

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.

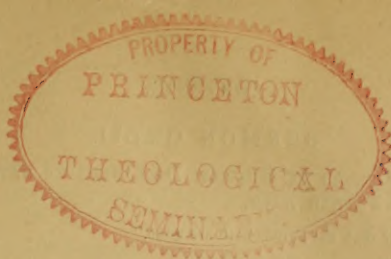
"By these he, being dead, yet speaketh."—HEB. xi. 4.

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# RALPH ERSKINE'S SERMONS.

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## SERMON CXXXIV.

GOD'S GREAT NAME, THE GROUND AND REASON OF SAVING  
GREAT SINNERS.<sup>1</sup>

"Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake."—PSALM cvi. 8.

MY friends, the sacramental cup that some of you have in view, is a cup of salvation; and those that adventure to take that cup into their hand, had need to be persons duly informed, and heartily concerned about salvation. The very first piece of heart-exercise in all that are effectually convinced and awakened to a sense of sin and fear of wrath, is that or the like question, arising from the bottom of the heart; "Men and brethren, what shall I do to be saved?" Surely they are not fit for a communion-table, who have never yet come this length in religion, so as to be more concerned about salvation, and the solution of this question than ever they were about any temporal concern in the world; for such as stand fair to be worthy communicants, they have come yet a greater length than this, namely, to get that question resolved to their satisfaction, and their mind spiritually enlightened in the knowledge of the method of salvation through Christ, so as to see upon what terms, and for what reason it is that God saves them: and particularly, that there is no reason why he should save them, unless he bring the reason from himself, that it will not be for their sake, but for his own. God's great end, in all his works, is the glory of his own name; and especially his work of saving sinners through Christ; and that which makes it a great work, is, because his great name is so much con-

(1) This subject was finished in one sermon, preached at Carnock, July 18th, 1730, before the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.



cerned therein, and magnified thereby, that it is not so greatly glorified any other way, as it is here. God proposes, in this work, that the loftiness of man shall be brought down, and the Lord alone exalted; and hence all whom he saves, he humbles them so low for their sin and wickedness, as that to bring them to this acknowledgment, that, if ever God save them, it will be owing, not unto them, but unto his own glorious name. What thought and concern about salvation ye have, I know not; but if ye be of these that believe, to the saving of your souls, you will see so much of your own sinfulness and guiltiness before God, that you will be brought to despair of salvation in any other way, and upon any other account, that that which was his method of saving Israel of old; "Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake."

How this people sinned, we are told in the two preceding verses: and how God saved them, we are told here in the text: "Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake." The more full history of their sinning, even in the extremity of danger they were in, and of God's saving them at the Red sea, ye have *Exod. xiv.* throughout. And concerning this wonderful salvation, there are four things ye may notice in the words.

1. We have a glorious Saviour in the pronoun, *He*, namely, *JEHOVAH*, the great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Angel of the covenant, that appeared to Moses in the bush, and delivered Israel by the hand of Moses. He is the Saviour; even he that says, "Look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

2. The grievous sinners whom he saved, in the word, *THEM*: "He saved them:" namely, the Israelites, his professing people, when they were in great peril, having the Red Sea before them, the rude enemy behind them, and inaccessible mountains on each side of them: in the greatest extremity, and yet a sinful people; sinning against God even in that extremity; yet, he saved them.

3. The great argument that moved him to save them, or upon what account he thus appeared; it was, for his name's sake; that is, for his own sake, as Hezekiah prays to be saved from Sennacherib, *Isa. xxxvii. 20*, "That all the kingdoms of the earth may know, that thou art the Lord, even thou only:" or, for thy name's sake; that is for thy glory's sake, *Psal. lxxix. 9*, "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." That is, also for thy

mercy's sake, for thy goodness' sake ; or, because they were called by his name ; this is urged, Jer. xiv. 9, "Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name, leave us not."

4. The marvellous nature and circumstance of this salvation, in the word, Nevertheless ; the glory of divine mercy is herein magnified, that he saved them for his name's sake, with a *non obstante*, with a nevertheless ; that is, notwithstanding all their sin, though their sin cried to God, not to save them, but to damn them : not to help them, but to destroy them ; "Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake," notwithstanding their provocations.

OBSERV. That when God saves sinners, or a sinful people, he does it for his *name's sake*, notwithstanding their provocation, whereby they forfeit his help, and deserve destruction.

I shall First premise some general positions for clearing the text and doctrine. Secondly, Illustrate the truth of the doctrine, from some parallel texts of scripture.

1st, I shall premise some general positions for clearing the text and doctrine.

First Position, "That the salvation and temporal deliverance that God, for his name's sake, wrought for Israel of old, in bringing them out of Egypt through the Red Sea to Canaan, was typical of the great salvation from sin and wrath, to eternal life, through Jesus Christ ;" which spiritual and eternal salvation this text itself leads me to speak of, not excluding the temporal deliverance, remarkable appearances of divine providence, for the visible church in general. As Israel's sin and provocation, and the judgments that came on them for the same, was our example and warning-piece, 1 Cor. x. 6 ; and great destructions happened for ensamples and types, ver. 11, "And written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come : " so the great deliverances God wrought for them were types of the great salvation that God works for sinners, through Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace ; or, For his name's sake.

Second Position. "Many unconverted persons, in the visible church, may be delivered from temporal judgments, and saved of God only in outward respects, and that for his name's sake ; so, doubtless, many unconverted persons were among the Israelites ; yea, most of them gave discoveries that they were so." They for-

feited his help in many respects ; yet he saved them in many respects, for his name's sake. See Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 23, " Thus saith the Lord, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel ; but for my holy name's sake. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God ! be it known unto you." Their slavery was so great, that it opened the mouth of the heathen, as if the God of Israel were no God ; therefore God, for his name's sake, helped them. See also, Deut. ix. 5, Israel was bad enough, but the heathen were no better, but rather worse ; therefore, for his name's sake, he appeared. Many whom God will not be merciful to in the world, may yet, for his name's sake, be delivered in time.

Third Position. " Gracious souls do too much forfeit God's help in time of danger, and deserve to be forsaken of God, and exposed to misery ; yet, for his name's sake he saved them ;" this is their acknowledgment, as you see in Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10, " I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies." Even so does the church acknowledge, Ezra ix. 8, 13, and Lam. iii. 22, " It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed." And again,

Fourth Position. " God may punish his people dolefully, whom yet, for his name's sake, he will not destroy ;" as in these instances just now recited. See Jer. xxx. 10. God may punish his people for their sin severely, whom yet he will save eternally, for his name's sake ; yea, and punish them more than others, Amos iv. 6—13, and iii. 2, " You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Those whom, for his name's sake, he saved from sin to eternity, he will make them feel it to be an evil and bitter thing in time.

Fifth Position is, " God may save a visible church, in many outward respects, for the sake of his name, which he resolves to magnify, especially, in behalf of his invisible remnant among them, his hidden ones ;" Isa. i. 10, " Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Many are saved with a temporal salvation, for the sake of those whom God resolves, for his name's sake, to save with eternal salvation. Hence it is said, with respect to the day of outward calamity, that, for the elect's sake, these days shall be shortened. The wicked are more obliged to God's people than they are aware of. Hence,

Sixth Position is, " That that salvation, wherein God's name is most concerned, is salvation in Christ Jesus to eternal life :"



wherein he brings sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; from death to life; from a hell of sin and misery to a heaven of holiness and happiness. Having proposed these things shortly for clearing the text and doctrine in the general; before I proceed to the particular parts thereof, I shall,

2dly, Prove the doctrine by scripture instances; Ezek. xx. 8, 9. Read 1 Sam. xii. 22, Isa. xlvi. 22, 25. Consider, for this purpose, God's promises; such as, Isa. xlvi. 8, 9, 11. His people's prayers; such as, Jer. xiv. 7. But an induction of particulars, to this purpose, may afterwards occur for the confirmation.

Now having premised some things, and confirmed the doctrine, the method may be as follows:—

- I. To inquire what is that name of God, for the sake of which he saves.
- II. What it is for God to save for his name's sake.
- III. What salvation he works for his name's sake.
- IV. What is imported in this *Nevertheless*; or, in God's saving with a *notwithstanding*; and so over what impediments, real provocations, and seeming impossibility, he brings about this salvation for his name's sake.
- V. Offer some reasons why he thus saves for his name's sake.
- VI. Deduce some inferences from the whole, for the application.

I. I am to inquire what is the name of God, for the sake of which he saves. And,

1. By the name of God we may understand his being, or God himself; Deut. xxxiii. 58, "That thou mayest fear this glorious and dreadful name, The Lord thy God." Our Lord Jesus commands his apostles, to go and teach [or *discipline*] all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Matth. xxviii. 19. Whatever then is intended by the name of God, each of the adorable persons of the glorious Trinity, are equally concerned therein. It is a name common to them all: and in this sense they have not distinct or diverse names; for it is not simply the name Father, and the name Son, and the name Holy Ghost that is intended, but the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God. By the name of God then, is meant God himself; and to save, for his name's sake, is to save for his own sake, as he says, Isa. xlii. 20, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions,



for mine own sake." We find the names of things, taken for the things themselves; "A few names in Sardis;" that is, a few persons.

2. By the name of God, we may understand the authority of God, that is, his absolute right and power to do what he pleases with his own creatures. He hath right to order, and power to execute, whatsoever he will concerning them: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," Isa. lxvi. 10; so that when he saves, for his name's sake, he saves for the sake of his sovereign will and pleasure, and for manifesting his own absolute authority; his right and might to effectuate what he pleases.

3. By the name of God, we may understand the Christ of God; for in our Lord Jesus Christ is the whole name and authority of God: Exod. xxiii. 21, "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him." But in case any should think, It is not a part of God's name, that he pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin; Why then it is said of Christ, "He will not pardon your iniquity, for my name is in him;" I answer, The pardon here is not a pardon that respects condemnation, and freedom from hell; but castigation, as a father is said to pardon a child, when he will not spare the rod, nor forbear to chasten; thus he will not pardon your iniquity, without taking vengeance on your inventions; "For my name is in him;" *i.e.*, my authority is in him. Christ is the very name of God; and when he pardons for his name's sake, he pardon's for his Christ's sake: thus the Old-Testament saints, as they used to pray to be saved of God, for his name's sake, so they sometimes pray for his word's sake, 2 Sam. vii. 21; that is, for Christ's sake, the Word that was made flesh; for the same prayer is rendered, "For thy Servant's sake," 1 Chron. xvii. 19. This purpose, Psalm lxxxiv. 9. David's prayer is, "Behold, O God, our Shield; look upon the face of thine Anointed;" And Daniel's prayer is, "For the Lord's sake," Dan. ix. 17. And, O but God hath done much, and will do much for Christ; because his name is in him, and in him he is well-pleased and reconciled.

4. By the name of God we are to understand, the attributes of God. I shall mention some of these.

(1.) His Power is his name, and for the sake of that, he saves as in the text: "He saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power known." Compare Exod. xix. 16, and Rom.

ix. 17. For this cause God raised up Pharaoh, that he might shew his mighty power in him, that his name might be declared throughout all the earth, even his mighty power in saving of Israel out of his hand. This argument Moses makes use of, to divert God's threatened wrath, Numb. xiv. 15, 16. This is the name God manifests to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 1. "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect." And the three children, Dan. iii. 17, have recourse to his name: "Our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us." If there be anything that stands in the way of the accomplishment of his promises, he is able to remove it; so Abraham's faith fixed here, Rom. iv. 21, "Being thus persuaded, that he that had promised was able also to perform." When God saves for his name's sake, it is for the sake of his power, to shew, that he is able to do above all that we are able to ask or think; that he is able to do above our wants, above our deserts, above our prayers, and above our thoughts: we cannot want more than he can give; we cannot pray for so much as he can bestow; we are not able to think what he can do. God's power is a part of his name, that faith may take hold of for salvation, and flee unto, even when there is no explicit view of his will; thus saith the leper, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." I cannot tell if he will help me, a soul may say, but I know he is able, and I am called to trust in his powerful name, and to take hold of his strength, Isa. xxvi. 24, chap. xxvii. 5. While you can do no better, it is good to trust in his power, and put his will in his own discretion, and refer that to himself; that soul is not far behind.

(2.) His mercy is another part of his name: when he saves for his name's sake, he saves for his mercy's sake; "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy," Micah vii. 18. He is, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious," Exod. xxiii. 6. He so far delights in mercy, that mercy rejoices over judgment, James ii. 13. Hence the Psalmist's prayer is, Psalm vi. 4, "Return, O Lord, deliver my soul, for thy mercy's sake:" and Psal. lxxix. 8. "O remember not against us former iniquities; let thy tender mercy speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low;" and, ver. 9, "Help, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." David had

fainted, unless he had believed to see the goodness of the Lord, Psal. xxvii. 13. Out of a sense of misery, we ought to go to the fountain of mercy, and so look to be saved for his name's sake.

(3.) His Wisdom is another part of his name: "The Lord is a God of knowledge, by him actions are weighed," 1 Sam. ii. 3; Yea, "His understanding is infinite." The psalmist takes up the wisdom of God as his name, and for the sake thereof seeks to be led and guided; "For thy name's sake lead me and guide me," Psalm xxxi. 3. God, in saving sinners, through Christ, has such a regard to his name, as a God of infinite wisdom, that in this method of salvation, the manifold wisdom of God is shown, Eph. iii. 10.

(4.) His Truth and Faithfulness is another part of his name, for the sake of which he saves and shews mercy; "His mercies are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness," Lam. iii. 3. It is declared to be one of the capital letters of his name, Exod. xxxiv. 6, "Abundant in goodness and truth:" and hence, how often did God remember, toward Israel, his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob notwithstanding their sin? Read Psalm cv. 8, 9, 10, 2 Kings xiii. 23. And, O what will not God do for his truth's sake for his promise's sake! for, "He is not man that he should lie." He that, for his mercy's sake, makes the promise, will, for his truth's sake accomplish it; "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old," Micah vii. 20. In saving sinners, through Christ, his truth is exceedingly manifested; his truth in fulfilling the threatening of the law upon the Surety, in the room of the sinner: his truth in fulfilling the promises of the gospel, that are all Yea and Amen in Christ; his truth and faithfulness in fulfilling the promises made to Christ in the eternal compact; which may be part of the meaning of that word, Rom. iii. 25, "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sin," through that propitiation; when God forgives sin through his blood, he declares his righteousness and faithfulness in his promise made to Christ, with reference to his seeing his seed, upon his giving his soul an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10.

(5.) His justice is another part of his name, for the sake of which he saves, and works salvation. The justice of God may be viewed as either retributive or vindictive; Retributive justice is that for the sake of which he saves either more generally, or in a more special way; In a general way, even some wicked sinners in the visible church may be unjustly oppressed by their enemies that



are more wicked than they, as Israel was by the Egyptians; therefore God righteously took vengeance on them, and delivered Israel. In a special way it may be viewed in the saints themselves, who are sinners; yet, because objects of promised mercy in Christ Jesus, therefore he saves and delivers for his righteousness and justice' sake: "Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake; for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble," Psalm cxliii. 11. Thus he is said to uphold his people with the right hand of his righteousness, Isa. xli. 10. His vindictive justice is also that for the sake whereof he saves, upon the supposition of its having got full satisfaction: and so we ordinarily understand, Rom. iii. 25. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of the sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." It is ordinary for people to seek to be saved for his mercy's sake; but believing views of justice satisfied, and God reconciled in Christ, would make the soul as freely and boldly seek to be saved for justice's sake in and through Christ the atonement, in whom that name of God, justice, hath more glorious satisfaction than ever it will have in the damnation of sinners. This is expressly God's name, Exod. xxxiv. 7. "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty:" that is, in dispensing mercy, he will be so far from dispensing with justice, that, by no means, will he show mercy, in pardoning sin to the sinner, without the highest respect to justice, in punishing sin in the surety, in whom his vindictive justice, taking vengeance on sin, is so cleared and vindicated, that when he pardons sin, through Christ, he is as just in pardoning sin, as he is merciful in doing so; for he has so ordained it, to the glory of his great name, "That he might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus."

(6.) His Holiness is a part of his name, for the sake of which he saves. This is declared to be his name, Exod. xv. 11. Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness." Isa. lvii. 15. "The high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy." For the sake of this he pities and saves, Ezek. xxxvi. 21. "But I had pity, for my holy name's sake, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen:" Hence read, verse 22, "I do not this for your sake, but for mine holy name's sake." God, in saving sinners, through Christ's righteousness, hath his holiness, in the precept of the law, as much magnified by the active obedience of Christ, as his



justice in the threatening of the law is magnified by his passive obedience.

I might here mention the Providence of God, as a part of his name, his watchful care over his people : " For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, to show himself strong in their behalf." 2 Chron. xvi. 9. He rules and over-rules all for their good. I might mention his titles whereby *he* is designed—such as, " The Lord of hosts, the mighty God, the King of kings." And I might likewise notice his Word, which he is said to magnify above all his name. But, in a word, as the name is that by which any thing or person is known ; so the name of God is the very thing whereby he makes himself known ; whether it be in his titles, attributes, ordinances, words, or works. He hath made himself known by his works of creation and providence, but a thousand times more clearly in the work of redemption and salvation ; herein appear, not only those attributes that shine in creation and providence, but also some perfection of the divine nature, that would not have been displayed, in case the first covenant had stood ; such as the infinite mercy and patience of God toward guilty sinners ; nor such a pitch of condescension as he hath here discovered ; nay, nor any other attribute had shined forth in such lustre and beauty as here it doth ; therefore, while Satan thought to have deleted the name of God, that he wrote upon the creature at first, behold how infinite wisdom counteracts him, and makes that the occasion of making his name more known than before. These attributes of God, therefore, that are displayed in the new covenant of grace, and exerted in the salvation of sinners according to that covenant, is that name of God that is principally here to be considered.

II. The second thing was, to show, what it is for God to save for his name's sake ; or, for the sake of his name. Having cleared what his name is, what is it, I say, for God to save for his name's sake ?

In general, beside what has been said, God's saving for his name's sake, imports, I think, his making his name the ALL of our salvation, because the sinful creature is nothing, hath nothing, will do nothing, can do nothing in the affair of his own salvation ; therefore God himself will be all, and do all : Isa. lix. 16, and Isa. lxiii. 5. " He looked, and there was none to help ; therefore his own arm brought salvation." Thus God designed to show himself to be *all in all*. More particularly,

1. For God to save for his name's sake, is to make his name the motive whence he saves. What moved him to save any guilty sinner? It is his name; his own mercy moved him; his own grace moved him; his own bowels of pity and compassion moved him; his own love moved him; his own name moved him; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

2. For God to save for his name's sake, is to make his name the reason why he saves. Though his name be the motive, yet some may think there is surely some reason drawn from the creature: Armenians say, that it was the foresight of faith and good works, that he foresaw some would be better than others, and improve the means better; and for this reason he would save them; but the word of God says otherwise, Deut. vii. 7, 8. God loves sinners, because he loves them. His sovereign mercy is the cause of his showing mercy; "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," Rom. ix. 15.

3. To save for his name's sake, is to make his name the matter of their salvation, inasmuch as his name itself is their salvation. His name is their strong tower. Prov. xviii. 10. His name, *the eternal God* himself, is their refuge, Deut. xxxiii. 27. Inasmuch, that whom he saves, they have not only salvation from him, but in him: "Israel shall be saved *in* the Lord with an everlasting salvation," Isa. xlv. 17. Christ, therefore, who calls us to look to him, and be saved, he himself is the salvation of the sinner. "Now mine eyes have seen thy salvation," said old Simeon, Luke ii. 22. "Behold thy salvation cometh," says God, Isa. lxii. 11. Christ is not only the helper, but the help itself; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help," Hos. xiii. 9. See Psalm xviii. 2. "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. He is given for a covenant of the people, a light to the Gentiles," Isa. xlix. 6, 7. Again,

4. To save for his name's sake, is to make his name the means of salvation; and so it must be, if his name itself be the *all* of our salvation. By what means doth he save? It is even by his name. By whom doth Jacob arise but by the God of Jacob? By whom are sinners saved, but by the name of God, by the Christ of God? And, "There is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12. No man comes to the Father, but by him as the Way, by him as the Leader, and as the name of God.

5. To save for his name's sake, is to make his name the measure of our salvation; he will, therefore, save as far as his name and honour is engaged by promise to Christ, or to his people in him; 1 Kings viii. 56. Read also Josh. xxi. 45. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass. Thus God saves his people in particular cases, as far as his name, and faithfulness, and truth is concerned; "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye 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.

6. To save for his name's sake, is to make his name the end of our salvation, even the glory of his name; the great end he proposes in saving, is even the praise of the glory of his grace, Eph. i. 6. The praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. This is the great end of God in his work of saving sinners through Christ; "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise," Isa. xliii. 21. Christ's grand prayer, when he was accomplishing the work of our salvation and redemption, was, "Father glorify thy name." And here let us stay a little, and admire the great design that God had in hand in saving, *for his name's sake*. God's chief end herein being the glory and honour of his name, What is that? Why,

(1.) In saving for his name's sake, he designs the manifestation of his name, the declaration of his name, as it is said, Rom. iii. 25. "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;" to make known his name in every salvation of Israel, or of his church, his great design still is, that his name may be known, declared, published, and proclaimed.

(2.) In saving for his name's sake, he designs the vindication of his name. His name is abused and reproached in the world, which is filled with harsh thoughts of God, as if he were either unjust or unmerciful; therefore, in saving for his name's sake, he will vindicate his name, "That he may be just when he speaks, and clear when he judges," Psalm li. 4. That he may appear to be not only merciful in saving; but also just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus; and as just in saving believing sinners, that flee to his name, as he is just in damning unbelieving impenitent sinners.

(3.) In saving for his name's sake, he designs the exaltation of his name; "I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth," Psalm xlv. 10. He designs that the right hand of



the Lord should be exalted in doing valiantly, Psalm cxviii. 16; and make mention that his name is exalted, Isa. xii. 4, "Therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy on you," Isa. xxx. 18. Wherefore hath God exalted Christ to his right-hand, but that his name may be exalted in him? "Who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God: that at the name [or, *in* the name] of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," Phil. ii. 6, 10. On which account, God hath highly exalted him to the glory of God the Father. And wherefore does he save, and glorify, and exalt any sinner through Christ, but that his name may be glorified and exalted.

(4.) In saving sinners for his name's sake, he designs the pleasure of his name; that his name should not only be exalted but delighted in, because it delights in shewing mercy, through Christ, Micah vii. 18. We read of the good pleasure of his will, Eph. i. 5, the good pleasure of his goodness, 2 Thes. i. 11. God being infinitely well-pleased in Christ, he takes pleasure in giving out of his goodness through him; and he saves to the good pleasure of his name, and to the contentment of all his attributes; to the good pleasure of his goodness, the good pleasure of his grace, the good pleasure of his holiness, the good pleasure of his justice, the good pleasure of his truth and faithfulness: all the perfections of God are well-pleased; "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," Psalm lxxxv. 10.

(5.) In saving sinners for his name's sake, he designs the aggrandising of his name; I mean, that his name should not only be glorified and exalted, but magnified to the highest, according to the song of the angel upon the coming of the Saviour; "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will towards men," Luke ii. 14. His name is magnified to the highest in this way of salvation through Christ. Damnation is but the lowest way, wherein God is glorified of sinners, and it is to their eternal ruin. Let sinners consider this, that they may not go on in the road to hell, but may fall in love with that way, wherein God is glorified and magnified to the highest. For, herein God is glorified by the highest person, his eternal Son, in his doing and dying, and rising and reigning, and mediating at his right hand; glorified in the highest place, with the highest praise, in the highest manner, and to the highest degree.



(6.) In saving sinners for his name's sake, he designs the eternalising of his name; "It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off," Isa. lv. 13, that is, that his name may be celebrated with Hallelujahs of praise to all eternity: "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever; the Lord shall rejoice in his works, Psal. civ. 31. Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever, and thy memorial throughout all generations," Psalm cxxxv. 13. Christ, the Saviour, was set up from everlasting, that the sinner saved of God in him might praise him to everlasting: "His name shall endure for ever;" and his ransomed shall come to Zion with everlasting songs, saying, "Salvation to our God that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever," Rev. vii. 12.

QUEST. What is it in the name of God that he hath such regard to, when he saves for his name's sake?

ANSW. He hath regard to his name in all the parts of it that I have already mentioned, and in every attribute, insomuch, that no attribute shall be injured, but every one of them extolled more than another. He also hath regard to his name in all the properties and qualities of it. His name is a glorious name; and, in saving sinners, through Christ, he hath regard to the glory of it; that it be glorified in the manner I have hinted at. His name is a great name; and, in saving sinners, through Christ, he hath regard to the greatness of it, by bringing about such a great salvation. And, what will he not do for his great name? His name is a holy name, and therefore, in saving sinners, through Christ, he hath a regard to the holiness of it; not only in sanctifying all whom he saves, but in saving, by a righteousness, whereby his holy law is not only fulfilled, but magnified and made honourable; in providing a Saviour of such infinite dignity, that he casts a lustre on the law, by his obedience to it. His name is a dreadful name; and therefore, in saving sinners, through Christ, he hath such a regard to the dreadfulness of it, that his most dreadful vengeance lighted upon sin, in the person of the Surety, the Saviour, when he became a sacrifice for sin. His name is a precious name; and therefore, in saving sinners, he hath such a regard to the manifesting the preciousness of it, so as to make it appear in the precious blood of Christ, which is the price of salvation. His name is a blessed name, and he cannot be more blessed and happy than he is in himself; yet, to manifest the blessedness of his name, he saves sinners, so as to show he loves not to be blest and happy alone, but

will have men to be blest in him, that all nations may call him blessed. His name is a wonderful name, a mysterious and unsearchable name ; and therefore it is said, Isa. ix. 6, " His name shall be called Wonderful. Angels have been prying into this depth, so many thousand of years, and yet are not at the bottom of it, but still are prying into the mystery of the gospel salvation through Christ ; and such is the regard God hath to this wonderful name, in saving sinners, that every part of their salvation is a miracle and wonder, manifesting the wisdom of God in a mystery. In a word, his name is an everlasting and unchangeable name : and it is his regard thereunto that makes him, by the means of his everlasting righteousness, bring about this everlasting salvation.

III. The third thing proposed in the general method was, To shew what salvation he works for his name's sake. Salvation is either temporal, spiritual, or eternal ; and though God, for his name's sake, works many temporal deliverances for his church and people, as you see in Israel here, ver. 9, 10, 11, 21, 22, 43, 45, 46, and all this for his name's sake : also, he saved the Church of Scotland many a time, for his name's sake : he saved us from Paganism, for his name's sake, when he first sent gospel light to our land ; he saved us from Popery, for his name's sake, at the glorious Reformation, which was here carried on by solemn National Covenants, that were the glory of our land, whatever contempt is now put upon them ; he saved us from Prelacy, and arbitrary power and tyranny, at the merciful Revolution, for his name's sake ; and he hath saved us, from time to time, from many attempts of enemies that were seeking to raze us to the foundation, as some are subtilly doing at this day, by damnable errors, which strike at the foundation of all religion ; I mean, especially Arian blasphemy ; but, whatever church salvation, or temporal salvation of this sort to a visible church, God works, for his name's sake, yet it is that spiritual and eternal salvation typified by Israel's salvation, that the name of God is most concerned with and exalted by ; therefore, I especially speak of this everlasting salvation in Christ.

And therefore, if the question be, What salvation of this sort he works, for his name's sake ?

I answer, There is no part of this great salvation but the name of God is engraven upon it, as being what he works, for his name's sake. I shall offer a few instances thereof ; from election to glorification, all the parts of salvation that lie betwixt these two words, from everlasting to everlasting, are brought about for his name's sake.

1. Wherefore did he elect any sinners from eternity? It was for his name's sake, to shew his absolute sovereignty in making vessels of mercy, of whom he pleased; "And that he might make known the riches of his glory to them, Rom. ix. 23. He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace," Eph. i. 4, 5, 6.

2. Wherefore did he redeem any sinners by the blood of his eternal Son? It was for his name's sake, Eph. i. 7, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." The redemption of Israel is designed and ordered for the glory of the God of Israel, "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel," Isa. xlv. 22.

3. Wherefore doth he call any sinners effectually? It is for his name's sake: this is illustrated at large by the apostle; "You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world," &c., 1 Cor. 26-31. He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which he purposed in Christ before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. Hence the saints ascribe their conversion and quickening to the name of God, and to the grace of God; "By grace I am what I am," says Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 10, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory," Psalm cxv. 1.

4. Wherefore doth he justify and pardon any guilty sinner? It is even for his name's sake, Isa. xliii. 25, "I even I am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my name's sake. And Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26, We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past," &c. Again,

5. Wherefore doth he adopt any child of wrath into his family? It is for his name's sake, Eph. i. 5, "We are predestinate to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace." Again,



6. Wherefore doth he sanctify any filthy sinner? It is even for his name's sake, 1 Cor. i. 30, "Christ is made of God to us sanctification, that no flesh might glory in his sight: but that he that glorieth might glory in the Lord." And hence all the great things promised in the covenant of grace, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. Among the rest, His putting his Spirit within them, and causing them to walk in his statutes, are said to be done for his holy name's sake, ver. 22.

7. Wherefore will he carry on the good work, which he hath begun, and never utterly leave his people, nor suffer them altogether to depart from him? Why? It is even for his name's sake, and his promise's sake, Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their heart, and they shall not depart from me. Heb. xiii. 5, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee finally."

8. Wherefore doth he glorify at last? It is for his name's sake, who is the giver both of grace and glory, Psalm lxxxiv. 11, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus every part of salvation, from first to last, is wrought for his name's sake. "The Lord is a rock, and his work is perfect:" he begins for his name's sake; carries on for his name's sake, and completes the work for his name's sake, that the head-stone of salvation may be laid on with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it."

As all the parts of salvation, so all the means of salvation, are granted for his name's sake. Is right hearing a mean of salvation? Well, this is what he gives, for his name's sake, according to that promise, John x. 16, "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." Is prayer a mean? Well, right praying is what he alone grants, for his name's sake, according to the promise, Zech. xii. 10, "I will pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication." Is faith a mean of salvation? Yea, and it is a part of salvation also, which God gives, for his name's sake, according to his word, Eph. ii. 8, "By grace you are saved, through faith: and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Is repentance a leading part of salvation? This is also what he gives for his name's sake, on the back of faith, as a fruit thereof, according to his promise, Zech. xii. 10, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn," and he hath exalted Christ to give it, Acts v. 31.

My friends, if there be any other thing that we reckon pertains to salvation, which God doth not work, for his name's sake, you may realise it as no part of salvation; for, I will assure you, his name will have the glory of every part of salvation.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, What is imported in this Nevertheless, or in God's saving with a Notwithstanding; and so to show over what impediments, whether real provocations, or seeming impossibilities of bringing about this salvation, for his name's sake; "Nevertheless, he saved them, for his name's sake." It is impediments on the sinner's part that the text speaks of; therefore I confine myself to these. He saved Israel here, notwithstanding dreadful sins. Read verses 6, 7, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 28, 29, 32, 34, 39, 43. Yet, "Nevertheless he saved them, for his name's sake." Did he notwithstanding all this, save them, for his name's sake? Then, what will not he do for his name? And what may not sinners expect upon this ground? What bar cannot God break, for his name's sake? What mountain cannot be come over, for his name's sake? What provocation can he not overlook, for his name's sake? Let all the sinners that hear this doctrine, beware of provoking God any more by their sins. When thus the saving mercy of God is proclaimed in your ears; for provoked mercy will turn to fearful vengeance: Damnation to eternity will be your doom, if this offered salvation be not received: and in order to allure you to the reception and welcoming of it, I am now telling you the freedom of it, and how God can save you with an everlasting salvation, notwithstanding of the most grievous provocations that hitherto you have been guilty of, and notwithstanding of the greatest impediments that you have laid in the way. More particularly,

1. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding grievous guilt and heinous transgressions. Hence his name is declared to be a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, "Come now, and let us reason together, says God, Isa. i. 18. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Make not this objection against yourselves in coming to a God in Christ for salvation; for here you see mercy courting you, notwithstanding this very objection.

2. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding long continuance in sin; though you have been a transgressor from the womb to this day, be it never so long that you have been following that fearful trade of sin, yet mercy is now following you with a "how

long; how long." Many a *how long* is he pursuing you with; one is, Numb. xiv. 11, "How LONG will this people provoke me? And how LONG will it be ere they believe me? Another *how long* is, Psalm iv. 2, "How LONG will ye turn my glory into shame? How LONG will ye love vanity?" Another *how long* is, Prov. i. 22, "How LONG, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?" Another is, Prov. vi. 9, "How LONG wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" A sixth *how long* is, Jer. iv. 14, "How LONG shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

3. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding manifold apostacies and backslidings, Jer. iv. 14, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within you? Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you," Jer. iii. 14. And ver. 1, "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again unto me. Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Isa. lv. 5, I will heal your backslidings."

4. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding of your prodigious neglect and contempt of God hitherto. See Isa. xliii. 22-25, "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel; I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my name's sake, and will not remember thy sins." O wonder of wonders! that such may be saved, for his name's sake.

5. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding grievous, rebellious incorrigibleness and frowardness. See Isa. lvii. 17, 18, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners."

6. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding outward afflictions and poor circumstances in the world, Zeph. iii. 12. And, "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Isa. lxxvi. 8, "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." Though you be an out-cast, that no body cares for you, he may save you for his name's sake; for, "He gathers the out-casts of Israel," Isa. lvi. 8.



7. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding baseness, unworthiness, and pollution, for there is a fountain opened, Zech. xiii. 1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness."

8. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding gross darkness and fearful ignorance; "It is written in the prophets, They shall all be taught of God," Isaiah liv. 13; John vi. 45.

9. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding long refusals, and resisting of many calls, and slighting many opportunities, Rom. x. 21, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Importing, that after all these refusals, he is yet standing with open arms to receive all comers, saying, "Whoever will, let him come."

10. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding of none-such, and unparalleled wickedness; what, if there be no sinner like you, nevertheless, he can save for his name's sake; because there is no Saviour like him; if thy unbelieving heart suggests desperate thoughts, as if there were no salvation for thee, saying, Who is a sinner like unto me? Let Micah vii. 18, be an answer, "Who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity?"

In a word, he can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding the greatest and highest mountains either of sin or misery, that seem to be in the way, Zech. iv. 7, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before our Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding dreadful hardness of heart, and innumerable plagues of heart, atheism, unbelief, deadness, and security; the God that works for his name's sake can take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh; and out of stones raise up children to Abraham. He can save, for his name's sake, notwithstanding of nameless maladies, nameless objections, that no minister in the world can mention, far less remove: may be the obstacles in the way of your salvation are out of the sight of man, out of the sight of ministers; but they are in God's sight, and the omniscient God, that knows it, is the omnipotent God, that can remove it, and save for his name's sake. Oh! but may some poor soul think, no doubt, he can save for his name's sake: but my objection is, I doubt of his will. Why, man? wherefore is God now telling you what he can do; but to remove your ill thoughts of him, and to manifest his good-will towards you; behold, he is more willing to

save than you are willing to be saved : if it be salvation from sin, as well as salvation from hell, that you mean, then you are either unwilling to be thus saved, and so your ruin is, that you will not come to him for salvation ; or, if you be willing, you are more than welcome to him for all the salvation he can work for you. It is his will to save you, notwithstanding of thousands and millions of objections in the way.

V. The fifth thing proposed, in the general method, was, To offer some reasons why he thus saves for his name's sake. Why,

1. He saves for his name's sake, because if he did not so, he would save none of Adam's race ; the best saints on earth cannot deserve mercy ; the salvation of the most righteous is an act of grace ; therefore, the righteous run to his name ; and even the just must live by faith, saying, " Though our iniquities testify against us, yet do thou it for thy name's sake," Jer. xiv. 7. And, " Help us, for the glory of thy name," Psalm lxxix. 9. He can save none, if he did not save them for his name's sake.

2. He saves for his name's sake, that sinners may hope in his name ; that they may return to him, and call upon him for mercy ; " There is mercy and forgiveness with him, that he may be feared," Psalm cxxx. 4. Why, say you, could not God be more feared, if he had no mercy and forgiveness with him ? It is true ; man, in that case, could fear as devils do, despairingly ; but not with any penitential fear ; " The goodness of God leads to repentance," Rom. ii. 4. Thus God interprets his merciful providences, as a drawing with the cords of love. None could trust in his name, if he did not save for his name's sake.

3. He saves for his name's sake, that sinners may adore his name ; that they may admire his mercy. God remembers his own glory ; and therefore saves for his name's sake, that men may glorify his name. O wonder-working God, that can show mercy, when nothing is deserved but misery ; this effect it had upon David, Psalm viii. 1, 9. " O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth ! Psalm xlviii. 10. According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth.

4. He saves for his name's sake, that sinners, who will not flee to his name as a strong tower, and afterwards glorify his name, by living to his praise, may be left inexcusable in their sins. The glory of God's justice will be conspicuous in those that have slighted his mercy ; " Behold you despisers, and wonder, and perish !"

They that despise such mercy, treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, Rom. ii. 5.

5. He saves for his name's sake, because it is the only fit way for us to be saved in ; if God should offer to save us for our own sakes, for our righteousness' sake, for our duties' sake ; Oh ! how unfit would that be. We might think God were mocking us, because we have nothing but sin and hell about us ; and our best righteousness deserves damnation ; but when he offers salvation for his own name's sake, then it appears to be a fit offer ; we cannot think God is mocking us ; would he thus affront himself when his own name is the ground of faith laid before us ?

6. He saves for his name's sake, because it is the only fit way for him to save us in ; it is the only way of salvation suitable to his infinite excellency, who cannot but consult the glory of his perfections in all his works. Now, God's glory requires that no salvation should be found but in his name. Why hath he told us of mercy running in the channel of the new covenant ? Why hath he told us that justice itself is drawn in to be upon the sinner's side, inasmuch as he can be justified in forgiving them ? Why hath he displayed so much of wisdom in making judgment and mercy to meet and kiss each other ? Wisdom in punishing sin, and yet saving the sinner ? Why ? it is even that he might be glorified ; that the loftiness of man might be brought down, and the haughtiness of man laid low, and that the Lord alone may be exalted, Isa. ii. 11. This way of saving is suitable to his nature.

VI. The sixth thing proposed, was, to draw some inferences from the whole. And is it so, that when God saves sinners, or a sinful people, he does it for his Name's sake notwithstanding their provocations, whereby they forfeit his help, and deserve destruction ; then,

1st, Hence learn, by way of caution, the following particulars :—

1. That this doctrine yields no encouragement to sin, though God saves sinners, for his name's sake ; the current of his providence, the current of his word, the current of his dealing, all declare his enmity at sin. What is there in the word that can encourage us in sin ? All the threatenings of the law say, in effect, as you regard the wrath of God beware of sin ; all the commands of the law say, as you regard the authority of God, beware of sin ; all the promises of the gospel say, as you regard the grace, love, and mercy of God, beware of sin ; and God's saving for his name's sake, says,



as you regard the great *name* of God, beware of sin. The great salvation that he exhibits for his name's sake, is salvation from sin ; and therefore, to make this an encouragement to sin is to affront his name, to abuse his name, to profane his name, and to take his name in vain ; " And he will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain."

2. Think not that God will deliver any from eternal damnation, who are gone to hell, or save them for his name's sake ; no, by no means : they are lost for ever, that die out of Christ.

2dly, Hence see, by way of information, a foundation for the following truths :—

1. The reason why the saints confide in God ; and why believers trust in his name, and flee to his name in time of danger ; they are acquaint with his name ; " And they that know his name will put their trust in him, Psalm ix. 10. They know his grace, his goodness, his power, his holiness, justice, and truth ; and they have the encouragement of a promise so to do, Psalm xci. 14. " I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." And why is it that they pray for help, for his name's sake ? Because they know God will do more for his name, than otherwise he could do, Psalm xxv. 11., Jer. xiv. 7. Thus Joshua, when Israel were smitten at Ai, chap. vii. 9. " And what will thou do unto thy great name ?" Again,

2. Hence see, to whom we ought to give the glory of experienced mercy, even to God's name ; as Psalm cxv. 1. " Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name be the glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake." Thus you will find David frequently at this work, Psalm cxlv. 1, 2. " I will extol thee, my God, O King ; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever." This is one ground of God's helping, Isa. xxix. 22, 23. This is in a manner, all that JEHOVAH gets by all his glorious salvations wrought for us, Ezek. xxxvi. 23. Let us therefore learn to render the glory of all God's works unto his glorious name.

3. Hence see a door of hope opened for sinners in this gospel. Does God save for his name's sake these who may not put in for salvation ? Whatever they be, whatever objections you can make, they are answered by this one argument, God saves for his name's sake, when there is no other reason for his doing so in the world ; he can make a reason to himself, and find the answer in himself why he will save.

4. Hence see the freeness of the gospel-method of salvation ; for God saves with a *non obstante*, that is, with a notwithstanding. O but the gospel-salvation is free ! The law brings in so many *provisos* ; that is, either the law of works, truly so called. It says, If ye do, ye shall live, if you be perfect, ye shall be happy ; or the law, falsely so called, the many remainders of it in man's heart that makes the sinner think, Why, I cannot be saved, unless I do as well as I can ; unless I be so and so qualified, I cannot expect to be saved ; but the gospel opens a door of free access to sinners with a Nevertheless ; notwithstanding whatever sins, guilt, disorder, confusion, death, distress, and ruin ; notwithstanding whatsoever wickedness be about you, yet here is a way wherein you may expect salvation ; " Nevertheless he saved them, for his name's sake."

OBJECT. Must I not be saved upon my believing and repenting, is not faith at least the condition of my salvation ?

ANSW. Faith and repentance are parts of this salvation that God gives for his name's sake ; and how can they be conditions of that salvation, whereof they are leading parts ? " By grace you are saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. Christ is exalted to give repentance, Acts v. 51. None are saved without faith and repentance ; because all that are saved of the Lord, are saved thereunto ; they are saved from unbelief, and brought to faith ; saved from impenitency, and brought to repentance. Faith and repentance are the beginnings of this salvation, and salvation cannot be completed, without having a beginning ; but both beginning and end are what God gives for his name's sake ; " Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ," Phil. i. 6 ; because his name is " Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending." Faith itself is not necessary to salvation, as a moral condition ; but only a physical instrument. And hence, as it is not possible a beggar can be the better of a free gift offered to him, if he does not take it, or accept of it ; yet his taking of it is no moral condition, but only the natural instrument, or mean of possession ; so neither can any possibly be the better of this free salvation that God offers in the gospel, if they will not take it, or have it in the manner it is offered, namely, Salvation from sin and wrath, unto eternal holiness and happiness, and all freely, for God's name's sake. Taking is no moral condition, otherwise it would contradict the design of the gospel. Faith is nothing else but a welcoming this salvation in

this manner ; it is the soul's acquiescing and falling in with this method ; not a condition of it properly, but a closing with it freely ; it is a believing that God will save in this way for his name's sake ; and not for the sake of our faith, or any thing else done by, or wrought in us. It is a being content to be saved this way, that the name of God may for ever get the praise ; and renouncing all other grounds of faith and reasons of hope, taking this name of the Lord for his strong tower, resolving to rest here.

5. Hence see, what is the last and ultimate refuge of faith. The first resort of faith is to a word, a "may be the Lord will be gracious:" but a finding no rest here, then perhaps it goes to a direct promise ; such as that, "A new heart will I give you;" and pleads for the promise' sake : but needing to be better fixed, it goes to Christ, and pleads for Christ's sake ; in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen. But why should God save for Christ's sake ? What obligation is God under to accept of that ransom and atonement in the blood of Christ for me ? Why ? Then last of all it flees to God's name, and sees that God's name will be more magnified in this way of salvation, than it can be in any other way of God's dealing with it ; and hence it is never said he damns for his name's sake ; for his name gets not so much glory that way. Here then is the last shift of faith, and its ultimate refuge and ground of hope ; and there is ground enough here.

Use 3. The next Use shall be for Examination. Try whether or not God hath begun to save you for his name's sake ; or, if you have got his name engaged and concerned in your salvation-work. For the trial of this interesting point, consider the following things :

1. They whom God hath begun to save for his name's sake, and to whom he will be further merciful for his name's sake, they are made sensible that God hath hitherto helped them for his name's sake ; and that they are beholden to God's name for every bit of bread ; indebted to his name for their preservation out of hell ; obligated to his mercy and power, that hitherto he hath helped, pitied, and saved them from everlasting ruin : and they are so affected with his mercy, that they endeavour to live like persons sensible of this obligation they are under to his name ; though, in strict justice, they deserve nothing, and God may say, as Judges x. 13, "I will deliver you no more ;" and swear, as Jer. xlv. 26, 27, "Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name shall be no more named in the mouth of any man." Yet,



being a gracious God, will not utterly leave them, 1 Sam. xii. 22, but save them, and others, for their sake; so good is he to them, Gen. xviii. 32.

2. Hath frowning providence done you good? Are you purged by afflictions? For these whom God delivers for his name's sake, their deliverance from trouble bears some resemblance to his name who delivers.

QUEST. How shall we know, when God's rod hath done its work, and when God hath said, "It is enough?" 2 Sam. xxiv. 16.

ANSW. (1.) When you are humbled for the sin that caused God to take his rod in his hand; such as want of love, despising the gospel, abounding of error, division, unbrotherly animosities. Have these things been lamented, loathing the simplicity of the gospel, and the plain administration of God's ordinances? Professors grown full in their stomach. Is the case altered? The abounding of hypocrisy under the specious name of higher attainments, &c.

(2.) When a people can thrive under merciful providences without the rod; for God will not needlessly afflict any, much less his own people, 1 Pet. i. 6, Lam. iii. 33. More particularly,

1. Are your salvation and God's glory twisted and conjoined? Will God's name be a loser, if your bonds be strengthened and continued? Joshua said, "What wilt thou do unto thy name?" This moved God to shew mercy on a wicked people, Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27; lest God should lose his declarative glory in the wonders he had wrought for Israel; lest the heathen should say, God cannot save his people. Can you say, Oh! I think God will want much glory, if I be not saved; and I cannot think that his name should want that glory and praise that I see it will get in saving me.

2. They whom he saves, for his name's sake, are brought off all hope of being saved for their own sake; as God says, "Not for your sakes have I done this, but my own name's sake;" so they are brought to say, not for my sake will God do so and so, but for his name's sake.

3. They seek all they want from God, for his name's sake. Many a graceless beggar seeks an alms for God's sake, that know not what they say; but believers are beggars at God's door, and they seek for God's sake; they seek pardon for his name's sake, with David; "For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great:" they seek, saying, Quicken me, for thy name's sake; purify, for thy name's sake; give grace, for thy name's sake: and

every thing they seek is for his name's sake. Thus they lean upon his lap, and give evidence of their being loved with an everlasting love.

4. They will desire to do much for his name's sake; and will be content to suffer for his name's sake. Such is their regard to his name, that every duty they perform will be easy to them, when they have his name and honour in their eye; and they count their sufferings all to be light, when they suffer for his name: this made them take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, Heb. x. 34.

5. They will set his name on high, as being a name above every name. Hence they will desire, and endeavour to have his name exalted in the world, that all men may know his name; they will be grieved when his name is profaned and blasphemed; they will be content that their name sink and be buried, that his may arise, saying, Let me decrease, and him increase; whatever may come of my name, let thy name be exalted: their ambition will be to have his name written in their foreheads; "I will write upon them my new name," Rev. iii. 12.

6. They approve and esteem the way of salvation, for this reason, because God saves for his name's sake: their hearts say, O! I prize salvation the better, that his name is honoured thereby: they set his name above their salvation, as the crown of it; and his name below their salvation, as the ground of it; and his name and attributes round about their salvation, as the defence of it; the place of their defence being the munition of rocks. His name is a rock round about them; "As the mountains are about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever." As that is his reason for saving them, even his name, so it is the reason for expecting salvation; as God's argument in saving them, is drawn from his name; so their argument in trusting in him for salvation, is drawn from his name. O! but this is what sweetens the thoughts of salvation, that his name is exalted thereby; they desire no other way of salvation but through his name.

7. They not only run *to* this strong tower, the name of the Lord, but they run *into* it, and rest there: they hang their salvation upon this strong nail; they build upon this everlasting rock; here they have their rest. As the sparrow and swallow built their nests on the rafters of the temple and tabernacle, and there laid their young: so they dwell on high: Christ is the temple, and God's name and attributes are, as it were, the lofty pillars and high rafters

of the temple; and faith builds there, resides there, where neither the devil, nor all the powers of hell, shall be able to disturb or annoy them: there they dwell safely from the fear of evil; there they lay their young, and bring forth their fruit unto God, even all the fruits of holiness and righteousness, which are to the praise and glory of God: for, as from him their fruit is found, Hos. xiv. 8, from the temple; so their fruit is to him, being dedicated to the temple, to the praise and glory of his name that dwells therein.

8. They whom God has begun to save for his name's sake, as their confidence is placed only in his name, as the leading argument of their trust; so this argument will carry them through thousands of difficulties, oppositions, and impediments that seem to lie in the way of their salvation; this name of God will strengthen you against thousands of temptations, thousands of objections. Notwithstanding your sins, your guilt, your rebellion, your apostacy, the wrath gone out against you for sin, as it did against Jonah, in fearful streams of indignation; yet faith will look again to God's holy temple, to God's holy name, and say, "Nevertheless he saves for his name's sake:" there are thousands of things to damp and discourage me in looking for salvation, and if I consider them, I must despair; but, with Abraham, I desire to consider nothing but God's name, and word of promise, Rom. iv. 19. Here is one thing that can overcome all things, O! I hope he will save me for his name's sake; have you won here? stay here, and you are safe. There is not a man fuller of God, in all the world, than he that is brought to nothing before God, and has nothing to rely on but the great name of God. That name never failed a soul that trusted to it.

In a word, they whom God saves for his name's sake, are brought, 1. To know his name. 2. To trust in his name. 3. To love his name. 4. To fear and worship his name.

Use 4. The fourth use shall be by way of exhortation. And our exhortation shall be tendered, 1. To sinners in general. 2. To believers in particular.

1st, To all sinners in general, O sirs, does God save for his name's sake, and that with a *notwithstanding* of innumerable sins? Then let sinners hope in his name, and fly to his name for salvation.

QUEST. How is this doctrine the ground of faith to *all*, seeing those whom God designs to save are only the elect, and these whom he actually saves are only believers? How then is this doctrine to



be conceived as an encouragement to all sinners, to look to his name for salvation?

