we cannot be supposed to speak to such, as have no regard to the glory of God, the praise of Christ, or the honour of the Holy Ghost ; why then, I think it may melt our hearts, for our unchristian walk hitherto, and move our souls to a more Christian walk hereafter ; that by the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we stand obliged to this Christian walk : "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

2dly, The advantage of man is another motive that may be branched out into many particulars ; whether we consider the necessity of this Christian walk, with respect to our own advantage, or the advantage of others.

(1.) It is necessary in respect of ourselves ; and the advantage that accrues to the children of God, by this Christian walk, lies in these particulars.

1. The first advantage of this Christian walk is, that it is the porch of communion with God ; none but those that walk in Christ, have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son. While a man is profane and unsanctified, what communion can there be between light and darkness ? God is light in the abstract, and an impure

sinner is darkness in the abstract. As a man cannot have communion with beasts, because they live not the same life ; so, a natural man cannot have communion with God, because he lives not the same life ; nay, he is alienated from the life of God. But when a man walks in Christ, then he walks with God ; and when you walk in Christ, God walks in you. “ Ye are the temple of the living God ; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them ; I will be their God, and they shall be my people,” 2 Cor. vi. 16.

2. The next advantage of this Christian walk is, that it exalts a man above his neighbours ; lifts him up above the sphere of other men : “ The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.” A gracious poor man is far more excellent than a graceless rich nobleman, notwithstanding all his titles of honour. The saints are God’s jewels ; the rest of the world are but lumber, with all their land and lordships.

3. The third advantage of this Christian walk is, that it turns moral virtues into graces. Some persons are naturally more meek, and sober, and patient than others ; and some natural men are morally just and righteous in their dealing and conversation in the world ; honest dealers, good pay-masters, make their word their deed ; all this a man may be and do, and yet perish for ever. But whenever grace and a Christian walk enters, and sanctification in the power of it, then the principle of grace turns these moral virtues into graces ; his natural and moral actions are now performed from inward and renewed principles ; he now acts FROM God, and FOR God, in all that he doth, whether he eats or drinks, or buys or sells. As carnal hearts are always carnal, even in spiritual performances ; for the streams never run higher than the head ; so, on the contrary, gracious hearts are spiritual, even in natural and moral actions ; for, they that are in Christ are new creatures ; acting from new principles.

4. The next advantage of this Christian walk is, that it is the matter of our joy. There is the joy and peace of our justification, that is founded upon the righteousness of Christ’s merit for us ; this is the greatest ground of the believer’s joy. But next in virtue to that, there is the joy and peace of sanctification flowing from the righteousness of Christ’s spirit in us, of which the apostle speaks, when he says, “ This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity ; not with fleshly

wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."—And the Psalmist, when he says, "Great peace have they that love thy law," Psalm cxix. 165. Whereas, there is no peace to the wicked: and therefore Christ's coming, at death and judgment, will be terrible to them, both because they are destitute of the righteousness of justification and sanctification; for it is only the pure in heart that shall see God. At death and judgment, a dram of saving grace will be more valuable, more comfortable, than mountains of gold, and millions of worlds. Oh! the midnight cry at death and judgment, saying, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him!" How terrible will it be to the foolish virgins, that have no oil in their lamps, nor grace in their hearts! Alas! how dolefully will you cry in that day, man!—how dreadfully will you shriek! But Christ will not hear you; yea, he will shut the door against you, Matt. xxv. 10. Then, knock never so hard, cry never so loud, the door is shut; there is no hope of entrance.

5. The fifth advantage of this Christian walk is, that it is an evidence of a gracious state, for the confirmation of our faith; hence Abraham shewed his faith by his works; whereby it was justified from the calumny of a false faith, James ii. 21-23. And this indeed contributes to make this holy walk a comfortable thing; because it is the fruit, effect, and evidence of justification; though it be no ground or foundation thereof, yet it is an evidence of it, and of a gracious state.—How shall a man evidence that he hath received Christ Jesus the Lord, but by walking in him.

6. The next advantage of this Christian walk is, that it is a walking toward heaven; heaven is at the end of the walk; hence it is said, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. And no unclean thing shall enter into heaven," Rev. xxi. 27. Without are dogs and swine, but within are the pure and holy. Believe it, man, without holiness on earth, there is no happiness in heaven. This Christian walk is the very beginning of heaven, where the saints walk with him in white; this holy walk is a great part of heaven and salvation itself; hence in that golden chain, Rom. viii. 30, "Whom he called, them he justified, whom he justified, them he glorified;"—no mention is made of sanctification, to shew that sanctity and holiness is heaven and glory begun; it is not only the way to heaven, but it is heaven itself. The more we walk in Christ, the more do we live the life of God, and anticipate

the life of heaven ; that glorious life, which the angels of God, and the blessed spirits of just men made perfect, live here. This Christian walk makes a man meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. What would a carnal heart do with heaven, that knows no other heaven but to eat, drink, and wallow in sensual delights? So the glutton at a feast cried, "There is no heaven like this!" We must not look for a Turkish paradise in heaven, but for a pure sinless state ; perfection of grace, and fulness of joy, in the presence of God's glory, is the saint's heaven. An unsanctified man cannot truly desire heaven ; he may desire it as a privation of suffering and misery, but not as it is a perfection of grace, a privation of all sin, and perfection of holiness ; when a man begins to be holy, then he begins to enter into the white cloud of glory. O then, seeing every one would be happy, and would be with Christ for ever, who would not desire to be holy and to walk in him? A graceless man is very miserable in both worlds ; he misses heaven in this world, and loses heaven in the world to come ; nay, he was a hell of sin here, and a hell of suffering hereafter ; fire and brimstone is his portion. But the gracious man is the happy man ; indeed he hath heaven begun here, and heaven perfected hereafter. Here then are some of the advantages of this Christian walk to the children of God.

In a word, this Christian walk is the way to bring down the blessing of God on every work of your hand ; Psalm. i. 4, "Whatsoever he doth shall prosper." Whereas, to walk in the way of swearing, drunkenness, whoredom, Sabbath-breaking, cursing, lying, cheating, is the direct way to bring down the curse of God upon all the works of your hand.

Now, I think the consideration of these advantages should move us to this walk ; while the disadvantages of the contrary walk must be as grievous as the advantages of this are precious. And though, when we speak to them that are in Christ, we cannot denounce against them the curse of the covenant of works, which they are altogether freed from ; yet, if they be untender in their walk, there are many other things, besides the curse, which belong only to, and lie heavy upon Christless sinners, that may be the believer's motive.—Is it nothing to you, believer, that your heavenly Father should chastise you, hide his face from you, deny an answer to your prayers, conceal your evidences of heaven from you, give you up to the tyranny of your lusts, and then take vengeance on your inventions? Yea, he will thus visit your iniquities with rods, if you

walk not in Christ, and in his way, though his loving-kindness he will not take away, nor suffer his covenant to fail. Thus much for the advantages of it, with respect to ourselves.

(2.) This Christian walk is necessary with respect to others : and the advantage of this walk with respect to our neighbour, both godly and wicked, and all in general will appear by considering the following particulars :—

1 Our Christian walk would be for advantage to the wicked ; for it may tend for their conviction and conversion. On the one hand, this walk may tend to their conviction, and to stop their mouths ; 1 Pet. ii. 15, “ This is the will of God, that by well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” See also, chap. iii. 16, “ Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.” On the other hand, your walk may tend to their conversion ; 1 Pet. ii. 12, “ 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.” The holiness of professors hath sometimes tended to the conversion of the profane, who, in the day of their gracious visitation, have glorified God on that account. See also 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. How advantageous and profitable such a walk may be, the apostle tells us, Tit iii. 8, “ This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they, which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works : these things are good and profitable unto men.”

2. Our Christian walk may be for advantage to the godly, who are thereby excited and encouraged to be the more holy, by the strict conversation which they behold in others ; and to say with those, Zech. viii. 23, “ We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” Whereas an untender walk doth grieve and stumble them ; but a Christian walk will rejoice the hearts and strengthen the hands, both of godly people, and godly ministers, “ I have no greater joy,” says the beloved disciple, “ than to hear that my children walk in truth,” 3 John 4.

3 Our Christian walk may be of advantage to all in general, that are round about us ; yea, to the whole generation we live among : for, in this way we would become a public good, a common good ; not only in communicating good to them, but in diverting

judgments from them, among whom we converse ; so ten righteous persons would have preserved Sodom ; and surely, if the Lord had not left us a remnant, in this generation, we had been like Sodom and Gomorrah, in respect of judgments, as we are in respect of sins, for the most part of the generation are declaring their sin as Sodom. Thus the advantage of man is a great motive to this Christian walk.

3dly, The credit of the gospel is another great motive to this Christian walk ; by this we are called to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, Tit. ii. 10. By this walk we adorn the gospel of Christ. As the glory of God, the advantage of man, so the credit of the gospel obliges unto this walk. The gospel is honoured thereby in many respects.

1. Gospel doctrine is honoured by this walk, while thereby we are taught, in an efficacious manner, "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, which teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in a present world," Tit. ii. 11, 12. Every doctrine of the gospel teaches this holy walk. The doctrine of election, 2 Thes. ii. 13. The doctrine of redemption, Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. The doctrine of vocation, 1 Thes. iv. 7. The doctrine of justification, which is to take away the guilt of sin, Rom. iii. 25. The doctrine of sanctification, which is to take away the power and filth of sin, 1 Cor. vi. 11. The doctrine of glorification, which takes away the very being of sin, and admits of no sin at all. Every doctrine of the gospel tends to the advancement of this holy, Christian walk. And,

2. Gospel promises are honoured thereby, insomuch that this walk is excited powerfully thereby ; 2 Cor. vii. 1, "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The promises are the cords of love, whereby we are sweetly bound to the service of God, and the acceptable performance of religious duties.

3. Gospel rules are honoured by this walk, which is the law of God, as a rule of holiness and righteousness, and as disburdened of the covenant of works, in his fœderal requisition of the condition of life from us ; for we are no more commanded to DO that we may LIVE, while we walk in Christ : we live, that we may walk in Christ, and do not walk, that we may live. The law here is also disburdened of its terrible curse, and of its irritating power ; and therefore

may well be called a law of liberty, to the man in Christ; an easy yoke: and commandments that are not grievous, James i. 25, Matt. xi. 30, 1 John v. 3.

4. Gospel examples and patterns are honoured by this walk, it being a walk according to these examples: it being a walking after the example of Christ. A gospel walk is a walking after God-Jehovah, as our Father; and after Christ, as our leader; and after the Spirit, as our guide; and after the example of the saints, as they were followers of Christ; we are to follow them who, through faith and patience, do inherit the promises: and to follow the footsteps of the flock.

5. Gospel ordinances are honoured by this walk, while we are careful and conscientious, in our attendance upon these, with an eye to the God of ordinances, for his blessing upon them, whether public or private; particularly upon the hearing of the joyful sound, the gospel message; and regular participation of the gospel sacraments.

6. Gospel privileges are honoured by this walk; and particularly, all the privileges that go along with the gospel-state, while we walk worthy of, and suitable to these privileges, and that state. Are you believers in a gospel-state, being effectually called? Why then, you are to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. Are you in a justified state? Then you are to evidence your justification, by your sanctification. Are you in a sanctified state? Wherefore got you a new nature, but to walk before God in newness of life? Are you in an adopted state? Then it is suitable to that state, that you be followers of God as dear children. O sirs, if we be believers, is it not a shame for us, to live so unsuitable to our state? Is this all the thanks we give to God, for these privileges, that we trample his statutes under our feet, dishonour his name, break his law, and grieve his Spirit? Oh! shall we render acts of enmity for all his acts of love toward us! Fy for shame! "Tell it not in Gath." Have we the hope of glory, and shall we not, having this hope, purify ourselves, even as he is pure? Are we separate from the world? And shall we walk in the broad way with the rest? Hath God pitied us? And shall we not study to please him? Hath he washed us in the blood of his Son? And shall we wallow in the mire of our lusts? Or, rather, shall we not study to let it be known to the world, that his blood hath a virtue to sanctify us? Well, brethren, if we do not walk in Christ, we do

discredit to the gospel doctrine, gospel promises, gospel rules, gospel examples, gospel ordinances, and gospel privileges, and counteract the design of a gospel state. These are the motives to this gospel walk.

The fourth and last thing upon this second branch of the exhortation was, the directive part of it, namely, to give some directions, in order to our walking with Christ. In general, I hope I need not tell you, that you must be in a gospel state, otherwise you cannot have a gospel walk : we must first be married to Christ, before we can bring forth fruit unto God, Rom. vii. 4. We must first be in Christ, the true vine, before we can bear good fruit, John xv. 5. And, therefore, let this be your principal study, to be sure that the state be changed, and that you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, otherwise you cannot walk in him. All other directions will be in vain without this. And now, as we go along, lift up a prayer with your heart, that the Lord may bless the following advices and directions, wherewith I design to put a period to this subject.

[1.] Our first direction, in order to your walking in Christ, is to beware of all impediments that hinder this walk. And I will mention you a few of these hinderances of the Christian walk ; both that you may beware of them, and also seek to be rid of them.

1. Darkness hinders walking. A man that wants light, and is in the dark, cannot walk comfortably : even so, the darkness of ignorance hinders this Christian walk : They that walk in the night stumble. O'pray that God may take away your gross darkness. It is midnight with many, in respect of black and dark ignorance : and, therefore, no wonder that they stumble and fall : some into one open wickedness, and some into another.

2. Heedlessness hinders walking. When a man doth not take heed to the way, but is gazing about him, he is ready either to dash his foot against a stone, and so fall and break his bones ; or else he is ready to wander out of the way, while he doth not notice the road : even so, spiritual heedlessness and unwatchfulness is the cause of many wandering steps out of God's way ; " Watch, therefore, and pray, (saith Christ), that ye enter not into temptation."

3. Weakness hinders walking. If a man be sick and weakly, he is hardly able to walk abroad : even so, as there is a bodily weakness, so there is soul weakness. As all by nature are without strength : even so, those that are sometimes strengthened by grace,

may turn weak and powerless; while corruption is strong, grace is weak, faith is weak. Seek to have this impediment removed, by being strong in the Lord, saying, "I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only."

4. Fetters hinder walking. If you bind a man, he will walk at leisure. Many are bound with the strongest fetters; even believers may be under the conduct and influence of some secret lusts, and these are so binding, that they are like fetters: they have the binding power of a law; and hence are called, "The law of the members, warring against the law of the mind," Rom. vii. 23. And again, "I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." Seek therefore, that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, may make you free from the law of sin and death. Seek to be free of your fetters, to be loosed of your bonds: "Surely, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds."

5. Weights hinder walking. If a man hath a clog at his heels, a heavy weight on his back, he will not walk hard. There is a twofold weight that hinders the Christian walk much: the weight of worldly incumbrances: the cares of the world are a dead weight, that keep many from walking. O sirs, cast off that weight. There is also the weight of predominant sin: whatever be the weight, we are to lay it aside, that we may be in case to walk, yea, and to run in God's way; "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us; and run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith," Heb. xii. 1.

6. Diversions hinder walking. There is some company, if a man meet with, in his way wherein he walketh, they will mightily hinder and retard him in his journey; so it is with the carnal company of the men of this world. They will not walk fast in God's way, but make many a stop, who haunt the company of graceless and profane persons, that mock at religion, idle away their time, and neglect their souls.

7. Discord hinders walking. If men fall out by the way: if, instead of walking together with concord, they fall by the ears, this will hinder and mar their walking; yea, perhaps, they may disable one another, that they can walk no more, but must lie by the way: so here, discord and contention hindereth the spiritual walking. They that live in the fire of strife, have little of the life of religion:

they that are fighting in the way, are not walking in it: they that are occupied in slandering, backbiting, reproaching their neighbours; and especially that fall out with the godly, and cannot live at peace with them, or in love to them, their walking is marred: therefore beware of discord; where there is much division, there is little devotion.

8. Doubting and discouragement hinder walking. If a man doubt about the road wherein he walketh: if he doubt that it is not the way, that will carry him to his desired journey's end, or to the place he hath in view, then he is discouraged, and hath little heart to walk therein: even so, doubting instead of believing, mars our spiritual walk, and fills the soul with discouragement. David reasons himself out of his discouragement, saying, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God," Psalm xlii. 11. Many reason themselves out of their faith, instead of reasoning themselves into faith. Doubting is no duty: nay, it is a sin that hinders our walk; discouragement is no duty: no, no; the joy of the Lord should be our strength.

9. Intemperance hinders walking. If a man intoxicate himself with drink, and overcharge his belly with meat, he is more fit for loitering and snorting in a bed, than walking on the road: it impedes his walking: hence we will see some beastly drunken persons attempt to walk in the steet; but instead of walking, we will see them staggering from side to side or tumbling down, and exposing themselves to open infamy. Well, this intemperance is such a hinderance to all spiritual walking, that if a man be stuffed with meat and drink, and immoderate cares, he is altogether unfit for spiritual work and worship; therefore Christ warns his disciples, even them, to beware of it; "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you unawares. Watch therefore, and pray always," Luke xxi. 34, 35. Let habitual drunkards and tipplers consider whether they are walking; for surely they are not walking in Christ, but in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. Let those that cannot make a bargain, without drinking to excess, as many use to do at your public markets, consider this,

10. Slothfulness and laziness hinder walking. When people

shut themselves up in a close chamber, as it were, to sleep and slumber, surely their walking is marred ; even so, nothing hinders this Christian walk more, than spiritual sloth and security. I will tell you two chambers wherein especially the slothful, lazy, and secure sinner shuts up himself to sleep into. There is the chamber of lies, and the chamber of ease.

(1.) The chamber of lies ; or, as the Prophet Isaiah calls it, the refuge of lies, chap. xxviii. 15, " They have made lies their refuge, and under falsehood have they hid themselves." Whether it be the lying refuge of their legal righteousness, their pharisaic profession, their cradle faith, their false hope, partial repentance, legal convictions, their carnal dreams and delusions ; if they sleep on there, God's curse will hale them out of that chamber ; for, " The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies." Some are brought out in mercy, but the most part are dragged out in wrath.

(2.) The chamber of ease ; " Moab hath been at ease from his youth," Jer. xlviii. 11 ; never truly awakened, never duly concerned about their soul and their eternal state, nor concerned about the affairs of Christ's house ; notwithstanding of all the trouble of Zion, or dangerous circumstances that the church of Christ is into : there is a woe upon the bed, and a woe upon the covering of those that are lying at ease ; " Woe to them that are at ease in Zion," Amos vi. 1. Now, that partial security may overtake believers themselves, is too evident, not only from common experience, but also from the parable of the virgins ; where it is said both of the wise and foolish, that while the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept ; but slothfulness and walking are inconsistent. Seek therefore, that God would deliver from sloth and security : " The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way ;" he will not walk forward. These are some hinderances of walking ; seek to be free of these, and beware of them, if you would walk in Christ.

[2.] The next direction, in order to this walk, is this, O endeavour, through grace, that every action may be a stepping in this way : then would we walk in Christ to purpose, if we could learn to make every action of our life, a step of our walk in this way. It is possible to a child of God, through grace, that any action of his life may be a part of his Christian walk : *e. g.*, even in his natural actions, of eating and drinking ; when, whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he doth, he doth all to the glory of God in Christ ; then

he is walking in Christ, even when he is eating and drinking. But I instance especially in our religious, and in our civil actions.

1. Let all your religious actions be a part of your walking in Christ; for this walk extends to all religious duties. When a man is reading the word, with the Spirit and understanding, then he is walking in Christ. When he is hearing the word, with faith, he is walking in Christ. When he is praying in the Holy Ghost, in the Spirit of Christ, then he is walking in Christ. When he is singing and praising, with grace in his heart, he is walking in Christ. When he is communicating worthily, then he is walking in Christ, for then he is eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of God. And since I have mentioned this, I shall take liberty to say, that I understand there are several obliged to be hearers in this place to-day, who may see it incumbent upon them, to be communicants elsewhere the next Lord's day; and therefore, though I drop a word suitable to them, I think it cannot be reckoned amiss; and though there is no direction I am offering, but they may find abundantly suitable to their case, yet, I would here say, that this Christian walk is so extensive, that it comprehends all the duties, both before, in, and after communicating; and right partaking of the Lord's Supper, is a special part of this walking in Christ. As a man may be standing in the church, and yet walking in Christ, if spiritually exercised; and as a man may be lying in a prison, and yet walking in Christ, as Paul and Silas were in the stocks; so much more, may a man be sitting at a communion-table, and yet walking in Christ; for walking in Christ doth not lie in bodily exercise, but in soul exercise; as in the exercise of faith, the exercise of love, the exercise of repentance, and godly sorrow for sin, the exercise of joy in the Lord: when a man is in that exercise, under the conduct of the Spirit of Christ, then he is walking in Christ.

What is the duty then before communication? It is to walk in Christ. What is the duty in communicating? It is to walk in Christ. What is the duty after communicating? It is to walk in Christ.

There are two words I have to tell those, and take the liberty to offer them. The first is, that none can communicate worthily, that are not in Christ, by having received Christ Jesus the Lord, that are not believers. The second is that people may be believers,

that have received Christ, and yet communicate unworthily, if they be not walking in him.

(1.) I say, that none can communicate worthily, that are not in Christ, by receiving of him. It is the children's bread, and is not designed for the conversion of sinners, but for the confirmation of saints. Why, may not, and have not some been converted at sacraments? It may be so, but yet this sacrament is not in itself designedly institute for the conversion of sinners: some have, indeed, been converted at communion sermons: but I have not heard of any Christless sinner converted at a communion table, where he himself was partaking. It may be, there have been instances of this, that I have not heard; but yet that doth not falsify what I assert, that it is not a converting ordinance: must we run a man through with a sword to save his life; because one did so once, and let out a secret imposthume? Because some minister hath been converted at his ordination, is therefore the laying on of hands institute as a converting ordinance? No; by no means. Because a man hath been converted at his marriage, when the sermon and blessing hath wrought upon him, is therefore marriage a converting ordinance? No; not at all. Let this then be remembered, that none can communicate worthily, that are not in Christ, by receiving him.

(2.) That people may be believers, that have received Christ, and yet communicate unworthily, if they be not walking in Christ. Let communicants then endeavour, through grace, to prepare and examine themselves, "Let a man examine himself, and so let them eat." Why, a man may examine himself and find himself both out of Christ, and out of a course of walking in him: shall he eat in any case upon examination? No, no; the meaning is, let him examine whether he be in Christ, yea, or not; and see if he can prove his being in Christ, by his walking in him. As a man that tries gold with a touchstone, will not take it because he tried it, but because he found it true gold: and as a man will not go abroad because he hath beheld himself in a looking-glass, for he may find deformity and filthiness; but because he hath corrected what was amiss, and composed his dress by looking at himself: and so unless we will prevaricate with the scripture, the Holy Ghost means, by that word, a fitness and preparation found; and yet those that prepare for that ordinance, must never expect such a preparation as will not stand in need of Christ: nay, Christ himself must be the

great preparation; for this ordinance hath a special relation to Christ: and it is by walking in him that we have communion with him in that ordinance.

QUEST. How shall I attain this privilege to walk in Christ?

ANSW. How doth a man come to walk in his clothes? Is it not even by putting them on? So, if you would walk in Christ, you must put on Christ; Rom. xiii. 14, "Put on Christ Jesus the Lord, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Put off your filthy garments, Eph. iv. 22, put on Christ. It is true, many put on Christ, as a man puts on his shoe, to trample upon him. Some put on Christ as a man doth his hat, which he lifts to every passenger; they will compliment every company with their religion, and put on or put off their profession of Christ, according as the company goes. Some put him on, as people will put on a fine glaring embroidery upon their clothes, for ornament, and not for use. But they that truly put on Christ, as they put him on, never to put him off again; so they put on Christ as a robe; particularly the robe of his righteousness, for their justification; and the robe of his grace, for their sanctification; that is, they take him in his merit, to justify them; and in his Spirit, to sanctify them: and as a man walkes in his robes that he hath put on, so they that go to a communion table in this robe, they go walking in Christ; and so they have the wedding garment, and shall have the Bridegroom's favour. Here is the robe we ought all to walk in: it is heaven's parliament robe; and to walk in it, is to wear it; and to wear it, is to walk in it. To have Christ, and to use him, is the sum of all true religion.

But to return, I was saying, first let all your religious actions be a part of your walking in Christ, whether it be your reading, hearing, praying, praising, communicating, or the like.

2. Let all your civil actions also be a part of your walking in Christ. A man may be walking in Christ when he is buying and selling, if he be acting spiritually, conscientiously, and in the name of Christ; and acknowledging the Lord in all his ways. And because of the market you have now in view, I shall tell you what are the sinful ways that people take, in buying and selling, which declare that they are not walking in Christ, when about these actions. There is the disparaging and under-rating of what you are to buy; and the praising and over-valuing of what you are to sell; and both without just cause: see Prov. xx. 14, "It is nought

it is nought, saith the buyer ; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth." There is the sin of abusing men's simplicity and unskilfulness, and using false weights, balances, and measures to deceive ; Prov. xi. 1, " A false balance is an abomination to the Lord." Again, some will, I understand, set off the goodliest face of their wares outmost to the market ; the buyer takes all to be of the same sort, at the word of the seller. Thus they are guilty of a double cheat ; they cheat their neighbour's eye with their wares, and cheat their mind with their words ; and thus both their hands and lips are full of cheating and deceit : but they should know that they cannot cheat God, who surely will not let them thrive that way ; or, if they seem to thrive, it is with his curse upon their gain. God hath said, " None that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, shall enter into heaven : but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life," Rev. xxi. 27 ; intimating that those, among others, who are cheaters and liars, they may well read their names written in the black book of death and damnation ; but they cannot read such foul names as theirs in the fair little white book of life, the Lamb's book of life. O sirs, there is a way of walking in Christ, even in all your natural, religious, and civil actions. The direction then that I was giving is, O endeavour, through grace, that every action of your life may be a step forward in this way, by doing all in his fear, and through his grace.

[3.] The third direction, with which I close, is to endeavour, through grace, to improve all these means, and to make conscience of the diligent use of all the means that tend to advance this Christian walk : and here I mention these four means.

1. A punctual and serious attendance upon gospel ordinances ; Prov. viii. 34, " Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, and waiting at the posts of my doors."

2. Frequent conversation with gospel professors, whose walk adorns the same, " He that walketh with the wise shall be wise." See Heb. vi. 12, " Be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises."

3. Prayer ; " Continue in prayer, and watch in the same, with thanksgiving," Col. iv. 2. Seek the assistance of the gospel Spirit, who only can enable you to this walk, Luke xi. 13. Seek him as a Spirit of power to strengthen you ; for it is he that worketh in you, both to will and to do, Phil. ii. 13. Seek him as a Spirit of faith, that by faith in exercise you may abide in Christ ; for, except

ye abide in him, ye cannot bring forth fruit, John xv. 4. That by drawing virtue and water out of these wells of salvation, and fountain of life, and receiving out of his fulness grace for grace, ye may live on him, and walk in him. And that, by faith, ye may make use of the gospel promise, and thereby be partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. And that by this faith ye may fix all your resolves for duty, in the strength of the Lord God, with a design to make honourable mention of the Mediator's righteousness, in every performance, as that alone whereby ye are justified in your persons, and accepted in your performances, Psalm lxxi. 16, 19, 24.

4. Spiritual meditation ; " I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies." Meditate on your ways, how sinful and ungrateful they have been ; how unlike unto the ways of the children of God, and those who have received so many favours. Again, meditate on the Lord's way, how sweet, pleasant, profitable, and honourable it is. And though, through much tribulation you may enter into the kingdom of heaven, and must resolve upon the cross ; yet, amidst all the crosses of the way, meditate upon these two things in this way you are called to walk in.

(1.) The red carpet that is laid over all the way : that is, the red carpet of the blood of Christ : and as the saints have always overcome by the blood of the Lamb, so, by this blood of Christ, you shall overcome all the difficulties in the way, and walk upon the red carpet.

2. The white pavement that is below the carpet, all along the way you walk in ; and that is the white pavement of love, the love of God in Christ : Song iii. 10 ; there Solomon's chariot, representing the gospel covenant, is said to have a covering of purple ; there is the red carpet of the blood of Christ : and it is said to be paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem ; there is the white pavement of divine love. Now, the holy meditation and persuasion of God's special love in Christ, to you in particular : his love already manifested, in what he hath done for you, and in you : his love to be manifested, in what he is to do for you, in conducting you to the actual and full possession of the glorious inheritance reserved in heaven for you ; nothing will more engage to a gospel walk, than this ; the love of Christ will constrain you, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Gal ii. 20. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. Psal. lxxiii. 24.

Neglect not these means ; and if Satan tempt you, saying, What need of the use of means, since God hath promised to cause

you to walk in his statutes? Answer him as Christ did, when Satan tempted him, to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, adducing the promise that God had given his angels charge over him, to keep him in all his ways; his answer to Satan was, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." So, when Satan tempts you, to cast yourself from the pinnacle of the temple, from temple-means and ordinances, let your answer then be, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." To neglect the means is to tempt the Lord. Let means be used in dependance on the Lord, who only can put a blessing in the means: they are like pipes and conduits, which convey nothing, unless the fountain let forth of its water; so they convey nothing, unless the Lord send forth a stream thereby. Therefore, in the use of means, be still looking to the Lord, both for grace to use the means, and grace to bless the means.

Now, all the sermons I have preached upon this text, will be so many standing witnesses, against all the unbelievers of this congregation, who do not receive Christ Jesus the Lord: and all believers that, having received him, do not walk in him. Be restless then, till he be received into your hearts and souls; and, having received him, so walk in him.

May the Lord himself put a blessing, in all that hath been said from this text, and to his name be praise.

SERMON XC VII.—CIV.

THE HAPPY CONGREGATION; OR, THE GREAT GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE TO SHILOH.¹

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."—GEN. xlix. 10.

THE twelve sons of Jacob were very remarkable in their day; but the twelve tribes of Israel, that were descended and denominate

(1.) This subject is the substance of eight discourses, preached at several places on sacramental occasions. The first three were delivered at the sacrament at Kinglassie, June 5th, 6th, and 7th; and end about the middle of the third general head. The next three were preached at the sacrament of Airth, June 19th, 20th, and 21st; and end with the fifth general head. The last two were delivered at the sacrament of Carnock, July 4th and 5th; all in the year 1725.

from them, were yet more remarkable and renowned; for we find their names upon the twelve gates of the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 12. In the view hereof, their dying father, Jacob, says some things remarkable concerning each son and his tribe. Holy Jacob, the nearer he was to his death, the nearer to God; his soul had not only a kind of divinity, but of divination also, whereby he prophecies of what shall take place concerning them and come to pass in the latter days. From Jacob's couch, and death-bed prophecy, we may learn some new lessons, though it be an old story, and spoken more than three thousand years ago. Many great things are said to and of the several sons of Jacob, when now they were gathered together at his bed side: but especially very glorious things are spoken of Judah and his tribe; as, 1. That it should be an honourable tribe; ver. 8, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise." 2. That it should be a victorious tribe; "Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies." 3. That it should be a superior tribe to the rest; "Thy Father's children shall bow down before thee." 4. That it should be a powerful and courageous tribe, ver. 9, "Judah is a lion's whelp." 5. That it should be a royal tribe, from which the Messiah the Prince shall come, ver. 10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

As Abraham saw Christ's day afar off, so did Jacob here: though his bodily eyes were dim, yet such a clear-sighted soul hath he, that he sees that which the eye of mortality never saw, even an object at such a far distance, that he spake clearly of it more than sixteen hundred years before the accomplishment thereof; and while there was nothing but shadows, that intervened betwixt the prophecy and the event. And, notwithstanding all the legal intervening shadows, and that his sun was going down in his hemisphere of nature, his eyes dim through infirmity of age; yet his mind being irradiated by the Spirit of God, he sees the Sun of righteousness, the Morning-star, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Light of the Gentiles, and the Glory of his people Israel. As Moses, from the mount, beheld the land of Canaan afar off; so Jacob from the mount of his divine contemplation, even when his heart and eye-strings are breaking, sees to the furthest end and period of all the prophets.

This text is the more remarkable, that it is the third promise of grace and of Christ to mankind sinners after the fall. The first

promise was, Gen. iii. 15, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." The second was, Gen. xxii. 18, where God says to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." But this is the third, both fuller and plainer than the former two; for these shew that it shall be, but this shews, when it shall be; pointing out the very precise period of time when Christ shall come: So that if any one demand, When shall this Messias be revealed? The answer is, When the sceptre is departed from Judah.

This text hath two parts: the first pertaining to the Jews, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh come;" the second pertaining to the Gentiles, "To him shall the gathering of the people be." He shall come to the Jews, and be received by the Gentiles; for Christ, the King of the Jews, came unto them; "He came to his own, and his own received him not." The Gentiles shall be subject to the King of the Jews, and at last the Jews shall be subject to the King of the Gentiles. The former part of the verse speaks forth the conviction of the Jews, the latter part the conversion of the Gentiles.

Now, in the first part of the words, relating to the Jews, you may notice two things, first, a Sign; and, secondly, an Event. The sign is, the departing of the sceptre from Judah, and the government. The event is, the coming of Christ the Shiloh.

1. You have the Sign; and this sign, if it be not doubled, is at least twice mentioned in the text; for the same may be understood by the sceptre and the law-giver; where there is a sceptre, there must be a legislator. They may be either considered to be the same, namely, the sceptre or the law-giver; or, separately, as some read it, the sceptre of the law-giver; making the one the principality, and the other the magistracy, as it were, at the feet of the former; as Paul at the feet of Gamaliel. Jacob here foresaw, that the sceptre and government would come to the tribe of Judah, which was fulfilled in David, on whose family the crown was entailed. He foresaw also that the sceptre would continue in that tribe, at least a government of their own, till the coming of the Messias, in whom, as the King of Zion, and great High-priest, it was fit that both the priesthood, and royalty, should terminate and centre.

I know it is objected here, especially by the Jews, who deny that the Messias is come, that in the captivity of Babylon, Where

was the sceptre of Judah? And that the Maccabees were of the tribe of Levi; Where then was the tribe of Judah? For clearing of this, you are to remember, that when the sceptre entered upon Judah, it remained there. You may see Judges, i. 1, 2, "That after the death of Joshua, the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them? The Lord answered, Judah shall go up, because I have delivered the land into his hand." But when it is said, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah," it is not meant, the sceptre shall still remain there in the same splendour and glory: it is not taken away when it pleases God to eclipse the glory, and obscure the splendour of it, as a punishment of their sins. Now, as until the captivity, all along from David's time, the sceptre was in Judah: so in their captivity they had their princes exiles. You see the king of Babylon lifting up the head of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, when he was his captive, and advancing him above the other kings that were with him in Babylon, 2 Kings xxv. 27. And after the captivity, their rulers were either by the father or mother's side, descended from the tribe of Judah. They had still a governor of that tribe, or of the Levites, that adhered to it, which was equivalent, till Judah became a province of the Roman empire, just at the time of our Saviour's birth, and was at that time taxed as one of the provinces of that empire, Luke ii. 1. And though the act of government might, at some time or other, cease, yet the right of government was still in Judah; the crown still did belong to Judah, and the principality had its denomination from Judah; and to this day, they have the name of Jews from Judah, and will ever be so called; the name shall not wear out, till Christ's second coming: however, his first coming did not take place till the sceptre was departed from Judah: and when the government was actually departing, or departed from Judah, that was the time when Christ came into the world; for when Herod, a stranger, and of another nation, was made king and governor of Judah, and thereby the sceptre and royal power departed from Judah, our Lord appeared on earth. Therefore, in the narrative of Christ's nativity, Matt. ii. 1, 2, it is particularly recorded, that he was born in the days of Herod the king, namely, when this notable prophecy of the patriarch Jacob was fulfilled.

The Jews, then, may hold their peace and be silent, otherwise we can condemn them out of their own mouths; for, at the time of

Christ's death, they expressly owned, saying, "We have no king but Cæsar," John xix. 15; no king but the Roman emperor: and now the sceptre, that was removed from Judah before this time by conquest, is departed from them by consent. Now, they solemnly own that the right of government was fallen into the hands of the emperor, and so departed from Judah to Cæsar, from Judea to Rome. The sceptre here is publicly resigned—"We have no king but Cæsar"—a plain indication that the time for the Messiah to appear, even the set time, was now come; for, if the sceptre was departed from Judah, and the law-giver from between his feet; hence our Lord Jesus, by their own confession, is he that should come, and we are to look for no other, for he came exactly at the time appointed. Now, from that time to this very day, they have no king, no magistracy, no governor among themselves; their tribes are confounded, they are vagabonds in the earth, without any rule or government at all. This sign of the coming of Shiloh cannot now take place among them: this may confirm our faith of his being come, and condemn their unbelief, who obstinately deny it, though they cannot but acknowledge that the sceptre hath ceased from Judah seventeen hundred years ago. So much concerning the sign.

2. The Event is the coming of Shiloh. If the question now be, Where is this Messiah, in our text? Here it is said, Until Shiloh come. But what is this to the sign? where is any mention made of the Messiah? It is universally received that this Shiloh is Christ; but the question is, How Shiloh may signify and be called Christ? The imposition of the name does agree with the nature of the person, and his work; and from divers roots proceed divers reasons of this name: as the lines drawn in a circle may be many, yet all agree in one centre; so, among all the divers opinions about the signification of the word Shiloh, yet all agree that it is the Messiah who is here meant. I shall lay before you some of the significations of that word. 1. Some notice that *Shiloh* signifies peace, prosperity, and happiness; now, Christ is the Prince of Peace, he preserves against the gates of hell, sin, and death; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; and they only are happy that are found in him. 2. Some make it to signify rest; Christ is indeed the true resting-place for weary souls, Matth. xi. 28, 29, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me,—and ye shall find rest unto your souls." 3. Some notice that *Shiloh* signifies a *repo-*

situm, a thing laid up in a store : and this agrees to him who is the desire of all nations, kept up in the store-house of God, until the fit time in which he might come abroad and appear : "In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." And so, 4. Some observe that *Shiloh* signifies *Filius ejus*, his Son ; that is, the son of Judah, or the Son of David ; but a certain author puts *ejus* in the feminine gender, her Son ; that is, the Son of the virgin : and so, in both these sentences, Christ is the Son of David, the Son of the virgin, the seed of the woman. 5. To this purpose is the observation of these that make *Shiloh* to signify the *membrane* ; that is, the skin that wraps up the infant in the mother's womb : Christ, according to the flesh, was the Son of the womb, even of the virgin's womb. 6. And more especially, *Shiloh* signifies Sent ; and Christ is indeed the sent of God, and the best present that ever God sent, John iv. 7. A man that was blind was bid go and wash in Siloam, which is by interpretation sent, to heal, not bodily diseases only, but soul diseases. As God said to Moses in the mount, "Get thee down, and visit thy brethren, that commit sin below ;" so God said to Christ, Go down and visit thy brethren, which are below in sin, and in the shadow of death. How frequently is he therefore called, the Sent of God ? Whatever of these meanings you put upon the word, they are all significant, and shew that *Shiloh* agrees to the person of Christ ; and put them all together, they make his name to be as ointment poured forth, that fills the whole world with a sweet savour. He is the King of Zion, to whom the sceptre belongs ; for "The sceptre was not to depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, till *Shiloh* come."—And thus you have the portion of Judah, or that part of the words that belong to the Jews.

Now, the second part of the words is what relates to us, To him shall the gathering of the people be. Here is a happy confluence and concourse of people prophesied of ; where you may notice, 1. The place of their resort, To him. 2. The manner of their resorting to him, There will be a gathering to him. 3. The persons resorting, or the members of the meeting or assembly ; it is a gathering of the people. 4. The certainty of this event, To him SHALL the gathering of the people be. Notice, then, I say,

1. The place of their resort, or to what centre of rest their motion will tend, even to him ; that is, to *Shiloh* the promised Messiah to him who is the Son of God, the Sent of God ; to him as the only temple, the only shelter and Saviour ; to him who is the

Lion of the tribe of Judah; to him on whom the Sceptre is devolved.

2. The manner of their resorting, To him shall the GATHERING be. I find this word in the original Hebrew, to be such as gives occasion to render it thus, To him shall the expectation of the people be; or thus, To him shall the obedience of the people be: but our own translation being most excellent and agreeable to the original, I shall especially hold by it, yet so as not to exclude the other significations; for they agree upon the matter, and declare the manner of this resort of the people to Christ; that it is not a simple assembling to him, or an outward gathering, like a confused multitude not knowing wherefore they meet together; but that Christ shall be so the desire of the people, the hope of the people; that is not only a gathering of bodies, but a gathering of souls, and a gathering of hearts unto Shiloh. They shall not only lend an outward ear, but an inward heart-obedience; not a gathering of external attendance upon him and his ordinances only, but a gathering also of spiritual attendance and dependence on him, complacency in him, and reverence towards him. In a word, this is such a gathering here as imports all the acts of faith and hope in him, and all the outgoings of the soul after him in the exercise of grace internally, as well as in the performance of duty externally.

3. You have here the persons thus resorting or assembling unto Shiloh, namely, the people; "To him shall the gathering of the people be:" that is, the Gentiles: for the blessed Shiloh was to break down the partition-wall betwixt them and the Jews. The promise here respects the Gentile nations. It is not a particular set of people here intended—it is people in the plural number. All our Latin commentators translate it either *aggregatio gentium*, or *aggregatio populorum*; Junius and Tremellius, *obedientia populorum*¹. The coming of Shiloh was to turn the singular number to the plural; he was to turn *Gens* to *Gentes*, and *populus* to *populi*; that is to say (for I design not to speak to you in an unknown tongue) he was to turn a nation in particular to nations in general; and instead of making a feast only for one sort of people, to wit, the Jews, he was to make unto all people a feast of fat things and wines on the lees, well refined, Isa. xxv. 6; yea, he was to turn out the Jews, and take in the Gentiles in their room for hundreds of years. And

(1) That is, the gathering of the nations, the gathering of the people, or the obedience of the people.

alas! they have been turned to the door, these seventeen hundred years by-gone, and we need to pray that the time of their rejection may be of no longer continuance; for it will not fare the worse with us that they be received in again. Nay, "If the casting away of them, says the apostle, be the reconciling of the Gentile world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" Rom. xi. 15. However, at present, they that were the only church are unchurched, they are cut off from Shiloh, and there is a gathering of the people in their room: what people? even the people that were afar off, the Gentiles, for the Jews had been long the people near to him: they were the children of Abraham, and we the stones; and glory to him that, out of these stones, can raise up children to Abraham. They were the garden of God when we were a desolate wilderness. The Gentiles were contemned by the Jews: the Levite-priest would scarce look upon a poor Samaritan, but passed by on the other side. We were the dogs that were without, and looked upon by them as a cursed people, as indeed we were; but now, by the gathering of the people to Shiloh, the curse is turned to a blessing; the Gentiles are invited, and the Jews neglected. Where nature made a separation, grace makes a gathering and conjunction; where sin made a disjunction, grace makes an aggregation: "To him shall the aggregation, or gathering, of the people be."

4. You have here the certainty of this event: "To him SHALL the gathering of the people be." God revealed this counsel of his to old Jacob; and he, by the inspiration of God, declares it that it *shall* be. It is very true, the *shall be* in the text here is not in the original, but it is very fitly supplied by our translators; and the certainty of this event is as strongly asserted when these two words are left out as when they are put in, and in my opinion somewhat stronger: for, if you read the text without supplying of these two words, then it runs thus, *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE TO HIM.*—And this way of reading the text says, I think, four things.

(1.) That the gathering of the people to Shiloh is a certain evidence that the sceptre is departed from Judah; for the sceptre was not to depart from them till Shiloh should come, and gather the people to him. Now, the sceptre is departed from Judah; therefore Shiloh is come, and the gathering of the people is to him.

(2.) That the coming of Shiloh, and the gathering of the people

to him, was of equal certainty by the counsel of heaven; the gathering of the people to Christ was as certainly foreseen, as it was certainly foreseen that he was to come; and that according to the counsel of God, the gathering of the people hath been and shall be to Christ, is as sure and certain, as it is sure that he is come already; for thus they stand connected, namely, the coming of Shiloh, and the gathering of the people to him.

(3.) It says, that the coming of Shiloh, and gathering of the people to him, was to take place together; and indeed the gathering of the Gentiles took its remarkable accomplishment with his coming. Whenever he was born in Bethlehem, behold there came wise men from the east, inquiring after him; we are sure they were Gentiles, and belonged not to the commonwealth of Israel; and the respect they paid to Christ, the King of the Jews, was a happy pre-sage of what would follow, when these that were afar off should be made nigh by Christ. It is true, they were magicians; but some take it in a good sense, for the Magi among the Persians were their philosophers and their priests; but though we take it in the worst sense, it was an early instance of Christ's victory over the devil; whatever sort of wise men they were before, now they begin to be wise men indeed, when they set themselves to inquire after Christ. In this there were some early trophies erected of Christ's victory over Satan's territories, abstract from the Gentiles that were religious proselytes of old; herein commenced the gathering of the people to him.

(4.) This reading says, that as upon the coming of Shiloh, the gathering of the people should be no more delayed, so, upon his coming, their gathering should be no more discontinued; but that the gathering of the people should continue and run parallel with the period wherein it can be said that now Shiloh is come. The text speaks of a twofold period: the first is the time before Christ's coming, wherein it could be said, Shiloh is *not* come; and, so long as that could be said, the sceptre was to remain with Judah. The second is the time of Christ's coming, and after it, wherein it can be said, that Shiloh is *now* come, and the gathering of the people to him; therefore so long as that period remains, so long must the gathering be.

In a word, this reading of the word imports, that while the scene is now so far altered, that it can be said, The sceptre is departed from Judah, which will be to the end of the world, so long

we have ground to expect that the gathering of the people shall be to Shiloh, who is now come. The sceptre is departed from the Jews, and the Saviour is come to the Gentiles; whatever way we read it then, it stands established for a firm certainty, that to Shiloh shall the gathering of the people be.

Now, omitting many observations that might be drawn from the words, I confine myself to that which especially concerns ourselves, namely,

OBSERV. That it is established in the council of heaven, concerning Jesus Christ, the Messias, that to him shall the gathering of the people be.

Now, that this is established in the council of heaven, is plain from the sacred records of that council, which you have in your hand. I need not cite all the scriptures that speak of the conversion of the nations to him; I will but name two or three, Psalm ii. 8, where God is declaring the decree concerning our Messias; he says to him, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." *Ask of me*; what shall I give thee in consideration of that noble undertaking of thine, which I am so well pleased with, and so much glorified by? Why, might Christ say, all that I ask is, that I may have a seed to serve and glorify thee and me; that I may have my friends among the lost heathen Pagan world; let me see in them, as well as in others, the travail of my soul, and be satisfied.—Well, says the Father, it is granted: "I give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." See Isa. xi. 10, 12; Isa. xliii. 5, 6; Isa. lvi. 8, and lx. 4-9.

The method we would propose for illustrating this proposition, through divine aid, shall be the following:—

- I. To offer some remarks with respect to the nature of this gathering, and the qualities of it.
- II. Who are the people of whom it is said this gathering shall be?
- III. To whom this gathering of the people shall be, and in what respect it is to Christ.
- IV. The manner of this gathering; by what means and in what method it shall be.
- V. When are the special times and seasons wherein this gathering to Christ does, or shall take place.

- VI. Why, or for what reasons this gathering shall be to him
 why the people, and why to Shiloh. And then,
 VII. Shut up all with some Inferences from the whole.

1. The first thing proposed was, to offer some remarks with respect to the nature of this gathering, especially these four.

1. You may remark, that there are several sorts of gatherings that we would distinguish. There is an outward corporeal gathering, and an inward spiritual gathering ; outward gatherings are not here especially intended. It is true, that a flocking to ordinances is very pleasant, as it was to the Psalmist, when he said, " I was glad when they said, Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord ;" and when that word is accomplished, Isa. ii. 3, " Many people shall go and say, Come, let us go up to the mount of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob ; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." But many gather about a tent, and gather together to ordinances, that never are gathered to Shiloh. Some like the Athenians, gather to ordinances, to hear if the minister will tell them any news ; some, like the Pharisees, watch for a word to carp at, and play the part of the devil in accusing of the brethren ; some, like the Jews, seek after the law and legal duties, that they may establish their own righteousness ; some, like the Greeks, seek after wisdom and eloquence, and flowers of rhetoric ; some gather only to gaze, and others to muse ; and perhaps they muse upon their market, their journey, their dinner, their supper, their diversion ; and maybe the sermon is done before they know well where they are ; some gather to hear, but so soon as the minister begins, they fall asleep, as though they had been brought in for dead corpses, and the minister were preaching their funeral-sermon ; some gather to ordinances and hear, but they hear and scorn ; they hear and mock ; they hear and despise. May we not say with Christ, " What went ye out to the wilderness for to SEE ?" rather than, " What went ye out to HEAR ?" For people remember that which they see, but forget all that they hear, which says, that they came rather to see than to hear. Some indeed will mind what they think to the minister's reproach, or what will afford matter for their own diversion ; but with respect to the main thing, they depart from sermons with their hearts like a bottomless purse, that can hold no money ; and so they go home without gathering any fruits that fall from the tree of life, which should be the greatest design of their gathering together.

Nay, as Satan pointed Adam to another tree, lest he should go to the tree of life, so he points to some other business, and to some other exercise and study ; hence they go home, saying, The minister hath not an edifying gift ; says another, I cannot profit by him ; says another, He does not keep his text ; says a fourth, He preached too long, and I cannot mind all ; as if the ground should complain of the seed, which yet will not receive the seed. Few gather to ordinances, or attend upon the word, as the star that should lead them to Christ ; as the ladder that should mount them to heaven ; as the manna that should refresh their souls. Many gatherings of the people consist only in presenting their bodies like dead carcasses before the Lord : " They worship God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips ; but their heart is far removed from him." The special gatherings here intended, is an inward and spiritual gathering. The gathering of the people to Shiloh, is the gathering of souls to Christ, a gathering of hearts, a gathering of affections to him. An outward gathering, like bodily exercise, profits little, where there is no spiritual gathering and holy approach to a God in Christ ; and it is a pity, where there is a great congregation of people, there should be but a small aggregation to Christ ; while the soul comes not along with the body to his ordinances. O that only is a blessed gathering, when God gathers souls to himself, and Christ gathers hearts to himself ! " Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts ; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple," Psalm lxxv. 4. And indeed there will be no gathering to Shiloh here, if God himself do not cause us to approach. Hence as you are to distinguish betwixt a corporal and spiritual gathering, that you may not think it enough when you bring only your bodies before the Lord, while yet you leave your hearts behind you, and the desire of your soul is not to his name, so you are to distinguish betwixt a passive and active gathering ; as a bodily gathering is unprofitable, where there is no soul-gathering, so active gathering to Shiloh is impossible without a passive gathering. That there shall be an active gathering to Christ, is as certain as the firm decree of heaven ; John vi. 37, " All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me ;" but it is as certain, that there can be no active, without a passive gathering ; ver. 44, " No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." Both these are expressed by the spouse in one word, " Draw me, we

will run after thee." The passive gathering is God's drawing sinners to Christ, the active gathering is their running to him when drawn. This is such a necessary distinction, that it must be taken along with the whole of our discourse upon this subject; wherein we must consider this gathering sometimes in an active and sometimes in a passive sense, because the one cannot be without the other. When irresistible power is put forth, there must be a gathering, Psalm cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." And where there is such a gathering, it is a fruit of that exerting of divine power in its irresistible efficacy. Hence I offer,

2. A second remark, that in this gathering of the people to Shiloh, there are certain gatherers employed. The great and glorious gatherer is God himself, when he draws sinners to himself with the cords of love and bands of a man; that is, in a powerful irresistible manner; and yet not violating the will, as Arminians dream, but with loving and rational arguments, conquering, carrying, captivating, and overpowering the whole soul. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are employed in this gathering-work; it is done by the *care* of the Father, by the *pains* of the Son, and by the *power* of the Holy Ghost; it is done by the *motion* of the Father, by the *mediation* of the Son, and by the *might* of the eternal Spirit. God the Father is the gatherer: he is said to gather into one all things by Christ, Eph. i. 10. Christ himself, to whom the gathering is, is also the gatherer, John xi. 52, where it is said of him, that he would gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad. And that the Holy Ghost is the immediate gatherer, is plain, in that as the Father sends the Son to gather, so the Son sends the Spirit to gather the people to him; hence the Spirit is said to reveal Christ, to testify of Christ, to glorify Christ, to invite the people to Christ, Rev. xxii. 17, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." And he not only says it externally to the ear by his word, but internally to the soul by his common motions, and efficaciously to the heart by his irresistible operation; like that word by which the world was made, when God said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" so, when the Spirit says, Let there be faith, there is faith. Hence he that is called "the Spirit of faith," 2 Cor. iv. 13, is also "the Spirit of power," 2 Tim. i. 7. For he both begins and carries on the work of faith with power, and so powerfully draws sinners to Christ, and effectually gathers the people to Shiloh. The principal gatherers, then, are the blessed persons of the glorious

Trinity ; the Father does it through the Son, by the Holy Ghost. This adorable three-in-one work to each other's hand. There are subordinate gatherers, which God does employ ; particularly ministers of the gospel, whose greatest work lies in winning souls, and gathering people to Christ ; therefore called, " workers together with God," 2 Cor. vi. 1. Their principal business is to sound the trumpet, and gather the people to Shiloh ; they are to preach Christ, to proclaim Christ, to offer Christ, to invite sinners to Christ, and that is all they can do. They may cast down the gospel-net, but they will take nothing, unless the Lord himself gather in the fish : " Except the Lord build the city, the builders build in vain." The gospel is then the power of God to salvation ; that is, his organical power, the instrument of his power, when it is the ministration of the Spirit : " Not by strength, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Seek then, that his power may accompany the word, otherwise it will not be a gathering word. Now, as ministers are the subordinate gatherers, under Heaven's influence, by office, so may private Christians, whose souls are gathered to Christ ; they may be gatherers in their station, not indeed by office ministerially and authoritatively, but by private admonition and counsel charitatively. Thus parents, by their precept and example, may be the instruments of gathering their children to Christ, masters their servants, and private Christians their neighbours. And happy these that through grace are thus employed, whether as ministers or Christians ! for they are wise : " He that winneth souls is wise." " And they that be wise" (Dan. xii. 3), or, as it may be read, " they that be *teachers*, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." But then again,

3. The third remark I offer is, that there are certain airths, or particular quarters from whence the gathering of the people is made. Whence are they gathered, may you say ? Why, this is to be considered both in point of place and in point of state.

1st, In point of place. Whence is the gathering to Shiloh, and from what airth ? Why, even from every airth : " They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God," Luke xiii. 29. This gathering to Shiloh, considered even literally and extensively, will be from all the four quarters, and from all the four corners of the earth ; from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. Hence it is

said of Christ's dominion, Psal. lxxii. 8, that he shall have it from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth; and not only the large continent, but the little isles are included; ver. 10, 11, "The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents, and the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; yea, all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him." You have all the four airths mentioned, Isa. xliii. 5, 6, "I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; and will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." While the isles and ends of the earth are so much mentioned, even the utmost ends of the earth, to be Christ's possession; we may therein see and wonder at the grace of God, that in his counsel of old, concerning the gathering of the people to Shiloh, he had a view to our remote northern isles among the rest; even Britain and Ireland, Scotland and Zetland. When God will count the people that were gathered to Shiloh, it will be said of poor, remote Scotland, "This man and that man was born there;" and, O that the number were increased, and a greater gathering-time would come than ever hath been! O for a gathering of power, a day of power! However, it is from all airths that the gathering of the people shall be to Christ; it is not confined to one place; to him shall the gathering be, from Asia in the east, and from America in the west, and from Africa in the south, and from Europe in the north, not forgetting the European isles in the midst of the northern seas.

2dly, In point of state. Whence is the gathering of the people to Shiloh, and from what airth? from what state and condition are they to be gathered? Here let me allude to the four elements, water, fire, earth, and air, out of which they are gathered.

(1.) Some are gathered, as it were, out of the water, and fished out of the flood; and hence, as ministers in gathering souls, are called Fishers of men, and the gospel, the Fish-net cast into the sea for gathering of every kind, Matt. xiii. 47, so they are gathered out of the sea of a troublesome tempestuous world, out of the floods of sin and misery, where they are swimming. When the Lord gathers people to himself, he must fish them, and gather them out of many waters and great depths, even out of the depth of security, out of the depth of sensuality, where they are swimming pleasantly, yet dangerously, ready to swim into the dead sea of everlasting destruction.

Nothing but the hand of God could reach to the bottom of the depth whence the Lord doth gather his elect.

2. Some are gathered, as it were, out of the fire, Zech. iii 2, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" There is the fire of lust and lewdness, that some are burning in: "For wickedness burns as the fire," Isa. ix. 18; and to be gathered out of the Torrid Zone, and brought to a temperate climate, is a great matter. Out of this fire they must be gathered that are gathered unto Shiloh. There is the fire of God's wrath, which is a consuming fire, wherein they are in the utmost danger of being consumed for ever; but when the Lord gathers the people, he puts his hand, as it were, into the midst of the fire, and plucks them as brands out of the burning. Again,

(3.) They are gathered out of the earth, out of the dust and dung of the earth. Some are grovelling on the earth, and licking the dust like serpents, having their hearts and affections clogged with the clay, in respect of their worldly-mindedness, earthly dispositions, and covetousness, while the heart is so set upon earthly things, that they are lost and hid among the clay, and covered with the dust; and from thence they must be gathered: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; and lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners," Isa. lvii. 17, 18. O the kindness of God, in gathering souls out of such a dismal situation! Yea, some are not only covered with the dust, but lying among the dung of this earth, sticking in the miry clay, and wallowing in all the gross abominations and pollutions of the world, such as these mentioned, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11; yet out of the very dung does he gather the people to Shiloh: "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified." He gathers his sheep out of the most dirty mire. Let none presume; for he is sovereign, and lets some stick and perish in the mire; let none despair, for he is merciful, and draws out some from the very dung. When Antigonus, a king, past by a ditch into which a sheep was fallen, the historian says, he pulled it out, though foul and dirty, with his own hand; for which he was exceedingly beloved, and commended by his subjects.—But behold the King of Israel is yet kinder; he not only stoops to filthy ditches of sin, into which his sheep are fallen, and gathers them with his arm, but lays them

in his bosom, Isa. xl. 11, that he may warm them with his heart-love, and wash them with his heart-blood. Again,

4. They are gathered out of the air in a manner ; while the prince of the power of the air is flying away with them, they are gathered out of his claws. Some that are Satan's captives, they are flying in the air, as it were, with the wings of pride and vanity, exalting themselves above all that is called God. They learn of Lucifer to be proud and lofty ; looking down upon others as if they were the dregs and offscourings of the earth : when God gathers any such, he hath them to bring down from lofty elements and airy vanities, that he may humble them under his mighty hand, and make them stoop to Shiloh. Others are, as it were, building castles in the air : such are these who, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, will not submit to the righteousness of God, Rom. x. 3. This is a high and lofty building ; but it is like a castle in the air, having no foundation but the high and airy imagination of these that build it ; which the Lord will bring down when he gathers them out of their heights and altitudes, as you see he does, 2 Cor. x. 5, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." There you see high things, high thoughts, high imaginations, all high and airy buildings exalted against Christ and his righteousness ; yea, strong holds, such as nothing but the mighty power of God can pull down : such are all the false hopes and legal dreams of poor sinners. They hope they will mend before they die ; they will turn a new leaf, and live a new life, and so pay their own debt, and do their own business themselves : thus they build in the air a refuge of lies which the hail must sweep away. And indeed God raises a storm in the air, that he may gather his remnant from thence. As in a dangerous storm the mariner will cast silk and satin overboard, and the most valuable things, rather than perish ; even so God raises a storm of conviction in the man's conscience that threatens everlasting shipwreck, that he may cast away his confidence and legal righteousness : that what things were gain to him, these he may count loss for Christ.—Thus, I say, there are some airts from whence they are gathered. And this leads me to,

4. A fourth remark, viz., that there are several things supposed

and imported in this gathering of the people to Shiloh. To mention some of these,

(1.) It supposes straying, and imports conversion. It supposes straying : and indeed the natural state is a straying and wandering state. The man is wandering away from God, wandering from his commandments, wandering in a wilderness, wandering he knows not whereaway, for the devil hoodwinks him ! "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not : " and so they wander in the dark ; in the darkness of ignorance, unbelief, error, delusion, and confusion ; and yet, in the darkness of deep security, never imagining but that they are in the right enough way, though it be the highway to hell, thinking that God is altogether like unto themselves, and approves their way, and allows them in these things wherein they allow themselves. Hence it is impossible to bring them off from their carnal thoughts and wicked ways where they are wandering, unless God himself gather them by his convincing grace. This gathering imports conversion, wherein God says with power (as he made the world with an omnipotent Let it be, so here), "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord," Isa. lv. 7, 8. But this power of God, whereby he converts sinners, rides in the chariot of grace, saying, as it follows, "I will have mercy on him ; I will abundantly pardon." And here is the cord of love and mercy with which he draws. The gospel of grace is the power of God to salvation, the power of God to conversion : without the faith and apprehension of this mercy there is no gospel repenting nor return, no effectual conversion ; "Let him return, for I will abundantly pardon." There is the motive, which must be viewed before any can be moved thereby. But when this mercy of God in Christ, in multiplying pardon where sin hath been multiplied, is once viewed, then the soul is melted and moved. What ! is there mercy for the like of me ? Pardon for the like of me ? And abundant pardon, where sin hath abounded ? Oh ! will I for great sins get great pardons, and for a multitude of sins a multitude of pardons ? Will the mountains of mercy overtop and cover all the mountains of my sins ? O, says God this, even to wicked me ? This makes all my bowels melt, and all my bones to say, "Who is like unto the Lord ? " Thus he gathers in conversion, saying, Wicked man, turn : for I will abundantly pardon ; and, O that is a powerful for ; like a loadstone, that hath a drawing virtue upon the hard steel ; so will this

draw the hard heart and dissolve it. This for is backed with another, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor my ways your ways;" *q.d.* With respect to the proud secure sinner, do you think that I am altogether like unto yourself, and that I approve of your ways as if they were my ways, and your thoughts as if they were my thoughts? Because you allow yourself in that way, you think I allow you also; and your thought is, that you shall have peace, though you walk after the imagination of your own heart: nay, "My thoughts are not your thoughts."—Or, with respect to the self-righteous sinner, what are your thoughts? You think that your way is a very good way, and so that it is God's way; and you think that God will accept of you, because you say you do your best, and do as well as you can, and nobody can impeach you, or say black is your eye; you are a good neighbour; you are honest in your dealings: and so you think you are every way right, and that God thinks as well of you as you do of yourself; and that his thoughts are your thoughts, and that your way that you are walking in is his way: Nay, nay, says he; "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither my ways your ways; for as the heavens are above the earth, so are my thoughts above your thoughts and ways." O do not measure God's thoughts and ways by your sinful or selfish thoughts and ways: if you would not run into a mistake, man, woman, look to the clouds, and see how far they are above the earth: yea, look to the heavens, and see how far they are above the clouds: yea, look to the God that made the heavens, and see how far he is exalted above the heavens: and if the heavens be so far above you, that you cannot reach them or measure them: O how far is God above you that you should attempt to measure his thoughts and ways by yours!—Or, again, with respect to the humbled sinner, that is like to be moved and melted with the view of mercy, but yet is tempted to doubt and deny it, saying, O my thoughts are that God will never have mercy on the like of me, such a God-provoking sinner; and I fear God's thoughts are the same with mine; Nay, "My thoughts are not your thoughts," says God; look to the heavens, man; look to the heavens, woman; look to the heavens, lass; look to the heavens, lad; for as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways of grace, and thoughts of mercy above your thoughts and ways; your thoughts are, that I have no way to shew mercy on you, and therefore that my thoughts are to ruin and destroy you; but I have found a ransom, through

which my mercy does make way, and vent to the credit of justice ; therefore, "My thoughts are thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Judge not my thoughts, then, by the standard of yours, but rather make the height of the heavens above the earth to be the standard, whereby to judge the height of my mercy, for overtopping all your sins with abundant pardon ; therefore turn : here is the For, the threefold For, or motive, upon which turning or conversion is urged. This gathering, I say, supposes straying and imports conversion.

(2.) It supposes SCATTERING and imports CONVENTION: it is a gathering together into one, the children of God that were scattered abroad, John xi. 52. The natural state is a scattered state, and God's remnant whom he hath a mind to gather are not only scattered here and there through the earth, but before the Lord gather them, they are like dead and dry bones scattered about the grave's mouth, Psalm cxli. 7. They are dead in trespasses and sins ; dead spiritually, under the power of sin ; dead legally, under the sentence of death and damnation ; and not only dead bones but dry bones, no sap of grace or goodness in them ; and not only so, but scattered bones ; "How shall these dry bones live, or these scattered bones be gathered together?" You see this represented, Ezek. xxxvii. 1-10. The Spirit of life must come and gather together the bones, and make them live : and then, and not till then, are the scattered souls convened, and gathered to Christ. Then the SCATTERED thoughts that were scattered among the stuff of the world, are gathered to Christ ; every thought being brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Then the scattered affections, that were lost among the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, are gathered and convened together unto Christ as the proper centre. O, then, there is a convention of hearts, that were scattered among other objects ; "My son, give me thy heart." Then there is a convention of desires, to him who is the desire of all nations ; a convention of delights, to him who is the delight of God and angels. Instead of the desires of the flesh and the delights of sense, the desire of their souls comes to be towards him, and the remembrance of his name, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee ? And there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee." Oh ! are there not here dead and dry bones scattered about the mouth of the grave ? Dead and dry hearts and affections scattered about the mouth of hell ? O ! what need of a gathering !

(3.) It supposes *rejection*, and imports *reception*. The natural state is a state wherein the man is rejected of God: he hath forsaken God, and God hath forsaken him. But when God gathers the people to Shiloh, he receives them into favour: Isa. liv. 7, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee;" that is, "I will love thee freely, and receive thee graciously."

(4.) It supposes SEPARATION, and imports UNION. The natural state is a state of separation from God, wherein the man is like the prodigal, in a far country; far from God, and far from Christ, and far from grace: "Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," Eph. ii. 22. There is an infinite moral distance, as well as a natural distance, betwixt God and them. The wall of separation is such, as none but God can pull down; which he must do, when he gathers the people to Shiloh; and hence, in gathering sinners, he not only preaches peace to them that are afar off, but in Christ Jesus, they that were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ: they that were separate from God, and without a head, since the first Adam fell, are gathered together to God, under a new head, the second Adam, and unite to him: it is called, "A gathering together into one, all things in Christ," Eph. i. 10. They are thus unite to God, and one among themselves in Christ. This union is by the bond of the Holy Spirit, and instrumentally of saving faith: and the gathered soul becomes one building with Christ, whereof Christ is the foundation; one temple, one body, one Spirit; "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit."

(5.) It supposes REBELLION, and imports SUBJECTION, RECONCILIATION, and OBEDIENCE. The natural state is a state of rebellion, alienation, and enmity. Before people are gathered to Shiloh, they are gathered under the standard of the devil, and carrying on a rebellion against heaven; every man and woman is a rebel: "The carnal mind is enmity against God:" every thought of every man is a rebel against God; "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil, and only evil continually." Now, when God gathers people he brings them into subjection to his Son, as they are unite to him as their Head, so they are subject to him as their King. This subjection and obedience is imported in the original word, as I told in the explication. The gathered people are brought to say, "Other lords beside thee have had dominion over us; but

now, by thee only will we make mention of thy name." As the Jews said, "We have no king but Cæsar:" so they are brought to say, We have no king but Shiloh; no Lord but the Lord Jesus. Rebellion is turned to subjection and obedience; and their alienation, to amity and love.

(6.) In a word, it supposes an AMISSION, or LOSING, and imports RESTORATION and RECOVERY. The natural state is a lost state; we are lost in the rubbish of the fall of Adam. We are lost privately, in that we are not what we were, in a state of innocence and uprightness, nor in a state of friendship and fellowship with God, nor in a state of power, strength, and ability to do God's will; we have forfeit all this by our sin and fall; "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Rom. iii. 25. We are positively, in regard we are that which we should not be, even filthy sinners and guilty criminals; filthy, and so are children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 3. Our bodies and all their members are corrupted, which is called the filthiness of the flesh: our souls, and all their faculties are corrupted, this is the filthiness of the spirit: being filthy and guilty sinners, we are positively lost. We are lost judicially, as being under a sentence of death, and under the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 10. The law saith, "The soul that sinneth shall die." We are lost meritoriously, in that our sins deserve death, which is the wages of sin, Rom. vi. 23. And no wonder, for it is a violation of God's holy, just, and good law, Rom. vii. 12. It is a contrariety and contradiction to God's holy, just, and good nature, Hab. i. 13. In a word, we are lost in point of power and ability to save and recover ourselves: lost as to all capacity in the creature to help us; "We are by nature without strength," Rom. v. 6. We are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, Rom. viii. 7. We cannot know or discern the things of God: yea, they are foolishness to the natural man, 1 Cor. ii. 14; far less can we by any atonement satisfy God for our offences; therefore, "The redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever." Thus we are every way lost.

Now, as this is the lost state supposed, so this gathering of lost souls imports the Son of man his coming to seek and save that which was lost, Luke xix. 10. While yet the sinner is stout-hearted, and far from righteousness, unwilling to be saved and gathered like these, Matt. xxiii. 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, but ye would not!" He makes

inquiry after them by his word, by his rod, by his Spirit, saying, as to Adam, when he made inquiry after him, "Adam, where art thou?" Man, woman, where art thou hiding thyself? I am come to seek, to save, and gather you. And as he seeks them out by his word, so he finds them out by his Spirit, and restores them to a state of salvation. Thus he gathers them preparatively by the law, formally and immediately by the gospel, meritoriously by his blood, procuratively by his intercession, occasionally by his providence, and effectually by his Spirit; drawing them with grace, covering them with his righteousness, quickening, sanctifying, and sealing them to the day of redemption. But how he gathers may come to be more particularly shewn upon the fourth head. Only so much for the remarks I promised, concerning the nature and import of his gathering.

II. The Second general head proposed, was, To shew who are the people of whom it is said, the gathering of the people shall be to him. Why, in general, by the people you are to understand the Gentiles, Rom. xv. 11, and therefore here is a door of faith open to us, to gather in by it unto Shiloh: for the promise is to us, whose forefathers were as black and blinded pagans as any in the world; "To us is the word of this salvation sent," that the gathering of the people should be to Shiloh. And here is encouragement to us to gather in to him by faith; here is a foundation of faith for all the people that hear this gospel: God says, "The gathering of the people shall be to Christ, the Messiah," insomuch that whoever of all the people shall be persuaded to gather in under his wings, they shall be welcomed to him, and saved by him. Why, says one, it may be I am none of the people here intended, none of the elect that shall be effectually gathered; and therefore my attempting to come to him may be vain. In answer hereunto, you would consider that there are two distinct questions here, namely, 1. Whom he designs in this decree? 2. Whom he defines in his word to be the persons that shall gather? And we would consider which of these especially is proposed in the gospel for our encouragement in gathering unto Shiloh.

As to the first, Whom he designs in his DECREE to be gathered? These are indeed the elect, who are said to be chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Ephes. i. 4. They are said to be predestinate; and "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called," Rom. viii. 30. They are said to be given to Christ; and, "All

that the Father hath given me shall come to me," John vi. 37; and "All that are ordained to eternal life shall believe, Acts xiii. 48. The election shall obtain," Rom. xi. 7. And indeed, if God had not, in his eternal purpose, designed to gather some, none at all would be gathered. Now, I think it is observable, that in all these places, where God's design of gathering the elect to him is mentioned, it is readily brought in either as an encouragement to them that are gathered, that they may have the comfort of their election from eternity: or as an encouragement to ministers that are gatherers that they may know their labour shall not be without success; or else as a check and blow to these that are final rejecters of Christ, and refuse to be gathered to him: but never is it brought in for a discouragement to any people in the world to gather unto Shiloh; hence to the Jews, that obstinately and finally rejected Christ, he says, John vi. 36, 37, "Ye will not come;" but know to your confusion, that "all that the Father hath given me, shall come." But that none may be hereupon discouraged, he says, "Whosoever comes, he will in no wise cast out." Where, as he shuts the door upon final rejecters; so he opens the door to all comers, that they may flock in to him; and the rather because it is impossible they can know their election of God, till once they come and gather to Christ. It is devilish reasoning therefore to say, I know not if I be an elect, and therefore I need not come to Christ: for it is divine reasoning rather to say, I know not my election, therefore I will come unto him that I may know it, since it cannot possibly be known otherwise. Election is in Christ, Ephes. i. 4, "We are chosen in him;" and therefore out of Christ it cannot be seen. But if I be not elected, say you, I will not get grace to come. Indeed if you have no will to come, you have no grace to come; and if you have no will to come, whom can you blame for your enmity but yourselves, that will not come to Christ? Will you complain you have not grace to come, and yet reject the gospel of grace, that only can make you willing! O then, "Why will you die, O house of Israel?" But, sir, is it not true that all will not be gathered; and therefore perhaps not me? Well, but is it not as true, that many shall be gathered: and therefore why not you? Is there any irritant clause in the gospel, excluding you from gathering to Shiloh among the rest? Non-election can be no hinderance to you, if a lying devil and deceitful heart do not make it so; for it is a secret you are not concerned with: it is a secret thing that belongs to God,

Deut. xxix. 29. Your business is to notice what belongs to you, namely, what warrant you have from the word for your gathering unto Shiloh. When the gospel call is among your hands, it belongs not to you to demur upon that question, Whom he designs in his decree?

But it belongs to you to answer to your name in the second question, namely, Whom he designs in his word to be the persons that should gather, and shall be gathered to Shiloh? And that all may press themselves in upon him, without fear of presuming when they are gathering to him, they are defined by the most general terms, namely, THE PEOPLE; "To him shall the gathering of THE PEOPLE be." And that none may have any reason to think that they are cast out, but that all and every one may be encouraged to venture their perishing souls upon Christ, I shall shew what sort of people are here intended.

1. It is a gathering of pagan people and heathens that is here meant: "Shiloh shall come, and the gathering of the people to him," accordingly Christ came, that the Gentiles might be gathered, and might glorify God for his mercy; he came to the Jews for the good of the Gentiles: see Rom. xv. 8, 12. And now, for accomplishing of these promises, he allows us to preach, among you Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ. This is a part of the mystery of godliness, Christ preached among the Gentiles, 1 Tim. iii. 16. It was a mystery to the Jews and primitive Christians, when Christ was first preached among the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 17, 18. Why, the Gentiles were the uncircumcision; they were abominable outcasts, whose very entering into the temple was enough to pollute it. They were strangers and aliens; but now God declares in the gospel, that he will justify the uncircumcision through faith, Rom. iii. 30. "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached the gospel before to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed," Gal. iii. 18. The Gentiles here meant were called dogs, and the Jews were called the children; hence said Christ to the woman of Canaan, when trying her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs. Without are dogs," Rev. xxii. 15; but such dogs have been gathered, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11, "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified." Thus the people that may, and shall be gathered, are defined, they are Gentiles, uncircumcised, heathens, dogs; and if that be a description of you, man, woman,

then the promise concerns you, and you are called to embrace it with application.

2. It is a gathering of graceless and ungodly people that is here designed. Though he makes them gracious and godly when once he hath gathered them; yet, before they be gathered, and while he is seeking to gather them to himself, they are graceless and ungodly, "I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Mark ii. 17. And indeed, if he would except sinners, he would except all mankind, and call none at all; for, "All have sinned," therefore say not, you are a sinner, and therefore cannot be of that number, to whom this word of grace belongs: for if you be a sinful creature of Adam's family, we are charged to hold out the word of salvation to you: "Go, preach the gospel to every creature," Mark xvi. 15.

3. It is a gathering of the most sinful people that ever were, that is here intended. Christ, say you, may gather sinners, but none so gross as me: therefore I tell you, that even the grossest of sinners are included in this gathering: hence the stout-hearted people are encouraged to come to him; hearken, ye stout-hearted, and far from righteousness, I bring near my righteousness: and my salvation shall not tarry," Isa. xlvi. 12, 13. Hearken to his reasoning, Isa. i. 18, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Why says he thus, but that the greatest and most guilty sinner may not be discouraged from gathering about the throne of infinite grace? Hence neither the cruel massacres and cursed sorcery of Manasseh, nor the blasphemy and persecution of Paul, did exclude them from obtaining mercy and being gathered to Shiloh: yea, the Jews, who murdered the Lord of glory, see them both called and converted, Acts ii. 14.

4. It is a gathering of diseased people that is here meant, Mark ii. 17. When Shiloh comes, it is to gather the sick and diseased about him to heal them; "They that be whole need not the physician, but they that are sick:" multitudes gathered about him to touch him; and, "As many as touched him were made whole." All that are sick are called to come to him, and all that want the physician. We need not understand it of these that are sensibly sick, and see their need, such only will indeed come: but it is true without a figure, "That all that are really sick, and stand in need of a physician, ought to come." Now, what is your disease, man,

woman? For the physician is come here to gather all diseased persons about his hand, that he may get the glory of healing them. Is darkness and ignorance your disease? Behold, Shiloh is come to be a light to lighten the Gentiles. Is deadness your disease? Behold, "He is come to give life, and to give it more abundantly." Is blindness your disease? "He is come to open the eyes of the blind." Is hardness of heart your disease? "He is come to take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh." Whatever be the disease, let the gathering of diseased people be to him. If your disease be unbelief, so as you cannot for your life elicit one act of faith; he hath the Spirit of faith to give for curing of that. If your disease be impenitency, so as you cannot repent of one sin; he hath the Spirit of repentance to give for curing of that. If your disease be enmity and hatred against God and Christ, he hath the Spirit of love to give for curing that. If your disease be carnality, so as your thoughts and affections are carnal and fleshly; he hath the Spirit of holiness to give for curing that. If your disease be weakness, that you cannot think, you cannot act, you cannot pray; he hath the Spirit of power to give for curing that. If your disease be error and delusion, as well as dimness and confusion: he hath the Spirit of truth to give, to lead you into all truth. If your disease be security, fearing nothing, but sleeping in the arms of the devil, destitute of all grace, filled with all atheism and blasphemy, and such unconcernedness and indifference, that no arguments in the world can awaken you; Behold, Shiloh is come, who is the resurrection and the life, having the Spirit of all grace to give, Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." There is one disease called the unpardonable sin, which the man that is under would never so much as wish to be cured of; abstracting from that, I know no disease excluded out of the Mediator's commission. Whatever be the disease then, of which you would wish and need to be cured, if you be among the number of diseased people, that is the people of which the gathering must be to Shiloh.

5. It is a gathering of distracted people and mad fools. This is set forth in the parable of the prodigal, who played the fool and madman, till he came to himself, and came home to his father, who, notwithstanding of his former madness and folly, kindly received and entertained him, Luke xv. 17, 24. What is all the people in

the world but a company of mad fools, and besides themselves ; feeding upon swine's husks, sensual pleasures and lying vanities ? yet of such people is the gathering to Shiloh. Therefore, O sinner, do not exclude yourself from the benefits of this promise, though you have been carrying like one that hath been out of his wits all your days. Some in the world are called wits, and think themselves so, who yet are mad and out of their wits, so long as they do not think of gathering to Shiloh, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge : and, Who of God is made unto us wisdom."

6. It is a gathering of imprisoned people that is here meant : for Shiloh is come to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, Isa. lvi. 1. Now, what sort of a prison are you in, man ? This word of salvation is to you, "Turn ye to your strong holds, ye prisoners of hope," Zech. ix. 12. The people that are gathered to Shiloh are designed prisoners ; and if a prisoner be your name and designation, be it ever such a deep, dark, and dreadful prison, here is a door of hope for you. Is your prison door barred and bolted, so as no man or angel can open ? Behold, he proclaims the opening of the prison to them that are bound. When he in the gospel proclamation is saying, Open prison doors, open, open ; O take hold of his strength, and invite his power to be put forth, and you shall find all the bands shall be broken in pieces. To give him employment to open your prison is one of the ways of gathering to him. Do you look upon yourself as a prisoner in the further corner, hidden in the deepest and darkest hole of the prison ? Behold the gathering hand of him that can save to the uttermost, can reach to the furthest corner in the prison, and bring you forth, so as your name shall be called, "Sought out, and found out," Isa. lxii. 12. But, on this subject, see my notes on Isa. xlii. 6. Now, if the people to be gathered to Shiloh be of that sort, if it be a gathering of pagans, to make them Christians ; a gathering of graceless people, to make them gracious ; a gathering of great sinners, to make them great saints ; a gathering of diseased people, that they may be made whole, a gathering of fools and madmen, that they may be made wise ; a gathering of prisoners, that they be made free : if this be the designation of these people of whom the gathering shall be to Shiloh, O then, is your name and designation touched at here ! What hinders, but you put in for a share of this gathering grace ! By what clause are you excluded,

if you be one of the people here mentioned, man, woman? And why will you exclude yourselves from coming to Christ? The gospel excludes you not, for it names you in a manner; and you should answer to your name, saying, "Lord, here I am:" I find I am mentioned among these of whom the gathering shall be to Shiloh; therefore, behold I come to him; let my soul and all its faculties be centered on him.

But, in case you think that I have missed your name, I must tell you, that all that are called by the gospel of Christ are allowed to gather under his wings; and it is by the free universal call given to all the people to whom the gospel comes; it is by this that God gathers all his chosen into Christ; and the promise, given forth indefinitely to all the people, is a ground of encouragement to them all, to come to Shiloh by faith; therefore, says the apostle to them whom he was calling come to Christ, whom they had crucified, Acts ii. 39, "The promise is to you, and to your children; and to all them that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." And here, as all that are afar off are called, so more particularly, there are two sorts of people called, that some do not dream to be so—namely, 1. They that exclude themselves. 2. They that are excluded by men, they are included in the call.

(1.) They that exclude themselves; and you will find, they are most particularly called, who are most ready to exclude themselves. They that are weary and heavy laden, under a sense of sin and apprehension of God's wrath, are ready to exclude themselves; therefore they are particularly called; "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. I do not confine the sense of these words indeed to the humbled and convinced: for I think that even these that are wearying themselves in pursuing vanities, and living contentedly under a heavy load of sin and guilt, or wearying themselves with a load of legal and unprofitable service, are called also by that text to come to Christ, in whom alone they can find that rest and satisfaction which they are vainly seeking in other things. Now, though I judge it would straiten the gospel-call there, to confine it only to the first sense; yet I reckon the first to be so much imported, that seeing such persons as find a load of sin and wrath upon them, are readiest to exclude themselves, therefore they are expressly called. Thus again, they that see themselves destitute of all good qualifications, have no money nor money-worth: nothing but poverty, and want, and

worthlessness: these are ready to exclude themselves, as being broken and lost; therefore they are particularly encouraged, Ezek. xxxiv. 16. Again,

(2.) They that are excluded by men; yea, whom ministers are ready to exclude, yet the call reaches them. Men are ready to exclude from the call of the gospel, such as refuse the call, and pour contempt upon it, viz., Mockers and scorers; yet we find such are called, Prov. i. 22, 23. Men are ready to exclude from the call of the gospel, or the invitation to come, and gather unto Shiloh, such as are not sensible of the want of him, and think themselves happy enough without him. Men exclude unsensible sinners, that have no thirsty desire after Christ, but are satisfying themselves with other things; yet these are particularly called, as you may see in these two passages, Isa. lv. 1, 2, "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. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Now, you may notice, that the thirsting here is no desirable quality; it was a thirsting for that which did not satisfy, and a labouring for that which was not bread: and yet they are invited to come to him, as one that hath a variety of supply; water to refresh; wine to cherish; milk to nourish; and all offered freely; "Without money and without price:" so that here, even these that are thirsting after their lusts, and after the world, and unsatisfying vanities, are called. See also, Rev. iii. 18. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed: and eye salve, that thou mayest see." But who are they that are thus called? Even these, that in the preceding verse, said they were rich, and increased with goods, and stood in need of nothing; even these that had no sense of their need of Christ; true, these that do not see their need, will not come; but whether they see it or not, they are called and obliged to come. Now, men are ready to exclude from the call these that are unhumbled, unsensible sinners, that are not convinced of their sin and misery: but because God's free and gracious call can effectually work upon unsensible, stupid, brutish sinners, as well as upon the objects that we reckon most prepared; therefore sinners want of sense, and due conviction, is brought in as

a reason why they are called to come to Christ : " I counsel thee to buy of me tried gold, white raiment, eye-salve ;" why, because thou sayest, " I am rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." Let none think then, because they do not see their wretched and undone state without Christ, therefore they are not concerned with his call ; nay, upon that very account you are concerned, says the Spirit of God ; and you may object what you will, but you will not get it put by you. Shift this call as you will, it will rise up in judgment against you, if you do not answer it. If you are an unsensible sinner, not knowing that you are poor and miserable, thinking that you are rich enough already, and do not see that you are wretched, blind, and naked, you have the more need to come to Christ, that he may give you eye-salve, that you may see your misery without him, and your remedy in him. Thus we are warranted to open the mouth of the gospel-net : and I hope, by this time, you may see, that you are all concerned with this call. And, what do you think we intend by this universal call ? Why, there is one of two things will follow : either, to the glory of God's justice we get you all left inexcusable ; or, to the glory of his mercy, we get you all gathered into Christ ; and if there be some of both sorts, then both these ends are taught. But, O to see the last especially, even a happy gathering of the people to Shiloh. Thus you see who are the people, of whom it is said, the gathering shall be to the Messiah. None are excluded, all are invited, and warranted to assemble to him ; and when God says, " To him shall the gathering of the people be, all the people should say, AMEN."