ANSW. Salvation is to be considered three ways: either salvation decreed, salvation obtained, or salvation exhibited in the word. Salvation decreed, concerns the elect indeed; and the election shall obtain; but thus it is not the first object of any man's faith. Who are elect is a secret, and secret things belong to God. You are not concerned with salvation as it lies in the decree. Salvation obtained, is what concerns believers; and this is not the object of any man's faith either, but rather the object of the sense of them who have it, when they know they have it. But salvation exhibited in the word, is what every man that hears the gospel is concerned with; salvation promised, salvation offered in the general dispensation of the gospel, with a particular invitation to every one to look to Christ for salvation. Now, to lay hold of salvation here, as it lies in the word, is the safe way for you to take; if you lay hold on salvation exhibited to you in the word, then you will come to find it salvation obtained; and when you find it salvation obtained, then you may find it salvation decreed: and this is the right order in which you ascend to God's decree, by taking hold of his word, when to you the word of this salvation is sent. See Rom. 6, 7, 8, "Say not, even in thine heart, Who shall ascend to heaven," to see if salvation was decreed for me? or, "Who shall descend into the deep," to the heart, to see if salvation be obtained? you will find no object of faith in yourself: but the word is nigh, the word of salvation which we preach; it is in thy mouth, and in thy heart, to be acknowledged with the mouth and embraced with the heart, ver. 9. O then, sinner, his word, which you are called to take hold of, is his name; it is that whereby he makes himself known: fly to his name, and look for salvation, as it is in his word, in his name. And in coming to him for salvation, 1. Let his name be your motive; for thus you will glorify his name. 2. Let his name be your tower, to which you fly for salvation. 3. Let his name be the measure of your hope; how much he will be glorified in saving you, so much let your hope and expectation go forth that he will do so. 4. Let his name be your plea and argument: "What wilt thou do for thy great name?" Josh. vii. 9, "O save for thy name's sake. "Father glorify thy name." Cast anchor here, and you shall ride out all storms, and be eternally safe.

2dly, We next tender our exhortation to believers, in particu-

lar, who have run to this strong tower of salvation, the name of the Lord. O admire his goodness, admire his name : he knows all your sins against him, and against his name ; yet for his name's sake, he shews mercy. O ! let sin against so good a God be abhorred : let his goodness lead you to repentance more and more : "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." O believer, are you called by his name ; praise him for his mercy, truth, faithfulness : "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth ; thy right hand is full of righteousness," Psal. xviii. 10. O sirs, ascribe all the mercy you met with to his name ; and study to be meet objects for God's name, to be more and more glorified, upon his engaging his name for your help. Study to become such persons as the scriptures require : for though sinners have ground of hope, that he MAY do, for his name's sake ; yet saints have ground of hope that he WILL do for his name's sake : the graceless may run to him with hope, that he may begin the good work, for his name's sake ; but the gracious may run to him with hope that he will perfect the good work for his name's sake. His name is engaged.

In a word, O improve his name in every case ; for he hath a name suiting every want, every need. Do you need wonders to be wrought for you ? His name is Wonderful ; look to him so to do, for his name's sake. Do you need counsel and direction ? His name is the Counsellor : cast yourself on him and his name for this. Have you mighty enemies to debate with ? His name is the mighty God ; seek he may exert his power for his name's sake. Do you need his fatherly pity ? His name is the everlasting Father ; "As a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Plead his pity, for his name's sake. Do you need peace external, internal, or eternal ? His name is the Prince of Peace ; seek for his name's sake, that he may create peace. Do you need healing ? O sirs, his name is JEHOVAH-ROPHI, the Lord the healer and physician ; seek, for his name's sake, that he may heal all your diseases. Do you need pardon ? His name is JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness ; seek, for his name's sake, that he may be merciful to your unrighteousness. Do you need defence and protection ? His name is JEHOVAH-NISSI, the Lord your banner ; seek for his name's sake, that his banner of love and grace may be spread over you. Do you need provision in extreme want ? His name is JEHOVAH-JIREH, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will provide. Do you need his presence ? His name is

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, the Lord is there : IMMANUEL, God with us : look to him to be with you, for his name's sake. Do you need audience of prayer ? His name is the Hearer of prayer. Do you need strength ? His name is the Strength of Israel. Do you need comfort ? His name is the Consolation of Israel. Do you need shelter ? His name is the city of refuge. Have you nothing and need all ? His name is All in all. Sit down and devise names to your wants and needs, and you will find he hath a name suitable thereunto ; for your supply, he hath wisdom to guide you ; and power to keep you ; mercy to pity you ; truth to shield you ; holiness to sanctify you ; righteousness to justify you ; grace to adorn you ; and glory to crown you. Trust in his name, who saves, for his name's sake.

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## SERMON CXXXV.—CXXXIX.

### WISDOM'S WAYS PLEASANTNESS AND HER PATHS PEACE.<sup>1</sup>

“ Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”—  
Prov. iii. 17.

As the way of religion is a safe and sure way, Prov. x. 9, so here it is described to be a sweet and pleasant way. Several other characters are given of Wisdom's ways, in the preceding verses, which are as so many arguments to seek after true wisdom, and after Christ, the essential wisdom of the Father. The happiness of these who find wisdom, is transcendent happiness ; far exceeding all that can be found in this world, ver. 14, 15. It is true happiness, including all those things which are supposed to make man happy, ver. 16, 17. Wisdom is here represented as a bright and beautiful queen, distributing gifts to her loving subjects ; such as length of days, even everlasting life ; riches and honours. Here are true riches, the

(1.) This subject was prosecuted in five discourses : It was begun in the Author's own church, at Dunfermline, on Thursday the 24th of September, 1730, and afterwards enlarged on, we are told, and finished at a sacramental occasion, a little before his death.



unsearchable riches of Christ ; true honours, " The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour ;" yea, though they were in this world buried in obscurity, they will in the next shine forth as the sun. Here is true pleasure ; " Her ways are ways of pleasantness."

It is no argument against this subject, that the wicked world can find no pleasure in Wisdom's ways ; for, as that food is delightful to a beast, which would be loathsome, like death, to a man ; so, to an unrenewed man, these things are delightful, which, to a sanctified soul, would be loathsome : no wonder, therefore, that these things that are most pleasant to a renewed soul, are disrelished by these whose beastly nature was never changed, or who have no spiritual health. If we would prove that wine is pleasanter than vinegar, or bread than ashes, we would not appeal to the appetite of the sick or diseased ; it is the sound and healthful that must be judges. These who have base thoughts of God himself cannot love him, or delight in him ; but all that honour him in Christ, know and acknowledge that " Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Such as men are, such are their delights. We are naturally filled with malignant enmity against God and godliness ; and therefore no reason will persuade them that God and godliness are the most pleasant delights ; no reason, I say, but what persuades them from that enmity. No reason will persuade a slothful man, that labour is better than sleep or idleness : no reason will persuade a drunkard, glutton, or voluptuous person, that abstinence and moderation are the sweetest life. Till God change their hearts, they will not change their pleasures.

In the words we have a twofold doctrine ; the one is, " That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness ;" the other is, " That all her paths are peace."

Here several questions may be propounded and solved, for a more accurate explication of the words, and clear uptaking of their meaning.

QUEST. 1. What are we to understand by Wisdom's ways ?

ANSW. As by Wisdom we are especially to understand Christ, who is the Wisdom of God, and " In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:" so, by Wisdom's ways, we may understand, either the way wherein Wisdom walketh towards us, which are summed up in mercy and truth. Micah vii. 20, Psalm xcvi. 3. Mercy lays the foundation ; Truth puts on the cope

stone; or the ways wherein Wisdom directeth us to walk, which are summed up in faith and love; Faith sees and flies to Christ; and Love takes pleasure in him: by faith we come to Christ, by love we walk in his pleasant way.

QUEST. 2. Why are Wisdom's ways said to be pleasantness? It is not only pleasant, but pleasantness, in the abstract.

ANSW. Why, it is to shew, that Wisdom's ways are such wherein abundant delight and satisfaction are to be found; all the enjoyments and entertainments of sense are not comparable to the pleasures which the gracious soul finds in communion and fellowship with God, and in the course of holy gospel-service and obedience; yea, it is not this or that way of Wisdom, but her ways are all strewn with roses and pleasures.

QUEST. 3. What is understood by Wisdom's paths?

ANSW. If this has any other meaning than Wisdom's ways, and be not a different expression of the same thing; then it seems to import that not only the ways of religion in general, but all the particular paths of that way are pleasant; every act of grace, every instance of duty, every particular piece of spiritual service, the very secret path of religious duties, as well as the open ways of divine worship, are all pleasantness.

QUEST. 4. What is to be understood by peace?

ANSW. Why, Wisdom's paths are not only peaceable but peace itself; not only peace in the end; "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace;" but they also bring in, advance, and increase peace and reconciliation, between God and man; peace of conscience between man and himself; and peace of concord, between man and man; of the first you read, Rom. v. 1, of the second, Prov. xv. 15, and of the third, Psal. cxxxiii. 1.

The words themselves are a doctrinal proposition; and, in discoursing from them, we adduce no other, namely,

DOCT. "That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

The method we lay down, for the illustration of this point of doctrine, through divine assistance, shall be the following:—

- I. We shall demonstrate the truth of this proposition, "That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness."
- II. Consider the quality of that pleasure that is to be found in Wisdom's ways.
- III. Speak of the particular paths of Wisdom which are all peace.
- IV. Open up the nature and qualities of that peace.
- V. Make application of the whole subject.

I. We shall essay to demonstrate the truth of this proposition, viz., "That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness." And this we may do, 1, By an induction of particulars, representing some of Wisdom's ways that are pleasantness. 2. By opening up some of the springs of pleasure which Wisdom's children, who keep her ways, draw their pleasures and comforts from.

1st, We may demonstrate the truth of the observation by an induction of particulars, shewing some of Wisdom's ways that are pleasantness. And here there are four ways of Wisdom I shall mention; there are 1. Providential administrations. 2. Doctrinal principles. 3. Evangelical graces. 4. Spiritual benefits and works of God, in and towards Wisdom's children, which are all pleasantness.

[1.] There are providential administrations that are part of Wisdom's ways; these are wonderfully pleasant and unsearchable, Rom. xi. 33, Rev. xv. 3. The Lord gives his people cause to praise him daily for his mercy, Psalm xxxv. 27.

OBJECT. But what shall be said of his rods and afflictions? "No affliction is joyous, but grievous," Heb. xii. 11.

ANSW. Let it be considered, that it is not said they are grievous, but only seem to be so; "No chastisement *seemeth* to be joyous but grievous." They are not truly grievous, but truly joyous; for, there may be much joy in affliction, 1 Thess. i. 7. If we consult Habakkuk iii. 16, 17, 18, we will find extreme affliction, yet joy. Thus David, 1 Sam. xxx. 6, was greatly distressed; Saul was driving him about like a partridge, and persecuting him; the Philistines are suspecting him; his friends, who should have comforted him, are taken captive; the people are speaking of stoning him; yet "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." See James i. 2, 2 Cor. xii. 10. They went away rejoicing in their affliction. "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," Heb. x. 34. Many ex-



amples we have to this purpose ; and even of martyrs rejoicing in the flames. Why did that Martyr cry out, "That the fire and torture he endured was more pleasant than a bed of roses?" Why did Paul and Silas sing so merrily and cheerfully in the stocks, amidst the dark prison? Why, they sealed this by their experience, that "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness," even in providential administrations, and most afflictive dispensations as well as prosperous.

[2.] There are doctrinal propositions that are part of Wisdom's ways : and these also are all pleasantness. The truths and doctrines of his word are sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb, Psalm xix. 19. "Thy testimonies are my delight," says David, Psalm cxix. 24. "Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it ; and thy word was to me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart," Jer. xv. 16 ; intimating, that his words must be eaten and digested, before the sweetness of them can be relished. There is especially a singular pleasure in the doctrines of Christ's gospel. The doctrine of his incarnation, O how pleasant. See the angels singing of it to the shepherds, Luke ii. 10—14. From his incarnation go to his active obedience ; O how pleasant ! It is the righteousness of God, Christ's human nature had never any existence separate from the divine ; no sooner was it, than it was united to God. Thus he magnified the law, Isaiah xlii. 21. Let us proceed from his doing to his dying ; How pleasant is the doctrine of his passive obedience ; Isa. liii. 5, "Wounded for our transgressions ;" satisfied the justice of God ; "Gave himself a sacrifice, of a sweet-smelling savour, unto God," Eph. v. 2. O what a pleasant and a savoury doctrine may it be to us ! But, from his passion, let us go to his resurrection ; How pleasant is the doctrine of Christ's resurrection ! Here is the foundation of our joyful hope ; we are begotten thereto by his resurrection, 1 Pet. i. 3. From his resurrection let us pass to his ascension ; How pleasant is the doctrine of Christ's ascension into heaven ! See Eph. iv. 8, Acts v. 31, Psalm lxviii. 18. The words are emphatic ; "He hath ascended up on high ; he hath received gifts for men." From his ascension, look to his intercession ; How pleasant is the doctrine of his intercession in heaven ! Of this we read, 1 John ii. 1, 2, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father," Heb. vii. 25. "He is able to save to the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." He is God in our nature ! nothing can be nearer unto man than manhood. Christ

is of our kindred ; and he is God's eternal Son : his beloved Son ; whatever he asks he shall obtain ; " The Father hears him always." These doctrinal principles are so many wells from which true believers may draw much comfort and sweetness.

Upon this head of doctrinal principles, I might bring in a multitude of pleasant things ; such as, the pleasant counsels of Christ, the pleasant invitations, the pleasant promises, and the pleasant records of the word.

1. The pleasant counsels of Christ in the word ; such as, Rev. iii. 17, 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 eye-salve that thou mayest see." O what a pleasant counsellor is Christ, the Wisdom of God ! " He will guide by his counsel, and afterwards receive to his glory."

2. The pleasant invitations of the word ; such as these, Isa. lv. 1, " Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, &c., Matt. xi. 28. Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." See also Hosea xiv. 1, Jer. iii. 4, 14, 22. And how sweetly will he invite them at the last day, who accept of his invitation here ? " Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world."

3. The pleasant promises of the word, which are great and precious, and Yea, and Amen in Christ ; such as the promise of regeneration, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, " A new heart also will I give you ; and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." The promise of justification and pardon, Heb. viii. 12, " For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." The promise of adoption, 2 Cor. vi. 18, " And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The promise of sanctification, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, " And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes ; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." The promise of the Spirit for this end plentifully ; " For I will pour water upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground ; and I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring," Isa. xlv. 3. The promise of renewed communications out of his fulness, John i. 16, " And out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. The promise of peace and comfort ; John xvi 33, " These things have I spoken unto you,

that in me ye might have peace." The promise of strength and support, and of furniture for active and passive duty, for doing and suffering; "He will give power to the faint, and to them that hath no might he increaseth strength," Isa. xl. 29. The promise of his constant presence: Heb. xiii. 5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The promise of perseverance, Jeremiah xxxii. 40, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

4. The pleasant records of the word, with reference to many other things, besides what I have just now mentioned; such as,

(1.) A record of pleasant parables: among others, that of the lost groat, and what joy there was at the finding of it; representing the value that the Lord puts upon the lost soul, when found, as if it were a treasure wherein he takes peculiar pleasure. The parable of the lost sheep, such as we are; and what joy there was upon the finding of it. The parable of the lost son; and what joy there was upon his returning. All these three are recorded, Luke xv.

(2.) A record of pleasant providences; such as, the providence concerning Joseph; the providence concerning Esther; all the providences relative to Israel; the providence about the three children; and Daniel himself, recorded in the book of Daniel. What a field of pleasant meditation is here!

(3.) A record of pleasant experiences of the saints: such as, the experience that David had of the Lord's delivering him out of the paw of the lion: out of the horrible pit; his experience of communion with God; Psalm lxxxiv. 10, "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand, &c. Psalm lxiii. 2, O to see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen thee in the sanctuary!" The experience of the Spouse, Song ii. 3, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight. He brought me into the banquetting house, and his banner over me was love." Yea, for our comfort, we have experiences recorded of their desertion and darkness; as Psalm lxvii. 7, "Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious?" And Isaiah xlix. 14, "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me: and my Lord hath forgotten me," &c.

(4.) A record of pleasant titles, which are given to God, to Christ, to the Spirit, and to the saints.

1. Many pleasant titles are given to God: such as, "The Father of mercies—The God of all consolations—The God and Father



of our Lord Jesus Christ—The Father of the Fatherless.” O! let poor, fatherless, helpless sinners see a well of sweet pleasure here, at their head. See Psalm x. 14, and ciii. 15. Hos. xiv. 3. He is called, The Fountain of living water, Jer. ii. 13. A fountain always flowing, and overflowing. See Isa. xxxv. 6, 7. He is called, “The Hope of Israel,” Jer. xiv. 8. “O the Hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof in time of trouble!” He is called a sin-pardoning God, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, pardoning iniquity, and transgression, and sin.” He is called a prayer-hearing God, Psalm lxxv. 2, “O thou that hearest prayer,” &c.

2. Many pleasant titles are given to Christ. He is called the Shepherd, John x., the faithful Shepherd, the chief Shepherd, the good Shepherd, who will not suffer his people to want; they shall not want provision, protection, direction, counsel, &c.; and also a tender-hearted Shepherd, Isa. xl. 11. He is called the Physician, the good Samaritan, the Lord that healeth us. He is called the Redeemer, who pays our ransom. He is called the Desire of all nations, a Friend, a Husband, a Bridegroom, a Brother, an Advocate, the Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, the Sun of righteousness, the Saviour of sinners: every one of these relative titles are full of pleasure and sweetness. Beside, his comparative titles are full of pleasure: “He is fairer than the sons of men; more glorious than the mountains of prey: the bright and morning Star: the Rose of Sharon: the Apple-Tree among the trees of the wood.” Besides all these, his absolute titles are all full of pleasure; for, “He is God over all, blessed for ever; even the true God, and eternal life.” O what a delicious field of meditation is here for the gracious soul!

3. Many pleasant titles are given to the Holy Ghost. He is called the Remembrancer, John xiv. 26; the Helper, that helpeth our infirmities, Rom. viii. 26; the Teacher, 1 John ii. 2: the Revealer of deep and hidden things; for he searcheth all things, even the deep things of God; the Convincer and Reprover, John xvi. 8, the Sanctifier, Rom. xv. 16. The Gentiles were sanctified by the Holy Ghost. And, therefore, he is called the Spirit of holiness; the Comforter, John xiv. 26: the Witness, John xv. 26, “He shall testify of me;” the Advocate, that maketh intercession within us, Rom. viii. 26. The same word rendered Comforter, signifies an Advocate. O what pleasant things are here!

4. Many pleasant titles are given to the children of God. They are called the temples of God, 1 Cor. iii. 16 : his portion and treasure, Jer. xii. 10 ; his ransomed ones, Isa. xxxv. 10, he hath been at great charges with them ; the members of his body ; every believer may call him his head, &c. They are his beloved ; "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell safely : the dearly beloved of his soul, Jer. xii. 10—the bride, the Lamb's wife," Rev. xxi. 9. O what a pleasant relation is this ! They are his crown ; "They shall be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord," Isa. lxii. 3 ; his jewels, Mal. iii. 16, his little flock ; yea, the very apple of his eye, which he will not suffer to be touched ; "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye."

All these pleasant things, and a vast variety of others, are to be found in the doctrines of his holy word, which are a part of Wisdom's ways : Surely then they are pleasantness.

OBJECT. But what say you of the commands and threatenings of the word ? Is there any pleasure there ?

ANSW. Why, the word is a magazine of delight ; the precepts appoint us a pleasant work ; the strictest do but restrain us from our own calamities, and keep out of our hands the knife by which we would cut our fingers, if not our own throat. The severest threatenings do but deter us from running into the consuming fire, and running away from our only pleasure. And thus, even the bitterest parts of God's holy word, contribute to true delight and real pleasure. But,

[3.] Besides providential administrations and doctrinal principles, there are evangelical graces, that are part of Wisdom's ways. Every act of grace carries complacency and delight with it. I instance in knowledge, faith, love, and hope.

1. Knowledge, which is a part of Wisdom's ways, which we are called to walk in, is pleasant. What a pleasant thing is it to know God in Christ, as revealed in the gospel ! This is a looking-glass, wherein so many excellent things are to be seen. The pleasure of natural knowledge is great ; but the pleasure of saving knowledge is much greater. The pleasure that great men have in courts, and grandeur, and pomp, and splendor, is not comparable to the pleasure which an honest student hath in his books : and yet this pleasure is nothing to that which a believer hath in the knowledge of God and Christ. If you compare that pleasure and this together, we disdain the comparison ; but if you compare the pleasure that

drunkards, whoremongers, and voluptuous persons have in their carnal ways, with the pleasure of Wisdom's ways, we not only disdain the comparison but detest it. Wisdom gives us the knowledge of the best things ; the knowledge of things to come ; the knowledge of things that are most sweet : O what is sweeter than precious salvation, God, and glory ? The delights of sense are the most base and brutish ; yea, nauseous, in comparison of the heavenly delights of a renewed mind. How pleasant is the knowledge of the things that most concern our souls, and everlasting happiness ? This must be a feast to the minds of wise men. Ask one who is groaning under the weight of sin, and fear of God's wrath, whether the satisfying knowledge of pardon and reconciliation, and acceptance with God, would be more pleasant to him, than all your carnal merriment can be to you ? Ask a soul that hath lost his evidence of grace, and walks in darkness, whether the discovery of his interest in Christ, and the assurance of God's love, and the return of the light of his countenance, would be more pleasant to him than any pleasure or contentment that earth can afford ? Ask any man, at the hour of death, if he be not stupid, whether now the knowledge of his salvation would not be better, and more pleasant to him, than all the lustful sports and honours of the world ? How pleasant is the knowledge that is certain and infallible ! Such is the knowledge here. It is grounded on the infallible word of God, that endureth for ever. How pleasant is the knowledge that is experimental ! The soul, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, and tasted the sweetness of his love, this is more delicious knowledge than the most learned men in the world can have, who are ungodly.

2. Faith ; what a pleasant grace is this ! To find that we stand upon a rock, and that underneath us are everlasting arms, and that we have as full security for our salvation, as the immutable oath of the unchangeable God, what a pleasure must it be to the believing soul ! The trouble of the godly is most from their unbelief, but the more they believe, the more they are comforted, John xiv. 1. The life of faith is a pleasant life ; " Whom having not seen we love ; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 5, 6. There is joy and peace in believing, Rom. xv. 13. O how pleasant is the faith of things not seen ! Heb. xi. 1. To see him who is invisible : How pleasant is the faith of everlasting love ? Faith's retrospect, and faith's prospect of everlasting love ?



3. Love is a pleasant grace ; the love of God. Alas ! all the pleasures of the world are but trifles, and like the sports of a child, in comparison of the pleasures of the love of God. There is a sweetness in the soul's out-going after such an object. If the lustful have a pleasure in their vile and unlawful desires, and the ambitious world have a pleasure in their vain desires : surely the godly must have another kind of pleasure in their spiritual desires, and much more in their love. And, if every love have, in its own nature, a pleasure in the object beloved, what unspeakable pleasure must be in the love of God ! How sweet are the services of love ! as that of Jacob's for Rachel. How pleasant are the pains of love ! There is a sweetness in the sickness of love ! Song ii. 4.

4. Hope is a pleasant grace : what joy is there in the hope of glory, Romans v. 2. It is not the hope of corruptible riches, but of an incorruptible crown. It is not a hope in the promise of a deceitful man, but in the word of the everlasting God. This hope will never make us ashamed. How pleasant is it to be begotten again to a lively hope of that heavenly inheritance, 1 Pet. i. 3. O what is the pleasure of meat and drink, of mirth and jollity, of pride and bravery ? Nothing but mere vanishing dreams. "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most miserable ;" but, having this hope, in the life to come, we are of all men the most happy.

Thus I might speak of all the graces of the Spirit. Every act of grace carries pleasure in the bosom of it ; even these spiritual actings of repentance and godly sorrow, and mortification, which seem to be most troublesome and bitter. Spiritual fasting carries spiritual feasting with it, see Zech. viii. 19. How could their fast be a feast ? Why, there is pleasure in gospel-penitence. The tears of godly sorrow are tears of joy. Never hath the believer more pleasure than when looking to Christ, with the tear in his eye. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," Psalm xxxvi. 5, 6. They reap when they are sowing as well as afterwards ; and if the very seed-time be a reaping-time, what will the harvest be ? Thus you see Wisdom's ways are pleasantness.

[4.] There are spiritual benefits and works of God, in and towards Wisdom's children, which are part of Wisdom's ways, and are all pleasantness. The works of God are the ways of God, Rev. xv. 3, 4. And I mention four beneficial works of his that are full of pleasure, namely—illumination, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

1. Illumination is the work of Christ, the Wisdom of God, as he is a Prophet : and, O how pleasant is this divine light. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. It is a light shining into the soul, whereby not only the head is informed, but the heart satisfied and transformed. If the light of the natural sun be pleasant, what must the light of the Sun of righteousness be ?

2. Justification is the work of Christ, as he is a Priest ; and, O what pleasure is there in this work, this way of Wisdom, Rom. v. 1, 2, 11, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ ; by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement." See how David rejoices in this work, Psalm ciii. 3, 4, 5, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies ; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed as the eagle's." What peace doth an intimation of pardon bring to the soul, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee."

3. Sanctification is the work of Christ, as he is a King : for herein he sets up his throne in the heart : and, O what pleasure is there here, for, according to the measure of sanctity, so are the spiritual senses exercised. As the eye is pleased with the beloved object, and the ear pleased with harmony, and the taste pleased with food, and the smell with odour ; what must the pleasure be of seeing the glory, hearing the voice, tasting the goodness, feeling the power, and smelling the odour of Christ. If there be any pleasure in ornament, any pleasure in beauty, what must be the pleasure of this adorning with the beautiful image of God ! The fruits of this work are pleasant to God, and to the soul both, Song iv. 16, v. 1, and ii. 14.

4. Glorification and complete salvation is the work of Christ, and therein is the pleasure of the saints consummate ; "He is the author of eternal salvation to them," Heb. v. 9. And it is his work to call them to his joy, saying, "Enter thou into the joys of thy Lord," Matth. xxv. 2. The fullest persuasion of this : "Thou wilt shew me the path of life ; in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy

right hand are pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. 11. Surely then, "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness."

2dly, To demonstrate this truth, viz., that "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness," by opening up some of the springs of pleasure, that Wisdom's children who keep her ways, draw their comfort from. I shall mention a fourfold source and spring, from whence the believer may derive his pleasure, viz., God and his attributes, Christ and his fulness, the Spirit and his operations, the covenant and its promises.

1. God and his attributes is the source and spring of the believer's pleasure: and, O what an ocean of delight is here! He is a God of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; here is wisdom to direct, power to protect, holiness to sanctify, justice to satisfy, goodness to pity, and faithfulness to make good all that he hath said. Where shall we find comfort, if not in God? What a poor portion is the world? But God is the everlasting and unchangeable portion of his people. There is more ground of comfort in that one word, "I will be thy God," than there is in a thousand of worlds. What can they want who have a God to go to! Can he want water who hath the ocean? Can he want light that hath the sun?

2. Christ and his fulness is the spring and source of his pleasure; the store-house of his delight, from whom he may daily bring his comfort; for, what great things he doth for his spouse are unspeakable. It is he that pays all their debt, supplies all their wants: "All their springs are in him; and out of his fulness they receive and grace for grace, John i. 16. In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9. And they are complete in him, chap. ii. 9, 10. And he is made of God to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30.

3. The Spirit and his operations is the spring and source of their comfort. He is the Comforter, John xvi. 7, and he gives sometimes strong consolation, Heb. vi. 18. They who have the spirit of faith and conversion, have the promise of the Spirit for consolation; and in all his various operations there are manifold consolations. The Spirit in his working is compared to wind, Song vi. 16; to water, John iii. 5; to fire, Matthew iii. 11; to oil, Psalm xlv. 7, 1 John ii. 27. Now, this is the wind that pleasantly fills their sails, and forwards their voyage to the heavenly harbour; this is the well of water within them that springs up to everlasting life; and the streams of this river make glad the city of God; this is the



fire that makes their hearts burn within them ; and this is the oil of joy that anoints the wheels of their soul for running the Christian race ; the joy of the Lord being their strength.

4. The Covenant and its promises are springs and sources of their pleasure. They have the whole treasure of the gospel to go to for delight ; and little doth the sensual, ignorant world know what sweetness and supporting pleasures are from thence derived. What comfort did this afford to David ? " 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, although he make it not to grow," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. God's covenant of promise, which stands fast in Christ, is the comfort of the Christian in all his distresses, " This is my comfort in my affliction ; thy word hath quickened me." One scripture promise of the love of God, and the life to come, is of infinitely more worth than all the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world : these vanish, but " The word of the Lord endureth for ever." We have promises suiting every state, and every strait. Osirs, what comfort can we find without a promise ? What but a promise can comfort them that are short of the possession ? We may have more joy in sickness, with a promise, than others can have in their health, without a promise ; a promise in prison is more than liberty ; a promise in poverty is more than riches ; a promise in death is better than life. All that you have, without a promise, you may lose in a moment, and your souls and hopes with it ; but all that you have, with a promise, you may be sure of ; yea, believer, you are vastly more sure of that which you have in promise, than of that which you have in possession. The comfort that you have in possession is the stream-comfort, that may soon be cut off ; but the comfort that you have in promise is the fountain-comfort, which cannot be cut off. We are called, therefore, to live by faith, and not by sense. Sensible comforts are not sure here ; but the promise, the ground of faith, is sure and immutable. We may go through death rejoicing with a promise of life in our hand, while infidels lie down in the dust with desperation ; and though we should stagger at the promise of God, through unbelief, yet that shall not make the promise of none effect ; for, " The foundation of God standeth sure. Though heaven and earth should pass away, his word shall not pass, till all be fulfilled."

## SERMON CXXXVI.

“Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”—

PROV. iii. 17.

[The Second Sermon on this Text.]

OUR blessed Redeemer is frequently represented in the sacred volume under the name of WISDOM, particularly in this book of Proverbs; not only in this chapter where our text lies, from ver. 13—18; but also in chap. iv. 7, viii. ix. 1, &c. And under this name, in many of the above places, his glorious excellence is pointed out in a very striking light, as being better and more precious than rubies, and all things desirable are not to be compared with him, &c. What is elegantly and sublimely said in praise of Wisdom, by Job, chapter xxviii. 12—20, might with great propriety be said concerning him. As Christ the essential Wisdom of God, is so transcendently excellent in and of himself, so, everything about him and appertaining to him, bears an impress of his glorious dignity. He himself is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person; and his disciples, in virtue of their union to him, have the divine image drawn upon them, made partakers of the divine nature, and are accounted the excellent ones in the earth, the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, the King’s daughter being made all glorious within. The religion of the blessed Jesus is a glorious, excellent, and divine thing, and the distinguishing badge of all the candidates for glory; the profession of it highly expedient and truly ornamental; and the sincere and devout exercise thereof, evidential of the true Christian, and of a divine principle of life being inlaid in the soul. In a word, everything about God is amiable and lovely, and yields the greatest delight and satisfaction; for, “Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

We have already finished what we intended on the first general head of the method, which was to demonstrate the truth of the proposition, viz., That “Wisdom’s ways are pleasantness;” and this we did by an induction of particulars, condescending on some of the ways of Wisdom which are pleasantness; and then opening up some of the springs of pleasure that Zion’s children have, who keep her ways. We now proceed,

II. To the second thing we proposed, which was, To speak of the qualities of that pleasure that is in Wisdom’s ways. And here

we may have occasion to observe the excellency of Wisdom's pleasures above all worldly pleasure whatsoever.

1. The pleasure of Wisdom's ways is real and solid ; it is called joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Peter i. 8. Whereas, sensual delights are like children's laughter, slight and fleeting ; as children laugh in one breath, and cry in the next—so are worldly joys followed at the heels with sorrow, for they lie not deep, and fortify not the heart against distress, as the delights of faith do. Hence worldly pleasures, when compared with spiritual, are said to be like the crackling of thorns under a pot, Eccl. vii. 6. " So is the laughter of a fool : " it is nothing but a blaze and it is gone. Hence, also, worldly delights are compared to Jonah's gourd, Jonah iv. 6, 7. We are apt to rejoice in creature comforts, but God prepares a worm to destroy them. When a person promises most in them, then a worm eats them up root and branch ; they are such comforts as either the wind can wither them, or the water can drown them, or the fire can burn them, the moth can consume them, or the thief steal them ; sickness can sink them, or death can destroy them ; some worm or other can eat them out, and eat them up ; but the joys of godliness are so solid and substantial that they can defy fire and water, Isa. xliii. 1, 2, they can defy trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ; they can defy death, or life, or angels, or principalities, or powers, or things present, or things to come, Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.

2. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are rational pleasures, and well grounded, and safe ; they are not grounded upon mistakes and fancies ; they are warranted by the promise and oath of God, The two immutable things by which it is impossible for God to lie, Heb. vi. 17, 18. None but a lying devil, or an unbelieving heart full of blasphemy against God, will call in question the foundation of their faith and comfort ; but the wicked rejoice in their own delusion ; it is ignorance and error that they are beholden to for their mirth ; they but laugh in their sleep, and, like madmen, in their distraction. If they knew the shortness of their pleasures, and the length of their sorrows ; if they knew how much God is offended at their carnal merriment, how much the devil rejoices in their joys, and how near they are to hell, and eternal woe, and howling, it would turn their laughter into lamentation ; so that they rejoice upon a mere mistake ; " Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness," Prov. xiv. 23. " How much she hath glorified herself



and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her," Rev. xviii. 7. I have read of a certain weed, which makes the creatures that eat it give up their lives laughing; such a weed do the wicked of the world eat, that they go laughing to hell.

3. The pleasure of Wisdom's ways is spiritual, pure, and holy; the devil is an enemy to it; and it is contrary to sin, and commanded; "Rejoice evermore," 1 Thess. v. 16. It is the gift of God, the fruit of the Spirit of God, and accompanied with the fear of God; "They walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," Acts ix. 31. It is warranted by his command, and promoted by his promise; but the pleasures of the ungodly are impure and sinful; they are forbidden pleasures, condemned by God and confounded by his terrible threatenings; "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," Isa. xlvi. 22. He forbids joy to a rebellious people; "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people; for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God," Hosea ix. 1. He calls them to weeping, and mourning, rent of heart, Joel ii. 12, 13. (See James v. 1—5.) God protests against their peace, and sentences them to sorrow.

4. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are relieving; they give rest in the middle of trouble and perplexity; "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul, Psalm xciv. 19. They give relief from present fears of danger and distress; and relief from future fears of death and judgment; but worldly pleasures, instead of giving relief, increase trouble; yea the thoughts of death, judgment, and eternity, will quickly mar all their mirth, and put a final period to their rejoicing.

5. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are purifying pleasures, as well as pure; they are meliorating, and make us better; they are so far from disordering the mind, and leading it to sin, that they compose and purify the mind, and make sin more odious than ever. No man hates sin so much, as he that hath tasted most of the sweetness of divine grace, and hath most of the joy of God's salvation. They are not taken with the snares of the flesh, till once they lose the relish of divine pleasures, and suffer their delights in Christ to fade. So long as we maintain our delight in God, the world is but dung, honour is a smoke, and lust is a stink to us. He is the best and highest Christian that hath most of spiritual delight and pleasure; why, they rejoice and work righteousness, Isaiah lxiv. 5; but fleshly pleasures are putrifying, instead of purifying; they make

men worse, and not better. They are snares to entrap men ; and to bewitch and defile their souls, that should be chaste for God. The noise of sensual pleasures drowns the voice of God and reason. Oh ! how little of God is in the midst of men's hunting and hawking, diceing and carding, drinking, dancing, ranting, and revelling ! How little of heaven is in their mind, when the heart is quite sunk and drenched in sensual delights ! It is then petrified and hardened against the word and warning of God. Then it is that they are foolish, disobedient, deceived, when they are serving divers lusts and pleasures, Titus iii. 3. Such are unwilling soberly and seriously to consider the things that belong to their everlasting peace ; and hence so frequently grow up to be slighers and scorers of the means of their salvation.

6. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are honourable and heavenly ; they are of the same nature with these that saints and angels have with God ; whatever their gradual difference be, yet they are of the same kind. It is the same God and glory that now delights the believer, as seen by vision and intuition with open face. If heaven be the state of greatest joy and pleasure, the state of grace that is next to it must be a pleasant state. But sensual pleasures are sordid and earthly ; so far unlike to the joys of heaven, that nothing more withdraws the heart, and makes it unfit for heaven. Hence,

7. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are high and lofty pleasures ; here the soul delights in things of the greatest worth. The delights of holiness are glorious and sublime delights, brought from the most great and glorious things, and fed by God, and his grace, and everlasting glory ; whereas the delights of the sense are fed with trifles and swine's husks. The carnal man's pleasures in the world are like these of children, playing with toys and trifles, baubles and butterflies. We may judge by the matter that feeds their pleasures which of the two is the more pleasant life, to sport in their own shame, and lie at the brink of misery, with the ungodly ; or to delight ourselves in the love of God, and rejoice in the assured hope of the glory of God, with the true believer. The proper delight of believers is with angels, to delight in God, and in the glory of God in Christ ; but the delight of sinners is, as swine, in wallowing in the mire of sin ; and, as the dog to eat his own vomit, 2 Peter ii. 22.

8. The pleasures of Wisdom's ways are lasting, yea, and everlasting. It is not a mutable good we rejoice in, but in an immut-

able good, in the immutable God ; in the immutable love of God, in the immutable promise of the covenant, and in the hope of a kingdom that cannot be moved. These pleasures are pleasures for evermore, Psalm xvi. 11. Indeed, the believer's joy here, in this world, is oft interrupted by the neighbourhood of the flesh, and prevalence of sin, and the hidings of God's face ; but yet still God keeps their comforts alive, at least, in the root, and will make them spring forth, as we need them, and are fit for them ; and their joy no man taketh from them, John xvi. 22. Death cannot kill the joys of the believer ; the grave cannot bury them, millions of ages shall not end them ; God hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, 2 Thess. ii. 16 ; but worldly pleasures are but of a short duration ; they are gone before we will feel that we have had them, and the worldlings are therein sowing the seeds of everlasting sorrow ; Satan is but scratching them, as the butcher shaves the throat of the swine before he kills them. He that hath had many days, and months, and years in sinful pleasures, hath no relish of it when it is past ; but as if it had never been, and much worse. The bones and dust of many thousands lie in the churchyard that have tasted many a sweet morsel, and that have had many a merry wanton day ; and now what the better are they of it ? What have they more than those that spent their time in sorrow ? The poor and sorrowful are their equals. Their souls have as little of these pleasure as their dust. In heaven these carnal delights are abhorred ; and in hell they are turned to everlasting flames, and remembered as fuel for the devouring fire. Alas ! how foolish is it to choose the pleasures of sin that is but for a season ? Heb. xi. 25. The joy of the wicked is quickly drowned in everlasting sorrow, Job xx. 4—9, xxi. 12, 13, and the momentary sorrows of the godly are forgotten in everlasting joy, John xvi. 20. O sirs, who can value the pleasures of the wicked that do foresee their end ? If folly and stupidity were any wonder, it were a wonder that ungodly men can be merry when their consciences tell them that they are not sure if they shall stay one hour longer out of hell ; for, while they are saying, " Soul, take thy rest ; eat, drink, and be merry ;" they may suddenly be told from God, " Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee ;" and then to whom appertains thy wealth ; and where is thy sport and mirth ? As a paper wall cannot stand before consuming fire, no more can your fading pleasures stand before the frowns of God, or the face of death ; nay, scarce can they endure or



stand before a serious forethought of the day of death and judgment that is approaching ; they are beholden to their folly, security, and stupidity for their ease and pleasure ; and their temporal pleasure mars and hinders their everlasting pleasure, but the pleasure of saints is eternal.

III. The third thing was to speak of some of the particular paths of wisdom, which are peace and pleasure both ; for peace and pleasure are so near akin that peace is like the fire, and pleasure the flame. Peace is the root of pleasure, and pleasure is the fruit of peace. Now, as I said in the explication, the paths of Wisdom are either such as Wisdom walks in towards us, or such as Wisdom directs us to walk in. Upon the first general head, I have especially touched at these ways wherein Wisdom walks towards us ; particularly his pleasant providential administrations, which we with pleasure submit to and acquiesce in ; pleasant doctrinal principles which we are with pleasure to believe and cleave unto ; pleasant evangelical graces, which we are with pleasure to receive and exercise ; and pleasant spiritual benefits, and works of God towards us, which we are with pleasure to entertain, and adore him for.

But now, beside the general ways of Wisdom, there are particular paths, especially such as wisdom directs us to walk in, which will be found to be pleasantness and peace both ; and those paths are either internal, such as concern graces to be exercised ; or external, such as concern duties to be performed.

1st. There are internal paths of Wisdom that relate to graces to be exercised : this is what I have already touched at, on the first general head, wherein I spoke of evangelical graces ; and therefore, I shall not enlarge on this, neither recapitulate what was said, but only add a few things, particularly these two.

1. Joy ; internal joy itself is a grace that believers are called to exercise ; for the kingdom of God consisteth as in righteousness, so in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. xiv. 17. They receive not the spirit of fear but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, ABBA, Father, Rom. viii. 15. O sirs, how pleasant must this be, to be enabled with boldness, love, and confidence, to call God, Father, and to fly to him for succour and supply, in every danger and necessity ! They only know the pleasure of this, that enjoy it ; "The fruit of the Spirit is joy, love, and peace," Gal. v. 22. Now, if joy itself be a part of the state of grace, you may see that it is the most pleasant path.

2. Internal sorrow, fears, cares, and disquietments are forbidden to the children of God. Wisdom's children, and therefore Wisdom's ways must surely be pleasantness and peace. God hath commanded us to cast all our cares upon him, and hath promised to care for us, 1 Peter v. 7. He hath called us to be careful for nothing but in everything, by prayer and supplication, to make our requests known unto him, with thanksgiving, Philip iv. 6. And can there be a more pleasant course than that, which excludes all inordinate cares, and fears, and sorrows, as much as health excludes sickness! Here it is made unlawful to be miserable and sorrowful; no sorrow being allowed, but that which tends to our joy; yea, God hath forbidden care, and fear, and disquietment of mind; for his command is, "Care not, fear not," Isa. xxxv. 4, xlv. 10. What do you fear then? Do you fear reproach? You do it contrary to the will of God, who says, "Fear not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings," Isa. li. 7. Do you fear the fury of men? the power and rage of enemies! (See Isa. li. 12.) Why, it is contrary to your religion so to do; for God says, "Fear them not," Isa. xliii. 5, 13, 14, and xlv. 2, 8. Do you fear persecution or death from the hand of cruel violence? Why, it is contrary to the will of God that you do so; "Fear not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," Matt. x. 26, 28. O then, what a pleasant, peaceable path must this be, where all that is annoying and grievous is forbidden, and all that is delightful and joyous is commanded! It is here made our work and duty to rejoice in the Lord; yea, always to rejoice, Phil. iv. 3. Now, O poor deluded sinner, that would be free of care, fear, and sorrow, if you will give up yourself to Christ, and choose Wisdom's ways, you shall be free of all those, except such as are necessary to your joy. Pleasure and peace is the very work and employment of the righteous. (See Psalm xxxii. 1, xcvi. 11.) "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. And Psalm xxxii. 11. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart, and cxlii. 9, 16. Let thy saints shout for joy: her saints shall shout aloud for joy, and v. 11. But let all them that put their trust in thee, rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them; let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. Phil. iii. 41, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord."

You that love no life but a life of mirth and pleasure, here it is to be had ; if you will have God to be your God, Christ your master, and Wisdom's ways your choice, then holy mirth and spiritual pleasure will be your work, your employment. But again,

2dly, There are external paths of Wisdom that relate to duties to be performed, which are also full of pleasure and peace. I shall mention some of these.

1. The duty of hearing and reading the word : how pleasant is it to be exercised herein ? This is plain from the experience of all that have been revived, renewed, refreshed by the word. If you who feel no sweetness in it will not believe them that say they feel it, at least believe the word of God, and the declarations of his ancient saints, Psalm cxix. 14, 16, 24, 47, 92, 93, 72, 97, 103, 111, 127, 162, 165. "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches. I will delight myself in thy statutes. Thy testimonies are my delight ; and I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. Unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in my afflictions. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. O ! how love I thy law ? it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste ; more than honey to my mouth. Thy testimonies have I taken for my heritage for ever ; for they are the rejoicing of my heart. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. Great peace have they that love thy law ; and nothing shall offend them." It is the work and mark of a blessed man, that his delight is in the law of the Lord ; and in his law doth he meditate day and night, Psalm i. 1, 2.

QUEST. What is there in the word that affords such pleasure ?

ANSW. There are many pleasant things therein to feed the delight of the child of God ; besides the pleasant doctrines of the word, there are pleasant counsels, invitations, promises, records, as I noticed above.

2. The duty of prayer, both secret and social, how pleasant is it to them that are exercised therein ! Jer. xxxiii. 3. "Call upon me and I will answer thee ; and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." We may say in this, as with reference to the former head, what makes hearing so unpleasant to many ? Why, because, in hearing, they do not hear ; for, if indeed they heard the voice of God, it would be the most pleasant thing



in the world to them, it being a quickening voice, a heart-rousing, and raising voice. So what makes prayer unpleasant? Why, because in praying, they do not pray. If people knew what it were, with Jacob, to wrestle with God in prayer, they would call the name of the place Bethel, "The house of God, the gate of heaven;" they would call it Peniel, where they saw God face to face, Gen. xxviii. 17, xxxii. 30. Can any think it a grievous work for the guilty soul, to pray for pardon; or the polluted soul, to pray for cleansing; for a loving child to converse with his father, and speak to him? True, the atheistical heart says, "It is in vain to serve the Lord: and what a weariness is it?" Mal. iii. 14, and i. 13, such will give him but a lame and lifeless service. But the time cometh, when they who now despise prayer, will betake themselves to prayer; sickness, and death, and terror, will teach you to pray earnestly, who now put off with a few dead, formal, and heartless words.

3. The duty of praise and thanksgiving, how pleasant it is, to them that are exercised therein! Surely they are not acquainted with this work who know not the pleasure of it. If there be any thing pleasant in the world, it is the praise of God that flows from a loving, believing heart, filled with the majesty, mercy, goodness, and excellency of God in Christ, to remember his great and wonderful works, to mention his glorious and adorable attributes, shining in the face of Jesus, with a light that infinitely surpasses the sun in its brightness. O! how pleasant is it to see and adore the Father in the Son, and the Godhead in the manhood of our Lord Jesus, and the riches of grace in the glass of the gospel, the manifold wisdom of God? There is not a perfection of God, nor a promise of the covenant, nor a passage of the gospel, nor a part of the Spirit's work upon the soul, but contains such matter of praise to God, as might fill believing souls with pleasure and find them most delightful work. Surely they never knew the life of religion, who never took any pleasure in praise: they must have a dangerous disease that makes them loath the sweetest things. See how the Spirit of God represents the sweetness of this exercise, Psalm cxlvii. 1, cxlix. 1, 2, xcv. 1, 2, 3, xcvi. 1, 2, 3, "Praise ye the Lord; for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely. Praise ye the Lord: sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. O! come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock

of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King, above all gods. O sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord, all the earth ; sing unto the Lord, bless his name ; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people." O what a joyful thing is it, when the force of love doth open our lips that our mouth may shew forth his praise ! Psalm cxxxv. 2, 3. This is the recreation of saints and angels. How are they to be pitied who know no better diversion, nor cure of melancholy, than in a bumper of ale, a stock of cards, a company of profane swearers, drunkards, or debauchees ! Whoever will surfeit on the pleasures of the flesh, there are a few happy souls that are for David's *one thing* : " One thing have I desired of the Lord : that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life ; to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire into his temple, Psalm xxvii. 4. For in the times of trouble he will hide me in his pavilion : in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me ; he shall set me upon a rock : and now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies, round about me : therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy ; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord," ver. 5, 6.

4. The duty of partaking in the sacramental supper, how pleasant is this to be worthy communicants ! They that know what it is to meet with God at such occasions, will know that there is no pleasure on earth comparable to that which is sometimes found at this solemn feast. This holy feast is purposely provided by the King of saints, for the pleasant entertainment of his family. Therein the slain Lamb of God, our Passover sacrificed for us, to take away our sins, is the pleasant food : as our sinful pleasures were his sorrows ; so his sorrows are our joys ; his pain our pleasure ; his death our life ; his suffering our feast. See John vi. 33, 50, 51, " For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven ; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Here we have communion with God, as a reconciled God in Christ, his eternal Son, whom he, the offended Majesty, sent to be our Redeemer,

Saviour, and Surety; here we have communion with Christ, as crucified and glorified for us, offered and exhibited to us, as our quickening and strengthening Head; and here we have communion with the Holy Ghost, applying to our souls the benefit of redemption, drawing us to the Son, and communicating light, life, strength, and comfort from him to us; here we have communion with the body of Christ, his sanctified people, heirs of eternal life in Christ; here we have pardon and salvation sealed, and the greatest mercies in the world brought down to us, in sensible representations, that the means may be suited to the frailty and infirmity of our present state. If you could never find any pleasure in these things, it is because you are alive to sin, and dead to God, and want spiritual sense; insomuch, that heaven itself would not be pleasant to you, unless your nature be changed, to make you change your pleasure. If the children of God find, at any time, little pleasure in that ordinance, it is only when some disease doth corrupt the appetite, and make the sweetest things seem bitter, when faith is not in exercise, and their spiritual senses are dulled.

5. The duties of Sabbath-day's service, or of the work of the Lord's day. How pleasant is it to all that call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord honourable! Isa. lviii. 13. How sweetly doth the exercised believer, then, go from flower to flower, gathering honey to his soul, and so preparing for winter! How sweetly doth he go from promise to promise, from duty to duty, from prayer to reading and hearing, from reading and hearing to prayer again; and from prayer to praise; from public to private worship, and from private to public; from one edifying employment to another, from one edifying lesson to another, gathering honey and sweetness to his soul, and laying in provision for death and eternity! Alas! sirs, if brutish wantons, who make the Sabbath but a play-day, an idle day, knew the ineffable delights that exercised souls find in some of their Sabbath-day's public and private worship, how would they blush at their own folly and madness, that prefer a day in an ale-house before a day in God's house! How confounded might they be, to hear king David saying, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand?" O carnal, brutish sinner! that Sabbath-work, which is your toil, is the saints' recreation; and these follies which are your sport and recreation, would be their prison, and stocks, and toil: for they are delighted in waiting on that Lord, whom you know not.



6. The duty of holy conference is another pleasant portion of the work : however much this is worn out amongst the people of God, yet, as the duty is always binding, so the exercise is pleasant to all that are engaged in it, who converse with one another, not by hearsay, but by experience, about the communion they have had with God, the prayers he hath heard, the deliverances he hath granted, and the support and comfort in distress that he hath allowed ; their conflicts with temptation, and their conquests over it ; they can direct each other in their difficulties, and comfort each other with the same comfort, wherein they themselves have been comforted by the Lord ; and so edifying one another by their spiritual communication. O Christians, if your graces did not languish, and your soul lose the relish of heavenly things, you would be more fond of and frequent in fellowship meetings, and holy converse with the godly, according to Mal. iii. 16, Heb. x. 24, 25, iii. 13, " Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another ; and the Lord hearkened and heard it ; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works, not forgetting the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is ; but exhorting one another ; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." O sirs, you who never could take pleasure in the converse of the godly, upon spiritual subjects, what is the subject of your communication with these with whom you confer ? Do you talk of better things than God ? or higher things than heaven ? or things that more nearly concern you than the matters of everlasting consequence ? Go to a company of merry fellows, as you call them, and to a company of serious, godly people, and secretly write down all their words that you hear, from both companies, and read them over together, and see which is the pleasantest or sweetest. What a hotch-potch of nonsense, impertinence, levity, worldliness, pride, and folly, and perhaps impurity and profanity too, shall you find in the one ? and what savoury, necessary, edifying discourse will you find in the other ? It is far pleasanter to be among bleating sheep, and singing birds, than among idle, prattling, foolish companions : for, with the former, you shall have some natural good, without any mixture of sinful evil ; but, in wicked, foolish company, what will you perceive,

but how much nature is depraved? How sinners are beside themselves, how Satan doth befool them, and how God is forgotten, while he is present with them, and they are lying in the devil's chains, and at the very brink of death and hell? Surely holy converse with the godly is, in itself, more delightful, than all the poor merriment and idle drolleries of the ungodly. If you think not so, it is because your relish is deprived, the devil hath deluded you, and sin hath bereaved you of your wits. Thus you see some of the paths that wisdom directs us to walk in, that are peace. I come now,

IV. To the fourth thing proposed, viz., To touch at the nature and qualities of that peace that is to be found in Wisdom's paths. It is a peace that differs vastly from the peace that the wicked may have. I shall therefore, 1. Describe the peace negatively, by shewing what sort of a peace that of the wicked is. 2. I shall describe this peace positively, by shewing what kind of a peace is to be found in Wisdom's paths.

1st, Let us take a view of this peace negatively, by shewing what kind of a peace that of the wicked is.

1. It is a peace that cannot endure a scriptural trial; the man cannot endure to be searched, but hates the light, John iii. 19, 20; whereas true peace loves to be searched by the rule of the word, Psalm xxvi. 1, 2, 3, and cxxxix. 23, 24.

2. It is a peace that stands not upon scriptural evidences; whatever pretences to truth and reality one's peace may have, yea, though it pretend to a great deal of the Spirit, it is false peace, if it have no full evidence from the word, Isa. viii. 20, and lix. 24.

3. It is a peace that consists with sin and sloth. It consists with the maintenance of known sin; whereas true peace keeps the soul at war with every evil, Psalm lxvi. 18, 19, it consists with sloth and security; whereas true peace kills sloth, and stirs up to spiritual exercise, Rom. v. 1, 2, 3, 4, Phil. iv. 6, 7, 8, Psal. cxix. 32.

4. It is a peace which pleases the devil, and which raises no opposition to him; whereas true peace is opposed by all the power and policy of hell. See Luke xi. 21, Eph. vi. 11, 12, "When a strong man keeps his palace, his goods are in peace. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

5. The peace of the wicked is a profane peace, Deut. xxix. 19, "I shall have peace, though I walk after the imagination of my own heart." They think they may lie, and steal, and swear, and com-

mit adultery, and break the Sabbath, and yet have peace ; that is a profane peace : better have a conscience roaring, and full of the terrors of the Almighty.

6. It is a deluded peace ; “ He feedeth on ashes ; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand,” Isa. xliv. 20. It is as if a man were sleeping on a topmast, ready to be flung into the ocean, with every pire of wind, and yet dreaming that he is an universal monarch : Would any man envy him ? This is the case of the profane ; they are in all circumstances of danger, exposed to the loudest thunder of heaven, yet dreaming of nothing but ease and quiet, while ready to plump into the ocean of God’s wrath ; for they have no shelter, no defence ; who would envy them ?

7. It is a dangerous and destructive peace, Isa. l. 11, 1 Thess. v. 3, “ They say, Peace, peace, when sudden destruction cometh,” and is at the door. The prosperity of fools destroys them ;” and so doth the peace of the wicked destroy them ; “ They look for peace, and behold trouble.” They think they are safe, when they are just at the perishing for ever.

8. It is a sacrilegious peace, for God allows no peace to his enemies ; “ There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,” Isa. lvii. 21. If thou art an unconverted man, living in a state of enmity against God, he doth not allow you one moment’s quiet of mind ; and if you take it, it is theft, it is a taking what is not yours. Consider this, man, in your jovial and revelling hours : your mind should be upon the rack, till the enmity between God and you be taken away, and you be interested in the blessed Peace-maker. And the more so, in regard that there are bars on God’s part, and on yours both, that exclude you from that peace which is only the privilege of those that are in Wisdom’s ways.

[1.] On God’s part, there are four bars which exclude you from this peace.

(1.) The power of God is a bar that excludes : God only hath authority to give peace : all the angels in heaven cannot speak a comfortable word to a sinner, if God be against him. It is he that createth the fruit of the lips ; peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is nigh, Isa. lvii. 19. It is not men or angels that can create, it is a work peculiar to God alone. Carnal men look upon pardoning grace as an easy thing, that it is easy to give pardon and easy to take it ; yea, but take a guilty conscience, that sees it-



self, as it were, hanging over hell, ready to drop in, then all the ministers in the world can do this person no good, except the Lord encourage him. Alas! this is such a hard lock, that no hand, but that of the Spirit of God can turn.

(2. The holiness of God is a bar that excludes the wicked from peace. His holiness manifested in the precepts of the law, says, "Before you have peace, I must have perfect obedience: what have you to do with peace, as long as your spiritual whoredom doth remain?" Again,

(3.) The justice of God is a bar: for, his justice, in the threatening, says, "Before you have peace, I must have satisfaction, Gal. iii. 10; "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," Isaiah lvii. 21.

(4.) Yea, the mercy of God is a bar: for, as mercy will not vent to the dishonour of justice; so slighted mercy brings on the sorest vengeance, Rom. ii. 4, 5, Heb. ii. 3, x. 28, 29, xii. 25.

[2.] On the sinner's own part, there are also four bars that exclude them from peace.

(1.) Their own corruption is a bar; one sin making way for another; and different lusts make great disturbance: See Isa. lvii. 20, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

(2.) Their own conscience is a bar that impedes their peace. Conscience will not be satisfied without keeping the law. God's deputy is a terror to the man. It is a Rebecca, feeling the child struggling in her womb. Conscience condemns, and casts daggers at the heart of a sinner.

(3.) Their own crosses are a bar that keep them from peace. As the Israelites, when they were in the wilderness, and in Egypt, though God stopped their mouths, it could not stop their murmurings: they cannot learn in every state to be content. They fret against God. The cross galls them: and every thing fears them; whereas it is said of the righteous, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." It is not so with the wicked.

(4.) Their own comforts are a bar that exclude them from this peace. As they cannot serve God without distraction; so they cannot live in prosperity, without distraction; "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep," Eccl. v. 12. A good man

can sleep quietly, because he lays his head upon the pillows of God's providence and promise ; whereas the wicked, when they pretend to trust their soul with God, yet cannot trust their riches with him ; they cannot trust him with their temporal concerns ; their comforts keep them from peace.

2dly, We would now describe this peace positively, shewing what that peace is that is to be found in Wisdom's paths.

1. It is an internal peace. There is an outward external peace in the world, between man and man, as I observed in the explication of the words ; but worldly peace is oft-times denied unto the godly ; for Christ says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation ;" but he hath promised them peace of a spiritual nature, saying, "In me ye shall have peace," John xvi. 33. This internal peace is either peace above us, with God ; or peace within us, in our heart ; the one is the cause, and the other is the effect. Peace with God, is what all true believers have in the first moments of their justification, Rom. v. 1, and viii. 1. And this inward peace, resulting from peace with God, may be considered either as it hath a relation to sin, or to affliction. As it hath a relation to sin, it hath a threefold aspect. It looks to sin, and the guilt thereof ; it looks to God, and his wrath, the desert of sin ; and it looks to Christ and his blood, as the remedy of both, taking guilt from sin, and wrath from God ; as making reconciliation through the blood of his cross : and, in this respect, this "peace is a sweet composure and tranquillity of mind, arising from a sense of pardon, and reconciliation, in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God." As it hath relation to affliction, it imports the same thing, namely, "a sweet composure of Spirit and tranquillity of mind, flowing from a sense of divine favour through Christ ;" and further, it contains these three things.

(1.) An acquiescing in and submission to the divine will, whatever befalls the man ; resolutely to take up the cross, with an absolute resignation to the divine pleasure, 1 Sam. xxv. 25, 26.

(2.) An heroic courage to encounter with difficulties, the soul saying, "Through God we shall do valiantly ; for it is he that shall tread down our enemies, Psal. lx. 12. By thee will I run through a troop ; by my God will I leap over a wall," Psal. xxviii. 29.

(3.) Holy security, and a sweet inward relish of ease, in the midst of trouble and difficulties. When the storm is whirling about their ears, in patience they possess their souls.

This peace as it relates to sin, is opposite to enmity ; the enmity hath got a deadly stroke in regeneration and justification ; God is at peace with the soul, and the soul is at peace with God. And as it relates to affliction, it is opposite to disquieting thoughts, impatience under trouble, and a fretful disposition.

2. It is a divine peace, and has a divine original. All the three persons of the glorious Trinity are co-workers herein, as the author of this peace. God the Father, he is called the God of peace that bruises Satan under our feet. He gives peace, creates, maintains, preserves, and perfects it. The Son is called the Prince of peace. He, as a Prophet, preaches peace ; as a Priest, purchases it ; and, as a King, proclaims and commands it : yea, in the abstract, he is our peace, and joy in believing, by his powerful, physical, irresistible efficiency, mastering all the storms of the soul. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22.

3. It is a holy peace : "Great peace have they that love thy law, nothing shall offend them. As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and on the Israel of God. The fruit of righteousness is peace." As it is said, "He that hath this hope purifieth himself ;" so, he that hath peace, it embitters sin ; and peace with God cannot be without war with sin ; hence, when sin prevails, believers cannot find rest, till they get a new sprinkling of the blood of the Peace-maker.

4. It is a miraculous peace ; it is a miracle ; for it is peace in the midst of fire and water. The three children walk in the midst of fire, and have peace ; the Israelites walk through the Red Sea, and have peace. And all this according to his promise : "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee," Isa. xliii. 2.

5. It is a noble and nobilitating peace : it sublimates the soul above all inferior things, so as with a generous disdain, it looks down upon the trifling vanities which bewitch the affections of the world. A man who hath this peace, can trample upon crowns and diadems, as upon dung ; and is not afraid of, nor over-awed with, the terrors that damp the spirits, and defeat pusillanimous persons in the world ; but he hath a victory over the world, 1 John v. 4, 5. Psalm xlii. 1—5.

6. It is a secure and well-secured peace : firmer than the moun-



tains and hills: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed," Isa. liv. 10. It is everlasting peace and consolation, built upon everlasting foundations; such as, the everlasting love of God, and the everlasting righteousness of Christ.

7. It is a sweet and sweetening peace; it sweetens every lot, and makes him say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." It sweetens the cross, and makes him glory in it, saying, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." It can turn a prison to a palace, and a rack to a bed of roses. It makes the soul acquainted with that paradox; "Poor, yet possessing all things; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," 2 Cor. vi. 20. It sweetens the aspect and prospect of death: O how will this peace mollify the thoughts of the king of terrors! and make the soul to say, "O death, where is thy sting?" It sweetens the views and apprehensions of the day of judgment, while the man apprehends the Judge to be his friend, his righteousness; and that he is at peace with the divine tribunal, through the blood of Jesus. It is a miserable peace that cannot consist with, but is dashed and confounded at, the thoughts of death, judgment, and eternity: and hence the wicked man, amidst his carnal peace, banishes the thoughts of these awful things, otherwise they would destroy his peace. But here is a peace which makes the soul at peace with death, judgment, and eternity: yea, and to rejoice in the view of these awful and unavoidable things.

8. It is a perfect peace; "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace," Isa. xxiv. 4. It is perfect, in that it is not a faint impression, but such a peace as shall accomplish the end for which it was given, and not be altogether useless; yea, it is perfect, in that it not only grows to perfection after time, but it hath a kind of perfection even in time, being a peace that passeth all understanding, unspeakable and inconceivable; and there is no end of its growth; "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end," Isa. ix. 7. And it is perfect in respect of the grounds of it; such as, God and his attributes; Christ, and his righteousness; the Spirit and his operations; the Covenant, and its promises; as may be seen on the first general head of the method.

When faith views the freedom of the covenant, then peace comes in like a river, however unworthy the soul be in itself; when faith

views the fulness of the covenant, then peace comes in, however empty the soul be in itself: when faith views the stability of the covenant then peace comes in to the soul, however mutable it be in itself; when faith views the Mediator of the covenant, it brings in peace; under a sense of ignorance, peace comes in from his being a Prophet to teach: under a sense of guilt, peace comes in from his being a Priest; under a sense of bondage, peace comes in from his being a King; when faith views these things peace runs in. The promise of the covenant viewed by faith, brings in peace. Can I have peace that have such a false heart? Yes; when I view the promise, made by the true God. Can I have peace that have such a backsliding heart, that never retains a word? Yes, because though I break my word, yet God cannot break his word: "He hath faithfulness for the girdle of his loins; and the covenant stands fast with him." When faith views the condition of the covenant, viz., the righteousness of Christ, peace flows in like a flood: for the promises are ratified thereby. Faith improves Christ's righteousness, as a justice-satisfying righteousness, as a debt-paying and a bliss-purchasing righteousness, a covenant-sealing and strength-furnishing righteousness; faith improves it as a ransom, a laver, and a ladder.

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## SERMON CXXXVII.

"Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."—

PROV. iii. 17.

[The Third Sermon on this Text.]

THE pleasures of the ungodly cannot be valued by any who truly see their end. Who would envy him that wears a crown but for a day, and would be the scorn of the wicked to-morrow? Or him who would choose one day of mirth and pleasure, though he knew that it would fill the rest of his life with pain and misery? Who would envy the state of the wicked and ungodly, whose life-time is but at best, a day of sinful pleasure, and issues in an everlasting state of woe and torment? How grieving may it be to any considering believer, to look upon a worldly sensual gallant, in the midst of his vain-glory and mirth, and to think where that man will shortly be, and how the case will be shortly altered with him? It would sadden our hearts to see such a one struck dead in the place;

and, alas! should it not grieve us, to foresee the stroke of death and wrath under which they will perish for ever? When this is the case, who would not choose more solid and durable pleasures, such as are here set before us: "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness."

Having finished what we intended on the doctrinal part of the subject, by demonstrating the truth of the proposition, viz., "That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness;" considered the qualities of that pleasure that is to be found in Wisdom's ways; spoken of some of the particular paths of Wisdom, which are all peace; opened up the nature and qualities of that peace; we shall now proceed to the sequel of the subject.

V. The fifth thing proposed was the application of the point. Is it so, "That Wisdom's ways are pleasantness?" Then the inference I would deduce from it, at present, is to rectify the mistake and error of the world, and of all carnal men, who, if one begins to leave off wickedness, and to seek after Christ, then they reckon his pleasant days are at an end, and that he is turning mad, morose, and melancholy; because they have no taste of spiritual comforts themselves, no relish of divine pleasures, no savour of any delight, but what is carnal and worldly; therefore they imagine the way of religion a most unpleasant way.

For pursuing this use, I shall essay the three following things: 1. Argue a little against this opinion, for demonstrating the absurdity of it. 2. Answer some carnal objections against the pleasures of religion. 3. Shew what these things are, wherein believers have pleasure, such as the world knoweth not of.

1st, I would argue a little against this mistake and error of the world, as if the way of Wisdom and true religion were not a pleasant way.

1. Must not that way be pleasant, which is pleasing to God himself? But such is the way of wisdom and religion as may be seen, 1 Pet. ii. 5, where believers are called a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy," Ps. cxlvii. 11. And must it not be the chief pleasure of the saints to please God?

2. Must not that be very pleasant to the soul, that is the very life and health of it? Why, Wisdom's way, or the way of faith, love, and holiness, is the very health of the believing soul; whereas the way of unbelief, enmity, and sin, is the very disease of the soul. Life and health is a constant sensible delight. It is only sin that is



opposite to soul-health ; " Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee," Ps. xli. 4.

3. Must not that way be pleasant, which removes all fears and troubles? But such is the way of Wisdom ; the way of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ; " Let not your heart be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me," John xiv. 1. It removes the fear of death and damnation ; and therefore must afford a greater pleasure than this world can afford. One serious thought of everlasting salvation, which Wisdom's ways is the earnest of, can give that true contentment to the soul, that all worldly wealth and glory can never give.

4. Must not that way be pleasant, that removes the cause of all sorrow, viz., Sin? But such is Wisdom's way ; it removes sin, which is the cause of calamity. In this way, the guilt of sin is removed, by justification ; and the rule of sin, by sanctification ; till the being of it be removed in glorification. Wisdom's way is the way of holiness, which is the very destruction of sin.

5. Must not that way be pleasant, which consists in rejoicing, and graces which cannot be exercised without pleasure ; such as, knowledge, faith, love, hope, and joy itself? " The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17. The way of Wisdom consists in these joyful exercises, when considered as the way wherein Wisdom directs us to walk, as well as the way wherein Wisdom walks towards us.

6. Must not that way be pleasant which consists in communion with God, who is the fountain of pleasure and delight ; and brings us near to him, as a God of love? Such is the way of Wisdom : " We have known and believed the love that God hath to us : God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John vi. 16.

7. Must not that way be a pleasant one, which, whosoever chooses it, do voluntarily forsake all other pleasures in the world, and renounce them for the sake of the pleasure of this way. They, with Moses, choose the worst of Christ, rather than the best of the world, Heb. xi. 25, 26, " Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; and esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." Would they make such an exchange, if they had not found it a more pleasant way, and that which tends to everlasting

pleasure? All who ever tried Wisdom's way, they think they never can have enough of it. The more holy they are, the more holy they would be; he that hath most, would gladly have more, Phil. iii. 12, 14, Psalm xxvii. 4.

8. Must not that be a pleasant way, which, whosoever hath once chosen and tried, will never choose to go back again to their former pleasures? Such is Wisdom's way; every taste of the pleasure thereof makes the believer say, with Ephraim, Hos. xiv. 8, "What have I any more to do with idols? Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, the son of man, whom thou hast made strong for thyself; so will we not go back from thee," Psalm lxxx. 17. It makes the man say, "I will never forget thy precepts: for by them thou hast quickened me." If they found God's way did not answer their expectations, they have abundance of leisure, and temptations too many, to turn back to the state from whence they came, and to a loose, wicked life: yea, but that is the life they would not choose for all the world; surely, therefore, they find it the most pleasant way; if not in sensible delight, yet, at least, in easing their consciences, and securing their minds from the terrors that sinful pleasures would produce; nay, when they are themselves, they loath the very remembrance of their sinful pleasures.

9. Must not that way be pleasant, that can turn the most painful things into pleasant things? That which can sweeten gall and wormwood must needs be very sweet itself; such is Wisdom's way, that can bear up the soul under all afflictions, and make it rejoice; yea, and glory in tribulation, Rom. v. 3. Read to this purpose, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness; most gladly, therefore, will I rather rejoice in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong."

10. Must not that way be a pleasant way, that can make the views of death and judgment as amiable to the enlightened soul, as ever it was formidable to the awakened conscience? Surely that way, and that pleasure is little to be accounted of, that cannot endure a serious thought of death and judgment. How poor is that pleasure that is damped at the views of death, and frightened and chased away at the prospect of judgment! But in Wisdom's way, a man may look death in the face, and say, "Come, O friend! why

carry the wheels of thy chariot?" For death, as an enemy, is one of the trophies of the victory of faith; "Death is swallowed up in victory," 1 Cor. xv. 54: and as a friend, it is the chariot to carry the soul to heaven. And, in this way, a man may look to judgment, and say to the Judge, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly," Rev. xxii. 20. "Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bether," Song viii. 14.

In a word, It must be a pleasant way, that leads to everlasting pleasure.

2dly, We proposed to answer some objections that carnal minds make against the pleasantness of Wisdom's ways; or the pleasures of religion. And,

Object. 1. "How can that way be pleasantness that forbids all our pleasure? that requires to mortify the flesh, to renounce the world, to deny ourselves, and so to abandon all our pleasures?"

ANSW. The strength of this objection lies in this, that Wisdom's ways are ungrateful to the flesh, and oblige us to part with our sins: and, indeed, as they that are in the flesh cannot please God; so they cannot take pleasure in God, or in his way. A new and spiritual nature is necessary in order to our having these new and spiritual pleasures; for, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But, mean time, O sinner, do you think that sin is so lovely a thing, that a man cannot live pleasantly, or merrily, without it? Whereas, indeed, they that are the most free of sin have the most pleasant life. Sin is a breach of God's law, and an abuse of his authority: and is there no mirth, but in abusing God! no pleasure, but in injuring our Creator and Redeemer. What sinful natures have we that must have such pleasures! Cannot a man live merrily unless he provoke the God of heaven, and trample on his mercy? Cannot a man live in pleasure, unless he tumble in the mire, or drink poison? Alas! what pleasure is it to dishonour God and destroy ourselves! Let it be considered, that it is for our everlasting pleasure, and to prevent everlasting pain, that the pleasures of sin are forbidden; for they exclude all spiritual and eternal pleasure; and do you accuse the word of God, and Wisdom's way, because it would keep you from such costly comfort, and dangerous delights! You will forbear the most delightful fruits and drinks, if your physician tell you they will hazard your life, or torment you after-



wards; and will you be offended with the Physician of souls, when he warns you to beware of that pleasant poison that destroys the soul? Yea, even at present, is not virtue more pleasant than vice? sobriety more pleasant than drunkenness? chastity more pleasant than uncleanness? and temperance more pleasant than gluttony and intemperance? Do not these bring in such troubles of conscience, such sickness, shame, and remorse, as that they have a punishment in their bosoms, if not a consumption of men's wealth, and outward estate, besides the consuming of their precious souls? But again,

OBJECT. "How can Wisdom's way be pleasantness, when it is a part of Wisdom's way to take up our cross, and lay our account with tribulation; for, Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and, "If any man lives godly, he must suffer persecution?"

ANSW. 1. As for sufferings and chastisements, the cause of them is sin. God doth not punish men for walking in Wisdom's way; but for going out of it. It is no small part of the pleasure of Wisdom's way, that it keeps men out of the way of punishment. Is it not then unreasonable, when we trouble ourselves, to blame our physician for troubling us, in order to a cure? When we have made ourselves sick with too much of the creature, and sensual delight, no wonder than we need painful and unpleasant physic.

2. As for sufferings in the cause of Christ, they are usually requite with pleasure, both here and hereafter. If we knew the joys of martyrs, we would never shrink at the sufferings of martyrs. What have made many of the sufferers for Christ face the severest tortures, with undaunted courage and fortitude, but the internal pleasure they found in God, and the ways of religion?

3. In a word, the sufferings and trials of the children of God are only castigatory for their chastisement; or probatory, for their trial; or medicinal, for their health. A little of the vinegar of affliction will make them relish their pleasure and prosperity the better. O what lamentable work hath prosperity, honour, and wealth made in the world! Do we not see those who are most prosperous in the world, to be ordinarily the most proud and perverse? and shall we grudge that necessary moderate affliction that tends to save us from the like overthrow? The people of God, through their frailty, would be apt to surfeit on their pleasures, if infinite Wisdom did not order some sour sauce to help their digestion. And yet it is a known experience among them, that their times of

greatest affliction are ordinarily their times of greatest consolation; when he brings them to the wilderness, then he speaks comfortably to them, and gives them in the valley of Achor, a door of hope; so that their tribulations do not hinder their consolation, but further it, Hos. ii. 14, 15. And as their afflictions abound, so do their consolations abound, 2 Cor. i. 5. And in the multitude of their thoughts within them, his comforts delight their souls, Psalm xciv. 19. And so their sufferings work for their joy, and their trials for their triumph.

OBJECT. 3. "How can Wisdom's way be pleasantness, or how can we suppose that they who fear God have the greatest pleasure, when we see the contrary in the sadness of their faces? in their heavy doubts, and fears, and complaints; insomuch, that while many of the ungodly have a life of mirth, they, on the contrary, have a life of mourning?"

ANS. This objection, respecting what seems to be the common case, requires to be particularly considered.

1. We are to distinguish between new entrants into religion, and established saints. No wonder that a new entrant have pangs and sorrows for his having lived so long in sin and misery; but who will hence infer, that the way of godliness is unpleasant, because a man that is entering into it, is lamenting that he hath lived so long in the way of wickedness? The complaint of penitent souls is not their present piety, but their former impiety.

2. We are to distinguish between weak and strong Christians; and the more grace and piety that any hath, the more peace and pleasure usually attend it. Hearken what the godly complain of; are they grieved because they are godly? Or rather, is it because they are not more godly? Do they complain of their faith, or of their unbelief? of their spirituality, or of their carnality? Who then will say that holiness is unpleasant, because men who have it, would gladly have more of it?

3. We are to distinguish between believers who have fallen, since their conversion, into any great and wounding sin, and believers that walk more uprightly with God, and maintain their integrity and peace. No wonder, if David, after his sin, complain of the breaking of his bones; and Peter go out and weep bitterly. Believers know so much of the evil of sin, that they cannot walk so lightly under it, as the blind obdurate world, that are past feeling.

4. We must distinguish between the assured believer, and the

doubting one, that is afraid lest he be not in a state of grace, and union with Christ ; that man's grief is not because he is afraid lest he be unsanctified. This doth not say that religion is unpleasant ; nay it shews, that Wisdom's way is most lovely and pleasant in his eyes ; otherwise, why is he so much troubled, when he doth but doubt whether he be in it or not ?

5. We must distinguish between believers who duly understand the extent of the covenant of grace, and others that are not so much enlightened. If a believer, through mistake, think that the grace of the gospel extends not to such an unworthy creature, or to such a great sinner as he, no wonder that he is troubled ; but this infers no conviction the man hath of the unpleasantness of Wisdom's way ; nay, but rather proclaims the estimate he hath of the excellency of the gospel, and the happiness of the heirs of promise, though under a mistake he be excluding himself, and so is under fears.

6. Consider, that the sorrow of believers may consist with joy. Try the most dejected mournful Christians, if they would change states, and change pleasures, with the best and greatest of the wicked and ungodly, you will find they would not do it for all the world, nor turn back to the state they were in. Yea, the godly sorrow of a believer is attended with solid joy ; in comparison whereof carnal mirth and laughter is but madness and folly. It is little, trifling, ridiculous accidents and toys that provoke to loud laughter ; but great things give us inward sweet content and joy, which scorns to shew itself by laughter ; and hence the believer's pleasures is not ordinarily, so discernible to others, as carnal mirth is.

7. Consider, the root of the believer's pleasure is indiscernible ; the world cannot understand their peace and pleasure ; it is a peace that passeth all understanding ; and strangers intermeddle not with their joy. They have hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name, that no man knoweth, but he that receiveth it, Rev. ii. 17. The world cannot see the grace of Christ, nor the comforts of his Spirit within them. You see their crosses, but cannot perceive their unction by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

8. Consider, that however saints may be in heaviness, through manifold temptations, they are not always so ; take them in their own element, and then you will find them rejoicing. When they are brought into God's holy mountain, then are they joyful in his house of prayer, Isa. lvi. 7. You may, perhaps, find them in a val-



ley: a fish is a most lively creature, but it must be in the water, not in the land; so is it with the believer; see Psalm cxxii. 1, "I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the house of the Lord;" compared with Psal. cxx. 5, 6, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace." Take a believer when he is himself, when the candle of the Lord is shining, when there is no quarrel between him and his God, when his conscience is sprinkled, and his heart purified, and the Lord is lifting up the light of his countenance upon him, and see if he be not a glad man then, Psal. iv. 6, 7.

9. If you will judge whether Wisdom's way be pleasant, you must look to these who live by faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, and according to the mercy of the gospel: and not look at the dejections and sorrows of these who grieve themselves by swerving from the way of holiness and Wisdom. And yet even weak and mournful believers have more joy than the wicked world; even these who many times fall through weakness. Why the very preservation of one soul from that despair which these would cast them into, if they had not Christ to fly to, and the little tastes of mercy that they have felt, and the reviving that they find between their sorrows, and the hopes they have of better days, are enough to weigh down all their own sorrows, and much more to weigh down all the trifling, light, vanishing pleasures of the world.

10. Consider that this is not the life of perfect joy; and therefore some sorrow will be intermixed. Comfort will not be perfect till holiness be perfect: what is wanting now, will be made up in the new Jerusalem, when believers will enter into the joy of their Lord.

OBJECT. 4. "How can Wisdom's way be pleasantness, when it commends the contrary, namely, to fast, and weep, and mourn? So that it is not only the weakness of professors, but the way prescribed to them, that must bear the blame."

ANSW. If God's children will fall, and break their bones, they must endure the pain of setting them again; some of their sorrows are medicinal; but while he commands them to mourn, he commands them also to rejoice; and he calls them to no mourning that is inconsistent with their joy, and to rejoice evermore; and if believers did but live as God requires them, they would be the wonder of the world for their exceeding joy. They would make the world

admire the joy, and hope, and comfort that transports them. They would be so taken up in the love and praise of the glorious Redeemer that they would scarce have leisure to observe whether they were rich or poor; or to regard the honour or dishonour of the world. These little trifling things would scarce have any room in their thoughts. O the joy they would have in their secret prayer! in their heavenly meditation! in their holy conference! in their reading and hearing the promises! and in their public worship and praise, if they did but follow more fully the conduct of the Spirit, their comforter! What makes believers slight this world, and to take all your pleasures to be unworthy of their entertainment and regard, but that they have had a taste of sweeter things, and by faith have got the better of their childish vanities? If God and his favour be better than such worms as we, and the heavenly glory better than these transitory toys, you may well conceive, that the believer's joys, that are thereby fed, must be better than all the pleasures of this sublunary world. If then you love a life of pleasure, come over to Christ, and believe him, that "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths peace." We come now,

3dly, To consider what these things are wherein believers have pleasure, such as the world know not of; no man can trade in such a way of comfort as this is; it is the rejoicing of his heart, Psalm cxix. 111. Why,

1. He hath comfort in his God, who is the God of all consolation, whose love is to the believing soul what the sun is to the body, viz., to enlighten, warm, revive, and comfort it; if it were not that sin causes some eclipses, or raises some clouds, or shuts the window, he would rejoice continually; and, with David, encourage himself in the Lord his God; and find how sweet a thing it is, being justified by faith, to have peace with God, Rom. v. 1. What comfort like this, to have God for our consolation!

2. He hath comfort in his Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the consolation of Israel. The believer brings comfort, by faith, from the death of Christ, from the life of Christ, from the resurrection of Christ; from his intercession, from his office, from his blood and righteousness; from his word, his covenant, his promise, his mediation; and hence may triumph, with the apostle, Rom. viii. 34, "Who shall condemn us, when it is Christ that died; yea, rather that is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?"

3. He hath comfort in his guide, the Spirit of God, who is given

to be the Comforter, John xiv. 16, 17, xv. 26. He may bring comfort from the Spirit's motions, influences, and operations; from his enlightening, quickening, strengthening, teaching, and directing operations, and from his continual inhabitation, as being in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

4. He hath comfort in his conscience, while he hath the testimony thereof; "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our consciences that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world," 2 Cor. i. 12. When all the world is in a flood, a good conscience is an ark. A wicked man's conscience is his hell; but a believer's conscience is his heaven upon earth; when it is sprinkled with the blood of Christ, it gives a man peace within his own breast, whatever trouble be without doors.

5. He hath comfort in his grace, though Christ the fountain of grace be his main consolation; yet even the streams are pleasant, as they are so many tokens of eternal love, and so many pledges of eternal life, yea, the first fruits of it.

6. He hath comfort in his duties and services, while he puts them in their own place and room. It is pleasant to him to serve and glorify his God. There is a sweetness in his exactest services; the more fully he is brought up to the will of God, in self denial, in forgiving enemies, or in whatsoever part of his preceptive or providential will, the more sweetness and comfort doth he find. Yea, there is a sweetness in the bitterest of his services even in his tears; for, his water is turned into wine, and his fasting into feasting. This is proposed as an argument to choose Wisdom's way, and to love the truth and peace: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace," Zech. viii. 10.

7. He hath comfort in his experiences, while he is enabled to reflect on the Bethel visits that God made to him, Hosea xii. 4; and while he remembers that God is the God of Bethel, the same God in his worst times that ever he found him to be in his best time. How comfortable are experiences of the kindness of their Father, in hearing their prayers, helping them in straits, delivering them in distresses; experiences of his returning after distance, and reviving them after decays; experiences of sudden turns in their condition, from bondage to liberty, from fears to joy; of sudden glances and



displays of his glory after desertion, and preventing their expectations, when they thought of nothing but being swallowed up ; how he surprised them with his mercy, in bringing them out of the horrible pit, pardoning their iniquity, healed their backslidings, and allowed them access to his throne with boldness, and holy courage, and confidence ?

8. He hath comfort in his helpers ; I mean, the dispensers of the gospel, that are called the helpers of our joy, 2 Cor. i. 2. It is their office, in the Lord's name, to preach deliverance to the captives, and to comfort those that mourn. " How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." Rom. x. 15. How amiable are the ordinances of God to believers ! How do they draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation !

9. He hath comfort in his mercies ; in his temporal mercies, which he hath with God's blessing, being blessed in his basket and in his store ; and so he rejoices in the use of the creature, being sanctified to him by the word of God ; in his spiritual mercies ; in his garment wherewith he is clothed, Christ's everlasting righteousness ; in his charter, wherewith he is secured, the everlasting covenant. O what ground of consolation is here ! They have multitudes of mercies about them, and every day renewed upon them, to feed their comfort : " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ," Eph. i. 3.

10. He hath comfort in his crosses : this we see clear from 2 Cor. i. 4. " Who comforteth us in all tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." It is comfort to know that his crosses are physic to heal him : " By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin ;" and that all things shall work together for good ; and so even affliction shall be his commodities.

11. He hath comfort in his life : Why, " Goodness and mercy follow him all the days of his life," Psalm xxiii. 6. O what a comfortable life hath he, when he lives like himself ! When his life is a life of faith, a life of love, a life of communion with God, a life of reconciliation and peace with God, a life of sanctification and holiness, it is a life of comfort.

12. He hath pleasure in his death, while it is a dying in the faith, Heb. xii. 13 ; a dying in the Lord, Rev. xii. 13. Not only is

death their gain, Phil. i. 21, but death is their delight, while they are strong in the faith, and viewing death as the porch to everlasting pleasure and joy at God's right hand.

Thus we have endeavoured to rectify some mistaken notions that the world and carnal men have of those who relinquish a course of wickedness, and embrace Wisdom's ways; obviated some carnal objections against the pleasures that are to be found in a religious course; and condescended on a variety of those things, in which true believers find solid pleasure.

## SERMON CXXXVIII.

"Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."—

PROV. iii. 17.

[The Fourth Sermon on this Text.]

It is possible that many are convinced of the truth of what is here asserted of Wisdom's ways; and, therefore, they may think it needless to multiply words on this subject; for, who is there, that is so senseless as not to own that the way of true religion is the best and sweetest way? But, alas! this is a gross mistake. It is true, many are superficially convinced, that are not converted; many have a slight opinion, that Christ and heaven, and holiness is best; while yet their practical judgment does not go along with their opinion; and hence they relish the world, and their lusts, as sweetest unto them, and have no delight in God and his way; their heart goes after their covetousness, the world, and the lusts thereof; sinful pleasures being their choice. We may easily guess what their true judgment is, from what they choose, and what they refuse; their refusing their spiritual pleasures discover they have no solid conviction of this, that "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

The doctrinal part of the subject being discussed, and an informative use of the doctrine essayed, rectifying some mistakes which the wicked world are apt to entertain concerning the pleasures that are to be found in Wisdom's ways, we now proceed to another use.

The second use that we make of the doctrine, is of examination and trial, whether or not you be acquainted with the peace and

pleasure of Wisdom's ways.—Surely if you be walking in Wisdom's way, you will know something of the pleasure of it.

We shall observe four things that take place in Wisdom's way that yield pleasure to the gracious soul. 1. Pleasant views. 2. Pleasant experiences. 3. Pleasant impressions. 4. A pleasant bent and propensity of soul towards spiritual pleasures.

1st, Enquire what you know of the pleasant views that are to be found in Wisdom's way. There are some views that are preparatory thereto, and have pain in them; yet they tend to usher in the pleasure. Those that are prefatory are a view of your lost estate, your want of all the good that innocent Adam had, and a view of your having all the evil that guilty Adam had. Your want of all the grace the second Adam hath to communicate your inability to save yourself, and utter incapacity to help yourself. Have you got a particular afflictive view hereof, leading you to a concern about salvation? The way being thus paved, what do you know of the pleasant view of Christ the Saviour, and of God in Christ, mentioned, 2 Cor. iv. 6, John i. 14. "God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us: and we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?" These views of Christ, the sun of righteousness, are so pleasant, that they contribute to make the most terrible things comfortable and pleasant, when viewed in Christ. A view of God is terrible to a sinner; but, when he is seen in Christ, he is a reconciled God. A view of justice is terrible; but when in Christ, it is satisfied justice. A view of wrath is terrible; but when seen in Christ, it is appeased wrath; it is hell quenched with his blood. A view of the law, and its curse, is terrible; but when seen in Christ, it is a fulfilled law; for, "Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness. He hath magnified the law, and made it honourable." A view of death is terrible; but, when viewed in Christ, it is unstinged; and the believer may triumph over it, and say, "O death! where is thy sting?" Everything out of Christ hath a dreadful aspect, but in Christ it hath a pleasant view.

QUEST. But may they not have pleasant views of God in Christ, who yet have not saving views?

ANSW. For preventing mistakes, here I will give you a fourfold account of these pleasant believing views that are saving, which



believers have either in their first believing, or in their further progressive actings of faith. Saving views of Christ are—1. Clear and distinct. 2. Particular. 3. Powerful. 4. Determining, under the influence of that powerful distinguishing grace. This is what imports the assurance and persuasion of faith. Indeed a sinner convinced of sin and wrath, and condemned by the law of God, could get no relief by believing in Christ, if he had not in believing, so much assurance of the mercy of God in Christ, revealed to him in the gospel, as he had assurance of the wrath of God revealed to him in the law. As much particular persuasion, as he formerly had of law-wrath, leading him to despair; so much particular persuasion doth he now get of gospel-grace, leading him to hope. Why, the particular assurance he hath, when under conviction, the particular assurance he hath of the law-threatening condemning him, can no other way be remedied, but by as particular an assurance of the gospel-promise absolving him.

Whether the generation can hear or bear this doctrine or not, it will be found to be true: and wo to us if we know nothing of it, that there is, in saving faith, as much assurance and persuasion of the promise of the gospel, as there is, in conviction, a particular assurance and persuasion of the threatening of the law, and as you are strangers to true conviction of sin and misery. If the Spirit of God, as a Spirit of bondage, hath never given you a particular assurance of the law's threatening, with application to yourselves, so as to see wrath denounced against you in particular; so you are strangers to true and saving faith, if the Spirit of God, as a Spirit of faith, hath never given you a particular assurance of some gospel-promise, with application to yourself, so as to see mercy there for you in particular. If it were not thus, the remedy would not be suited to the malady; and the plaster would not be so broad as the sore: the balm given by the gospel would not correspond with the wound given by the law. But so it is, that, as in conviction, there is such a faith of the law, as gives a man a particular persuasion of the malady he is under: so, in conversion, there is such a faith of the gospel as gives a man a particular persuasion of the remedy provided for him: otherwise there would be no relief.

It is true, remaining unbelief may keep a person much in bondage: but, as we speak of what is in the nature of faith; so we speak of what takes place, when faith is in act and exercise. Why, faith sees the gospel making as much way for the hope of salvation,

as the law made within him to the fear of damnation. Here is a part of the pleasant views that are to be had in Wisdom's ways.

2dly, There are pleasant experiences that Wisdom's children have in her way, whereby you may try yourselves what knowledge you have of the pleasure thereof. And these are not only experiences of things pleasant in themselves; but also of unpleasant things working to some pleasant and desirable issue. I speak not here of extraordinary experiences, but even of such as are common: such as, experiences of the evil of sin; which they got, partly by the word, and partly by the rod, making them know what an evil and bitter thing it is, and what a fountain of wickedness is in their heart. Experiences of the deceitfulness of the heart, which is like a deceitful bow, soon turning aside from the sweetest frame; inso-much that the plagues of the heart are like to overcome the man wholly. Experiences of the vanity of the world; vanity in the abstract: this they are taught from experience, as Solomon was, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity; and, who may come after him?" for, he had more of the pleasures, riches, and honours of the world than any before him, or since; and yet, "All is vanity, saith the Preacher." Experiences of the policy of Satan, who is a cunning enemy: they are not ignorant of his devices. He adapts his temptations to our trade and temper. Experiences of the truth of the threatening; such as that merciful one, "If his children break my laws, I will visit their iniquity with the rod, and their transgressions with stripes." They feel this verified in their broken bones, as David did. Experience of the truth of the promise; as Israel did, Josh. xxiii. 14, "And, behold, this day I go the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Experiences of the goodness of the promise, and of the blessings that are treasured up therein. This they feel sometimes in providences, and sometimes in ordinances, when they are made to say, "It is good for me to draw near to God." Experiences of the tokens of divine favour, as when he hears their prayers, gives them grace to pray and wrestle; when he intimates pardon, and communicates sweet influences of his grace, recovers them from backsliding, returns after desertion, relieves in extremity, supports under affliction.

But that people may not deceive themselves with experiences,

that they may know whether they be solid, I will give you a character of true experiences, namely, that they are working experiences, as it is said, Rom. v. 4, "Experience worketh hope." This is true of all solid experiences, when compared with one another, and linked together; though yet different experiences have different effects, yet all work to some advantage and benefit thus. The experience of the evil of sin works towards the making the man hate sin, and to loath himself for it, and shun all appearances of evil. Experience of the deceitfulness of the heart works towards a man's watching over his heart, and jealousy and distrusting his heart; and desiring to have it searched and tried. Experience of the vanity of the world works a weanedness of heart from the world, and from the comforts of time; and tends to a gaining of the heart, and engaging it to the Lord. Experience of the policy of Satan works in the soul a desire to put on the whole armour of God, and to fly to God in Christ by prayer; "For this I besought the Lord thrice:" and the man is thereby humbled; a thorn in the flesh is given, lest he be exalted above measure. Experience of the truth of the threatening works a holy, filial fear, like that of David; "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments:" And thus he is guarded against presumptions. Experience of the truth of the promise works more and more dependence upon a promising God, as he is truth and faithfulness itself, and thus he is guarded against despair. Hath he accomplished his promise in this or that particular? and will he fail in what further he hath said? Experience of the goodness of the promise, and the sweetness that the soul finds in the Lord's way, in a suitableness to the promise, this works out farther strength to the man's faith: as Israel, when they saw the great work of God at the Red Sea, then they sang his praise, Exod. xiv. xv. When they experienced the out-making of any promise, this inflamed their love, "I will love the Lord because he hath heard the voice of my supplication," Psalm cxvi. 1. Experiences of the tokens of God's love, this also works love, and constrains them to love; and also excites joy, and makes them rejoice in the shadow of his wings, and glory in the Lord. In a word, by all experiences they come to be more and more rooted in the faith, and by degrees to more and more of a sensible assurance of the love of God. Try what you know of these things.

3dly, There are pleasant impressions, by which you may try also if you are acquainted with the pleasures of Wisdom's ways.



What are these? In a word, it is God's seal and impression on the heart, which discovers it to be a new heart, when it is impressed with a suitable frame. The leading impression is that spoken of, 2 Cor. iii. 18, "Beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." It is a stamp and impress of the Spirit of God upon the heart, making it of a worldly, a heavenly heart; instead of a proud, a humble heart; instead of a carnal, a holy heart: making the soul all glorious within, according to the measure of the manifestation of his glory. Something of God's image remains engraven; but because this is very little discerned, there is a twofold more abiding frame and impression that still remains upon the spirit of believers, almost at the lowest.

1. The first is a poor and needy frame, mentioned, Mat. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." They are poor, with respect to themselves, empty of themselves; poor with respect to their own righteousness; poor with respect to their own strength; and therefore are ready to say, "In the Lord only have I righteousness and strength;" for I have none of myself; no grace, no good in myself. They have still impressions of their own poverty and want; far from thinking they are rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing. This impression and frame is so pleasing to God, that he says of such, "To this man will I look: even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word," Isa. lxvi. 2.

2. The next is a hungry and thirsty frame, spoken of, Mat. v. 6, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." This also, for ordinary, remains with the believer at the lowest, and at the worst; and it follows upon the former; because he is poor and destitute of all things in himself, therefore he desires to have supply out of Christ's fulness. And there is still some longing in his soul, "O to be brought near to God! O for another visit! O to see his power and glory in the sanctuary! How long! long!" This also is such a pleasing frame in God's sight, that he hath promised satisfaction to such; that "He will satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry with good things," Psalm cvii. 9. The needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever," Psalm ix. 18.

These two particulars suppose and import an impression they have of their own want and weakness; and an impression of the

fulness and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. But because these that are hypocrites and unregenerate, may have many good impressions, at certain times, and very strange impressions, yea, even joyful impressions, like the stony-ground hearers, who received the word with joy. I will lay before you the difference between the pleasant spiritual impressions that take place in Wisdom's way, and the impressions that hypocrites and reprobates may have.

(1.) True and saving impressions are sociable; they accompany one another, and go hand in hand together: For example, holy fear doth not cast out love, nor love cast out fear; holy triumph in the Lord does not take away trembling at his presence; nor holy trembling take away triumph; joy does not destroy godly sorrow for sin; nor godly sorrow remove spiritual joy: faith doth not destroy repentance; nor repentance destroy faith; the man's humility does not destroy his boldness before God; nor his boldness of access destroy humility: his low thoughts of himself doth not destroy his high thoughts of Christ; nor his high thoughts of Christ destroy his low thoughts of himself; his self-diffidence does not destroy his holy confidence; nor his holy confidence destroy self-diffidence. Nay, instead of destroying one another, they advance and harmoniously help and forward one another. Whereas the hypocrite's joy destroys his sorrow; his faith and false confidence destroys and excludes his repentance; his fear destroys his love; and his pretended love to God destroys his fear of him; one good impression he hath destroys another; they cannot keep company together. Whereas spiritual impressions in believers excite and quicken one another.

(2.) True and saving impressions are unlimited and unstinted: and the good frames of hypocrites stinted and limited: insomuch that they rest satisfied without their attainments; so far they go, and reckon they need go no farther, if they think they have so much as will keep them out of hell, or bring them to heaven. But true believers have no stinted measures of grace; whatever holy impressions are made upon them, they still desire more, and more, and more; pressing after consummate perfection: "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting these things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. iii. 13.

(3.) The true and saving impressions are habitual impressions;

they are like the believer's daily bread: though a man be not always eating or drinking, yet the taking of food for the nourishment of the body is a man's daily habitual work: so, though the believer be not always under a divine impression, or in a spiritual frame, but hath his changes, yet he is habitually thus exercised; and if any days pass wherein he is destitute of these meals they are to him as days of famine and spiritual scarcity: his soul pines and languishes, and is uneasy for want of what it would be at in duty. Whereas hypocrites can be quite easy in the want of these things, without ever giving a longing look towards the Lord for his returning to them. But the believer dies of penury and want: these are his melancholy days, his sighing days, till he recover all again, by the Spirit of the Lord returning, and reviving his heart, and restoring his soul. It is true, the established believer learns, in the want of sensible enjoyments, to live by faith on the Son of God; yea, but still that faith gives many a long look for the Lord returning to its sweet and sensible embraces.

4. These impressions in believers are not only habitual but natural. If the hypocrite can have any such impressions, they are not natural to him, they are not his element; he hath no new nature corresponding thereto; and therefore he cannot endure to be long under any good and spiritual impressions; his carnal unrenewed nature sets it off; and his carnal mind, being enmity against God, he is content that the impressions be gone. But, to a child of God, these impressions are natural; they are his new nature, his element, they are like the very breath of his new nature; natural to his sanctified part, as breath is to his body; yea, so natural to him, that they are like a part of his life, and the removal of them is like death to him; and hence, when under these sweet and heavenly impressions, he is disposed to give, as it were, a charge to all the world, to beware of disturbing and bereaving him of his joy. "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please," Song ii. 7.

In a word, the hypocrite and the godly differ as much in their motions and affections, as the motion of a clock differs from the sun, the one moves by art, the other by nature: the hypocrite's motions and impressions are like artificial clock-work, under the influence of the common operations of the Spirit, working upon him by some outwards means and providences; but the impressions of believers



are natural, under the influence of the Spirit dwelling in them ; and whatever subserviency outward providences and ordinances may have for advancing them, yet they are the fruits of the special operation of the Spirit that is in him, as a well of water springing up to eternal life. So that their impressions differ as much as a land-flood, that quickly dries up, being only maintained with rain from the clouds, differs from a living spring, which is never altogether dried, even when the flood is abated.

4thly, There is a pleasant bent and propensity of soul towards spiritual things, and spiritual pleasures. If a man know what it is that pleases and delights him most, he may know whether he be acquainted with Wisdom's pleasant way or not ; and whether he hath the Spirit of Christ or not ; for such as have the Spirit of Christ, do savour the things of the Spirit. This is a durable and infallible evidence, which the weakest Christians can scarce well tell how to deny in themselves, namely, what they would be at, and what they are most pleased and displeased with. Could they be more holy, it would please them better than to be more rich. Could they have more of God, it would please them better than to have more of the world ; yea, than ye give them all the pleasures and honours of the world. They are never so well pleased with themselves, and their own heart, as when they find them nearest heaven, and have most of the knowledge of God, and an impress of his attributes, and sense of his presence. They are never more pleased with their own life than when it is most holy, and fruitful, and most like a walking with God. They are never so much displeased with their hearts as when they find least of God upon them, and when they are most dead, and dark, and dull, and indisposed for communion with him. They are never so much displeased with their life, and weary of it, as when it is most carnal, and fruitless, and unholy, and uncircumspect. This is a certain evidence of their sincerity and uprightness ; it shews what they love, and what it is that hath their hearts and wills ; and looks upon a man to be what he sincerely would be. His complacency and displeasance are the immediate sure discoveries of his bent and inclination ; and poor doubting souls should often have recourse to this evidence. It is quite otherwise to the wicked : and it is a sure evidence of their misery, that they would be better pleased to be great, than to be good : better pleased to be rich, than to be righteous and religious ; better pleased to serve their lusts than to serve the Lord ; they are more taken up with the applause

of men than with the approbation of God ; and would rather be far from God than near him. They take the world and sin for their recreation and delight, and account Wisdom's way but a melancholy way, wearisome, and unpleasant course. This shews they have yet the old corrupted nature and serpentine enmity against the Spirit and life of Christ ; and therefore can no more please God than his holy ways are pleasing to them, "For, to be carnally minded is death ; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be ; so then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God," Rom. viii. 6, 7.

In a word, it is the pleasant exercise of believers to delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man, to rejoice in his word.

OBJECT. "May not hypocrites and unbelievers have joy and delight in the word like these, Isaiah lviii. 2, and like Herod, that heard the word gladly ; and the stony-ground hearers, that received the word with joy?"

ANSW. Such is the difference between spiritual and carnal joy, that whereas the godly sorrow of the believer is the matter of his joy ; insomuch that he is more glad when his heart will melt for sin, than he would be though he had all the carnal pleasures in the world. On the other hand, the carnal joy of the wicked is matter of sorrow ; yea, in the midst of his laughter his heart is in heaviness. Again, even the greatest sorrows of the godly are medicinal, sanative, and preparative to after joy ; whereas the greatest joys of the wicked are hurtful, pernicious, and preparative to after sorrow ; but godly sorrow worketh out of the poison of sin that would mar their joy.