III. The third thing proposed was, To shew to whom shall the gathering of the people be ; or, what is the gathering place, and where is the gathering to be. Here we may inquire, 1. What place there is in Christ for the people to gather ? 2. In what respect the gathering of the people is to him ?

First, What place there is in Christ for the people to gather to ? Christ is the temple to which we ought to resort ; he is the only refuge and sanctuary of poor miserable souls ; and there is room enough in the temple, and sanctuary for all that shall gather into it. In general, the very PERSON of Christ is the gathering place, the meeting place, to which people should gather. They that come to Christ are to close with his person, and then they are interested in all his purchase ; hence the many calls to come to him,

to receive him, to rest on him, to trust in him, to flee to him, and so to God in him; for a God in Christ is a throne of grace, to which the gathering of the people should be, Heb. iv. 16, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need." More particularly, there is a six-fold place or chamber in the Lord Jesus, that I shall mention, for the gathering of the people into.

1. There is the chamber of his righteousness; no doubt this is one of the chambers spoken of, Song i. 4, "The King hath brought me into his chambers:" and Isa. xxvi. 20, "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and hide yourself, till the indignation be overpast." Indeed there is no escaping of divine wrath and indignation, but by gathering into this chamber of Christ's righteousness. It is one of the most splendid and well-adorned chambers that ever was: for it is hung with the red and white hangings which God himself wrought: I mean with the fair and white obedience, and the red bloody suffering and satisfaction of the Son of God. Guilty sinners cannot be saved without a law-fulfilling, justice-satisfying righteousness: but when they gather into this chamber they are absolutely safe, and may say, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength, Isa. xlv. 24. The Lord is well-pleased, for his righteousness sake;" insomuch that none can lay anything to their charge, Rom. viii. 33. They may laugh at all challenges, while they shut their chamber-door upon themselves; they are then chambered, like Noah in the ark, which was pitched within and without, Gen. vi. 14, so as no drop of water could come in; so here,

2. There is the chamber of his name, for the gathering of the people into; "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, to which the righteous run, and are safe," Prov. xviii. 10. He is the strength, as well as the righteousness of Israel: and to this chamber, in which there is everlasting strength, we ought to throng. Many a closet there is in this chamber: if we should mention all his titles, all his offices, all his relations, all his divine attributes and perfections which belong to his name, there would be no end of telling; but every one and any one of them, is a fit place for gathering to: every corner of this chamber is perfumed, insomuch, that none are gathered into it, but they are ravished with the sweet smell thereof; "Because of the savour of thy good ointment, thy name is as ointment poured forth." His name is Christ the Anointed; and every name he

hath is an anointed name: He is an anointed Jesus, an anointed Surety, an anointed King. And when any of his names are cleared up, and opened, it is like the opening of a box of ointment; it is like the opening of a chamber door, full of ravishing perfumes.

3. There is the chamber of his bosom, for the gathering of the people into, "He gathers them with his arms, and carries them in his bosom," Isa. xl. 11; his kind and merciful bosom and bowels, which yearn toward sinners, Jer. xxxi. 20. This is a large chamber, James v. 11, "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy;" the original is **POLYSTPLAGCHNOS**, he is of **LARGE BOWELS**, or **FULL OF BOWELS**; there is place enough in these bowels of infinite mercy for sinners to gather in into; and this chamber of his bosom is standing open for all comers. The chamber door of his heart is open, that the gathering of the people may be in to it: and as it is a large chamber, that can contain you all, being as broad and wide as the infinite mercy of a God in Christ; so it is a warm chamber: O it is a warm and heartsome chamber, to get into the heart and bosom of Christ. They that gather in there, will sit under the warm and benign influence of God's love and grace in Christ: their hearts are warmed, and made to burn within them: "Did not our hearts burn within us, when he talked with us by the way, and opened to us the scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 32. While he was opening the scripture, he was stirring up the fire of love: they were in the chamber of his warm heart and bosom, and it made them to have a warm heart too: surely, believer, you know what a sweet chamber that is.

4. There is the chamber of fulness, to which the gathering of the people should be. This is a chamber that comprehends all the rest of the chambers within it; but because it is so notable and glorious, we name it among the rest. It is the best furnished chamber that ever you heard tell of; for, all the fulness of the Godhead is in it: "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19, and ii. 9, 10, "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in him." To this chamber should all poor beggar and bankrupt sinners, that have lost their stock in the first Adam, gather together, that out of his fulness they may receive, grace for grace, John i. 16. In this chamber are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all the treasures of grace and glory, all the treasures of God's perfections, and all the trea-

asures of the Spirit's graces. Your great want is the want of God ; and you may find him in this chamber : your next want is the want of grace ; and whatever grace you want, be it faith, repentance, love, or whatever else, it is lying treasured up in this chamber ; if you want pardon, purity, happiness, holiness, all the stock of riches that you can imagine, to make you up for ever and ever, is treasured up in this chamber, and behold the chamber door is open to you all, while we preach among you Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Let every soul here be like beggars gathered about this door.

5. There is the chamber of his covenant, to which the gathering of the people should be ; when God gathers people into it, he is said to shew them his covenant, Psalm xxv. 14 ; and in shewing his covenant, he shews some divine secrets to them. When the people gather into this chamber, they are said to take hold of his covenant, Isaiah lvi. 4, 6. This chamber is remarkable for the wells that are in the midst of it. There is both a well for washing, and a well for drinking ; and both are open, that the people may gather together to them. The well for washing is the blood of the covenant ; and that is the fountain open for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. It is just the boundless bottomless sea of the Redeemer's blood, which cleanses from all sin ; this fountain is open, that all guilty, filthy, polluted people, may gather to it, and be washed. The well for drinking, is not only that same blood of Christ, which is drink indeed ; but all the blessings of the covenant and all the promises of the covenant ; to all or every one of which people should gather, and draw water out of these wells of salvation with joy, Isa. xii. 3. Here is the well of water springing up to everlasting life, John iv. 14, and all the people are invited to gather to it : " Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. In this chamber there is the best of cheer ; " bread enough, and to spare ; all spiritual blessings of heavenly places in Christ Jesus ;" and this chamber, and all the cheer that is in it, whereof Christ himself is the all, it is dedicate of God for the use of the people, that their gathering may be to it, " I will give thee for a covenant of the people," Isa. xlii. 6.

6. There is the chamber of his palace, for the gathering of the people into : by his palace, I mean, his church ; and by his church, I mean, both his church militant on earth, and triumphant in heaven.

As for the church militant, that is the palace of the great King, Psal. xlv. 15, there he desires to dwell, Psal. lxxviii. 16. It is his house where he would have the gathering of the people to be ; therefore he calls it a house of prayer for all people, Isa. lvii. 7, and all are to flee unto it, Isa. ii. 2. The ordinances and provisions of Christ's house are, in a peculiar manner, for the entertainment of the people ; and the stewards of the house have a special commission to invite all sorts of sinners, even these that have played the prodigal and the fool in the way of sin, to come into it ; Prov. ix. 3, " Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither. As for him who hath no understanding, Wisdom says to him, Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." Luke xiv. 21, 23, " Go quickly, says the Master of the house, to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, the blind, the maimed, and the halt ; yea, go to the high ways, and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." It is a pity indeed, that ever people should be discouraged from gathering into the Lord's house, while the provisions of the house are mixed with unwholesome food of corrupt or erroneous doctrine ; while the stewards of the house do turn it into a den of thieves and robbers ; robbing the people of their Christian privileges : and while the servants of the house do fall by the ears, and begin to smite their fellow-servants, because the Lord of the house is away, and delays his coming : while, in a word, the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the house is out of order, and in great confusion, not garnished like the palace of the great King. This indeed is matter of lamentation, and will be so, till the King of Zion, the Master of the house, himself come by the power of his Spirit, and set matters right ; and, as the prophet says, Hag. ii. 7, " I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come ;" so, before the Lord comes in a glorious manner to his house, we have reason to expect he will give the house a terrible shake, and make it tremble. But in the mean time let not the disorders of the house hinder the gathering of the people to it ; for at best the lower chambers of our King's palace will never be so clean, as the upper chamber in the higher house. The church militant will never be in a state of perfection here : only study you to keep always the cleanest and best side of the house, like sick people betaking themselves to the purest air. But withal, let never your gathering to his house or ordinances content you, without the presence of the Master of the house, and the Lord of ordinances, so as

you may have it to say, that only you was brought to the banqueting house, but also his banner over you was love.

As to the church triumphant, that is his glorious palace, his higher house, of which Christ says, John xiv. 2, "In my Father's house there are many mansions," thither all that have been gathered graciously, will be gathered gloriously; with gladness and rejoicing will they be brought, and shall enter into the King's palace, Psalm xlv. 15. This is by way of eminency, the ivory palace, where all his garments smell of aloes, myrrh, and cassia; where the people gathered to him, will be like him: for they shall see him as he is; where they will be for ever with him, "In whose presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore." As he that drinks of the ocean, though his thirst be never so great and insatiable, yet leaves it as full and flowing as ever; so these that drink of the ocean of these heavenly pleasures will find the fulness of joy never ebbing, but ever flowing through all eternity. Christ himself will be the heaven of heaven, and the very temple, wherein the happy people will be gathered together, "I saw no temple there, but the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it," Rev. xxi. 22. If the Lamb be the temple there, then the gathering of the people there, must be to him. Thus you see, what place there is in Christ, and what chambers for the gathering the people to.

The second question, upon this head, was, to show in what respect the gathering of the people is to him, or in what capacity. The scripture is very copious, and elegant in setting forth the various respects, where in this gathering of the people to Shiloh may take place; and that for conveying a due apprehension thereof to our souls, it is set forth by what takes place, sometimes among rational creatures, among sensitives, among vegetables, and among inanimate things; and it is not for nought, that the Scripture is so copious this way, that our faith may have room and liberty to act upon Christ, in whatever respect he is represented.

1. From rationals; while we view political or economical affairs among men, or whatever station or relation they are said to be in, or actions they are said to perform, by these we will find this matter represented unto us. Hence our gathering to Shiloh is like the gathering of scholars to a teacher, or of disciples to a master, that we may be taught of him; and he is therefore called the none-such Teacher, Job xxvi. 22, "Who teacheth like him?"

Man's teaching reacheth the ear ; but his teaching reacheth the heart ; man's teaching may work upon the capacity where it is ; but his teaching can work a capacity where it is not. O let all the people gather to his school, who is the great Prophet, who teaches with authority, that teacheth as never man taught.—Again, it is like a gathering of pursued malefactors to a refuge ; it is a flying for refuge to the hope set before us, Heb. vi. 18. To gather to him is to say by faith, with David, “ I flee to thee to hide me ;” to hide with thy wings, with thy blood, with thy righteousness, from the wrath of God, and from the curse of the law.—Again, it is like the gathering of rebels to a sovereign, casting down their arms, and owning him to be their only King and Liege-lord ; gathered souls put the crown upon King Jesus his head, saying, “ Other lords have had dominion over us ;” but now, O let the king of glory come in ! Ps. 24, 7, “ Let him reign, and let all his enemies be scattered.” It is like the gathering of wanderers to the right way home. “ I am the way,” says Christ.—It is like the gathering of weary travellers to an inn, or weary labourers to a resting-place : “ Come to me, all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”—It is a gathering of guests to a feast, Matt. xxii. 10, and of strangers to their home, that they may be no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, Eph. ii. 19. Before a man come to Christ, he is abroad in a far country ; but whenever he comes to Christ, he is at home.—It is a gathering of children to a father, to be pitied as a father pities his children, Psal. ciii. 13.—It is a gathering of brethren to their elder brother, as Joseph's brethren did to their younger, that they might be supplied by him, and live upon him.—It is a gathering of beggars to a storehouse, that they may be enriched ; of captives to a redeemer, that they may be liberate ; of debtors to a surety, that they may be ransomed : “ Be surety for thy servant for good ;” of lepers to a laver, that they may be cleansed : “ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean ; yea, wash thou me and I shall be whiter than the snow.”—It is a gathering, as broken merchants to a free market ; what a gathering of people will be to a fair or market. But they are not all buyers that come to markets, far less that come to the market of ordinances ; however the market is free, we may buy without money and without price. The wares are precious, tried gold, white raiment, eye-salve, and the pearl of great price. All things are nothing to this pearl ; and therefore, when we sell

our all to buy this pearl, yet we get it for nothing. Right gathering to Christ, is to come to his market, and to take all his wares for nothing—It is a gathering of members to an head: “For he is the head of the body, the church,” Col. i. 18. From the head is derived to the body all the light, life, beauty, motion, sympathy, protection, provision, supply of good, and prevention of evil.—It is a gathering of fugitive servants to their masters; of clients to an advocate to plead their cause.—It is a gathering of drowning men to an ark, to save their lives; and a gathering of patients to a physician, to heal their diseases. Lord, says the gathered soul, my disease is mortal and incurable; I will die of this disease, if thou do not heal me. Well, says Christ, “This sickness is not unto death;” I can cure the disease of death itself, spiritual death. Lord, says another, my disease is a lingering disease, it is an halt and lameness, that I cannot so much as come to the physician for healing, and I am like to go halting to the grave, under a certain sore that nobody knows of. Is that your disease, woman? mind that word, Micah vi. 4, “I will heal her that halteth;” and be encouraged still to be about the physician’s hands.

2. From sensitives, this gathering of the people to Shiloh is represented in scripture in the following respects. This gathering to Shiloh is like the gathering of sheep to a shepherd: “Ye were as sheep without a shepherd, but now are ye returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls. Other sheep I have that are not of this fold, says Christ; these also I must bring.” He must gather them, and they must be gathered, according to his promise, Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12; Isa. xl. 11. O wandering sheep, here is the fold.—It is like the gathering of doves to their windows; Isa. lx. 8, “Who are these that fly as a cloud, as doves to their windows?” The wounds of Christ, the holes of the Rock of ages, the promises sealed with his blood, and all his offices, are the windows; and to gather to him, is to fly to these windows; and make your nest in the rock.—It is like the gathering of fishes into a net; Matt. xiii. 47, “The kingdom of heaven, or the gospel, is likened unto a net cast into the sea, gathering of every kind.” O when the gospel net is spread, do not swim away; it may be, your thoughts are swimming in the air, when they should be gathered about the mouth of the net. Sometimes it is likened to the gathering of chickens under the wings of a hen; Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xiii. 34, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her

chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" O the wings of his grace, the wings of his righteousness, the wings of his merit, the wings of his mercy are stretched! If we will not be gathered, the silly chickens will witness against us; for they gather at the cluck of the hen under her wings. Again, it is like the gathering of eagles to their prey; Matt. xxiv. 28, "Where the carcase is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." Whither should the eagles go, but to the prey? And, whither should the soul go, but to Christ, who hath the words of eternal life? Christ's flesh and blood is the carcase, which, like hungry eagles, we should be gathering unto; for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.

3. From vegetables, this gathering of the people to Shiloh is represented, in the following respects. It is like the gathering of wheat into a barn; Matt. iii. 12, "He will gather the wheat into his garner." Matt. xiii. 38, "Gather the wheat into my barn." God will not lose a grain of his wheat; he will not only gather it to the barn to be kept, but the granary to be purified. It is like the gathering of grafts into a branch: "I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit," John xv. 5. When God gathers souls to himself, he takes a branch of the old Adam, cuts it off from the old stock, and engrafts it into Christ, from whom, as the everlasting root, it derives all sap of grace, all the fruits of righteousness. It is like the gathering of plants into a garden or vineyard: "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant," Isa. v. 7. And these, whom he effectually gathers into his garden, are called, "Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified." To be gathered unto Christ, is to be planted in his house. It is like the gathering of fruit into a basket, or of flowers and lilies for pleasure and entertainment: "My beloved is gone down to his garden to gather lilies," Song vi. 2. Having gathered them into his garden, and planted them, and suffered them to grow, through his grace, till they be ripe, he gathers them to himself, and picks them one by one, to put them in his bosom. But again,

4. From inanimate things, this gathering of the people to Christ is represented, in the following respects. It is a gathering of vessels to an harbour; for, before the soul be brought in to Christ, it is like a ship tossed in the tempest, and tumbling in the swelling waves, like the ship in which the disciples were, when the

sea was tempestuous, and Christ came walking on the sea towards them ; but when they are gathered into Christ, then they are at anchor in a safe harbour : “ Which hope we have, as an anchor sure and stedfast, entering within the vail, whither the Forerunner is for us entered,” Heb. vi. 19. It is a piercing, entering anchor ; for, as an anchor will not hold a ship firm and fast, if it only lie on the ground, and do not pierce deep into it, so faith will not establish the heart, if it do not enter into Christ, as it were, and pierce the vail. But when once it enters here, then the soul is at a safe harbour and a sure anchor both. Again, this gathering of the people to Shiloh is like the gathering of stones to a building : “ To whom coming, as to 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. We are by nature hard stones, senseless stones, stupid, inflexible, dull, heavy stones, having an heart of stone, Ezek. xxxvi. 29 ; but God can, even of these stones, raise up children to Abraham, Matt. iii. 8, Luke iii. 9. And what does God condescend to do, when he comes to gather sinners ? Behold, he comes to gather stones ! and he sends us that are ministers out to gather stones. It was a sin for the man to gather sticks on the Sabbath-day ; but it would be no sin, but a good Sabbath’s work for us, if we were gathering stones this day, to bring them to the chief corner Stone, the sure Foundation, as Christ is called ; 1 Pet. ii. 6 ; Isa. xxviii. 16, “ This is the stone which the builders rejected ; but the same is become the head of the corner,” Ps. cxviii. 22. What we translate the *chief corner stone*, some translate it the *highest*, and some the *lowest stone* ; but it is best to reconcile both, and make him both the highest and lowest, reaching from the first to the last ; because his name is ALPHA and OMEGA, the first and the last ; and because he is the stone that reaches from earth to heaven ; from the church militant to the church triumphant ; he is the corner stone to bring both sides of the building together, Jews and Gentiles into one temple ; and, “ Another foundation can no man lay,” says the apostle, “ than that is laid, which is Christ ;” to this foundation should the stones be gathered. Solomon says, Eccl. iii. 9, “ There is a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together.” In allusion to this, may I say, What sort of time is this ? It hath long been a time of casting away stones ; many are like castaway stones in the field, or desert of nature, hard and dead stones ; they never gather to the living temple,

by all the gathering means and ordinances that ever they enjoyed: they look like stones ready to be cast away to hell, to be fuel for God's wrath; because the fire of love and grace manifested in the gospel could never melt them. Oh! it hath been thus a time of casting away stones: when it is not a gathering time it is a rejecting time. But, O shall we now expect a time of gathering stones together! O cry for a day of power, a gathering day, a gathering time to Scotland again; a gathering time to yourselves, even God's hand of power, for gathering stones together to Christ the foundation; and so for gathering the people to Shiloh!

IV. The Fourth thing proposed was, To speak of the manner of this gathering to Shiloh. That which I intend under this head, distinct from the former, is to inquire, 1. Into the means of this gathering. 2. The qualities thereof.

First, As to the means thereof, or by what means the gathering to Shiloh is brought about. By what means say you does God gather the people, or are the people gathered to Christ? We have warrant from scripture to speak of these six gathering means.

1. A gathering hedge and inclosure; I mean the hedge of providence, by which he gathers people occasionally, as sheep within an inclosure are gathered together, that they may not get leave to stray. This is the thorny hedge of affliction, whereby the Lord stops the sinful career of these whom he hath aimed to gather in to himself; "Behold I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths," Hosea ii. 6. Thus Manasseh was caught among the thorns, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11. And to this purpose, says David, "It was good for me that I was afflicted; for before I was afflicted, I went astray," Psalm cxix. 67. Thus some affliction or other many times is made use of as the occasional mean of gathering straying souls to Christ, or some alarming providence, as that which Paul met with, Acts ix., and the jailor, Acts xvi., when the foundation of the prison was shaken with an earthquake. But this leads me to another mean.

2. There is a gathering storm and tempest, with thunder and lightning from Mount Sinai, whereby an earthquake is raised in the conscience, or rather an heart-quake in the soul. By this mean of law-terrors and convictions, according to the measure wherein it is dispensed, he gathers the people preparatively, as by the former occasionally. This dispensation is called a tempest, Heb. xii. 18,

accompanied with blackness and darkness, and burning fire. And as a blowing storm, or beating tempest, makes a man cheerfully to betake himself to a house for shelter ; so the storm of legal conviction and humiliation makes people willing to gather unto Shiloh. Hence the law is said to be our schoolmaster, to SCHOOL us to Christ, as the word there signifies, Gal. iii. 24, "By the law is the knowledge of sin," and the conviction of wrath ; and while the storm of law-threatenings, law-curses, law-vengeance is beating and battering on the soul, it is glad to cry out, "What shall I do to be saved ?" And where shall I go to be sheltered ? Under this dispensation, there are two things that the soul sees, when the law comes with force, namely, the spirituality of the command, and the severity of the threatening. The spirituality of the precept discovered makes the man cry, O ! I am unclean, unclean ! The severity of the threatening discovered makes him cry out, O ! I am undone, undone ! O, the infinite holiness of God in the precept can never be gratified by any obedience of mine, for I am a sinful beast ! O, the infinite justice of God in the threatening can never be satisfied by any suffering of mine, for I am a finite worm ; if there be not another shift for me, I am lost and gone for ever ! Thus, Rom. vii. 9, the soul that was alive without the law once, now when the commandment comes, sin revives, and it dies.

3. As the gathering inclosure of providence is the occasional mean, and the gathering storm and tempest of law-conviction is the preparative mean, so the gathering trumpet of the gospel is the more immediate mean. The gospel is the great gathering engine of infinite wisdom ; for faith comes by hearing of the joyful sound of this trumpet, which is like the trumpet of the jubilee of old, Lev. xxv. 9. There is the joyful sound of gospel-revelations, and good news that Christ came to save sinners. O ! when this sound of the silver trumpet reaches not only the ear, but the heart of the sinner, that by the law hath got the knowledge and conviction of sin and misery, what a joyful sound is it, that now he hears of the remedy for him ; that justice is satisfied, life is purchased, death is destroyed, wrath is appeased, and the law is magnified, and God reconciled in Christ ? Many a gathering sound comes through this gospel-trumpet. There is a sound of gathering calls, saying, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved : This is his commandment, that ye believe." A sound of gathering invitations, saying, "Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." A sound

of gathering proclamations, saying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come; and he that hath no money, let him come: buy wine and milk without money and without price." A sound of gathering expostulations, saying, "Why will ye die?" joined with complaints, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." A sound of gathering counsels, saying, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." A sound of gathering intreaties and obtestations, saying, "We beseech you in God's name, and pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And finally, a sound of gathering music, and charming melody: and as children gather to the sound of the pipe, so the Lord Jesus complains, Mat. xi. 7, when people do not joyfully gather at the sound thereof, "We have piped unto you, and you have not danced;" yea, such are compared to deaf adders, that stop their ears at the voice of the charmer, though charming never so cunningly, Psalm lviii. 5. O what melodious music in the world so sweet as to hear the sound of gospel promises, of pardon to the guilty, purity to the filthy, and pity to the miserable soul! This trumpet hath a sound of peace, a sound of grace, a sound of mercy, a sound of glory to God in the highest, and of good-will towards men: a certain sound, in opposition to all the legal trumpeters, sounding forth life and salvation, depending upon uncertain conditions and qualifications on our part: but, as says the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 8, "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who goeth forth to battle?" There is no heart to go forth to the battle of the Lord, upon such an uncertain sound: but when the trumpet gives a certain sound of victory, peace, life, salvation, and all, to be had only, and wholly, and freely for nothing, in and through Jesus Christ, then who would not go forth under the standard of this Captain of salvation, at the sound of this golden trumpet!

4. There is the gathering wind of the Spirit. Besides the gathering inclosure of providence as the occasional mean, the gathering tempest of the law as the preparatory mean, and the gathering trumpet of the gospel as the immediate mean, there must be a gathering wind of the Spirit, which is the efficacious mean; the former means cannot be effectual without this, though the gathering trumpet of the gospel and the gathering wind of the Spirit are most nearly related to each other; for it is the gospel only that is the ministration

of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 8. It is this wind of which the Lord Jesus speaks John iii. 8, which blows where it listeth, and is the great efficient of regeneration and aggregation unto Christ. It is this wind that gathers dead sinners out of their grave of spiritual death; "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon the slain, that they may live," Ezek. xxxvii. 9. It is this mighty wind that blows down the strong holds of Satan, and casts down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; gathering the thoughts, like captives, to him, 2 Cor. x. 15. It is this wind that makes the spices of the believer's garden to flow out: for this gathering wind brings a gathering rain with it; "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth," &c. Psalm lxxii. 6-8. "Awake, O north wind; come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out," Song iv. 16. O it is a happy wind, that can drive a sinking vessel to a safe harbour, and gather perishing sinners in to a Saviour! But where is this wind to be had, say you? Why, it is in God's hand: it is said with respect to his kingdom of providence, that he hath gathered the winds in his fist, Prov. xxx. 4; and it is true with respect to his kingdom of grace: this blessed wind is, as it were, gathered in his fist; and what a man hath gathered in his fist, he can easily distribute of it by opening his hand; so our God can easily distribute of the Spirit: this wind is in his fist, and he hath no more ado but to open his fist. O look to him, and cry to him to cast a gale of this wind out of his fist, a handful of the gathering motions of his Spirit, a handful of the gathering influences of this heavenly wind, a gale of his gathering operations.

5. I may add, though it be very sib to the former, yet it is what may give us another distinct view of the Lord's way of gathering people; besides the gathering wind, there is a gathering sun: I allude to Psalm civ. 21, where it is said of the young lions, "The sun rises, and they gather themselves together to their dens; and man goeth forth to his work and labour." As the rising of the sun makes the beasts gather to their dens, and men gather to their work; so the rising of the Sun of righteousness, in the manifestation of the favour of God in Christ, makes the lions of hell gather to their dens in a manner, and men to gather to their work; I mean to gather to Christ by faith: for, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in his Son, whom he hath sent." It is promised that men

shall go forth when the sun rises ; " The Sun of righteousness shall arise, and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves in the stall," Mal. iv. 2. Indeed, they that go forth to meet the rising Sun by faith, they will grow up in all the graces and fruits of the Spirit of holiness. However, I say it is the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and shining in his glory, that makes sinners gather to him by faith ; " He manifested forth his glory, and then his disciples believed on him," John ii. 11. The displays of his glory are his gathering arms ; " He shall feed his flock like a shepherd ; he shall gather the lambs with his arms," Isa. xl. 11. He gathers with his arms, even the arms of his grace and mercy ; yea, the displays of his glorious grace are his military arms, whereby he subdues them and gathers them into his camp, Psalm xlv. 3, 4, 5.

6. In a subordination to all these gathering means, there is a gathering fan : Mat. iii. 12 ; Luke iii. 17, " His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner." The devil hath his fan, wherewith he seeks to winnow God's people as wheat, in order to separate them from Christ, and from one another ; but Christ hath his fan, wherewith he will winnow his Church and people, in order to gather them to himself, and to one another in him. By the fan of his word, and the fan of his rod, he purges the floor of his church ; it is his threshing floor ; and sometimes he must take the flail of his doctrine and thresh upon his people, to separate the chaff of error from the grains of truth, and the sound from the erroneous. Sometimes he must take the flail of discipline and severe judgments, rods, and calamities, to purge his floor, and gather the wheat from the chaff. Though the great day of judgment will be the great day of separating the precious from the vile, and gathering of his saints, yet there are trying days in this world, wherein several discoveries are made, and the Lord's scattered and divided sheep are gathered together, to be more united in the Lord. It is necessary sometimes that the Lord take his fan in his hand for purging his floor ; when it is foul, it needs to be swept with a besom. The floor of his house is sometimes very foul ; and as when one sweeps a house, if there be dross and dirt in it, and also gold, and diamonds, and jewels, lying hid among the dust, all may be swept to the door together ; but the jewels being soon missed, are gathered again from among the filth : so, when the besom of public judgments and calamities comes, the godly, as well as the wicked, may be all swept to the door together, and share of

the same outward strokes: but God, in due time, will gather the jewels to his cabinet: "They shall be mine, in the day when I make up my jewels," Mal. iii. 17.—So much concerning the various means of gathering.

Secondly, The second question upon this head, was, To speak of the qualities of this gathering of the people to Shiloh. And here the qualities of this gathering may be considered, either passively, shewing how his power is exerted; or actively, shewing how their faith is exercised: or, 1. The qualities of God's gathering the people to Shiloh. 2. The qualities of the people's gathering to him under his conduct, influence, and assistance. Now of both these particularly.

1st, PASSIVELY; the qualities of God's gathering the people to Christ: or how his powerful grace is exerted, when in a day of his power he makes them willing and gathers them.

1. His gathering power is exerted congruously, and agreeably to the rational nature; he draws with the bands of love, and the cords of a man, Hos. ix. 4. What is that? He even brings them over by rational arguments upon the judgment, and powerful persuasion upon the will. While the minds of men are blinded with ignorance, their affections are bent upon their lusts; but now, the understanding being cleared, the affections are captivated, the man is bound with invincible reason; and so he gathers souls in a way congruous to the rational nature.

2. His gathering power is exerted affectionately and lovingly; Hos. ii. 4, "I will allure her, and bring her to the wilderness; and there will I speak comfortably to her."—*I will*, as it were, *BEGUILE her, and speak to her HEART*, as the Hebrew signifies; I will persuade her that there is more reason to yield to my intreaties than to the devil's sophistry. The Lord sweetly draws up the lock of the heart, and gets in upon the affections; "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee," Jer. xxx. 3. As a man puts on his best robes on his wedding-day; so Christ, in the day of espousals, when he would gather the eyes of the people to look to him, and their affections to centre on him, he puts on his robes of glory and grace; clothes himself with a garment of salvation, with an alluring attire, when he addresses himself unto and courts sinners.

3. His gathering power is exerted efficaciously: he comes with that argument of omnipotence, whereby he commanded light to

hine out of darkness by that same argument whereby he commanded the dead to arise does he conquer and captivate the soul ; by that same argument whereby Christ himself was raised, Eph. i. 19, 20, till there be no power to resist, no strength of corruption left to oppose. The infinite bounty of God, the infinite beauty of Christ and the infinite power of the Holy Ghost, all concur to gain the soul with infinite ravishing sweetness. Almighty love kills the mighty enmity ; and how can he be resisted ? “ Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” Before conversion the sinner is unwilling, and he cannot come to Christ, because he will not. But, in conversion the man is made willing, and so he cannot resist, because he will not ; the will is gained ; “ Thy people shall be willing.”

4. His gathering power and grace is exerted seasonably ; for he speaks a word in season to them, Isa. l. 4, “ The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” A word of power comes at a particular season, at God’s set hour ; and people are never gathered till that hour come ; “ The hour comes when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live.” O happy hour, says one, wherein the word and ordinances are impregnated with almighty efficacy ? When the minister finds himself in a better frame than ordinary, he is ready to think that blessed hour is come ; but he may be oft mistaken. However, “ The counsel of God stands sure : the Lord knows who are his ;” therefore we must preach in faith, and pray in faith, and wait in hope, and water in hope, till the accepted time come, the happy hour ; and when it comes, it will be an hour never to be forgotten, a signal time on which eternity depends. Besides, it is seasonable with respect to the soul that is gathered ; it comes at the nick of time when it is in the extremity of distress, plunged into the deeps, and deep calling unto deep, and the soul like to succumb therein. Hence,

5. This gathering grace is manifested surprisingly ; it is freighted with preventing mercy ; herein God anticipates the current of the carnal affections : when the soul is running post to hell, God stops his career, as he did that of Paul, Acts ix. Every sinner that is converted is gathered beside his proper natural intention : little does the man foresee what is God’s design in bringing him to such a place, to hear such a sermon, to live under such a ministry ; even as little as Saul thought of finding a kingdom when he went

out to seek his father's asses. Some have come to hear the word in a very customary careless manner, not knowing where else to spend an hour ; when lo, on a sudden, an arrow of conviction hath been shot into their consciences, and awakened them to seek God. His gathering grace, both in the beginning and progress thereof, is still exerted in such a manner as sweetly surprises the soul ; " Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminabab," Song vi. 12. When I was expecting that my soul should be gathered among the damned, O ! grace stepped in, and gathered me to Shiloh.

6. This gathering power is exerted sovereignly ; there is much sovereignty manifested, both over the gathering means and the gathered soul : over the gathering means, such as the word and ordinances : it is not every word that does the business ; how many great sermons and spiritual discourses have you heard, O believer, and yet never a word reached your heart, till the Lord sent it with power ? Hence the word that kills one quickens another ; the word that is unsavoury to one is sweet to another ; the word that is galling to one is gaining to another ; the word that hardens one softens another. Sovereignty is also manifested over the gathered soul ; many hundreds are gathered together at a time, yet, perhaps, but one or two are touched and reached by the word : the minister is speaking to the heart of these, but only to the ears of all the rest. O ! is God finding you out by his word, and gathering you ? He is sovereign : " Shewing mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion," Rom. ix. 15.

7. This gathering grace is exerted particularly ; for, " He calls his sheep by name," John x. 3, and leads them out : as by the law the sinner is convinced particularly, " Thou art the man," the sinful man, the guilty man : so by the gospel, he is called particularly ; " I have called thee by name," Isa. xliii. 1, and xlv. 4. What is offered indefinitely and generally to all, is carried home particularly to the soul ; it comes to be as particular, as if God were speaking to none other in all the congregation. Christ came to save sinners, and to seek lost souls, and particularly, I am come for you, man ; you, woman ; " Rise, for the Master calls you." O, says the soul, it is me that God is speaking to ; there is good news for me !

8. This gathering power is exerted successfully ; the Lord comes to gather, and the people are gathered ; he draws, and they run, and run into the ark : " The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the

righteous run into it, and are safe ;" the soul runs, not only to it, but into it, so as to be found in Christ. People may be gathered to Christ, in a manner, and yet not gathered successfully, unless gathered in to him ; as in the days of Noah, when the deluge of water came upon the world, many might gather to the ark, and hing about the sides of it, and climb up on it for shelter ; but the waves at last washed them away ; none came to it with success, nor were saved, such but as got into the ark ; so unless you get in to Christ, be united to him, and implanted in him, as a branch to the stock, so as to derive life from him, and grow up in him, if you be not thus found in him, you cannot be saved by him, though in several respects you may lean upon him, and take hold of him. They gather to him with success, that get in to him. O happy they that are gathered to him, so as to win him ! Phil. iii. 8. He that wins, succeeds ; and much winning, much success ; and they may laugh that win ; for they win all, who win Christ ; they win his person for their Husband ; they win his purchase for their jointure ; his covenant for their charter ; his Spirit for their counsellor ; his righteousness for their robe ; his grace for their ornament ; his glory for their crown ; and all his fulness for their supply ; they may live upon their winning for ever.

9. This gathering power is exerted irreversibly, yet gradually ; when God gathers sinners to Christ, he gathers them irreversibly : " For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He never leaves drawing of them and gathering them to him, till he hath gathered them all round about his throne in glory ; his gathering grace works a lasting impression, and abiding effect on them ; the seed of God remains in them. Many hundred sermons you have heard, and all these excellent truths evanish, and slip off from your memory, as water falling on a rock ; but, O says the believer, though I forget much, yet I think I will never forget such a word, that came to my soul with a glance of glorious majesty in it, and filled all the powers of my soul with a divine seraphic enlargement : " I will never forget thy precepts ; for by them thou hast quickened me." Christ having begun to gather, goes on with the soul constantly, till the business be done and ended : " For he waits to be gracious," Isa. xxx. 18. He will not take a refusal, nor desist for an ill answer ; and whatever interruption may be after laying the foundation, yet he carries on the good work ; it is not altogether stopt as it is with others, that may be under some common opera-

tions of the Spirit ; the Lord may leave them and never return, but here he renews his visits, and gradually advances his gathering work : “ For his going forth is prepared as the morning,” Hosea vi. 3 ; and he comes to them as the rain, as the latter and former rain upon the earth, which makes the fruits of the ground gradually to spring up. “ A sudden work is seldom a sound work,” says one. However, his ordinary way of gathering is by various degrees ; he gives them now a pull, and then a pull, “ here a little, and there a little.”

10. This gathering power is exerted remarkably. Hence the soul can say, “ Once I was blind, now I see.” Though the kingdom of heaven comes not with outward observation ; yet either in the beginning, or progress, or both, it is remarkable, discernible, and sensibly felt, by the soul that is wrought upon and gathered ; he hears the voice of the great Shepherd, he sees his glory, he feels his power. Sometimes it is remarkable in the very beginning ; like a man born blind, and come to age, and getting his eyes suddenly opened, he cannot know the time ; in others it is not so remarkable, till the progress thereof make it so ; like rain dropping from a house-top on a flint-stone, that by constant dropping makes a hollow in the stone ; when it begins to make the hollow at first, is hard to tell, but that it is made, is remarkably evident ; even so here, by the constant dropping of the rain of the Spirit’s influences, from time to time, there is an hollow made in the heart ; the man is gradually emptied of sin, and self-righteousness ; and nothing can fill that hollow, but a God in Christ ; when it began at first, he cannot tell ; but now it is remarkable, if grace be in any measure exercised. Thus you see the qualities of God’s gathering people, yet after all we are not capable to give an exact account of the outgoings of this mighty gathering grace ; many feel it, who cannot tell the particular manner thereof : “ For the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth,” John iii. 8.¹

2dly, ACTIVELY viewed ; the qualities of this gathering, that is, of the people’s gathering to Shiloh ; or the way how faith is exercised, or how the soul acts when it is prevailed upon to come to the Lord Jesus, and so to be gathered unto Shiloh. In general, it is by FAITH that they gather to him ; and hence this gathering to

(1.) What follows, to the beginning of the sixth general head of the method, was delivered at Airth, June 19th, 20th, and 21st, 1725, in three discourses.

Shiloh is so frequently called a coming to him, and believing on him, trusting and staying ourselves upon him. In this gathering unto Shiloh, the soul acts believably; and all the other qualities of this gathering are reducible to this, and are so many ways, wherein faith acts, in coming and gathering to Christ; or how, being acted they act; and here is matter for trial; particularly then,

1. In this active gathering unto Shiloh, people are made to act spiritually; for it is a spiritual gathering, under the conduct of the Spirit of God, as a Spirit of faith, making the soul to gather under the wings of Christ the Messias. It is not by natural might, but by the power of the divine Spirit, that sinners gather to a Saviour: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord; even the exceeding greatness of his almighty power," Eph. i. 19. There is a spiritual, internal principle, from which the man acts, in his gathering to Shiloh, even the Spirit of God as the main, and the new heart as the subordinate principle of faith in the man. It is not the Spirit's working extrinsically upon the man; hypocrites may have the Spirit working on them extrinsically, to the production of great affections and enlargements, while they are not savingly gathered; but this spiritual act is from a spiritual principle, whereof the Spirit of God within is the spring. The former is but a natural acting by some external objects; it is like a pool fed by water from the clouds; the other is like a well fed by a spring within.

But here a question may be propounded, How shall I know the difference betwixt these two, viz. the Spirit's working on me by his common motions, and his working in me as a living principle?

To which we might reply, Why, the common motions of the Spirit, externally moving the affections, differ from the saving operations of the Spirit, internally elevating the soul to a God in Christ, as a land-flood differs from a living spring; the land-flood is maintained externally by the clouds; the living fountain is maintained internally by its own spring; thus the hypocrite's frames and affections are maintained only by external means and objects, such as the tuneable voice of the minister; so Ezekiel was to his hearers as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument, Ezek. xxxiii. 32; and when the external object or excitement is over, then their frame and affection falls, because the only thing that maintained it is gone; whereas, in the spiritual acting of the soul that is gathering to Shiloh, though faith

comes by hearing externally, yet the Spirit of God being received by the hearing of faith, this internal principle of spiritual life does many times animate the soul to spiritual work, when all external objects and operations fail ; and this may be known, just as a spring-well is known by the bubbling up of the water. Thus is the Spirit's inhabitation known by the actings of the graces of the Spirit, such as faith, love, repentance, joy in the Lord, and the like.