But more particularly, the difference between the godly and the wicked in their delight may be viewed in four things, viz., the matter, the manner, the measure, and the end of their joy and delight.

1. As for the matter and ground of the godly man's delight, it is God himself, Christ himself, the gospel itself ; whereas the matter of the hypocrite's delight is rather his own knowledge of these things ; and so his knowledge puffeth up.

2. They differ as to the manner of their delight ; that of the godly is solid and constant, and preceding from the special grace of the spirit ; but the delight of the wicked man and hypocrite is unsound, unsolid, and unconstant ; preceding from the common grace

of the Spirit, and not from the new nature, but some impression on the old nature; and so his delight is not natural; neither is it the man's element, as we have illustrated above.

3. They differ in the measure of their joy. The delight the believer hath in the Lord, and in the word and law of the Lord, is his chief delight; it is his exceeding joy, Psalm xliii. 4; but the natural man hath something that he delights more in; he takes more pleasure in worldly riches and honours, but the godly hath more delight in the word than in all manner of worldly enjoyments; "O how love I thy law! it is sweeter to me than honey; therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold," Psalm cxix. 97, xix. 10, cxix. 27. "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Then hast thou put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased," Psalm iv. 6. 7.

4. They differ in their end and effect. The delight of the godly leads them to desire conformity to the law, inward and outward, while the wicked content themselves, at most, with an outward reformation. The difference between them is like that of the two painters, or skilful limners, who, both together, beholding one and the same picture, very artfully drawn; the one beheld it with admiration, and contented himself with seeing it and commending it, but endeavoured not himself to make the like; the other beheld it with a desire of imitation, and so praised it as to set his skill awork to make the like. So it is with the regenerate and the unregenerate man; the regenerate man liketh and delighteth in the word of God, so as he desires and endeavours a conformity thereunto; but the unregenerate man rests in the contemplation of the word; and remains easy, though he attain no conformity to it.

Thus we have laid before you some of the pleasant views that are to be found in Wisdom's way; presented you with some of the pleasant experiences that Wisdom's children have in her way; condescended on some of the pleasant impressions made upon those acquainted with Wisdom's way; and considered the pleasant bent and propensity of soul towards spiritual things, and spiritual pleasures.

This use of trial, to know if we be walking in Wisdom's way, and are acquainted with the pleasures thereof, might have been farther enlarged on, and examined by the ground and cause of it, namely, the efficient and instrumental, the Spirit and word of God;



by the object thereof—viz., Christ in his person, purchase, covenant, and ordinances; by the properties of it, viz., joy and pleasure that is unspeakable and full of glory; and by the effects thereof, such as rejoicing, elevating, strengthening, sanctifying, and supporting pleasures found therein; but the consideration of these would lead us into a large field of matter; and, as we intend brevity, the prosecution of them shall be superseded at the time; and let what has already been offered suffice.

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## SERMON CXXXIX.

“Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”—  
 PROV. iii. 17.

[The Fifth Sermon on this Text.]

It is not at all surprising that the way of religion and holiness should be pleasantness and peace, seeing Christ himself is the way; and everything in and about him yieldeth inconceivable pleasure to the true believer. And what satisfaction the gracious soul finds in communion with a reconciled God in Christ, is only known to those who have their fellowship with the Father and the Son, by the Spirit. Though there be nothing more certain than that Wisdom’s ways are not only pleasant but pleasantness, and every individual path of that way peace, yet there is scarce anything more like a paradox to the carnal mind; but this is not to be wondered at, since he is a stranger to the life and power of religion upon his soul, and to the solid pleasure and satisfaction arising from the contemplation of God and his excellencies, and in the lifting up the light of his countenance upon the soul. However, the testimony of the Spirit of God in the scripture, as well as the attested experience of the saints, puts it beyond all doubt; for “Wisdom’s ways are pleasantness, and all her paths peace.”

The doctrine being formerly improven in an use of information and examination, we shall now proceed to another use of the point.

The third use shall be for exhortation, which shall be tendered to two sorts of persons. 1. To the wicked, who can find no pleasure in Wisdom’s way. 2. To the godly, especially such as are under heaviness and sorrow, that they would study more to manifest that the way they are in is pleasant.

1st, We are to direct our exhortation to the wicked, that never found any pleasure in Wisdom's way, nor ever could relish any other pleasures but these that are sensual and brutish. O sirs, be exhorted to come and try Wisdom's way, and to taste the pleasure thereof. And, in order to excite you hereto, we would first offer some motives, and then give some directions.

(1.) For motives, we shall lay before you the four following considerations, which we would have you seriously to ponder :—

1. Consider how wicked the heart is that can find more pleasure in sin than in God and holiness ; that can find the creature pleasant and God unpleasant ! What a shame is this to your understanding and will ! What a shame to the understanding is it to value darkness rather than light ? And what a shame to the will to choose death rather than life ? What a shame to both that the worst things are more pleasant than the best ? If you had no more wit than to be pleased more with dung than with meat, and more with nakedness than with clothing, you would not be reckoned wise enough to be left to your own disposal and government ; and yet here the folly that you manifest is unspeakably greater, when you are more pleased with feeding upon swine's husks than upon heavenly manna ; and have more pleasure in exposing your shameful nakedness to the world than in being clothed with a heavenly robe—a robe of perfect righteousness for your justification, and a robe of grace and holiness for your sanctification. O sinner ! you have a God of infinite goodness to delight in, and you have liberty to come to him ; you have liberty, as well as others, to love, admire, adore, and trust in him ; to open your hearts to him in secret, yet you have no delight in him ; no desire to think or speak of him. You come to public ordinances, but you find no pleasure therein, because you are strangers to the inward and spiritual part thereof : you look at the minister's gifts and parts, and the manner of his doctrine and delivery, but are never taken up with the spiritual matter that is delivered. And yet, perhaps, you have pleasure enough in drinking, feasting, and idle talking ; you seldom weary of them. But every spiritual exercise is a weariness to you ; and it is one of the hindrances of your conversion lest religion should deprive you of your mirth, and cause you spend the rest of your days in heaviness. Alas ! what blindness and wickedness is here !

2. Consider how ungrateful your heart is when God hath provided, and Christ hath purchased, such privileges and delights that

sinners may be charmed with them, and yet you say you take them for no delights all all. If your child, or a beggar, should refuse the best things you can give them, and throw them away, saying, "There is no sweetness in it;" would you not reckon it monstrous ingratitude? Why do you so then with Christ, and his blessings and pleasures, saying, "What a weariness is it?" Mal. i. 13. But if you still are weary of reading, praying, hearing, and other religious exercises, take heed lest you provoke God to cast you into a place where you will have more cause to be weary. Will you not weary of hell fire, and the dolorous reviews of your own folly, and of the awful sense of the never-ending wrath of God, and that for wearying of the sweetest services, and rejecting the greatest mercies he can offer, as if they were burdensome, worthless things? If God be not worthy to be loved and delighted in, more than all things else, surely he is not God. If heaven and holiness be not sweeter than all the pleasures of earth and sin, then they ought not to have such honourable names. Sin and earth may be called heaven; but, woe to them that have no better.

3. Consider, if you find no pleasure in God and holiness, and in his way, you may be sure he hath no pleasure in you, while you take more pleasure in sordid, fading trifles than in God and Christ. He can take no pleasure in your person nor in your prayers: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord," Prov. xv. 8. "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee: the foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity," Psalm v. 4, 5. (See also, Isa. i. 13, 14, 15. Eccl. v. 4. Mal. i. 8, 9, 10. ii. 3. Zech. xi. 18. Heb. x. 38? How justly will they be all damned that obey not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness? If you continue to say practically, you have no pleasure in him; how fearful will it be when you shall hear him saying he hath no pleasure in you! Hath Christ bought holiness and everlasting pleasures at the price of his blood; and do you think carnal, sensual pleasures better than they? O sirs, is it Christ or you, think you, that is mistaken in the value of them?

4. Consider, if God, and his ways of wisdom seem not pleasant to you, then heaven itself cannot seem pleasant to you, if you consider truly what heaven is; for the heavenly blessedness and felicity consists in the perfection of that holiness, vision, love, joy, and enjoyment of God, which you so much hate, and can take no plea-



sure in If the little holiness on earth be so unpleasant to you, that appears in the imperfect saints here, what pleasure could you take in that perfect holiness that takes place above? If the thoughts and mention of God, and the singing of his praises, be unpleasant, or matters of no delight to you, what would you do in heaven, where this, in perfection, must be your everlasting work? Surely you have no right notion of heaven, if you hope to be there, and yet have no pleasure in heavenly things here? What sort of a heaven do you expect? Can you beg of God to bring you to glory, when you take glory to be a misery, grace a burden, and religion a weariness? If you think there is a heaven of such sensual pleasures as you desire; or if you choose heaven only as a place of more tolerable misery than hell, you will shortly find your expectations to be deceived, and your hope miserably frustrated.

[2.] That you may not only come and try, and also taste the pleasures that is to be found in Wisdom's way, we shall lay before you the following directions:—

1. Would you taste the pleasures of Wisdom's way, and the peace thereof, then come and see; come and search into the pleasure of Wisdom's way. Do not stand looking at a distance, where you see nothing but the outside: do not judge by hear-say, which gives no taste or relish: "O taste and see that the Lord is good," Psalm xxxiv. 8. The sweetness of honey or meat is not properly known by looking at it, but by tasting it. Come near and try what it is to live in the faith and hope of eternal life, and to live in the love and favour of God through Jesus Christ. The shell is not sweet, but serves only to hide the kernal, which is the sweetest part: and, indeed, the kernal of religion is covered with a shell so hard, that flesh and blood cannot break it. Hard sayings, and hard providences to the church, and to particular believers, are such hard shells, as many can never break through, and therefore never taste the sweetness.

2. Cast away your prejudices and false conceits which have deceived you, and turned your mind against the ways of Wisdom. This would natively follow upon the former; for people will never be rid of their prejudices against Christ, till they come and see. Nathaniel saith, John i. 46, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" Philip answered to him, "Come and see;" intimating, that a sight of Christ would effectually remove prejudices. Can there be any pleasure in Wisdom's ways? in a religious life? Yea, if you will

come and see, you will soon throw away your prejudices. These two things are closely connected together, and reciprocally influence each other. Why, they that will not come and see, will not relinquish their prejudice; and they who will not cast away their prejudice, will not come and see. A man may be persuaded to hate his meat, if you can but make him believe it is poison; or to hate his clothes, if you can but persuade him that they are infected with the plague; so, if you suffer your understanding to be deluded so far as to overlook the amiable nature of holiness, and of Wisdom's way, and to think the image of God is but a fancy, that a heavenly life is but hypocrisy, and that it is but pride for men to be holier than others. If you believe what the devil and his instruments say, no wonder than you hate the very name of holiness; nay, you shall never love God, nor see any loveliness in his service. How can you find pleasure in the greatest good, while you take it for an evil?

3. Apply yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, in the use of his appointed means, for the renewing of your nature, and that his spirit may give you a new understanding to discern, and a new heart to relish spiritual things; for your old corrupt minds and hearts will never do it, they are unsuitable to the things of God; and therefore cannot receive them, nor favour them, 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15, Rom. viii. 5—8. The appetite and relish of every living creature is suitable to its nature; a fish hath no pleasure in dry land, nor a flying bird in the bottom of the deep; so, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and therefore takes no pleasure but in fleshly things; "And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and therefore will relish spiritual things. Seek, therefore, the new nature.

4. If you would taste the pleasure of Wisdom's ways, then forbear the pleasures of the ways of folly, even these sinful fleshly pleasures that you are so much taken up with; for they infatuate your understanding, corrupt your appetite, and make the sweetest things seem loathsome to you. When the heart is glutted with sensual pleasures, it makes the word and ways of God unsavoury. The Prodigal that we read of, Luke xv., never thought of the sweet and full provision of his Father's house, till he was brought to a famine of his former pleasure, and denied the very husks. Hence it is, that God so frequently promotes the work of conversion by affliction. Perhaps you cannot tell how to leave your sensual pleasures, you who never found any nobler pleasure than that which lies in eating, drinking, sporting, and the like; what will you do, when

pain and sickness make you weary of your meat, drink, and sport, and to say, "I have no pleasure in them?" These things which you are now so loath to leave, may shortly become such a load to your soul, as undigested meat is to a disordered stomach; that you shall have no ease, till you have vomit them up. Alas! you will never know your friends, unless you forsake these deceivers; nor know the pleasures of a holy life, unless you let go the poisonous pleasures of sin; then you will find that Wisdom's ways will not destroy your pleasures, but change and recover your pleasure and delight, and make it noble, heavenly, spiritual, solid, and durable: and give you life for death, light for darkness, and gold for dross: and the greatest peace and safety, instead of the greatest peril.

2dly, We would next offer a word of exhortation to the godly; such as are under heaviness and sorrow, and who live as sadly, as if they found more grief than pleasure in Wisdom's ways: and our exhortation to them is, that they would study to manifest that the way wherein they walk is a pleasant way, and that its paths are peace, by their cheerful walk, by their rejoicing and working righteousness. In order to enforce the exhortation, we shall adduce some motives, offer some directions, and obviate some objections, that may be proposed, as we go along.

[1.] For motive, then, you may consider the six following particulars:—

1. Let the dejected believer consider, that, by his heaviness and dejection, he seems to the world to accuse God and his service, as if he was a hard Master, and his service unpleasant service. I know this is not your thought, who are believers; I know it is not God and his service that you complain of, and that you walk heavily, not because you are holy, but because you fear you are not holy; yea, but you may thus give great occasion to ignorant persons to judge otherwise. If you saw a servant always dull and melancholy, that was wont to be merry and cheerful, when he was in another service, would you not think that he had a master that displeased him? If you saw a woman in continual heaviness, ever since she was married, that lived more heartily and cheerfully before, will you not conclude that she has met with an unagreeable match? Why, then, your heaviness may tend to the reproach of your heavenly Master whom you serve; and are you not married to the Lord Jesus Christ? And will you give occasion to the ignorant world to reproach your heavenly husband? And can you find in your heart to dishonour and wrong the God whom you so much esteem.



2. Consider what a lamentable hindrance you may hereby be to the conversion and salvation of souls ; your dejected countenance and complaints may affright men from Wisdom's ways, as if they were not pleasant ways, but rather grievous : you gratify Satan and his instruments, who would keep men from Christ and his way, by making them believe that the servants of Christ are a company of distempered, depressed, melancholy souls ; and that godliness is the way to make men mad : and, indeed, this is one of the ways wherein, as the prophet Isaiah hath it, chap. lix. 15, "Truth faileth, and, he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey ; or, is accounted mad," as it is in the margin. Satan and the wicked persuade men, that if they will set their heart on heaven, they must never any more look for a pleasant life on earth : and will you contribute to confirm this slander of the devil and his instruments ? Can you have peace in your own mind, to lay such a stumbling-block as this in the way of your miserable acquaintances as to hinder their salvation ? Perhaps you have hindered it formerly by your sinful merriment ; and will you now do it by your sinful heaviness ? If you could live a heavenly, joyful life, that the glory of your hopes might appear in your countenance, deportment, and conversation, what an attractive would it be to the ignorant, who, having a natural enmity against it, cannot see the excellency of it immediately in itself, but only judge of religion by the carriage of the persons who profess it ? And surely these will appear to be the best and happiest persons who have the greatest comforts, and conquer the greatest trouble of mind. O were the pleasure and excellency of religion exemplified in the lives of Christians, the world would be forced to admire the very thing they hate ; and some would wish to see and know what it is that so much delights us, and desire to be made partakers of our joys. O sirs ! shall they glory, who have nothing but a vain transitory world to comfort them ? and will not you glory in the Lord ? Shall they boast of their fading riches ? and will not you boast of the unsearchable riches of Christ ? Psalm xxxiv. 1, 2, 3, "I will bless the Lord at all times ; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord ; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. Psalm xlv. 8, "In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever." Why, in this case, poor fading sinners would begin to pity themselves, and to think with themselves, "Surely it is not for nought

that these men rejoice, and have such pleasant, comfortable lives, and joyful countenances, even in the loss of all these things that we take all our comfort in." Therefore, O believer! as you would not dishonour our Lord, and discourage your neighbour from his way, endeavour, through grace, to reach this joyful life, and glory in the Lord.

OBJECT. "If I would endeavour to live thus, for the encouragement of others, I fear this would draw me into a hypocritical affectation of joy and courage, as long as I am unable inwardly to rejoice, and can see no sufficient cause of rejoicing within myself."

ANSW. Every believer in Christ hath sufficient cause of unspeakable joy, without himself, in the perfections of God, the fullness and righteousness of Christ, the promises of the covenant, which stand as unshaken foundations of his fiducial assurance, even when he cannot find within himself, these good marks and characters which are sometimes the foundation of his evidential assurance; and I would have you to know, that you ought not to suspend your comfort, and forbear your joy and delight, till you would have that full evidential assurance you would be at. Yea, I will assure you, that the weakest faith and hope will warrant a more comfortable life than you can live. And it is not hypocrisy, but duty, to do the outward actions that are commanded you, with reference to holy courage and confidence before the world; even though you cannot reach to that degree of inward comfort you desire.

I remember once to have heard a dying saint speak to this purpose, to some that were in the company; "I had an inclination, said the person, many times to speak more of Christ and religion, and to commend it to you more than I did; but that which marred my courage and confidence, was the fears lest afterwards I myself should prove a hypocrite; this was a temptation to me." It is possible some of the Lord's people may be under temptations of this sort. Far be it from us, sirs, to persuade any man to lie and hypocritize: as some, perhaps, do, who can talk boldly of religion, just to recommend themselves to the opinion of others, as if they were more acquainted with religion than indeed they are; but I speak to sober, serious and exercised souls. You do not lie, nor affirm yourselves to have the joy which you have not, when you only endeavour to express, as fully as you are able that little which you have; and, indeed, a little peace and pleasure, a very little of this joy and pleasure is of such a high and heavenly nature, grounded on the smallest

hopes of everlasting life in Christ, as will allow you, in the expression of it, to transcend the greatest delights of the ungodly ; yea, to endeavour conscientiously to perform the external part, is both a commanded duty, and a means to further the inward rejoicing of the soul ; as outward diseases of the body may contribute to the inward recreation of the mind, and the performance of outward duty may be the means of inward frame ; and it is no hypocrisy to essay the outward means, even when you find a want of the inward frame and encouragements. If you cannot restrain your anger, as you do desire, it is no hypocrisy, but your duty, to hide it, and to refrain from the sinful effects of it ; yea, in doing so, your anger itself may be the more quickly subdued. Thus, if you cannot restrain your inordinate appetite to meat and drink : yet it is no hypocrisy, but duty, to hold your hands and shut your mouth, and refrain from the things to which you have an appetite ; the doing so, may subdue the appetite itself. If the drunkard would forbear the drink, and the glutton the dish, and the sportful his sinful games, then the fire of sensuality might go out for want of fuel, as it is with other lusts of the flesh, could men make no provision for it, to fulfil the same, Rom. xiii. 14. Even so, if you cannot overcome your inward doubts, fears, and sorrows, as you desire : yet let them not be frightful, nor cause you walk so dejectedly before the world as to dishonour God, and disparage your holy profession ; and you will find, that your essaying a holy cheerfulness of countenance, expression, and deportment, even when you want the inward comfort you desire, may contribute to your overcoming your inordinate disquietment, and much promote the joys that you desire.

But yet further, that you may see cause for the cheerful walk we have been speaking of, I exhort you, by way of motive.

3. To consider, that if you have but one spark of saving grace, it is not possible to conceive or express the happiness of your state, and the cause you have to live a joyful life. If you have no grace at all, you are not the person I am speaking to ; but, if you have it, and yet suspect the want of it, as it is hardly possible to want, and yet to be heavily lamenting the want of it ; so, if you have it in the least degree, you have in it an unspeakable treasure of delight. I formerly offered marks : and, if you are indeed in Wisdom's way God is yours, Christ is yours, the Spirit is yours, the promise is yours, heaven is yours in title, and shall be yours in possession. Shall they dwell in grief, and refuse consolation, who in a few days



shall be swallowed up with joy? If you were sure of this, and of being for ever with the Lord, after you have lived but a few days more, would not your conscience check you for your discouragement and say, that your want of joy doth express your too much want of thankfulness for such mercy?

OBJECT. "Yea, I could rejoice, if I were sure of all this; but when I rather think I shall have no part of it, it can be but small comfort."

ANSW. (1.) Whence is it that you have such fears? Have you not in your soul that love to God and Christ, that hatred and weariness of sin, that desire after communion with God in Christ, that esteem of the gospel, and of the searching word of God, that love to the saints and children of God, that are evidences of grace and things that accompany salvation? And notwithstanding of this, you will be still questioning whether you have them or not, and whether the kingdom shall be yours; it is your own weakness and inconsiderateness that causes your sorrow.

(2.) Are you not sure that Christ and his benefits are yours? Why, man, woman, I am sure they are yours in the offer and general promise; and, if they be not yours in a special, saving way, nothing but your continued refusal deprives you of them. If you will not have Christ, and his offered benefits, why do you so dissemble as to complain that you have them not? For, if you are willing, they are yours.

OBJECT. "How can we live comfortably under so much sin, and so much suffering both? For, perhaps you know not our circumstances, otherwise you would not call us to joy and pleasure."

ANSW. According to this method of doing, you will never rejoice till you come to heaven: for you will never be free of sin and suffering till then: nay, it would seem, you would have no man else to rejoice, and so would banish all comfort from the world; for there is no man without sin and suffering. Are your sins great, believer? Why, then, be sorrowful for them after a godly sort; but let not that hinder your thankfulness and joy; for the pardon of sin, and the promise of begun deliverance here, and of full deliverance hereafter, are yours. Are your afflictions great? Why then, be humble under them; but rejoice that they are fatherly chastisements, proceeding from love, and tending to your greater good; and that you are chastened of the Lord, that you may not be condemned with the world. Will you tell me, is there more evil in your in-

firmities and sufferings, than there is goodness in God, sweetness in Christ, happiness in heaven, and fulness in the covenant? If you dare not say that, then surely you have greater ground of joy than you have ground of sorrow. Yea, there is no mourning that God allows his children, but what is either mixed with, or makes way for joy; "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted," Matt. v. 4. Gospel-humiliation is both attended and followed with kindly heart-melting consolation.

4. Consider, that the advancing of peace and pleasure is the great end and design of the everlasting gospel. As God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they repent and live; so surely he takes no pleasure in the dejectedness of his children, but rather that they would walk in love and cheerful obedience before him. It is the office of Christ to give rest to these that labour and are heavy laden with burdens of their own, Matt. ix. 28; he was anointed to preach glad tidings to the poor, Luke iv. 18. When he was to leave the world, his legacy that he left to his disciples was peace and comfort; "Let not your heart be troubled. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you," John xiv. 18, 26, 27, 28. Nay, he commanded them, as they love him, to rejoice because he left them and went to the Father. He foretels them of sufferings; but he promises that their sorrow should be turned into joy; and that in him they should have peace, when in the world they should have tribulation, John xvi. 20, 33. When he appeared after his resurrection, his salutation unto his friends is, "Peace be unto you," John xx. 19, 21, 26. And the abounding and multiplying of this holy peace is the desire and salutation of Paul, to the church, in all his epistles. The gospel itself is the message of peace; the work of the ministry is the preaching of peace and reconciliation with God. The proclamation of angels was peace on earth and good-will towards men, when they were discovering the birth and incarnation of the Prince of Peace. It is God's call to his people to rejoice evermore; and it is the character and description of believers, being justified by faith, they have peace with God, and to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and to glory in tribulation, Rom. v. 1, 2. See also 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13, 14, Luke vi. 22, 23, Matt. v. 11, 12, 2 Cor. vi. 10, Col. i. 24, Acts v. 41, 42, chap. viii. 8, 39, Psal. v. 11, xxxiii. 21, lxviii. 3, civ. 5, cv. 1, 2, 3, cxxxii. 9, 16, Isa. lxxv. 13, 14. Multitudes of scripture passages to the same effect, may shame the godly out of

their indecent trouble and heaviness ; as you would shew a child his face in a glass, when he cries, that he may see how he deforms it. If, by these, you wound your own soul and bring grief upon yourself, dwell not in that wounded state, but run to your Physician and beg of him to restore to you the joys of his salvation, and make you to hear the voice of joy and gladness, that your broken heart and bones may rejoice, as David, Psal. li. 8, 12. Why will you sit complaining of your wants, when the fountain of all store is at hand for you to go to ? or complaining of your wounds without going to the Physician, who freely offers you his help ? And what though they be not suddenly cured ? Wounds may be caused in an hour, but they are not usually cured in an hour. Wait his time, and use remedies, and cheerfully trust him, and you shall find the healing go on with success, though it will not be finished till death.

5. Consider, that as peace and pleasure are the life of heaven : so it must be the most holy and happy life, that comes nearest the life of heaven. To go to heaven, is to enter into the joy of our Lord ; and as they are the most happy, so they are the most holy Christians that are the most joyful ; and joy is a part of our holiness, and of our religion : "The kingdom of heaven consisteth in righteousness, and joy in the Holy] Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17. And therefore, without this holy delight, we deny God a principal part of his service, which is the sacrifice of thanksgiving. How unfit is a doubting, drooping, distressed soul, for the great and excellent work of praise, which should be our daily sacrifice ! We thus muzzle our mouths, when we should be speaking and singing forth the praises of the Lord. What a shame is it that the servants of the devil are so jocund, and the servants of God so dejected ! Will you go drooping to heaven, while they go dancing to hell ? O believer, you could live merrily before your conversion, when you served sin ; and will you walk dejectedly when you serve Christ, as if you had changed for the worse, or would make men think so ? I know you would not, for all the world, be in the state you was in before conversion, and faith in Christ Jesus ; why then do you live as if you were more miserable than you was before ?

6. Consider, that it is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost, the third person of the glorious Trinity, to comfort as well as sanctify : and if you would be loath to resist the sanctifying work of the Spirit, why should you not be loath to resist his comforting work, since it is the same Spirit you resist in both ; and since, while you



resist his comforting work, you resist his sanctifying work also, and his strengthening work, whereby you would be fit and strong for service and suffering both? For the joy of the Lord would be your strength. So much for motives.

[2.] For direction to attain this pleasure and joy, we tender the following advices:—

1. Study a more full and fixed knowledge of God, and his attributes, and covenant relation to you in Christ Jesus. If infinite perfections be not matter of pleasure to you, it is because they are not known: If the sun seems not light to you, it is because you want sight, or look not to the light; If the most pleasant meat or food, be what you can find no relish in, it is because your appetite is diseased, or you do not taste it; If your most suitable and affectionate friend be not amiable to you, it is because you know not his suitableness and love; So, if the infinite and eternal God, possessed of all infinite and glorious perfections, can afford no pleasure to you, it is because you have no acquaintance with him. Study then his infinite perfections; and be much in secret prayer and meditation, knowing it is love itself you have to do with; for, "God is love:" and so it is the fountain of all pleasure you draw nigh unto. It is a cold heart that fire itself cannot warm; a dead heart indeed that life cannot quicken. Study also a full and fixed knowledge of his covenant relation to you, as thy God, thy Father, thy friend in Christ. Think not of him as cruel, or an enemy, if you would love him, or delight in him. Love and delight are never forced by bare commands and threatenings, but drawn forth magnetically, as with a load-stone, by attractive goodness. If God were not most amiable, lovely, and loving, it is not saying, Love me, or I will damn you, that would ever cause any man to love him; but rather to fear and hate and fly from him. Now, his love is manifested in his covenant of promise which thou hast laid hold upon, in the day of believing; and wherein he hath engaged to be thy Father, thy Saviour, and thy Sanctifier; and this covenant cannot be violated, Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21, Isa. liv. 6, 7, 8, "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed: but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed." God's providence does not give you such security that the sun shall shine, and that the streams shall run, and that the earth shall be fruitful, as God's covenant gives you of all that is necessary to your happiness.

QUEST. But how shall I be sure that I am in covenant with God?

ANSW. By your consent. God offers himself to be your Father, his Christ to be your Saviour, his Spirit to be your Sanctifier ; do you consent to this or not ? If sin be so sweet and pleasant to you, that you are unwilling to have God to be your portion ; if you would not have him to be your reconciled Father, your Saviour, your Sanctifier ; then why do you so dissemble, as to lament your misery, while you refuse your happiness ? But if you are brought to a cordial consent, then you are truly and spiritually in covenant, and the benefits are yours ; and therefore the joy, and pleasure, and comfort thereof should be yours.

2. It you would find the pleasure of Wisdom's ways, then abandon worldly pleasure ; and let not your heart be overwhelmed with worldly cares, or griefs, or troubles ; you cannot find your delight in God, when you turn from him to seek it in the creature. If you sought less for pleasure in friends, and health, and wealth, and prosperity in the world, you might have more in God. The flesh is ready to befool men into brutish conceits of the nature of happiness. You first fancy that it is an excellent thing to be rich, and renowned, and to rule others, and to have plenty of all accommodations for the flesh ; and then, because God satisfies not these carnal fancies, you think he neglects you, or deals hardly with you ; as if every person in a town should murmur because they are not provost, or baillies, or justices ; whereas yet, if they had sense to know it, they are but kept from a double incumbrance, and from a burden that perhaps would break their backs. But when the flesh befools people into an over-valuing of these worldly things, they are then always tickled by deluding pleasures, or troubled for the crossing of their carnal wills ; so that they grow out of conceit with, and have no suitable relish for the true and durable delights.

3. Take heed of indulging yourself in any sin ; and keep still your watch against temptation ; for sin will breed trouble and sorrow, instead of joy and pleasure. Sin is the cause of suffering ; when it promises you delight, it but prepares you for sorrow ; when it is flattering you into presumption, it is preparing you for despair ; when it is promising you security, it is preparing you for trouble ; and when it is promising you secrecy, it is preparing you for shame ; and, be sure sin will find you out some way or other, Num. xxxiii. 23. Therefore, when you have sinned, delay not to fly to Christ by faith and repentance. If you would thus get out the thorn that vexes you, Wisdom's way would be more pleasant to you. As you

would not forfeit the pleasure of religion, leave the house, leave the company, the occasions that ensnare you to sin ; for, if you do not, your best resolutions and precautions will prove so weak, that the flesh will beguile you, and so rob you of your happiness and pleasure.

4. Use cheerful company ; not carnal, but holy ; not such as waste their time in unprofitable, vain, frothy speech, who are more employed in speaking ill of their neighbour, than in speaking good of Christ ; and who seldom speak good of any but themselves ; or, if they speak good of some, it is with a view to disparage others. Beware of the company of such as have only a carnal, idle, worldly conversation ; but seek after the company of these that are most acquainted with the pleasures of religion, and whose cheerful conversation does manifest their sense of the love of God, and the grace of Christ. There is a delightful virtue in the converse of joyful Christians, and thankful heavenly believers ; “ As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend,” Prov. xxvii. 17.

5. Let your prayers be still attended with praise. When you address yourself to God, pore not only upon your wants, in order to prayer : but also upon your mercies, in order to praise ; and let not thankful acknowledgments be forgotten. I would advise troubled and fearful souls to spend as much of their time and words in confessing their mercies, as in confessing their sins ; and in praising God for what they have, as in praying to him for what they want ; and you may find cheerfulness of heart promoted by thankful expressions. And I would advise you to the same thing with respect to your thoughts, namely, that you endeavour to spend as many thoughts upon grace and mercy, as upon sin and misery ; as many thoughts upon the goodness and love of God in Christ, as upon his terrors and threatenings. Why will you study only your afflictions and your wants, while you live in a land that flows with milk and honey ? Why will you still keep the gall and wormwood in your mouth ? This is the way to lose both the benefit of affliction, and the pleasure of religion. Beware of cherishing any fears or sorrows but such as are subservient to faith, hope, and love ; and preparatory to thankfulness and joy : for religion consists not of any other kind of sorrow. Study above all things the love of God revealed in Christ, which is the best attractive of your love to him ; and hate all suggestions that would represent God as unlovely or undesirable to you.



6. If you would know the rest and pleasure of believers, seek to rest in the will of God, in all conditions. You cannot expect rest and pleasure while you seek only the fulfilling of your own will, and murmur at the disposal of the will of God. If you rest in your own wills, your rest will be disturbed and imperfect; but if you rest in God's will, then you will rest in constant peace and quietness. You pray that his will may be done; and if you acquiesce in the doing of his will, you shall find repose and heart-satisfaction, whatever befall you. Subject yourselves to his commanding will in every duty; for the comforts of religion attend the exercises thereof, and are not to be expected in a way of sloth. And submit to his disposing will; for, in this way, you will find your crosses turned to comforts, and your afflictions mixed with consolation; such as that, "Fear not little flock:" for, as it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the cross, so, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," and the crown; and, indeed, the fore-apprehension of this is matter of unspeakable joy; "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God," Rom. v. 5. As the pleasure of the carnal consists in the sense of what they have in hand; so the pleasure of believers consists mostly in a sense or view of what they have in hope, or of what they shall enjoy with God for ever, and of their being for ever with the Lord.

7. Meditate much upon the disadvantages of not delighting and taking pleasure in the Lord. Why, little pleasure in the Lord argues little light and much darkness; and hence misapprehensions of God and his providences. Little pleasure in the Lord argues little life and strength, little faith and love, and humility.

8. Meditate upon the great advantages of delight and pleasure in the Lord. Why, this pleasure is your holiness, your happiness, your heaven: it is the heaven of the church militant, the heaven of the church triumphant; the heaven and happiness of God to delight in himself. And the more pleasure you take in God, the more he takes in you, John xiv. 21.

9. Know and consider, that there is no such weight in your objections against this delight, as any whit can weaken your obligation thereunto. What are objections drawn from guilt, when you view Christ as your righteousness? What are objections drawn from your pollution, your darkness, your deadness, when you view Christ as your sanctification, your light, and your life. And remember in what cases you are called to take pleasure in the Lord,

even in these cases and seasons wherein you are ready to think your duty is to be discouraged. When God is writing bitterness upon all other things; why does he imbitter the creature, but that you may delight in Christ? for then he is saying, "Come with me from Lebanon?" Song iv. 8. When you are disappointed of your expectations from other things, from dear relations and enjoyments; perhaps from such a minister, such an ordinance; why, then you are to go a little further. When under despondency and discouragement, fears and faintings of spirits; then you are to take pleasure in the Lord, and hope in him, Psal. xlii. 11, xliii. 5. When you walk in darkness, and have no light; when you find a restlessness of spirit and know not what to do; then he says, "Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." When you come to a place where two ways meet, and know not which hand to turn to; then you are to take pleasure in him, saying, "I will lead the blind by a way they know not, and in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight," Isa. xlii. 16. When troubles and afflictions are swelling on every hand: even then you are called to delight in the Lord: when deep calleth unto deep, and his waves and billows going over us; yet then the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day time, and in the night his songs shall be with us, Psal. xlii. 7, 8. When the world is so bad, that you know not whom to trust, or converse with; even in this case you are to delight in Christ, who is a trusty friend to whom you may tell all your mind: "He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother." When the world is turning up side down, and all things are turning out of course, nothing but a Babel of confusion to be seen in the face of affairs in church or state; then is a time of delighting in the Lord, Psal. xlv. 1, 2, 3, 4. In all these, and a thousand such cases, you may find pleasure in Christ.

Take pleasure in this, that Christ is still the same, when other things bid an adieu. Take pleasure in this, that he is full; when emptiness is written upon all things else, there is an immense fulness in him. Take pleasure in this, that he is so free; so free-hearted to dispense of his fulness. Take pleasure in this, that he is unchangeable; though you change, and the world change, yet he is unchangeable in his love, unchangeable in his word, unchangeable

in his covenant: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my loving-kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Delight in this, that he is sympathizing; that in all your afflictions, he is afflicted; that he who "toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." Take pleasure in this, that he is so sweet as to sweeten all the waters of Marah to you; that he is so sib to you, so nearly related to you; your head, your husband, your elder brother, your shepherd, your friend, your physician, your *all in all*; and bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh, by virtue of the natural sibness between him and you; your Surety, by virtue of the legal sibness and oneness between him and you; and your life, by virtue of the mystical and spiritual union and relation to you: "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." These considerations may afford comfort in every case.

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## SERMON CXL.—CXLI.

HEAVEN'S GRAND REPOSITORY; OR, THE FATHER'S LOVE TO THE SON, AND DEPOSITING ALL THINGS INTO HIS HAND, A STRONG ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITH.<sup>1</sup>

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."—

JOHN iii. 35.

MY friends, the natural state we are all into, is a state of poverty and want. The first Adam spent our stock, and left us nothing but sin, and misery, and death. If we have any right view and knowledge of ourselves, we will know that we are now cursed in want of *all things*; that we are nothing but sin, and have nothing but sin, and can do nothing but sin, and deserve nothing but hell. As creatures, we are originally nothing; as worthless creatures, we are less than nothing; and as wicked creatures, we are worse than nothing. If any here are made truly sensible of their total want of all that is good, and would know where they may be supplied, my text makes

(1) This subject was handled in two Sermons. The first was delivered at a sacramental solemnity at Kinglassy, June 13th, 1731; the second was an Action Sermon, preached at Dunfermline, June 27th, 1731.



a discovery of a good hand, wherein there is a greater stock of provision and furniture than ever Adam had before his fall. Here is a second Adam, the eternal Son of God, so well qualified for supplying our wants, that there was never a hand heard tell of in heaven or earth, that could have more than he hath : " The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."

It is no matter though you have nothing in your hand, if you come to him who hath all things in his. As the apostle Paul gloried in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him ; so, it were good if we were glorying in our emptiness, that the fulness of Christ might be magnified in us. As he hath a full hand, so it is an open hand ; for, this immense fulness is made the ground of faith, as you see in the context ; because it is laid down as a foundation of what follows ; " He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life." What this believing is, we may see, ver. 33 : it is receiving his testimony, and setting to the seal that God is true. God is true whether we set to our seal or not ; but, by faith, we subscribe to his truth ; and hereby God reckons himself honoured and glorified ; for, he that receiveth the testimony of Christ, subscribes to the truth of God, and, by believing in Christ, we set to our seal that God is true to all the promises made concerning Christ ; and so give credit to all that he hath said by the prophets ; and that he is true to all the promises made in Christ, venturing our souls upon the veracity of God ; and the more credit we give him, the more honour we put upon him.

QUEST. But how does it appear, that when we receive the testimony of Christ, we receive the testimony of God, and set to our seal that God is true ?

ANSW. Why, because as Christ is the Word of God, so he is the Sent of God, to deliver the word of God ; " He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God ;" and he was sent of God for this very end ; " A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, from amongst your brethren, like unto me ; him shall you hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you." But for clearing this further, we shall propose, and answer another question.

QUEST. How does it appear that Christ, as the Sent of God, speaketh the words of God ? and consequently, how may we be sure of this, that when we believe the truth of Christ, we believe the truth of God.

ANSW. It appears that he speaks nothing but the words of God, because he hath the Spirit of God, and the Spirit above measure; for, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." The prophets of old had the Spirit in a limited manner, only with respect to some particular revelations, and sometimes spoke of themselves; but Christ had the Spirit always residing in him, without stated measure or limitation: and therefore spoke always the words of God. The more of the Spirit of God that any person hath, the more will he speak the words of God; now, the Spirit was never in any mere creature but as in a vessel; but the Spirit was, and is in Christ, as a fountain, and as in a bottomless ocean: therefore his words may well be depended upon, and rested in, as the words of God. Here is a foundation for faith, in respect of his veracity. But, is there as much foundation for faith, in respect of his ability and furniture every way? Yea, there is; for, "He loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."

In which words we may notice these two things following:—

1. An Assertion; "The Father loveth the Son: He was always his delight," Prov. viii. 30. And he is his delight still.

2. A Proof and Evidence of this assertion: "He hath given all things into his hand." He gives him so much trust, that he could not entrust him with more; for, what more can be conceived than *all things*? Love is best known and evidenced by the greatness of the lover, and the loving gifts he bestows upon the object beloved. Here is the greatest gift, evidencing the greatest love; "The Father hath loved the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." This is the honour of Christ, and the happiness of his people, that the Father hath given all things into the hands of Christ the Mediator. If you would have a sum of these *all things*, it may be gathered from what follows, viz., that it is *everlasting life*, and all that attends it, and all the means that lead to it; all the parts of it, and all things that belong to it; for it follows, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

The text then lays down a strong ground of encouragement to believe on the Son of God unto eternal life; therefore we may lay down the following doctrinal proposition as the sum of it, namely,

OBSERV. "That the Father's love to the Son, evidenced by his giving all things into his hand, is a strong argument and encouragement for faith to believe in him."

You will see this same argument adduced and made use of by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, Mat. xi. 27, 28, "All things are delivered to me of my Father." And amongst other things, all the Father's counsels and secrets, he being the great Secretary of heaven; and, what follows? "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come to me, as the Father's trustee, who hath intrusted me with all things.

We shall endeavour, through divine assistance, to prosecute this subject in the following method.

- I. I would speak a little of the Father's love to the Son.
- II. Speak of this evidence of the Father's love; and that, 1. Shew some of these things the Father gives to the Son. 2. Notice the import of the expression, *He gave all things into his hand*. 3. How this evidences the Father's love to him. 4. Why he hath thus manifested his love to him.
- III. How this love of the Father, thus evidenced, in giving all things into his hand, is a ground of faith.
- IV. Make some Application of the whole.

I. I am to speak a little of the Father's love to the Son. For clearing of this, there are these following Positions I would offer.

First Position is, "That there are many scriptural expressions of the Father's love to the Son." He is called *the Beloved*, emphatically, Eph. i. 6. He is called his *dear Son*, or the *Son of his love*, Col. i. 13. He solemnly declares his love to him from heaven three several times; once, at his baptism; again, at his transfiguration; and afterwards in his agony, by that audible voice, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He expresses himself with the greatest complacency in him; and that in such terms as might invite all the world to fall in love with him; "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. lxii. 1.

Second Position, "That the Father's love to the Son imports something in it that is very great and glorious." It imports that there is an infinite and inconceivable sweetness in the person of Christ, and in his undertaking, that renders him the object of his Father's dearest love and complacency. There is such a loveliness in him, as makes him not only the darling of saints, but the darling of his Father. It imports that the Father's heart is fixed upon him;



that his very soul is, as it were, knit unto him. Would you know where to find God's heart, so as to get a share of his heart's love? Then, get into Christ, for his heart is fixed upon him, and rejoices in him; and, indeed, they that rejoice in Christ, they partake of his Father's joy and delight.

Third Position, "That there are several capacities in which the Father loveth the Son." He loves him as his Son, and he loves him as his Servant; he loves him as God, the second person of the glorious Trinity, and he loves him as Mediator, God-man. He loves him, I say, as God the Son; therefore called, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," John i. 18. This is expressed in terms adapted to our capacity; but it is a mystery too deep for us to fathom; for, how one divine person loves another divine person, none but a divine person can understand. How the Father loves the Son, none but the Father and the Son can comprehend. As he is begotten of the Father, by an eternal and an ineffable generation; so he is loved of the Father by an internal and an ineffable love. The Father cannot but love him as he loves himself; for, as in respect of his nature and essence, he is one God with the Father and eternal Spirit; so, in respect of his personality, he is his Father's exact picture, being the image of the invisible God, and the express image of his person. Again, He loves him as Mediator, God-man, in which office he is the Father's Servant on our business, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold," Isa. lxii. 11. This is what most concerns us; for what would it avail us to hear only that the Father loveth the Son, if we had no share of that love? But, behold, here is the good news of the gospel, that the Father loveth the Son, as he is clothed with the office of a Mediator and Saviour, to save the like of you and me. He loves him as his Servant, whom he hath chosen to his office; he loves him as his Anointed, whom he hath qualified for this work; "I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;" that is, to bring forth light and salvation to the Gentiles; for he loves and delights in him as one whom he hath given for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison.

Fourth Position, "That there are several things for which the Father loves the Son, as our Mediator." He loves him for his undertaking of this office from all eternity; and hence he is said to be his Father's delight, while his delight was with the sons of men,

rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth," Prov. viii. 30, 31. The Father was so much in love with him, for this undertaking, that he promised to support him therein; "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold!" And he solemnly engages, that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand, Isa. liii. 10. As he loves him for his undertaking, so he loves him for his performance of the work, by his coming, and doing, and dying, that he might finish the work the Father gave him to do. The hardest part of the work seemed to be that of his dying, and giving himself a sacrifice; and see how the Father loves him for this, John x. 17. "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again." Eph. v. 2, "He gave himself a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God." The Father was delighted with his doing and dying, his active and passive obedience: because, by this means, he wrought out an everlasting righteousness for our justification, to the honour of the law and justice of God: "The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable," Isa. xlii. 21. 'The Father loves him for every thing he did as our Redeemer; for, "He did always those things that pleased him," John viii. 29. He loves him for his compassion and tender sympathy he bears with sinners; therefore it was said of him, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench, until he hath sent forth judgment unto victory," Isa. xlii. 3. He loves him for his courageous encountering with his sufferings in our room, ver. 4, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he hath set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law." Yea, the Father is delighted with him, for what he is doing, namely, his praying, and interceding in heaven: he never rejects any of his prayers, but hears him always, John xi. 42. Again,

Fifth Position, "That there are several properties of the Father's love to the Son." It is an eternal love; it is an unchangeable love; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is a tender and affectionate love; therefore called his beloved Son, his dear Son. It is a wise love, though he loved him dearly, yet he would not let sin pass unpunished, when but imputed to him; "The Lord hath chastised me sore," says Christ, Psalm cxviii. 18. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." It is a boundless love and unlimited; it is a love that passeth knowledge; and, indeed, God's love to his people, in Christ, hath these proper-

ties ; and if it be ineffable and boundless, what thought can we have of the vastness of his love to Christ ? In a word, it is a bountiful love, as appears by the effects of it ; which leads me to the

Sixth Position. "That there are several effects of the Father's love to the Son, several evidences and discoveries of it ;" such as, his choosing him, from eternity, to this honourable work ; upholding him therein ; revealing all his mind and bosom to him ; accepting of him ; and being well pleased with all that he did ; exalting and glorifying him at his right hand ; commanding all men to pay honour to him. But the particular effect and evidence of his love here mentioned, is the great trust he commits to him ; he hath given all things into his hand. This leads me,

II. To the second thing proposed, namely, To speak of this evidence and effect of the Father's love to the Son, he hath given all things into his hand. Here consider, 1. What are these things the Father gives into Christ's hand ? 2. What is the import of the expression, his giving all things into his hand. 3. How this evidenceth the Father's love to him. 4. Why he hath thus manifested his love to him.

1st, What are these things the Father hath given into Christ's hand ? *All things*, says the text ; and surely it is but some of all things we can mention.

1. All government is given into his hand : "To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders : 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 with justice, from henceforth even for ever ; the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this," Isa. ix. 6, 7. And it is a wonderful government ; for his name is called Wonderful. A wise government ; for he is the Counsellor. A powerful, divine government ; for he is the mighty God. An everlasting and a friendly, fatherly government ; he is the everlasting Father. A princely and peaceable government ; for he is the Prince of Peace. And it is a growing government ; for, "Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end : " It is an universal government ; and therefore it is said, "All power in heaven and earth is given unto him," Matt. xxviii. 18. He is Lord of all, and Head over all things to the church, Eph. i. 22: Angels are his servants, devils are his captives, and all flesh is in his hand ; "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life



unto as many as thou hast given him," John xviii. 2. Both the golden sceptre and the iron rod are given into his hand ; the government of the world, and the government of the church. He is the great Lord disposer of all events, and the great Lord dispenser of all blessings, and the great Judge of quick and dead ; " The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son," John v. 22.

2. As all government is given into his hand, so all grace is given into his hand ; eternal life, and all its preliminaries. The second Adam has got all the stock put into his hand, therefore he is said to be the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ; and out of his fulness we are to receive, and grace for grace, John i. 14, 16. All grace is in his hand, so as there is no grace to be had anywhere else ; justifying grace, sanctifying grace, saving grace, all the graces of the Spirit ; yea, the Spirit and all his graces, all his gifts ; his mission and motions are in the hand of Christ. The context says, he has the Spirit above measure ; and the dispensing of the Spirit, in what measure he pleases to us, is in his hand, John xvi. 7, and xv. 26. He hath the sending of the Spirit in his hand, insomuch that, when the Father sends the Spirit he sends him in Christ's name : " The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance," John xiv. 26.

3. All the blessings of the covenant are given into his hand ; therefore we are blessed in him, with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places. Hence, says the apostle, " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath thus blessed us," Eph. i. 3. Therefore it is said, " Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed ; and in him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." You have a sum of these spiritual blessings that are in Christ, 1 Cor. i. 10. " Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." No flesh must glory in his sight ; but, that all flesh might glory in the Lord, and have nowhere else to go for any blessing, but to that blessed hand, into which the Father hath given all things.

4. All the promises of the covenant are given into his hand ; he is, therefore, the centre of all the promises ; " All the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God," 1 Cor. i. 20. As the promise is affirmed by his word, and confirmed by his blood ; so, the donation of the promises, and application of the pro-

mises, is in his hand. All the promises are primarily made to him, and secondarily, to us in him. As the immediate object of faith is the word of promise ; so, when faith intermeddles with the promise, it cannot but see Christ in it, and it in Christ ; faith takes Christ in the promise, and the promise in Christ.

5. All the fulness of God is given into his hand, as Mediator ; “It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell,” Col. i. 19, and chap. ii. 9. “In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” All the fulness of divine perfection is in him ; for, he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God ; and all the other attributes of God, and all the glory of God, and the glory of all these perfections of God, is in him to be seen ; “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. iv. 6.

6. All the work that the Father had to do, was and is given into his hand. The work of creation was given into his hand of the Father ; for, “By him he made the worlds,” Heb. i. 2. The work of providence is given into his hand ; “He upholds all things by the word of his power,” ver. 3. The work of redemption, and all the parts of it, from the beginning to the end ; redemption by the price of his blood ; redemption by the power of his Spirit ; redemption from the law, from sin, Satan, death, and hell ; and redemption to eternal life is all in his hand. Isa. lxi. 1. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,” &c. The Father hath anointed, and qualified, and furnished him for the work ; and clothed him with all offices, such as Prophet, Priest, King, Surety, Saviour, Mediator, and Redeemer, for accomplishing the work ; and thus he is entrusted with all his Father’s business. This he knew after he entered the stage of this world in our nature ; at twelve years of age, he said to his parents that were seeking him sorrowing ; “Wherefore was it that ye sought me ? wist ye not that I must be about my father’s business ?” Luke ii. 49. And all the time he was on earth he never rested till he finished the work which the Father gave him to do. And the work that is yet upon his hand, relating to the application of redemption, he is restless till it be finished. In a word, all things that the Father hath are given into his

hand, John xvi. 15. "All things that the Father hath are mine ;" insomuch that he is the Author and Creator of all things, John i. 1. "All things were made by him." And the upholder of all things, as he is the proprietor of all things, by the Father's donation, Matt. xi. 27. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." And he is the centre of all things, Eph. i. 10. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." He is the Head of all things, Eph. i. 22. Col. ii. 10. He is the Heir of all things, Heb. i. 2. But now I come to show,

2ndly, What is the import of the expression, "He hath given all things into his hand." I think the words import,

1. The freeness of this dispensation. O ! in what a free manner, and with what a free heart hath the Father given all things into Christ's hand ! All God's gifts are free ; but never did he give anything more freely than he gave all things into Christ's hand. Love is always free in its donations to the object beloved ; and the Father's love to the Son being infinitely great, O ! how freely hath the Father given all things to the Son ? It is true, that all things that concern the happiness of his people, and all the blessings of the covenant were dearly purchased by the Lord Jesus ; and so it cannot be said of what God hath given to Christ, as Mediator, as it must be said of what he gives us, that it is without our merit, and without motive on our part ; for, in Christ, there is infinite value in his blood to merit ; and infinite dignity and loveliness in his person, to move the Father to give all things to him ; and therefore, when I say it was a free gift, do not understand it as free in opposition to merit or motive, for they were both in Christ to an infinite degree ; but it is free in opposition to force or constraint. The Father had no reluctance in his infinite mind, no grudge in his heart in giving all things into Christ's hand ; nay, it was with infinite frankness and freedom ; for it was in infinite love and kindness.