2. In gathering to Shiloh, people are made to act knowingly and judiciously, under the influences of the Spirit, as a Spirit of light ; and to act as in a matter of the greatest concern, with judgment and understanding, saying, as John vi. 68, " To whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life. We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Many gather together in a confused way, and know not wherefore they meet together ; but this gathering includes knowledge, and saving spiritual illumination : " They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee," Ps. ix. 10. They that know him, will gather to him ; there must be a seeing of the Son, before there can be a believing in him, or gathering to him. Many, instead of gathering to Christ, they gather to an idol of their own fancy ; when they hear of Christ, their idolatrous, carnal mind, represents a carnal image of Christ in their own brain ; as those, Hos. xiii. 2, that are said to have made idols according to their own understanding ; so, many in their own imagination, form an idea of Christ ; and this idea or image of Christ, that they have in their own mind, is all that they have for Christ. But, O sirs, when Christ is externally revealed in the gospel, there must be a marvellous light discovering him in himself, making him known, though not perfectly, yet really and truly as he is ; not only as he is man, but as God-man, having all the fulness of the Godhead in him, and all the glory of God appearing in his face, 2 Cor. iv. 6, so as the soul cannot but cleave and adhere to him. A painted sun will neither give light nor heat, but the real sun gives both ; so a painted image and representation of Christ, in the imagination, gives no spiritual light, heat, nor communicates any transforming virtue ; but the true Sun of righteousness ariseth with healing under his wings. It is true, this light is not without mists and smoke, sent forth from the bottomless pit, to darken all ; but yet there is such a clear discovery of the man's inability, of God's gracious offer, and Christ's good-will, and mind to the bargain, as determines the soul to its duty.

3. In gathering to Shiloh, people are made to act fiducially : this is connected with the former ; " They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee," Psal. ix. 10. This I call an acting fiducially ; that is, with a believing persuasion and particular application. The good news, that Shiloh is come, that Jesus Christ is come to save sinners, even the chief of sinners, is received as a faithful saying, and so with believing persuasion ; and as worthy of all acceptation, and so with particular application. Persuasion with application must be in the nature of faith, according to the measure and degree of faith. If it be weak faith, it is a weak persuasion ; if strong faith, a strong persuasion ; and it is not a natural persuasion, a man persuading himself that all shall be well with him, and so no more of it ; nay, it is supernatural, and comes of God, which natural, carnal persuasion does not, Gal. v. 8, " This persuasion comes not of him that calleth you ;" intimating, that right persuasion comes of God ; like that of Abraham, Rom. iv. 20, 21, " He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God ; being fully persuaded that he that had promised was able to perform." And like that of the Old Testament believers, Heb. xi. 13, who received not the promises by feeling, but by faith. But how ? why, they were persuaded of them, and embraced them.

But here there is a twofold persuasion that ought to be carefully distinguished, and the confounding whereof, occasions many mistakes and misrepresentations : namely, a fiducial persuasion, and an evidential persuasion. The former is the assurance of faith, and in the nature of it ; the other is the assurance of sense, and consequential to faith ; and is not properly faith at all, but sense. Now, this fiducial persuasion differs from evidential, in four respects.

(1.) They differ in their acts : by fiducial persuasion, the man receives and rests upon Christ, and trusts in him for salvation to himself, believing and expecting this salvation according to the promise of the gospel, and as Christ is offered and exhibited to him therein : but by evidential persuasion, the man knows and feels that he hath received Christ. The former every believer hath, when he acts faith ; the latter many believers want even when they act faith, because, though they may be conscious that they are acting upon Christ for salvation, yet they may not be conscious of the quality of the act, if it is saving or not.

(2.) They differ in their order : we first believe, by a fiducial

persuasion ; before we can be sure, by an evidential persuasion : the one is the cause, and the other the effect. The persuasion, that is in faith, is like the heat in the fire : the persuasion, that is after faith, is like the heat in the room, that is the effect of the former ; and because assurance (that is commonly so called, namely, the *assurance*) is the effect of faith ; this will not prove that there is no assurance in faith, no more than heat in the room will prove, that there is no heat in the fire : for the contrary is rather evident.

(3.) They differ in their objects and grounds ; the object and ground of fiducial persuasion, or of the assurance of faith, is without the man, and looks to the word and promise of God, the blood and righteousness of Christ, the truth and faithfulness of God : but the object and foundation of evidential persuasion, or of the assurance of sense, is within the man, and looks to the work of God within : such as, graces, attainments, and experiences. As there is a great difference betwixt a man's being persuaded, that he hath such a sum of money, because he hath it upon bond, or good security ; and his being persuaded thereof, because he hath it in his hand, in his chest or coffers ; so here, by the persuasion of faith, the man is persuaded of salvation through Christ, because he hath it upon bond, namely, God's promise sealed with Christ's blood, which is good security ; but the ground of the persuasion of sense, is the man's having it in his hand, or so much of it, which is not faith, but sense.

(4.) They differ in their effects : the effect of faith, or fiducial persuasion, is justification ; the effect of sense, or evidential persuasion, is consolation : a man is not justified by his evidential persuasion, or by knowing and feeling that Christ is his : but he is justified by his fiducial persuasion, by his fiducial knowledge, whereby he receives and rests upon Christ as his, and trusts in him for salvation to himself ; by this fiducial knowledge, I say, is justification, " By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many," Isa. liii. 11.

Now, if these two were carefully distinguished, and that people considered, that it is the former, namely, fiducial persuasion, that we put into the nature of faith, as essential to it, not the latter, namely, evidential persuasion, which is consequential to it ; it would prevent many mistakes, and misrepresentations on this head ; as if some placed assurance so in the nature of faith, as that none were to be reckoned believers, but such as have this full evidential persuasion, and assurance of sense, which is a gross misapprehension of

matters, and flows from the confounding of this twofold persuasion, which differs as much as faith and sense ; assurance of faith carries in it the persuasion of the faithfulness of God in the promise ; the assurance of sense carries in it a persuasion of the reality of grace in the heart : by the one we see with our eyes, as it were ; by the other we handle with our hands the word of life : the one, to wit, Faith, is begun-vision ; the other, to wit, Sense, is begun-fruition : assurance of faith is essential to faith, the assurance of sense is consequential to it, and not always in, or with it. And hence we say, with respect to this evidential assurance and persuasion, as our Confession hath it, " That it does not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and consist with many difficulties, before he be partaker of it ;" namely, of that assurance, that is grounded upon the inward evidence of grace, and testimony of the Spirit, which is the assurance of sense there spoken of ; but the assurance of faith, which is founded upon the divine truth of the promise of salvation, and upon the word of God without us, as the object thereof, this must be as essential to faith, as seeing is essential to the eye. And yet this will not say, that the believer hath always even this fiducial persuasion, unless his faith be in exercise : for, as it is in the nature of the eye to see, though the man, that hath eyes, is sometimes sleeping, or winking, or dim-sighted ; so it is in the nature of faith, to be persuaded of the favour and good-will of God in Christ, as revealed in the word of grace, though he, that hath this faith, is sometimes doubting ; sometimes faith is not exercised ; sometimes the eye of faith is dimmed with the dust of corruption and unbelief. It is with faith, as with other graces ; as some have a true love to Christ, yet dare not say they love, because they have so much enmity remaining : they have true grace, but dare not say they have it, because they have too much sin and corruption ; but their doubting of their love and grace does not infer, that they have no love, no grace ; so some have this fiducial persuasion and assurance of faith, who yet dare not say they have it, because they have so much unbelief and so many doubts : but as love is opposite to enmity, and grace opposite to corruption, though they are in the same subject ; so is faith opposite to doubting, in its very nature, even though faith and doubting may be in the same believer, as light and darkness in the same air : yet their natures are opposite to one another.

As this fiducial act of gathering to Shiloh imports a believing

persuasion, so also a particular application. In the offer of the gospel, salvation is particularly held forth to every one, saying, "The promise is to you; to you is the word of this salvation sent," therefore in gathering to Christ, people are to lay hold on salvation to themselves particularly: "Christ came to save sinners, of whom," says Faith, "I am the chief;" mercy is held out to me, and I lay hold on it as held out to me. As when the law comes with power, it says not only in the general, "All have sinned;" but it comes in particular, saying, You have sinned; and makes you say, I am the man, the sinful man, the guilty man, the condemned man: so when the gospel comes with power, it speaks to the person particularly, saying, not only, "Christ came to save sinners;" but, Here is a saviour for you: and the soul is made to say, I am concerned in this. The gospel offers life and salvation to the poor soul particularly, and he is commanded to believe for salvation particularly; and the man believes with particular application. Thus a certain divine illustrates it: "As the sad sentence of the law generally and indefinitely held forth in the scripture, is particularly applied for his (viz., the man's) conviction and condemnation; so the precious promise of the gospel, generally and indefinitely held forth to all sinners, that hear the gospel, is particularly applied for salvation:" and without this particular application, there is no effectual gathering to Shiloh. When gospel-light shines into the heart of the awakened sinner, it applies the promise particularly to itself, as it did formerly apply the threatenings of the law particularly; and as from the law it did particularly condemn itself; so now, from the gospel, it does by faith particularly absolve itself, or rather find itself absolved from the law-sentence, in its being helped to make particular application of the gospel promises. Again,

4. In gathering to Shiloh, the people that are brought to him, are made to act evangelically, or to believe in a gospel-manner; to receive and rest upon him as he is offered to us in the gospel. There is a gospel ground, on which the people gather: legal faith acts upon a legal ground, such as inherent strength, and natural righteousness; but true faith acts upon the ground of a borrowed strength, and an imputed righteousness of another, saying, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," Isa. xlv. 24. This gathering to Shiloh is a self-renouncing business, stripping the man of his own righteousness, of his own strength, and taking him entirely off his own bottom: they that are gathered to Christ, are

gathered out of themselves. There is a gospel-rule also, whereby they gather, in a suitableness to the gospel-offer and dispensation; "So we preach, and so ye believed," 1 Cor. xv. 11. Faith answers the gospel-call, as the impress upon the wax does answer the engravings of the seal; so Christ offers himself, and so sinners gather unto him, and believe on him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Hence again, there is a gospel-order, wherein the gathering of the people is to him; the soul, in coming to him, receives first the person, and then the portion; even as God gives Christ, and then with him all things, Rom. viii. 32. The people gather to him in a day of power, first, as JESUS, and then, as a LORD; first, for JUSTIFICATION, and then, for SANCTIFICATION. Legal adventures invert this gospel-order, seeking sanctification first, that upon that bottom it may build its justification: "Seeking righteousness, as it were by the works of the law," Rom. ix. 32. And however confused and indistinct the true believer's faith may be, in his first believing, yet repeated acts of faith may afterwards make it more and more evident to him; that right believing is in the foresaid gospel-order. There is a gospel-warrant, upon which this gathering proceeds; they that gather to Shiloh act warrantably, upon the warrant of an objective sufficiency; there is a sufficient Christ presented. O the sufficiency of his person; being God-man in one person! the sufficiency of his offices and commission, being sealed of God to be a Surety, a Saviour, a Prophet, a Priest, and King! the sufficiency of his righteousness, his doing and dying, his obedience and satisfaction! the sufficiency of his power, as being able to save to the uttermost! the sufficiency of his will, while he proclaims his good-will towards men; and that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself! They gather upon the warrant of a general gospel-dispensation of grace through Christ, in the external revelation of the word, where the elect are not characterised more than others, but life and salvation through Christ is held out to sinners of mankind, without distinction of nation, state, or condition; and so in an indefinite way. Thus run all the promises, except these that are made to believers, or such as have grace already; to them indeed the promises are definite; so also they are definite to the elect, in the decree of heaven; but in the external dispensation of the gospel, they are indefinite and general, saying, "To you belongs the covenants and the promises," Rom. ix. 4. And as the promise is indefinite, so the call is universal, whether by

exhortations, invitations, intreaties, counsels, or commands, to all and every one, to come and receive Christ, and all his sure mercies freely, Isa. lv. 1. And upon these gospel-warrants do the people gather to Shiloh. In a word, the whole covenant, and all the promises of it, are held forth to all the people, that they may gather to it; "I will give thee for a covenant of the people," Isa. xliii. 6. Hence we are said to receive the promise through faith, Gal. iii. 14, to be persuaded of them, and embrace them, Heb. xi. 23, and the faith we are called to, is said to be a receiving of the word, Acts ii. 41; a taking hold of his covenant, Isa. lvi. 4; a believing of the testimony, 2 Thess. i. 10. Christ cannot be received, but as he is offered; he is not offered to us, but in a word, a promise, a testimony: hence the substantial act of faith being an assent, there must be a word, promise, or testimony, for faith's immediate object, wherein we see and receive Christ: if a man would see his shadow in a glass, he first looks to the glass, and through it sees his own shadow, or image: the glass is the immediate object, to which his sight is directed; so, in order to our seeing of Christ, the glass of the gospel-promise is set before us. Thus a displayed covenant of grace, as standing fast in Christ, seems to be the warrant for the people gathering to Shiloh, Jer. l. 5, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant (says our translation), that shall not be forgotten:" I know this is viewed, by some, in another sense, with reference to our covenanting; but I think the original reading that others notice, is very pleasant and evangelical; for it may be read, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, the perpetual covenant shall not be forgotten; *q. d.* Come and let us gather together unto Shiloh; why, the everlasting covenant, that stands fast in him, who is the all of the covenant, shall never be forgotten. And so it may be viewed, as an encouragement of faith, and reason for the gathering of the people to him; behold he is given for a covenant of the people, and this perpetual covenant shall not be forgotten." Thus they are made to act evangelically.

5. In gathering to Shiloh, the people that are brought to him, are made to act cordially and spontaneously, with heart and will: yea, with a thousand good-wills:—O take my heart, says the man in the day of power; take it, and a thousand blessings with it. It is true, there is no gathering, no approaching to him, without a draught of omnipotency; yet there is no violence in it, no force or compulsion, but when power comes, it takes away the backward-

ness and unwillingnesses; "Thy people shall be willingness," Psal. cx. 3. Never did a mariner draw near to a shore with better will after shipwreck, than the soul comes to Christ, in the day of power; the person being drawn yields necessarily and willingly both; "Draw me, we will run after thee;" DRAW ME, there is the almighty power exerted, in its irresistible operation; WE WILL RUN, there is the voluntary motion of the soul. So that this gathering does not destroy, but establish the liberty of the will of the rational agent. Reason is not hoodwinked; the person approaches to a God in Christ, upon the most rational grounds, seeing and apprehending his misery while far from God, and the happiness of nearness to him in Christ. And this gathering is as cordial as it is voluntary; as the will is inclined, so the heart is inflamed. Hypocrites may gather to ordinances, and gather to a communion table with the outward man: they may draw near to God with the mouth, and honour him with the lip, while the heart is removed far from him; this is what God complains of, "Their heart is far from me." But what do I regard a gathering of dead corpses about my table and ordinances, a gathering of bodies, while there is no gathering of hearts? But in this gracious gathering, the language of the soul is, O many a time I have given my heart away to the devil; I gave my heart and affections away to lusts; I gave my heart away to the world; and now, shall I give Christ less than I gave them? It will be a miracle if he accept of it, after my manifold departures; but, O if I had as many souls as I had sins, I would give them to him! O if I could believe in him with the whole heart, pray to him with the whole heart, serve him with the whole heart; and that all my affections, that have been struggling among the creatures, may be gathered to him and centered in him! Yea, in the day of power, a man finds himself so willingly and freely to come to Christ, that he is rolled upon him, as if he were carried on a wave of the sea, or rather in a chariot paved with love: formerly he found believing hard; yea, that it was impossible for him to come to Christ; but now, he finds it impossible for him to stay away from Christ. Believing is so sweet and easy then, that, as if he had wings, he flees for refuge to the hope set before him, Heb. vi. 18. Though, as a great divine (viz., Dr. Owen) expresses it, "Faith is in the understanding, in respect of its being and subsistence; yet it is in the will and heart, in respect of its effectual working. As to its essence, it lies in assent, but the saving quality of this assent, is, that it is cor-

dial; and it is not true faith, if it be not a cordial assent to God's testimony concerning Christ." And indeed there is a great difference betwixt a dead assent, and a cordial hearty assent to any truth; "Suppose, says one, you were in a foreign land, and that you got a sure account that the Turks have got a victory over the Persians; and at the same time you hear, that your beloved spouse is recovered of a dangerous disease, that all your family is well, and your affairs prosper: there is a great difference betwixt the way of assenting to these two; you believe the former, but it hath no impression on your heart, it is only a naked, heartless, unconcerned assent; but you would believe the other cordially and gladly, because you are much concerned therein: hence you would welcome the messenger." Thus the gospel is not only a faithful saying, but worthy of all acceptation; and in gathering to Christ, in the day of power, the soul acts cordially.

6. In this gathering of the people to Shiloh, they are made to act humbly and reverentially: the man comes with a "What am I? and what is my father's house? Behold I am vile!" and if the Lord shall have mercy on me, it is well; grace shall have the glory: but if not, I may even preach his righteousness in hell, and declare he never wronged me; he is a just God. O the soul acts humbly, in the day of powerful gathering; "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done," Ezek. xvi. 63. O but a soul convinced of its own unworthiness, and desert of hell, and that scarce can expect any thing but utter damnation; how does the first dawning of mercy melt and humble it! O whence is this to such a worm as I! He stands behind Christ weeping and washing his feet with tears. When one of the first works of the Spirit in conversion is, to give the soul a light in its hand, to go down into the dark cellars of his heart, and make discoveries, so as he stands amazed, trembling at the sight of himself; and the next work of the Spirit is, to lead him to the light-some chamber of the King of glory, to bring him from darkness to light: O how is he melted with a sense of mercy and humbled with a sense of his own monstrous vileness! "Now mine eyes see thee; wherefore I abhor myself." Oh! in such a day, the man sees his heart vile, his lips vile, his practice vile, his righteousness vile and filthy rags; he sees, in his bosom, as it were, a hell of devils and unclean spirits; that when he thinks on himself, it makes him loath

and scunner, as it were, like a man ready to hock or vomit, when he sees some filthy nasty thing, especially among his meat ; or as a man's flesh will creep, when he sees some venomous toad or viper : so it is with these that see themselves in the Lord's light, in the day of their gathering to Shiloh. They that were never humbled were never gathered ; and they that have been deeply humbled, have come to God with ropes about their necks, as worthy to be cast over the gibbet, and hanged over the fire of God's everlasting vengeance : they have been humbled to the dust ; yea, humbled to nothing before the Lord ; and to a thousand times less and worse than nothing ; yea, they cannot see such vile monsters among all the devils in hell as themselves ; they come therefore with humility, reverence, and godly fear.

7. In this gathering of the people to Shiloh, under the influence of gathering power and grace, they are made to act boldly though humbly ; Heb. iv. 16, " Let us come boldly to the throne of grace. Heb. x. 19. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Eph. iii. 12. In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, by the faith of him." Here is the boldness of faith, in opposition to the boldness of presumption. Bold faith comes walking on a sea of blood, or rather upon the red and white pavement of the active and passive obedience of Christ. This boldness of faith's approach to a God in Christ, is remarkable for several things. It is remarkable for the vehemency, that is sometimes in it : O how vehemently does the soul act when it is laying siege to heaven, by the prayer of faith and importunate supplication, crying, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief ; Lord, increase my faith : Lord, give me a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem ! O for a drop of the precious blood of the Lamb ! O man, woman, where are the bed sides, and secret corners, that can bear witness to your besieging heaven with your vehement cries ! It is remarkable for the violence that is in it, " The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." The man acts, as it were, violently, " If I perish, I perish ;" at Christ I must be. It acts in a manner wilfully, " Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him : I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." The soul, as it were, violently casts itself upon the free grace and faithfulness of God, in the greatest distress ; and here it lies, as it were, at anchor in such stormy days, Heb. vi. 19. It is remarkable for the confidence that is in it ; it hath the confidence to give God a testimonial, as it were :

when faith is acted, not only does God give the man a testimonial, Heb. xi. 5, 6. "Enoch had this testimony, that he pleased God; but without faith it is impossible to please him:" but what is yet more strange, faith not only gets a testimonial from God, but gives a testimonial to him, John iii. 33, "He that received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." Here is the confidence and assurance of faith; it acts upon an infallible testimony, the divine veracity and faithfulness; a "Thus saith the Lord," is the firm foundation, upon which faith is built. It is a receiving the record of God: and all the acts of faith, without this, are but as so many arrows shot at random in the open air. Many a confident address does faith make; it ventures to go as far forward as the holy of holies, by the blood of Jesus; it ventures the soul upon the blood of the Son of God, and upon the promise of a God in Christ: here is the boldness of faith. To gather in to Shiloh, and believe in him, is in effect to say, I adventure my soul upon nothing in the world, but upon the promise of a God, that I have provoked, and been an enemy to, all my days; I have nothing but the word of this God; and yet I must adventure upon it even my everlasting ALL. It is an adventuring act, like Peter upon the boisterous water, with this in his mouth and heart, "Master, save me." To venture upon the promise of a provoked God, and to believe him to be a God in Christ reconciling, according to his word, upon the account of the ransom he hath found out, and the propitiation he hath set forth; here is the boldness of faith. And again, it is remarkable for its resoluteness: the person, like the woman with the bloody issue, presses resolutely through crowds of devils and lusts, and with an irresistible intenseness of soul, forces a passage through all obstructions, to get a touch of the sceptre of King Jesus. We are called to come with full assurance of faith, with an holy resolution and courage. When a poor trembling Roman approached the emperor Augustus, he was in some fear, "What," says the Emperor, "take you me for an elephant that will tear you?" So we should come with boldness to Christ. He encourages the worst of sinners; he hath given his word for it, which is as firm as the pillars of heaven and earth, and stable like mountains of brass, that him that cometh he will in no wise cast out: when he comes at first, he will not cast him out; when he comes again afterwards, he will not cast him out; he will not cast out the vilest and most desperate sinner that comes; he will not cast him out of his favour now; he will not cast him out of

heaven at last ; no, no, " He will in no wise cast him out." We may gather to Shiloh, and come with the greatest boldness ; and welcome, welcome, welcome shall we be for ever. In a word, this boldness is remarkable for the solemnity that is in it, it is a solemn gathering ; the people, that gather to Shiloh, come to him with a *behold*, Jer. iii. 22, " Behold, we come unto thee : for thou art the Lord our God." The heart goes out with some kind of eminency and solemnity, " Behold, we come ;" let heaven and earth be witnesses : we take instruments, as it were, in every angel's hand, in every creature's hand, in every spire of grass's hand, that we come back to a God in Christ ; we are satisfied the whole universe attest, and behold what we are going to do. Not that the believer loves to blaze abroad his religion indecently ; no, no, it is especially a silent, secret, heart-gathering, and soul-approach to Shiloh : but they are so far from being ashamed of the match, and so well pleased are they with it, that they are content it be registrate in heaven, and that the whole creation attest it, " Behold we come !" The man acts with a solemn boldness.

8. In this gathering of the people to Shiloh, they that are under the conduct of gathering grace and power, are made to act regularly : no wonder, for in gathering to Shiloh, their footsteps are ordered by the Lord, and according to his word, the unerring rule of faith and manners. It is in many respects a regular address and approach : and here I shall name some other particulars, which I suppose may be included in the regularity of this approach.

(1.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular approach and address to him is made penitentially : and faith in its addresses to him acts penitentially, mournfully, and tenderly : " Going and weeping they shall go, and seek the Lord their God : they shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord," Jer. l. 4, 5. *Going and weeping*, this manner of gathering is not inconsistent with the cordial and cheerful acting, that I spoke of already ; for the tears of gospel repentance are tears of joy : it is said of the New Testament believers, Isa. xxxv. 10. " The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads : they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Though this will not take place in its perfection but in heaven, yet it hath its begun accomplishment in all believers that are gathered in to Shiloh ; they obtain joy and gladness, and LEGAL

sorrow and sighing do flee away; for, according to the measure of their faith in Christ, they have joy and peace in believing: yea, in him believing, they rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. But gospel-sorrow, and godly-sorrow does not mar the music in this joyful song: for, while they look on him, whom they have pierced, and mourn, Zech. xii. 10, and see him wounded for their sins, Isa. lv. 2, they see, at the same time, the blood issuing out at these wounds, to be justice-satisfying blood, wrath-appeasing blood, hell-quenching blood, and heaven-purchasing blood; hence a sweet mixture of joy and sorrow both. These seem to be joined together, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them," Jer. xxxi. 9. It may be rendered, as you may see, in the margin of some of your Bibles, *with FAVOURS will I lead them*. As the sense of their own sins and ingratitude makes them come with weeping; so, at the same time, the sense of God's favours, and kindness in Christ, makes them come with rejoicing; for, with loving-kindness does he draw them, and with favours does he lead them. O! when he favours such a guilty sinner with a pardon, such a filthy sinner with a laver of blood, such a naked sinner with a robe of righteousness, such a black sinner with a beautiful ornament, such a hell-deserving sinner with a promise of glory, such a backsliding profligate with a merciful visit or return, and such a prodigal wretch with a compassionate embracement: and thus with favours does lead them. O then it is hard to tell, whether the voice of joy, or the voice of weeping in the soul be loudest. But as we render it also, it is most expressive of this penitential address, in gathering to Shiloh; "With weeping, and with supplication doth he lead them." Indeed faith's approach is begun, maintained, and nourished, by prayer and supplication, saying, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief: Lord, increase our faith." There are some who have a presumptuous faith, that can believe when they will, without praying down the Spirit of faith from God; as they can eat and drink, and sleep, and walk, and talk, though they pray not for strength to do these things, so they can exercise their natural presumptuous faith, saying, I trust in God's mercy; and their false repentance, saying, God forgive me, I am a great sinner, they can believe and repent, without prayer and supplication for grace and strength to do so. But true grace, true faith, and repentance, is attained and maintained, in a way of supplication: and hence true faith does increase and decrease, according to the increase

and decrease of the Spirit of prayer and supplication. If it be not so with you, man, know it, that though your false faith may give you some false peace for a while, yet when death and eternity stare you in the face, then the rottenness of your faith will be discovered; "The hope of the hypocrite will perish." They that gather to Shiloh, they come with weeping, and with supplication doth he lead them.

I am not here to enter upon the dispute concerning the priority of faith to repentance, in their natural order, and in their acting and exercise; it is well if you know both, whether you know the order or not: only, if whatsoever is not of faith is sin, you may guess what sort of repentance it is that is not of faith: and when the word of God speaks any where of the proper order, let your experience, consonant to the word, witness, and you will find, that such as the faith is, such will the repentance be. Legal faith works legal repentance; gospel faith, gospel repentance; true faith, true repentance. Thus, when the people of Nineveh believed God, then they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, Jonah iii. 5: when they believed his threatening, and yet that he was not irreconcilable, nor implacable, then they repented. Thus, when a man believes, and apprehends that God is pacified towards him, then he is confounded and ashamed, Ezek. xvi. 63. When you have harsh thoughts of God, and no hope of favour at his hand, I suppose then you will find your heart hard like a stone, and inflexible; but when you get kindly thoughts of God, and apprehension of his mercy and good-will, and love to you in Christ, then I imagine you will find joyful meltings, and gospel sorrow. O the fire of God's love melts the soul! And the hardness and impenitency is healed, when the Sun of righteousness ariseth with healing under his wings, Mal. iv. 2. The qualities of this penitential approach you may see, 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." And this penitential acting of faith runs through the whole of the believer's life, in an universal tenderness of disposition and deportment, according to the measure of faith. And there are six tender things in it, which the believer hath.

1. He hath a tender heart, called a broken and contrite heart: broken for sin, and from sin; Josiah his heart was tender. 2. A

tender conscience ; some have a conscience seared as with a hot iron, and that is a silent conscience : but the penitent hath a smitten conscience : as David's heart smote him, when he cut off the lap of Saul's garment. 3. A tender eye ; "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn : Rivers of tears run down their eyes," because of their own sins, and the sins of others who break God's law. 4. A tender ear, which being circumcised, does hear and fear ; "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart, and trembles at my word." 5. A tender lip or tongue, that dare not lie, nor speak profanely : "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." And 6. A tender hand, that dares not touch the garment spotted with the flesh, but studies to shun all appearances of evil ; or, if you will, you may add, 7. That he hath a tender foot, saying, with Hezekiah, "I will go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul." And this leads to another quality of this regular approach.

(2.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular approach and address to him is made obedientially, as well as penitentially : it is an obediential gathering. And as faith acts penitentially, so it acts obedientially ; for it works by love, Gal. v. 6 ; it purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9 ; and the man that hath it purifies himself, even as God is pure, 1 John iii. 3. It stirs up to new obedience ; for, "Faith without works is dead," James ii. 20, 26. Wherever it is, it is still working, and it can no more be idle, than the fire can be. It is true, "We are justified by faith, without works," as the apostle says : that is, without the casuality of works, without conditionality of works, without the instrumentality of works, and without the influence of works upon our justification : but not without the presence of works : for justifying faith is a sanctifying thing, and natively works, as the fire natively burns. Common faith is a dead useless faith, making no change or alteration on the soul where it is ; but saving faith acts always obedientially : hence you read of the obedience of faith, Rom. xvi. 26 : importing, both that faith acts in obedience to the divine call at first, and that it influences the soul to all the acts of gospel-obedience afterwards. O, says the returning sinner, that is making this obediential address to a God in Christ, I have been a fugitive servant to the most glorious Lord and Master ; I have deserted his service, and denied my obedience ; but now, Lord, nail my ear to the door-post, that I may serve thee for ever nail my heart to thy service, that no trouble, temptation, devil, or

desertion, may drive me away from thee ; nail my eyes to thy service, that I may never look upon vanity : nail my hands to thy service, that I may never do an ill turn ; nail my feet to thy way, that I may never turn aside from thee ; let all the faculties of my soul be nailed to thy service and obedience.

(3.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular address to him is made speedily ; O the poor soul, that sees itself ready to drop into hell, how speedily, in the day of power does it flee unto Christ ! “ I flee to thee to hide me,” says the Psalmist : the flight of faith is very quick, and swift as lightning, that goes from the one end of heaven to the other in an instant ; so when the soul is on wing, under the influence of the Spirit of faith, it can flee from earth to heaven in a moment. But this speedy gathering, I understand especially in opposition to delays, which are dangerous in religion : to delay coming to Christ one half-hour is dangerous exceedingly ; for, if you die within that half-hour, you are undone to eternity. Now, in a day of powerful gathering, the soul makes no longer delay : but it is in an holy haste ; “ I made haste and delayed not to keep thy righteous judgments.” The man is made to flee with speed, and to run with haste out of Sodom.

(4.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular approach and address to him is made deliberately ; though it is with speed, yet it is with deliberation ; though none can believe too soon by a saving faith, yet some believe too soon by a temporary faith, never having weighed matters in the balance of the sanctuary. The true approacher puts the matter in a fair balance : he puts the disadvantages in one scale, saying, What will be my fare, If I come not to Christ ? Why, “ They that are far from him shall perish :” he puts the advantages in another scale, and comes at length to that conclusion, Ps. lxxiii. 28, “ It is good for me to draw near to God.” O ! of all the gatherings, the gathering to Shiloh is best : “ To whom shall I go ? he hath the words of eternal life.” The man is not effected only with a transient flash ; no, by no means : he sees the wicked oft in prosperity, and the godly in adversity ; he sees the large and alluring offers that sin, Satan, and the world make ; and yet after all, he deliberately affirms, It is good for me to draw near to God and Christ : Let others say, as Psal. iv. 6, “ Who will shew us any good !” But my SAY shall be, “ Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance on me.”

(5.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular approach

and address is made chastely and uprightly : the soul views the saying, that Christ came to save sinners from sin and wrath, not only as a faithful saying, but as worthy of all acceptation ; because the beauty of Christ is discovered. Some have their reason conquered, but not their love ; and, therefore, they come to Christ feignedly, and not with the whole heart : their judgment draws one way, and their affections another : for their judgment is gained, but not their affections ; as if one should marry a woman, not because of her beauty, but because of her patrimony ; not from a regard to her person, but love to her portion. Some take on with Christ, and take hold of the skirt of this Jew, who yet see no form or comeliness in him, for which he should be desired. But as it is said, "The upright love thee ;" so they that in gathering to him act chastely and uprightly, they come to him out of pure love, not for servile ends : not to gratify a natural conscience, not for fear of hell only, but from a great love to him, and a just esteem of him, and a strong desire of fellowship with him. The man is content to come to Christ on mount Calvary, as well as on mount Tabor ; when going to Golgotha in ignominy, as well as when riding to Jerusalem in triumph : he cleaves to him, when people cry, "Away with him, away with him ; crucify him ;" as well as when they cry, "Hosannah to the son of David." He loves him when lying in the grave, as well as when mounted on a throne. The chaste and upright comer cleaves to him, when kings and princes are against him, when laws and governments are against him, when potentates and parliaments are against him, as well as when they seem to be upon his side. It is true, indeed, that there are many unchaste thoughts, and looks, and lustings after idols in the hearts of true believers, and many defections and declinings may take place ; but these are wrestled with and opposed by them, and that not only by their light and conscience, but by their love and affection to the Lord Jesus, saying, "O shall I thus requite the Lord ?" So that in the main they are upright. But, to the same purpose,

6. When there is a gathering of the people to Shiloh, the right and regular approach and address to him is made entirely and undividedly. False and hypocritical comers, they come with a divided heart to a divided Christ ; but true comers, with a whole heart to a whole Christ. The legalist would marry Christ, while yet his other husband, the law is not dead to him, nor he dead to it, but it is an adulterous and unlawful match to join with another hus-

band while the first is living ; hence true believers in Christ are said to be dead to the law by the body of Christ, that they might be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, Rom. vii. 4. And God throws down the old building, turns him out of that shelter, lets him see all his legal duties, best performances, and most glaring graces, are but fig leaves, insufficient to cover his nakedness ; and discovers the necessity, excellency, and glory of Christ's righteousness ; and the man submits cordially to it, renouncing all hope and expectation of life, favour, and justification by the deeds of the law. The carnal man would have Christ and his lusts too ; but, " If you seek me," says Christ, " let these go their way." Gathering grace makes the man say, " What have I to do any more with idols ?" The covetous man would have Christ and the world too ; Christ satisfies his conscience, and he flies to him for that ; the world satisfies his heart, and he cleaves to it for that ; but in the day of gathering power, the emptiness of the world is discovered, and the man sells all for the peril of great price.

The man that comes to Christ, he comes for all these four things, 1 Cor. i. 30, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ; He comes to him as a Prophet, for wisdom ; as a Priest, for righteousness ; as a King, for sanctification ; and as his *all in all*, for complete redemption ; and he can want none of these, because he knows his own foolishness, guiltiness, filthiness, and misery. The true believer dares not divide righteousness from sanctification, nor pardon from purity ; yea, he comes to Christ for remission of sin for the right end. What is that ? namely, that, being freed from the guilt of sin, he may be freed from the dominion of it. Knowing that there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, he does not believe remission of sin that he may indulge himself in the commission of it ; no, no ; the blood of Christ, that purges the conscience from the guilt of sin, does also purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God, Heb. ix. 14. They that come to Christ regularly then, they come so to him for righteousness, that they may have him also for sanctification ; otherwise the man does not really desire the favour and enjoyment of God, or to be in friendship with him who is a holy God. As the true lover loves him, not only because he is good and merciful, but because he is a pure and a holy JESUS, so the true believer employs Christ for making him holy as well as happy ; and hence draws virtue from him for killing of sin, and quickening the soul in the

way of duty. And the faith that can never keep you from a sin, will never keep you out of hell ; and the faith that cannot carry you to a duty, will not carry you to heaven. Justifying faith is a sanctifying grace ; it improves Christ undividedly. It is true, as it sanctifies it does not justify ; but that faith that justifies, does also sanctify ; as the sun that enlightens hath heat with it ; but it is not the heat of the sun that enlightens, but the light thereof ; so that faith that justifies hath love and sanctity with it ; but it is not the love and sanctity that justifies, but faith as closing with Christ.

(7.) When there is a gathering of the people to Shiloh, the regular approach and address to him is made exclusively, excluding all other saviours, all other helps, all other props, saying, "I will make mention of thy righteousness, and of thine only," Ps. lxxi. 16. To depend partly on Christ, and partly on our own righteousness, is to set one foot on firm ground, and another on quicksand. If a man set one foot upon a rock, and another upon the deep water, and lean to them both with equal weight ; yea, if he give any of his weight to the foot that is on the water, he will be sure to sink into the deep ; so here, these who rely partly upon the merits of Christ, and partly upon their own good works for justification, will inevitably perish in the issue ; therefore in the day of gathering to Christ, the soul is brought to say, "Surely in the Lord only have I righteousness and strength," Isa. xlv. 24. Thus Paul excludes the best righteousness that ever he had, either before or after conversion, from the matter of his justification, Phil. iii. 8. When he compares his best righteousness with Christ's, he looks upon it as a dunghill, a stinking dunghill, where there is no pleasure ; and a sinking dunghill, where there is no standing. Such is our righteousness, if it be not excluded from our justification before God, and acceptance with him. If we go about to establish our own righteousness, it stinks in the divine nostrils as dung ; and not only so, but it is a sinking ground to stand upon, there is no firm footing ; the more a man leans to it, the more he sinks in it. Christ's blood is the only sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour to God ; every sacrifice stinks that is not perfumed therewith ; Christ's righteousness is the only sure foundation and firm ground for standing on before God. As the way of sin is a sinking way, so the way of self-righteousness is little better ; for the sin that is in man's best righteousness trips up his heels, and lays him in the mire, where he sinks to hell, if he be not brought to build upon a surer ground, and to take a better way.

(8.) When there is a gathering to Shiloh, the regular approach and address to him is made progressively, as also peremptorily and irreversibly, saying, as Psalm lxxx. 17, "Henceforth we will not go back." O! after we have tasted of the bitterness of sin, and the bitterness of wrath; after the wings of our souls have been singed with the flames of hell; after the arrows of conviction shot out of the bow of omnipotence have pierced our souls, so as no man, minister, or angel, could pull them out, Christ did it, with his own hand, and therein manifested his powerful grace, as being the Man of God's right hand. Shall we again turn our back upon him? No; *Henceforth*, through grace, *we will not go back*. The true believer comes to Christ, so as never to part with him, saying, as Ruth to Naomi, Ruth i. 16, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Nothing shall part thee and me." Yea, the man, having once come to Christ, is still coming nearer and nearer to him: "To whom coming as to a living stone, ye are built up a spiritual house," 1 Pet. ii. 4. The building goes up gradually, and is still going forward. Some professors are like the mill-wheel, it goes round, yet still it stands in the same place where it was; they go the round of duties, and morning and evening prayers; and attend Sabbath and week-day sermons, which is well done; but they are at a stand; they are the same now that they were ten, twenty years ago, if not worse. But, in gathering to Shiloh, the people are made to advance nearer and nearer to heaven, getting more knowledge, more experience, more hatred of sin, more love and likeness to Christ. It is true, the saints themselves have their winter-decays, but they have also their summer-revivings, that set them forward again. And thus the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto a perfect day.

V. The fifth general head proposed, was, To speak of the special seasons, wherein this gathering of the people to Shiloh does take place. When shall this gathering be? Why, in general, When Shiloh is come, then shall the gathering of the people be to him; and there are two remarkable seasons of his coming, that the text intends, namely, his coming in the flesh, and his coming in the Spirit. Now, his coming in the flesh, I spoke of in the explication; and his coming in the Spirit, I spoke of, when I shewed by what means this gathering is brought about; particularly the gathering

wind of the Spirit, when he gathers the dead sinners, as it were out of the graves, according to that word, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live," Ezek. xxxvii. 9. Christ's coming in the flesh was the beginning and commencement of the New-Testament dispensation, which is to last till his second coming; and during the whole of that dispensation, there will be a gathering of the Gentiles, a gathering the people to him. Christ's coming in the Spirit, is the very efficient cause of all the spiritual and effectual gatherings, that do take place under that dispensation; and therefore, his coming in the Spirit, to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, is promised for that end, John xvi. 8. His coming thus, is like the gathering shower spoken of, Ps. lxxii. 6, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." Whereupon a gathering ensues, verse 8, "His kingdom shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the end of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; and all nations shall serve him." O cry for a gathering shower of the Spirit's influences and operations; for there will be no gathering till then. But more particularly, the gathering seasons may be considered under a fourfold view. 1. With relation to the public and remarkable gathering of the church in general. 2. With relation to the initial gathering of sinners in particular. 3. With relation to the progressive gathering of believers. 4. With relation to the consummate gathering of the saints.