2. The words import the fulness of this dispensation ; the Father hath given him all things ; he hath kept nothing back from him. He hath given him all his mind, all his heart, all his counsel, all his secrets, all his treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all his glory, all his authority ; all things in heaven, and earth, and under the earth ; all persons, and cases, and causes ; nothing is withheld.

3. The words import the fitness of Christ to bear the weight of all things. What hand could be fit to put all things into ? Well did the Father know who is the fit hand ; and, behold ! infinite



wisdom sees none so fit as Christ, that so all things might meet in the centre, even in the middle person of the glorious Trinity, and that all things might hang in the midst between heaven and earth, between God and man; therefore, infinite wisdom makes all things concentre in a God man, that thus poor sinful men might get hold of all things they stand in need of in Christ; even of God himself; for, "God is in Christ."

4. The words import the firmness of his title to all things, insomuch, that not only hath he a natural right, as God; but a donative right, as Mediator, God man, to all things; which are so put into his hand, that they are under his authority; all things that belong to his church, being in his hand, are at his keeping; all things that can befall his church, being in his hand, are at his disposal; all things sinners need, being in his hand, are at his giving; and, indeed, all things are given into his hand, that he, having a full hand, sinners may come and share of his fulness. But,

3dly, How doth this evidence the Father's love; or, what love appears in this? Why,

1. The Father's giving all things into Christ's hand, shows his love to him to be a confiding love; a love attended with confidence in him, that he can trust him with all things that concern his greatest glory, and his people's good; that he is the Father's Confident and great Trustee, whom he can trust with all his treasures of grace and glory, with all his treasures of power and majesty. He loves him so, that he can entrust him with all things. He is entrusted with all the keys of his Father's house; "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there you may be also," John xiv. 2, and with the keys of hell and death, Rev. i. 18.

2. The Father's giving all things into Christ's hand, shows his love to him to be a complacential love. A lover is known by his gifts; we give gifts to them we love; the more we love them, the more we give them. Here, then, is the greatest gift arguing the highest love, the dearest love, the most complacential. He gives him not only to the half but to the whole of his kingdom; the whole of his dominion and empire; he gives him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession, Psalm ii. 8. Hence,

3. It shows that his love to him is a generous love; what greater generosity can be manifested than by giving him all things? Could he give him more? No; it is as much as God could give;

and, indeed, God only could give such a gift ; and it is only God that could receive such a gift. It is only the proprietor of all things that could give them ; and it is only the proprietor of all things that could take them in his hand, and under his management.

4. It shows that his love to him is a superlative love, and that he loves him above all things, therefore gives all things into his hand. If there were anything that the Father loved better than Christ he would have kept that out of his hand ; but, having given him all things, it says, there is nothing he can lay in balance with him. O ! how should we love him above all things as the Father doth ? We do not love him at all if we do not love him above all.

5. It shows that his love to him is an ingenious love ; there is no flattery here, nor disingenuity ; but the most wonderful affection, proved by the most conspicuous action, and the love of his heart evidenced by the love of his hand, which he hath opened so wide to him as to give him all. The Father and the Son not only join hands, as it were, as many will do, where there is little ingenuity of love, and integrity of affection ; but the Father opened his hand and put all things into the hand of his Son.

6. It shows that his love to him is a constant love, and that he will never repent that he set his love upon him ; for “ The gifts and calling of God are without repentance ; ” and therefore, as he will never recall his love to Christ, so he will never take out of Christ's hand anything that he hath given him. Not one soul of all the elect of whom Christ says, “ Thine they were, thou gavest them me,” John xvii. 6 ; not one soul of them, no, not the poorest youth or girl in the world will he ever take out of his hand again. Nay, the Father's hand and his meet together, as it were, and hold them fast, that they may never perish, never be lost, John x. 28, 30. The Father hath given him all power in his hand to save and quicken whom he will, John v. 21 ; and he will never revoke the power and authority that is given him. Thus you see how the Father's giving him all things evidences his love ; and what love it evidences. In a word, it evidences infinite love, eternal love, unchangeable love.

4thly, I am to show why he thus manifested his love to him, by giving all things into his hands. And,

1. The Father manifests his love to the Son, by giving him all things, because the Son lays out all things that he gets for his Father's honour and glory. For example, the words which the

Father gave him, he gives out to his people; "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me. I have given unto them thy word," John xviii. 8, 14. Again, the Spirit which the Father gives to him, he gives to them; "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life," John iv. 14. And both his word of grace, and Spirit of grace, poured into the Mediator's lips, are what he gives out, in a conformity to the promise; "This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my Spirit that is upon thee; and my words which I have put into thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever," Isa. lix. 21. Thus he that hath received gifts for men, and to whom the Father hath given all things for men, even for the rebellious, he gives out what he hath received to the Father's honour and glory. "Hence," says Christ, John xvii. 4. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And what work? See a notable part of the work, ver. 22. "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." And what is that glory? See a notable part of that mentioned, ver. 23, even the glory of his grace and love, drawing them to oneness with the Father and the Son; "I in them, and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." It lies in manifesting his love, his Father's love to them, in the resemblance that it bears of his Father's love to him. God, therefore, manifested his love to Christ, in giving all things into his hand, because he lays out all things the Father gives him to the Father's glory: hence he is exalted as LORD, "To the glory of God the Father," Phil. ii. 9. As Lord of lords, and Lord of all things, to the glory of God the Father, that he may bring in the revenue of praise and glory, and of all things to the Father. And thus, by him a revenue of honour comes in to the crown of heaven, and glory to God in the highest.

2. The Father has manifested his love to his Son, by giving him all things, because, as he is one with the Father in nature and in will, and is the Father's express image; his essential image, as God; and his representative image, as Mediator; so he had the greatest regard imaginable to his Father's will and command in all things: "I delight to do thy will, O my God," Psalm. xl. 8, 18. "I lay down my life; and this commandment have I received of



my Father," John x. 17, 18. May I not allude to that word, Luke xi. 13. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children," especially if they be obedient children? O! how infinitely more must God the Father manifest his love towards his eternal Son, in giving good gifts to him, whose meat and drink was to do his Father's will! (See Phil. ii. 7—10.)

3. The Father manifests his love to his Son, by giving him all things, not only as a reward of his work and victories, that are over his head, but also as furniture for the work and victories that are yet upon his hand to accomplish; for, "His reward is with him, and his work is before him," Isa. lxii. 11. Christ came to destroy God's greatest enemies, as well as to do God's greatest work; "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." And the devil hath groaned ever since he met with him. He hath groaned with a sore head, a pained head; for, "He bruised the head of the serpent." Christ was the stoutest combatant or ablest hand that ever hell or the devil met with; he would make no parley or cessation with his enemies, nor give over the battle till he brought the keys of hell, death, and the grave alongst with him. See how magnificently his victories are described, Isa. lxiii. 1—4. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozra? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel? and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat? I have trodden the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment; for the day of vengeance is in mine heart and the year of my Redeemed is come." And because all things are put under his feet, in point of victory and subjection; all things are put in his hand in point of reward; and not only as a reward for what is over, but as furniture for his further work and victories, as long as there is any soul on earth to be ransomed from the power of sin and Satan. (See Psalm lxxxix. 20—25.) "I have found David, my servant: with my holy oil have I anointed him. With whom my hand shall be established; mine arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not exact upon him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes

before his face, and plague them that hate him ; but my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him ; and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers." Why does the Father furnish him as you see, Isa. xlii. 1, 4, "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 : He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he set judgment in the earth : and the isles shall wait for his law." It is, that he may bring forth judgment to the Gentiles ; therefore, he is made Head over all things unto the church.

4. The Father manifests his love to the Son, by giving him all things, that he might be the restorer of all things to God, and the giver of all things unto man ; "Then I restored that which I took not away," says Christ, Psalm lxix. 4. The first Adam's sin had robbed God and man ; God's attributes was robbed of their honour, God's law was robbed of its obedience ; man was robbed of the favour of God, of the image of God, of the grace of God, of the blessing of God. Now, all things are given into Christ's hand, that he might restore all things to God and man, that sin had robbed them of ; and accordingly he, as Mediator, restores what he took not away ; he restores glory to the perfections of God, and obedience to the law of God ; and by this means also, he restores to man the favour of God in justification, and the image of God in sanctification.

In a word, he is the great magazine and storehouse, the possessor of all things, and the restorer of all things, and the outgiver of all things that sinners stand in need of, that thus a good solid foundation for faith may be laid unto sinners. This leads,

III. To the third general head proposed, namely, How this love of the Father to the Son, thus evidenced, by giving all things into his hand, is a ground of faith to sinners.

It is laid down here for the encouragement of the faith of all sinners that hear of it ; for it follows, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Everlasting life is in his hand, where all things are ; and therefore, let sinners come to him, and believe in him, for all things that they need. It is the greatest encouragement to faith in the world, that all the riches of the new covenant are deposited in his hand ; and that in several respects.

1. It is the strongest encouragement to faith, that all is in such a good hand ; for,

(1.) Here is ground of faith and hope to sinners, that all things are given into such a kind hand. Herein the love and kindness of God towards man appeared, Tit. iii. 4 ; that all things sinners need are given into the hand of a loving friend of theirs, an elder brother, a near kinsman ; one that is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh ; who, out of kindness towards us, took on our nature ; out of kindness, died in our nature, and in our room ; in loving-kindness, came from heaven, and returned again thither ; and now, in loving-kindness, sends the gospel unto us, and has promised to send the Spirit with it. Is not here strong ground for faith and hope ?

(2.) Here is encouragement for faith and hope, that all things are given into such a high and great hand ; who as he hath infinite kindness, so he hath infinite greatness ; and therefore will act both in a suitableness to the kindness of his heart, and to the greatness of his mind. As a liberal man devises liberal things, and a great man loves to do great things, how much more will the great God do infinitely greater things, and that even towards great sinners ? And therefore, they may be encouraged to come to him, and look for great things from him.

(3.) Here is ground of encouragement to the faith and hope of sinners, that all things are given into such a wise hand ; even his, who is the wisdom of God, and knows how to give out of his treasures, and when, and in what measure ; “ His understanding is infinite. He is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him,” Isa. xxx. 18, for, “ He waits to be gracious.” He waits the best time, and therefore we would do best to wait his time, and we shall find it to be the best ; “ He that believeth maketh not haste,” knowing that wisdom dwelleth with God.

(4.) Here is ground of faith and hope to sinners, that all things are given into such an able hand, who is the *power of God*, as well as the *wisdom of God* ; able to keep things that the Father commits to him, and able to keep all things that believers commit to him ; able to save to the uttermost, able to help at the last extremity, able to give out all things needful for our various circumstances, and able to do far above all that we can ask or think.

(5.) Here is ground of faith, that the Father hath given all things into such a sure hand ; insomuch, that all the blessings and mercy, that he hath in his hand to give, are called, “ The sure mercies of David,” Isa. lv. 3, Acts xiii. 34. All the promises in him are sure promises ; for, the covenant stands fast in him ; Psalm



lxxxix. 28, "My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him," says God, ver. 24. His name is called, "Faithful and true," Rev. xix. 11. You may depend upon his word more than upon the oath of all the angels of heaven and saints on earth; these are but changeable creatures, but he is the unchangeable God, and unchangeable truth itself.

(6.) Here is ground of faith, that all things are given into such an open hand. He keeps an open door to all that will come, and an open hand to all that will take; and therefore says, Rev. xxii. 17, "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely. Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; he that hath no money, come; buy wine and milk without money and without price," Isa. lv. 1. As the Father hath an open hand to him, so he hath an open hand to us; Freely he hath received, and freely he gives. His hand, though it be a sure hand, yet it is not a shut or a closed hand; no, by no means; it is an open hand, and a giving hand; and well were it for us if we had a receiving hand; he gives freely, and we are called to receive freely. And hence he commands us to preach the gospel to every creature, be what they will, of rational creatures among Adam's posterity; although they have sinned themselves into the likeness of devils; yet, if they be creatures, preach the gospel to them; offer Christ, and all things in him, to them; and he enjoins his ministers to be free and unhampered in their offers and proffers, saying, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Here is such encouragement to faith, that sinners may see that they are welcome to come, and take what they will, out of his stock.

2. Here is ground for faith and hope, that all things being given to Christ, there is nothing that sinners need, but what is here; bread enough and to spare. There is an overflowing ocean of all good in Christ for sinners, and that his grace doth infinitely exceed all our sins, and all our wants. It is unbelief that doth diminish and limit the fulness of Christ; it shews the soul a multitude of sins and wants, but it hides and conceals the fulness of Christ, and locks up his treasures. It is true, people pretend this and that, as a hinderance and discouragement to their believing; but however the ground of their not closing with Christ is, it turns chiefly upon this, that they doubt of his fulness. Nay, say you, my doubt is of his *willingness*; but I have no doubt of his *fulness*. I fear you mistake it, O sinner; and that your chief doubt is about his fulness; and

that your doubt of his willingness flows from the doubt of his fulness. What ! is it possible that one can believe the immense fulness of Christ, as having all things in his hand, and yet, at the same time, believe that he is a niggard, and has nothing to spare ? No, no ; if you believe his fulness, you cannot but believe his willingness ; and if ye doubt of his willingness, it flows from a doubt of his fulness ; for these two go together ; “ In my Father’s house there is bread enough and to spare,” Luke xv. 17. If you think there is nothing to spare for you, it is because you think there is not bread enough, and fulness enough in Christ ; for, if ye believe there is bread enough in him, then you will believe that there is to spare also. Examine, therefore, your faith of his fulness again ; if you do not see there is enough in Christ, no wonder you do not see what a free heart he hath, when you do not see what a free hand he hath. But, O sinner ! as the fulness of the Godhead is in him ; so, if there were ten thousand millions of worlds, and as many heavens full of men and angels, Christ would not be pinched to supply all their wants, and fill them all. Christ is the well of life ; but, who knows how deep it is to the bottom ? And the due consideration of this might provoke all the world to come and draw water out of this well of salvation with joy, were it not that their eyes are shut, through unbelief ; they see not the well, nor the overflowing fulness thereof.

3. Here is ground for faith and hope, in that as all things are given to Christ, so this inexhaustible fulness in him is not for himself, but to be dispensed and communicated to poor sinners ; for, here is the Father’s giving all things to the Son, as Mediator betwixt God and man. You will say, There is fulness enough in Christ ; but what is that to me ? Why, it wholly concerns thee ; it is treasured up in Christ for sinners ; yea, for the worst of sinners, that they may believe in him, and receive all things in him and with him ; “ He hath received gifts for men,” Psalm lxxviii. 18. Ah ! say you, but I am a rebellious devil. Well, it is even for the rebellious. Hence also, Eph. i. 22, “ He is Head over all things to the church ;” he hath all things in his hand. Well, but it is as head of the body the church ; as treasures and endowments of wit, and sense, and the like, in the natural head, are for the body, and for the service of it ; so, the treasures in Christ are for the service of sinners in the visible church ; sinners, that are made saints already ; and sinners, who are to be made so, by his grace ; and his grace that is in him, is pub-

lished and preached to every creature under heaven, Col. i. 23, that every one may apply it to himself, and hear believingly, when he is saying, in effect, "I have all things in my hand, and I have them for thee: I have life and salvation, and I have them for thee; I have peace and pardon, and I have them for thee; I have righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and I have them for thee; I have grace and glory, and I have them for thee." Therefore, go to him sinner, and expect all from him; and say not, Alas! it is not for me; for, be who thou wilt, To thee is the word of this salvation sent; and, therefore, receive not this grace of God in vain: for, it is unbelief that says, There is nothing for me: but faith says, It is all for me! O! he is a fit Saviour for me; he hath supplies of all wants for me; healing for me, help for me, all for me.

4. Here is ground for faith and hope to sinners, in regard that the Father's love to Christ, in giving all things into his hand, as the Saviour of sinners, is just a discovery of God's sovereign grace and love to sinners, in and through Christ; and therefore God is represented as sitting upon a throne of grace, and the Lamb sitting also upon the throne, where, in his Father's name, he dispenses the blessings that are given to him, and that as a glorious King upon a gracious throne. He acts like a King, pardons like a King, saves like a King and Sovereign; and while he distributes all in a way of free grace, he pardons, because he will; saves because he will: has mercy because he will have mercy. Why, what is the nature of sovereign grace? It is the nature of it to act from itself, to itself, without consideration of any thing in us; without respect either to the worthiness or unworthiness of the creature; neither restrained by our evil, nor constrained by our good; but all running out in a way of free love: Hos. xiv. 4, "I will heal their backslidings: I will love them freely." "No matter then, may faith say, however vile and wretched I be, while I have to do with such love; the Father loving the Son, and giving him all things, and that in love to the like of me." As free grace is the rise and spring, so the exalting of free grace is the end of this great business of salvation in Christ. It is not what such and such sinners do, or do not deserve, that he considers; but what his grace can do for them, and what will make most for the glory of that grace, and what will set the crown, the brightest crown on the head of free grace. This is evident, Eph. i. 6, 12, 14, "To the praise and glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved:—That we should



be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ: Which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." His design is, that grace might reign, Rom. v. 21, and that sinners might sing the praises of free grace, free love. "O! who am I? says the soul that hath obtained mercy; What! such a rebel, and yet pardoned! such an enemy, and yet reconciled! "such a black devil, and yet washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb! such a fiend of hell, and yet made a favourite of heaven! O grace! grace!" This is God's design to magnify his grace and love in Christ upon sinners, that they may love him much, who has pardoned much; and serve him lovingly, who has saved them freely.

5. Here is ground for faith, and encouragement for the hope of sinners, that the Father having loved the Son, and given all things into his hand, it must be acceptable to the Father, that sinners come to Christ for all things they need, and employ him for all things they have ado, and trust in him for all things they want; "This is his commandment, that we believe in him," 1 John iii. 23, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." Do you think God will be angry with you if you come to Christ? No; you cannot please God better, you cannot honour him more, for this is his very design in giving all things to him that you may come and get all things from him.

6. Here is ground for faith and hope, that the Father loves the Son, so as to give all things into his hand, in regard that, as it is acceptable to the Father, so it is honourable to the Son, that sinners come to him for all things. As the Father gave all things to Christ, that he might put honour upon him; so the sinner, giving employment to Christ, in all things he hath ado, puts honour upon him: and as it is the Father's honour that he gave all things to Christ; so it is to the Son's honour, that he gave out of this fulness to sinners, in a way of causing them to believe in him. And here is wonderful encouragement to faith and believing, that it is the glory and perfection of Christ, as Mediator, to receive sinners, and give out himself, and all things to them, that they need. Christ has a two-fold glory, viz., the glory of his person, as the Son of God; and the glory of his office, as Mediator, and Head of the second covenant; the former is infinitely complete and full, and can admit of no diminution, or augmentation, being unchangeably the same for ever; but the glory and perfection of his office, as Mediator, is still more

and more complete, the more sinners he receives, and the more grace he gives out ; and here there is an increase of his government, an increase of his glory, and perfection, and completeness ; hence the church is called his fulness, Eph. i. 23. If the church be his fulness, then the more that is filled, by his receiving sinners, and giving out grace to them, the more full and complete is he himself. His mediatory honour and perfection grows ; and hence also the saints are called the glory of Christ, 2 Cor. viii. 23. As Christ alone is their glory, so they are his glory. How his glory ? Not only because they glorify him actively, but also because he lays out his grace upon them, and they have nothing but by free gift from him ; and therefore he is said to be glorified in them. O ! what encouragement to faith and believing is here ! seeing thus you not only shall be glorified by Christ, and have everlasting life by him ; but also, you shall glorify Christ, and he shall have everlasting honour by you. O sirs, it is a part of his exaltation to give out of his fulness ; for, “ He is exalted to give repentance and remission of sin.” O ! how may unbelief sink and die, and faith rise and sing, before this consideration, “ It is Christ’s honour to receive me ; it is his glory to bestow himself and his grace upon me. The Father in love hath given all things to him, that he may get honour and glory in giving out all things needful for me.”

IV. The Fourth thing proposed, in the general method, was the Application of the subject.

Is it so, that the Father loves the Son, so as to give all things into his hand ? Hence many precious truths may be seen in the several branches of the text and doctrine, namely, 1, That the Father loves the Son. 2. That he hath given all things into his hand. 3. That this is a strong argument and encouragement for faith.

1st, Is it so, that the Father loveth the Son ? Hence we may see,

1. The infinite love of God, in giving the Son of his love to be a Saviour and a sacrifice for the like of us. O ! “ How excellent is his loving-kindness ! And, how precious is his grace,” that he should love such vile creatures, and make his love to flow in such a channel as this of his love to his Son ! Here is a love that passeth knowledge and comprehension, and they comprehend it best, who comprehend that it is incomprehensible ; they know it best who know that it passeth knowledge, Eph. iii. 18, 19. O ! does the Father love

the Son, as our Surety and Saviour? How astonishing should the love of God in Christ be to us! Are we not obliged to love that God that loves our Redeemer; and loves him, because he is our Redeemer?

2. See here a strong argument to make use of in our application to God for what we need. We are to go to God, in Christ, and to plead upon the love he bears to Christ; there cannot be a stronger argument with God than this, the Father's love to the Son. This is the argument on which Christ pleads, and prays for his people, John xvii. 24, "Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." You hear commonly that we should pray in the name of Christ; and if we pray the Father in his name, we shall be heard whatsoever we ask. What is it to pray the Father in Christ's name? It is even to raise our faith, and embolden our confidence with God, merely on the account of that high love the Father bears to the Son; and that, though we have nothing that is lovely in God's sight; nay, but rather every thing that is loathsome; though we have nothing in us to make God love us, but a thousand things to make him loathe us; yet we build our hope of acceptance and success upon the Beloved of the Father, and upon the Father's love to him. He is a blessed believer that can plead with God upon this argument, for he shall prevail; "And whatsoever ye shall ask, in my name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it," John xiv. 13, 14, "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing; verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you," John xvi. 23. Where you see both the Father and the Son engaged to do it.

3. See how dear and precious Christ should be to us; since the Father loves him, what should move us to love him if this do not? How precious should he be to us, who is precious unto God? It would argue that the mind of God and the Spirit of God was in us, if the Father's beloved were our beloved.

4. See here the right rule of our love to Christ, namely, to love him as the Father loves him. Wherein should our love to Christ resemble the Father's love? Why, the Father's love to the Son was evidenced in choosing him to be our Saviour and Surety: so should our love to Christ be manifested in making choice of him to



be our Saviour and Surety; insomuch, that, as God hath laid all our help upon him, so we should lay all our help where God hath laid it. Again, the Father's love to the Son was evidenced in giving all things into his hand: thus should our love to Christ be evidenced in putting all things in his hand as the Father doth; and particularly, you may put your hearts in his hand: that he may keep them; put your souls in his hand, that he may save them; put your plagues in his hand, that he may heal them; put your corruptions in his hand, that he may weaken and subdue them; put your wants in his hand, that he may supply them; put your work in his hand, that he may work all your works in you, and for you: put your burdens in his hand, that he may bear them; put all things in his hand, and thus evidence your love to him, by putting honour upon him, as a Prophet, to teach you; as a Priest, to pardon; and as a King, to conquer you by his grace, and crown you with his glory. This leads to the second branch.

2dly, Is it so, that the Father hath evidenced his love to his Son, by giving all things into his hand? Hence we may see.

1. How the infinite wisdom of God hath outwitted the policy of the devil in his subtile attack upon, and in robbing the first Adam of all his stock, and thereby thinking to destroy mankind; but, behold, the second Adam appears with a stock incomparably greater than that which the first Adam lost! Oh! what a happy change of Adams! what a happy change of covenants, and covenant-heads! The second Adam is well furnished, having all things in his hand; and there the stock is well secured in a hand that the devil dare not meddle with: in a hand that hath already bruised his head, and hath spoiled principalities and powers, and hath all things put in subjection under his feet, Heb. ii. 8.

2. See what a great want it is to want Christ; for, then they want all things; they have nothing, that are without Christ; they have no wisdom, they have no strength, no righteousness. They are destitute of God; for God and all his perfection are in him. They are destitute of the Spirit; for, the Spirit and all his graces are in Christ; they are destitute of all things; for all things are in him:” and he is all in all. Without Christ, ordinances are nothing but an empty shell; the sacramental supper, without Christ, is but an empty table: sermons, without Christ, are but an empty sound: heaven, without Christ, is but an empty void: heaven would be but darkness, if the Lamb were not the light of the place. The sinner,

then, that remains without Christ, is nothing but a hell full of wickedness ; empty of all good, and cursed in the want of all things.

3. See what a great thing it is to have Christ, because they who have Christ, have all things, Rom. viii. 32. When God gives Christ, he cannot but with him freely give all things ; for, he hath given all things into his hand. O how happy are believers ? All things are yours, because Christ is yours, 1 Cor. iii. 21—23, “ All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all is yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's.” The believer's stock can never be spent ; and he can never see himself in misery as long as he is looking to his Head. He can never lose any thing but it is well repaid in Christ ; and so long as Christ is to the fore, he has all things in him.

4. If the Father has given all things into Christ's hand, then hence we may be sure of several particulars.

(1.) We may be sure that we cannot go to a better hand for all that we need ; for, he hath all things in his hand, both by a natural right, as God ; and a donative right, as Mediator : therefore we may say, “ To whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life,” John vi. 68. To whom should we go for light, and life, and strength, and pardon, and peace, and perseverance ? To whom should we go for the Spirit of faith, for the Spirit of repentance, for the Spirit of grace, and supplication ? Again, We may be sure that it is easy with Christ to supply all our needs, and to give us all sufficiency in all things, 2 Cor. ix. 8. He hath not far to go to bring our supply ; no : he hath no more ado but open his hand ; for, the Father hath given all things into his hand.

(2.) We may be sure that all things shall work together for good, to them that love God, Rom. viii. 28. All things are for their sakes, because all things are in the hand of their Lord, and Head, and Husband ; and he can easily turn them about in his hand for accomplishing his pleasure and their profit. The worst things, as well as the best, are in his hand ; the most heavy crosses, as well as comforts, are in his hand, and at his disposal.

(3.) We may be sure that the covenant is well ordered in all things, and the covenant Head hath all things in his hand, who will do all things well ; and will have this testimony from all his children, at the end of the day, that he hath done all things well. How can it be otherwise, when all things are put in his infinitely wise

and gracious hand? It is unbelief to say, O! there is an ill-ordered providence; there is an ill-ordered trial. Stay a little, till faith look up and see all things in Christ's hand; and see all things managed by the hand of infinite wisdom, infinite holiness, infinite righteousness, faithfulness, and truth, and then it will say, "O! well-ordered temptation, that hath thus humbled me. O! well-ordered tribulation, that hath made me take rest in God only. O! well-ordered chastisements, that hath driven me to my heavenly Father. O! well-ordered losses and crosses, that hath weaned me from the world, and made Christ precious to me. O! well-ordered desertion, that tended to imbitter that which separated between God and me, and made his presence more precious to me than ever. O! well-ordered victory, that sin and Satan got over me, that tended to fill my heart with holy revenge against sin, and made me set the powers of heaven against the powers of hell. O! well-ordered disappointment, at such and such a time, that made me know that God was a Sovereign, to be waited on, and not to be limited to my time. O! well-ordered providence, that dried up the streams of creature-comforts, and worldly enjoyments that I might betake myself to the fountain of all consolation. O! well-ordered extremity, that so tended to make the Lord's appearing, at such a time, so wonderful and welcome: for, I was brought low, and he helped me." All things are well-ordered, because all things are in his hand. Again,

(4.) We may be sure that the dead shall rise again, according to the word of God, and that by the power of the Mediator; for, all things, even the dust of the earth, is in his hand, and particularly the dust of the saints; he hath undertaken to raise them up at the last day: John vi. 39, 40, 44, 45, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all that which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day."

(5.) We may be sure that dead sinners may be raised to spiritual life, and dead hearts quickened to a new and lively hope; for all things, and all hearts are in his hand, who is the resurrection and the life: John xi. 25, "The hour is coming, says Christ, and now is," [and, O! may it be now at this occasion!] "when the dead



shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." O! may the spirit of life that is in Christ's hand, enter among these dead and dry bones, that they may live.

(6.) We may be sure that ministers can do nothing to communicate saving light to darkened minds, without power from Christ; for they are called stars in his right hand; and they can give no light if he shut his hand: and while they, in particular, are said to be in his hand, it says, that their gifts, and parts, and ministry, and success; their labour, so long as here or elsewhere, is all at the special disposal of the Lord Jesus.

(7.) We may be sure that nothing can fall out without his ordering and over-ruling providence; for, all things, and all the reins of government, are in his hand. This may be silencing amidst all the troubles that the church of God, and all the trials that the children of God, are trysted with; "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it, Psalm xxxix. 9. Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" I have done it, says the Lord: all the evil of afflictions are of his ordering: Who laid such a man on a sick bed? Who made such a man a widower, and his children motherless? Who made such a woman a widow, and her children fatherless? Who was it that made such a man weak and sickly, or smote such an one with the gout, or gravel, or flux?" "I have done it," says the Lord. As to the evil of sin, you must answer for it; but as to the evil of affliction, I will answer for it; that it is I that have done it: wherefore, "Be still and know that I am God."

(8.) We may be sure hence, that Christ is God, otherwise he were not capable of this honour to have all things given into his hand. What shall we think of those that would dishonour Christ, by withholding all things from him, and denying his supreme Deity, making him incapable of receiving all things, or managing all things? How contrary to God the Father are Arian blasphemers? The Father gives all things to him, and they would take all things from him, that the Father gave him; yea, and the things that the Father never gave him; his divine nature and essence is a thing the Father never gave him; for, he is essentially one and the same God with the Father: but, by divesting him of this, they would take away all from him, and leave him nothing but a name.

(9.) We may be sure, that the time is coming wherein Christ will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, Mat. xiii. 41.

For, all things are under his hand, and under his feet : and he is Head over all things to the church. Many things are amiss in the church of God ; it is robbed and spoiled, in many respects ; but he that hath all things in his hand rules, and over-rules : let our eyes be towards him for better days ; and though our eyes should be shut before we see them, may we live and die in the faith of this, that the Lord will appear in his glory, to build up Zion ; and that at last the church militant shall be triumphant.

(10.) We may be sure, that Christ is a pearl of great price, and that he is the money that answers all things ; because all things are given into his hand ; and we should count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. There is that in Christ that will answer all our needs, all our wants, all our necessities, all our desires, all our hopes.

(11.) We may be sure that all things shall be fulfilled, whatsoever he hath promised ; for, all things are in his hand. We need not doubt of his performing his promise ; for, what he hath promised to give, he hath in his hand to give, and will do it in his own time.

(12.) We may be sure, that all things, whatsoever we ask, believing, we shall receive : " And whatsoever ye shall ask, in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it, John xiv. 13, 14. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing ; verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you," John xvi. 23.

(13.) We may be sure, that preparation for a communion table is to be had only from the Lord Jesus ; for, as all things come of him, 1 Chron. xxix. 14 ; so the preparation of the heart is from the Lord. We are to look to him for a communion frame ; and what is that ? I think the best communion frame is a believing frame ; and what for a frame is that ? Really, I suppose, it is the frame that is the least known : it is a frame wherein the soul comes to be denied to all frames that it uses to rely upon, and think much of, and come to say, in effect, to this purpose, Though the Lord should deny me a lively frame, a mourning frame, a melting frame ; yea, though he should allow me nothing in my own hand, yet this shall suffice me, if I can go believing and rejoicing in this, that all my stock is in the hand of Christ. I have nothing to confide in but Christ, as the Lord my righteousness and strength : it is a frame wherein the person is sensible that he has nothing, but yet goes away leaning upon

him whom the Father loves, and to whom he hath given all things. This leads,

3dly, To the third class of inferences, from the other part of the doctrine, namely, That the Father's love to Christ, in giving all things into his hand, is a strong argument and encouragement for faith: this I have demonstrated already And if it be so, hence we may see,

1. That there is nothing to hinder our matching and marrying with the Son of God by faith; for, "All things are ready," therefore we may come to the marriage, before you come to the marriage supper, Matt. xxii. 4. "All things are ready;" for, all things are in the Bridegroom's hand: "The Father loves him, and hath given all things into his hand." The wedding garment is ready for you to put on; pardon of sin, and peace with God, and all is ready in his hand to give you. But, say you, I am not ready. Why, what want you to make you ready? Do you want faith, repentance, love, or any grace, to make you ready? Do you want such and such a humbled, and believing, and penitent heart to make you ready? And will you never come till you have these things? Why then, you will never come at all; for these things are nowhere to be had but in Christ's hand, where all things are. And therefore, in God's name, I call you, who are sensible of your want of all these good things, to come and join hands with Christ, and put your hand, as it were, in his hand, wherein all things are, and you shall not want; for, all things are ready in his hand to give you. Therefore,

2. It is no matter though sinners have nothing to bring alongst with them to Christ: though they are poor, destitute of all things; they are welcome; yea, the more poor, the more welcome to him that hath all things in his hand to give. What though you are nothing, and having nothing, and are a thousand times worse than nothing, and crying out in your heart, Oh! I have no faith, no love, no grace, no good about me, and all things wanting: is that your case? I will tell you man, woman, you are the welcomest person in all the world to come to Christ, who has all things given into his hand: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word," Isa. lxvi. 2. As for you that are rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing; and are ready to say you have many good things, you have a good heart to God, and you have good frames, and good desires, and are good Christians, and good neighbours; and do so many



good duties, and think you have so many good things ; really I fear our Lord gets little honour from you ; for, you have some money, and you will not come to take all things freely out of Christ's hand, without money, and without price. Indeed, if people go to a public change, they can get nothing without money ; but if you go to a king's palace it is an affront to the prince, if you should offer money for any thing. O ! what an affront is it to the King of kings, who has all things in his hand to give, for you to offer him money ? I am not offering that, say you ; yes, you do it, when you say, in effect, " I have so many good things about me : therefore, I hope, he will give me more ; I am none of the worst of folks, I hope, and therefore, I trust he will save me." You are not yet for salvation by free grace, according to the new covenant ; no : you are standing upon the rotten covenant of works. If God have mercy on you, he will bring you to nothing, that he may bring you to Christ for all things.

3. Hence see the nature of faith, and a mark and evidence of its being true saving faith, or believing unto everlasting life. It is a faith that believes the Father loves the Son, and hath given all things into his hand : and rests content with such a Christ as this : " Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." Examine your faith on this : Have you a faith that believes the Father's love to the Son, and giving all things into his hand, so as you are well content that all your stock of righteousness and strength is in Christ's hand ? This is a mark that will distinguish the believer from the closest hypocrite. It is the soundest faith that can rejoice in this that all things are in Christ's hand. Hypocrites may have something *from* Christ, but they have nothing *in* him : they cannot make this their boast, that they have all things in Christ : but let hypocrites boast of their common gifts, common graces, common attainments, or whatever they may have from Christ ; yet these only have most from him who are content ; and glad at their hearts, that their all is in him ; and that their stock is in his hand. Hence believers are said to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might : strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Hypocrites may be, like the ivy, growing up the tree very close, and receiving sap therefrom : and yet it grows upon its own root. They may grow up in a profession, and receive the sap of common influences from Christ, and yet they grow upon the root of the old covenant, were never rooted in Christ : they have only some things from him, but nothing in

him. But the believer is rooted in Christ, and has his all from him, into whose hand the Father hath given all things. Hence the Spirit of Christ may be upon a hypocrite, in respect of common operations ; but the Spirit of Christ is in the believer, in respect of special inhabitation. The hypocrite is like a pool of water, maintained only from without, by the clouds ; but the believer is like a well of water, springing up to everlasting life ; for, he hath not only many things from Christ, but he hath all things in him, and lives upon him for all things.

4. And lastly, We may hence see the duty of all sinners, as well as saints, as long as they have sin and want about them, namely, to come to Christ for all things ; because the Father loves him, and hath given all things into his hand. O what a full-handed Saviour is here ! and such a full and solid foundation for faith, that you can have no objection against coming to Christ, but what the text will answer. Christ hath all offices for saving sinners ; the Father that gave him all things, hath anointed him to all saving offices. If you be ignorant ; he is a Prophet, to reveal the will of God to you ; if you be guilty ; he is a Priest, to reconcile God and you, and make peace by the blood of the cross ; if you be a bond slave to sin and Satan ; he is a King, to ransom you from the power of these enemies. He to whom the Father hath given all things, to him he hath given all offices suiting your various cases ; and, therefore, be your case what it will, there is no ground to stay at a distance from him. As he hath given him all offices, so he hath given him all relations suitable to our need ; therefore in scripture he is set forth in manifold relations wherein he stands to sinners in the visible church, namely, as a Head, a Husband, a Bridegroom, a Physician, an Advocate ; therefore, whatever relation he claims to himself, claim you to be the party related to him, saying, " If he be a Head, I will be a member ; if he be a Husband, I will be a wife ; if he be a Bridegroom, I will be the bride ; if he be a Physician, I will be the patient ; if he be an Advocate, I will be the client." Yea, he is given to be all things that we need, and all things are given into his hand. Nothing, therefore, in the world should hinder your coming to Christ, and believing in him ? Are you objecting against believing in him ? No doubt you are ; and yet I will tell you, I know of no objection you have, but what this doctrine will be an argument and a reason for faith, instead of being a reason against it.

You object that you are a most prodigious guilty sinner ; Why that is a reason for your coming to him, because the pardon of all sin is in his hand ; he had power on earth to forgive sin : and hath he not power in heaven ? Are you a filthy sinner ? Why, that is a reason for looking to him ; because the washing away of all filthiness is in his hand ; and therefore he says, " If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Are you over-run with maladies, plagues, and diseases ; such as, deadness, darkness, hardness of heart, and enmity ? Well, that is a reason why you should come to him ; for the healing of all diseases is in his hand ; his name is, " The Lord, the healer." Are you a bond slave to the devil, and a captive to sin ? Why, that is a reason for your coming to him ; for the loosing of all bonds is in his hand : and, " If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." Are you under the power of lusts and corruptions ? That is a reason for your coming to him ; for, the subduing of all corruptions is in his hand : " All power in heaven and earth is given to him. Are you burdened, and under heavy loads ? That is a reason why you should come to him ; for, the bearing of all burdens is in his hand ; " Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Cast your burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee." Are you under heavy crosses ? That is a good reason for your coming to him ; for, the sanctifying of all crosses is in his hand ; " By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away sin. In their affliction they will seek me early." Are you pressed with innumerable objections, that you think no minister in the world can answer ? Why, that is a reason for your coming to Christ ; for, the answering of all objections is in his hand : " I have put my Spirit upon him," says the Father, " and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Are you oppressed with fears ? Behold the dispelling of all fears is in his hand ; and he can force them away with a word, saying, " Fear not, only believe." Are you bewildered in the mist of darkness and ignorance, not knowing what way to take ? That is a reason for believing in him, who is given to be a light to lighten the Gentiles. " He that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God. I will lead the blind in a way that they know not, and in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Are you under the power of unbelief, un-



able to believe? Well, that is a reason why you need to believe, that he hath power to make you believe; it is given to him, as Mediator, to be the author and finisher of faith. Look to him for his drawing power. Are you under the power of obstinacy, unwilling to believe? Why, that is sad; and yet it is the reason why you should believe in him, and to believe that he is given to make you willing; "Thy people shall be willing in a day of thy power." Have you nothing at all in hand? Why, so much the better; if you can believe that all things are in Christ's hand, then should your case be as that of the apostle, "Having nothing, yet possessing all things."

"But, says the carnal heart, what doctrine is this, nothing but believe! believe that all things are in Christ's hand! what advantage is this to practical religion? This must be some strange doctrine." Well, I doubt not but it is strange to flesh, and to the legal heart that would have all things in its own hand; and cannot be persuaded to believe that this way of believing is the way to heaven: "What! must there be no doing at all, nor working?" Why, man, I must tell you, with the apostle, that, "By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified:" but if you be for right gospel-doing, acceptable to God, then know it, in God's name, I inform you, that the best believer is the best doer; for, if once you could believe that the Father hath given all things into Christ's hand, and believe it with application, that all your stock of righteousness and strength is in Christ, then you should be able to do all things, through Christ strengthening you, Phil. iv. 13. It is strange and yet it is as true as it is strange, they that are for the way of doing, they can do nothing; whereas they that are for the way of believing they can do all things; for "All things are possible to him that believeth;" because, when he is weak, then he is strong, 2 Cor. xii. 10; weak in himself, but strong in the Lord; no sufficiency to think a good thought, but his sufficiency is of God, whose strength is made perfect in weakness. Gladly, therefore, doth he glory in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him. Happy therefore is that soul, which, in the sense of the want of all things, can believe and be joyfully content in this, that the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that thus believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

May he, who hath all things in his hand, open his hand and

give the Spirit of faith, that so faith may come by hearing of the glorious object of faith.<sup>1</sup>

## ACTION - SERMON.

“The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.”—

JOHN iii. 35.

[The Second Sermon on this text.]

IT is in the holy and over-ruling providence of him, in whose hand all things and all hearts are, that I have been inclined to pursue this subject, on this solemn occasion. I have not found my mind determined to enter on any other theme; and, I suppose, no subject can be more suitable to the work of the day; for, we cannot commemorate the boundless love of Christ to us, in dying for our sins; nor can we remember it more effectually than by remembering the Father's bountiful love to him, for his so doing; and that evidenced by his giving all things into his hand.

Nothing, in the world, will sweeten the remembrance of Christ's love to us, so much as the believing remembrance of the Father's love to him; even as nothing can provoke us more to put honour upon Christ, than to see how much honour the Father puts upon him; and for this end, “That all men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” Why, what honour has the Father put upon him? It is even the greatest honour; and that wherein our greatest happiness lies: “He hath given all things into his hand.”

As this is laid down here for a foundation of faith, if you compare it with ver. 36, and with Matt. xi. 27, 28; so here we have a full feast, and plentiful provision for our faith to feed upon this day, and all in the best hand; “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.”

The doctrinal observation we deduced from these words was as follows, namely—

**OBSERV.** “That the Father's love to the Son, evidenced by his giving all things into his hand, is a strong argument and encouragement for faith to believe in him.”

(1) Here ends the first Sermon on this text, preached at Kinglassy. What follows was delivered immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Dunfermline, June 27, 1731.

The method laid down, for prosecuting this subject, was the following, viz. :—

- I. I would speak a little of the Father's love to the Son.
- II. Speak of this evidence of the Father's love; and that, 1. Shew some of these things the Father gives to the Son. 2. Notice the import of the expression, "He gave all things into his hand." 3. How this evidences the Father's love to him. 4. Why he hath thus manifested his love to him.
- III. How this love of the Father, thus evidenced, in giving all things into his hand, is a ground of Faith.
- IV. Make some Application of the whole.

We have already discussed the doctrinal part of this subject, and likewise made some improvement thereof: what I now intend farther, upon this subject, is by way of Exhortation. And the exhortation I would offer this day, from this doctrine, is, That all that hear me would come to this full and sufficient Saviour, believing that the Father hath furnished him with all things necessary for your everlasting salvation; for, he that thus believeth on the Son hath everlasting life in him. That which is the great matter and ground of faith, is also the great motive and argument for it, namely, that the Father hath, in love to him, and to sinners in him and through him, given all things into his hand.

That I may, therefore, pursue and enforce this exhortation to believe in Christ, upon this ground, I shall, as the Lord may enable, observe the following method of discourse:—

First, That our faith may be fixed in this truth, I shall offer some demonstrations of it; and evidence that all things are given into the hand of Christ, the Father's beloved.

Secondly, That faith may be cleared on this head, I shall notice a little the beauty of this disposal of infinite wisdom, in giving all things into Christ's hand.

Thirdly, That our faith may be enlarged and widened in the view thereof, I shall speak a little of the extent of the matter, the treasure, that Christ hath in him, while it is said that all things are given into his hand.

Fourthly, That faith may be enlightened and assisted further herein, I shall consider the manner how all things are in the hand of Christ.



Fifthly, that faith may be quickened and excited, I shall offer some motives and considerations, arising from, and accompanying this truth, that all things are given into Christ's hand.

Sixthly, That our faith may be regulated and squared, according to the gospel rule, I shall close with a few directions, as the Lord may enable.

And, O sirs, since faith comes by hearing of the object of faith, by hearing what Christ, the object of faith is, and what he hath, let your eye be towards him, and your ear be open to hear what is said of him; that, in hearing, you may believe, without seeking to draw faith out of your own heart and bowels, whence you will never find it. If there be any subject in the world, the hearing whereof tends, through grace, to work saving faith, it is this, that faith, and all grace, all good, all fulness, all things, are in Christ's hand.

First, The first thing I have proposed, that faith may be fixed, and settled, and assured of this truth, is to offer some demonstrations thereof. And, O that it may be in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power.

I shall only premise, that when we say, All things are in the hand of Christ, we mean not only generally, all things in the kingdom of providence; because his kingdom rules over all; and, "He is the Head of all things unto the church," Eph. i. 22, but also, particularly, all things in the kingdom of grace, of which he says, "My kingdom is not of this world," John xviii. 46. But blessed be God, he hath not said, his spiritual kingdom is not *in* this world; but it is not *of* this world: he hath his spiritual invisible kingdom in the hearts of his people in this world; who, though they are in it, yet they are not of it, but chosen out of the world; yet, sometimes this kingdom of his is visible, in the remarkable tokens of his spiritual presence in his ordinances. And, O for many such tokens this day! But now, that all things are in Christ's hand, will be evident from the following demonstrations:—

1. Demonstration of it is this, "If they that inherit Christ, inherit all things; then all things are in his hand; but so it is, they that inherit him, inherit all things, 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come: all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." This golden chain, together with all things present, and all things to come, is linked to the believer, because he is united unto Christ. The believer hath

an interest in Christ ; by an interest in Christ, he hath an interest in God ; and by an interest in God, he hath an interest in all things. As Solomon says, "Money answers all things ; because all things that are vendible may be procured by it ; so Christ answers all things to the believer. He is meat and drink to them ; "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." He is gold and silver to them : "The merchandize of wisdom is better than silver ; and the gain thereof than pure gold." Come, buy of me gold tried in the fire." He is raiment to them when naked ; and they put on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is health to them when diseased : "I am the Lord that healeth thee." He is all things to them ; "He that overcometh shall inherit all things," Rev. xxi. 7. Why ? It is added, "I will be his God."

2. Demonstration of this truth is, "If all things, without Christ, be but empty nothing, then all things only are in Christ's hand ; but so it is, all things are nothing without Christ : Vanity of vanity, says the preacher, all is vanity," Eccl. i. 2. All the riches, pleasures, profits, and preferments of the world are but emptiness ; your wisdom, your parts, your children, your lands, your revenues, without Christ, can amount to nothing ; they are but like cyphers without a figure. It is said of believers, 2 Cor. vi. 10. Having nothing, they possess all things ; because, though they had nothing in the world, yet, having Christ, they have all things ; and on the other hand, it may be truly said of the wicked and unbelieving, that, having all things, they possess nothing ; because, though they had all things in the world at their will, yet, being without Christ, they have nothing ; all they have is but emptiness ; yea, all they have is a curse, because they have not Christ. And thus all things, without him, are not only nothing, but worse than nothing.

3. Demonstration of this truth is, "If all things in the world be but a shadow of what is in Christ, then all things are in Christ's hand substantially ; but so it is, all good things in the world are but shadows of what is in Christ." Outward riches are but a shadow of the unsearchable riches of Christ ; outward life is but a shadow of him who is the way, the truth, and the life ; outward liberty is but a shadow of that freedom that is to be had in Christ ; "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed," John viii. 36 ; importing that no freedom is freedom indeed, and in truth, but this ; outward rest is but a shadow of the rest that is to be had in him ; "Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The sun in the firmament is but a shadow of the Sun of righteous-

ness, and of his glory ; roses and lilies are but shadows of his beauty, who is the rose of Sharon, and lily of the valley ; rivers and fountains are but shadows of his fulness, who is the fountain of living waters ; not a fountain closed, but a fountain opened to us : plants and trees are but a shadow of the verdure of him who is the plant of renown, the tree of life. All things that have any excellency in them are but shadows of him in whom all excellencies do concentrate. All the stars of creature-excellencies are but shadows of him who is the bright and morning Star.

4. Demonstration is, "If the knowledge of all things be worth nothing, in respect of the knowledge of Christ ; then all things are only in his hand ; but so it is, that all things are but loss and dung in respect of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Phil. iii. 8." The great apostle desired to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified ; yea, this is life eternal to know him, and God in him, John xvii. 3. The knowledge of Christ is the most certain, the most profitable, and the most comfortable knowledge. It is the most certain knowledge ; we know other things only by their shape and species ; but we know Christ by the Spirit ; we know other things by the testimony of men ; but we know Christ by the testimony of the Spirit ; now, as the testimony of the Spirit is more certain than the testimony of man ; so the knowledge of Christ is the most certain knowledge. It is the most profitable ; it is a knowledge that gives us the possession of the things we know ; by the knowledge of Christ we are possessed of Christ ; by our knowledge of his fulness, we are possessed of his fulness ; "By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many." If it be life eternal to know him, surely it is most profitable. It is the most comfortable ; all our want of comfort and satisfaction flows from our want of the knowledge of Christ ; and all our true comfort arises from the knowledge and view of him. John wept, because he thought none was able to open the seals of the book of God's decrees, concerning man's redemption ; but, upon the discovery of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the weeping was stilled ; he wept no more, Rev. v. 4, 5.

5. Demonstration, or scriptural argument is, "If Christ can supply all wants ; then all things must be in his hand ; but so it is, he can supply all wants which we labour under, Phil. iv. 19. My God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Whatever you labour under, there is that in Christ which can supply and support. Do you labour under desertion ?



"Then," he says, "I will never leave nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. Do you labour under corruption and bondage to sin? It is he that says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you," Rom. vi. 14. Do you labour under temptation? It is he who, as the God of peace, will tread down Satan under your feet, Rom. xvi. 20, and says, "My grace shall be sufficient for you." Do you labour under weakness? It is he who says, "My strength shall be perfected in thy weakness," 2 Cor. xii. 9. Do you labour under affliction, inward or outward? "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Do you labour under fears of public calamities upon the land? It is said of him, "This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land." Do you labour under the fears of death? It is he who says, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."