1st, The gathering seasons may be considered, with relation to the public and remarkable gathering of the church in general. And there are four or five seasons that have been very remarkable for public and numerous gatherings of the people to Shiloh. As,

1. Reformation times, in the church, have been gathering times, under the powerful influence of the Spirit of God accompanying reformation-work, and leading forward thereunto. Thus was it in the days of Hezekiah, when a multitude having destroyed the altars of idolatry, and Hezekiah having joined fervent prayers with his reforming measures, "The Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people," 2 Chron. xxx. 20. Reforming times have been remarkable gathering times in Britain and Ireland. The Lord brought gospel-light very early, particularly into Scot-

land, by which our forefathers were delivered from heathenism and paganism; and we wanted not some gospel-light for the space of five hundred years after Christ: about which time Popery came to put in its foot among us, when one Palladius was sent from Rome to corrupt us: and though there was a strenuous opposition for several hundred years after that against the Romish rites and hierarchy; yet popish darkness did gradually overspread these lands, till it came to the greatest height, in the space of a thousand years; after which time, to wit, in the fifteenth century, I mean a thousand five hundred years after Christ, which was the reformation period; and now, about two hundred years ago, the Lord was pleased to make reformation-light to arise, by stirring up eminent instruments to preach the gospel clearly, and to put their hands zealously to reformation work; especially in Scotland, even to the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, and Erastianism, and the solemn renunciation thereof, and of all heretical and sectarian errors, whether in doctrine, worship, discipline, or government. Then it was that ministers were clothed with righteousness and salvation, and were eminent in their faithfulness to God, in his truth and interests, and zealous against sin, and all lukewarmness in the Lord's cause: then it was that the representative body of the nation put to their hand for the reformation thereof; then it was that Scotland particularly was famed through the world, under the name of PHILADELPHIA; because of the purity of its reformation, having left all the rags of Popery behind it in the grave, from whence it arose; which could not be said of many other churches, particularly of our neighbour church of England: for, as Lazarus came out of the grave bound hand and foot, and his face bound about with a napkin, so was it with England in their first reformation. It was indeed like a resurrection from the grave, in the days of King Edward and Queen Elizabeth; but yet they came out of this grave bound hand and foot with their grave-clothes, bringing many things out with them which they should have left behind, especially all these ceremonies, superstitions, and modes of worship and government, wherein they symbolize with the church of Rome, and which they brought along with them when they left her; these grave-clothes they have not cast off to this day. And, alas! many in Scotland are fond of borrowing from them some of their old garments, which smell of the prison of Popery, which they left. But, with respect to Scotland's reformation-days, as Christ, when he rose from the dead, left all his

linens and grave-clothes behind him; so he helped Scotland, in rising out of the grave of Popery, to rise and reform so purely as to leave all the rags of Popery to be buried in the grave from whence they arose. And then in these days it was that the work of the Lord prospered, the gospel flourished, iniquity was made to stop his mouth: our church was glorious to all its beholders, "And terrible to her enemies as an army with banners," and multitudes of people were gathered to Shiloh. But, alas! one of the great reasons why there are so few gathering to Shiloh now, is too plainly this, that reformation work is much at a stand, little reformation zeal and spirit among magistrates, ministers, or people, as it is said, Neh. iii. 5, "The nobles of Tekoah did not put their necks to the work of the Lord:" yea, deformity, defilement, corruption, and defection, instead of reformation, is too palpable in our day, wherein many pollutions have crept into our doctrine, much defilement into our worship, partiality and pithlessness into our discipline, and tyranny and disorder in the church government; manifold encroachments made upon the liberties of the Lord's people, and the privileges of the Lord's house, too well known that we need not mention them at all: insomuch that the very foundations are ready to shake, and the garden is much grown over with weeds. Oh! cry for the return of reformation-days! for, till then there is but little hope of remarkable gathering of the people to Shiloh. And as Christ commanded his disciples to unbind Lazarus when he was raised out of the grave, and to take away his grave-clothes; so, seek and earnestly intreat that the Lord may come and take away whatever is opposite to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of his house, and to the perfecting the work of reformation, and whatever tends to hinder it. But again,

2. Covenanting times in the church have been gathering times, as you may see in the time of Josiah, 2 Kings xxiii. 3, when the people made a covenant to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, his testimonies, and his statutes with all their heart and soul, and all the people stood to the covenant. Thus it was with these lands, when, after the reformation, all ranks were brought into holy and solemn covenants with God: in those days the Lord delighted in us, and our land was married to him; when, with uplifted hands, we swore allegiance to him, and abjured all rivals with him in his government. Never a nation was more solemnly bound to the Lord by national covenants in the fifteenth century, the

eightieth and eighty-first years thereof; and renewed again and again in the sixteenth century, the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth years thereof, and in latter times also; together with the solemn league afterwards for furthering the ends, designs, and obligations of the former. I know indeed some dispute, and deny the obligations of these covenants upon posterity: but as good Josiah brought back the people, and caused them to stand to the covenant of their fathers, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 32; so we find that religious covenants in scripture comprehend absent as well as present: and posterity to come, as well as the covenanting forefathers, Duet. xxix. 14, 15, 22, 24, 25. Now, our Solemn Covenants, that our forefathers entered into, being nothing but a superadded and accumulative obligation, to what we were previously bound to by the word of God, they cannot but stand binding upon us their posterity. But as these covenanting days were gathering days, wherein many flocked in to Shiloh, and wherein God appended his seal to the covenanted work of reformation by a numerous accession of souls to the Messiah, under the influence of the powerful Spirit of God, blessing his word and ordinances to their conversion; so our covenant-breaking days, on the other hand, are far from being gathering days. Little wonder, when we have occasion to lament that our covenant hath been broken, burned, and buried! and if our covenant-breaking be not duly lamented, and covenanted reformation revived, we have ground to expect the Lord will send a sword, a dreadful judgment, to avenge the quarrel of his covenant. Till there be a remarkable reviving hereof, we can hardly expect a remarkable gathering of the people to Shiloh.

3. Confessing times in the church have been gathering times; times of humble acknowledging of personal and national guilt, as you see, Ezra viii. 23, and ix. 7, and downwards, compared with chap. x. 1, 2, 3. No doubt there were better days of the gospel, in respect of the power thereof, with us than now, when there was public and solemn acknowledgment of public sins and breaches of the covenant; such as you have an account of in the ordinary Confessions of Faith among your hands. But, in our days, we seem to be so far from taking with our public sins and affections that we are rather upon the self-justifying lay, as if we had done nothing amiss, and as if matters had never been better with us. May we not hereupon conclude that the Lord is speaking to us as he did of old to Judah, Jer. ii. 34, 35, "Behold I will plead with thee, because thou

sayest, I have not sinned?" While our mother church is not duly taking with her sin, how can we expect a remarkable gathering of her children to Shiloh? Whereas, if our uncircumcised hearts were humbled, and that we were confessing our iniquities, and the iniquities of our fathers, then we might expect the Lord would yet remember his covenant and heal our land as it is, Lev. xxvi. 40, 41, 42. Not that public reformings, covenantings, and confessings have any meritorious influence upon, or are procuring causes of remarkable gatherings unto Shiloh; only in this method and order he uses to work, preparing the way of the people, Isa. lvii. 14, and lxii. 10. He gathers out the stones, lifts up a standard for the people, and then follows the gathering of the people to him; therefore, while none of these national revivings, or public acknowledgments of our own and our forefathers' iniquities appear, little wonder that, instead of a gathering of the people to Shiloh, we see clouds gathering in the sky, and more and more national bondage and thralldom taking place. We walk contrary to God, and God walks contrary to us, and will punish seven times more for our iniquities. Therefore, if you would wish for a remarkable gathering, O cry for a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of repentance and reformation, whereof there is so little to be seen in church or state in our day. O seek for a return of his departed glory, and that our land may not be called LO-AMMI and LO-RUHAMAH, as it is said, Hosea i. 6, 9, but rather AMMI and RUHAMAH, Hos. ii. 1, and that we may be called HEPHZIBAH and BEULAH, Isa. lxii. 4, that the Lord may yet delight in us, and our land may yet again be married; so that every one may not only call him BAALI, but ISHI,¹ Hosea ii. 16.—But,

4. Suffering and contending times in the church have been remarkable gathering times. It was in times of persecution and suffering of the church that such great numbers of people were converted and gathered into Christ in the primitive ages, as you see, Acts iv. 4. Times of contending for the faith have been times of convening to Christ, the glorious object of faith: yea, scattering times have been gathering times, when the Lord hath scattered his servants abroad, that by the preaching of the word in every airth to

(1) LO-AMMI, *i.e.* Not my people. LO-RUHAMAH, *i.e.* Not having obtained mercy. AMMI, *i.e.* My people. RUHAMAH, *i.e.* Having obtained mercy. HEPHZI-BAH, *i.e.* My delight is in her. BEULAH, *i.e.* Married. BAALI, *i.e.* My Lord. ISH, *i.e.* My Husband.

which they were scattered, there might be a gathering of the people to Shiloh, as you see it was, Acts viii. 4, and particularly Acts xi. 19, 20, 21. Thus the Jewish persecution first, and then the primitive Pagan persecution next; especially the second under Domitian, which was about the sixty-ninth year of Christ; and the ninth and tenth under Aurelius and Dioclesian, as historians relate, were the very means of bringing the gospel first to Scotland, while eminent men fled from these dreadful tempests unto this land, and so planted the gospel here. Suffering times, persecuting times, and hiding times, have been gathering times in the church. Some old persons here, perhaps, have been witnesses to days of power in the time of persecution, in the late suffering times in Scotland. Our fathers have told us, how the Lord appeared for them and with them, when men were appearing most bloodily against them; they have heard the best news from heaven, when they heard the worst from earth. God many times smiles most upon his church, when the world frowns most against them; when the cause and truths of Christ are most opposed by men, God usually puts the most remarkable seal to them upon the hearts of many. Some can say, When they were contending most for the truth, then the Lord hath made the truth most sweet and refreshful to themselves, and most powerful and efficacious to others. Even a time of bonds hath been a time of begetting children to God: "Mind Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds," says Paul, in the 10th verse of his epistle to Philemon. Indeed, the Lord's gathering time is not confined to suffering periods of the church; for, "Glorious things are spoken of Zion the city of God," even at other times, "that this man and that man was born there;" and that it can be said of our Zion, without looking many years back, that this man and that man, this woman and that woman was born there. But I speak of remarkable gatherings, where it can be said, not only *this man* and *that man*, but *this multitude* and *that multitude* was born there; and O for a time of the gathering of multitudes to Christ! Perhaps sad and suffering days must come again, before we have such gathering days; and there may be terrible sufferings before there be remarkable gatherings; for, he whose fan is in his hand, does usually purge his floor, before he gather in his wheat, Matt. iii. 12.

But as the day of calamity in itself is not to be desired, so, that we may not be hopeless in the meantime, I would further tell you, that the church's backsliding times have been God's gathering

times, according to Jer. iii. 14, "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord ! for I am married unto you ; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and bring you to Zion." There is a call in a backsliding time ; but see verse 22, where there is not only a gathering call, but a gathering power accompanying the call, even at a time wherein they had perverted their ways, and forgotten the Lord their God : "Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings ;" and then it follows, "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." Behold a gathering of the people unto Shiloh in a backsliding time ! O then, let backsliding Scotland say, *behold we come !* O that the hearts of hearers were saying, *behold we come !* Oh ! there is no national reformation can take place till there be a personal reformation ; if personal returning to the Lord were general and universal, then there would be a national returning. Therefore, if you would wish to see a national reviving, let every person put in for a share of gathering power and grace, saying, "Turn me, and I shall be turned ; draw me, and I shall run ;" and, under the conduct of drawing power, let us say, "Behold we come to thee, for thou art the Lord our God." Hath your personal backsliding, man, woman, been great and grievous ? Hath this been your disease all your days, a backsliding heart, a backsliding nature, a backsliding practice, a bentness to backsliding in thought, word, and action ? Is that your disease, that you are a backsliding heifer, a backsliding devil, that, it may be, thinks the disease is desperate and incurable ? O let me assure you, that there is a healer come here to-day, that says, "I will heal your backslidings ;" and he will not say the thing that he cannot do. And while his mercy is saying, "I will heal your backslidings," let your heart be saying, Lord, I will come to thee for that healing, for that is my disease, and there is none in the world needs it so much as I ; the church and nation need to have their backslidings healed ; but I am the particular person that needs it most of all ; heal me, and I shall be healed ; behold, I come to thee for that end. Is your heart saying so ? Then welcome be all comers ; welcome, welcome, welcome ! "Him that comes, I will in no wise cast out ;" nay, he will in no wise cast up your former backslidings, but heal you, without upbraiding you ; for he gives liberally, and upbraids not. "I will heal your backslidings ;" it is spoken without limitation, either of former or future backslidings ; and therefore the fear of backsliding again, needs not discourage you from coming to him ; your former

backslidings will not cast you out ; and though you backslide again, he will not east you off. He may visit your iniquity with the rod, but his loving-kindness will he not take away. No, he will in no wise cast you out. Backslidings shall never part him and you, for he will heal your backslidings : “ I will heal your backslidings.” It hath respect to the future, as well as the present time ; not to encourage your sinning for the future, no, no, but to encourage sinners to come, notwithstanding of their fears of future failings ; this shall be my office and employment, so long as you labour under that disease of backsliding, which will be till you come to that land, where the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick ; now, till you come there, I will constantly and perpetually be a physician and healer to you, to give you my healing word, my healing blood, my healing visits from time to time, and to arise like the sun of righteousness, with healing under my wings, from day to day ; therefore come, backsliding soul, and let me have all your employment from day to day, O ! is your heart saying, *Behold we come !* then blessed be the comers, though they have been backsliders. The people that must be gathered to Shiloh, are a backsliding people ; and if it were not such, it would be none of Adam’s race, for all are smitten with the same disease ; therefore all the backsliders here are invited to be comers. Come and welcome in the name of Shiloh, to whom the gathering must be ; and in his blessed Father’s name, come and welcome. And if there be any comers here, then glory, glory to God, that, notwithstanding all that is amiss in the church of Scotland, yet it is a gathering time ; notwithstanding all your backslidings, yet it is a gathering season.—Thus I have considered the gathering seasons with relation to the remarkable gathering of the church in general.

2dly. The gathering seasons may be considered with relation to the initial gathering of sinners in particular ; when he begins to gather in sinners to himself, O the freedom and sovereignty of his grace, that shines in the seasons and times of gathering ! for some he gathers at the third hour, Matt. xx. 3, some at the sixth hour, and some at the ninth hour, ver. 5, yea, some at the eleventh hour, ver. 6. There are four periods and seasons mentioned ; for he gathers some in the morning, some in the evening, some at mid-day, and some at midnight ; whatever be the hour, it is an happy hour : “ The hour comes, when the dead shall hear ;” and, O may this be the happy hour with respect to some here ! More particularly,

1. The morning is the gathering season, with respect to some ; I mean the morning of their youth ; the Lord hath gathered some very early in the morning, before break of day, before ever they saw the light of day ; for some are gathered before they be born, sealed and sanctified from the womb, as well as foreknown from eternity : Jer. i. 5, " Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee ; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee," which some have applied to regeneration, that some are spiritually born, before ever they are naturally so. We are sure that infants are as capable of all the essentials of regeneration, as adult persons are. The essential part thereof is, God's putting his Spirit within them ; and infants are as capable of this as aged persons, if not more, while natural enmity is not strengthened by actual rebellions. But this I pass, as more rare, and what cannot be known, but by some remarkable effects thereof. It is not so rarely that some are gathered in the morning of their younger years ; so was it with Josias, who was called at eight years old, 2 Kings xxii. 1, 2 ; so was it with Timothy, who knew the holy scriptures from a child, 2 Tim. iii. 15. And, if the morning of youth be a gathering season unto Shiloh, let this encourage young children, that are here, to remember their Creator and Redeemer in the days of their youth ! O remember to seek him early : " I love them that love me," says God ; " and they that seek me early shall find me " See also Psal. cx. 3, " Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power : in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth."

2. The evening is the gathering season, with respect to some : God gathers some in the evening of their old age. Thus we find Abraham was gathered in his old age : he was seventy-five years old when God first called him, Gen. xii. 4 ; and it is probable, that Nicodemus was an old man before he was born again, as appears from John iii. 4. Is there any old sinner here, that hath been a transgressor from the womb, and been living without Christ all your days ? Oh ! it is more than time you were gathered into Shiloh. Oh ! hath the devil got the morning and the noon-tide of your day, and will you give him the evening too ? Alas ! sirs, he hath got too much of your time already ; let Christ have the rest, if he can have no more. I dare not say, that he will not take what the devil hath left, for I have no warrant from the word to say that old age cannot be God's gathering time ; I am sure my text excludes nei-

ther old nor young, "To him shall the gathering of the people be;" therefore let even old and dying people gather into the new and living way, which is consecrated for us, through the vail of the Mediator's flesh; sure it is the best way that you can take before you be gathered into a grave.

3. The mid-day is God's gathering season with respect to some; I mean the middle time of their age: and whom God gathers he most ordinarily gathers about the midst of their days. Some have judged that God's remnant are most ordinarily gathered in betwixt the years of fifteen and twenty-five, others between fourteen and forty. But I dare not limit the holy One of Israel: only, seeing the most part here are, perhaps, such as are about the midst of their day, O look to God, to hallow the middle of your days, as Solomon hallowed the middle of the court, 2 Chron. vii. 7. And when God says of the Messias, To him shall the gathering of the people be; let all the people say, Amen. Ye that are young, ye that are old, and ye that are betwixt the two, O say, Amen; let gathering power come.

4. The midnight is a gathering season with respect to some: I mean not only a midnight time of death and approaching eternity, at which season God hath gathered some as he did the thief on the cross, though it is not his ordinary time: but also a midnight state of security, when the soul is in a dead sleep; even such a time hath been a gathering time. I need not insist here on Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, and others: when did the day of grace dawn upon Saul afterwards called Paul? even when it was the darkest hour in the night: when he was sleeping most sound in the bed of security. It is true, his body was not sleeping, for he was riding furiously to Damascus, but his soul was so far asleep that he was snorting and breathing very high in his sleep, Acts ix. 1. He was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord; behold, even at midnight there came a cry from heaven that awakened him and roused him to seek Jesus. Now, it is, perhaps, a midnight time with some here; they are sleeping and breathing in their sleep; breathing out enmity against God, and the people of God, and the way of God; but a midnight time may be a gathering time, as it is said, Mat. xxv. 6, when all the virgins, wise and foolish, slept, at midnight there came a cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him:" so, though it be midnight, with the church, and midnight with poor miserable secure souls;

yet at midnight there is a cry in this gospel, Behold Shiloh is come, and let the gathering of the people be to him; go forth and meet him, for behold he comes with salvation. There is the initial gathering.

3rdly, The gathering seasons may be considered with relation to the progressive gathering of believers, in whom the good work is begun, and who have either now, or at some former time, been engaged to come to Shiloh; yet they need to be still coming to him, and still gathering under his wings. Now, many are the gathering seasons that relate to the believer's progressive gathering, and advances in nearness to and communion with the Lord. I shall consider them, for distinction and memory's sake, in these four periods; namely, of summer, winter, spring, and harvest.—And,

1. There are summer times of refreshment that believers sometimes have immediately after the gathering harvest of conversion; and these summer times are further gathering times, and contribute to their progressive gathering. When the soul hath been long under guilt and wrath, and under the frowns and displeasure of God and hath long seen the gates of heaven barred against him, and the mouth of hell open to receive him; then readily the Lord comes in, and speaks peace to the soul, saying, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquity, for mine own name's sake." Hearken, soul, my thoughts towards you are thoughts of peace; here is mercy to pardon thee, merit to justify thee, blood to wash thee, balm to heal thee, bread to nourish thee, wine to cherish thee, raiment to clothe thee. Thus after Paul was awakened, and converted, and gathered, then God takes him up to the third heaven, and makes such manifestations of his love and favour, beauty and glory, as he is not able to utter. Thus, after the prodigal's return, the fatted calf is killed, the best robe is put upon his back, and the ring is put upon his hand, and shoes on his feet; shewing us that, upon the sinner's conversion, and gathering in to Shiloh, God is graciously pleased to give him some choice and signal manifestation of his love and favour, grace and glory: and these contribute to his progressive gathering; "He manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him," John ii. 11. Hence, Ps. cii. 16, "When he builds up Zion, he appears in his glory:" when the stones that are already gathered, and laid upon the foundation, are to be built up a spiritual house, in a progressive work, he discovers his glory; that beholding his glory, they may be changed from glory to glory. But the summer-time of spiritual

prosperity may be but a short time, as David's, Psalm xxx. 6, 7, though it ordinarily recurs to them in some measure, even as summer does year by year; yet it is frequently followed with a winter. Therefore,

2. There are winter-times of adversity which believers have, which yet may be God's gathering times for making way for their progressive gathering to Shiloh. And thus,

(1.) A winter-time of personal affliction does sometimes make way for their further gathering; "It was good for me that I was afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have learned thy law." He had been straying, but now a gathering again was the fruit of his affliction, according to Hosea v. 15, "In their affliction they shall seek me early:" their afflicting times shall be a gathering time, for bringing them nearer to the Lord; hence they have been made to rejoice in the Lord, though the fig tree should not blossom: and to glory in tribulation. As the ark was lifted up nearer and nearer heaven by the rising of the waves; so, by affliction, believers are raised nearer and nearer to God in Christ.

(2.) The winter-time of sore trial hath sometimes been a gathering time to them: gathering mercy prevents them sometimes before an eminent trial, to prepare them for it. Thus it was with Elijah: "Arise and eat, for thou hast a journey before thee, and the journey is too great:—And he went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, till he came to Horeb the mount of God," 1 Kings xix. 7, 8. Sometimes gathering mercy supports them in the trial, and under it, saying, "Fear not, for I am with thee; I will strengthen thee; when thou goest through the fire, I will be with thee, that the flames kindle not upon thee." Thus many times the Son of Man is with them in the furnace, gathering them in his arms, as he was with John in the isle of Patmos, with Ezekiel by the river Chebar, with David in the wilderness of Judea, and with the three children in the furnace of fire. Again,

3. The winter-time of temptation is sometimes a gathering time unto them; as, after Paul was buffeted by Satan, he heard that sweet word, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Yea, after the sharpest conflict he usually gives the strongest cordial, for gathering their spirits again; "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul," Psalm xciv 19.

(4.) The winter-time of desertion and hiding hath been sometimes a gathering season: let not the deserted soul be too much disquieted, the valley of Achor may be a door of hope; you may have occasion to say, as Psalm cxvi. 6, "I was brought low, and he helped me:" you may be brought to the brink of despair, that you may have occasion to say, as Psalm xl. 2, 3, "He brought me out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings: and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." When Jacob was in great distress, God met with him at Bethel, Gen. xxviii.; and when he was in great fear that God would not accomplish his promise, he was prevented by another visit, Gen. xxxii.; and it was the most remarkable night that ever he had: he calls the place PENIEL; for he saw God face to face; and he had told him before what he had been, and would be to him, saying, "I am the God of Bethel."

(5.) The winter of downcasting hath been a time of reviving: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." And, "Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and billows have gone over me: yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his songs shall be with me, and my prayer to the God of my life," Psalm xlii. 6, 7, 8. Thus he gives songs in the night, insomuch that the darkest night hath ushered in the clearest light, according to that promise, Zech. xiv. 7, "It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light." Again,

(6.) The winter-time of outcasting hath been a gathering time, for "He gathers the outcasts of Israel," Isa. lvi. 8. "I said, I am cast out of thy sight: yet will I look again to thy holy temple," Jonah ii. 4. There, you see, was a gathering time by faith unto Christ, when he was cast out into the very belly of hell, as it is called, ver. 2. You, whose name is a CASTOUT, may then expect that your name may be turned to a SOUGHTOUT, Isa. lxii. 12.

(7.) The winter-time of fears: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee: fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." The time of hopelessness and helplessness hath been a time of spiritual gathering to the people of God: "I looked on my right hand, and beheld; but there was no man that would know me: all refuge failed me:

then I cried to thee, O Lord, and said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living, Psal. cxliv. 4, 5. When their hope is perished, and nothing but the sentence of death passing, then the Lord hath been gathering: "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead," 2 Cor. i. 9. Yea, when the soul hath not only been sentenced, but slain in a manner, and laid in the grave, then hath it been a time of gathering; "Our bones are dried," says the church; "our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts:" But, "Behold, saith the Lord, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up: and I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live," Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 12.

(8.) Yea, a winter-time of sinning, and declining, and departing from the Lord, hath been a time of gathering of his people; and this is the most wonderful of all, as I said before of a backsliding time: O! that is a strange word, Isa. xliii. 23, 24, 25, "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, and wearied me with thine iniquity, yet I even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquities for my name's sake." There is one of the bitterest challenges for sin, and that backed with one of the sweetest promises of pardon and pity, and of gathering and restoring mercy; will this encourage a believer to sin, because the time of your falling down may be a time of God's gathering up? Oh! no; nothing will humble and melt the believer's heart for sin more than to think of the riches of divine mercy and sovereign grace: when he stoops down to gather you out of the mire that you fall into, and recovers your soul and your graces. Some tell us that musk, when it hath lost its smell and sweetness, if it be put into a sink among filth, it recovers it; so when the believer's graces have lost their flavour and savoury exercise, the Lord in a manner lets them fall into the mire, that their decaying graces may be recovered and revived. Thus Peter was suffered to fall into the mire of dreadful sinning, and then his graces were revived; his humility revived, he was humbled to the dust; his repentance was revived, "He went out and wept bitterly;" his spiritual remembrance was revived, for he remembered the words of Christ to him; and all flowed from this, that it was even Christ's gathering time; for while he was yet among the dung, into which he fell, Christ looks upon Peter, with a gracious gathering eye, Luke xxii. 61, 62. Let the believer then, for the up-stirring and encouragement of his faith, know, that his saddest winter-time may be God's gathering

time to Shiloh. Your halting time may be his gathering time ; when your decrepited feet make you go halting in the way of the Lord ; " I will assemble her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out," Micah iv. 6. Your falling time may be his rising and up-gathering time ; your perishing time may be his saving time ; for his thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor his ways as your ways. And his taking such a time, makes his interposal at such a juncture the more wonderful, and the more welcome. But now, as, in these instances, God is pleased to glorify his sovereignty, and shew that he does not confine himself to means, in these progressive gatherings of believers, any more than he did in the initial gatherings of unbelievers to himself ; so, to glorify his holiness, and to put honour upon the means of his own appointment, you would know also, that,

3. There are spring-times of spiritual duty and gospel-diligence, which believers have, which are also God's gathering times, with respect to their progressive gathering to Shiloh. (By the by, neglect not means, on pretence that grace must do all ; it were an ill argument, water only refreshes, therefore cut off all cocks and pipes). But to return ; such a spring-time as this you read of, Song ii. 10—13, " My beloved spake, and said unto me, Arise my love, my fair one, and come away : for, lo ! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone : the flowers appear. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Why, it is a gathering time, therefore come away. Now, what are these fruits and flowers that appear in the spiritual spring-time which prognosticates a gathering time to be at hand ; yea, that it is a gathering time at present ? There are several fruits of the Spirit, that appear in the gospel spring-time, which betoken a gathering time : As,

(1.) A believing time is a gathering time : faith is one of the fruits and flowers that appear in this spring. A believing time is so much a gathering time, that God's gathering is his giving faith ; and our gathering, is our exercising faith. But a believing time is also a pronosticating time, betokening a further progressive gathering, so as to be brought to more and more nearness to the Lord Jesus : hence believing times are glorious times ; " Said I not unto thee, If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God ?" John xi. 40. When God's children are in the exercise of faith, then the Lord is pleased to make known his goodness. Believing times are sealing times ; " In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed

with the holy Spirit of promise," Eph. ii. 13. Believing times are rejoicing times; "In whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. There is joy and peace in believing. Faith ordinarily brings in sense; spiritual sense and feeling is the fruit of faith; though by the by, I must tell you, what is the fault and folly of the most part even of believers themselves, from whence it flows that they feel so little of the sweet fruits and advantages of faith, making sense and feeling the root and ground of faith; whereas it is only the fruit and effect of faith. But know, that when sense is made the support of faith, it frequently leaves faith in the mire; for when sense, which they make the ground of their faith, fails, then their faith fails with it. The only sure ground of faith is God's word, his truth, his faithfulness, which is an unchangeable ground. Now, if you make God's work upon you, such as spiritual sense, graces, experience, or the like, the ground of your faith, you will find these to be such changeable grounds, so much up and down, that your faith must be up and down with them, and you will totter sooner than you are aware: or, if you build your faith partly upon sense, feelings, &c., and partly upon God's truth, you are then like a man that sets one foot upon a firm ground, and the other upon a floating board: when the loose floating board sails or slips, you will hardly stand fast, however firm the other foot stands. Who among all ordinary believers knows not the ebbings and flowings, the ups and downs of frames and spiritual feelings? They may rise and fall ten times in an hour, as the wind blows. Now, if your faith be built upon these love-tokens, and depend upon them; then as your faith must be ever wavering, so God, seeing himself robbed of the dependence due to him, may purposely withhold these things from you, that you may learn not to trust in uncertain experiences, but in the living God. Why, say you, when I get these love-tokens, it is not upon these that I trust, but on the God that sent them. Well done, if it be true; but I fear it is otherwise; for if Christ himself and his truths be the ground of your faith, when you get these love-tokens, then how comes it, that when these love-tokens are gone, and when sense and feeling is gone, your faith is to seek? I suppose, when feeling is up, then your faith is up; and when feeling is down, your faith is down. Now, if the whole building of your faith were upon the unchangeable Rock, you would see no more cause of doubting, when the changeable feeling is gone,

than when it is present ; and therefore, I fear it be your fault, believer, as well as mine, that many times we lay too much weight upon that thawing ice, and make sense and feeling the ground of our faith. But if God make you a believer at all, man, he will bring you off gradually from this evil : and if you never believe till you get spiritual sense, you will never be a believer ; for feeling follows believing, and therefore believing must be before feeling. To build faith upon sense then, is like a man setting up the couples of a house, and then beginning at the rigging or roof of the house, and building it downward ; such a house can never be built. This is one lesson by the bye, which though we should tell you it twenty times, we will need to tell it over again : however, I say, it is a believing time that is a gathering time, for faith hath influence upon all other graces ; it is like a silver thread, that runs through a chain of pearls : it puts strength and vivacity into all other virtues : it applies and appropriates all to itself, even God, and Christ, and the promises, and all ; it is like the spring of the watch, that sets all the golden wheels of love, joy, comfort, and peace agoing : for it sees in Christ's righteousness a fulness, a glory that fills the heart with glorious joy. Christ is the centre of faith, and therefore a believing time is a time of gathering to Shiloh. But lest any say, Oh ! I do not find it a believing time with me : therefore,

(2.) A repenting-time is a gathering-time ; and repentance is one of the fruits that appears in this spring-time that I speak of ; and gospel-repentance natively springs from faith ; for, in short, " It is a turning from sin to God, through Christ by faith ; " and surely where there is no such turning from sin, there is no gathering to Shiloh ; Isa. lv. 7. There you see this gospel-repentance described in the several parts that I have mentioned. 1. It is a turning from sin ; therefore it is said, " Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; " all sins of heart and way, thought word, or action. 2. It is a turning from sin to God ; therefore it is said, " Let him return to the Lord : " there is the end. 3. It is a returning from sin to God through Christ ; therefore it is said, " Let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon : " and so it is a merciful sin-pardoning God, that is, a God in Christ, in whom alone God is reconciled, and well-pleased : and without this apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, there can be no kindly repentance. Therefore, 4. It is a returning from sin

to God through Christ, by faith; hence it is said, "Let him return, FOR he will abundantly pardon." Faith looks to this FOR this motive of reviewing: faith views the motive, and so influences the return. As it is a good FOR, so it is a good TURN that is influenced thereby; and as the motive to an action is viewed, before the act be elicited; so here, the motive, though the last thing in the expression, yet is the first thing viewed by faith. O! is there mercy with him for the like of me, and pardon, yea, abundant pardon, great pardon for my great sins, multiplied pardon for my multiplied sins! O! this kindness of God melts the heart! this goodness of God leads to repentance! and so the faith of God's favour and mercy in Christ influences this gospel repentance. And indeed the whole progress of the believer, in this continued progressive gathering to Shiloh, is intermixed with this penitent disposition: he cannot cease repenting, till he hath ceased sinning, and consequently till he hath ceased living; and his most joyful days of communion with God, on earth, are still attended with the joyful tears of repentance; and he sows in tears, till he reap in joy. He never comes to Christ by any lively act of faith, but, at the same time, with Mary, he washes his feet with his tears, in a manner, and wipes them with the hair of his head. But in case any should think their faith and repentance is to seek, therefore it is no gathering time with them: Why then,

(3.) A praying time is, and indicates a gathering time; I speak of the prayer of faith: while Daniel was praying, and confessing his own sins, and the sins of his people, the Lord appeared to him, and gives him a divine touch, and tells him, that he is a man greatly beloved, Dan. ix. 20, 23. Of this we have the instance of Cornelius also, Acts x. 1, 4. God loves to load the wings of prayer with the choicest and chiefest blessings, the best and sweetest flowers of paradise. God gives liberally many times to his people, when they are upon their knees. Thus many have found praying times to be sealing times, wherein the Lord hath been pleased graciously to lift up the light of his countenance upon them. After much praying, weeping, and wrestling, God usually comes, with his hand and his heart full of mercy to his people; he loves not to come empty-handed to these that have tarried long begging at mercy's door. But because some poor soul may think, either they cannot pray, or they have been long praying, and yet have not come speed. Therefore,

(4.) A waiting time speaks forth a gathering time: "The vision is for an appointed time, at the end it will speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry," Hab. iii. 3. God never did nor will fail the praying and waiting soul; for, they that wait on him shall not be ashamed, Isa. xlix. 23, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me," yea, Isa. xl. 31, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Therefore we are to wait for him, as the husbandman waits for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, till he receive the early and latter rain, James v. 7. Though you do not reap the very day you sow, yet, in due time you shall reap, if you faint not, Gal. vi. 9. David found his waiting time to usher in a gathering time, Psa. xl. 1, 2, 3, "I waited patiently on the Lord, and he inclined to me, and heard my cry; he brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay; and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings: and he hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God." Old Simeon had waited for the consolation of Israel, and behold the Holy Ghost led him to a sight of Christ in the temple, Luke ii. 25, 30. And this made the old man sing, and say, "Now, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." O I have lived long enough, for now I have got Christ in my heart, and Christ in my hands, who is my light, my life, my love, my joy, my crown, my glory, my all. O believer, have you not found, when you have been weeping and waiting at the door of mercy, how the Lord hath sometimes caused his love and goodness to beam forth upon you, so as to make your heart rejoice, and your tongue to sing; yea, so as to gather your soul to Shiloh, and to gather all the lines of your affections to meet in him, as the centre of your rest, and so as you could have wished the valley of vision had been your burial-place, and that your eyes might never see another sight than the glorious Jesus, that was discovered to you, when you was waiting on him in public ordinances, or in a certain secret corner? But, in case any poor soul may be saying, Oh! I have been waiting, and yet I find so little success, that I fear I am a stranger to the right way of waiting. Therefore,

(5.) A longing-time may be a gathering-time, and hath been so; for, Psal. cvii. 9, "He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the

hungry with good things." Are you at David's four *how longs*? Psal. xiii. 1, 2, "How long, Lord, wilt thou forget me for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemies be exalted over me?" It seems his longing was soon backed with gathering influences, drawing out his whole soul towards the Lord, and filling his heart with joy, and his tongue with singing, ver. 5, 6, "I have trusted in thy mercy, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation: yea, I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me." O believer, when you are longing he is waiting, and waiting to be gracious, Isa. xxx. 18. Surely you have found it in your experience, that your longing time hath been his gathering time: but lest you mistake, know that I speak of gathering, in the whole of my progress here, both in an active and passive sense; both passively, that is God's gathering his people to Shiloh, and to more and more nearness to him; and actively, that is, their active gathering to him, through his grace. Now, I say, a longing time is, and presages a further gathering time; for, "He fills the hungry with good things." Some have found that promise of satisfying the longing soul, as clearly made out, as it is evident, that the light of the day shines at present. But some poor soul may say, I fear it is no gathering time with respect to me; for I find no such disposition as you have been speaking of; it is neither a believing nor a repenting time with me, neither a praying, waiting, nor longing time with me. Therefore,

(6.) An attending time, O believer, may be a gathering time; your attending time, I say, O soul, may be God's gathering time. It is true, bodily attendance, like bodily exercise in religion, profits little; when people come to duties and ordinances with their bodies only, to see and hear, and hardly that, while their eyes and ears are sometimes shut with sleep and heaviness; but because preventing grace hath laid hold upon sinners many times, and taken them napping, and gathered them to Shiloh; therefore I shall not discourage people's giving their bodily attendance on gospel-means and ordinances, even though they have neither an outward ear, or inward disposition towards a regular attendance: because, though, in such a case, justice might take advantage against them righteously; yet none knows, but mercy may catch them at a disadvantage graciously: as it did the man, who, coming to church, yet hating to hear, set his elbows on the desk, and put his fingers into his ears; but

while he was napping, one of his elbows falls down, and as his finger went out of his ear, a word of the sermon came in to it, by which the Lord caught him, converted him, and gathered him to Shiloh. But the subject I am upon, at present, relates to believers, and their progressive gathering; and it may be their case sometimes, that an outward attendance is all that they can attain unto: they can find neither any believing, repenting, praying, waiting, or longing disposition: but on the contrary, much darkness, deadness, dulness, despondency, hardness, heaviness, and all spiritual indisposition; only this is all they can say, Some secret hair of hope hath brought them to attend, and give their bodily presence, that they may hear what God will say to them, and see what God will do to them. Well, poor soul, even such an attending time as this may be a gathering time, as you may see it was with these spoken of, Acts x. 33. "We are all here present," say they, "before God to hear all things commanded thee of God:" what they were to get, or receive from God, they knew not as yet; but all they could say, at present, was that they had brought their souls and bodies before God, to attend upon him in his ordinances. It seems they had some secret hope, that they might get some good by Peter's preaching; and behold it was a remarkable gathering time, as you see, verse 44. For, "While he spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all that heard the word." Therefore, if any poor creature be here, saying, It does not look like a gathering time, with respect to me; for it is not a believing time, but a doubting time; it is not a repenting time, but rather a rebelling time; it is not a praying time, but rather a perplexing time: not a waiting, but a wearying time; not a longing, but a languishing time: I cannot so much as pray, nor pant, nor long, nor look up: I can hardly give an hearty sigh, or a groan upwards. Well, put poor creature, can you say, Lord, I am here present before thee, thou knowest this is all I can do; I have no more, under heaven, about me of disposition to any duty or ordinance, but a secret may-be the Lord will pity, and may-be not; I am just at the footstool of sovereignty. Well, such a time may be a gathering time; when they were all present before the Lord hearing, a gathering wind came, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. This is one of the lowest flowers that appears in the believers spring-time, when no grace is appearing in his view at all, but only he is presenting himself before the God of all grace; and does not the believer find this to be even a gathering time, now and

then in secret, as well as public, when all he can do is just to cast himself down on his knees before the Lord his maker, as it is Psal. xcv. 6. with a who knows but the Lord may pity? This attendance on the Lord, even in this manner, hath been blessed with a mighty gathering wind about their souls, that hath blown them nearer to the Lord, their harbour of rest, than ever they were before. Therefore, believer, however low your circumstances may be, when you can do no more but attend, as it were, at a secret duty or public ordinance, never draw back your attendance on the Lord, and presenting yourselves before him; seeing your attending time may be his gathering time.—Thus I have mentioned to you some of the believer's spring-times of duty, and some of the fruits and flowers that appear therein, which speak forth a gathering time, and presage an harvest. And this leads me to speak of another gathering season, with respect to the believer's progressive approach to Christ, or gathering to Shiloh.

4. There are harvest-times of solemn ordinances, or gospel-solemnities, not only teaching but sealing ordinances; which his people sometimes have, and which are God's gathering times, and the believer's gathering times, with respect to their progressive gathering into Shiloh. And though the Lord of the harvest, who sends forth labourers thereunto, and takes them away when he pleases: as he hath lately removed one¹, that used to be an eminent labourer at solemnities, in Airth; on which occasion, if we cannot say in point of paucity, that though the harvest be great, the labourers are few; yet sure I am, we may with grief of heart say, in point of quality, that the harvest is great, and the honest evangelical labourers are the fewer that he is gone: and the only thing that makes such an heavy loss to be supportable, is, that the Lord of the harvest still remains, who can send forth labourers, qualified for whatsoever work he hath ado: But what I was saying, is, that though the Lord of the harvest makes these gospel-solemnities, frequently to be the gathering times for sinners, in respect of their initial gathering, of which I spoke before; yet the special design of these communion-solemnities, is, for advancing the progressive gathering of believers; and, though the most remarkable progress of the believer may be upon his knees in secret duties, and in secret

(1.) It is supposed, and with a great degree of probability too, that our Author here, hath his eye upon that shining light, and able servant of Christ, the Rev. Mr. Brisban, minister of the gospel at Stirling.

prayer, and secret intercourse betwixt God and him ; yet public ordinances are the means of these private intercourses ; though the secret may be most comfortable and refreshful, yet the public ordinances lay the foundation of that secret comfort and refreshment. It is in this, as it is with the public well of a city, from whence people go and fetch water to their private houses ; for ordinary there is not so much use made of the water at the public well itself, till once they bring it home in their vessel to the private house or family, and there it is more freely made use of for several necessary purposes ; such as for drink, and refreshing meals, the liquid part whereof is mostly made up of the water, that was fetched home from the well. Public ordinances are the wells ; but, for ordinary, the children of God are not so much refreshed with the water thereof, till once they get home to some secret corner with it, and there they get a more hearty draught, and refreshing drink of the water of life, than they got at the public well ; but still it is from thence it was fetched ; and so the foundation of these private and secret refreshing meals, is ordinarily laid in the public ordinances. It is true, some that go to fetch home water from the well, may, according to their need, get an hearty drink of water, even at the side of the well, before they bring any water home ; and so the Lord's people may, and sometimes do, get a very heartsome and refreshing draught of living water, even at the well-side of public ordinances, while they are hearing the word, or receiving the sacrament of the supper. Now, the harvest-time of gospel-solemnities, for the believer's progressive gathering unto Shiloh, is twofold, teaching and sealing.

(1.) The harvest-time of teaching solemnities is his hearing season, which frequently is God's gathering season ; the gathering of the people to Shiloh is ordinarily made up in the time of hearing the word ; for, " Faith comes by hearing ;" and the progressive gathering of believers is ordinarily made up also in the time of hearing the word : for, the increase of faith comes by hearing ; " as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, 1. Pet. ii. 2. And hence, the doctrine of the gospel is the ordinary means of working and increasing faith ; because it is the ministration of the Spirit ; Gal. iii. 2. " Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ?" This gospel is the power of God to salvation, both for working faith, and for advancing it ; " For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith," Rom. i. 17. By this means we advance,

if so be we have heard of him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, Eph. iv. 21. The gospel is like a ladder, by which we climb up to a God in Christ, when he is gathering us to him ; and every truth of the gospel is like so many steps or rounds of the ladder, and every one of them should be maintained and contended for : if any of the rounds of the ladder be broken off, you are in danger of falling down, and your climbing up is rendered more difficult or impossible. Every truth denied, or error maintained, is like a cutting out or breaking off a round of the ladder ; and whenever a breach is made in it, the climbing up by it is rendered impracticable, if it be a fundamental error ; or greatly obstructed, if it nearly concern the fundamentals of religion : we need therefore to be concerned, that every truth be maintained by us, and transmitted to our posterity pure and entire. It is our mercy, that we have pure Standards : and if any latter acts of this church seem to clash therewith, we hope they have not the deliberate approbation, even of those that framed them ; however all gospel-truths ought to be sacred to us, as well as the purchased liberties and privileges in God's house ; the loss of the least whereof, is the loss of a jewel out of the Mediator's crown. Christ is the Head, and centre of all gospel-truth, and we ought to hold by the Head ; and so we shall hold by the truth, as it is in Jesus the Head. The apostle complains of some, their not holding the Head, Col. ii. 19. Some, instead of holding the Head, they hold by the feet : it is enough to them, that such a good man, or such a learned man, says so and so, concerning this or that truth ; and so let the Head go, and hold by the feet, not regarding the truth as it is in Jesus ; but the truth, as it is delivered by such a man, whom they esteem, or such another man that hath this or that good character : but we ought to hang and hold by the Head, and not to hang our faith at the beld of any man or angel : " For, if we, or an angel from heaven, preach another doctrine, let him be accursed," Gal. i. 8. Now, I say, that the gospel-season is the gathering season ; while gospel-truths are published, they are the Standard of the Captain of salvation, to which the gathering of his soldiers should be, and will be, when the gospel comes not in word only, but in power. But again,

(2.) The harvest-time of sealing solemnities, that is, the believer's receiving season, which frequently is God's gathering season, when he forwards their progressive gathering to Shiloh. This ordinance of the supper being, in a special manner, appointed, not for

begetting spiritual life, where there is none, but for increasing it where begun; it is in this ordinance, that the Lord is pleased sometimes to seal up the promise, to seal up the covenant, to seal up his love, and seal up their pardon sensibly to their souls: and to make himself known to them in the breaking of bread, Luke xxiv. 35. He brings them under the shadow of a sacrament, and his fruit is sweet unto their taste, and his glory bright in their eye; whereas they came stark blind, they have got their eyes opened; yea, sometimes they get here a breathing of glory, an holy perfume of the sweet embalming love of Christ; sometimes a young heaven, a green glory, a taste of the grapes of the good land beyond Jordan, to keep the taste in their mouth, till they come to drink of the new wine in their Father's Kingdom. Many a fainting soul hath been refreshed and revived with the wine upon the lees in this ordinance; while he hath come, and pardoned all their sins, healed all their sores, supplied all their wants, cleared all their cloudy skies, and driven the bottom out of all their doubts and fears: and thus gathered them and brought them to more nearness and conformity to him; for, as when a man makes a timber vessel for holding food, or the like, the first cast may be very rough, and therefore, he smooths, and fits it more and more for use; so the souls of saints are, at first conversion, but rough casten, as it were; therefore the Lord, by visiting of them, and manifesting himself to them in his ordinances, does more and more fit the vessel of mercy for a fill of the liquor of glory; hence these divine incomes now and then, that make them cry out, "O my soul thirsts for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?" Psal. xiii. 2. As the tossed mariner longs for the haven, the harbour; so does the soul that hath met with God in ordinances, long to meet with him in heaven. As one tells us, "That when once the Gauls of old had tasted 'of the sweet wine that was made of the grapes of Italy,' nothing would satisfy them but Italy, Italy;" so the soul that once tastes of the goodness of God, and sweetness of Christ, and the grapes of Paradise, nothing satisfies that soul at such a time, but O Paradise, Paradise: O to be in glory's land, in Immanual's land! O to be for ever with the Lord! It is true, as the Lord is sovereign, and sometimes hides his face from his children in these ordinances, and sacramental solemnities, inso-much, that they go mourning without the sun; so, the measures of his communications are various; sometimes more bright and glori-

ous, and sometimes more dark and cloudy ; but as we enjoy the light and benefit of the sun, even when we cannot see it, because of the clouds : so believers do sometimes enjoy much of the light, and heat, and warmth of the Sun of righteousness, even when, by reason of many clouds, they cannot see him so clearly as at other times ; however, every glance of his glory, in these galleries of ordinances, hath such a soul-gathering influence, such an heart-drawing virtue, that this harvest-time may be called a gathering season ; while all the faculties of the soul, all the affections of the heart are gathered to, and centered on Christ, and longing to be gathered about the throne, to see him face to face. And this leads me to the fourth and last period, with respect to the season of this gathering of the people to Shiloh.

4thly, The gathering seasons may be considered, with relation to the consummate gathering of the saints : and of this final gathering there are two seasons, namely, the day of death, and the day of judgment.

1. The day of death is a gathering day to the saints ; for then Christ gathers his lilies to himself, " My beloved is gone down into his garden to gather lilies," Cant. vi. 2. When the lilies are ripe, he gathers them into his bosom ; he picks up one here, and another there ; and indeed some of the sweetest smelling lilies in all the garden of his church, particularly in this and some neighbouring presbyteries, hath the Lord been lately gathering ; and, among the rest, that lily that used to cast such a savoury gospel-smell, at former solemnities here : you cannot but know what I mean : but, O sirs, if God shall gather up all the fairest and sweetest of his lilies from among us, our garden will become but unbeautiful and unsavoury ; the beauty and savour is gone, when the lilies are gathered ; unless the Lord himself shall make other such lilies to grow up in their room. I remember that one of the last savoury smells that that lily cast among us, at the last year's solemnity, was in the pleasant opening of that word, " Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face," and, no doubt, it was in the prospect of being gathered to the place of immediate vision, and full enjoyment of God and the Lamb. And indeed a time of death is a time of gathering of the saints to glory, where their dark, and partial, and transient enjoyment of God here, is turned to a clear, full, perfect, permanent, and uninterrupted enjoyment : for then, they know him, as they are known, " And there is no temple there ; for the Lord

God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it," Rev. xxi. 12. And therefore, to him, as the temple in heaven, shall the gathering of the people be. Hence, death to the godly is called a gathering, Gen. xlix. 33. It is said of Jacob, when he died, "He was gathered unto his people," why, one would think he was rather taken away from his people; for he was dying, and all his children and grand-children about him; yea, but he had people elsewhere, and better company, that he was going to, even the general assembly and church of the first-born, that are written in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect, and all the saints that had gone before him. O sirs, see what company ye choose now; if ye be of the wicked and ungodly, your death will be but a gathering to the devil and reprobates in hell; if you lose heaven at the first shot of death, you are gone for ever: when a man shoots at a mark in his life time, if he miss at one shot, he may shoot another, and shoot again and again, till he hit; but if you miss heaven at the first shot of death, you are not to live again to shoot another shot for it: therefore, let your life now be a pressing towards the mark; a shooting at the right mark, a gathering to Shiloh: for these that are gathered to him graciously in life, will be gathered gloriously to him at death; for then, the souls of believers do immediately pass into glory; when their bodies are laid in the dust, their souls are gathered to their people in heaven, where Christ is the centre of the assembly, "And so shall we be ever with the Lord," 1 Thes. iv. 17. There are angels and archangels in heaven, there are saints and seraphims there; but all will not make a heaven without Christ; he is the light of the place, and the heart of the company for ever, and to him shall the gathering of the people be. But then,

The day of judgment will be a most remarkable season of the consummate gathering of his people to him: the text indeed speaks mainly of Christ's first coming in the flesh, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come, and to him shall the gathering of the people be:" but it will be also true of his second coming in the clouds of heaven; for then will he gather his saints together unto him, these that have made a covenant with him by sacrifice, Psal. l. 5. Therefore the apostle joins his second coming, and his glorious gathering together; "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him," 2 Thes. ii. 1. "Then will he send his angels, with the

great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to another," Matt. xxiv. 31; wherever the wind of providence hath driven their dust. Though the dust of the believer's body may be scattered to all corners of the earth and sea, and resolved to the original elements, of which it was at first compounded; yet God will gather it all together again, when he makes the earth to give up its dead, and the sea to give up its dead, Rev. xx. 13. And therefore, Though worms destroy this body, yet in their flesh shall they see God, according to the words of Job, wherein he expresseth his faith of the happy resurrection, Job xix. 25. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth;" for then, as God will gather together their scattered bones and dust, so he will bring their glorified souls along with him: "Them which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him," 1 Thess. iv. 14, and he will reunite these two intimate friends, soul and body; they shall meet with one another, and meet the Lord in the air.

O my brethren, let none of us think it incredible, that God should raise the dead; for, in that day when Shiloh comes again, he will gather together and make up all his jewels, Mal. iii. 17. Though his jewels be lying among the dust, yet he will separate his jewel dust from the rest of the dust; for, as Christ is the Loadstone that draws the hearts of people to him, that are gathered to him by his grace now, according to his own word, "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me;" so, at his second coming, he will be the glorious Load-stone, that will draw all the precious dust of his saints together to him. Any of you who know the virtue of the load-stone will know this, (which I have sometimes tried with a load-stone in my hand) let the filings of steel, never so small, be mixed with dust, so as it is impossible you would think, to separate the dust of the steel from the dust of the other earth; yet, if you bring near the load-stone, all the filings of the steel will separate from the rest, and fly up to the load-stone, in the tenth part of the twinkling of an eye. Well, if the load-stone have such a virtue, what must be the virtue of him who gave virtue to it? Whenever Shiloh comes in the clouds of heaven, behold, in the twinkling of an eye, all the redeemed that sleep in the dust will be gathered; the glorious load-stone will put forth its virtue, and they will be all drawn to him in a moment, 1 Cor. xv. 52, 1 Thes. iv. 16, 17. There is the consummate gathering of the people to Shiloh.

It is true, the day of judgment will be a separating day, the sheep will be separate from the goats, and the wheat from the tares Matt. xiii. 20. But however terrible that day will be to the Christless world, that could never be gathered to Shiloh, when they shall be gathered together in bundles, and cast into the fire of God's everlasting wrath; yet glorious, glorious will the gathering be of all the redeemed! As they will be gathered to him, so they will be assessors with him in judgment; "Know ye not that saints shall judge the world, yea, they shall judge angels," 1 Cor. vi. 3. They shall sit upon the bench of judgment with Christ, and applaud him in all his judicial procedure against wicked men and devils. These, who formerly trampled them like dirt under their feet, will then stand, like so many guilty pannels before them; and when the irreversible doom goes forth, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," the gathered saints will joyfully adore the equity of the Judge, and will not so much as give a sigh or sob at the terror of the sentence pronounced against the wicked, but clap their hands, and send them to hell with a shout. Oh! that wicked and Christless souls would fear and tremble, and flee from the wrath to come, in the awful apprehension of this glorious day? Devils quake at the apprehension of this day; "They believe, and tremble," and yet sinful men are fearless. But when the great Judge will erect his fiery tribunal in the air, see if you shall be able to bear up be as stout-hearted as you can.

O man, death is insensibly stealing away your breath; and after death, comes the judgment; and then comes the doleful gathering of the wicked to be the fuel of eternal flames; because oft he would have gathered you, as a hen does her chickens under her wings, but ye would not be gathered, therefore you will be separated from him for ever: you would not come for his blessing, therefore you must depart with his curse, "Depart from me, ye cursed; Then shall they be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." Oh! sinner, flee, flee to Shiloh; let the gathering of the people be to him now, that you may share of the glory of the consummate gathering of the saints. After judgment, the gathered saints will return, and come to Zion with songs. God having in that day gathered together, and made up all his jewels, what a bright constellation will these jewels make, when they shall be all gathered together in

the firmament of glory ! Yea, they will shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever, Dan. xii. 3. "Then, says Christ, shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," Matt. xiii. 23 ; that is, even all these poor creatures that have been gathered to Shiloh, as the Lord their righteousness and strength.

O sirs, this glorious gathering day will be upon you, before we be all gathered together on earth again. Some that were at the last year's gathering here, are now gone to eternity ; and you will never see them again, till you and they be gathered together before the awful tribunal of God ; and, without all peradventure, there are here that will never see another sacrament at Airth ; it may be you, man ; it may be you, woman ; it may be such a minister, or such a private person ; it may be such a gentleman, or such a lady, such a youth, or such a girl, as have little thoughts of death at present. O sirs, I am looking to you, and you to me ; but we will never all see one another till we see the Son of man, the Son of God, coming in the clouds of heaven, and gathering all the world before him ; and therefore in the view of that gathering day, O let not this gathering of people here, part from one another and dismiss, till once there be a gathering unto Shiloh. "Now, we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, at the great day of his appearance," that you consent to be gathered, and that this present gathering be not dissolved till your hearts and affections be gathered to Shiloh and centered in him. Oh ! choose rather to die upon the spot, than not be gathered unto him this day. Many a gathering word and call you have got these days bygone, and Christ is saying, "How oft would I have gathered you, yet ye would not !" O ! is he saying, I would gather you, man, woman ? Then, what would you ? Have you no will to be gathered out of the stinking prison of your lusts and idols, your self and self-righteousness, your worldly-mindedness and covetousness, your pride and vanity ! Whatever be the filthy stinking prison that you are like to perish in, he is saying, I would gather you out of it. And, O man, woman, would you rather be gathered unto the devil, than be gathered unto Shiloh ? Would you rather be gathered to a tavern of drunkenness, lewdness, and carnality, than gathered to the temple of grace and glory ? Would you be gathered to Shiloh, or not ? It is come just to this, man, "What would you that I should do unto you ?" Would you that I should

gather you? Behold he is declaring his will in this gospel. Is he saying, The gathering of the people shall be to him? Does he say, It shall be? Then, O say AMEN, Lord; So let it be.

The strength of unbelief lies in your unwillingness to be gathered; and if the will were once broken, it would be a day of power: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," Ps. cx. 3. O! has there any power been here to make you willing? Willing to be gathered to him as a Priest and a Prince both? Willing to be gathered out of the prison of sin, as well as out of the prison of hell and wrath? Willing to be gathered to him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption; and to be indebted to him for all and every part of his salvation? Willing to have all from him for nothing, so as the praise and glory of all may redound to himself? O sirs, are you thus willing to be gathered under his wings of grace and glory? Then, glory to God for the power that hath made you willing; or, if you cannot say that that power is what you have felt, yet is it that will-breaking power you would be at, saying, O let this gathering power be exerted? There is hope in Israel concerning you.

O may sinners be gathered to and close with him! This is God's design by the gospel; and we hope it is our design in preaching it, to get sinners gathered. And, O let me tell you, that there is such a glorious gathering of excellent things in him, as may engage the hearts of all the sinners here to gather unto him, and all the believers here to be still gathering to him more and more.

Well, what for a gathering is there in him? O! there is a gathering of all glories in him; the glory of saints, the glory of angels, the glory of God is in him; so that he is altogether lovely. The gathering of all perfection is in him, and all divine attributes and fulness: for, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." So that he hath all fulness of ability and authority to save. The gathering of all righteousness and strength is in him; therefore, "To him should men come," Isa. xlv. 24. The gathering of all the promises is in him: for, "All the promises are Yea and Amen in him." There is no promise out of him. The gathering of all graces is in him, that out of his fulness we may come and receive grace for grace. And to whom should the gathering of the people be, but to him that hath all grace for them? The gathering of all blessings is in him; for all spiritual blessings in heavenly places are only in Christ Jesus, Eph. i. 3. And to whom should

the gathering of the people be, but to him, of whom it is said, that "Men shall be blest in him, and all nations shall call him blessed?" Psalm lxxii. 17; and no blessing is to be had out of him. The gathering of all mercy is in him; and therefore all the mercies of the everlasting covenant are called, "The sure mercies of David." All the mercy of God is in Christ; and there is no mercy in God out of Christ, towards any sinner. The gathering of all gifts is in him: "He hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them." The gift of the Spirit especially; for he hath received the Spirit above measure; and so hath all the influences of the Spirit to give. He received gifts for men: all is for men, and for the people; all the promised righteousness, graces, blessings, mercies, and gifts that he hath received, as Mediator, and that are gathered in him, is for the people, that the gathering of the people may be to him.—There is a gathering of all things in him; for he is *all in all*; and all things are yours, if once you be gathered to him; whereas you have nothing at all but sin, death, and misery out of him. In a word, there is a gathering of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and all unsearchable riches in him, for making you up, and making you happy for ever; and to whom should the gathering of poor ignorant people be, but to him? What shall I say? There is a gathering of all saving offices in him: he is a Prophet, Priest, King, Mediator, Redeemer, Surety, and all offices in one; whatever be your want, he hath an office for supplying it; whatever be your debt, he hath an office for paying it; whatever be your disease, he hath an office for curing it; for diseases in the mind, he is a Prophet; for diseases of the conscience, he is a Priest; for diseases of the will, he is a King. And for all other maladies that can be named, he hath all other healing offices that can be named; yea, for wonderful maladies, he hath wonderful offices; for wonderful sins, he hath wonderful pardons; for wonderful plagues, he hath wonderful balsams and plasters.

O sirs, is there such a gathering of all good things in him for the people? and shall there be no gathering of the people to him? Christ hath no other use for these things that are thus gathered in him, but for the behoof of the people that are gathered to him; and they would all be useless, if there were no gathering of the people to him. Alas! shall he be an useless Shiloh for you? And have you no need of him, no use for him? Oh! dole and misery! Will you stand at a distance from him, as if he were an useless Christ?

But if you have any use for him then, all that he wants is to have your employment; to believe, is to employ him to do all your works in you and for you. Doing and believing are very different things; if you be for doing all yourself, in order to your own salvation and justification, then you make Christ useless, and his death vain: "If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain," Gal. ii. 21. But if you be for believing, then know what believing or faith is. Faith doth nothing, but gives Christ all to do, and lets him have the glory of doing all that belongs to his office, saying, Lord work; work for me, and work in me. And hence, though believing be not doing, yet the best believer is best doer; in regard the work that is put in Christ's hand is the best done; and because, while faith does nothing, but only employs the strength of Christ to do all, then, through Christ's strengthening, it can do all things.

Now, O sirs, shall Christ get no employment here? Will there be no gathering to him for righteousness and strength? I hope some have been gathered and drawn to him, and can say, "The Lord God of the Hebrews met with us," and made a soul-gathering influence run through, yea, thoroughly through our hearts. O sirs, let the whole of your life be a gathering to Shiloh, and a living upon him. And, now the great gathering of the people here may be joyfully dismissed, though they shall never all meet together again in time, if this promise of Christ hath taken effect, "To him shall the gathering of the people be."

VI. The Sixth general Head was, To give you the Reasons of the Doctrine. And here I am to show you, 1. Why there must be a gathering of the people, the Gentiles? 2. Why to Shiloh must the gathering be? Why to him?

1st, Why are the people, the Gentiles, to be gathered? For this part of the text concerns the Gentiles, in contradistinction from the Jews: "to him shall the gathering of the people be," the Gentile people. It was in pursuance of this design that the apostle Paul was called the apostle of the Gentiles; and he magnifies his office, and boasts of it, saying, "To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," Eph. iii. 8. This is a question of the greatest concern to us Gentiles: Why, is our name put in Christ's commission? O, sirs, it should be good news

(1) What follows, to the end, was delivered in two discourses, at a sacramental occasion at Carnock, July 4th and 5th, 1725.

to us : and for confirming our faith herein, take these six grounds and reasons for it.

1. There must be a gathering of Gentile people to him, for filling up the room which the Jews left : Christ came to his own, and his own received him not. And since the Jews rejected him, and cast out themselves by unbelief, the Gentiles are taken in, to succeed them in their church privileges ; "Through their fall, salvation is come to the Gentiles," Rom. ix. 11. And, ver. 19, "These branches were taken off, that the Gentiles might be grafted in." The room which the Jews left vacant must be filled up with Gentiles, Luke xiv. 15-24, where the gospel-entertainment is compared to a great man's supper, to which many are invited ; some reject the invitation, particularly the Jews, that had the first honour of being invited to the banquetting house ; that is, to partake of Christ and his gospel-blessings : others embraced the gracious offer, particularly the poor, despised, outcast Gentiles, even these who were without the law. Hence see and read ver. 21, 22, 23 : there you see the Gentiles called, to fill up the room that the Jews left vacant.

2. There must be a gathering of the people, the Gentiles, to reprove and punish the unbelief of the Jews, from whom the sceptre is departed, and to provoke them to jealousy, Rom. xi. 11 : for, as because of unbelief they were broken off, ver. 20 ; so for the punishment of their unbelief. See what God says to them, Deut. xxxii. 21, compared with Rom. x. 19, "I will provoke them to jealousy, by them that are no people." The Jews had the first offer, Acts iii. 26 ; and the Gentiles had but their leavings. But what a provocation it was to the Jews to see the Gentiles taken into favour, is represented in the parable, Luke xv. 11-32, where the elder brother envied the reception and entertainment of the prodigal Gentiles ; and more plainly, Acts xiii. 49, where you see how the Gentiles were received, ver. 46, &c. Thus, whenever the Jews heard that the apostle Paul had a commission to go to the Gentiles, see how they were provoked, Acts xxii. 21, 22. It was their sin that they were thus enraged ; and God makes oftentimes people's sin their punishment : a man needs no greater plague than to be left to the impetuous rage of his own lusts. However, in gathering of the Gentiles God shews his anger and displeasure at the unbelief of the Jews ; and, to this day, their posterity, scattered up and down the earth, are under the dismal effects of this anger ; for, ever since Shiloh came,

the Jews have been set to the door, and the Gentiles gathered in. Yea,

3. There must be a gathering of the people, the Gentiles, to pave a way for the glorious gathering of the Jews again, Rom. xi. 23-26. Here is a twofold mystery, namely, that the gathering of the Gentiles will make way for the renewed gathering and conversion of the Jews. I shall read you some promises you have thereof, Isa. xi. 10-12; Jer. xxii. 3-6. These, you may see, have evidently a further look than their deliverance from Babylon, Zech. xii. 10, and xiii. 1. As we have encouragement to pray for the conversion of the Jews; so, if there were a Spirit of prayer to a God in Christ among us, in their behalf, who were his ancient people, we might then think the happy day were hastening, wherein it is promised that the Gentiles shall further the gathering of the Jews, Isa. xlix. 22, and lx. 9, 10, and lxvi. 18-23. See Zech ii. 10, 12, and viii. 21, 23. Again,

4. There must be a gathering of the people, the Gentiles, to shew the sovereignty of his grace, and freedom of his mercy, Rom. ix. 15, "That he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion." The Jews expected to monopolize this privilege of being God's people and church continually to themselves, and few thought that the Gentiles should become fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God: but God's thoughts are not our thoughts: he shews his sovereignty in pitching upon what nation of the earth it pleases him; "The potter hath power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour." The great Creator of the ends of the earth does thus shew his power and authority in making these a people that were no people, and these his people that were not his people, Rom. ix. 25, 26. This, therefore was one of the great mysteries of Godliness, "Christ preached unto the Gentiles, and believed on in the world," 1 Tim. iii. 16. This was a great mystery, that with difficulty could be received, and believed by the apostles; for when Peter was persuaded by the vision of a sheet knit at the four corners, wherein was all manner of four footed beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air, not to despise the Gentiles as common and unclean, and accordingly had preached the gospel with success to them, he was accused by the rest of the apostles, Acts xi. 2, 3, till Peter making his defence, "They held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then hath God granted to the

Gentiles repentance unto life," ver. 18. And in all this the Lord acted in a suitableness to his ancient promise, concerning the calling and inbringing of the Gentiles. It is long since God promised by Noah, saying, "God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem," Gen. xi. 27. Now, of Japhet came the Gentiles, Gen. x. 5, and of Shem came the Jews; so that, by this prophecy, there is a clear prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles, and their inheriting the privileges of the Jews, to the praise of sovereign grace.

5. There must be a gathering of the people, the Gentiles, to shew the extent and sufficiency of his grace, as well as the sovereignty and freedom of it: how extensive is his grace and goodness in gathering in the Gentiles as well as the Jews, under the wings of his favour and mercy: while he sets open his entertaining room doors to sinners, out of every tongue, and nation, and kindred, where neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, are excluded; but all are one and alike in in Jesus Christ, Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 18. Herein he appears to act with a greatness like himself, becoming his boundless infinity, and not after the manner of men, but like a God; and so to signalize his goodness beyond the compass of man; "For he is God, and not man," Hos. xi. 9. It were a diminution of the glory of his grace if it were said, This is nothing but what a man might do. It is his glory to act in such a manner as is proper to none but a God, a God of boundless grace and unparalleled goodness; that, when poor dogs, Pagans, Gentiles, finding his goodness even extending to them castaways that were rejected of men, they may have it to say, "Is this the manner of men, O Lord!"

6. There must be a gathering of the people, the Gentiles, to shew the glory and greatness of Christ's kingdom: That his dominion reacheth from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth; see Psalm lxxii. 8, 10. As it is the glory of a king, to have many subjects, a numerous train, and a great retinue; so it is the glory of our Shiloh, that the gathering of the people is unto him, even Gentiles as well as Jews: and so many the more to celebrate the praises of free grace, and to adorn the triumph of his glorious throne above, with loud acclamations of Grace, grace. Solomon tells us, Prov. xiv. 28. That "The glory of a king is in the multitude of his subjects;" So it is the glory of King Jesus to have a

multitude of people gathered to him; and, O that he may get honour here this day, by gathering a multitude of souls, that they may come and set the crown upon the head of an exalted Jesus!

2ndly, Why to Shiloh must the gathering of the people be? Why,

1. To him must the gathering of the people be, because to him the headship and government of the people does belong. All the people that come of Adam have lost their head since Adam's fall; or, if they have no other head than the first Adam, they are no better than an headless company, yea, and worse; for, from Adam their first head, there is nothing but sin and death conveyed, Rom. v. 12. But now, the second Adam, the promised Shiloh, is constituted the Head of the people, the head of the body, the church, "That in all things he might have the pre-eminence," Col. i. 22. And to whom should the gathering of the people be, but to him, who is the Head of the people, and, "The Head over all things to the church?" Eph. i. 22. He is the Head influential and political; the Head of influences; for all the influences of light, and life, and strength, and comfort, come from him: the Head of government; for, Isa. ix. 6, 7, "The government is laid upon his shoulders,—and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice for ever." The sceptre is departed from Judah: but it shall never depart from Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah: the sceptre is fallen into his hand; and to whom should the gathering of the people be, but under the sceptre of this glorious King? O that there were a flocking to touch the sceptre of King Jesus! For, "God hath made this Jesus, who was crucified, to be both Lord and Christ, Acts ii. 36. He hath set his King upon his holy hill of Zion, Psalm ii. 6. He hath exalted him by his right hand, to be a Prince and Saviour," Acts v. 31. The sceptre and the law-giver is departed from Judah, from the Jews since Shiloh came; but the sceptre and the Law-giver is come to the Gentiles; for, "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord is our King, he will save us," Isa. xxx. 22. There needs no other reason, why the gathering of the people must be to him; for he being the Head and King of the people, by God the Father's appointment, all divine honours are owing to him: he must be the object of our faith, love,

trust, obedience, and worship, as he is God-man, Mediator: and it is the will of the Father that all men honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; and to him must the glory of the gathering be; "Upon him must be hung all the glory of his Father's house,—even all the vessels of small quantity as well as great, from the vessels of cups to the vessels of flagons," Isa. xxii. 24. All the vessels of mercy that are gathered together to God's house, they must be gathered to him, and fastened on him, as the glorious Nail in a sure place, ver. 23: "For it is he that builds the temple of the Lord, and shall bear the glory: for he shall sit and rule upon his throne," Zech. vi. 13. People may gather about the throne of a king; and, O! should not the gathering of the people be about the throne of grace, to see the glory, and touch the sceptre of him that sits upon the throne? To him the headship and government of the people does belong: therefore to him must the gathering of the people be.

2. To him must the gathering of the people be, because to him does the WORK of the people belong: as he is appointed to be an Head to them, so a worker for them. Ever since the covenant of works was broken, and so our working arm broken, we being by nature without strength, it is he that works all our work in us, and for us, Isa. xxvi. 12. Hence says the Psalmist David, Ps. lvii. 2, "I will cry unto God most High, unto God that performs all things for me." There is a twofold work that we need to have performed, namely, work satisfying to the law as a covenant; and work suitable to the law as a rule. Now, the performing of both these works belongs to Christ, as he is made of God to us, both righteousness and sanctification. The work satisfying to the law, as a covenant, is performed by him as our righteousness, while he fulfils the righteousness of the law for, and in his people, Rom. viii. 4. The work suitable to the law as a rule is performed in and through him, as our sanctification; while he puts his Spirit within us, and causes us to walk in his statutes, Ezek. xxxvi. 22. And hence, says Christ, John xv. 5, "Without me ye can do nothing:" the word is CHORIS EMOU, Severed from me, or separate from me, ye can do nothing.—Why, then, we must not remain separate from him, but gather to him, as the Mediator, and the All of the covenant. The whole weight and work of the covenant belongs to him, and this makes it a covenant of grace to us, and not of works; because all the work falls to his share. There is his doing work for the people; for he

came to fulfil all righteousness, that so the people might say, "In the Lord have I righteousness," Isa. xlv. 24. Therefore it follows, "To him shall men come." Again, there is his suffering work for the people, on which account the gathering of the people should be to him : Heb. xiii. 13, "That he might sanctify the people with his own blood, he suffered without the gate ; therefore let us go forth to him." There is his dying work ; for he suffered unto death ; and his death was an act of obedience ; he being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This is the gospel delivered unto us, to be preached unto the people, "How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures," 1 Cor. xv. 3. And shall he die for the people, and yet there be no gathering of the people to him ?—There is his repairing work, for behoof of the people ; and in the works just now mentioned, this repairing work is accomplished ; for he repairs the breaches of the law, that our sin made : and not only is the law magnified and made honourable by his doing and dying ; while his doing answers the precept, and his dying the threatening thereof, and that to infinite advantage ; but the glory of the Law-giver is repaired. The people had come short of the glory of God ; but he to whom the gathering of the people must be, did repair the honour and glory of his holiness by a perfect obedience ; and the glory and honour of his justice, by a condign satisfaction : and thus brought in glory to God in the highest ; yea, and made all the other glorious attributes of God shine forth gloriously and harmoniously, in the work of our redemption. And hence, when Christ was about this work, he says, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him," John xiii. 31. There is his purchasing work, for the behoof of the people ; "He hath bought the people with a price," 1 Cor. vi. 20. And shall not the gathering of the people be to him, whose blood was the price of the people's souls, and the purchase-money for buying grace and glory to them ?—There is his pleading work for the people ; for "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25. And this is the reason for their coming and gathering to him ; for, in so doing, they shall have an evidence that his pleading for them hath been, and will be for ever effectual. There is also a conquering work that belongs to him, according to Psalm cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power : " therefore the gathering of the people shall be to him, because the conquering of the people belongs to him ; and

how he conquers them by the sword of his powerful grace, you see, Psalm xlv. 3, 4, 5. Indeed there will be no gathering to him, till this conquering power come : and therefore, if you would be gathered cry to him to gird this sword upon his thigh, and to send the rod of his strength out of Zion, that it may be mighty through God to the pulling down of the strong holds of sin. O that his voice in the gospel were powerful ! Some tell us that the lion's whelps are born dead at first, till by the roaring of the old lion over them, they are quickened : whatever be in this, it is true enough in the case of the people that are gathered to Shiloh ; they are born dead, and remain so, till the Lion of the tribe of Judah roar so loudly as to quicken them with his powerful voice, according to John v. 25, "The hour cometh when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live : " his voice quickens, conquers, and captivates them. And as it his work to conquer them, so to conquer all their enemies for them, whether it be sin, Satan, death, hell, or the world, that they may be more than conquerors through him ; and all this conquering work belongs to him, that the gathering of the people may be to him. And, in a word, there is a strengthening work that belongs to him, as well as a leading, guiding, comforting and counselling work, that I might mention, together with all the other parts of his saving work ; "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me," says Paul. And it is upon this footing that all the fruits of faith come in, even all the works of spiritual gospel obedience. When we go forth to any work, we are to go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, and of his only ; being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might ; strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus : and strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man ; his strength being made perfect in our weakness ; and he working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Thus he is the strength of Israel, the strength of his people : for which cause the gathering of the people must be to him ; and because, in this manner, the work of the people belongs to him, to work all their works in them and for them. But then again,

3. To him must the gathering of the people be, because to him does the instruction of the people belong ; for as the purchase of the people belongs to him as a Priest, and the conquest of the people belongs to him as a King ; so th instruction of the people belongs

to him as a Prophet. And, indeed, though I mention it here in the third place, yet this is the first part of his gathering work, to instruct, and teach, and enlighten; and may we not say with Elihu, Job xxxvi. 22, "Who teacheth like him?" He is the none-such Teacher of the people; and therefore must the gathering of the people be to him. In vain is the gathering of the people about tents and pulpits if their eyes look no higher than towards poor ministers, mortal worms like themselves, that can only speak to their ears, but cannot make one beam of divine light to break in upon their understandings. This is the peculiar work of him who is the Sun of righteousness, the Light of the world, the Light to lighten the Gentiles: it is he only, by his Spirit that can make us to know God, and the things of God; "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. He is the blessed and only Teacher and Instructor; and therefore the gathering of the people should be to his school, that they may be all taught of God: John vi. 45, "And every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, comes to me," says Christ; where it is pleasant to observe, comparing this and the former scripture together, that as God and Christ both are teachers here, so the Father and the Son both are the lessons taught, in the light of the eternal Spirit: and, that as there is no coming to Christ, nor gathering to him, but under the influence of the Father's teaching; nor is there any coming to the Father but by the Son, who is the way: so the great lesson that the Father teaches is the Son, and the great lesson that the Son teaches is the Father; and so the whole teaching comes to this, a knowing the Father in the Son by the Holy Ghost. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, in a peculiar manner, is the great Prophet and Teacher, being anointed with a supereminent unction of the Spirit of wisdom for this end, Isa. lxi. 1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach;" O glorious preacher and teacher! "I have put my Spirit upon him, says the Father, that he might bring forth judgment to the Gentiles:" that is, light and instruction to the people: and therefore should the gathering of the people be to him. O, then, let all the people say, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

4. To him must the gathering of the people be, because to him does the salvation of the people belong. Salvation from sin belongs

to him ; therefore his name is called JESUS, because he saves his people from their sins, Matt. i. 21. Salvation from wrath belongs to him, therefore his name is also called, even JESUS, which delivered us from the wrath to come, 1 Thess. i. 10. And not only the privative but the positive salvation of the people belongs to him ; hence, whom he saves he adopts ; whom he saves he adorns ; whom he saves he anoints ; whom he saves, he justifies and glorifies. O then, to whom should the gathering of sinners be, but to him who is the Saviour of sinners ? 1 Tim. i. 15, “ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom [viz. of saved sinners] I am the chief.” O let every man and woman here say it with application ! say it, man, woman ; say it, old and young, high and low, rich and poor ; and I will say it with you through grace, “ Of whom I am the chief ;” even the chief of sinners, whom he came to save. Let not unbelief say, It may be he came not to save me ; for this gospel declares that your name is in his sealed commission, if you be a sinner ; there is the gospel-charter let down from heaven, and it is a letter directed on the back, *For you, sinners* ; “ Jesus Christ came to save SINNERS ;” and if you open the charter, and read it with application to yourself, you will find that it is all for you, both within and without. O ! hath Christ a commission to save the people ! and shall not the people gather to him for salvation ! Hath he a commission to save sinners, and shall he return with his commission in his hand, saying, Father, thou gavest me a commission to seek and to save that which was lost, and yet wretched lost sinners will not have me, nor my salvation either ? They love their lusts better than me ; they love their own proud fancy better than my righteousness ; and they will not believe that I have so much good-will to them as to save them ; they will not be persuaded but I am cheating them with some goodly words ; I would gather them, but they will not be gathered ; and save them, but they will not come to me that they might have life, though I have a commission from the Father to give life to dead sinners. Why, may one think or say, if Christ hath such a commission to save sinners, then let him execute his commission, I shall not hinder him. What is that you are saying, man ? Let me hear that again ; if he hath a commission to save sinners, let him come and save me, I shall not hinder him. Is it jest or earnest that you are saying ? If your heart be jesting while you are speaking thus in your heart, and despising a Saviour not-

withstanding, then it is a dreadful jest : “ Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish. How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great a salvation ?” But are you in earnest, O sinner, saying, Since it is his office to save sinners, O let him do it for God’s sake ! let him execute his saving office on me, the chief of sinners ; for, the Lord knows, I would not desire to hinder him ? Why, poor soul, I will tell you good news, he seeks no more at your hand than what you are saying, namely, that you do not resist nor refuse his grace by unbelief ; but that your heart say, Content, Lord ; content to have salvation from all my sins and lusts—content to have all the salvation that Christ came to give ; why, he came to give life, and to give it more abundantly ; and when he is content to give, and you content to receive, there is little more ado than to bless him that it is a bargain ; for he is proffering himself, and all his salvation upon you this day. To him does the salvation of the people belong ; therefore let the gathering of the people be to him.

5. To him must the gathering of the people be, because to him is the GIFT of the people made. God the Father hath made a gift of the people to him ; therefore the people must be gathered to him. The Father desires him to ask the people, and he should have them : “ Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for thy possession,” Psal. ii. 8. There is indeed a select number that were given to him from eternity ; John vi. 37, “ All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me ;” that is, all that were given to him shall be gathered to him ; and, that none of all the people that hear the gospel may exclude themselves, as if they were not given ; therefore it follows, “ Him that comes I will in no wise cast out ;” all comers are welcome. It is as if Christ had said to these final rejecters of him, “ I would have gathered you, but ye would not ;” you never had so much as a will to be gathered ; you would not ; but be it known, to your confusion, that though you reject and despise me, yet I will have a gathering of the people to me : “ All that the Father hath given me shall be gathered to me ;” and though none will be gathered, but these that were given, yet this giving is not put in as a bar to your coming, but rather as an encouragement thereto ; therefore it is remarkable, he does not add, Him that *was given* I will in no wise cast out ; but, Him *that comes* I will in no wise cast out ;” intimating, That as this giving is not the primary object of faith, so it cannot be seen or known, but in the way of

coming ; and they may have this encouragement to come, that in coming they may know they were given to me. They that have no will to be gathered, cannot know they were given ; but all that would be gathered, may be sure they were given ; therefore let this be a ground for the gathering of people to him, that as the people to be gathered were given to him from eternity, so they that would be gathered, may know and be assured that they were given to him : “ Thine they were, and thou gavest them me,” John xvii. 6. They were thine by election, and thou gavest them me, to be redeemed by me. O happy people, whom a day of power hath made so willing, that indeed they would be gathered to Shiloh ! They may know that they were in God’s hand from eternity, and out of God’s hand they were put as a compliment into Christ’s hand, if I may so express it ; and indeed he is infinitely well pleased with the compliment ; he takes an armsful of them, as it were, out of God’s everlasting arms ; and he hugs them in his bosom, for his delights were with the sons of men ; and whenever he sees the travail of his soul, he is satisfied ; and when he hath hugged them in his redeeming arms, till he hath justified, sanctified, and completely saved them, then he will give them back to the Father’s hand again, presenting them blameless to him, saying, “ Behold I, and the children which thou hast given me.” There must then be a gathering of the people to him, because there was a giving of the people to him. A poor compliment, you may think with wonder of the like of me, to pass betwixt the hands of the eternal Father, and his eternal Son, in concurrence with the eternal Spirit, one God in three Persons ; but little matter how poor and mean the compliment seem to be, and really is in itself, if God be glorified, and Shiloh magnified, and you saved. O ! let the consideration of what a large dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, is given to Christ ; yea, a numberless number, that no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and people, that shall stand before the throne of the Lamb, with white robes, and palms in their hands, Rev. vii. 9, saying, “ Salvation to our God, that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.” Let the view of that innumerable multitude of people that are given to him, stir up and provoke the gathering of the people to him ; he is come to demand what was given him.—But then again,

6. To him must the gathering of the people be, because as the people are given to him, so he is given to the people for this end,

that the gathering of the people may be to him ; and hence, to all the people of the visible church, it is said, " To us a child is born, to us a son is given, whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," Isa. vi. 9. I speak not here of his being given in actual possession to believers ; they that take the gift of God are possessed of it ; but I speak even of a giving in the gospel-dispensation and offer ; for no man can receive what is not given ; receiving is not giving ; and Christ is so far given to all the hearers of the gospel, that they are obliged to receive him, and believe in him, upon peril of damnation : " He that believes not shall be damned." Thus he is given to many that reject him ; hence says Christ to these that were rejecting him, John vi. 32, " My Father gives you the true bread from heaven." That is, in order to be received by you ; for, in rejecting of this bread, that my Father gives you, your souls will starve. This will aggravate the damnation of the damned, that Christ was given to them in the gospel-offer, and they rejected the gift of God. However, the good news of the gospel is, John iii. 16, " God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him [or gathers in to him], may not perish, but have everlasting life." This reason for the giving of the people to Shiloh, is imported in the very bosom of the text ; Shiloh is come to you, that you may come to him ; he is come in the flesh, he is come in the gospel, and may we hope he is come in the Spirit ? He is come to the people, that the people may be gathered to him ; and he is come as a Shiloh ; that is, the Messias, the Sent of God, that the people may welcome God's Send, saying, " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. To you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord ;" this is indeed " good tidings to all people," Luke ii. 10, " To you is the word of this salvation sent," Acts xiii. 26. Christ the Shiloh is the promised Seed, the leading promise ; and, " The promise is to you, and to your children," Acts ii. 39, that you may receive him in the promise. He is the Sent of God to you, that you may gather to him ; he is sent to be the Saviour of the people, the Helper of the people ; and sent by way of free gift and donation, Isaiah xli. 27, " I will give to Jerusalem One that brings good tidings ; and for what is he given to the people ?" See Isa. lv. 4, " He is given to be a Witness to the people, and a Leader and Commander to the people," yea, Isa. xlii. 6, " He is given for a Covenant of the people." And why is he

thus given to the people, but that the gathering of the people may be to him? The people then are promised to him, and he is promised to the people; and there must be a gathering of the people to him. Shiloh is come to seek the people that were promised and given to him; let the people seek that Shiloh, that is promised and given to them. In a word, he is the true temple, to which the gathering must be; he is the mercy-seat, at which God and the people may meet together; and you cannot meet with God but in him, for in him alone God is well pleased: and when you gather in to him, you get in to the heart of God; for he lies in the Father's bosom, being his Elect, in whom his soul delights. So much for the reasons.

VII. The last thing proposed in the general method, was the Application of the subject.

I have endeavoured in the doctrinal part, all along, to deliver the matter in a practical and applicatory strain, and also enlarged it so much, that I need the less to insist upon many inferences, wherein I have already anticipated myself. The main uses I design are for Information of some truths, and Exhortation to some duties.