6. Demonstration is, "If Christ can satisfy all the desires, suit all the conditions, and answer all the objections of sinners, then he must have all things; but so it is, he can satisfy all desires of sinners; for he is the Desire of all nations, and everything desirable is in him; '*He is altogether lovely*' (or ALL DESIRES, as the word imports), Song v. 16, made up of desirable things." Is worth desirable? He is the treasure hid in the field. Is wisdom desirable? "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom hath builded her house," Prov. ix. 1; it is in the plural number, *wisdoms*. Christ is a compound of wisdom. He can suit all conditions of poor sinners; there is no condition you can be in, but he hath a promise suited to it; so that there is in Christ what suits all cases; for the promises are nothing else but the veins where the blood and fulness of Christ doth run. Are you wandering? Christ says, *I am the way*. Are you in darkness? Christ says, *I am the light of the world*. Are you in deadness? Christ says, *I am the resurrection and the life*. Are you guilty? Christ says, he is the Lord our righteousness. Are you polluted? Christ says, he is the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Are you dejected? Christ says, He will send the Comforter. Do you need protection? Christ affirms that he is the Rock of Ages, in whom is everlasting strength. Do you need direction? Christ is the wonderful Counsellor, and he says, *I will lead the blind by a way they know not*. As Christ can satisfy all desires and suit all conditions, so he can answer all objections. If any of you say, "Alas! I am a poor lost sinner," then Christ says, "I came to seek and to save that which

is lost," Luke xix. 10. "Oh!" says another, "I am unrighteous, and I am a great sinner." Well, Christ says, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Math. ix. 13. "Oh," says a third, "but I cannot repent." Well, it is answered, "Him hath God exalted to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins," Acts v. 31, "Alas!" cries another, "but I cannot turn from sin." It is answered, Christ is sent to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities, Acts iii. 26. It is his work to turn away transgression from Jacob; to turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. "Ah! but I have no might or ability to come unto Christ." It is answered, "He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might he createth strength," Isa. xl. 29, 30, 31. He is the Author of faith, Heb. xii. 2. "Oh! but I have sinned to the uttermost." Why, then, he tells you he is able to save to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25. "Alas! I am a backslider, and bent to backsliding." To this it is answered, "I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely," Hos. xiv. 4. "Oh! but though I should come to him, I cannot follow him; his sheep follow him." Well, what says he to this? Even that "He will carry the lambs in his arms, and gently lead those that are with young," Isa. xl. 11. Whatever the objection is, he can answer it; whatever the case is, he can remede it; whatever the desire is, he can satisfy it: why then, all things must be in his hand; and no wonder, for all the treasures of divine plenitude and fulness are in his hand. This may suffice to demonstrate the truth hereof.

Secondly, The next thing proposed was, in order to clear our faith in this matter, to notice the beauty of this disposure of infinite wisdom, in giving all things into Christ's hand. And,

1. In this contrivance infinite wisdom hath consulted the Father's right and property, and manifested that he is the giver of all things, and the possessor of all things; insomuch that, when he gives all things, he cannot lose thereby the possession of any thing he gives; for, the Father's giving all things into Christ's hand doth not imply that he alienates his own right. It is true, when we give a thing to another, we lose a right to it; but it is not so with God; for when he gives all things to Christ, and when he gives Christ, and all things in him to us, he still keeps his right to all that he gives; "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. Thus, what the Father gives into Christ's hand, remains still in the Father's hand; "And I give

unto them eternal life, and none shall 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," John x. 28.

2. In this contrivance infinite wisdom hath consulted the Son's right and title. This donative right that he hath, as Mediator, as it is well adapted to him, who, as God, hath the same essential right and title to all things with the Father and the Holy Ghost. For, as to his eternal Godhead, he is the everlasting Father, Isa. ix. 6, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting, Micah v. 2. "By whom are all things, and we by him," 1 Cor. viii. 6. And, as Mediator, his donative right is attended with an acquisitive right, by his purchase, by which he hath merited and obtained a name above every name, and a being head over all things to the church, Phil. ii. 9, Eph. v. 23. A bellical right, by conquest, making the people to fall under him, Psalm cx. 4; making them willing in a day of his power, Psalm cx. 3.; and overcoming those that make war with him, Rev. xvii. 14. He is able to subdue all things to himself," Heb. ii. 8. An hereditary right, being the heir of all things, Heb. i. 2, and being the first-born, higher than the kings of the earth, Psalm lxxxix. 27; the first born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence, Col. i. 18.

3. In this contrivance, infinite wisdom hath consulted the security of the stock and treasure, with which Christ is intrusted; and taken the best method for securing all things in his hand. We will find it is done with a special solemnity: It is done by solemn election, he being chosen to this trust; "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isaiah xlii. 1. It is done by solemn transaction between the Father and him, when the counsel of peace was between them both; "I have made a covenant with my chosen," Psalm lxxxix. 3. It was done by a solemn call, a formal and legal call; "I the Lord have called thee, and given thee for a covenant of the people, a light to the Gentiles," Isa. xlii. 6; and so to be all things to his people. It was done by a solemn commission, under the broad seal of heaven, whereby he is authorised to be all things that sinners need; "Him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 2. All things are given to him with the solemnity of a promise; such as, Psalm lxxii. 8-11, "His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." To the same purpose, Psalm lxxxix. 24, 25, "But my



faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers." Yea, all things are given into his hand with the solemnity of an oath, Psalm lxxxix. 34, 35, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the word that hath gone out of my mouth; once have I sworn by my holiness, I will not lie unto David." Psalm cx. 4-7, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck," &c.; not only so, but a King, for ever, upon a throne, ruling over all things; "The Lord, at thy right hand, shall strike through kings in his wrath; he shall judge among the heathen; he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the head over many countries." This vast treasure, then, is well secured.

4. In this contrivance, infinite wisdom hath consulted the fitness of the great Trustee, to whom all things are granted. O what wisdom is in this, that he who is, so to speak, the centre of the glorious Trinity, I mean, the middle person, should be the centre of all things: Thus he hath, as it were, consulted the convenience of all things. How fit is it that all things should move towards their centre, and meet there! He is the central place, not only the middle person of the glorious Trinity, but also the Mediator between God and man, that all things between God and man, they might have all things common between them, for his own glory and their good. Read concerning this, Eph. 1. 10, "That he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him." All things good and bad may be said to be given into his hand; all evil things, such as, the devil, the world, and sin, and death, that they may be ruled and overruled; and all good things, that they may be managed and secured. All our enemies are put in his hand, that they may be destroyed; and all our blessings put in his hand, that they may be preserved. None but Christ was capable of such a trust; no mere creature, among men or angels, was capable to bear this glory; "It is he that builds the temple of the Lord, and bears the glory," Zech. vi. 13. None but he was capable to be the disposer of all wants and dispenser of all blessings: therefore he is made the general receiver of all things.

5. In this contrivance, infinite wisdom hath consulted the pleasure of all parties, even the pleasure of all the persons of the glorious Trinity; "It pleased the Father that in him should all

fulness dwell," Col. i. 19, where you may notice that the word FATHER is not in the original; and, therefore, this work of reposing all things, all fullness in Christ, may be looked upon not only as the work of the Father, but the work of the whole glorious Trinity. It pleased Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that in Christ should all fulness dwell; that into his hand should all things be given; the Father proposed, the Son accepted, and the Holy Ghost consented, that in Christ, as Mediator, should all fulness dwell; and this was done with rapturous pleasure. It pleased the Father to propose it; for he says, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty." It pleased the Son to accept, for he says, *Lo! I come!* It pleased the Holy Ghost to consent, for he rested on Christ, and furnished him for his work; "The Spirit of the Lord God was upon me, for he hath anointed me," Isa. lxi. 1. This ravishing pleasure of the glorious Trinity is not only plainly imported in the words of our text, where it is the Father's love to the Son, as our Saviour and Surety, is made the spring of his giving all things into his hand; but you have it plainly expressed, Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth." And Prov. viii. 30, "Then," says Christ, namely, from all eternity, "I was by him, as one brought up with him; I was daily his delight." Now in what respect was he the Father's delight? Even in respect of his rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights being with the sons of men. The Father delighted in me, because I delighted in the sons of men, in the very prospect of saving and redeeming them by my blood. He delighted to see him delighting in this mediatorial service, for which all things were given into his hand, with infinite pleasure. And, as God consults his own pleasure herein, so the pleasure of all poor sinners, for whose sake and benefit all things were given unto him; and hence, whenever the glory of this method of salvation, through Christ, is open to the heart of any poor sinners, they are not only pleased and satisfied, but ravished and filled with sweet wonder, and strong consolation, Heb. vi. 18; and rejoice with joy unspeakable, 1 Pet. i. 8. The soul is, by a glorious and ravishing power, carried out to rest in this device, as every way worthy of God, and every way suitable and satisfying to their case.

6. In this contrivance, infinite wisdom hath consulted the credit and honour of all concerned. He hath herein consulted the credit and honour of his own majesty and greatness, in giving all things

into the hand of Christ, the second Adam, and not transacted any more with man, in his own person, now when turned rebel to his crown and dignity; but transacted immediately with Christ, a person of equal dignity with himself, giving all things to him, and through him to us. Thus we are taught to keep at a due distance from this infinitely glorious Sovereign, and to come and receive blessings, not immediately out of his hand, but by the hand of Christ, the Mediator; "I am the way, no man cometh to the Father but by me." He hath consulted the credit of his name, and of all his glorious excellencies; the credit of his broken law, how it might not only be fulfilled, but magnified to the utmost; the credit of his offended justice, how it might not only be satisfied, but glorified to the highest. Why infinite wisdom knew that there was nothing that the violated law, or the injured attributes of God, could demand for the reparation of their honour, but what the sinner's Surety, having all things given to him, could answer with ease, and to infinite satisfaction. The creditor well knew that the Surety was not only creditable, but responsible, abundantly able to pay all the debt; mighty to save, mighty to satisfy, mighty to give all the infinite satisfaction demanded; insomuch, that mercy vents to sinners, without any prejudice to justice; and the attributes of God, seemingly inconsistent one with another, are reconciled in Christ, "Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." And God pardons and satisfies so as not only to be merciful, but even just, in justifying the ungodly. He hath consulted the credit of his Son Christ Jesus, who thus is honoured with a name above every name that can be named; all things being given into his hand, not only to furnish him with his mediatorial service, but also to reward him for it, Phil. viii. 9. He is honoured with a goodly train, a throng court of supplicants, all things being given unto him, that the gathering of the people might be to him for supply, and that the revenue of praise might be given to him, through all eternity. Yea, he hath consulted the credit as well as the profit of all the redeemed, by giving all things into the hand of Christ. God never honoured the church, nor advanced them to greater dignity, than by giving them an universal plentitude, as head of the body the church; and every believer may say, "My Head, my Husband, my Lord, hath all things in his hand." 'This is the honour of all the saints, they have all things in Christ; and he is made of God unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;



yea, and all things, that he that glorieth may glory in him. So much for a hint at the beauty of this disposure.

Thirdly, The next thing proposed was, in order to enlarge and widen our faith in this matter, to speak of the Extent of this store and treasure that Christ hath ; the Father having given all things into his hand. Why then, besides what we said on the doctrinal part, consider,

1. If all things are in his hand, then all the attributes of God are in him. There is nothing that the Father hath, excepting his personality, but the Son hath, as Mediator ; " All things that the Father hath are mine," John xvi. 15. All things that God hath, they belong to the Mediator also, the God-man. Here then is an ocean where you and I may dive for ever, and never get to the bottom. Having all things, he hath all the wisdom of God, Col. ii. 3, " In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Poor foolish sinner, who hath no wisdom, knowledge, nor understanding, here is a treasure for you ; " Christ, the wisdom of God, made of God unto you wisdom," 1 Cor. i. 30. Having all things, he hath all the power of God ; " We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God," 1 Cor. i. 24. Poor feeble soul, who can do nothing, here is a good bargain for you to lay hold upon ; it is he that can work in you, both to will and do ; and make his people willing in a day of his power. You are not called to come to Christ, but by the power of Christ, which is the power of God. You are to receive him that can give you power to receive him ; and, as one absolutely weak, to take hold of his strength, and look to his power, to whom is given all power in heaven and in earth. Having all things, he hath all the holiness of God ; he is said to be made of God unto us sanctification ; and surely here is an immense fountain of sanctity, the infinite holiness of God. O poor, vile polluted sinner, who hath lost the image of God, by the fall of the first Adam, and the deficiency of his holiness, here is a better head and husband for you, in whom is all the fulness of the divine holiness, that you may be complete in him. Having all things, he hath all the justice of God, and all the righteousness of God in him, and justice satisfied in him, by his mediatorial righteousness ; for, " The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake ;" yea, he that is the righteousness of God, is made unto us righteousness, 1 Cor. i. 30,

and, O wonderful word ! “ He was made *sin* for us, that we might be made the *righteousness* of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21. O guilty, guilty sinner ! here is a joyful sound in your ears, “ He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” You may, in Christ, be more righteous in God’s sight than ever you was guilty in his sight ; yea, you may be the very righteousness of God in him. You may not only be justified, but find God to be just in justifying you, because the justice of God is in him ; and it is satisfied in him, magnified in him, glorified in him. Having all things, he hath all the mercy of God in his hand ; all the infinite love, pity, and compassion of God is in his hand, and in his heart. 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, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” And Jude, ver. 21, “ Keep yourselves in the love of God ;” how ? “ Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.” O poor miserable sinner ! would you wish to find mercy in the moment of death, and mercy at the great day ? Know that there is no mercy to be expected out of God’s hand, unless you look to his mercy as in the hand of Christ ; 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 embrace each other. Having all things, he hath all the faithfulness and truth of God, “ My mercy and my faithfulness shall be with him,” Psalm lxxxix. 24. I have observed between thirty and forty places of scripture, where mercy and truth, mercy and faithfulness, are joined together ; and here you see they are joined together in Christ. In him the mercy and love of God vents to the honour of divine truth, pledged even in all the threatenings of the law, as well as divine truth, pledged in all the promises of the gospel ; because in him all the threatenings and curses of the law have spent their force ; “ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,” Gal. iii. 13. And, “ In him are all the promises, Yea and Amen to the glory of God,” 2 Cor. i. 20. He is the way and the truth ; truth itself, the God of truth, and the truth of God. O perfidious, faithless, unfaithful, and treacherous sinner ! who hath many times lied to the God of truth ; wouldst thou have thy falsehood all done away, and swallowed up in the truth and veracity of God, and your salvation secured not-

withstanding of your falsehood, fickleness, and instability? Here is a pillar on which you may stand firm and fixed, amidst all changes, whether in your outward lot or inward frame; for, "All flesh is grass; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." The truth of God standeth unalterably the same. Again, having all things, he hath all the authority of God in his hand; "My name is in him," *Exod. xxiii. 21.* O! poor lost sinner, when Christ, in this gospel, comes to seek and save that which was lost, say not, by what authority doth he these things? He is the Sent and Sealed of God, and he hath all the authority that God can give him. And if you ask by what authority we, poor sinful mortal worms like yourselves, do offer him and all his store to you? Indeed, we would have no authority if he had not said, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature; and lo, I am with you always unto the end of the world. In a word, having all things, he hath all the fulness of God in his hand; "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," *Col. i. 19.* "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Not only all the attributes of God, but all the fulness of all the divine attributes. Not only the wisdom of God, but all the fulness of divine wisdom; not only the power of God, but all the fulness of divine power; not only the holiness of God, but all the fulness of divine holiness; not only the justice and righteousness of God, but all the fulness of divine righteousness; not only the mercy of God, but all the fulness of divine mercy; not only the truth and faithfulness of God, but all the fulness of divine faithfulness; not only the authority of God, but all the fulness of divine authority; not only is God in him, but all the fulness of the Godhead. O! poor empty sinner! here is unsearchable riches, a bottomless well of everlasting salvation for you.

2. If all things are in his hand, then all the reins of providence are in his hand; this must follow upon what hath been said, having all the perfections of God, surely his kingdom ruleth over all. What a vast field is here! I shall only touch at some of the borders thereof. For all things in heaven, earth, and hell, are under his government as Mediator, *Phil. ii. 10, Eph. i. 22.* All the reins of common providence, in the world, and special providence, in the church, and among the children of God, are wholly in his hand. Why then, having all things, he hath all kingdoms and churches in his hand; "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice," *Prov. viii. 15.* When he will, he cuts off the spirit of princes, and is ter-



rible to the kings of the earth, Psal. lxxv. 6, 7, "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but God is the judge, he putteth down one and raiseth up another." It is by him that the churches are planted and watered; and again displanted and turned into a barren wilderness when he pleases, Isa. xli. 18, Psalm lvii. 34. Whatever disorders and confusions be in the church of God, it is best for us to keep about the hand of Christ, who hath the overruling of all things to his Father's glory, and his people's good. Having all things, he hath all the stars of heaven in his hand; not only the sun, moon, and stars of these visible heavens; for, he could make the stars in their courses fight against Sisera; but also, all the stars in the church's firmament, Rev. i. 16, and he orders them to shine so long in his place, and so long in the other, as he pleases. Having all things, he hath all the winds of heaven in his hand. When the church and children of God pray, Song iv. 16, "Awake, O north wind; come, thou south," &c. Whence do they expect these winds of the Spirit's influences? Even from him who hath said of the blessed Comforter, "I will send him unto you," John xvi. 7. It is he that prophecies unto the winds," Ezek. xxxvii. 9. "Thus saith the Lord, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." If there be little of this quickening wind blowing about your hearts, yet he can order the winds to arise when he pleases; for all the influences of the Spirit are in his hand, as well as the natural winds, Psalm cxxxv. 7. Having all things, he hath all the waters of the sea, and all the dust of the earth, in his hand; "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span? and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure?" Isa. xl. 12. Perhaps you have friends buried in the sea, or buried in the earth; whether the earth or sea be their graves, are they friends in Christ? Rejoice in the faith of their happy resurrection; "He will raise them up at the last day." It is easy with him to command the earth and the sea to give up their dead; for he hath every drop of water, and every pile of dust within the view of his omniscient eye, and within the hollow of his omnipotent hand. Having all things, he hath all the mountains and hills in his hand, as in the forecited, Isa. xl. 12. He is said to weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. The mountains and hills are in his hand, both in a literal and metaphorical sense; they are in his hand and under his feet, so that it is easy with him to cast

them out of the way with his hand, or tread upon them, and come skipping on the mountains, and leaping on the hills, Song ii. 8. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before our Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain," Zech. iv. 7. How doth faith remove mountains, but by the hand of Christ? Possibly you may find mountains of sin and guilt, mountains of trouble and distress, mountains of fears and objections, mountains of difficulties and discouragements in your way; but let them not fright you from coming to Christ; for he hath them all in his hand; and he can overturn the mountains as easily as he can turn his hand. Having all things, he hath all weathers in his hand, whether fair or foul, calm or stormy weather, as he pleases to order; whether prosperity or adversity, plenty or penury: In the day of prosperity be joyful in him; in the day of adversity consider that it is he also that hath appointed it; for God hath set the one against the other, Eccl. vii. 14. Having all things, he hath all times and seasons in his hand; he hath given to the stork and swallow to know their appointed times, and to observe the times of their coming," Jer. viii. 7. O sirs, how infinitely well then does he know the fit time of his own coming, and the proper season of visiting his people! "He waits to be gracious; and he is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him," Isa. xxx. 18. The time of our sojourning here, and the number of our months is in his hand. The time of his approaches to the soul, and the time of his staying, is in his sovereign hand. Again, having all things in his hand, he hath all the chains of devils and of evil spirits in his hand; they are held in his chains, and under his check and control; they cannot touch a herd of swine without his permission; and his hand is famed for casting out devils; and, perhaps, there are many such here to be cast out; but he hath no more ado but, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee to come out;" thou unclean spirit, I charge thee to come out; thou drunken spirit, I charge thee to come out; thou profane spirit, I charge thee to come out; thou atheistical unbelieving spirit, I charge thee to come out. All the chains wherewith poor prisoners of hope are held, are in his hand; and glory to God that hath anointed him to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, Isa. xli. 1. Again, having all things, he hath all the keys of hell and death in his hand; "I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death," Rev. i. 18. When death and hell thought to have detained

him prisoner, behold our mighty Samson came off with all the gates, and all the keys in this hand. Why, he had promised, saying, "O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction," Hos. xiii. 14. And having done as he said, therefore his people, even staring death in the face, may, and sometimes do, sing that triumphant song, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 55. Again, having all things, he hath all work upon his hand: having finished the work the Father gave him to do, even the work of redemption, by price; he hath yet upon his hand all the work that the redeemed have to do, even the work of redemption by power. In point of means, you are called to be much about his hand; but in point of power, you must put all in his hand; for, "Without him you can do nothing," John xv. 5. It is he who worketh in us, to will and do of his good pleasure, Phil iv. 13. It is he that works all our works in us and for us, Isa. xvi. 12, therefore we should pray, with the psalmist, Psalm cix. 21. "Do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake; and Psalm. lvii. 2. I will cry unto God, most high, unto God that performeth all things for me." But this leads me to another particular.

3. If all things are in Christ's hand, then all offices, all saving offices are in his hand. You know, the Father hath anointed him to the office of Prophet, Priest, and King. O sirs, what employment will you put in his hand? It is he, as a Prophet, that says, "They shall be all taught of God;" look to him for the promised teaching. It is he, as a Priest, that says, upon the ground of the sacrifice he hath offered, "I, even I am he that pardoneth thine iniquity, for my name's sake:" look to him for remission in his blood. It is he, as a King, that says, "I will subdue your iniquities: Sin shall not have dominion over you." O! ignorant sinner, will you find in your heart to refuse such a Prophet as Christ is? Who teaches like him? O! guilty sinner, will you refuse such a High Priest as this? O! enslaved sinner, will you refuse the help of such a King and Conqueror as this? If there be none of these offices to be dispensed with, then take hold of him in them all.

4. If all things are in his hand, then he is clothed with all relations that can contribute to the happiness of sinners. What friend or relation do you want, O sinner? Want you a father to



pity you? Behold, here you may have an everlasting Father, that is his name, Isa. ix. 6. "In him the fatherless findeth mercy." Want you a mother to be tender of you? Behold, here motherless children may have their loss made up: when father and mother leaveth you, he is one to take you up, Psalm xxviii. 10. He is one that can be a thousand times better to you than father and mother; and manifests more love than the tenderest mother that ever was; "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget you," Isa. xlix. 15. Want you a husband? O! What would you think to be married with the heir of all things? Why if the ear of faith be open, you may hear him saying, "Thy Maker is thy Husband," Isa. liv. 5, and again, Hos. ii. 19. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever." If you say, "O! how will it be consistent with the justice of God for him to marry such a black bride?" Why, he says, "I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness; I will betroth thee unto me in wisdom; I will betroth thee unto me in judgment, in loving kindness; yea, and in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord;" thou shalt know God in Christ. How can he betroth thee to himself, and yet be infinitely just, and wise, and merciful, and faithful in doing so? Because mercy and truth have met together in Christ, the glorious Bridegroom; they struck up a match together, and embraced each other, that there might be nothing to hinder the match between Christ and you. Want you a proper match then, O sinner, or a meet help, poor bankrupt, run in such deep arrears to the law and justice of God? Is not he that hath unsearchable riches a fit match for you? Poor dying creature, that will be food for worms in a little, here is a living Head for you, that can make you live for ever. O! mortal worm, here is an immortal Husband for you. Poor changeable creature, here is an unchangeable match for you: "Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Want you a lover? are you an outcast, that reckons yourself despised by all the world, insomuch that none cares for you, or loves you? Behold, an infinitely loving and lovely Jesus, offering and boding his love upon you, saying, "I will heal your backslidings; I will love you freely," Hos. iv. 5. And he is seeking your heart, your conjugal love, saying, "My son, give me thy heart." Want you a leader through the dark and difficult steps of your way? A guide, a director, and counsellor in whatsoever affair you have upon your hand wherein it is needful to be directed?

O! here is a wonderful Counsellor, who says, Isaiah xlii. 16. "I will lead the blind in a way they know not, and in paths that they have not known." Want you a shepherd to feed you, or a captain to fight your battles for you? Want you a physician, when in sickness, to heal you? Want you a refiner and purifier, when you are in the furnace, to purge away your dross? Behold he who hath all things in his hand, has all the relations that you can desire.

5. If all things be in his hand, then all graces are in his hand. This is a great part of the glory of the only begotten of the Father, that he is full of grace and truth, and, "Out of his fulness have all received, and grace for grace, John i. 14. Grace is poured into his lips," Psal. xlv. 2, and I hope he is pouring grace from his lips by his word among some of you this day. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon him, for he hath anointed him." He is anointed with the oil of gladness, anointed with the Spirit of all grace. Want you grace to believe? Behold it is in his hand, as he is the Author of faith. Want you grace to repent? Behold it is in his hand, as a Prince and Saviour exalted to give repentance. Do you want grace to pray? It is he that has the Spirit of prayer in his hand to give, Zech. xii. 10. Do you want grace to communicate? Grace to mortify sin? Grace to bear the cross? Grace to resist temptation? Grace to do and suffer? It is he that has all grace in his hand to give, and who says, "My grace shall be sufficient for you:" hence his people are called to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

6. If all things are in his hand, then all blessings are in his hand to give. He is the Lord-dispenser of temporal blessings; for, "The earth is in his hand, and the fulness thereof;" the Lord-dispenser of spiritual blessings; for, behold heaven is in his hand, and the fulness thereof: the Lord-dispenser of eternal blessings; for eternal life is in his hand. It was promised of him, that men should be blessed in him; and accordingly he is sent to bless us, Acts iii. 26, "God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." I might here enumerate many particular blessings. The blessings of illumination is in his hand; for, he is a Light to enlighten the Gentiles. The blessing of conversion is in his hand: for, he says, "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." The blessing of justification is in his hand; for, "We are justified freely by his grace." The blessing of reconciliation with God is in his hand; for, it is he

that maketh peace by the blood of his cross. The blessing of sanctification is in his hand : for, " He is made of God unto us, sanctification." The blessing of acceptance is in his hand ; for, " By him we have boldness and access, with confidence, through the faith of him." The blessing of consolation is in his hand ; for, he is the Consolation of Israel. The blessing of a happy death is in his hand ; for, " Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." The blessing of a happy resurrection is in his hand ; for, He is the resurrection and the life. The blessing of a happy sentence at the great day is in his hand ; for, All judgment is committed to him ; and it is he that will say to the wicked, " Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ;" and to the righteous, " Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." The blessing of eternal glorification is in his hand ; for, as he is the glory of the higher house, so he says, " Father, I will, that those whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory : and so shall they be ever with the Lord." Can you tell me any spiritual blessing that is not in his hand ? No : Eph. i. 3, " Who hath blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, only in Christ."

And now, after all, what think ye of him ? Have you no heart to join hand with a well-furnished Saviour, that hath all things in his hand ? If you have got no heart to such a good bargain, this is very sad ; but, because it is a day of glad tidings, I will tell you among other things, that all hearts are in his hand, and it is his prerogative to open the locked heart. It is easy with him to create a clean heart, to melt the hard heart, to fix the wandering heart, to cleanse the filthy heart, to elevate the drooping heart, to conquer the stubborn heart, to quicken the dead heart, to draw the backward heart, as I noticed on another subject ; and if any thing draw your heart to him, it will be the revelation of his grace and fulness, as having all things in his hand. Thus much may suffice for a comprehensive view of the extent of this treasure.

Fourthly, I come to the fourth thing I proposed, which was, in order to the further assisting of faith, to consider the manner how all things are in Christ's hand. I have already told you, all things are in Christ's hand naturally as he is God ; and donatively, as he is Mediator ; but, besides, there are these following ways wherein all things given him of his Father are in his hand.



1. All things are in his hand substantially ; not symbolically, as Christ is said to be in the elements of bread and wine in the sacrament ; or, as God was said to be in the temple, by the symbol of his presence. It is not the shadow of all things, but the substance, which is in his hand ; therefore it is said, Col. ii. 9, " In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ;" that is, substantially, and so in a glorious, eminent, superlative, and transcendent way. Christ is the substantial All of his people ; the substance of all the types, and sacrifices, and ceremonies under the law. They were but the shadow of good things to come, Heb. x. 1. All the good things themselves are in Christ substantially.

2. All things are in him communicatively ; his Mediatorial fulness is communicable and omnipotent. All shops are closed, but Christ's house stands open ; and on it this inscription, Whosoever will, may come and share of this treasure. Christ's fulness is communicable ; and therefore, Out of this fulness we may all receive, and grace for grace, John i. 16. We needed not preach of this store that is in Christ's hand, if it was locked up in him. Why is it, that in him, as Mediator, dwells all fulness of the Godhead bodily ? Why, but that we may be complete in him, Col. ii. 9, 10. Christ is a cabinet of rich jewels ; faith is a key to open the cabinet : we receive out of his fulness by faith. Prayer is a key, " If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God." If these keys be not in your hand, surely they are in his, who hath all things in his hand. O solicit him to cast you the key, and give you the spirit of faith and prayer.

3. All things are in his hand sufficiently ; there is bread enough and to spare, Luke xv. 17. Fulness enough for the destitute ; light enough for the dark ; life enough for the dead : there is grace enough in him, pardon enough in him, help enough in him ; bread enough and to spare. If you think there is none to spare for you, it is because you do not believe there is enough in him ; but will you disgrace our infinitely noble and glorious Lord, by supposing that there is not enough in him ? O ! He can satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry soul with good things. Nothing in this world gives satisfaction to the soul : he was a fool that said, when he had a full barn, " Soul, take thy rest, thou hast goods laid up for many years." We may as well dream of a coffer full of grace and glory, as of a soul full of corn and wine ; it is only Christ that has in him suitable and satisfying fulness for the soul, and enough to give complete, solid, permanent, and everlasting satisfaction.

4. All things are in his hand efficiently and effectively, in so much, that he can make others to share of a conformity to him, in that store that is in his hand. For example, hath he all comeliness ? Well, what says he ? "I have made thee perfect through my comeliness which I put upon thee," Ezek. xvi. 14. Hath he all righteousness ? Well, the believer is made righteous through his righteousness. Hath he all glory ? The believer is made glorious through his glory, and all glorious within ; "Beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. There is a power and efficacy in every saving discovery of the glorious treasure that is in Christ, a smiling savour in his face ; and, O happy they, that are smitten with a conformity to him : who, beholding the glory of his grace, are made gracious ; beholding the glory of his holiness, are made holy ; beholding the glory of his mercy, are made merciful.

5. All things are in his hand unchangeably ; for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. 18. He is always the same ; and his stock and treasure is invariably the same. Whatever you get out of his hand, yet still the stock and store is in his hand. Let faith draw never so many bills upon him, for this and that supply, at this time and the other time, and get never so much rent, annual rent, or daily rent, out of the stock ; yet still the stock and interest both are in his hand ; and the believer hath his all to the fore ; even when all that was in your hand is spent, yet all things remain as they were in Christ's hand ; yea, and this well of salvation springs up for ever, and that to everlasting life. O great encouragement ! the fulness of Christ, as it is in our hand, may ebb and flow ; but as it is in Christ's hand, it is unchangeably the same. The believer may be sometimes full, and sometimes empty ; sometimes up, and sometimes down ; but Christ is always the same : "I am the Lord, I change not." All believers, since the beginning of the world, have been always putting down their buckets of faith, and drawing water out of this well of salvation ; yet still it is full, and running over ; and no wonder, for his fulness is infinite ; it is the fulness of God.

6. All things are in his hand eternally, Col. i. 19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell : " it is a dwelling fulness. In him it is, and in him it dwells for ever. "In him are durable riches and righteousness ; and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." Hence also the blessings he communicates are

everlasting ; everlasting peace, everlasting pardon, everlasting consolation, everlasting life : “ He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life.” Here is a depth to dive into for ever : Christ hath an eternity of all perfection in him. An eternity of all excellency, an eternity of all blessings : here is a portion that will make you up to eternity. Here is eternal wisdom, eternal power, eternal holiness, eternal happiness. He is the true God, and eternal life. Every thing is everlasting in him ; his righteousness is everlasting righteousness ; his strength is everlasting strength ; his wisdom is everlasting wisdom. Poor dying mortal, here is an everlasting treasure. O ! come here, come here, poor mortal, that art to die in a few days ; and no matter though you give up the ghost shortly, when, instead of this short lasting life, here is everlasting life for you, as well as security from everlasting death. All things are in his hand eternally. But I shall go on,

Fifthly, To the next thing I proposed, which was, in order to the quickening and exciting of our faith, to offer some motives and considerations, arising from, and accompanying this truth, that all things are given into Christ’s hand. O let us be exhorted to come to, and close with, and believe in, this glorious One. And, for motive, consider,

1. Is it possible that we can have or desire a better pattern to follow or imitate, in trusting in Christ, than his eternal Father, who hath entrusted him with all things ? “ Behold my Servant whom I uphold !” Isaiah xlii. 1 ; or, as the word is observed to signify, “ My Servant whom I trust ;” and accordingly hath entrusted him with all things. And, Oh ! may not this shame us out of our distrust ? Thus the Father entrusted him with all the great concerns of his everlasting glory ? And may not we well trust him with all the concerns of our everlasting welfare ? O sirs, is it not safest laying our help where God has laid it ? Where the waters go, the fish will go ; God and all his fulness is gone with Christ. Is it not best going where God goes, and resting where he rests, and loving whom he loves, and trusting whom he trusts.

2. Consider, is it possible that we can have or desire a better hand for all things to be put into, than the hand of Christ, whom the Father thus loves ? All things you need to make you for ever happy, are in the hand of a God-man. That your stock may be sure to you, it is in the hand of a God ; and that it may be near to you, it is in the hand of a Man. How can it be surer to you than



in his hand, who is God as well as man ? How can it be nearer to you than in his hand, who is man as well as God ? O then, is not the stock in a friend's hand ? A great friend, a near friend ? God could not choose a better hand, both for his own interest and yours. It is more honourable for God, more profitable for you, that all things are put in the hand of Christ, the second Adam, the new covenant head, than if all things had remained in the state they were in before. The covenant of works was broken : but if you look believingly towards Christ, not only will God get more glory this way than if he should damn you for your sins, and satisfy his justice upon you to eternity ; but also more glory than if he should have rewarded you with life, for your righteousness, according to the tenor of the covenant of works, supposing it had never been broken. Why all the glory of God was designed to concentrate in Christ, as in a bright constellation ; and will you cross this design, that tends so much more to God's honour, and your profit, than if matters had stood in their old primitive posture ? See how Job was taken up with the way of grace, beyond that of works, Job ix. 15, 20, 21, " Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer ; but I would make supplication to my Judge. If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me ; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul, I would despise my life."

3. Consider, as another motive, that as it is not possible to miss everlasting life, if you look believingly to him that hath all things in his hand ; so it is not possible to escape everlasting wrath, if you believe not in him ; read the verse immediately following the text : " He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. He that believeth shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned." He that believeth cannot miss salvation ; for, it is in the hand of Christ to give to all comers ; he that believeth not cannot escape damnation : for, " How shall we escape, if we reject so great a salvation ?" so great a Saviour, who hath all things in his hand ? It is established in heaven, and it stands now upon the honour of God to save all believers in Christ, and to damn all unbelievers. Only, as God gets more honour and greater satisfaction in your salvation, through Christ, in a way of believing in him, than he can get in your damnation, if you remain in your unbelief ; therefore, though you had no regard to your salvation or

damnation, there is something here, of infinitely greater worth than your eternal life, or eternal damnation, that should move you to this glorious Jesus for all things; and that is, for the sake of the eternal honour and glory of God and Christ; for, the Father hath put honour upon the Son, by giving all things into his hand. As you cannot put more honour upon Christ, so you cannot put more honour upon his Father that crowned him with this honour, than by putting all things you have ado in his hand, and coming to him for all things you stand in need of. Christ is glorified in such: for, they are his glory; yea, his crown of glory, Isa. lxii. 3. When you come to him and make use of this treasure that the Father hath put in his hand, you join with his Father in putting a crown of glory on his head.

4. Consider, for motive to look to this Jesus, that it is not possible, O sinner, that all things are given into Christ's hand, and yet you have no concern in it, since all is given to him that he may give it out to you. Why has he received the Spirit above measure? He tells you himself, Isa. lxi. 1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me:" Why, even to preach good tidings to the meek and to proclaim liberty to the captives. His Father also tells you, Isa. xlii. 1, "I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;" that is, give life and understanding, life and salvation to the Gentiles. Why hath our Lord Jesus received gifts, even the gift of all things? See Psal. lxxviii. 18, compared with Eph. iv. 8. "He hath received gifts for men." But, say you, I am a poor rebel. Well, it is even the rebellious. So, not only are all things in Christ's hand communicatively, as I said before, but all things are given him for this very end, that they may be communicated for the benefit of sinners. When Christ says, Matt. xxviii. 10, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth," he immediately adds, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations:" As if he had said, Why have I received all power in heaven and in earth, but for this end, that I may be able to save and relieve poor sinners, and therefore, "Go ye, and teach all nations," and tell them where their help lies. Say not, then, you have no concern, O sinner; it is because the Father hath given all things into his hand, that therefore he says to us, in your behalf, "Go preach the gospel to every creature;" every sinner, though they have sinned themselves into monsters; sinned themselves into devils; yet, if they be creatures, preach the gospel to them; tell

them I have life, and salvation, and all things in my hand for them ; " Whosoever will, let him come." Put not away this grace of God from you through unbelief, saying, It cannot be for me ; yea, it is for you ; " To you is the word of this salvation sent." Let faith say, It is for me, for me, that all things were given into Christ's hand. No, says unbelief, and the devil together, it is for the elect and not for me. O sinner, let not the devil cheat you about the object of faith ; though indeed, " The election only shall obtain ;" yet the thing you are called first to believe, is not what is for you in the purpose of God, but what is for you in the promise of God, and in the offer of this gospel ; and if you take what is for you here, you are safe in spite of all the devils of hell. Therefore let your heart say, " O ! here is life and salvation, and all things in Christ's hand held out in this gospel for me ; and even so I take it as offered to me." If it were not for you, we could not preach the gospel to every one here ; but, in his great name, I preach it to every creature that hears me, that the Father hath given all things into Christ's hand for you ; and, therefore take him to you, and all things with him.

5. Consider, that Christ, having got all things put in his hand, for the behoof of sinners, it is not possible that he will keep all close in his hand, and give out nothing. No, no ; it stands upon his honour as Mediator ; it stands upon his credit as he is the church's treasurer, and the Father's trustee to give out of that treasure of grace and fulness, that is given to him, for our behalf ; he would not be faithful unto his trust if he should give out none of that treasure to poor sinners ; but, who can charge him with unfaithfulness ? What mouth, but that of cursed unbelief, will charge him thus ? When unbelief says, Oh ! he will give out nothing to me ; What is the meaning of it ? It is in effect a saying, He is not so faithful to his trust, as that I can expect he will give out anything to the like of me. Alas ! beware of blasphemy ; let faith rather step in and say, I hope he will give out of his fulness to me, because his name is *Faithful and true*. And if you can believe his truth and faithfulness pledged in the promise, as the Father's Trustee for sinners, and that with particular application to yourself, then his faithfulness is engaged unto you believer, in particular, but here is a door of faith and hope even for sinners that are yet unbelievers, that there is a glorious and sweet necessity lying upon Christ, to give out of his grace and fulness to sinners of mankind ; and why not to you ? He



must give out of his grace to make his people willing in a day of his power, and bring them to himself; "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold [namely, Gentiles as well as Jews], them I must bring; and they shall hear my voice," John x. 16. We are told, John iv. 4, "He must needs go through Samaria;" why, for what end? It was even to give out of his grace to a poor harlot, a vile sinful woman there: Even so, I hope he must needs go through Dunfermline, this day, to give out of that store the Father hath given him, for the sake of poor vile sinners here. Was there a blessed necessity for his suffering at Jerusalem? Yea, there was; Luke xxiv. 26, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Even so, there is a blessed necessity for his applying the virtue of his death and sufferings, by pouring out of his Spirit, and communicating of his grace for that end.

6. Consider, that though Christ be exalted to this honour and majesty, of having all things given into his hand, yet it is not possible that therefore he should be proud, and lordly, and disdainful, so as not to regard the case of poor sinners; for, the quite contrary is the truth, namely, because he is thus honoured, therefore he humbles himself. Some may think, "Oh! when Christ is exalted to such supreme dignity, as that all things are in his hand, surely he will reckon it below him to regard such a sinner as I am; and stoop so low as to wash such a leper as I am." Alas! sirs, think not so: for he declares the contrary; read his mind on this with wonder and admiration, John xiii. 3—8, "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself; After that he powered water into a bason, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter; and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." What was the reason, then, that Christ stooped down to wash his disciples feet? Even because he knew the Father had given all things into his hand. Was he therefore proud? No; he was therefore humble. Poor sinful men, that have nothing, are most proud; but the God-man, who hath all things, is most humble, and stoops to our infir-

mities, because he is clothed with infinite excellency. His excellency as Mediator, is the cause of his humility; and his humility prompts his excellency to be good to sinners. O wonderful, humble Saviour! There is a twofold humiliation of Christ; First, He humbled himself to come down into our nature, and shed his blood for us. Secondly, Being exalted, he humbles himself to come down into our hearts, our filthy hearts, and wash them in his blood. In the former, he humbled himself, that God might exalt him; in the latter, God exalts him that he might humble himself. He is exalted for this very end to pardon and purge guilty and polluted sinners, Acts v. 31. It is no disparagement to his exalted state, for him to stoop down and wash your feet, and wash your heart: "Him hath God exalted, a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins:" This is the way he washes, by giving pardon and repentance. For as high and honourable as he is, he thinks it his honour to give out grace. Woe is me, that he is not employed, since he thinks it his honour to wash you! It is not below him; he does not think he will be dishonoured or affronted, no: he knows that the lower he stoops, the higher will he be honoured in the hearts of his people. I appeal to all believing hearts; the lower that he condescends to you, to wash your filthy hearts, O! did not your hearts exalt him the more, and wonder at his glory? Do you think the less of him? I suppose not. I am sure you think the more, and the higher of him. O! sinner, then, do not think he is too high to look down towards you; the higher he is, the lower doth he stoop; and therefore the higher you conceive he is, the more hope you may conceive of his pity and favour towards you; and the more you see is given into his hand, the more do you expect to get out of his hand; faith has the more footing. So much for the motives.

Sixthly, The next thing proposed, in order to the regulating and squaring of our faith, according to the gospel rule, was to offer some Directions. And,

1. Be convinced that, as all things are in his hand, so faith itself is in his hand to give; for he is the author of it, Heb. xii. 2. And know, that nothing but the power of God can effectually work faith. The gospel must come, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thess. i. 5. Seek not for faith, then, out of your own bowels; for "faith cometh by hearing." Why, the gospel that you hear, is the power of God to salvation; and this power

works secretly and silently upon the heart, in hearing, when the person may be little knowing that it is the power of God that is dealing with his heart ; and yet that power is perhaps working so effectually, that, in hearing of Christ, there is a heart-beating towards him, a heart-bleeding towards him, a heart-bursting towards him, a heart-burning towards him. This power is sometimes an enlightening power, ravishing the heart with the glorious excellency of Christ, discovered in the word ; and with this a softening power, so as the heart is melted like water, before the Lord, that was a hard rock before ; and, perhaps with this a drawing power, so as the heart is panting after the Lord ; and yet, perhaps, the person doth not know that the power of God is present ; but, however, the gospel is the power of God ; and faith comes by hearing of it, when it comes not in word only, but in power. Faith comes not by working, it comes not by doing, it comes not by forcing yourself up to the act of faith ; but it comes by hearing the object, it comes by hearing of Christ, and of what he hath in his hand. The object of faith comes not from our act of faith ; but the acting of faith comes from the object of faith ; and so it comes by hearing of the glorious object. Why stand you poring then upon your want of power to act faith, as if you were to pull it out of your own breast ? You will be much nearer your purpose, if you will pore upon the object of it, Christ, who hath all things in his hand. If you be taken up with the object, there is no fear about the act of faith ; for the soul, in believing, considers not what can I do ? but what can Christ do ? It considers not, what have I in my hand ? but what hath Christ in his hand ? And hence, when faith acts rightly upon Christ, it considers not itself, and its own actings ; it is taken up with nothing but Christ ; and it is the best act of faith that loses itself, and is swallowed up in its object, saying, " Christ is all in all," and I see all things in his hand.

2. Direction, in order to your closing with Christ, who hath all things in his hand : O ! be convinced that you have nothing in your own hand, no righteousness in your own hand, no strength in your own hand ; this would pave the way for saying, " Surely in the Lord only have I righteousness and strength." I fear there are some here who are rich and increased with goods, and are relying on some of these good things that they have in hand ; even believers are in danger here ; some are saying in their hearts, Perhaps I have some good duty and preparation-work I have been about,



and I rest on that, and hope for favour on that account: I had a good frame yesterday, or yesternight, or this morning; and I got grace to pray, and I am hoping, on that account, to obtain favour at God's hand this day. O man, take care of your hand; while you are relying on any thing in your own hand, you are too rich, and it will be a wonder if you meet not with a disappointment; for he that feeds the hungry with good things sends the rich empty away. There is more hope, if, notwithstanding all your best duties and best frames, you are entitled to nothing, and see you have no wisdom, no grace, no good thing in your own hand, no good frame to confide in. What! have you nothing at all? No, not a crumb to put in your mouth? Are you reduced to poverty and beggary? Why, then, "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" come, and welcome to a full Jesus, who has all things in his hand. The poor and needy come best speed here. Have you nothing to trust unto but the grace that is in his hand? the fullness that is in his hand? and have you no hope or confidence built anywhere else? I can promise, in his name, it shall not be long ere you be supplied; for, "The needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the expectation of the poor perish for ever."

3. Direction I offer is, O man, woman, lay all things that you want distinctly and directly over against all things he hath, and you want out of his hand. For example, when you think on your own guiltiness, then look to his righteousness, and lay this over against that. When you apprehend your weakness, then apprehend the strength that is in his hand, and lay the one over against the other. When you consider your emptiness, then consider his fulness, and study Christ and your condition together; if you study your condition without studying Christ, then you will be full of despair and discouragements; if you study Christ, without studying your condition, then you will be full of pride and presumption. If you think on sin, without Christ, you despair; if you think on Christ, without thinking on sin, you presume. If you be ignorant, think on Christ as a Prophet; if guilty, here think on Christ as a Priest; if enslaved, apprehend him as a King. Observe the attributes and titles of Christ that are most suited to your condition; and lay them and your condition together. It is remarkable, that all the epistles to the seven churches of Asia, begin with titles of Christ; and every title is suited to the condition of that church. For example, his title to the church of Smyrna is "The first and the last, that was dead and is alive,"

Rev. ii. 8. Why so? Because they were to suffer hard things, and were called to be faithful unto the death, and so on; he shews that he hath a title suited to every case. Thus, set the names and titles of Christ, that suit your condition, directly over against it; and assure yourself that Christ will make good his titles, that he is clothed with. If the title be, "The Lord is my shepherd;" then I may certainly infer, "I shall not want," Ps. xxiii. 1. Thus do you, when you find there is distress among the saints, then remember his title, "King of saints." When you find disorder and commotion among the nations, then remember his title, "The king of nations." When you find darkness overspreading your soul, then remember his title, "I am the light of the world." When you find death and deadness taking place, then remember his title, "I am the resurrection and the life." When you are uneasy with the confusions and black aspect of affairs in the church, then remember his title, "The Head of the body the church," and Head over all things to it: "The government is upon his shoulders." Know that as Christ and the promise is yours, in the gospel-offer and publication to be believed in, rested upon; so Christ is so far yours in possession, as you, through grace, improve and rest upon him. The promise is so far yours in possession as you improve it, and rest upon it.

4. Direction I offer is, since the Father hath given all things into his hand, then, O let him be improven and employed by you for all things. Do not think you can put too much work in his hand, or that you can give him too many things ado for you. If you believe the Father hath given all things into his hand, you may be sure you are welcome to employ him in all things; and the more business you have to put in his hand, the more welcome. You may come to him not only with all your spiritual affairs, and trust him for all things that concern wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: but also with all your temporal affairs; for the promise, in Christ, is a promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Many profess to rely on Christ for eternal salvation, and yet they dare not trust unto him for their temporal provision; and so discover the rottenness of their faith, in that they cannot depend on him for all things. It is said, 1 John iv. 20, "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" So may we say, He that cannot trust in Christ for things temporal, in this world; how can he trust

in him for things eternal, in the other world ? Why then, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy steps." You may go to his table with an eye to him for his conduct and blessing, even in temporal affairs : and if you can trust him in these, it will be a good evidence that you can trust him, indeed, in the affairs of your eternal salvation also. Is there any remarkable change of circumstances in your life and lot in this world, wherein you would have his conduct and countenance ? Are you a minister ? and would you be a blessing to the parish where God is ordering your lot ? Are you a private Christian, and would you be a blessing to the place or family wherein God may appoint your lot ? Why, behold he hath the blessing of Abraham to bestow upon you ; "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing," Gen. xii. 2. If you own that the reins of providence are in his hand, as well as all things else, then come to him, and employ him in all things that pertain to life and godliness both.

5. Direction is, since the Father hath given all things into Christ's hand, then, in coming to him, not only come that he may *give* all things to you, that you need, but that he may *be* all things to you that you want. Not only that he may give you life, but that he himself may be your life ; not only that he may give you salvation, but that he himself may be your salvation ; not only that he may bring you to rest and happiness, but that he himself may be your rest and happiness, both by the way here, and at the end of the way hereafter. Look to Christ, not only to give you all, but to be your all ; for he is not only the way to life, but the life itself : "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "As I desire, says one, never to be happy, if Christ be not able to bring me to happiness, so I desire no greater, no better happiness, than what Christ is, and can be to me." O sirs, he is all, and there is all in him ; all to justify, all to sanctify, all to glorify, all to fill and satisfy, all to delight and solace the largest faculties of the immortal soul ; "In his presence there is fulness of joy." The highest happiness here is, "Christ in us the hope of glory : " and the highest happiness hereafter is, Christ, even to be for ever with the Lord. The thief on the cross had this preached to him, "This day shalt thou be with *me* in Paradise : " to be in Paradise, is not happiness ; to be with angels there, is not happiness ; but to be with Christ there, this is heaven and happiness. The more distinct that faith is in choosing Christ to be the supreme rest, the more complete is that faith. The



language of faith comes to maturity ; " O ! since God and all his fulness is in Christ ; it is Christ alone that is my life, all my salvation, all my hope, all my righteousness, all my strength, all my comfort, all my confidence, all my happiness, and all my heaven : " Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none in all the earth whom I desire besides thee."

6. Direction for regulating faith is, since all things are given into his hand, and are unchangeably and eternally in his hand, then let coming to him, through grace, be your continual exercise, your daily trade ; the fountain is ever full and overflowing ; and the oftener you come with your empty vessels, so much the better. Think not faith lies in one single act ; if you would be very sure of Christ, you should believe in him, and embrace him every day ; yea, and as oft as, through grace, you can every day. Having once come to Christ, your life should be a life of coming closely and constantly to him, 1 Pet. ii. 4. It is not only to be acted at the table of the Lord, when you sit there ; it may be acted, perhaps, as profitably and pleasantly before you go to the table, or afterwards, in hearing, or singing, in public or in secret ; and, as the second edition corrects the errors of the first, so after acts of believing, many times correct the defects of the first act. We are told, John v. 13, " The man that was healed, wist not who it was that healed him ;" and the man cured of his blindness, John ix. 36, knew not who he was, till the Lord met with him again : and, indeed, the longer a man hath Christ's company, the longer and sweeter are his manifestations of himself : every day's renewing of our application to Christ by faith, and closing with him, would make every day to be a day of espousals ; and every day of espousals would be a day of the gladness of his heart, and of yours too. I think there is ground for this in that promise, " I will betroth thee unto me for ever," Hos. ii. 19. What is that ? I suppose we may take this view of it, not only shall the marriage-relation be indissolvable ; but also the marriage-solemnity shall be perpetual : I will be for ever betrothing thee unto me ; the manifestations of my love shall never fade, never languish, but be always fresh and full, like that of the day of espousals ; and every new manifestation thereof like a new espousals. So much for directions in this matter.