First, For Information. Is it so, that the Counsel of Heaven hath determined concerning Christ the Messias, that to him shall the gathering of the people be? Hence see,

1. The doleful state of the Jews at present, and the lamentable circumstances they have been in, ever since the coming of Shiloh, their promised Messias. While a multitude of Gentiles, that were but dogs, are gathered to God's house, and they, in the meantime, unchurched and cast out, though "To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; and though of them, as concerning the flesh, Shiloh came, who is over all God blessed for ever," Rom. ix. 4, 5. Though they were the people of his first love, the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom so many precious promises were made in behalf of their seed; behold their Shiloh comes to them, and they will not have him, "He came to his own, and his own received him not." They owned the sceptre was departed from Judah, when they said, "We have no king but Cæsar; and so by their own confession, Shiloh is come, since the sceptre was departed from Judah. And, because they would not submit to the spiritual sceptre of the promised Messias, they have been with-

out a king, without a prince, without a sceptre, or law-giver, without a governor and government, for 1700 years and more, even since Shiloh came, to whom there is a gathering of other people in their room. Oh! shall we not lament their long continued rejection? Their seventy years captivity in Babylon was nothing to this: yea, their four hundred and thirty years bondage in Egypt was nothing to this! Alas! how long, how long shall his anger last against that people! How long shall they be under the guilt of the blood of Christ, which they imprecated upon themselves and their posterity, saying, "His blood be upon us, and our children!" Oh! pray, pray for that ancient people of God, and that the blood of Shiloh may cleanse them from that blood-guiltiness! When they were in favour with God, the believers among them had mind of us poor Gentiles, when we were the "little sister that had not breasts," Song viii. 8; and now, when we are sucking at the breasts of gospel ordinances and sacramental solemnities, Oh! shall we not mind them when their breasts are cut off, when they that were the natural branches are broken off, and we that were the wild olive-tree, are grafted in to partake of the root and fatness of the good olive-tree? Rom. xi. 17, 24. Oh! let us not boast against the branches, "For if thou boastest, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." See ver. 18, 19, 20, 21. Let us not boast, but let us beg, that they may be again grafted in, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciliation of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" ver. 15. The day of the return and conversion of the Jews will be a day of greater gathering to Shiloh, even among the Gentiles, than we have yet seen; and it would fare better with us, if we were more employed in praying for them. Meantime, this dark and doleful dispensation, that as yet they are under, was not darkly foretold in the words of our text, that, upon the sceptre's departing from Judah, Shiloh the Messiah should come, "And to him should the gathering of the people be:" that is, the Gentiles; plainly intimating a wonderful mystery of providence, that the King of the Jews should come to the Gentiles, and be crowned king among them, that so the Jews might have it to say at length, That the King of the Gentiles is become the King of the Jews; as well as the Gentiles have it to say, That the King of the Jews is become the King of the Gentiles.

2. Hence see the sovereign mercy of God in Christ towards the poor Gentile nations, and the isles of the Gentiles not forgotten;

for he particularly promises, That the isles shall wait for his law, Isa. xlii. 4. And, O wonder, that we, in this remote island, were in his view, when he promised, That to him should the gathering of the people be. Jacob, by inspiration of the Spirit of God, said it on his death-bed, and it is now more than three thousand years ago ; that is indeed to him not so much as three days ; for, to him a thousand years are as one day. Thousands of years intervening cannot make him forget his promise ; and, so far as there is, or shall be a gathering of the people to Shiloh, so far does this promise take effect. There was a promise of this, more ancient yet, Gen. ix. 27, "God shall enlarge [or *persuade*] Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem : " there is a promise that the Gentiles should be gathered in to partake of the privileges of the Jews ; for of Japhet came the Gentiles, and among his posterity were the isles of the Gentiles divided : see Gen. x. 1, 2, 5 ; and probably this island among the rest. For confirming whereof, I shall not be positive in averring what some alledge, that as Gomer was the eldest son of Japhet, and of him came the people called Gomeri or Cymbri ; so the first inhabitants of this island of Britain came of the posterity of Japhet, one of the sons of Noah, namely, of the said Japhet's eldest son Gomer ; and hence, from Gomeri came Cambria, which is the Latin name of Wales in this island to this day, to which place the ancient Britons retired at the coming in of the Saxons ; hence they suppose, that the isle of Britain is particularly intended here. But I shall not found any certain conclusion upon a doubtful supposition, though it be generally agreed to by some good historians. We may see it plain from the event, that God had a particular design that there should be a gathering of people to Shiloh in these lands, and even in Scotland. I have shewed formerly, how early the Lord visited us with the gospel ; and that we were among the first of the Gentile nations that ever were enlightened therewith, after Christ's ascension, by which we were delivered from gross Paganism. And when I spoke of the remarkable gathering seasons, I took notice of our reformation-days from Popery, and afterwards from Prelacy, our covenanting-days, and the like ; and therefore I am not here to insist thereupon : only, as there have been remarkable gathering times in Scotland, and as the Lord countenances yet the gathering means and ordinances among us ; so we ought to bless him that ever gospel light shined upon us, and wait on him for more of that gathering power of his Spirit, that Scotland's barrenness now,

and unfruitfulness under the means of grace, may not provoke him wholly to leave us, and make our name LO-AMMI : *i. e.* *Not my people.*

3. Hence see the excellency of the gospel, and the reason of the efficacy thereof. Behold the excellency of the gospel, which brings the glad tidings of a Saviour to the people, and of a gathering place for the poor Gentiles, as well as the Jews ; a God-man, in whom God and man might meet together, that scattered sinners, separated from God, might be gathered to him. Behold the condescension of our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed in this gospel, that he stoops so low as to be the gathering room for poor sinful people, to which they resort for shelter and salvation. Shiloh is come ; he is come in our nature, and with human nature he puts on human bowels, that into his very bosom, the gathering of the people may be, that all the good they have lost, may be found in Christ ; yea, that the God, whom they have lost, may be found in him ; for, " God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself." But as herein we see the excellency, so also behold the efficacy of the gospel of Christ, especially in the first ages ? It is a matter for which no human policy can account, that the gospel, preached in simplicity, by men of the meanest character, should make its way through forces of devils and men, should gain so many proselytes, subdue so many kingdoms. Had this doctrine been suited to flesh and blood, and like Mahomet's indulged men in sensual enjoyments, and promised afterwards the highest degrees of sensual pleasures ; had the gospel been designed for increasing the stock of earthly treasure, it were no wonder that it should have gained so much ground, for all carnal men would readily receive this doctrine, and tenaciously retain it. Nay, had it proceeded upon mere rational grounds and foundations, some philosophers, at least, would have embraced it. But that a doctrine, that teaches to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts : a doctrine, that teaches to crucify the old man, with his affections and lusts ; the lusts of the eye, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life : a doctrine that enjoins us to look to things that are not seen ; a doctrine, that commands us to leave all things, deny ourselves, and count all but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ ; that this doctrine, however highly rational, yet hath no foundation in reason, and admits consequences of no rational demonstration, many thereof being above the reach of reason ; that this doctrine, that owes nothing to the cha-

racter of its preachers, and owes as little to human force ; that this doctrine should have gained so great a ground, obtained so vast success, in a time wherein the profession thereof did make the professors of it, to run the risk of poverty, death, and disgrace ; this, I say, is a mystery, that none shall be able to unfold, but these who plow with this gospel-heifer, that the gospel is the very instrument of divine power, whereby he gathers the people to Shiloh. The reason of this marvellous dispensation is, that the omnipotent God, who can give a being to his word, hath past his word, that to Christ shall the gathering of the people be ; and divine power, for effectuating this design, is put forth in the gospel ; which, therefore is called the power of God to salvation, while therein is revealed the righteousness of God, from faith to faith. And this treasure is put in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man : And, O that this power were put forth on this occasion, for gathering the people to Shiloh !

4. Hence see what ought to be the great design of peoples gathering to gospel-ordinances ; the leading end is, what the prophet expresses, Jer. l. 5, "They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord." That is, Let us gather together unto Shiloh ; let us lay ourselves under the influence of his gathering power, and cast ourselves into his gathering arms, while he is stretching forth the arms of his free grace, in a preached gospel. O sirs ! What is the design of these gatherings of people together, if there be no gathering to Shiloh ? If we look to the views and designs of the most part, we will find that the gathering to Shiloh, is least of all in their view. As there were wise virgins and foolish ; so there are wise hearers and foolish : some come to ordinances, only for a name, because they would not be thought any worse than their neighbour : some come for diversion, to spend an hour or two in hearing, because they have little else to do ; some come for attendance sake, because they are waiting on their master or mistress ; some come for company's sake, their fellows saying, Let us go to sermon ; content, says the other, and so they go for company ; some come for curiosity's sake, they have heard people speak to the praise or dispraise of such and such a man, and they will see whether it be as they say ; some come for carping and cavilling, not to be judged by the word, but to judge it, and censure it, being content to find some word, that they reckon may be to the minister's prejudice, or reproach ? and though they

should forget all the rest of the word, yet this they will mind, to report to their confederates, either out of malice, because they receive not the truth in the love thereof, or out of pride, because they would have others, that hear their censorious remarks, to esteem them to be judicious persons, and competent judges, while in the mean time, they are but bewraying their own ignorance, malice, and pride. Hence some come to watch if anything can be wrested, that is uttered, that they may act the devil, in accusing the brethren; some gape for remarkable phrases, that, when they come to their ordinary company, they may have something to grace and adorn their tales: some never come to hear what shall be said to themselves, and therefore never prick up their ears, till they suppose they hear the minister exposing the crimes of others: some come to gaze and look about them, to see who are there, and what is their dress and behaviour; some come to muse, and dream, and rove, and if they notice any word that is said, it will perhaps occasion a hundred impertinent thoughts to keep out the rest of the sermon, and the mind will run a thousand ways before it can get another word noticed and perhaps the sermon is done, before they can gather their thoughts together again. Many such accidental hearers there are, that gather to ordinances, but not to Shiloh. They come to meet with their friends, that, it may be, convene at such a sermon, but not to meet with Christ. They are like children that gather to a market, and sit in the market-place, but neither to buy nor sell. But, as many foxes have been taken, when they came to take; so, some that have come only to spy novelties, yea, to scoff and scorn, have changed their minds before they went home. And, Oh that grace would come and catch some that are here, and yet are seeking nothing here, but like babes to catch butterflies! Oh that Christ, the greatest treasure in the world, should be most despised, and that the gospel-star which should lead you to the place where he is, that you may be gathered to him, that this star should not be marked!

5. Hence see what is the great Mark, at which ministers of the gospel should shoot, in dispensing thereof: why it is just the gathering of souls to Christ: "To him shall the gathering of the people be." Wo! wo to the minister, whose great design is only to gather a multitude of people to himself, and enhance their applause! It hath been indeed the lot of some of the most faithful ministers of Christ, to be thus reproached and calumniated, as if all their design were to recommend themselves to the populace, and gather a

multitude to their faction; they have been branded as self-seekers, instead of being soul-fishers: and why? Because providence hath commonly ordered that those who have been most denied and mortified to self, have been most followed: but the more they were followed, the more they were envied by those that truly sought themselves; hence as none was more followed than Christ, so none was more envied by the self-seeking Pharisees; "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold the world is gone after him," John xii. 19. And as we read not that Christ reprov'd any for following him, though he reprov'd them for their false ends in doing so, John vi. 26: so though no gospel minister will be displeased, that he hath many fishes before the net, in hopes that some may be gathered; yet it is, and will be the character of all faithful ministers, which the apostle relates, 2 Cor. iv. 5, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." And 1 Cor. ii. 2, "I determined to know [or MAKE KNOWN] nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The great gospel-design then is, to gather souls to Christ, seeing they can never be happy or holy, but in him. And while you find that to be your minister's great scope, you ought to regard and hear them, as you would do a voice from heaven; yea, and more, while they speak the mind of God, from the word of God, which is the more sure word of prophecy; for it is the same as if you heard Christ himself; therefore he says, "He that hears you hears me; and he that despises you despises me." If you truly regarded that word of Christ you would hear the voice of the preacher, as you would hear the voice of God. If Samuel had thought it was God that spoke to him, he would not have slept; but because he thought it was not God but Eli, therefore he slept on; so while people do not think it is God that speaks to them, but only a man, they will never regard it; and never will there be a gathering to Shiloh, till the word be received, "Not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually works in you that believe," 1 Thess. ii. 13. Where also that question is obviate, How shall we know when the minister speaks his own words, or God's word? Why, let the word of God be received, and it will speak for itself; for it will effectually work in you that believe. And when the words of one preacher seem to clash with the words of another, this effectual working of the word will teach you how to judge things that differ really, and how to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. The

great mark then, I say, that the gospel-minister aims at, is the gathering of the people to Shiloh; and the pointing out of Christ to them, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Surely, my friends, we know no other way to save you, nor ourselves: if we did, how wretched were we to keep it from you, since we have no other calling, but to shew you the way of salvation.

6. Hence we may also see what is the centre of all gospel truth: Christ is the centre, wherein all the lines of evangelical doctrine are gathered together, and do meet. It would not be the duty of people, to believe in him, or gather to him by faith, if he were not the truth, as well as the way: yea, the centre and substance of all truth; and that is not the truth, that does not lead to him. Here is the most sure test of orthodoxy; whatever pretends to be the truth, and yet tends only to lead a man in to himself, and not out of himself to Christ; whatever doctrine tends to make you think, you must produce some holiness or good qualifications from within yourself, without gathering first to Shiloh, to get it, you may know it is not orthodox doctrine: whatever doctrine tends to the disparagement of Christ, or to the robbing him of any part of the glory of salvation-work, is to be rejected as erroneous; for, to him alone must the gathering of the people be: and to him only shall the glory of our whole salvation, from first to last, belong. Christ is much robbed of his glory in Britain at this day; damnable Arian doctrine is spreading whereby Christ is robbed of the glory of his supreme Deity, denying his being the eternal Son of God, co-equal, and co-essential with the Father. The devil himself was more orthodox than our Arian doctors, when he owned, Matth. viii. 29, that Christ was the Son of God; "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?" The devil spake more honourably of him, than they do, when he said, Mark i. 24, "I know thee who thou art, the holy One of God." My text leads me to what I am saying; for, if Christ were not the supreme God, equal with the Father, the gathering of the people to

(1) About this time the Arian heresy was not only revived, but had gained considerable footing in our neighbouring kingdom of England, under the patronage of Mr. Whiston and others; but also diffused its baleful and pernicious influence upon Scotland, befriended by many, adopted and publicly taught in one of our principal seminaries of learning; for which a process was commenced by the presbytery of Glasgow, against Professor Simson, Anno 1726, and carried on, before the respective judicatories, till concluded by the Assembly Anno 1729, the charge being found clearly proven; and he, in consequence thereof, got but a very inadequate sentence, being only suspended from teaching and preaching, instead of deposition and excommunication.

him, to believe in him, to worship and adore him, would be unlawful; it would be idolatry. For, as the Lord our God is one Lord: so we must worship the Lord our God, and him only must we serve: and it is idolatry to worship any other. Yea, to the Son, he says, "Let all the angels of God worship him," and for this end, must all the people be gathered to him. My present work allows me not to trace the other doctrines, that rob him of his glory, and tend to lead people elsewhere than to Shiloh; only, whatever mask of truth, or holiness, any doctrine shall put on, if it tend to gather people to Moses, and not to Shiloh; or to lead them to the law, and not to Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, it savours not of the truth as it is in Jesus, Eph. iv. 21. But the main inference I designed at present was for exhortation: and therefore, passing all other inferences that might be drawn, I come to apply it.

Secondly, For exhortation. And I design, as the Lord may pity and assist, to direct it to three sorts of persons, with relation to this gathering of the people to Shiloh. 1. Some may be doubtful whether they were ever gathered to Shiloh or not; therefore I would exhort them to try. 2. Some may be sure they were never yet gathered to Shiloh; therefore I would exhort them to gather under his wings. 3. Some are believers, that have, through grace, been gathered by him, and made to gather to him; and I would exhort them to their duty, with respect to their further gathering to him.

1st, Some may be doubtful, whether they were ever gathered to Shiloh, or not; and therefore my exhortation to such is, that they would try and examine, whether it be so or not. Examination is a necessary duty at all times, as well after, as before a communion. He that says, with reference to the sacrament, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat," says also, with reference to any season, "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith, prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Oh! poor dying mortal! will you try if you have been gathered to Shiloh, or not? Whether you have gone in to him by a faith of his own operation? For according as this takes place, so will it fare with you through all eternity. If you die out of Christ, or in unbelief, you die in your sins, John viii. 24. And better die in a ditch, and die like a dog, than die in your sins. If you die in your

sins, you will rise in your sins, and stand before the tribunal of God in your sins, and so be condemned. If you be gathered in Christ, you will be found in him, and so found happy, when death, judgment, and eternity appear; therefore I exhort you solemnly to reflect upon this matter whether you be gathered or not. If all that you are worth in a world, as I noticed on a former occasion, lay in one precious stone, and that stone were to be tried by a skilful jeweller, whether it were true or false, whether it would fly, or endure under the smart stroke of his hammer; surely, your thoughts would not be unconcerned about the issue of such a trial. Why, man, woman, all that you are worth in this world, and the world to come, depends upon this matter, whether you be of the people that are gathered to Shiloh or not. Try whether your faith in the promised Shiloh will fly, or endure the stroke of the hammer of God's word: have you no concern in this matter? you would be loath to put to sea, though it were but to cross a narrow ferry, in a rotten leaky vessel; and will you dare to venture on the ocean of eternity, in a false, rotten bark? Whatever profession you have, whatever blaze you make, whatever esteem others may have of you, whatever opinion you may have of yourself, and of your faith, you will be drowned for ever in the deluge of God's wrath, if you be not gathered into the ark, Jesus Christ: I would therefore offer you some helps to make this trial. And here all that I said upon the fourth general head, concerning the means and manner of this gathering; how God acts in gathering, and how he makes the soul to act, might be brought in; but, passing all these, I offer these few following marks, by which you may try whether or not you have ever been gathered to Shiloh.

1. If ever you was gathered to Shiloh, then Shiloh hath come to you, before ever you was gathered to him. The text makes the coming of Shiloh to be the very cause of the gathering of the people to him: as his coming in the flesh did usher in the gathering of the Gentiles; so it is his coming in the Spirit that makes the spiritual gathering to him. Try then, if ever he hath come to you. Surely, if you be gathered to him, you can say, I would never have come to him, unless he had come to me: now, if Christ never came to you by his Spirit, as a Spirit of conviction, convincing you of sin and misery, and discovering your need of Christ, and that you was lost for ever without him, surely you have not yet been gathered to him. You have never yet had a sorrowful hour for want of Christ, and was never brought to a Wo's me, for I want Christ and salva-

tion? nor to a "What shall I do to be saved?" you have reason to conclude that you was never yet gathered to him: for, when he comes by his Spirit, he convinces the world of sin; when he gathers the people to him, he comes and convinces them of sin, because they believe not in him, John xvi. 8. Some never wanted faith, which declares they never had it; they never missed Christ, which says they never matched with him. As he that was never a real wanter, was never a real and true suiter; so it is the needy wanter that is the steady suiter. Thus here, man, woman, if you had never a want of Christ, you was never in suit of him, never gathered to him; though he hath been in suit of you by the gospel-offer may be a thousand times, yet you being pleased with your old match, your sins, lusts, idols, self-righteousness, or the world: his suit was never regarded, because you was never a wanter; and being never a true wanter, you was never a true seeker or receiver of him; and so never gathered to him; for you was never convinced of your want of Christ, and want of faith in him. Deceive not yourself, O sinner; you was never a believer, if you was never a wanter; if the Spirit of conviction never came, and made you say, Oh! I want grace, I want holiness, I want faith, love, repentance, and all good; yea, I want God, I want Christ, I want the Spirit! Hence it is the property of a believer, notwithstanding all he gets, yet he is still a wanter; always poor and needy, and nothing in himself: and it is the property of an unbeliever, notwithstanding all that he wants, yet he is always rich, and increased with goods, and wants nothing; hence we find some ignorant people expressing what others that pretend to more knowledge do conceal; ask them, Do you want faith? Oh! no; we always trusted in God. Do you want hope? No: we hope in his mercy. Do you want love? No: I had ever a love to God and his people all my days. Do you want grace? Nay, God forbid, that I should be altogether graceless. Do you want Christ? Oh! no; my sweet Saviour, what would become of me if I wanted Christ? Why, man, woman, I know nothing that you want; you are not a wanter; the Lord pity you; for what you dream you never wanted, you never had to this day. The Spirit of conviction hath never come; and, instead of being gathered to Shiloh, you was never yet gathered to the porch-door of true Christianity; for the Spirit's coming to convince of the want of Christ, and of faith in him, is the very beginning of true religion. But if Shiloh hath come by his Spirit, and shewed you

your want of all things, but sin, it is a good beginning ; for thus he gathers you out of your false hopes and lying refuges. But next, if Shiloh hath come to you for gathering you to himself, then he hath come not only as a Spirit of conviction, but also as a Spirit of powerful illumination, discovering the glory of Shiloh to you, even the glory of his person, offices, righteousness, fulness, and other things of Christ, so as to glorify Christ in your view, John xvi. 14, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you." Now, if Shiloh ever came, by his Spirit, in the gospel, to shew something of the glory of Christ to you, and the glory of God's perfections in him, so as to make him appear more glorious to you than all the world, it seems you have not yet been gathered ; "For if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost ; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. But if ever you was gathered, then, "The God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," verse 6. For as, when the Lord builds up Zion, he appears in his glory ; so, when he gathers souls, he appears in his glory, and brings them from darkness to his marvellous light. I do not speak of the highest degree of spiritual light, nor yet of any extraordinary manifestations ; all that I mean is, the Spirit's coming to enlighten your minds in the knowledge of Christ, whereby you have seen his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ; and have seen a fulness of all grace in him. These are not enthusiastic delusions, but spiritual expressions ; for, perhaps, some person may think or say, What is that the man is speaking of beholding such a glory ? I never saw any greater glory in all the world than that of the sun, moon, and stars in the firmament. What say you, man ? Saw you never any greater glory than that which your bodily eyes have seen betwixt earth and heaven ? Then I may say to you, that you was never yet gathered to Shiloh ; for he never came in his Spirit to shew you his glory. I speak not of weak, powerless fancies and imaginations that some may have of Christ's glory, but I call it a powerful illumination, conquering the will, and captivating the heart, and carrying in all the affections to the embracing of Christ ; for, when the

Sun of righteousness arises, it is with healing under his wings ; healing the resistance of the will, and the hardness of the heart, and melting down the whole soul in the warm arms of his gathering grace and love, while he draws with loving kindness. And indeed, " No man can come to me," says Christ, " except the Father which hath sent me draw him : " and saving discoveries are of a drawing nature. The true Sun hath not only light, but heat, whereby the heart is warmed ; and the true Light is the light of life whereby the soul is quickened. If ever you was gathered to Shiloh, then know it, that Shiloh hath come to you, before ever there could be a gathering to him.

2. If ever you was gathered to Shiloh, then as Shiloh hath come to you, so you have been made particularly to come to him, under the drawing power and influence of that Spirit I have been speaking of. And indeed, as none can come unless he draw them, so none can stay away when he is drawing them : and hence every believer finds, that as it is impossible to believe till power come, so it is impossible not to believe when divine power comes : it is as easy then, as it was difficult before. If ever you was gathered to Shiloh, then as the coming of Shiloh to you hath prevented your coming to him, so your coming to him hath been effectuate by his coming to you, and making the general call of the gospel effectual, in enabling you to a particular application, so as to give a particular answer to the general call. If you have been but hearers of the word all your days, without ever applying it to your own use ; and hearers of the general offer and promise of Christ, without ever seeing yourselves involved, inclosed, and included in the general promise and offer, and without ever making a particular, personal application thereof, you are not yet gathered to Shiloh, for, when souls are gathered, the general call gets a particular answer ; " When thou saidst, Seek ye my face ; my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek," Psal. xxvii. 8. The gospel-call is general, " Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ ; " but the answer must be particular, " Lord, I believe : help thou my unbelief." When people suffer gospel-truths to hover in the brain, without application, or learn things, as children do their Catechism, by rote, never reflecting, What am I doing ? Where am I going ? What will become of me ? And, What effect hath this word upon me ? Unbelief remains undisturbed ; the word comes and goes ; and there is no good done, no gathering to Shiloh, because no particular application. It is the very design of the

Spirit's convincing and enlightening work, to bring the soul to this particular application of Christ ; and therefore this mark may clear the former. If you think, How shall I know if I have such a measure of conviction and illumination as is sufficient to evidence that I am gathered to Shiloh ? Why, any measure that God pleases to give, is enough, if it issue in the soul's particular reception and application of Christ. When is it that the metal is melted enough in the fire ? Why, it is melted enough when it runs easily into the mould. Now, there may be natural meltings, under the common influences of the Spirit ; but, when is the soul melted enough with the beams of the Sun of righteousness, or with the fire of the Spirit ? Why, it is melted enough when it runs into the gospel-mould. There are some, as I have noticed on a former occasion, that have, as it were, too much of the fire ; these are they that apprehend themselves such great sinners, that they dare not come to Christ : There are others that have, as it were, too little of the fire ; these are they that only think they are not so good as they ought to be, and therefore they should not come to Christ : There are others that have nothing of the fire at all, and these are they that think they are good enough already, and they need not come to Christ ; but then only is the soul sufficiently melted, when it runs into the mould. What is the gospel-mould ? It is even Christ ; and when the melted soul runs into this mould, there does it get the right shape and form, and there only. As it is not the melting of the metal that gives it a shape, fashion, or form, but the mould that gives it the form ; so never expect to have any good form, any good shape, any good qualifications, till your souls run into this mould. It is the very design of the Spirit's coming, to induce people to relinquish their own fancied goodness, and oblige them to come to Christ for all. Try, then, if ever you was gathered to Shiloh, by this, namely, whether your soul, in a day of divine power was made to run in to him like melted lead into a mould, closing with, and cleaving to him by a particular application. But how the soul acts here, by a particular appropriation and fiducial persuasion, upon the divine word, under divine conduct, I have formerly described ; therefore I proceed to another mark.

3. If ever you was gathered to Shiloh, then the gathering place will be very precious to you ; I mean the promised Shiloh, Christ himself, 1 Peter ii. 6, 7. There he is held forth as the chief corner-stone, to which all the stones of the spiritual building are ga-

thered together, and unite ; and to all such as are gathered to him, it is declared, *He is precious* : and the word signifies, *He is HONOURABLE* ; he is an honour to them, and they put honour upon him, and entertain him honourably, in a suitableness to his high quality, as he is God-man ; and particularly, as he is the Shiloh, that is, the Messiah, the Sent of God, the Father's extraordinary Ambassador. Some esteem Christ, but not according to his grandeur and glory ; and therefore, it is evident, they are not gathered to him as the Shiloh, the Sent of God ; but they that are gathered to him, they receive, esteem, and entertain him, according to his dignity. If a subject shall receive, or entertain his prince, or the king's extraordinary ambassador, no otherwise than he would do his country neighbour, this would be interpreted a contempt : so, if Christ be not received, esteemed, and entertained according to his grandeur, dignity, and state, he counts it a contempt, rather than a due reception or estimation of him. If Christ be not esteemed as a King, he is but disregarded ; if he be not honoured as the Father's Ambassador-extraordinary, he is but despised : for, as Shiloh, he hath Heaven's sealed commission ; *Him hath God the Father sealed*. The unbelieving Jews were content to receive and esteem Christ as a great prophet, as the Mahometans do ; but they would not receive and entertain him according to his greatness, grandeur, and glory, which he was invested with : therefore they were challenged as rejecters and despisers of him, Acts xiii. 41, "He came to his own, but his own received him not ;" for they did not receive him as the Son of God, and the Sent of God ; whereas it is said of the believing Jews, who received Christ, That they beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father : that is, they so received him in all his glory, grandeur, majesty, and splendour, that they esteemed honourably of him. Hence, says Christ, John xvii. 8, "They have known that I came out from thee, and have believed that thou didst send me." If you be gathered unto Shiloh, then you esteem honourably of him, as he is the glorious Shiloh, the Sent of God. Is Christ thus precious to you, and honourable ?

4. If you be gathered unto Shiloh, then you will be clothed with him, for he is sent to be a robe of righteousness ; and all that are gathered to him, do put on that mantle, and gather in under that cover ; and in that clothing do they stand perfectly righteous in the sight of God ; being accepted as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ. Hence, it is given as a mark of the

true church and children of God, that are gathered to Christ, that they are clothed with the Sun, Rev. xii. 1. It is indeed called a great wonder; for the mystery of free and perfect justification, and of being clothed with a perfect righteousness, is such a mystery, that natural men cannot conceive it, nor believe it, though a man should declare it to them, as the apostle speaks, Acts xiii. 41. Yea, the believer himself cannot believe it, without holy wondering, and joyful trembling, Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9. This wonder is said to be of a Woman in heaven; that is, the church militant, and every particular believer under a gospel dispensation, wherein there is a full revelation of this righteousness. Now, here it is said also, she was clothed with the Sun; that is, with Christ, the Sun of righteousness; the Woman being married to Christ, as the Lord her righteousness, she is, as it were, gathered in to the Sun in the firmament, and so clothed with the perfect righteousness of Christ; that however black and dark she is in herself; yet, in point of justification, this Sun, wherewith she is clothed, makes her shine in a perfect righteousness, as gloriously in God's eyes, as the bodily sun shines gloriously in our eyes, when it shines in its meridian splendour. The believer is not only fair as the moon, in the sight of men, in point of sanctification; which moon, may be indeed, and is full of spots, and very changeable; but clear as the sun, in the sight of God, in point of justification; the Sun of righteousness with which he is clothed, being perfectly glorious. But, perhaps, some may say, If this be an evidence of one that he is clothed with the Sun of righteousness, how shall I examine myself by this, or know that I am thus clothed? Why, you may examine it by what follows. If you be clothed with the Sun, then you have got the moon under your feet, and upon your head a crown of twelve stars. Have you got the moon under your feet? What is that, may you say? I find some understand two things by it; the one is the moon of your own righteousness, and the other is the moon of the world. As to the former then, if you be gathered to Christ, and clothed with the Sun of righteousness, then you have the moon of your own righteousness under your feet; that is, you will make no account of your own righteousness of sanctification before God, in comparison of the garment of Christ's righteousness, which is the Sun that you are so gloriously clothed with. Nay, when your own righteousness, or graces, put in for any share of justification before God, you will in this respect trample them under

your feet as a menstruous cloth, as the prophet Isaiah did, chap. lxiv. 6, "All our righteousness are as filthy rags." Yea, when it claims to be a righteousness before an infinitely holy and just God, you will trample it under your feet as dung, as the apostle Paul did, Phil. iii. 8, "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; yea, I do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, that is after the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith." This he speaks not only of his Pharisaical righteousness before his conversion, but his righteousness of sanctification after his conversion. The man that is clothed with the Sun of righteousness, accounts his own righteousness a contemptible nothing in comparison of Christ's righteousness. It is not gain, but loss, because, as Chrysostom, one of the fathers, says, "When the sun shines, it is but loss to sit by a candle light." Why? Because his righteousness is God's righteousness. God is the worker of it; and in comparison thereof, our best righteousness whereof we are the workers, even with divine assistance, is but dung to be trampled upon, when it competes with the other, or would have any share in the matter of our justification before God. If you be clothed with the Sun then, and be thus gathered to Shiloh, you have got this moon under your feet; and whatever light of sanctification you have, it will flow from your justification, as the light of the moon does come from the sun: and as the moon gives light in the dark night, so will the moon of your sanctification give light to other men, walking in the dark night of this world: Your light will so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify God. And here is a mystery in the believer's life; he shines like the moon in point of sanctification, doing all the good works he can, that he may glorify God, and edify his neighbour in the world; and yet he keeps this moon of his own works and righteousness under his feet, and tramples upon it, in the matter of justification, because, in that respect, his only clothing is the Sun of righteousness.—Again, as to the other sense, if you be clothed with the Sun, and gathered to Shiloh, then you will have the moon of this world under your feet; the profits, honours, and pleasures of the world, which being changeable and inconstant, as the moon, the believer hath it under us feet; because, being clothed with the glorious Sun of righteousness, and thereby discerning the glory of God and Christ, and heavenly things, he cannot

but despise and undervalue all earthly thing, when coming in competition with heavenly ; as Moses did, Heb. ix. 25, 26, when he vilified all the glory and grandeur of Pharaoh's court, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." You that had never the moon of this world under your feet, but have the world in your heart, and nothing but the world, surely you are not gathered unto Shiloh ; for they that are gathered to him, they are gathered out of the world, and set apart from the rest of the world ; "They are not of the world, but chosen out of the world." Hence, they that are gathered to Shiloh are brought from their old worldly companions : there are sinful gatherings, wicked clubs and cabals, that will be hateful to them ; of which their heart will say, as Jacob said of Simeon and Levi, Gen. xlix. 6, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; to their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united ;" and with David, Psalm. xxvi. 9, "Gather not my soul with sinners." If you belong to these drunken, tippling, idle, and debauched gatherings ; you may be sure that you are not gathered unto Shiloh. The godly may indeed fall into such company, but it is not their element to embrace their society : nay, fellowship with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth, is their delight : and fellowship with the wicked is so far from being their delight, that their society is rather a burden, and brings them to a Woe is me ; "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar ! I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Now, see to it, if you be not gathered out of the world, you are not yet gathered to Shiloh ; for if you be clothed with the Sun, then you have the moon of this world under your feet, and upon your head a crown of twelve stars : that is, the doctrine of the gospel, delivered by the twelve apostles, and preached by gospel-ministers, which are called stars in his right hand, will be your crown, a golden crown to you : yea, his word will be to you as more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. And this leads me to another mark of those that are gathered to Shiloh.

5. If you be gathered to Shiloh, then gathering means and ordinances will be always desirable to you ; for they that are gathered will be always a-gathering to him till they be for ever with him, in the full and immediate enjoyment of him ; now try yourself by this mark. I enlarge a little upon each, because I design not to

'multiply particulars. If you be gathered to Shiloh, then the gathering means will be desirable to you. Now, what conscience do you make of the means? For there is a generation that boldly say they have religion, yet they use not duly either public, private, or secret means. If ever you be gathered to Christ, all the gathering means, all his ordinances will be sweet to you; you will seek where he is to be found; not in the city, about the streets and broad ways, among the watchmen, but a little further, Song iii. 2, 3, 4. They that never used means were never gathered; they that are gathered are still endeavouring to improve them, because they are always gathering to him: Therefore try yourselves here further, on this score, and see where you are, in Shiloh or not. If you be gathered to Shiloh, you will be constantly gathering to him, and living on him; for such are not of those that draw back to perdition, but of those that believe to the saving of their souls. They that go out from him were never of him; therefore says Christ to his disciples, "Will ye also go away?" John vi. 67. To which the true believer's answer is, "Lord, to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life?" ver. 68. Let me therefore ask you whether or not you intend to abide with Christ? Surely, if you be gathered to him, you resolve through grace to remain with him, and to be still coming to him, 1 Pet. ii. 4; and as newborn babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, ver. 2. Indeed, they that abide with Christ cannot but grow; and this I say to find out hypocrites, that perhaps use the outward means, and resolve in their fashion they will abide with Christ; that is, they will not turn Papists or malignants, turn who will, and yet know not what it is to be ever gathering to, and growing in the Lord Jesus. I know that saints have their winter blasts, that set them back: but they have also their summer refreshings, to set them forward again, and make them grow in knowledge, faith, love, experience; or else, for want of this growth, they are always quarrelling themselves: but, for other professors, that never were rooted in Christ, they keep still their old footing and disposition. Men would blush for shame to have it said to them, they are as foolish this day as they were this day twenty years; or, that they are as bad in their calling, and as ill at their trade as when they began: and yet, in Christianity, many are as ill as they were thirty, forty, fifty years since; as ignorant of Christ and the gospel, as great strangers to communion with God in Christ. Surely, they that are gathered to

Christ, they will strive to get forward, they cannot get enough of him, but press toward the mark. They that have got enough of Christ have got nothing as yet; and they that have got him, they may think they have got nothing to what they see to be in him; and therefore they press forward, whenever they are themselves. And, indeed, when you are not going forward you are going backward. When a man rows against the stream, he holds up the boat; but let him lay aside the oars, he will go further down than he came up. Hence, gathering souls are assiduously for making use of the oars of gathering means, that they may reach forward; and hence, as God's gathering means will be delightful, so the devil's scattering means will be hateful to him that is gathered: everything that tends to make a separation betwixt Christ and him will be uneasy, especially when he hath made any progress at ordinances. Oh! to think of a separation again will be sad and sorrowful! Woe is me, that I am going back to a world of sin, and sinners, and temptation again! Being gathered to him, he cannot think of being separated from him.

6. If you be gathered to Shiloh, then it will be your desire and endeavour to gather others to him; the soul that comes to Christ will seek to draw others after him, John i. 45, 46. Whenever Christ found Philip, Philip found Nathanael, and says, "We have found the Messias: O come and see him." When Christ manifested himself to the woman of Samaria, she invites the men of the city to come to him: "O come see a man that told me all things that ever I did," John iv. 29. Never a soul was gathered to Christ but desired to gather others, especially its friends and relations. The parent that is in Christ will be careful to gather his children to Christ—the master his servant, Gen. xviii. 19, "I know, says God of Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." It is not possible but that soul that comes to Christ, and hath got a draught of his free love, if it could command ten thousand, it would command them to come to Christ. If you never had a care or concern this way to know the Lord, you declare you never was gathered to him. But you whose soul's desire is to gather others to Christ, you may be sure, concerning yourself, that you are gathered to Shiloh. Now, if you try yourselves impartially by these marks, you may come to find whether you have been gathered to Shiloh, yea or not.

2dly, The second sort then, that I would speak to, are some that may be sure that they were *never* gathered to Shiloh; and it is to be feared, that unbelievers make up the greatest part of this assembly; and therefore I must be allowed to speak, especially to them; and if believers themselves give ear, and the Lord concur with the word of general exhortation, they may get a new grip and a firm hold of Shiloh, by the by. My exhortation to the people in general, then, especially those that were never gathered unto Christ, is in the words of the prophet, Zeph. ii. 1, "Gather yourselves; yea, gather together, O nation not desired;" that is, either not *desiring*, even you that have no desire towards God and Christ, and his grace and favour, but are very indifferent about it; or, nation not *desirable*, having nothing lovely or amiable about you, to recommend you to God; yet, "O gather together, before the decree bring forth, and before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you; for, if once his wrath begin to burn, blessed are all they that trust in him," and gather to him. Also, in the words of the prophet, Isaiah xlv. 20, 22, "Assemble yourselves, and come." Why, what is that? It follows, "Look to me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Shiloh is come, and he is come for the salvation of the people. O let all the people say, "AMEN; even so, come Lord Jesus." Here is, "The feast of fat things, that the Lord of hosts hath made on this mountain, for all people," Isa. xxv. 6. "Therefore let all the people assemble themselves and come, that they may eat and drink." I allude to Ezek. xxxix. 17, where God speaks to every feathered fowl, and every beast of the field, saying, "Assemble yourselves and come, gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice, that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood." Indeed, "Except you eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of God, you have no life in you," John vi. 53. Therefore, assemble yourselves and come, gather to this sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel for you; a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God. Here is the carcase; O let the eagles be gathered together. We must preach this gospel to every creature, every rational creature; yea, to men that have lost their reason, and turned to beasts; every beast of the field, tame or wild, clean or unclean, Acts x. 12. What means the opening of the heavens there, and the descending of the sheet, the great sheet knit at four corners, containing all manner of wild beasts, and creeping things,

and fowls of the air? Why, the meaning was, Go call all, and every one of the people. The Gentiles, some of them are creeping in the dust, and wallowing in the mire of sinful lusts and worldly mindedness; others are flying in the air of pride, vanity, and selfishness; but go you and call the poor sinful creatures within your reach, whether they be creeping on the earth, or flying in the air; all the sinful house of Adam, are made up of such a sort of people; but go and tell them, that now Shiloh is come; and, to him must the gathering of the people be. Therefore, in the name of the great Shiloh, and in his Father's name, we invite and exhort all the people that have hitherto been gathering to the devil, and gathering to their lusts, and gathering to the world, and gathering to their idle cabals, and drunken gossipings, sinful diversions, and damnable debaucheries, now to think in earnest of gathering unto Shiloh; for, Shiloh is come, and let the gathering of the people be to him.

Now, seeing nothing but divine almighty power can gather souls unto Christ; therefore, O man, woman; every individual who is just now hearing me, whether old or young, look to God for power to accompany the call; for the gospel-call uses to be the channel, in which divine power runs, for conquering souls. And because I know not but this power may accompany this call, for making out the promise in the text, that to him shall the gathering of the people be; therefore, I shall offer some considerations, for pressing home this exhortation upon the people.

1. Consider that Shiloh is come to the people, that the people may come to him; for this is what I mean, by gathering to him, namely, a coming to him by faith; and this faith, you know, is a receiving and resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered in the gospel. Now, since he cannot be received, but in and by the gospel offer, the word of grace, the word of promise in the gospel; therefore to receive him, is to believe in him, John i. 12. As it is by unbelief that we depart from him, Heb. iii. 12, "Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;" so it is by believing in him, that we gather to him; and to believe in him, is to credit the record that God hath given of his Son: "And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; he that does not thus believe, hath made God a liar," 1 John v. 10, 11. To come to him by faith, then, is to close with him in the gospel-record, and upon the divine testimony; to have a divine persuasion of the truth

and goodness of the gospel-message, with particular application to yourself, saying, O here is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief," 1 Tim. i. 15, and so it is just a taking him at his word, and taking his word of grace, his word of honour for your salvation, according to the gospel-offer of him. If you be saying, then, that you cannot come to him by faith, it may be very true, for indeed you cannot come till he draw you, John vi. 44. You cannot believe till the Spirit of grace mix in with this word of grace; but do you know what you are saying, when you say you cannot come to him by faith, though the word of grace came to you in particular, to be believed by you? You are saying, in effect, that God is a liar; I cannot take his word for it; I cannot believe that he is speaking to me, or that he means any good to me. "To you is the word of this salvation sent," says the gospel. "No, says unbelief, never a word of that is true, with respect to me; let them apply it to whom it is sent, but I cannot think it is to the like of me." Wretch! you are calling the God of truth a liar. Oh blasphemy! If it were not to you, your unbelief would not be your sin; but of all sins it is the most damning, as well as the prolific womb that genders other sins. However, Shiloh is come to you, that you may come to him: "He came to his own, and his own [viz. the Jews,] received him not;" intimating, that the design of the work, and design of his coming, was that they might come to him, receive him, and gather to him. And now he is come to you Gentiles; he is come to *the people*, and shall the people reject him too? He is come to us in the flesh, by taking on our nature; he is come to us in the gospel, the gospel-offer, the gospel-promise, the gospel-invitation; and though he should never come any other way, yet it states your obligation, and lays a foundation for your coming to him; and if you reject him, you are as inexcusable as the Jews that rejected him were.

2. Consider whom it is you will be gathered to when gathered unto Shiloh. Surely, they that know his name will put their trust in him, and so gather to him. Psal. xxiv. 9, 10, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, that the King of glory may come in." Oh! who would not cast open the gates of their hearts to receive such an honourable guest. Oh! if you knew what a glorious one Christ is, you could not find in your heart to reject and despise him; he is not a man simply, or an angel, but a God-man, the Lord of men and angels. It is not possible to tell what glory is in him, for God is

in him : "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. A God-head dwelling in our flesh is the world's wonder ; it is such a mystery that the world cannot receive it ; but this is the gospel that we preach, "That God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. O think what of God is in Christ ! (1.) The authority of God is in him : "My name is in him," Exod. xxiii. 21, this is the proper name, Shiloh, the Sent, the Authorised, and Sealed of the Father, John vi. 27. He came in his Father's name, as well as his own, to seek and save lost sinners. As the authority of God, so, (2.) The wisdom and power of God is in him : "We preach Christ crucified—the wisdom of God, and the power of God," 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. All the treasures of divine wisdom, and all the magazines of divine power are in him. And not only so, but again, (3.) The Spirit of God is in him : "I have put my Spirit upon him, that he may bring forth judgment to the Gentiles," Isa. lxii. 1. He hath not only the Spirit of wisdom to contrive for the best, and the Spirit of power to save to the uttermost, but also the Spirit of grace to confer upon the people ; and shall not the gathering of the people be to him ? O ! what of God is in him ? (4.) The righteousness of God is in him ; and his righteousness is the righteousness of God, which is revealed to you in this gospel, from faith to faith, Rom. i. 17. (5.) The love of God is in him, for divine love is wrapt up in this garment of flesh and blood : "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him," 1 John iv. 9. (6.) The mercy of God is in him. Oh ! poor sinner, when you come to your dying moments, readily God's mercy will be your cry ; but in vain will you seek God's mercy, to the prejudice of God's justice ; and behold, justice and mercy meet together, and kiss one another, only in Christ ; mercy will vent no otherwise, but in Christ, in whom alone God is well-pleased, and by whom his justice is satisfied. What shall I say ? (7.) The salvation of God is in him ; Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is no name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus." Yea, (8.) The fulness of God is in him : "For it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19, and accordingly, Col. ii. 9, "In him dwells all the fulness of the God-head bodily." None of God's attributes or excellencies are out of him : "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the

express image of his person." There is enough here to provoke all the world to gather to him.

3. Consider what you must be gathered to, if you be not gathered to Shiloh.

(1.) If you be not gathered to Christ, you will be gathered to your idols and lusts; and have you not provoked God too much already by gathering towards that airth? May not the time past suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles? Will you prefer a base lust to blessed Jesus—a lust that would damn you, to a Jesus that would save you? Again,

(2.) If you be not gathered to Christ, the best airth you can pretend to go to, is to be gathered to the Law as your husband; and, Oh! is a broken covenant of works a better bargain, think you, than Christ? Nay, nay: "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse," Gal. iii. 10; that is, as many as think to be justified and accepted of God by their obedience to the command of the law, they are under the threatening and curse of the law; for, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" and hereby you are a debtor to the whole law, Gal. v. 3; and because you cannot pay the debt of obedience to the command, you must lie under the debt of satisfaction to the curse, and therefore under the heavy curse and condemnation of the law is your soul gathered, while you are out of Christ. Yea,

(3.) If you be not gathered to Christ, you must be gathered to the devil; for there is no medium, either Christ or the devil must be your master; if Christ be not entertained, you entertain the devil in his room. And do you consider what sort of guest he is? He is a guest that will blind you; for he is the god of this world that blinds the minds of them that believe not. He is a guest that will blast you, and blast every word to you that you hear, or else run away with it, that you may never get good of it; for he catches away the very seed that is sown in the heart, Matt. xiii. 19. He is a guest that will deceive you, by persuading you that you have either been gathered to Christ already, and that you are a good enough believer, or else that it is time enough for you to be gathered to Christ. And so he is, in a word, a guest that will destroy you, and devour you, as well as delude you; for, "The devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." And as now he is your tempter, so afterwards he will be your tormentor. Therefore, again,

(4.) Let me tell you, if you be not gathered to Shiloh, you must be gathered to hell ; for, " He that believeth not, shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. And it is not the minister that says it, it is the say and affirmation of the God of truth ; and if his say be not enough, know he hath sworn as well as said it, Hebrews iii. 18. He swears in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest. And to whom does he swear thus in his wrath ? Even to them that believe not. Alas ! there is no little wrath abiding that soul against whom God swears in his wrath ; it will be wrath proportioned to the worth of that blood of Christ, which you do trample under your feet. Oh ! " How shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation ?" Let not the devil persuade you, that all these things are but fancies ; for, when death's cold sweat begins to break upon you, you will find them to be sad realities, if you be not gathered unto Shiloh. And therefore, again,

4. Consider what things are a-gathering, that should hasten your gathering in to Shiloh. Clouds are gathering fast in our sky : a cloud of wickedness, a cloud of error, a cloud of wrath, a cloud of death.

(1.) A cloud of wickedness is gathering ; nay, this cloud is already gathered to such a blackness, that we cannot say, " The iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full ; or that the iniquity of Britain and Ireland is not yet full ; nay, our covenant-breaking, covenant-burning, covenant-burying, sin and defection, beside all other evils, have made our cup full, some time ago ; but it seems God hath a mind our cup should run over, that so his cup of judgments may run also ; for a cloud of wickedness is gathering more and more.

(2.) Clouds of error are gathering also ; a black cloud especially of Arianism, which threatens the destruction of the very foundation of Christianity. And if the foundation shake, what shall the righteous do ? Of this I spoke formerly ; therefore, I shall only say, when these clouds of wickedness and error are gathering to a prodigious blackness of darkness, it is a time to be gathering to Shiloh, who is the way and the truth ; the way to walk in, in opposition to the way of wickedness ; and the truth to be believed, in opposition to all the paths of error. But, moreover, these black clouds bode more a-coming.

3.) There is a cloud of wrath gathering over Britain ; a cloud of judgment and calamity is gathering over Scotland, and hath been

gathering these many years bygone, especially since the time that Scotland was incorporate with her neighbour ; a cloud of wrath hath been gathering over us, both as a church and nation ; what drops have fallen out of that cloud, to the rending and dividing of our church, and to the sinking and impoverishing of our state ; what clouds of disorder and confusion are hovering over our head, is too well known ; but the Lord knows what will be the end of these things, more dreadful showers of temporal judgments are in all appearance hastening on ; and oh ! is it not time to be gathering to Shiloh, the only place of soul-safety ? They that are in him have the leese of the bush, and are in absolute safety, whatever way the wind blows. But though you should escape the cloud of national judgments, yet there is a cloud of personal affliction gathering, be it sickness on your body, or the like. Is it not best to be under covert before the shower comes on ? Or, if you should escape that, yet,

(4.) Certainly there is a cloud of death gathering and coming upon you, as fast as days, and hours, and moments fly away ; and if your bodies be gathered to the grave before your souls be gathered to Shiloh, you will be miserable as long as God shall be blessed ; that is, for ever and ever. You may make a shift to live as merrily as you can now, but, "What will you do in the day of visitation ?" Isa. x. 3. What will you do when the king of terrors is gathering his forces against you, and when you shall be gathered before God's awful tribunal to hear and receive that direful and alarming sentence pronounced against you, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels !"

5. Consider how long he hath been offering to gather you. And how oft, O sinner, would he have gathered you, as a hen does her chickens under her wings, but ye would not ? How long ? Even all day long ; Rom. x. 21, "All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." God hath been stretching out his arm to take hold of you, even the arm of his grace in the gospel-offer and invitation, and you are not laid hold upon to this day. All the day long that the gospel-sun hath been shining have I been stretching out my arms, says God ; for God counts the time how long he waits upon you ; he reckons up the time how long you let him stand knocking at the door of your heart ; he counts every hour's refusal, and every year's refusal, though it be forty years : "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation." God hath been calling on some of you, ten,

twenty, thirty, forty years ; and, it may be, to gray hairs, but he counts the time how long ; he hath been pursuing you with his grace, while you have been catching feathers in the wind ; delighting yourselves in nothing but vanity, yea, lying vanity, forsaking your own mercy, as persons that have neither care for heaven, nor a fear of hell. What if the time be now come, wherein he is saying, I will wait no longer : “ Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone ;” if this very call be slighted, “ My Spirit shall strive no more with you ; I have long sought your kindness, and you refused it ; I offered my kindness, and you thought nothing of it ;” “ I would have gathered you, and ye would not.” The cause of your damnation, then, if you perish, is not in God, but in you ; it is not in his act of reprobation, but in your act of rebellion and wicked will. You are a gainsaying and rebellious people against the God that stretched forth his hand toward you ; say not, then, what ails God at me, but rather, what ails your wicked nature at God ? Oh may conquering grace at length come ! But again,

6. Consider what relation Christ stands in to the people, that the gathering of the people may be to him ; not only is Shiloh come in our nature, but he is come in the capacity of a Shiloh ; that is, the Sent of God, under such manifold relations to the people as may engage the hearts of the people. Since the text makes him the Sent of God, let us see what he is sent for, and whether the people have any concern therein.—He is sent to be the Saviour of the people : “ To you is born in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,” Luke ii. 11. “ This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world,” John iv. 24. Is he sent to be the Saviour of the people ; and shall not the gathering of the people be to him ? He is sent to be the Deliverer of the people : “ There is come out of Zion the Deliverer, that shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob,” Rom. xi. 26. Oh ! shall he come to deliver the people, and none of the people come to be delivered by him ? He is sent to be the Helper of the people, yea, all the help of the people is laid upon him : “ I have laid help upon one that is mighty,” Psal. lxxxix. 17. “ O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help,” Hos. xiii. 9. Is he the helper of the people, and the help itself ; and shall not the people come to him, to seek his help and take his help ? He is sent to be the Prophet of the people : “ The Lord hath given him the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary,” Isa. l. 4. He is the only powerful preacher and teacher of the

people: "Never man spake like this man;" and should not the people hear him? "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased, hear ye him." He is sent to be the Priest and the Sacrifice of the people. As he is a Priest for ever, Psalm cx. 4; so he gave himself to be an offering, and a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God, Eph. v. 2. And all was that the people may gather under the covert of the blood of the sacrifice. Again, he is sent to be the King of the people; "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion," Psalm ii. 6. Shall he have no subjects for your part? Will none in all this large audience be influenced to become willing and loyal subjects of this glorious and immortal King? Will none match with him? He is sent to be the Friend and Favourer of the people; hence called a Friend of publicans and sinners; not a friend to their sins, but such a friend to their souls, as to save them from their sins. He is sent to be the Justifier of the people, the Justifier of them that believe in Jesus; yea, hence he is said to justify the ungodly, for he came not to be a condemner, but a justifier; "God sent not his Son to the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved," John iii. 17. O! shall not guilty people come to him to be justified in all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses? He is sent to be the Shepherd and Bishop of the people, that the people may return unto him, as the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, 1 Pet. ii. 25. He is sent to be the Physician of the people; hence, his name is JEHOVAH-ROPHI, "The Lord that healeth thee. And as many as touched him were healed. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." And, who are they that need not his healing? Therefore, let the gathering of the people that need healing be to him. He is sent to be the Witness, the Leader, and Commander of the people; "Behold, I have given him for a Witness, a Leader, and commander of the people," Isa. lv. 4; and all that the gathering of the people may be to him. He is sent to be a Counsellor, a Father, and a Prince of the people; "To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; and the government shall be upon his shoulders," Isaiah ix. 6. He is sent to be the Builder of the people, and the Foundation-stone, upon which the people should build; "Even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory," Zech. vi. 13. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried

stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation," Isa. xxviii. 16 ; and all that the gathering of the people may be to him. He is sent to be the Blessor of the people, that the people may gather to him for a blessing ; " God having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities," Acts iii. 26. He hath sent him to bless the people ; and God's blessing will light on all them that gather to him for a blessing ; " Men shall be blest in him, and all nations shall call him blessed," Psalm lxxii. 17. He is sent to be the Standard-bearer of the people ; " He is the Chief, the Standard-bearer among ten thousand," Song v. 10 ; hence he is called the Ensign of the people, and to it shall the Gentiles seek, Isa. xi. 10. Ought not, then, the gathering of the people to be to their Standard-bearer and Ensign ? He is sent to be the Burden-bearer of the people : behold the burden of your sins is laid upon him ; " The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all," Isa. liii. 6, 8 [or, *made them to MEET him*], he hath gathered together all the sins of the people, and laid them on his back, that the gathering of the people may be to him, as the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world. As the burden of our sins, so the burden of our sorrows is laid upon him : " Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," Isa. liii. 4. The burden of our wounds, and bruises, and stripes, was laid upon him ; " He was wounded for our sins, and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and by his stripes we are healed," ver. 5. All the wounds that we should have got with the sword of God's wrath, and all the stripes that should have been laid upon our backs to eternity, were gathered together, and laid upon Christ's back. And why was the burden of all the sins and sorrows of the people laid upon him, but that the gathering of the people might be to him as the Burden-bearer of the people ? What shall I say ? He is sent, not only to be all relations, but all things to the people ? He is sent to be the Covenant of the people ; " I will give thee for a Covenant of the people," Isa. lxvi. 6. He is sent to be the Glory of the people ; " A Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of his people Israel." He is sent to be the Hope of the people ; " He is our Hope," says the apostle ; and, " The Lord shall be the Hope of his people," Joel iii. 16. He is sent to be the Desire of the people ; therefore it is said of him, " The Desire of all nations shall come." He is sent to be the Propitiation of the people ; " He is the Propitiation for our sins, 1 John

ii. 2. He is sent to be the Salvation and Consolation of the people, "Behold thy Salvation comes;" and he is called the consolation of Israel. He is sent to be the Door of the people; "I am the Door; by me, if any enter in, he shall be saved," John x. 9. Again, he is sent to be the Way of the people; "I am the Way: no man comes to the Father but by me." He is sent to be the Ladder of the people; he is the true Jacob's ladder, that reaches from earth to heaven, by which alone we can ascend up to glory. And, O should not the gathering of the people be to him! And because they cannot of themselves enter in at this door, nor walk in this way, nor climb this ladder, therefore he is sent to be the leader of the people; "I will lead the blind in a way they know not, and in paths which they have not known." Yea, and to be the Strength of the people, that the people may gather to him and trust in the Lord JEHOVAH, in whom there is everlasting strength. He is sent to be the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of the people, 1 Cor. i. 30. He is made of God unto us all these things; even he who is the Lord our righteousness. And, that he might be a perfect law-biding righteousness of the people, behold with wonder! He sent him to be the Sin of the people, and the Curse of the people; "He hath made him to be sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. "To redeem us from the curse of the law, he was made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. What shall I say? He is the Redeemer of the people, the Surety of the people, the Advocate of the people, and the Ransom of the people. Shiloh is come, and he is sent of God to be all relations and all things to the people, that the gathering of the people may be to him. God hath put all the privileges of the people into his hands, that he may be the Light and Life of the people: who is therefore called the Light of the world, and the Life of the world. He hath put all gifts and grace, and fulness in his hand, for the people's use and behoof; "He hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them." And is there nothing in all this to be a motive or argument for gathering the people unto him? Is he sent for all these ends to the people, and shall not the people be gathered to him? O! may the people come to him, who is the All of the people!

7. Consider what house-room there is in him for the people to gather unto. And,

(1.) He is a hiding-house for the people to gather to; "A man

shall be as a hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," Isa. xxxii. 2. Behold, he is a hiding-house, a shelter-house, a refuge for the people, a sanctuary for the people, that the people may flee to him, saying, with the psalmist, "I flee to thee to hide me."

(2.) He is a dwelling-house for the people to gather to: "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," Psalm xci. 1. And, O they that dwell on him, they dwell on high, and the place of their defence is the munition of rocks. They that are once gathered to him, he and they do mutually inhabit one another in the communion of the Holy Ghost; "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, by his Spirit which he hath given us," 1 John iv. 13.

(3.) He is a working-house for the gathering of the people to: not one spiritually good work can be performed out of him; for, "Without him we can do nothing," John xv. 5. But when one gets into this house, then he is like a man in his working-house, that hath all his working instruments and tools at his hand, without which he could not work at his trade: yea, then he hath Christ himself for his working hand: "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." He performs all my work for me, his strength being made perfect in my weakness.

(4.) He is the bathing-house for the gathering of the people to: "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin," 1 John i. 7; "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." He himself is the fountain open to the house of David for sin and for uncleanness: Here alone it is that the filthy leprous people can get their souls bathed and purged, and must gather to him for that end, saying, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow," Psalm li. 7.

(5.) He is the treasure-house for the people to gather unto. Where must the gathering of the people be, but to the only store-house? Poor people may be here supplied out of his unsearchable riches; for, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. "It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell, that out of his fulness we might receive grace for grace."

(6.) He is the pleasure-house for the gathering of the people to. He is a pleasure-house both for God and for the people of God; such a pleasure-house for God to dwell in, that as God is well pleased

in him, reconciled and satisfied in him, in whom his soul delights; so he is infinitely well pleased with all that gather in to him, they are accepted in him, and that with pleasure: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And when once sinners are gathered in to him, O they are well pleased also; yea, abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house, Psal. xxxvi. 8, "In whom believing, we rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. In his presence there is fulness of joy." There is no house of pleasure in the world like this.

(7.) He is the magazine-house for the gathering of the people to. All our magazines for military provision are in him: he indeed is "like the tower of David, built for an armoury, where there hangs a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men," Song iv. 4; for all the believer's spiritual armour, whereby he must fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh, is hanging in this house; and therefore, whenever he is for fighting, he is to put on the whole armour of God; and to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Never will a soul get a happy stroke given to the devil, or corruption, without armour got out of this magazine-house. Here lies all the powder and ammunition, whereby the most subtle engines of hell may be blown up and broken.

(8.) He is the banquetting-house for the gathering of the people to; "He brought me to the banquetting-house, and his banner over me was love," Cant. ii. 4, it is remarkable and strange, that there should be need of a banner in a banquetting-house. A banner is for war; and indeed his people, when they are fed in his house, they are fitted for war: but, O a banner of love is good provision for war; the manifestation of the love of God in Christ, encourages and strengthens the soul, both for work and warfare. He fights best when he feeds best upon the love and favour of God in Christ, who himself is both the banquetting-house, the banner, and the feast; he is the food, "His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed." There he feeds them with his pardon and peace; he feeds them with his righteousness and fulness; yea, there he sups with them, and they with him: and this feast of fat things is provided for all people, Isa. xxv. 6, that they may gather in to the banquetting-house. He only is the victual-house, the true Bethlehem, the house of bread.

(9.) He is the praying-house for the gathering of the people to; the true temple, and house of prayer for all people, Isa. lvi. 7.

Would you have a house for praying acceptably in, so as to be always heard and answered, whenever you pray? Here it is; there is no house of prayer like it: and wherever you go, be it to a corner or a closet, this house is at hand for you to run in to, that you may be accepted in the Beloved: and when you go in to this house of prayer, you shall have whatever you ask, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, John xiv. 13.

(10.) He is the praising-house for the gathering of the people to; "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee," Psal. lxxxiv. 4. And, indeed, the farther you go into the house of prayer, the more will you find it to be the house of praise. Much praise, and honour, and glory in the highest, does God get in this house; whereas, people out of this house, do nothing but dishonour and affront him. But, O may all the people praise him, by gathering in to this house! O what notable housing is there here for the people! Therefore, let the gathering of the people be to him.

(11.) In a word, he is the meeting-house with God; "There will I meet with thee, even on the mercy-seat, between the cherubims," Exodus xxv. 22. Here is house-room for all the people. There is a sign hung up over the door of the house, with this inscription, "Whosoever will, let him come," Rev xxii. 17.

8. Consider there is a gathering-place for the people in the Lord Jesus, with a WHAT THOUGH written below the inscription.

(1.) What though you have never come in to this day, yet now you are welcome to come in, though you have been standing without all your days till now: it is come to the eleventh and last hour; "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Matt. xx. 6. He calls you in to his working-house.

(2.) What though you have played the harlot with many lovers, yet there is place in him for your gathering to; Jer. iii. 1, "Yet return unto me, saith the Lord." Yea, Isa. i. 18, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as white as wool." Have you been a drunkard, a swearer, an unclean person, &c.? Why, "Such were some of you, but you are washed, justified and sanctified," &c. Read 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.

(3.) What though you have been untoward and untractable hitherto, yet there is place in him for your gathering to: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me

and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his own heart; yet I have seen his ways, and will heal him," Isa. lvii. 17.

(4.) What though you have been making God to serve with your sins, and wearying him with your iniquity, yet there is place in him for your gathering to him; for, behold what he says, even with respect unto such, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquity for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance," Isa. xliii. 25, 26.

(5.) What though you have been guilty of the most provoking and grievous backsliding, yet there is place in him for your gathering unto; "Return, ye backsliding children, for I will heal your backslidings: yea, I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely," Jer. iii. 14, 22.

(6.) What though your outward circumstances in the world be never so mean and contemptible, so as no person cares for you, more than the mire of the street, and you are cast out at all hands; yet there is place in him for your gathering to; for, "He gathers the outcasts of Israel." And, James ii. 5, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, to be rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom?"

(7.) What though many have gathered into Shiloh already, yet there is room enough, and place enough for you to gather in also; for, as it is said in the parable, Luke xiv. 22, though many were gathered in to the supper, yet there was room; so here, though thousands, and ten thousands have been gathered to Shiloh since he came, and before he came, yet there is room; there is place for you: as he says, "In his Father's house are many mansions;" so say I of Shiloh's house, that there are many mansions therein; with him there are multitudes of mercies for multitudes of sinners. O! who can reckon the multitudes of his tender mercies? Who can comprehend the vastness of this gathering place? It would hold thousands of worlds, let be one world? therefore let not that stand in the way of your gathering unto Shiloh.

(8.) What though you could never think that there was any place in him for you, nor any mercy for the like of you; yet nevertheless there is a gathering place in him for you, Isa. lv. 8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts:—for, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

(9.) What though you be unworthy to come to him, yet there is place in him for unworthy sinners to gather in to. Are you unworthy of him? Sure I am that is true; as true a word as ever

you spake ; but the more unworthy you are, the more welcome to him, who hath worth enough for you and himself both : he expects no worth to be in you, till once you come to him. What is it that makes you unworthy ? Is it, that you are poor, miserable, wretched blind, and naked ? Or, is it that you are stupid and senseless, and know not that you are in these circumstances ? Why, he makes that the very reason of his inviting you to gather in to him ; “ Because thou sayest, I am rich, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich,” &c., Rev. iii. 17, 18. Unworthy sinners, gather in to that well-furnished house, where all that you need to make you happy and holy is to be had : and say not you are unfit to come ; for there you see, that even impotent and unsensible sinners, whom we are ready to shut out, grace is ready to take in. Yea,

(10.) What though you be unable to come to him, and gather in to Shiloh, yet there is place in him for your gathering in to him ; Isa. xl. 29. For, “ He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength.” If you would be gathered, he stands ready to reach you his helping hand, and enjoins you to take hold of his strength, that you may make peace with him, and you shall make peace with him, Isa. xxvi. 3. Yea, what though you have been unwilling all your days, till this very moment unwilling to be gathered ? Yet he who says, “ How oft would I have gathered you, and you would not ;” is now saying, If you would be gathered, I am here, and my power and grace is at your service, for drawing you nearer. Yea, what though you find much unwillingness and enmity this moment in your hearts against him ; yet if you would be content that he break your enmity, and make you willing, O there is place, there is place in him for you to gather in to. Yea, what shall I say ? Though you be as unwilling as ever you was, and your ill-will against him is ready to land you in the burning lake ; yet know, O wretched enemy to God and Christ ! he is calling you to come to him, saying, “ Whosoever will, let him come.” Oh ! will you not be gathered ? “ Why will you die ? As I live, I have no pleasure in your death :” I have infinitely greater pleasure in your gathering to Shiloh, in whom all my attributes are glorified and well pleased. And if this call do at last kindle a secret wish and desire in your soul, saying, O that he would come and gather me ! Behold his gathering arms

are stretched out towards you, and you shall be as welcome to him as ever any soul was since the world began. Well, is there such a gathering-place for the people here, such a gathering house, with so many What thoughts written on the sign of the house, or the face of the door, to invite all passengers that are travelling to eternity, to come in, and be happy for ever? And shall there be no gathering of the people to Shiloh? May we hope that divine power hath made some to be willing, and that they are either saying, "Behold we come to thee, for thou art the Lord our God:" or else, Lord come and draw: come and gather, and get the glory to thy name for ever.

Having offered these motives and considerations, I should next offer some directions. It is divine power only that does the business; and therefore, I shall only give you these two directions, in case you would know how to manage, so as you may not be deceived in this matter. If I could help you to heaven, I think I would desire to do it; and, for your help and direction, in order to your right gathering to Shiloh, I would say to you,

1. Never satisfy yourselves with gathering about him and his ordinances, without gathering to himself. Many, like the multitude in the gospel, may gather about him, yea, so near as to press upon him, while there was but one poor woman, that was gathered to him, and touched him: "Somebody hath touched me," says Christ: Why, says the disciples, "The multitude press upon you; and what mean you, Lord, by that, Somebody hath touched me." Nay, but as one of the Fathers said, *Turba premit, fides tangit*; "The multitude press, but faith toucheth." Satisfy not yourselves then, I say, with a gathering about him, unless you be gathered to him. People may gather about a tree, to pluck the fruit thereof, but it is another thing to be gathered to it, so as either to become a branch, or have an interest in it; even so may some people eat of the fruit of the tree of life, in respect of common providence, common graces, common influences; but it is another thing to have an interest in the tree, and union to it: so here, many may be gathered to ordinances, and even to solemn ordinances. and partake of the external privileges thereof; and yet not first gathered to the God of ordinances, nor having any interest in him, or union unto him, have no right consequently to intermeddle with the children's bread. O sir! say you, that is a hard note that casts me all down again. Why, may the Lord himself bring down all false refuges: but in

case it perplex any poor soul, that hath been sitting under Christ's shadow at this occasion, and his fruit hath been sweet to their taste, and they may think, that all they got is but only the fruit, while they have no union to, or interest in the tree: Well then, say you, How shall one know if he only eats of the fruit, and hath no interest in the tree? In answer to which, I will endeavour to illustrate by this plain simile: You know, when a man hath no interest in the tree of a garden, if he gets the fruit, he cares not what come of the tree, though the branches of it were all broken down: he loves the fruit, and takes it; but the tree is not his own, and therefore he hath no concern about it; but, the man that hath an interest in the tree, though he loves the fruit, yet he loves the tree better than the fruit; and therefore he would rather that people should take away all the fruit from him, than break and destroy the branches of the tree; for he esteems the tree better than all the fruit that grows upon it. The application thereof is easy; for, even so the hypocrite that eats of the fruit of the tree of life, as it were, but hath no interest in the tree; the fruit, viz., the frame, the enlargement, or the like, is all that he wants; the gifts and common graces he gets, is what he solaces himself withal; he rests there, and sits down satisfied, without Christ himself, or any true love to him, and unfeigned concern for his glory and interest: self is upmost with him, and therefore he pleases himself with the fruit, and loves it more than the tree. But the true believer, that is gathered to Christ, he loves the fruit indeed, and takes pleasure in the communication: but the tree itself is above all things to him; and the fruit he tasted still the more recommends the tree to him. O Christ's gifts are sweet, but himself sweetest of all! The believer's frame is like the frame of a picture; he is not taken up with the frame, but with the picture that is within the frame, even Christ, who is the picture of God, the image of the invisible God. See, I say, that it be Christ himself that you are gathered to.

2. Be still about his hand, in the use of appointed means, but with a constant eye to divine power. Let means and ordinances be still used; for though, as they are your performances, they cannot be profitable: yet, as they are his ordinances, he may put a blessing in them. Therefore be still in the King's high-way, in the use of means; for, though the natural use of means and God's saving grace have no connexion, yet there is far less a connexion betwixt that grace, and the neglect of means. The poor beggar, that needs

an alms from the king, goes to the king's high-way, where he passes : and surely he is nearer his purpose, than if he should go to the top of a mountain, where the king never comes ; so, be you still in the use of means, in the Lord's way ; but rest not there, lest you be like one, that, upon pretence of seeking a treasure on the other side of a river, should come to the boat, which is the mean, and rest there, without going further ; why, he may thus lose the treasure for ever. In your use of the means, look beyond the means, and cry for almighty drawing power, without which it is simply impossible you can make one step towards Shiloh. God knows you can do nothing this way yourself, and he does not expect it of you, that you should come to him in your own strength : nay, if you essay to do so, you but affront him, who is the strength of Israel ; and ye disparage his power, as if a creature, far less a filthy sinful creature, dead in trespasses and sins, would act independently of him. O then, cast yourself always into his almighty gathering arms, crying, O power, power, of the eternal Spirit of God, come ! Cry for a powerful conviction of the Spirit, whereby you may see how far off you are from God and Christ ; they that are gathered to him are made to see how far they are separate from him, and to say, " Lord, I am lying in the arms of the devil, and I know not how soon I may be in hell ; O pity, pity, of thy sovereign mercy !" Cry also for the powerful illumination of the Spirit, that you may see a God in Christ ; not an absolute God, sitting in the throne of flaming justice, but on the mercy-seat, sprinkled over with the justice-satisfying blood of the Lamb, from whence mercy does vent itself, to the highest honour, and greatest glory of infinite justice. Cry, in a word, for the powerful operation of the Spirit, the irresistible efficacious pull of his omnipotent arm : O long for a day of power, a gathering day ? Many a black powerful hinderance and drawback you have ; every lust says, upon the matter, If I can get my will, he shall never be gathered to Shiloh ; the devil says, If I can get my will, he shall never win to Christ ; the world, and the cares of it, say the same ; your graceless neighbours, and wicked companions, say the same ; there is a strong hellish combination to hinder your coming to Shiloh. Yet nevertheless, though all the entanglements of the world, all the corruptions of the heart, and all the devils in hell, should join counsel together, to keep your soul back from Christ, one divine draught of the cord of love will make them all yield. These are potent enemies, but here is an omnipotent God ; they are mighty, but he is almighty.

O sirs, cry, and continue to cry for his gathering power! and though you have been long seeking an omnipotent pull of divine grace, and, to your sense, have not got it; yet, if you wait for it, cry for it, and be earnestly solicitous to obtain it, it is a thousand to one, if you miss it; nay, it cannot be; for, "He is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him," Isa. xxx. 18. Judgment here, is not judgment in opposition to mercy, but judgment in opposition to folly; that is, he is an infinitely wise God, who knows the best time of coming and paying his visit; and because he is a God of judgment, blessed are all they that wait for him. He hath long waited for you; O wait for him in his own way! And when he is stretching forth his arms towards you in this gospel, offering to gather you; let your heart cry to him, saying, "Lord, thou who gathers the lambs with thine arm, O do thou not only stretch forth thine arms toward me, but clasp thine arms about me; gather me, and I shall be gathered." If you be brought to this, I would hope the good work were begun.

3dly, The third sort, to whom I proposed to direct my exhortation, was to believers, who ARE gathered to Shiloh. My exhortation to you is, that, through grace, you would gather more closely to Shiloh, than ever you have done, so as to be rooted in him, and abide in him, Col. ii. 7, John xv. 5. O cry for more and more of his gathering power and grace, to bring you nearer and nearer unto him. More particularly,

1. Hath Shiloh come and gathered you to himself? Then, O live UPON him; for that is the end, for which you are gathered to him, Gal. ii. 20, that the life you live may be a life of faith upon the Son of God, who not only loved you, and gave himself for you, but gathered you also out of the stinking grave of sin and misery, wherein you was. You have need to live a life of dependence upon him; for all other things may soon fail you, and nothing in all the world may be left you, but himself. But when the spider's web is swept down, yet you may see the house standing sure; even so, when the cob-webs of creature-confidences fail, faith will see a sure foundation to rely upon, "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit be found in the vine," &c., yet faith in exercise will induce a person to rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of salvation. You will every day need to be living on him; for, as I noticed upon another occasion, the vessel that is full to-day, needs a new filling to-morrow: and the stomach that seemed to be satisfied just now,

within a few hours will be empty and craving again ; so here, your vessel may soon be empty, but though the vessel be empty, the fountain is full ; and his power to help is creating power, whereby he can command nothing into a being.

2. Not only live on him, but live WITH him ; let it appear, that you are gathered out of the world, by your living above the world, in the place where Shiloh is ; “ If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God,” Col. iii. 1. Oh ! how unsuitable is it for them who are gathered to Shiloh in heaven, not to have their conversation in heaven ? What a pity is it, that they should so much resemble a bird they call the lapwing, that hath a crown upon her head, and yet lives upon excrements ? Hath the Lord crowned you with his loving-kindness, and yet you live upon the dung of this world ? Hath he made you an heir to a kingdom, and yet you lie tumbling in the ashes ? Surely the believer that does not live above the world, he lives below himself.

3. Are you gathered unto Shiloh ? Then, not only live on him, and live with him, but live TO him. For this cause also, did he gather you to him, that you might live to him, and to his glory and honour ; “ You are not to live to yourselves, but to him that died for you, and rose again,” 2 Cor. v. 15. In him there is a gathering of all gifts, and graces, and fulness, and all mediatorial offices, and divine qualifications for your use and behoof ; and, to him, O believer, should be the gathering of all the powers and faculties of your soul, that you may glorify and honour him. O let the gathering of your desires and delights be to him, who is the Desire of all nations, and the Delight of all the saints and angels in heaven ! Let the gathering of your thoughts and meditations be to him, and the meditation of his name will be sweet ! O let the gathering of your hearts and affections be to him ; for, “ he is altogether lovely.” Let the gathering of your prayers and praises be to him. Begging and blessing should go together ; for you will have occasion to beg from him as long as you are out of heaven ; and you will have reason to bless him, as long as you are out of hell. Though you that are gathered to him have no reason to fear hell, “ For there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ ;” yet you have always reason to bless, that you have escaped it. In a word, let the gathering of your words and actions be to him, so as you may put honour upon him, before the world, by the whole tenor

of your talk and walk, that your neighbours may take notice of it, that you have been with Jesus, and that you are gathered to him ; and let the gathering of your services and sacrifices be to him, saying, " What shall I render to the Lord, for all his benefits towards me ?" O render your humble service to him, saying, " Truly, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bands." Render him the love of your hearts, the calves of your lips, and the obedience of your life. Thus are you to live to him.

4. Are ye gathered to Shiloh ? O then endeavour to gather OTHERS to him ! See if you can get all that are in your family to come to Shiloh with you ; saying, with Joshua, " As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord, whatever others do," Joshua xxiv. 15. O have you been gathered to Christ ? And will you be careless though your friends, your children, be gathered to the devil ? O hath Christ brought you to himself, and will he bring you to glory, and gather you to heaven ? and will you be easy, though all about you be gathered unto hell ? No, no ; that cannot be your disposition, if you be a believer indeed. If you be content in your lifetime to serve him, you will study to your power, that others may do the like. And, this is the way to make the love of Christ continue in the world ; for, when you teach your neighbours, your servants, your children, the way of the Lord, they, following your example, may teach their children too ; and this will go from generation to generation, so as generations to come may praise the Lord ; or, at least, it will not fail on your part. Oh ! how is it to be regretted, that few come to Christ ; and of the few that come, how few do shew their love, in endeavouring to bring others to him ? Therefore, O let this be amended, and endeavour, in the place where you dwell, and the station you are in providence placed into, that, by your holy conversation, others may be gathered unto Shiloh too.

5. Are you gathered ? O let not believers, that are gathered to Shiloh, forget their gathering together for Christian fellowship and prayer ; Heb. x. 24, 25, " Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works ; not forsaking the assembling ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching." The wicked, that are to be gathered to the burning Tophet, are making speed in sinful ways, and gathering in clubs and cabals, to hearten and harden one another : and, O, shall not the godly gather

together, to exhort and excite one another in the way to heaven ; as iron sharpens iron, so does the holy gathering of saints use to sharpen the edge of their spirits in the Lord's way. But since fellowship-meetings have been deserted, many professors are blunted and rusted ; several Christian societies are broken and evanished, even at a time, when they that fear the Lord should speak often one to another in spiritual conferences. O ! if you be gathered unto Shiloh, let your zeal for him appear, in restoring and reviving these Christian gatherings, in a regular manner : and pray, that the devil's scattering wind that he hath raised in our day, for separating and dividing ministers and Christians from one another, may be laid.

6. To add no more, and to encourage you in the whole of your Christian course, O you, that through grace have been gathered to Shiloh, take home the comfort that belongs to your gathered state. As to these that are yet in a distant state, separate from the Lord Jesus, we have little comfort to offer, if you abide there ; for, in the Lord's time, you will be gathered to the grave, and after that you will be gathered before the tribunal of God, to receive the dreadful sentence, " Depart from me, ye cursed ;" and, in all appearance, some here will be gathered before that awful tribunal before they be gathered together here again ; it is more than probable we are not all to meet again in this manner, till we meet before the fiery bench of the glorious Judge ; and if you be not gathered to him, as an amiable Jesus now, you must be gathered to him as a terrible Judge then.—And, Oh ! that the thoughts of this would excite poor souls to think of gathering to Shiloh before they part, that they may part with God's blessing, and not under his heavy curse ! But as to you that have been gathered unto Christ, I would have you know that God allows you strong consolation. You having fled for refuge to the hope set before you, you may rejoice, in the hope of the glory of God, that the joy of the Lord may be your strength, in the whole of your work and warfare, as you go through the wilderness. You may rejoice in this, that as your hearts are gathered unto Shiloh now, so your happiest gathering-time is but coming ; for he that hath begun to gather you as stones for the spiritual building, will never leave the work till the building be completed, with shoutings of " Grace, grace unto it." He will never give over gathering you till you be completely happy ; from time to time, the work will be advanced, by the means of his word and ordinances, till the consummation of the work in glory ; for he hath

appointed a gospel-ministry for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying the body of Christ, till they all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, Eph. iv. 12, 13. He hath appointed these three fearful things, death, judgment, and eternity, to be three happy gatherings for you ; the initial gathering being over, by your getting in to Christ, after your progressive gathering is come to a close, in your having finished your course, and fought the good fight of faith, your glorious and consummate gathering will take place ; the day of death will be the glorious commencement of it. The first coming of Shiloh hath ushered in a gracious gathering ; his second coming will produce a glorious gathering ; but of these gathering seasons, I formerly spoke at large ; I only say, therefore, that then, O believer, then shall you be ever with the Lord ; and it is for this reason you are now gathered to him, that there you may be for ever with him ; and so sure as you are gathered to him in time, so sure shall you be with him through eternity ; not only for ever with the patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles ; not only for ever with angels and archangels ; not only for ever with saints and seraphims ; but for ever with the Lord ; for none of these can make a heaven without him. Christ himself will be the centre of the assembly, and heart of the meeting ; and though now you are but with him for a start, and he is with you but for a moment, and so your communion with him is but in transient glances of his glory ; it may be just now you are with him in the banquetting-house, but instantly you are, as it were, at the back of the door : it is only for a little, but then for ever ; and it is but a little of him that you have for a little while ; yet then, O then, shall you be for ever with the Lord ; " Wherefore comfort one another with these words," 1 Thes. iv. 18. Know, that being gathered to him on earth, you shall be gathered to him in heaven ; and being gathered in grace, you shall be gathered in glory : for all the promises of grace and glory are gathered in him, and you being gathered to him, are in him also, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen.

And now this gathering of the people here is to part ; but, O happy parting, to these who can date their first or farther gathering to Shiloh, from their gathering to Carnock ? For, part with whom you will, Christ and you shall never part again : whatever clouds may be in your sky, yet your sun is risen, and will never set. But

the most part of you here were never yet gathered to Shiloh : and oh ! how can you find it in your heart to go away without him, and without so much as a desire after him, who is the Desire of all nations ! For my own part, I cannot think of your going away in such a case. Alas ! shall he have it to say, "I would have gathered you as a hen does her chickens under her wings, but you would not !" Oh ! wherefore did you gather to this place, if you would not be gathered to Shiloh ! And if you be more willing to be gone than willing to be gathered, woe is me, that my text will be no more but a witness against you upon Carnock green that you would not ; and that the devil, and the world, and your lusts, were more desirable to you, and you had more heart to be gathered to them than to be gathered to Shiloh. O then, sirs, heartless parting, while you are content to part with Shiloh for ever, rather than to part with a base lust or a black devil ! If that be not your choice, then let your heart say, in the sight of the living God, if you can. Lord, I think I would be gathered, and would rather choose to die upon the spot than not to be gathered unto Shiloh ; and my soul could wish that all my dearest lusts were buried in this green, never to rise again, and that Christ might have my heart for ever, in room of them all. Why, man, can you say that to the heart-searching God ! Then, poor soul, let me desire you to take the first convenient closet or corner you can get, and there tell him this over again more solemnly ; and, at the same time, bless him that ever Shiloh came to you, and that ever you felt the virtue of this promise—that "To him should the gathering of the people be."

END OF VOL. IV.