Now, my friends, to come to a close, may I ask, What entertainment have you given to the Son of God, who hath all things given into his hand ? Or, what room hath he made for himself into

your heart? If you should hear of a sovereign water that could cure all diseases, what flocking of people would there be to that water? Here is that sovereign water, Christ alone, that can cure all diseases, yea, and supply all wants; and he is the great ordinance of God, the great institution and appointment of the Father for the relief of sinners, in all cases, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you," John vi. 27. There is the hand from which you may have it. But how shall I get it from him? Why, it follows, "Him hath God the Father sealed;" Him hath God the Father appointed. He is the great ordinance and appointment of the Father for the very things you want: "God hath set him forth to be a propitiation;" set him forth to be a righteousness for guilty sinners; set him forth to be a robe for naked sinners; set him forth to be a laver for filthy sinners; set him forth to be a ladder between heaven and earth, that sinners may get up to the everlasting enjoyment of God. He hath set him forth to be all things; to be wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all things for us; and this is infinite love to him and us: "The Father loves him, and hath given all things into his hand." Why, say you, but I cannot see his hand with all things in it. Why, man, by this gospel which you hear, he is reaching down his hand with all things in it, that you may take hold of it in this word of grace. Will you tell me, what way would you have the invisible God to put out his hand towards you: Infinite wisdom has thought this the best way; and if you be not so grossly ignorant as to think of seeing the infinite invisible God, with bodily eyes, what better way can you conceive for him to stretch out his arm, and reach out his hand to you? Would you have him speaking to you by some glorious angel of heaven? Why, this way hath been tried, and their appearance was terrifying. Would you have him putting out his hand in a flame of fire? Why, this was once done to Moses in the bush; but the poor man fell a quaking. Or, again, would you have God putting out his hand, or uttering his voice to you by thunder and lightning, and thick clouds, and darkness? Why, this was the way he took at mount Sinai, and all the camp of Israel fell a trembling and crying, "O! let not God speak, but Moses; if he will speak to us, let him do it by a man like ourselves:" and, O sirs, if you knew God, this is just the very way you would have him speaking to you; and behold it is just by a poor mortal worm

like yourselves, that you may not be frightened at his words. It is true, it may be, the devil and the world have been busy, to fill your hearts with prejudices against the poor feeble instruments, who preach this gospel to you ; but whatever you think of us, and, for Christ's sake, I beg you reckon no more of us than of poor earthen vessels, bearing a treasure to you ; only, never let the view of the baseness and insignificancy of the vessel make you to despise and reject the treasure we are bearing to you ; a treasure worth ten thousand, thousand, thousand worlds ; and wo is me, if you be only staring upon the poor preacher, and have not your eyes open, your understandings enlightened to see the treasure of unsearchable riches brought to your hand by this gospel, and brought to the very door of your heart ! Rom. x. 8.

My friends, I look upon you, as I do upon myself, to be a company of dying worms : and am dealing with you in the name of the living God, the living Jesus, that you may live for ever in him. We are all going to the grave, where our nearest friends and forefathers have gone before us. I suppose there are few here but have either a father or a mother, a husband, a wife, a brother, a sister, a child, a near and dear friend, lying in the cold bed of the grave ; and, in a few years, or days, these bodies of yours will lie rotting in the dust with them. Now, O man, woman, when your body is to be laid in the dust, would you have your soul laid in the bosom of Christ ? Behold he is now opening his bosom, and opening his heart, that you may enter in ; and if your heart were opening to let him in this day, it might yield such a joyful reflection in the hour of death, " O ! I think glorious Christ drew out my heart to him, at such a communion in Dunfermline ; and therefore, " O death, where is thy sting ? " I hope to live for ever in spite of thee."

My dear friends, it is not only a door of utterance to speak to you that we have been seeking to have at this occasion, but a door of entrance ; and Christ's entering into your heart by the power of his eternal Spirit. And O is he come ? Is he come ; yea or not ? Are you welcoming the Father's Beloved, that hath all things in his hand, saying, " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." When he is welcoming you to come to him, are you welcoming him to come to you ? Can you say, He hath persuaded me, and I am persuaded ! Have you found him riding in this chariot of the word of grace ; riding into your heart, and making it fly open to him, saying, " None but Christ, none but Christ ; O ! a thousand worlds



are not to be laid in balance with him." Is there never a heart here set a burning and glowing in your bosom towards a precious Christ? I am confident there is some; but wo is me, that all the hearts in this house are not set in a fire of love towards a lovely Jesus! O what a joyful sound may this be in the ears of poor sinners! Christ, and all things in his hand, as a pledge of his Father's love to him and you! and this blessed bargain offered freely to you! "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come to these waters; he that hath no money come; come without money, and without price!" O sirs, the best penny-worth, the noblest bargain that ever mortal ears heard tell of! All things for nothing! all things for nothing! and this to be had by you, sinner, who are less than nothing, and worse than nothing! Though you have an empty purse, yet you need not be a bashful merchant here; for the more poor and empty that you are, the welcomer to him that hath all things in his hand. Christ requires nothing as a price of his fulness, but want, and worthlessness, and misery. It is for the supply of such that he hath this fulness. Say not then that you have no right to it; for God offers it to you, and you need it; and there is right enough. If you say, Was he able, in his humbled state, when he came in the flesh? And is he not able in his exalted state, when he comes in the Spirit, to destroy the works of the devil? I am not only poor, but perverse; and am afraid of hell, because I have sinned to the uttermost. Why, he that hath all things, hath all power, and is able to save to the uttermost; your uttermost is great, but God's uttermost is infinitely greater. Say not, Satan hath confirmed his right to you by your long trade of sinning; for, Christ owns no prescription of that kind; and it is his errand here this day to come and destroy the works of the devil; for this cause was the Son of God manifested.

Is any here thinking, "Yea, but I am an apostate; guilty of many relapses; may not I despair?" No, no, man; he that hath all things in his hand has a plaster for all sores, and one for a falling sickness among the rest; "I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely. Though you have played the harlot with many lovers, yet return;" though you have run to the devil, to your lusts and idols, yet come to me. "But is it possible that there is a door of hope for me, when, notwithstanding all that you have said, I find all things wrong with me?" Why, man, will you tell me what state were all things into when the Father put them in Christ's

hand? I suppose all things were wrong by the fall of Adam; the devil was rejoicing, sin was raging, death was reigning, justice was flaming, hell was gaping, and all things were wrong; and then the Father put them all in Christ's hand, that he might set them right. Why, then, did the Father love the Son, and give all things into his hand, even in that state? Then, for the love of Christ Jesus, put all things that are wrong with you into his hand, that he may right them, for well can he do it. And as the Father did put honour upon him by doing so, and glorified his Son; so this is the way for you to honour and glorify Christ; and as in this way you shall have everlasting life by him, so he shall have everlasting honour by you, 2 Thess. i. 13.

If, after all, you say, "You cannot receive him, you cannot believe, you cannot come to him." Well, it is true you can do nothing; but there is something I would ask, if you can do, and that is, "Can you refuse him? Can you reject him? Can you stand out against him? Can your hearts say, for all that you have heard of him, that you care not for him, that you are better pleased with the world and your lusts?" If you cannot for your heart do these things, then I hope you shall be able to believe in him; for faith does not lie in your doing any thing, but in your employing Christ to do all, and saying, "He that hath all things in his hand must do all things for me." Faith is never truly acted under a sense of ability to believe, but under a sense of utter inability; and therefore, if you can say, "Though I find my own weakness and inability to believe, yet I think, by this revelation of Christ, made to me, God hath made me willing, that Christ, who hath all things in his hand, should be all things to me, and do all things for me; willing, with a thousand good wills, that he should put all things that are evil out of me, and put all things that are good within me; and willing that he should be all things that relate to wisdom, and illuminate all things that relate to holiness and sanctification; and all things that relate to happiness and complete redemption." Is it so with you? Then you have got a heart to join hand with him that hath all things in his hand; and you may gladly go to a communion table, and get the bargain sealed between him and you; and you may boast and glory in your all-sufficient Head and Husband, whom God hath furnished in this manner. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."

## SERMON CXLII.

CHRIST'S TREASURES OPENED BY HIMSELF, DECLARING HE HATH ALL THINGS THAT GOD THE FATHER HATH.<sup>1</sup>

"All things that the Father hath are mine."—JOHN xvi. 15.

THE glorious excellency, fullness, and all-sufficiency of our Lord Jesus Christ, is inexpressibly great ; none can speak of it so well as himself ; and indeed he himself is the preacher here ; and as here we have his word, so, if his Spirit accompany it, we may, in this glass, see his matchless glory ; for here it is so wonderfully described, that neither the tongues of men nor angels can tell so much of his glorious fulness and furniture, in so few words ; "All things that the Father hath are mine."

Our Lord fairly warns his disciples of what crosses they were to meet with in this world, verse 2, "They shall put you out of the synagogues ; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service." But, at the same time, he assures them of what comforts he would afford them ; and, as it was usual for the Old Testament prophets, to comfort the church in her adversity with the promise of the Messiah, Isaiah ix. 6, Micah v. 5, so the Messiah being come, he comforts his people with the promise of the Spirit, the Comforter ; and this is the great New Testament promise.

Christ promises the Spirit here, from verse 5, as a fruit of his ascension, saying, "If I go, I will send him ;" and that because the sending of the Spirit was to be not only the fruit of his purchase on earth, but the answer of his prayers in heaven, and of his intercession within the veil, John xiv. 16. The gift of the Spirit must be paid for, and prayed for, that we might highly value this privilege.

We are told, from verse 8 and downward, what a great benefit the coming of the Spirit should be to a blind world ; "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment," &c. Next, what a great benefit his coming would be

(1.) This Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, at Dunfermline, July 19th, 1747. To which is subjoined, the Discourses before and at the service of the first table, and at the conclusion of the Solemnity.



to the disciples themselves, from ver. 13. "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth," &c.

Again, the great work of the Spirit is summed up, verse 14. "He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and show it unto you." This I have spoken to formerly. And now this text comes in as a reason of the former; *q. d.* Would you have a reason why the Spirit, when he comes, shall glorify me, by taking of mine and showing it to you? Even because, "All things that the Father hath are mine: Therefore said I unto you, that he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you:" he being the Spirit of the Father as well as the Spirit of the Son, when he comes to glorify me, he comes to glorify the Father in me; and by showing things of mine, which are not different from, but the same with the things of the Father; his showing of mine will show what a glorious One I am, because "All things that the Father hath are mine."

Our Lord Jesus never speaks of his being glorified alone, without the Father's being glorified in him: nor of his own glory abstract from the Father's glory: see this in his entry upon his suffering work; "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him," John xiii. 31. See it in his entry upon his intercessory work on earth; "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee, John xvii. 1. And see it here in his declaring what should be the work of the Spirit in his name after his exaltation: "He shall glorify me by taking of mine and showing it to you." But will the glorifying of the Father be here neglected? No, no: by showing my glory, he will show the Father's glory; and by showing my things, he will show the Father's; for "All things that the Father hath are mine;" and these things the Spirit shall show or make them known to you; that is, he shall so declare and evidence them to you and in you, that you shall understand and have experience of them in yourselves; and that both by revelation, instructing you in them; and by communication, imparting them to you.

It is the reason here given by our Lord Jesus, that I especially speak of at present; "All things that the Father hath are mine." Here is the vast extent of the things of Christ which are to be shewed to believers by the Spirit; they are all the things that the Father hath: they are mine, says Christ. Now, these things may be taken, either absolutely, respecting the person of the Father and the person of the Son: or restrictively, respecting the office of Christ, as Mediator betwixt God and man.

1. Viewing it absolutely ; all things that the Father hath are his, even the whole entire divine nature, by having his personality from the Father, and that by an eternal, necessary, and ineffable generation : all the things of the Father must needs be his ; for, "He and his Father are one." In this sense Christ could say, All things that the Father hath are mine ; even all the essential properties of the Godhead ; there is no difference between his things and mine ; his nature and essence are mine, only our personal properties are distinct : he is the first, and I am the second person of the glorious Trinity, according to the order of the subsistence of the three-one God : he is my eternal Father, and I am his eternal Son by ineffable generation. But the *all things* here spoken of seem not to be in this absolute sense, they are not the all things of the divine nature which he had by eternal generation. Therefore,

2. We are to view it in a more restricted sense respecting the office of Christ as Mediator. All things that the Father had in his heart and purpose from eternity, to discover and dispense in time by voluntary donation are mine, according to these scriptures, Matt. xi. 27. "All things are delivered to me of my Father," Luke x. 22, John iii. 35. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. John xiii. 3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand, took a towel and girded himself to wash his disciples' feet." ALL THINGS ; that is, all the effects of the Father's love, grace, and will, whatever he had purposed in himself from eternity, and whatever his infinite power and goodness would produce in the pursuit thereof, were all given and committed to Christ : thus "All things that the Father hath are mine."

The order of operation in the Holy Trinity, with reference to our salvation, is according to the order of the subsistence of the distinct persons of the Deity : and hence you have here, 1. The things to be declared to us, and bestowed upon us, they are originally the Father's things ; he is the peculiar fountain of them all ; his love, wisdom, grace, goodness, counsel, and will, is their supreme cause and spring ; therefore here called the things that the Father hath. 2. They are the things of the Son : They are mine, says Christ, as Mediator ; they are given to me and unto my disposal, on account of my mediation ; by which they are prepared for us, and given out unto us to the glory of God. 3. They are actually communicated to us by the Holy Spirit ; "Therefore, said I, he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." He does not communicate them im-

mediately to us from the Father. We cannot deal, nor have to do with the person of the Father immediately ; it is by the Son alone we have access to him, and by the Son alone he gives out of his grace and bounty to us : it is with Christ, as the great Treasurer of heavenly things, that all grace and mercy are entrusted. The Holy Spirit therefore shows them unto us, not first as the Father's things, but as they are the fruits of Christ's mediation ; and thereby as the effect of the Father's love and bounty.

Here, then, is the honey we are to eat this day, as you read, Song v. 1. " I am come to my garden, my sister, my spouse ; I have eaten my honey comb with my honey ; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." This honey is presented here according to the order of the subsistence of the three distinct persons of the Deity. 1. As honey in the flower, which is at such distance from us we could never extract it, namely, " All things that the Father hath." 2. Honey in the comb, prepared for us, in our EMMANUEL, God-man, Redeemer, the Word that was made flesh, saying, " All things that the Father hath are mine ;" and mine for your use and behoof : for, 3. Here is honey in the mouth ; the Spirit taking all and making application thereof, by showing them to us, and making us to eat and drink with Christ, and share of these all things ; yea, not only eat the honey but the honey comb with the honey ; not only his benefits, but himself ; his person with his benefits ; himself and all things that the Father hath entrusted him with ; here is bread enough and to spare in our Father's house : here is the steward saying, " All is mine to give out to you by the hand of my Spirit."

The subject here spoken of is no less than all things that relate to our eternal salvation, and these are spoken of, 1. In respect of their origination ; they are the Father's things. 2. Their donation to Christ, as Mediator, they are mine. 3. Their communication, they are actually communicated to us by the Holy Ghost.

From the first part of this verse, we lay down the following doctrinal proposition.

OBSERVE. Such is the matchless glory of Christ, in his mediatorial fulness and furniture, that he can say, " All things that the Father hath are mine."

He, as Mediator, is possessed of all things that the Father hath for the benefit of sinners ; and this is the reason why the Spirit, taking the things of Christ, and showing them to us doth glorify



Christ; because all the glorious things of the Father are things of Christ, they are mine, &c. How could the Spirit's revelation and communication of the things of Christ make his matchless glory to appear, if they were not the things of God? Or thus,

Christ our Redeemer is entrusted with all things the Father hath for the benefit of sinners."

If these things were only the Father's and not the things of Christ, we could have no access to them, no share of them; we could never see them in the Father's bosom; for, "No man hath seen God at any time," though all things that relate to our eternal life are originally there; but the only begotten Son, that lay in the Father's bosom, he came out thence, laden with all the good, and great, and glorious things that were hidden there from eternity, and he hath declared him, and declared that all things that the Father hath there are his.

In the prosecution of this subject, I would inquire, through divine assistance, into the following things:—

- I. What right and title Christ hath to all things that the Father hath.
- II. Point out some of these *all things* that the Father hath which are his.
- III. Inquire how, and in what sense they are his.
- IV. Show for what reason it is so ordered; or, the beauty of this dispensation, that all things the Father hath are his.
- V. Make application of the whole subject.

I. The first thing proposed is, To show what right and title Christ hath to all things that the Father hath. And, in short,

1st, He hath a natural right to all things that the Father hath; and that as he is God, one God with the Father and Holy Ghost: in which sense he said, "I and my Father are one." And thus he hath the same essential right and title to all things with the Father, in regard of the unity of the essence among the glorious Three, and their equality in power and glory; "The Lord our God is one Lord."

2dly, He hath a mediatorial right and title to all things; and this may be considered under these following properties.

1. As Mediator he hath a federal right to all things; "I have made a covenant with my Chosen, my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him," Psalm, lxxxix. 3, 24. It is said, ver. 4. 11.

"Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine;" intimating, that he hath a federal right to all things by covenant with his Father.

2. As Mediator he hath a donative right and title to all the things the Father hath: hence, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand," John iii. 35. And hence, says Christ, "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me," Matt. xxviii. 18.

3. As Mediator he hath an acquisitive right, by his own purchase of the things the Father hath to give out to the children of men; by his death upon the cross, he hath merited and obtained a name above every name, and a being head over all things to the church.

4. As Mediator, he hath a bellipotent right, by conquest, having destroyed principalities and powers, and overcoming them that make war with him," Rev. xvii. 14. "He is able to subdue all things to himself," Phil. iii. 21. And accordingly, all things are put in subjection under his feet, Heb. ii. 8. And he subdues his people to himself, and makes them willing in the day of his power, Psalm cx. 3.

5. To these may be added, that he hath an hereditary right, being the heir of all things. It is said, Psalm lxxix. 24. "I will make him my first born, higher than the kings of the earth." And Col. i, 18, he is called the first born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

6. He hath a right by the Father's consent; "It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell."

We find Christ, as Mediator, hath his title to all things that the Father hath secured and confirmed with a special solemnity. It is confirmed by a solemn election: "Behold, my servant whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. xlii. 1. By a solemn vocation and formal call; "I have called thee, and given thee to be a covenant of the people, a light to the Gentiles," &c., ver. 6. By a solemn commission under the Father's broad seal; "Him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 24. Sealed to be all the things that the Father hath to bestow upon poor sinners. It is confirmed with the solemnity of a promise, Psalm lxxvii. 8, 9, 10. "That his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth," &c. Also, with the solemnity of an oath, Psalm lxxxix. 35, 36, 37. "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David," &c. But not to enlarge.

II. The second thing proposed was, To point out some of these *all things* that the Father hath which are his. To speak of all things which the Father hath, that are entrusted to Christ, is impossible ; but I mention a few.

1. All the perfections of the Father are his. There is nothing that the Father hath, except his personality, or priority of order in subsistence, but the Son as Mediator hath ; yea, he not only hath, but he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, 1 Cor. i. 24. Here is wisdom for poor witless creatures who know nothing. Here is power for the impotent that can do nothing. He that saith, "All things that the Father hath are mine," he says, upon the matter, His wisdom is mine for your behoof ; his power is mine, and all his other perfections. He that is the essential image is the representative image of God ; the image of the invisible God, in whom are made visible or evident to our faith, all the invisible attributes of God. See the holiness of God, in this holy one of God, who is made of God to us sanctification ; and who magnifies the holiness of God in the precept of the law, by fulfilling all righteousness. See the justice of God in Jesus Christ the righteous, who is made of God to us righteousness ; and who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him : and so the guilty sinner may become more righteous in God's sight than ever he was guilty in his sight ; and not only justified by his blood and righteousness, but may find and see God to be just in justifying through him, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, whereby justice is satisfied fully, and glorified highly. But, of some other perfections, more afterwards may be mentioned.

2, All the glory that the Father hath is his : yea, the glory of all his Father's perfections is to be seen in him ; for, "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. And hence, the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, is said to shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is not only the light of the knowledge of God, but the light of the knowledge of the glory of God : where is it ? Even in the face, or person of Jesus Christ.

3. All the fulness that the Father hath is his ; "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell ; and in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. i. 19, ii. 9. O ! upon what solid footing does he say, "All things that the Father hath



are mine," when all the Father's fulness is in him, and dwells in him? And, O! should not all poor souls look to and rely upon him, and out of his fulness receive grace for grace? O may we come and dwell where fulness dwelleth!

4. All the promises that the Father hath in his covenant are his; they are made to him first, and to us in him, in whom the covenant stands fast; "All the promises of God are in him, Yea, and Amen, to the glory of God, 2 Cor. i. 20. As the promises of God are all affirmed by his word, and confirmed by his blood, so he is trusted with the donation and application of the promises: hence he is the Author and Finisher of that faith whereby we see Christ in the promise, and the promise in Christ.

5. All the grace and mercy that the Father hath in store for sinners are his; "Grace is poured into his lips," Psalm xlv. 2. And this is a notable part of the glory of God that is to be seen in him; "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace," John i. 14. There is such fulness and sufficiency of grace in him for us, that we need no more but this saying, "My grace is sufficient for you." The spirit of all grace is in him above measure; he is anointed with this oil, that he may pour it upon us. And as he hath grace for the graceless; so, he hath mercy for the miserable; as all the grace, so all the mercy of God is his; "My mercy shall be with him," Psalm lxxxix. 24. Mercy vents through his blood, even as grace is said to reign through his righteousness. God sent his law to Christ for obedience, and justice to Christ for satisfaction, that mercy might vent, and grace might reign through his righteousness to eternal life.

6. All the truth and faithfulness of God the Father is his; "My faithfulness (as well as mercy) shall be with him," Psalm lxxxix. 24. "This of truth is added with grace," John i. 14. "Full of grace and truth." O what is Christ but just the love and faithfulness of God! The mercy and truth of God met together, and wrapt up in a garment of flesh and blood! I have observed in a former discourse, between thirty and forty places of scripture, where the mercy and truth of God, or his loving kindness are joined together. It was the work of mercy to make the promise; and it is the work of truth to make out the promise; therefore, O believer, when you have nothing to plead or prevail with a promising God for your succour or supply, remember there are two orators in his

bosom that will effectually intercede for your relief; and these are his mercy and truth in Jesus Christ: "God is not man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent: heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away." Nothing did ever God say in his word but what he hath and will accomplish. He said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," Gen. iii. 15; and he hath made it good, by Christ's coming in the flesh, and suffering in the flesh. God said to Abraham, he should have a son by Sarah; though the womb be dead, yet the promise lives: Isaac, the child of the promise, must come from this dead womb, to show that God is a faithful God. God said to Moses, that he should lead Israel out of Egypt; and therefore, notwithstanding of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, and power of his opposition, yet God, by many miracles, made good his word. O sirs, he hath faithfulness for the girdle of his loins: and the girdle being round about him, we may hold by this girdle, even when he turns his back, and hides himself in the darkest providences: "His mercy endureth for ever, and his truth faileth never." Man's mercy soon turns to cruelty, and his truth to falsehood; but the mercy and truth of God have met together in Christ: and when you can find no mercy nor truth in man, you may look and see all the mercy and truth of God in Christ, and rest there; for he says, "All things that the Father hath are mine."

7. All the works that the Father hath ado are his; the work of creation, providence, and redemption. God's creation work was his; "All things were made by him; and without him was nothing made that was made," John i. 3. God's works of providence are all his; for, "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power, Heb. i. 3. He is the Governor among the nations;" and all the reins of providence are in his hand. God's work of redemption is his: the work of redemption by price was his; and he hath finished this work which the Father gave him to do: the work of redemption by power is his; and he will never rest till he hath finished that also; and for this end he promises the Spirit here to glorify him, by showing all the things that are his; and for this end all the influences of the Spirit of God are his. And we may say, all the winds of heaven are his: these are what his people seek to blow upon them; "Awake, O north wind, come thou south;" these are what he promises in the coming of the Comforter: "I will send him to you," Ezekiel xxxvii. 9. "Thus saith the Lord, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breath upon these

slain that they may live ;" O say, "*Amen*, Even so, come Lord Jesus ;" come quickly in the power of thy Spirit. In a word, all his Father's works are his ; therefore he says, " My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," John v. 17.

8. All the authority that the Father hath is his, and he is entrusted with it as Mediator ; therefore says God the Father, " My name is in him ;" and, he hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man, John v. 27, yea, " The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son ; him hath God the Father sealed," and authorised to be both the Saviour and the Judge.

9. All the elect that the Father hath are his ; " I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world ; thine they were, and thou gavest them me," John xvii. 6. They were thine by election ; and thou gavest them to be redeemed by me. They were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, Eph. i. 4. These are called his seed, Isa. liii. 10, " When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed ; he shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

10. Hence all the blessings that the Father hath to give out are his ; he is constitute the Dispenser thereof ; for, God hath set him to be *blessings*, as the word may be read, Psalm xxi. 6, " Thou hast made him to be most blessed for ever." Thou hast set him to be *blessings* for ever, to be the Dispenser of eternal blessings. It was promised, " Men shall be blessed in him," Psalm lxxii. 17, and accordingly he is sent to bless us, Acts iii. 26, " God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquity." It is in him that God blesses us with all spiritual blessings ; with the blessings of pardon, peace, and reconciliation with God ; with the blessings of justification, sanctification, and consolation ; with the blessings of grace and glory, and every good thing. Would you have God's blessing ? You must have it out of Christ's hand ; for the Father's blessing, and all the things that the Father hath, are mine, says Christ ; they are mine to dispense, and they would never have been yours, if they had not been mine.

In a word, all things that the Father hath in his mind and council from eternity, and that lay hid in his everlasting bosom, they are mine to reveal to you ; for, " No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father,



he hath declared him." All things that the Father hath in his heart, and bowels of compassion to the children of men, they are mine to manifest ; and I am come to speak out of his heart, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." All things that the Father hath in his thoughts that are an infinite depth, they are mine to put in words ; though as the heavens are higher than the earth, so his thoughts are higher than our thoughts, yet behold they are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. All things that the Father hath in his sovereign will to be done for sinners, they are mine to do ; and therefore, in the volume of his book it is written of me, "Lo, I come ; I delight to do thy will, O my God." O infinitely glorious Christ, that could say, "All things that the Father hath are mine," therefore shall the Spirit glorify me!

III. The third thing proposed was, To shew how and in what manner all things that the Father hath are his ; I have already, upon the first head, relating to his right and title to all things that the Father hath shewed you, that all things are his naturally, as he is God ; and donatively, or economically, as he is Mediator. I add, in a few words, these following particulars.

1. All things that the Father hath are his substantially, not symbolically, as Christ is said to be in the elements of bread and wine in the sacramental supper ; or as God was said to be in the temple by the symbols of his presence ; no, it is not symbolically, but substantially ; it is not the shadow but the substance of all things the Father hath that are his ; therefore it is said, Col. ii. 9, that "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ;" that is, substantially ; and so in a glorious, eminent, superlative, and transcendent way. Christ is the substance of all the types, sacrifices, and ceremonies under the law. 'They were but the shadow of good things to come, Heb. x. 1. All the good things themselves are in Christ substantially.

2. All things that the Father hath are his communicatively. The Mediator's fulness is communicable to us. As they are the Father's things we have no immediate access to them ; but as they are lodged in the hand of Christ, whom the Father hath made the Dispenser, we have access to him immediately. Christ hath opened the door of his Father's storehouse, and comes out with all things in his hand that the Father hath ; and, indeed, all other shops are closed, if we may be allowed the expression, but Christ's shop stands open ;

and upon the door head is written this inscription, "Whosoever will, let him come, and share of all "things that the Father hath, for they are mine." Christ's fulness, which is the fulness of God, is communicative; therefore, "Out of his fulness we may all receive," John i. 16. We needed not preach of this great store, if it were locked up in him; nay, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, that we may be complete in him," Col. ii. 10. Christ is a cabinet of rich and rare jewels, that can enrich you, sirs, to eternity. There are two keys that use to open this cabinet; faith is a key, for, out of his fulness we receive by faith; prayer is another key; "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God." If these keys be not in your hand just now, yet surely they are in his hand, who says, "All things are mine." O sirs, beseech him to throw you the keys, and give you the Spirit of faith and prayer.

3. All things that the Father hath are his sufficiently; even bread enough and to spare, Luke xv. 17. Fulness enough for the destitute; light enough for the dark; life enough for the dead; pardon in abundance for guilty sinners; and plenty of all things for poor and needy souls; bread enough to spare. If you think there is none to spare for you, it is because you do not believe there is enough in him; nor believe that all things that the Father hath are his. But, O let us not thus, by unbelief, disgrace our infinitely noble and glorious Lord, by supposing there is not enough in him! Philip said once to Christ, John xiv. 8, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" *q. d.*, surely there is such a sufficiency in God the Father, that, if he be shewn to us, we will have what is enough to give full satisfaction to all the insatiable desires of the immortal soul; therefore, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Well, what is Christ doing here this day among us, but shewing us the Father, and all his treasures in himself; in whom alone are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and in whom alone they can be seen; and by whom alone they can be opened up to us, which he is doing, by saying, "All things that the Father hath are mine?" O then, sirs, there is enough in him; and how easily can he satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry with good things? Nothing else in this world can give satisfaction to the soul; he was a fool that said, when he had a full barn, "Soul, take thy rest;" we may as well dream of a coffer full of grace and glory, as a soul full of corn and wine. It is only Christ that hath suitable and satisfying fulness for the soul, enough to give complete, solid, permanent, and everlasting satisfaction.

4. All things that the Father hath are his efficiently, or effectively, so as to make us take and share of that store; he can make us comely, through his comeliness; righteous, through his righteousness; and glorious, through his glory; "I have made thee perfect through my comeliness which I have put upon thee," Ezek. xvi. 14. He imputeth righteousness without works, Rom. iv. 6, "All we, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. There is a power and efficacy in every saving discovery of this glorious treasure; it enriches all that behold it; and completely satisfies all that have a title unto it, and an interest in it.

5. All things that the Father hath are his unchangeably; for, he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. 8. Whatever supply you get out of his hand, his stock and store is still the same. Let faith draw never so many bills upon him for this and that supply, at this and the other time, and get never so much rent, annual rent, may I call it, or daily rent out of the stock; yet still the stock and interest both are in his hand; and the believer hath all his store secured for him, in Christ's hand, even when all that you get in your hand is spent; this well of salvation springs up for ever, and that to everlasting life. You may be full and empty by turns; but he is invariably the same; "I am the Lord, I change not."

6. All things that the Father hath are his eternally; they are the everlasting things of the everlasting Father. The fulness of the Father that is his is a dwelling fulness; "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him;" and in him it dwells for ever; hence the blessings he communicates are everlasting blessings, everlasting peace, everlasting pardon, everlasting consolation; so called, because though perishing things may give people perishing comforts; yet the consolations of the Spirit are from everlasting things; such as everlasting love, everlasting righteousness, and everlasting inheritance. Here is a depth to dive for ever into, O poor mortal that would be happy for ever! all things that Christ hath to give are everlasting and eternal things; because, All things that the Father hath are his.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, To shew why all things that the Father hath are the things of Christ; or, wherein appears the beauty of this disposure of all things.

1. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, that the right and pro-



perty of no party is lost or alienated. When Christ says, "All that the Father hath are mine," the Father's right is not alienated. When, among men, an inheritance is conveyed from one to another, then the conveyer denudes himself of his right; and the other only can say, All is mine; but it is not so here; when Christ says, "All things that the Father hath are mine," he grants that God the Father hath all things; and yet he asserts his own title and possession also, they are all mine; yea, when God gives Christ, and all things to us, he still keeps his right to all that he gives, "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. Thus what the Father gives into Christ's hand remains still in the Father's hand; "And 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," John x. 28, 29, 30.

2. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, namely, in the fitness of the great Trustee to whom all things that the Father hath are committed, that he who is the centre of the glorious Trinity (so to speak) the middle person should be the centre of all things. O sirs, how fit is it that all things should move toward their centre, and meet there! that he should be the Mediator betwixt God and man, the central place of meeting, where God and man, might have all things common betwixt them; and that he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him! Ephes. i. 10. All things good and bad, may be said to be given to Christ's management; all good things are put in his hand to be secured; and all bad things put under his feet to be over-ruled for the glory of God, and the good of his people. None but Christ was capable of such a trust: no mere creature among men or angels were able to bear this glory. It is he that shall build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory, Zech. vi. 13. None but he was capable to be the general receiver of all things that the Father hath, and the disposer and dispenser of all things.

3. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, that in this dispensation the pleasure of all parties is consulted; even the pleasure of all the persons of the glorious Trinity; it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19. The word *Father* there is a supplement, and not in the original; therefore, this work of reposing all things, all fulness in Christ, may be looked upon as not

only the work of the Father, but the work of the whole glorious Trinity ; it pleased the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that in Christ as Mediator, all fulness should dwell : the Father proposed, the Son accepted, the Holy Ghost consented, that in him all fullness should dwell : this was done with rapturous pleasure. It pleased the Father to propose it ; for he says, " I have laid help upon one that is mighty ;" and, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." It pleased the Son to accept : for he says, " Lo ! I come : in the volume of thy book it is written of me I delight to do thy will, O my God !" It pleased the Holy Ghost to consent ; for he rested upon Christ, and furnished him for all his work ; " The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me," Isa. lxi. 1. This unspeakable pleasure is expressed, Isa. xlii. 1, " Behold my Servant, whom I uphold ; mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth," &c. Also, Prov. viii. 30, 31, " I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him," &c. As God consulted his own pleasure herein so the pleasure of all the redeemed, whose eyes are opened to see the glory of this method of salvation : how does it fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory, that in Christ they have all things !

4. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, that in this dispensation the credit and honour of all concerned is consulted : for,

(1.) Here God hath consulted the credit and honour of his own majesty and greatness, in putting all things in the hand of the second Adam, and not transacting any more with man immediately in his own person, now when turned a rebel to his crown and dignity, by transacting immediately with Christ, a person of equal dignity with himself, and giving out all things through him to us. Thus we are taught to keep at a due distance from this infinitely glorious Sovereign, and to come and receive blessings, not immediately from God but by the hand of Christ the Mediator, who saith, " I am the way ; no man cometh to the Father, but by me."

(2.) He consulted the credit of his name, and of all his other glorious excellencies : the credit of his broken law : how it might not only be fulfilled, but magnified to the utmost ; the credit of his offended justice ; how it might be not only satisfied, but glorified to the highest. Why, infinite Wisdom knew that there was nothing that the violated law or injured attributes of God could demand, for the reparation of their honour, but what the sinner's Surety, having all things, could answer with ease and to infinite satisfaction. The Creditor well knew that the Surety was not only creditable, but responsible and able to pay

all the debt, but mighty to save, mighty to satisfy, mighty to give all the infinite satisfaction demanded; insomuch, that mercy to sinners vents without prejudice to justice; and the attributes of God seemingly inconsistent, harmoniously meet in Christ; "Mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other;" whereupon God pardons and justifies, so as not only to be merciful but even just in justifying the ungodly.

(3.) He hath herein consulted the credit of his Son, Christ Jesus, who thus is honoured with a name above every name; all things being his, not only to furnish him for his mediatorial service, but also to reward him for it; because "He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name," Phil. ii. 9. He is honoured with a goodly train a throng court of supplicants; all things that the Father hath being his, that the gathering of the people might be to him for supply, and that revenues of praise might be given him to eternity. Yea,

4. Herein is consulted the credit as well as the profit of all the redeemed. God never honoured the church and people of God, nor advanced them to a higher dignity, than by making over to Christ an universal plenitude, as Head of the body the church; and every believer may say, my Head, my Husband, my Lord, hath all things that the Father hath; and this is the honour of all the saints, they have all things in Christ; and he is made of God unto them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all things, that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord.

V. The fifth and last thing promised was, To make application. If it be so, That our Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, is possessed of all things that the Father hath; then hence,

1. It is most native to infer, what our Lord Jesus himself demonstrates by it, namely, that there is good reason why the Holy Spirit, by taking and shewing the things of Christ, doth glorify him: even because all things that the Father hath are his. The things of Christ are glorious things: why? 1. They are the things of the Father, the things of God. Yea, 2. They are *all* things; nothing is wanting in our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. They are all things that the Father actually hath; they are actually his. They are all mine, saith Christ; and therefore, when the Spirit takes of mine and shews it to you, it cannot but glorify me, and shew my glory; because, if the things of the Father be glorious things, then mine are so; for, "All things that the Father hath are mine." It is remark-



able in the context, that every thing here that the Spirit is said to do, when he comes to enlighten the world, is done by a demonstrative light, and by an evident, clear demonstration; when he shall convince the world of sin how does he it? Even by this demonstration, "Because they believe not in me;" this will above all things discover and demonstrate the world's sin and enmity against God, when he convinceth them of unbelief, or of their not believing in me, but rejecting this greatest instance of divine love, "He will convince of righteousness;" how? Even by this demonstration, that "I have gone to the Father; for, this shews, that God is well-pleased with this righteousness of mine, otherwise I would not have been received thus into the Father's embraces, and to sit in the midst of the throne. He will convince of judgment; how? Even by this demonstration, that the prince of this world is judged; I have by death destroyed him that had the power over death, and execute judgment in person upon enemies; therefore, judgment shall be brought forth into victory in behalf of all his people. And now again, He shall glorify me, says Christ; how? and by what demonstration? Why, He shall take of mine and shew it to you. Well, how will this demonstrate my glory? Why, the argument shineth with demonstrative light, "All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I unto you, he shall receive of mine and shew it unto you;" where our Lord, by doubling the expression, declares what way the Spirit demonstrates his glory; for, whenever the Spirit takes and shews any thing of Christ to us, then he lets in a ray and beam of the Father's glory; because all things that the Father hath are mine, and mine are his, therefore it is impossible when he shews my glory and glorifies me, but the glory of God the Father must shine in with it.

2. If all the things the Father hath are his, then the Father's Spirit is his. He is God equal with the Father; and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God. The Father's Spirit is his, not only naturally, as God; but donatively, as Mediator; and he hath the giving of the Spirit unto men in his power; for, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; and he gave gifts to men," Eph. iv. 8; and he still hath the giving of the Spirit in his hand. The Father says, "I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth, and set judgment in the earth; and the isles

shall wait for his law," Isa. xlii. 1, 3, 4. Hence he says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me." And he having "received gifts for men, even for the rebellious;" see by what authority we go about such solemn work, and execute our ministerial service; why, all the gifts and graces of the Father's Spirit are his to be communicated to us; and therefore as he had power and authority to promise the Spirit, saying, "If I go, I will send him, and he shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you:" so he hath the power and authority to accomplish his promise. His power is equally the same this day, as it was when he first gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; and, I hope, he is to this day giving and sealing our commission; for he that said, "All things that the Father hath are mine, and, All power in heaven and earth is given unto me," said with the same breath, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; and lo I am with you always."

It is therefore in his name, that says, "All things that the Father hath are mine," and in his authority, we execute this commission: and who are the men upon earth, or angels in heaven, that dare take upon them to say it is unlawful; or dare upon any new pretences, and new inventions of their own head, assume the power of counteracting his orders? No power or authority did our Lord ever give to the eminent apostles themselves, but what was for edification, and not for destruction: and what a humbling and astonishing providence is it, that any who bear the name of saints and servants of Christ, should be left of God to such amazing madness and distraction, as to assume to themselves a power for destruction, a power to commit sacrilege and robbery upon the sacred offices of ministers and elders; a power of shutting the door that he hath opened! who alone hath authority to open and shut, and who alone can say, "I have the key of the house of David, that openeth and none shutteth;" of these keys, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, no man can say, they are mine to give and take; yea, no angel dare say, they are mine; but glory, glory to him whose prerogative alone it is to say, "All things that the Father hath are mine." As to the *dear* Brethren, who are left to arrogate such unlawful power to themselves, the worst thing I shall say of them, is, in the Spirit of meekness, what Christ said once to his disciples, "They know not what Spirit they are of."

(1.) The beautiful harmony that had subsisted, from the commencement of the

But to return to what I was saying. The Spirit of Christ is the Father's Spirit, and indeed a fatherly and friendly, not a furious nor violent spirit; "Thus saith the Lord, Fury is not in me;" and it is by this Spirit he seals the commission that he gives to the gospel minister; we read, John xx. 22, that, "The Lord Jesus breathed on his disciples, and said to them, Receive ye the holy Ghost." We pretend to no new revelation of the Spirit, or such extraordinary effusions thereof, as the apostles had; but, yet, what we have heard and seen, we may declare unto you, that you may have fellowship with us in the same Spirit. I hope I can say, even since the time I began to think upon this text, that now and then, the Lord hath breathed upon my soul; and may I not hope, since I began to speak upon it, he hath been breathing upon you? Yea, what do I know, but he is breathing upon some here, and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" For, as all things that the Father hath are mine, so all the gifts, and graces, and influences of the Father's Spirit are mine, to give out to you: therefore, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and so far as this takes place in any measure, so far is he sealing our ministry; let men tear it, and trample on it at their peril.

3. See wherein it is, that the real personal glory of Christ, as Mediator, lies; and what is requisite for his declarative glory. His personal glory lies in this, that all things that the Father hath are

Secession, amongst the Associate Brethren, was, by this time obstructed, by the rupture which had taken place, in the Associate Synod, in April, 1746, concerning the religious clause in some burgess oaths. Though we will have occasion afterwards, where our Author speaks more full and clear to this point, to lay it open; yet, for understanding this passage, it may be proper to observe, That when the sinfulness of the religious clause was condemned by a small majority of a thin meeting at the conclusion of the Synod, in April, 1746, yet the full Synod which met in April, 1747, proposed, "Whether the decision concerning the religious clause in some burgess oaths, in April, 1746, should now, or afterwards, be made a term of ministerial and Christian communion, aye, and until the making the same to be so, shall be referred, by way of overture, unto Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions, in order to their giving their judgment thereanent, &c., or not?" This vote being carried in the negative, the party condemning the religious clause as sinful, immediately withdrew themselves from the Synod, and next day constitute themselves upon a new foundation, suddenly calling themselves the Synod, and the only Synod; and enacted, "That all Presbyteries, Kirk Sessions, and Communities in the Association, were subject to them; and that all Courts, whether Presbyteries, or Sessions, that were not subordinate to them, were unlawful Courts; and that all Ministers and Elders, who were not subject to them, had lost the keys of the kingdom of heaven:" and thus materially suspending and exauctorating all Ministers and Elders from their sacred offices, who could not yield subjection to their authority. It is this piece of their conduct our Author here alludes to.



his ; and that this glory may be declared, he manifests these things, and communicates them by his Spirit. It is not possible he can keep all these things to himself, and give out nothing ; no : it stands upon his honour and credit as Mediator, and the church's Treasurer to give out of that treasure of grace and fulness that is laid up in him for our behoof. Here is a door of hope for sinners, that Christ, as a faithful Trustee, must give out of his grace to make his people willing, and to bring them to himself ; John x. 16, " Other sheep I have that are not of this fold, these (Gentiles, as well as Jews), I must bring, and they shall hear my voice : " them I must bring. We are told, John iv. 4, " He must needs go through Samaria ; " why, for what end ? It was even to give out of his grace to a poor harlot, a vile sinful woman there ; even so, I hope, he must needs go through this congregation to-day, to give out of that store of all things, and of all fulness, which he hath for the sake of some poor vile sinner here. As there was a blessed necessity for his suffering at Jerusalem ; yea, Luke xxiv. 26, " Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ? " Even so, there is a blessed necessity for his applying the virtue of his death and sufferings, by pouring out of his Spirit, and communicating of his fulness. The context here shews, that his glory and honour stands upon this, and his Father's glory too, that the Spirit be sent to show his treasures ; which are both the Father's and his. Christ is not proud of his treasures ; see how high, and yet how humble our Lord Jesus is, so as not to think it below him to stoop and distribute thereof among poor beggars : unbelief says, O will he ever stoop down and wash such a leper as I, when he is so eminently and so infinitely glorious as to have all things that the Father hath ? Yea, but his grandeur and glory does not make him disdainful and lordly ; " Jesus knowing that all things were given him, he stooped down and washed his disciples feet," John xiii. 3. O sirs, it is strange ! man, that hath nothing, is most proud ; but he that hath all things is most humble : and because he is so highly exalted, therefore he stoops to wash polluted sinners, saying, " If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." He is exalted for this very end, to pardon and purge guilty polluted sinners ; " Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel," Acts v. 31. It is no disparagement to his exalted state for him to stoop down and wash your feet, and wash your heart : and this is the way he washeth, by giving pardon and repentance. He

knows, the lower he stoops, the higher will he be honoured in the hearts of his people. Do you think the less of him, O believer, that he stoops and condescends to wash you? No; you think the higher of him. O sinner, do not through unbelief think him too high to look towards you; nay, the higher he is the lower doth he stoop; and, therefore, the higher you conceive he is, the more hope you may conceive of his pity and favour towards you; and the more divine store you see he hath, the more let your expectation arise, for faith hath the more footing.

4. Hence see, how the infinite wisdom of God hath outwitted the policy of the devil, the old serpent, in robbing the first Adam of all his stock, and thereby thinking to destroy all mankind; but, behold, the second Adam appears with a stock incomparably greater than that which the first Adam lost! It was a dismal thing to hear such sad news upon the breach and violation of the old covenant, Behold, all things that man had are lost! But Christ, the new covenant Head, comes in with glad news, Behold, all things that God hath are mine! O happy change of Adams! Happy change of covenants, and covenant Heads! O what a well furnished Saviour is here! All things are mine. And, O how well is it secured in the hands both of the Father and of the Son: for, "All things that the Father hath are mine!" And, O how fully and divinely glorious is the treasure! What more full and extensive than all things? And what more divine than all the things of God? These glorious things, that could never have been seen otherwise, even all the glory of God, to be seen in the face and person of Christ, who is the Father's representative, not in some things, but in all things: here is all the glory of God represented, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

5. Hence see, what a great want it is to want Christ; for then they want all things. Oh! the miserable case of the wicked, ungodly, Christless world; they are cursed in the want of all things: they want all things that God hath, while they are without Christ; without him ordinances are nothing but an empty shell; the sacramental supper, without Christ, is but an empty table; sermons without Christ are but an empty sound; heaven without Christ would be but darkness, and if the Lamb were not the light of the place. But, on the other hand, what a great thing must it be to have Christ? For, they that have him, have all things, Rom. viii. 31. When God gives Christ, he cannot but with him freely give us all things; all things that Christ hath, and all things that the Father

hath. O how happy are believers ! “ All things are yours ; for, ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s : ” you have wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and all things in Christ : it is easy with Christ to supply all your needs, and to give you all-sufficiency in all things, 2 Cor. ix. 8. O what a well-furnished table is the Lord’s table, when the Lord himself is presented upon it ! There is an overflowing ocean of all good in Christ for sinners, infinitely exceeding all our sins and all our wants ; it is unbelief that doth diminish and limit the fulness of Christ ; it reveals a multitude of sins and wants, but it conceals and overlooks the treasure of grace and fulness of all things, that are in Christ. But passing other inferences, at present,

6. Hence see the duty of all poor and needy sinners, and where they ought to go for supply, and for a share of all things they need : and what a broad foundation for faith is here. God in Christ is the fountain of living waters. God the Father hath all things ; but how shall we come at them ? Why, says Christ, come to me ; for, they are all mine ; mine to give out, mine to distribute among poor needy sinners. Here is enough both to excite and direct your faith.

[1.] To move and excite faith. O may the Spirit come for this end. See that whatever you can object here is answered.

(1.) Do you think with yourself, Ah ! I am universally destitute ; I have nothing ? Well, but here is *all things* ; and they are all mine, says Christ ; therefore come to me. But,

(2.) Do you think that God is displeased with you, because of your sin ; and that the Father of Christ hath no favour for you ? Nay, but the fulness here exhibited, is the fulness of God the Father ; even ALL the things that the Father hath. But,

(3.) Do you think, O the Father is far away from me ! how can I have all things that the Father hath ? It is answered, They are all laid up in the hands of a near friend and kinsman ; they are all mine, says Christ, for your use. But,

(4.) Do you think, Alas ! I hear of these glorious things, but I do not apprehend them ; I am blind and in the dark, so as I cannot see any of these *all things* that Christ and his Father hath ? Well, but says Christ ; My Spirit is at hand to receive of mine, and shew it unto you ; and thus to glorify me : he would not glorify me, if he did not shew it unto you. But now, in so far as he is shewing it to you, he is glorifying me, by making me appear glorious to you, more glorious than all the mountains of prey.



The Spirit shews this glory of Christ just in this glass of the word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. And if he be shewing it to you, surely you must be moved to believe with application, that when Christ hath so much, you shall not want ; and that he hath enough to spare unto you. Is it possible to believe his immense fulness, and that he hath *all things*, and yet hath *nothing* to spare for you ? Nay, let faith say it is for me, for me : " He received gifts for men, even for the rebellious." O sirs, as the fulness of the Godhead is in him ; so, if there were ten thousand millions of worlds, Christ could not be pinched to supply all their wants. Here is the well of life ; but who knows how deep it is to the bottom ? The due consideration of this, might provoke all the world to come and draw water out of this well of salvation with joy, this fountain opened for you.

[2.] Here is enough to direct your faith, in and by the same topics that are here before you in the text,

(1.) Remember where all things are to be had ; and that therefore, if you would believe, you must remember, that faith to believe in the Son of God is to be had where all other things are. Faith is the gift of God ; and Christ is the Author of faith ; therefore, seek not to bring faith out of your own bowels ; for, as faith comes by hearing, so nothing but the power of God can produce it effectually ; that is, by the gospel's coming, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost. This power works secretly and silently upon the heart in hearing, when, perhaps, the person little knows that it is the power of God that is dealing with his heart ; when yet, while the Spirit is in the word, shewing the things of Christ, there may be a heart-beating towards him : a heart-bleeding, a heart-bursting, a heart-burning towards him : and possibly, the heart that was hard like a rock, now melting like water before the Lord ; yea, under this drawing power of the Spirit, there may be heart-panting after the Lord, and yet the poor soul, perhaps, doth not know that the power of God is present. This faith cometh not by working or doing, or forcing yourselves up to some strong actings : but it comes by hearing : the actings of faith come by hearing of the object of faith presented in the word, and by hearing what the Spirit says of his glory.

Why then do you stand poring upon your want of power to act faith, as if you were to pull it out of your own breast ? You will be nearer to your purpose, if you pore upon the object of faith, wherein all things are. The soul, in believing, considers not, What

can I do, but what can Christ do? not, What have I in me, but, what hath Christ in him? it is taken up with nothing but Christ; and it is the best act of faith that loses itself, and is swallowed up in his fulness.

(2.) The next direction to your faith, is, Let the claim of right that Christ hath to all things that the Father hath, be your claim. Christ is the first receiver of all things from the Father; and we can receive nothing but through his hand. We have no claim to any thing that the Father hath, but in him whom the Father loveth, and to whom he hath given all things; they must be his before they can be ours. All is mine first, says Christ, before ever you can share; and they are mine, that they may be yours: my mediatorial right to them is on your account: his love falls upon me, that it may descend upon you; his blessing lights upon me, that it may light on you; his Spirit is given to me, and put upon me, that it may be put upon you; his fulness dwelleth in me, that out of my fulness ye may receive, and grace for grace; his promise lights upon me, that it may be accomplished to you: Psalm ii. 9, Rev. ii. 27. Therefore, let your claim of right to any thing the Father hath, be grounded on my right; for, "All things that the Father hath are mine." He is your God, because he is my God; and your Father, because he is my Father; he is yours, because he is mine; and all things the Father hath are yours, because they are mine; all things are yours: for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's. God's kindness toward us is only through Christ, Eph. ii. 7. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings only in Christ, Eph. i. 3; and accepted only in the Beloved, verse 6.

(3.) The third direction to your faith is, O let faith take the testimony of Christ out of his own mouth concerning his own glory, which is here wrapped into the very midst of the Father's glory! "All things that the Father hath are mine," Christ, the Mediator, is the speaker here: and as he declares, to his Father's praise and honour, that all things he hath for us are originally the Father's, even that God, who so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, &c., so he proclaims his own glory that he hath from the Father: "All things that the Father hath are mine." We need not commend Christ to you, as if we could say more than he says himself; there is ten thousand times more in this very word, than men or angels can tell: therefore, O hear his commendation out of his own mouth, "All things that the Father hath are mine." He

says, elsewhere, "Come to me, and I will give you rest." Why? what rest? what happiness? what good things? Even all things that the Father hath, they are put in my hand to give. Christ himself is here the preacher, commending himself, and offering himself. O sirs, is there none here hearkening to him, and saying, O! "It is the voice of my Beloved; behold he cometh, skipping on the mountains, and leaping on the hills? It is the voice of my Beloved, saying, Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for, lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;" the heavy shower of the Father's wrath for your sins, hath fallen on my head, and now all the treasures of the Father's grace and love are put into my hand: and will you not come to me? Rise, my love, my fair one, you shall be fair in my sight, though in yourself a vile monster, and black like hell, by lying among the pots of sin and guilt; yet, rise at my call; let your heart rise, let your soul rise: "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away: all things are ready, come to the marriage." If you intend to come to the marriage supper, come first to the marriage. All things are ready for you, whatever you want; pardon, and peace, and grace, and glory, and every good thing; "All things that the Father hath are mine;" and, "I that speak unto you am he;" and, "To you, O men, do I call; my voice is to the sons of men. If any man thirst let him come to me and drink." Come and drink abundantly of all things that your souls stand in need of: only come to me, and then drink. The Father hath put the cup of salvation in my hand: come then, and take a large draught of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all things that the eternal God hath; for, "All things that the Father hath are mine." A large draught of the Spirit is to be had here. See John vii. 37.

(4) The last direction I offer to your faith is, O! would you take this testimony of Christ? Then receive it in the demonstration of the Spirit, who is come to glorify Christ. Look for the anointing that teaches all things; the Spirit takes and shews them to you. All the glorious things that are spoken of Christ will be tasteless, till the spirit give you a relish of them. But, O sirs, have you not now ground to expect the Spirit, when he that hath all things that the Father hath, hath said, "He shall come, he shall glorify me, he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you;" and again, "He shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you?" And, O! is he not this day shewing you, that the things of God are the



things of Christ, and the things of Christ the things of God? Yea, so far as he hath shewn you that all things that the Father hath are Christ's so far hath he glorified Christ, and made all the glory of God to appear in his face. If you have heard what Christ says of himself, you have heard what the Spirit says; and, O! the voice of the turtle agrees in one with the voice of Christ. This is the turtle dove that rests upon Christ; and when the voice of the turtle is heard, it is another argument by which Christ courts his bride; "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away; the voice of the turtle is heard in our land," Song ii. 10—13. The voice of the turtle is again heard in Dunfermline; the Spirit is come to glorify Christ, by making the words of Christ sound in our ears: "All things that the Father hath are mine."

QUEST. How shall I know, if I have believed what Christ here says, and what the Spirit shews; for, I think I am yet brutish in my knowledge; I think I know nothing of this mysterious glory, how all things that the Father hath are his; I think I have no right notion or understanding herein?

In answer hereto, read and consider Jer. xxvi. 7, "I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: for they shall return to me with their whole heart." Whence you may see, that the promise is not here of a head-knowledge, but a heart knowledge; for many learned heads, that have had very high notions, and lofty speculations, are lying in the bottom of hell: but, though you have not a head to know, yet have you got a heart to know the Lord; a heart desire to know him, such as many learned rabbies never had? And, though you cannot boast of knowing what a Lord he is; (for his glory is infinitely great above the language of men and angels; yet have you got a heart to know that he is the Lord? Not what he is, but that he is the Lord of lords, and King of kings; that he is such a Lord as commands your heart, and is drawing your heart to him, and away from all your lusts and idols, so as you are returning to him with the whole heart? Then he is so far enlightening your minds in the knowledge of his glory, in having all things that the Father hath, as to be giving you what is vastly better than a head to know, even a heart to know him that he is the Lord, a heart-burning desire to know him; yea, says he, I give you a heart to know me, that I am the Lord, that I am thy Lord; therefore worship thou me; for, "All things that the Father hath are mine;" all his power

and glory, dominion, and authority is mine ; and all his treasures and unsearchable riches are mine ; and now that thou hast got a heart to know me, thou art mine too. I have given thee a heart to know me, to love, and fear, and adore me ; you never had such a heart by nature ; it was a heart full of enmity against me, and my Father too ; but yet my Father had a heart toward thee, a heart-love to thee ; and as all things that he hath are mine ; so his heart-love is mine, and he gave it to me, that I might give it to you, and declare it by my Spirit ; and I open his heart to thee in his own words, " I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

Tell me, soul, Dost thou now believe ? and in a way of believing, welcome the Father's Sent, saying, " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ;" and that cometh laden with all spiritual blessings ; yet with all things that the Father hath ? And dost thou welcome the Comforter, that is sent to glorify Christ, by taking of his things and shewing them to you ; and making the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shine into your hearts ? Then surely our glorious Lord is welcoming you to his table, saying, " Rise my love, my fair one, and come away ;" whatever be your wants, my Father hath let me want for nothing. Do you want life or light, or strength, or pardon, or grace ? Let all your wants be upon me ; for, " All things that the Father hath are mine."

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## PART OF THE DISCOURSE AT FENCING THE TABLES.

WE are now to set about the work of commemorating the love of Christ in giving himself a sacrifice to satisfy justice for our sins ; and to remember the love of God in Christ, in whom is treasured up all things that the Father hath to dispense to poor sinners. Here is a feast of fat things to us ; but, though it be presented on the gospel-table to all sinners that hear the gospel, yet it is presented on the communion-table, only to believers and friends, who alone are capable of communion with him in all these things which the Father hath intrusted him with.

Therefore, I must debar enemies, who evidence themselves to

be so, by their continuing to be impenitent breakers of God's commands, &c.<sup>1</sup>

But, on the other hand, I do, in the same name and authority, invite to the table of the Lord, all believers, and lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ, even though they have been formerly of the black catalogue I have mentioned ; if, upon a view of the glory of Christ, they are brought to abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes. All who are brought to believe, that all things the Father hath are Christ's, and to be joyfully content that they should be humbled to nothing, and that Christ should be all things to them ; and particularly, as made of God to them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Are you taking with your name, folly, and guilt, and sin, and misery ; and yet would willingly give Christ the honour of his name, as made of God to you these opposite remedies, viz., wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption ? Are you taking with your vile name, saying, " Truth, Lord, I am a dog ;" yet, with the dogs, wanting to eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table ? Are you taking with your name, Nothing Nothing ? Saying, I am nothing but sin, I have nothing but sin, I can do nothing but sin, I deserve nothing but hell and wrath ; and yet for all this my heart leaps within me for joy, to think of Christ's being all things to me, and having all things that the Father hath ? Are you content to be nothing, that Christ may be all things to you ? And to be worse than nothing, that Christ may be better than all things to you ? Is that the frame of soul you are in, or have been in this day ? Then, O come to his table, and share of all things that he hath.

Have you got the faith of this glorious truth that proceeded out of the mouth of Christ, " All things that the Father hath are mine ?" And have you therein seen his glory ? If so, then, 1. You have seen the glory of Christ, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And hence, 2. You have seen Christ's treasure to be very great and extensive ; no less than all things that can render you happy for ever. 3. You have seen the store and treasure he hath, to be divine and excellent things ; to be the things of God the Father. 4. You have seen Christ's interest and the Father's twisted together ; and hence have seen the things

(1.) Though there be no precise form observed in fencing the Lord's table, every minister being at liberty in this matter ; yet all the impenitent breakers of the Moral Law are generally debarred ; of these our Author gives a specimen, in Vol. I.



of Christ to be the things of God ; and the things of God to be the things of Christ ; the blood of Christ to be the blood of God ; the righteousness of Christ to be the righteousness of God ; the words of Christ to be the words of God ; and the fullness of Christ to be the fulness of God. 5. You have seen that though you have nothing, yet he hath enough to spare for you ; that in your Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. If you thought there was nothing to spare for you, it would flow from this unbelieving thought that there is not bread enough, fulness enough in Christ ; for, if you believe there is bread enough in him, then you will believe there is to spare also ; and hence, have you not seen that your present, chief, and only good lies here ? And do you boast of this as enough, and glory in Christ ; for, " In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." 6. Do you value and highly prize the Anointing that teacheth all things ; and highly prize the Spirit's work in glorifying Christ, by taking of his and shewing it to you ? And are you glad of every glance of his glory that the Spirit gives you in the word of grace ; and in so far as he gives you a heart to know him, a heart's desire after him, and a heart's delight in him ? O have you got some glance of a glorious Trinity in this text ; and of the joint concern each person thereof hath, according to the distinct economy of the glorious Three-one God, in carrying on this work of redemption and salvation ? And are you well-pleased with this device as most honourable to God, and profitable to you ? Hath any thing like this been formerly or presently your heart-ravishing exercise ? Then, O man, woman, thou art greatly beloved ; Christ is here himself inviting you to his table, and saying, " Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away," resting on me for all things ; for, " All things that the Father hath are mine."

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### THE DISCOURSE AT THE SERVICE OF THE FIRST TABLE.

Now, believer, you are set down to a feast of fat things, a feast of great and g'lorious things. The Master of the feast, who is the matter of it, is saying, " All things that the Father hath are mine ;" and they are mine for you ; all my Father's treasures are mine ;

and all my treasures are for you ; and I am sent of the Father to give all to you, to give his love to you which he gave to me : see John xvii. 23, 26. I am sent with the word of salvation to you ; and am sent with the cup of salvation, and the bread of life to you.

“ Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night wherein he was betrayed, took bread,” &c. O my friends, remember that as all things that God hath are Christ’s, so all things that Christ hath are God’s. This bread here, sacramentally representing the broken body of Christ, is the bread of God ; 1 John iii. 16. “ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us,” that sin and guilt being expiated, and justice being satisfied, a vent might be made for all things that the Father had to communicate unto you.

“ After the same manner also, after supper, he took the cup,” &c. Now, all things that God the Father hath, all the fruits of the love of God in Christ, are in this cup of blessings. You are now getting the seal of the covenant of promise, and you may be sure that the covenant is well ordered in all things, seeing that all things the Father hath are his, and committed to his management ; therefore, all things, however heavy and trying, shall be well ordered. All the children shall have this to say in the issue of all their troubles, that “ He hath done all things well.” It is unbelief that says O ! this and that is an ill-ordered providence, an ill-ordered trial. Tarry a little, till faith look up and see that Christ hath the management of it, and you will see therein infinite wisdom and holiness, truth and faithfulness. And in the faith of all being in Christ’s hand, by the Father’s appointment, you will have ground to say, O well ordered temptation, that hath thus tended to humble me ; well ordered tribulation, that made me seek and take rest in God only as my hiding place ; well ordered oppression that I met with, which, through grace, made me to run to him who is a refuge for the oppressed ; well ordered chastisement, that hath sent me to my heavenly Father ; well ordered losses and crosses, that have contributed to win my heart, and made Christ precious to me ; well-ordered desertion, that embittered sin to me, which separated between God and my soul, and made God’s presence more precious to me than ever ; well ordered victory, that sin and Satan got over me, that tended to fill my soul with holy revenge against sin ; and made me set the power of heaven against the power of hell, and the power of Christ against the power of sin ; well ordered disappointment I met with at such a time, that made me know that God is a sovereign

to be waited on, and not limited to my time ; well ordered calumny and reproach cast upon my name, that made me to seek to have my name perfumed with the savour of Christ's name, which is as ointment poured forth, and made me see how I was honoured to have some conformity to Christ, who was most innocent, yet most reproached ; and even to glory in the cross of Christ, and reckon the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt ; for I have found, that when I have been reproached for the name of Christ, the Spirit of God and of glory hath rested on me ; O well ordered providence, that hath dried up the streams of creature comforts, and worldly enjoyments, that I might betake myself to the fountain of consolation ; well-ordered dispensation, that friends and brethren turned their backs upon me ; for, " When all men forsook me, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me ;" and, " I was not alone, for the Father was with me ;" O well ordered weakness and fainting, under such and such a shaking and sinking providence, that made me run to that name of the Lord as a strong tower, the God who gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength ; for, " The Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary ; there is no searching of his understanding." The covenant being well ordered in all things, makes even the greatest extremity to be well ordered, for making the Lord's appearing at such a time to be the more wonderful and welcome ; and all, because Christ hath all things that the Father hath, and the ordering of all providences, and will make all work together for good to them that love him.

You may be sure that all things that God hath promised will be accomplished ; for, " The promises are all Yea and Amen in Christ." You may be sure that all things whatsoever you ask believingly, you shall receive, John xiv. 13, 14, and chap. xvi. 23.

Here is a never failing fountain of joy and comfort to you, though all things else should fail you ; though flesh and heart should fail you ; though the good frame you have should fail you ; though ministers and people should fail you, yet God will fail you never ; for, " He will be the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever." All things that you have, and that creatures have, may fail, because all flesh is grass ; but the all things that the Father hath cannot fail you, because Christ is possessed of them ; he has said, they are *all mine*.



## THE DISCOURSE AFTER THE SOLEMN WORK WAS ENDED.

Now, O believer, improve the doctrine delivered out of Christ's mouth, saying, "All things that the Father hath are mine;" and therein see the new covenant and the superiority of the second Adam to the first; we have all things in the second Adam to greater advantage than ever we could have had, if the stock had remained in the hands of the first Adam. Why, we have all things in Christ.

1. More gloriously, he being the glorious God, the brightness of the Father's glory: hence the new covenant ministration is said to exceed in glory, 2 Cor. iii. 9, and the gospel is called the glorious gospel; because therein the glory of God shines more brightly than ever it did under the law, or could have done in the first covenant.

2. In Christ we have all things more abundantly, John x. 10. "He came to give life, and to give it more abundantly;" he came to give grace, and to give it more abundantly; he came to give glory, and to give it more abundantly; he came to give obedience to the law more abundantly, even to magnify the law; to give satisfaction to justice more abundantly; to give satisfaction to all the attributes of God more abundantly than could have been done any other way.

3. In Christ we have all things more safely, all the stock being so well secured in his hand; the bonds of provision being all sealed with his blood; for, all the promises of God are so many bonds and obligations faith hath to rely upon; they are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God, 2 Cor. i. 20.

4. In Christ we have all things more comfortably. This is the comfort as well as the honour of all the saints, that now their store is lodged in the hand of the Father's Beloved, and their Beloved; in whom God is well pleased, and they are well pleased; and that their supply runs in such a sweet channel; for, thus "We enjoy God, through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement," Rom. v. 11.

5. In Christ we have all things more wonderfully, to the surprise and admiration of men and angels. Christ's name is wonderful to all the rational world, that are enlightened in the knowledge of him; "Great is the mystery of godliness." Angels desire to look into it; and new scenes of wonder will open out of this contrivance of infinite wisdom to all eternity.

6. In Christ we have all things more durably ; I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever," Psalm lxxxix. 2. The covenant of grace and mercy is an everlasting covenant ; it stands fast in Christ. The covenant of works was properly betwixt God and man, like a bridge over a river, the one end built with firm stone, the other of fading clay, and so the weak end fell down ; and there is no passing to heaven by any such bridge : by any such covenant : Such is the Armenian's covenant, that makes God's will one end of it, and man's free will another ; but no wonder that the weak end fall down, and there be no passage that way. But the covenant of grace is better ordered, and better built ; it is made betwixt God and Christ, two divine and everlasting persons ; therefore, " Mercy shall be built up for ever." If it be asked, What is our part of the covenant ? Indeed we make no part of the bridge at all ; we are only called by faith to pass along by this bridge ; this faith is properly no part of the bridge itself, but a taking the bridge, when, in a day of power, we are persuaded to take it ; that is, to embrace Christ, and receive him, and then to walk in him ; and so to walk along the bridge till we come to heaven, and thus to live a life of faith and gospel obedience.

7. In Christ we have all things more freely. As the new covenant bridge is firm, so it is free to all passengers. At some bridges there is money to pay before you be allowed to pass ; but there is none here ; whosoever will, may come and pass. But the old covenant bridge is still the old price ; it requires more money of personal obedience to the law than you are able to give it ; whereas the new covenant bridge is such a free passage that it requires less money than you are willing to give, Isaiah, lv. 1, 2, 3, till God, by a work of humiliation, let you see your empty purse, and make you willing to be saved by free grace, and content to be obliged to Christ for all things, and that because all things that the Father hath are his. You that have a full purse, and are rich and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing, valuing yourselves upon your good hearts, your good duties, your good endeavours and meanings, your privileges, performances, and attainments, you mistake if you expect passage for your money by the old bridge of the covenant of works ; know, that you and your money will perish ; that bridge will fail you ; for " By the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified, All your righteousness are as filthy rags ;" you will fall into the gulf of wrath. But, for you that are poor, miserable, wretched, blind,

and naked, having no money, no grace, no good qualifications that you can see, which indeed is the case with all, though all have not their eyes open to see it; here is a good passage to you, free passage; and the poorer you come, the welcomer. As Christ hath laid himself like a bridge over the gulf of God's wrath and terrible justice, over which we may pass to the enjoyment of God; so, he hath all things provided for the poorest passenger. Christ is the way to the Father; and there is no fear of want of provision for them that take this way; for, "All things that the Father hath are his."

8. In Christ we have all things more honourably; and this is the honour of all the saints, that Christ is their all; and that of God they are in Christ Jesus, who of God also is made unto them, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and all things. Here is divine plenty and variety; for, in him, as a Prophet, they have all things necessary for their instruction and illumination; in him, as a Priest, they have all things necessary for their justification; in him as a King, all things needful for their sanctification; in him, as a Physician, they have all things needful for their healing; in him, as a Surety, they have all things necessary for paying their debt; in him, as a Treasurer, all things necessary for supplying their wants; in him, as a Counsellor, all things necessary for their direction; in him, as a Commander, all things necessary for their protection; in him, as an everlasting Father, all things necessary for their everlasting provision. Here, indeed, is royal provision, and honourable entertainment. Nothing is wanting where all things are; and surely, if you be a gospel believer, who are a hearer of these glad tidings, you will not be standing on dishonourable terms with God. It were dishonourable to a great man to offer money for a free feast, to which he invites his guests; how dishonourable to the great God is it to stand upon terms and conditions with him? He stands upon no terms with us who have nothing, when he invites us to come and share of all things freely.

God stood upon terms with the Surety, Jesus Christ; terms honourable to law and justice, viz., perfect obedience and complete satisfaction; but now Christ having fulfilled these terms, to the honour of law and justice, therefore God stands now upon no terms with the sinner, but allows him to come freely to him to whom he hath given all things. This is, indeed, an honourable way; more honour comes to God this way than any other, and more to the poor soul that comes to live upon this glorious and honourable steward, that saith, "All things that the Father hath are mine."



Again, hence let all believers learn to lay all things they want over against the all things that Christ hath ; when you think on your guiltiness, look to Christ's righteousness, and lay this over against that ; when you apprehend your weakness, then apprehend Christ's strength, and lay this over against that ; when you consider your emptiness, consider Christ's fulness, and lay this over against that. Study Christ and your condition together ; for, if you study your condition without studying Christ, then you will be full of despair and discouragement ; and if you study Christ, without studying your condition, then you will be filled with pride and presumption. If you be ignorant, think upon Christ as a Prophet ; if guilty, now think upon Christ as a Priest ; if enslaved, now study him as a King ; Christ hath titles suited to your condition ; therefore lay his titles and your condition together. It is remarkable that all the epistles to the seven churches of Asia begin with some title of Christ, suited to the condition of that church ; for example, his title to the church of Smyrna, Rev. ii. 8, is, " The first and the last, that was dead and is alive ;" why so ? Because they were to suffer hard things, and were called to be faithful unto death, and so on ; he shews that he hath titles suited to every case. Thus, set you his names and titles that suit your condition, just over against it, and assure yourselves that Christ will make good his titles that he is clothed with ; if the title be, " The Lord is my shepherd," then I may assure myself, " I shall not want," Psalm xxiii. 1. Thus do you ; when you find distress among the saints, then remember his title, " The King of Saints ;" when there is a disorder among the nations, remember his title, " The King of nations ;" when you find darkness overspreading your souls, remember his title, " I am the Light of the world ;" when you find death and deadness taking place, remember his title, " I am the resurrection and the life ;" when you are reproached, troubled, and oppressed, remember his title that he is a " Refuge in time of trouble, a present help." Know that as Christ and the promise is yours, in the gospel-offer and publication, to be believed in, and rested upon ; so, Christ is so far yours in possession, as you through grace improve him, and rest upon him ; and the promise is so far yours in possession, as you improve it, and rest upon it. Thus you may be possessed of all things.

Again, hence learn how groundless the complaints of believers are when they complain of wants. Whatever you want, yet still look to him, and you will see you want nothing. Do you say,

Alas! I want such and such a near relation? Why, do you complain as long as you have such a relation as Christ living? Will you say, I want a dear child? Is he not better to you than ten children? Do you want a father as long as your everlasting Father remains? Yea, here is comfort enough even in the case of parting with all things in the world; you may say joyfully, Farewell passing shadows and empty nothings, and welcome Jesus who hath all things that the Father hath, and who invites me to the everlasting enjoyment thereof. Let no extreme difficulty discourage you, and make you think, Oh! it is impossible relief can now come; what? are not all things possible to him that hath all things in his hand? Yea, "All things are possible to him that believeth;" and it is possible for you to do all things through Christ strengthening you, even to overleap the highest walls, to break bows of steel in pieces, and wade through the deepest fords in your way. "What ailed thee, O sea! that thou fleddest? and thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Tremble thou earth at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob."

O believer! let him that hath all things the Father hath, be all things to you; let him be the all of your knowledge, saying with Paul, "I desire to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified;" what, Paul, was you not acquainted with the heathen poets, and all the learning of your age? True; but I count all dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; in knowing him I know all things. Let Christ be the all of your desire, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee, Psalm lxxiii. 25. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple," Psalm xxvii. 4. This is my salvation and all my desire. Let him be the all of your love and delight; let him be the all of your esteem, the all of your joy, the all of your gloriation, the all of your life, and the all of your trust and confidence.

Again, O believer, hold your claim to all things only in him who hath "All things that the Father hath;" and reckon yourself sure of nothing but what you have in him. What claim have you to the promises, but in him in whom they are all, Yea, and Amen? What claim to pardon of sin, but only in his blood? What claim have you to a comfortable life, but in him who is the Consolation of Israel? What claim to a happy death, but in him who hath the

keys of hell and of death? What claim to a blessed resurrection, but in him who is the resurrection and the life, and is risen as the first fruits of them that sleep? What claim to everlasting life, but in him who is the true God and eternal life? "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." What claim have you to God as your God and Father, but in him who says, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God?" As a sound believer will hold his claim to all things only in Christ; so, he will reckon himself sure of nothing but what he hath in Christ. What you have in the world you are not sure of for a day nor a moment; what you have in your own hand may quickly be lost, whether they are temporal or spiritual enjoyments; flesh, and heart, and frames, and comforts, and all may fail you; but of all things you have in Christ, you may well reckon yourself sure; they are as safe in his hand as in his Father's, for he and his Father are one, John x. 28, 29, 30.

The great promise of the new covenant is, "I will be thy God;" this promise comprehends all things that God hath to give, and all things we need to make us happy for time and eternity. But if the question be, How shall this promise be made good to us? We are to remember that this new covenant promise is made first to Christ, the seed of the woman, spoken of, Gen. iii. 15, and who is called the seed of Abraham, Gen. xxii. 18, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed;" this is distinctly explained of Christ, Gal. iii. 16, "Now to Abraham and to his seed were the promises made; He says not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, that is Christ." Now, the promises being all made to Christ primarily, this promise, "I will be thy God," lights first upon him as Mediator, and he claims it, according as it is said, Psalm lxxxix. 26, "Thou art my Father; he shall cry, thou art my God alone;" he claimed it when hanging upon the cross, with an "ELI, ELI, My God, my God;" he claimed it when mounting the throne, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God." It is therefore evident how God becomes our God, according to that promise, "I will be thy God;" we are to look upon it as a promise made first to Christ, our glorious Mediator and exalted Head; if it did not belong to him first, it could not belong to us; God and all things that he hath are his; and in him, God and all things that he hath come to be ours, who believe in him; and who believe so as to receive his testimony that he gives of himself, saying, "All things that the Father hath are mine."



But if the next question be, How are all things that Christ hath made ours? We answer, By manifestation and communication, as the context shews; "All things that the Father hath are mine;" that is, either, 1. Mine to give you a sight of them by manifestation; or, 2. Mine to give you a share of them by communication; or, 3. Mine to give you both a sight and share by manifesting and communicating them. For this end the Spirit shall be sent to glorify me, by receiving of mine and shewing it to you."

Hence see reason to hearken to Christ's voice, when he comes to open and discover the Father's treasures, and dispense them to us. The Father hath said of him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;" why then, let us hear what he says; and, 1. What says he of his Father? namely, That the Father hath all things; yea, but what is that to us? The Father is not our Redeemer; he did not take on our nature; he did not become our kinsman. Well, but 2. What says he of HIMSELF? "All things that the Father hath are mine;" and therefore you have a concern in them, a relation to them, and a right to claim them as your own; in him whom the Father hath given to be a covenant of the people, the light of the Gentiles, and to be wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; a Prophet, Priest, King, and all to you.

Our Lord speaks here of all things the Father hath as his, not essentially, by nature, as he is God; for thus he and his Father are one; but economically, by office, as he is Mediator; for thus, he is the Father's Servant and Commissioner, to come and discover and dispense all his treasures that he hath to give out to us, and that we as creatures are capable of receiving and enjoying; more particularly when he says, "All things that the Father hath are mine."

[1.] He says the Father himself is mine; he is my Father, and my God; and this I came to tell you, that in me you may see him to be your Father, and your God, and hear him saying, as Jer. iii. 4, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father?" It is in Christ that he issues out that first command, "Thou shalt have no other God before me;" but know and acknowledge him to be the Lord your God and Redeemer. Thus, by the hand of Christ, God discovers and dispenses himself to us as our God and Father; this includes all things else that can be said; all things he hath are mine, because he himself is mine; and this discovery opens your right to him as your God and Father too, because of your right to

me ; and you have such a right to me by virtue of my being the Father's gift to you, that you must claim me as your own ; " God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. My Father gives you the true bread," to be used as your own ; and if you reject it, you reject your own mercy, as the Jews did, of whom it is said, " He came to his own, and his own received him not ;" and in rejecting him, they reject the Father, and all things that Christ and his Father had to give unto them ; when Christ says, the Father himself is my God and Father, then he discovers and dispenses to us the claim we have to the Father as our God and Father ; he is mine, and therefore yours who receive me ; " All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. But,

[2.] And more particularly, as the Father is mine, so, " All things that the Father hath are mine ;" and here is also a field to travel through, which to all eternity we can never come to the end of. Besides what I have formerly offered, there are some particulars I would mention, which we may gather from the word. What then are the particular things the Father hath, which Christ speaks of, saying, They are mine to discover and dispense to the children of men ? The sum of them is,

The Father's mind is mine to discover and disclose unto you ; and, indeed, God's mind is himself, and when his mind is told he himself is declared, see John i. 18, " No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The Father's mind is his bosom, and Christ was and for ever is in the Father's bosom, and he hath declared him ; not only as a Prophet declaring the mind of God, but as the heavens declare the glory of God ; Christ is not only a great Prophet to teach, but a bright Heaven to declare the Father's mind ; for he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. When therefore he says, " All things that the Father hath are mine," he says, the Father's mind is mine to discover and dispense to you.

QUEST. What are the special things in the Father's mind, that are in Christ's commission also, to discover and dispense ?

ANSW. Many things of this sort doth Christ declare in this sermon to his disciples, from chap. xiv. to the end of this chapter. I will name five or six.

1. It was the Father's mind that Christ should tell us of a resting-place from heart trouble, even in this world; and that this resting-place is not an absolute God, but a God in Christ, John xiv. 1, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me;" and that thus and thus only, you will get rest to your hearts, in God even by me; for, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." It was my Father's mind, that I should come and bring you to God; for, as it is said, 1 Pet. iii. 18, "Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; Rev. v. 9, Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood; Let not your heart be troubled, then, ye believe in God, believe also in me, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation;" and in whom God hath found rest and satisfaction to his justice, that ye may rest safe where God rests, even in me.

2. It was the Father's mind that Christ should tell us of a resting-place in the world to come, after all our troubles in this world are at an end; therefore he says, John xiv. 2, 3, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." It was the Father's mind that Christ had to discover and dispense to us, to shew us how we might enter into rest here, from all heart trouble; for, "He that believeth hath entered into his rest;" and to shew us what a blessed rest remains for the people of God at the end of time. It was the Father's mind that Christ should tell of his Father's house, which was to be their everlasting home; and that their everlasting rest was to be with him and his Father there.

3. It was the Father's mind that Christ should come and tell us we were to have the Father's ear whenever we should apply to the throne of grace; "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it," John xiv. 13, 14. It says, we should never want errands to come to God withal, but yet come when we would in the name of Christ, we should have his ear open to our suits, as the hearer of prayer, and the answerer of requests.

4. It was the Father's mind that Christ should tell us of the blessed Comforter, John xiv.; his name and abode with us, ver. 16, 17, 18; his attendants, namely, the Father and the Son, verse 23;



his offices, ver. 26, xv. 26, xvi. 8, 9, 10, 14, 15; all shewing how he was to confirm and comfort them. Again, among the mysteries of the Father's mind,

5. It was the Father's mind that Christ should come and shew his disciples the proper and needful purgatory he designed to bring them through; not the antichristian purgatory, after this life; for there is no word of this in the sacred oracles; but the Christian purgatory is three-fold; the first is, the bloody purgatory of the blood of Christ, that cleanseth from all sin. The second is, the fiery purgatory of the Spirit of Christ, and his operations, compared to fire. The third is, the crying and pruning purgatory of the cross. All these, but especially the last, seem to be spoke of by our Lord here, John xv. 2, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." There are two things in this world that he makes use of for trying, purging, and purifying his disciples; and it is part of his Father's mind to tell them of this; there is, 1. The world's hatred, John xv. 18, 19, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." 2. The world's rage, John xvi. 2, "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think he doth God service," &c. It was his mind to tell them the worst as well as the best.

6. It was the Father's mind that Christ should come and publish the Father's peace, and his peace to them amidst all their tribulations, see and compare John xiv. 27 with xvi. 33. It is another sort of peace than that of the world, which is a sinful and carnal peace, whereas this is holy; that is a crazy, brittle peace, whereas this is abiding; that, an outward peace from outward things; this, from inward and spiritual things; that, outward objectively; this, inward subjectively, solid heart peace, Phil. iv. 7, the peace of God; that a peace that is soon off, indeed; but this, like that in Psalm cxix. 165, "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." Lovers of the truth are least liable to offence; many take offence where none is given; thus Christ himself was a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence; he was to the Jews a stumbling-block; they were offended at his person and doctrine; "Because I said, except you eat my flesh, and

drink my blood, you cannot have life, &c. Doth this offend you?" When men are offended at the word of God, it argues little love to the word; for, "Great peace have they that love thy word, and nothing shall offend them." This divine peace is the part of the mind of God that Christ hath to discover to his disciples. God is the God of peace; and all things that God hath, Christ hath to give; therefore says, "My peace I leave to you: in me ye shall have peace."

I shall only add a word in general to all. Let none go away from this occasion, complaining, and saying, There was nothing to spare for them; for, behold, before you go, I will give you something that is worth a thousand worlds, and that is an offer of Christ, and all things in him that can make your soul happy for ever, even all the unsearchable riches of Christ; he is courting you, and commending himself to you, in these words, "All things that the Father hath are mine:" there is therefore nothing to hinder your matching and marrying with the Son of God; "All things are ready, come to the marriage, Matt. xxii. 4. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things to him," and hath made him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all things for your use, that you may receive and welcome him: he wants nothing, for he hath all things ready: and if you say, you are not ready, for you want all things; you want faith, repentance, love, and every grace; your want is no excuse, but a reason why you must come to him for all things you want; you will never share of them nor find them, but where they are; if you come not to him, you must want for ever, and live and die cursed in the want of all things. O may your ears be opened to hear the voice of Christ, saying, "Come to me: whosoever will let him come, and take the waters of life freely:" that is, of all good things that I have to give; for, "All things that the Father hath are mine."

## SERMON CXLIII.

TRUE LOVERS OF GOD HIGHLY PRIVILEGED: OR, THE GREAT COMFORT OF BELIEVERS IN THE CO-OPERATION OF ALL THINGS FOR THEIR GOOD.<sup>1</sup>

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose.”—Rom. viii. 28.

THIS chapter is like a string of pearls, every one of them more precious than another; if we might loose the string, and single out this one from among the rest, to take a particular view thereof, we may find an immense worth and preciousness in it. The whole of this chapter is consolatory; and holds forth some special grounds of consolation for supporting justified and sanctified ones against all evil whatsoever. We may take up the substance of the chapter in four heads.

1. We have comfort against the condemning sentence of the law, in the beginning of the chapter, to the fifth verse. Such as have union with Christ, have no reason to fear the dreadful sentence of the minatory part of the law.

2. We have comfort against indwelling sin that adheres even to them that are justified and sanctified; for, it shall never hinder the indwelling of the Spirit here, nor the glorious resurrection of the body at the last day, nor the eternal happiness of both soul and body; from the fifth to the seventeenth verse.

3. There is comfort against all afflictions, crosses, and tribulations in this world; from verse seventeenth to the thirty-third.

4. Not only comfort against all adversity, but against all adversaries whatsoever, and against all charges and challenges, insomuch that believers are brought in triumphing in the God that justifies, so as none can lay anything to their charge.

The chapter begins with no condemnation to the believer; and it ends with no separation from Christ; and, to be sure, the top stone has a solid foundation, for nothing can be more certain than this. That there is no condemnation to them, as to whom there is no separation from Christ.

(1) This Sermon was preached at Glasgow, on Monday, October 4th, 1747, being a thanksgiving day, after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper there.



This text is one of the pearls of the third part of this chapter ; and it contains a sum of the believer's comforts. There are two things especially that hinder the comfort and consolation of a Christian ; the one is sin, the head of the serpent ; and the other is affliction, the tail of the serpent : against which the apostle brings a sovereign remedy, taken from the providence of God, which is the daily executor of his purpose, " Working all things according to the counsel of his will," and making them the means to help forward the happy end ; nothing shall hinder, but rather everything shall promote their spiritual good and eternal happiness, " All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose."

The words contain two general parts. We have, 1. A divine consolation, encouragement, and privilege ; " We know that all things work together for good." 2. A due limitation or restriction, specifying the objects to whom this comfort pertains ; it is to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose.

1. We have a divine consolation, or great privilege asserted : wherein you may observe four things most comfortable and remarkable. (1.) A blessed end proposed, namely, Good ; spiritual and eternal good. (2.) The plentiful means for accomplishing this end, namely, all things. Here is a general including all particulars. (3.) The harmonious influence that these means have for reaching this end, they work ; and they work together in a wonderful harmony. (4.) The certain evidence hereof, " We know it," says the apostle, both by faith and experience, " that all things work together for good to them that love God." The operation of the Spirit, in helping the infirmities of the saints, of which the apostle was just now speaking, is not more certain than this wonderful dispensation of providence ; for it is emphatically asserted, in connection with that and the other great truths here delivered ; and " We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

2. We have a due limitation, or restriction ; or, if you will, a specification of the objects to whom this comfort pertains, to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose. And here also four things may be observed. (1.) The cardinal grace by which the believing child of God is described, namely *love*. (2.) The glorious object on whom this love is terminate, namely *God*. Every believer is a lover ; and the principal object of his love, is a God in Christ. (3.) The immediate root and spring of this love, and

that is calling; they are called, viz., effectually, and so have Christ formed in them, and are new creatures. (4.) The eternal foundation of this call, and that is the divine purpose; they are called according to his purpose, and this purpose of God, as the foundation of effectual calling, is more clearly explained in the following verses, 29, 30. "Whom he did foreknow, them also he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." There is, therefore, here a remarkable chain in answering this question, Who they are to whom all things shall work together for good? Why, it is the elect. But how shall we know who are elect? Why, they are effectually called in time. But how shall we know who are effectually called? Why, even by their love to God; we may know eternal election by vocation; and effectual vocation by our internal affection toward God in Christ.

Observe in general, "That God's free love and gracious purpose is fertile and productive of many precious fruits." Why, on this root grows the blessing of effectual calling, wherein the seed of all grace is sown, whence love particularly springs; insomuch, that our love to God, if it be true and genuine, is the fruit of God's everlasting love to us. On this root also grows the co-operation of all things for our good; insomuch, that it may well be said of believers in Christ, and lovers of God, ALL things are yours. The God that made all things had no other design in doing so, but his own glory, and the good of his friends and lovers. O! how fruitful is his free love and gracious purpose? I might here relate to you some of the special fruits of his love; but I proceed to the doctrine I mainly intend.

**OBSERV.** That it is the comfortable privilege of all God's loving children, that "All things shall work together for their good."

The method we propose for handling this important subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, is the following:—

- I. To inquire what we are to understand by this note of universality, ALL THINGS?
- II. What is this GOOD that all things shall work? that God's lovers may know what they are to look for.

- III. What is the meaning of their working, and working together for good.
- IV. Inquire a little into the character of these who are thus privileged, namely, as they are lovers of God, being called according to his purpose.
- V. Show whence it is, that all things shall thus work together for good to them; and so point out the evidences the apostle hath for saying, We know that it shall be so; and here also observe the suitableness and connexion between this character of loving God, and this privilege of all things working together for good.
- VI. Deduce some inferences for the application of the whole.

1. We are first to open up this note of universality, **ALL THINGS**. This we shall essay both negatively and positively.

1st, View it negatively. And, in general, we are not to understand it simply or absolutely, but relatively or respectively: that is to say, we are not so to view it, as if all things indefinitely, even these that the believer has no concern in, or notice of; such as all things that fall out in China or Japan were to work for his good who lives here: but we are to understand it relatively, of all things that relate to him, and wherein he is immediately concerned, and whereby he is exercised, such as all afflictive things, whereof the apostle had been speaking. Therefore,

2dly, Let us view it positively, and more particularly; all things that he hath to do with, whether good or bad. I shall offer a short catalogue of good things and evil things that shall work for the believer's good and advantage: here is a little word **ALL**, but it is great in signification: and all that can be said of all things must be but a few things; for *all things* is a subject that would never be exhausted.

[1.] I offer a catalogue of good things, that shall work for their advantage.

1. To begin with the best, **GOD** himself, who is the chief good, he works for their good. He that made all things, and orders all things, and governs all things, and to whom all things are nothing, and by whom all things subsist and move; if he work for their good, all things must do so, according as he orders them: but so it is, that God, and all things in God work for their good.

All the attributes of God work for their good; his wisdom, -



power, holiness, justice, goodness, faithfulness : his infinity, eternity, unchangeableness. I might particularly instance in every one of them, but I only consider them altogether working for their good, Gen. xvii. 1, 2, "I am God all sufficient ; walk before me, and be thou perfect. I will make my covenant between me and thee ;" intimating, his all sufficiency was to be forthcoming by way of free covenant promise ; "My grace shall be sufficient for thee ;" my wisdom shall be sufficient for thy direction : my power, for thy protection ; my holiness, for thy sanctification ; my justification, upon the footing of a justice-satisfying sacrifice ; my mercy, for thy commiseration ; my truth and faithfulness, for thy consolation ; my unchangeableness, for thy security and confirmation ; and my eternal being for thy eternal blessedness.

Again, as all the attributes of God, so all the works of God that ever he made, work for his people's good : his great end in making the world, was for the glory of his name and the good of his elect. Wherefore made he heaven and earth ? Why, he made the heaven for their habitation, in the end ; and earth, for their accommodation by the way ; and hence not only are they heirs of heaven but of the earth also ; "Blessed are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth," Mat. v. 3.

Again, not only all his works, but all his words work for their good ; both law and gospel : the law is their schoolmaster to lead them to Christ, by shewing them their sin and misery ; the gospel is the glass wherein they see the glory of Christ, and of God in him to their transformation, 2 Cor. iii. 18. In short, all the threatenings of the word, are for their excitation ; all the promises, for their consolation ; all the precepts, for their direction ; all the doctrines of it for their information ; and all the parts of it, even every thing in it, for their edification.

Again, not only all the words and actions of God, but all the thoughts and purposes of God work for their good ; "I know the thoughts which I think towards you, thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give you an expected end," Jer. xxix. 11. As they are called according to his purpose : so they are justified, sanctified, and saved according to his purpose, and will be glorified to eternity, according to his purpose.

2. CHRIST, and all his furniture, work for their good ; for, "He is made of God to them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. All that Christ did in the flesh ; all

that he suffered; all that he has done from eternity, and in time; all that he is doing in heaven; and all that he will do at the great day, work for their good. All his appearances are for their good: he lived for their sakes, and died for their sins, and rose for their justification. See how the apostle triumphs in the good that comes by Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession in the context here, ver. 33, 34. All his offices work for their good: as a Prophet, he is the wisdom of God, for their illumination; as a Priest, the righteousness of God, for their justification; and as a King, the power of God, for their sanctification. O! what matter is here, were we to speak of all things that belong to his person and his purchase; his authority and ability to save; his fulness to supply; his fitness to redeem; his sweetness to endear, and his brightness to display all the glorious perfections of God! See Col. ii. 9; John i. 14, 16.

3. The SPIRIT, and all his fulness, work for their good; and his operations and influences, John xvi. 8; all his fruits and graces spoken of, Gal. v. 22: all his various motions; whether as water, for cleansing them: as wind, for refreshing them; as fire, for warming their hearts: or as oil, for anointing the wheels of their souls: all the sanctifying operations of the Spirit: all his comforting operations; all his enlightening, quickening, strengthening, enlarging, and sealing operations: I must here but mention the fields that I might go through. The Spirit works for their good as he is a Spirit of faith, a Spirit of repentance, a Spirit of love, and power, and of a sound mind; as he is a Spirit of prayer, grace, and supplication: helping our infirmities, and teaching us to pray with groanings which cannot be uttered, as you see in the verses immediately preceding the text.

4. The everlasting Covenant, and all the blessings of it, work for their good; yea, This is their salvation, and all their pleasure, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. This covenant of promise is a bundle or heap of good things laid up for them. The fulness of the covenant brings good news of supply to them, however poor and empty they are. The freeness of the covenant brings good news of salvation to them, however guilty and unworthy they are in themselves. The stability of the covenant brings good news of perseverance to them, however fickle, and changeable, and unstable they are in themselves. The blood of the covenant, which is the condition thereof, the everlasting righteousness of Christ, brings the good news of all spiritual blessings bought with his blood, "In whom all the promises are Yea and Amen."

5. All divine providences work for their good ; “ His eyes run to and fro, throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in their behalf, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. All the special acts of providence ; all that befel Adam before the fall, in the fall, and after the fall. He was in a state of innocency ; yet he sinned : and what need have I to be watchful, may the believer say, though I be in a state of grace ? Thus his innocency works for good. In Adam’s fall he sees how sin was brought into the world, and that he hath sinned. What happened to Adam after the fall, gives a view both of the misery of a natural state, and of the remedy that God hath provided in Christ, the promised seed. All that befel the good angels, is a part of merciful providence that works for their good : they received their confirmation in their happy state by the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ ; and how much more may believers expect to be confirmed in a state of grace by the Lord Jesus, who took not on him the nature of angels, to be their Redeemer, but the seed of Abraham ? All the great deliverances wrought for the church and people of God, in all ages, work for their good. What he did for Israel in Egypt at the Red Sea, in the wilderness ; what he did for them at Jordan ; what he did for them in Canaan ; how he drove out the heathen, and rebuked kings for their sakes : what he has done for his church in general, and his children in particular, all work for the good of his people, to encourage their faith, and forward their confidence in the Lord.

6. All divine Ordinances work for their good ; such as a gospel-ministry, and all the ministerial gifts ; they are designed for perfecting the saints, and edifying of the body of Christ, Eph. iv. 12. Gospel sacraments, viz., baptism, and the Lord’s supper ; the one a seal of their incorporation into Christ, and the other a seal of their confirmation. If the sacramental solemnity work any saving good to you, it is a fruit of this promise. All the gifts and graces, not only of ministers, but of private Christians, work for their good, as well as their own gifts and graces ; for, not only Paul and Apollos, and Cephas, is theirs, but the communion of saints contributes for their good, Heb. x. 24, 25. All the prayers of the saints work for their good ; as their prayers, their fervent prayers avail much ; so it is a great comfort to have a stock, or numerous conjunction of prayers going up for them, when they themselves are in distress, or out of tune, or unfit for this exercise. All divine ordinances, word and sacraments, thus work for good. The word is the savour of



life to them ; and the sacraments, the medicine of life ; and no wonder ; for, in the word, there is the breath of God ; and in the sacraments, the blood of God.

7. In a word, all the mercies of God, temporal and spiritual, work for their good ; for, the goodness of God leads them to repentance : and all the works of the godly work for the good of believers, their good works, and good example, serving for their excitation and imitation. I might,

[2.] Offer a catalogue of evil things that work for their good.

1. To begin with the worst ; Sin itself, the evil of all evils, though, in its own nature, it works death and damnation ; yet, if we look to it as over-ruled by infinite wisdom, and tempered by Christ, who is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, it works for good ; even as a skilful physician tempers poison, and makes it medicinal and operative for good. Thus the sin of the first Adam made way for the righteousness of the second Adam ; in this respect, the greatest evil wrought for the greatest good. It is part of the wisdom of God in a mystery, that he can bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and life out of death. Indeed, sin, of itself, works no spiritual good, it works shame and sorrow, terror, and torment ; and they that can encourage themselves in sin by this argument, "Sin as we will, it will work for our good," they never shared of the good promised in this text ; for the principal good that all things work for them that love God, is to make them hate sin : and to do evil that good may come, is to make our damnation just, Rom. iii. 8. It is only corrupt nature that can abuse this doctrine thus ; for, wherever true grace is, it will make the sweetest use, to the encouragement of holiness, and the discouragement of sin ? because when God so wisely orders that his people get good occasionally of their sins and falls, as when thereby sin becomes more bitter to them, and Christ more precious, and themselves more humble and watchful, nothing in the world puts a sharper edge upon their hatred and opposition to sin than this doth. In this respect we may say, better is the sin that makes us humble and watchful, than the duty that makes us proud and secure : but, to go on in sin, because God can bring good out of it, is as wicked and atheistical, as if one should go to the devil, because God can bring good out of his temptations.

Sin itself will work for good to them that love God : observe what I say ; I would not for all the world say, that sin would work

for good to them that love sin, and live in sin ; but I can say, before all the world, that it will work for good to them that love God, and hate sin. It will work for good to them that hate it, and hate themselves because of it : it will work for good to them that love God, and loath themselves for sin ; it will work for good to them that are humbled for it, and to them that fly to Christ to be saved from it, and that dare not, for a world, allow themselves in the least sin ; it will work for good to them that fight against it, and pray against it, and who, though they must own, with David, That iniquities prevail against them, yet they are in arms against it ; and, because they know their own weakness, therefore they set the word of God, the sword of the Spirit against it ; they set the blood of Christ against it, and the power of God against it ; they call in the help of Heaven against it. Why, they love God, and hate sin ; and therefore, " All things shall work together for their good." " He that hath ears to hear let him hear : " if a naughty, reprobate world will stumble, there is no help for it. It is matter of comfort that the election shall obtain ; and the text speaks of these : " All things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the CALLED according to his purpose."

2. Satan, and all his temptations and suggestions, work together for good to God's children ; for, " God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation," 2 Pet. ii. 9. God would never have let the serpent bite their heel, if he had not designed to break his head, and to bruise him under their feet. All that the devil and his instruments can do, will work for their good. They may plot, contrive, reproach, persecute, imprison, banish, yea, and take away our lives, and yet all shall work for good ; because " The Son of God is manifested to destroy the works of the devil ; " both his in-works of deceit, and his out-works of violence.

3. All their wants and weaknesses work for their good, 2 Cor. xii. 9. From their wants, he takes occasion to magnify his sufficiency ; and from their weakness to magnify his power ; " My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfected in thy weakness. Most gladly therefore, says the apostle, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

4. All their inward trials work for their good, even those that issue from the Lord's hiding and withdrawing himself ; whether in point of grace, withholding the influence of his Spirit : or in point

of comfort denying the light of his countenance, Isa. liv. 7, 8. He frowns a little that his after-smiles may do them the more good when they get them. He orders their momentary, short-lasting desertion, for heightening the price of his everlasting comforts: his design of leaving Zion to say, "The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me," is that he may take occasion to hug and caress them the more kindly in his bosom, as a mother doth her child; "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee," Isa. xlix. 15. Again,

5. All their outward trials and afflictions work for their good; whether those that are punitive for correcting their faults; or those that are probative, for trying their graces; in the issue they will still have occasion to say with David, Psal. cxix. 71, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Why, physic is sometimes as good as food; yea, and more necessary many times, however uneasy it may be: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." It is as good for a child of God to be punished, as it is for a young tree to be pruned, John xv. 2; yea, the pressure of affliction may press out the fragrant smell of their graces.

6. All their sufferings, for the cause of Christ, work for good, Phil. i. 12, 19. This turns to the furtherance of the gospel, and to their salvation. They need not grudge any reproach or persecution they meet with for the truths of the gospel, and for their love to Christ; nor any loss they sustain, of name, credit, or profit, in this cause, for it is to be repaid; even here a hundred fold, and hereafter a thousand thousand fold. This is the particular the apostle seems especially to point at in the context, ver. 17, 18. "If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together." And, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." However, this particular is so included, as that nothing else is excluded; for "All things shall work together for their good." All things in the world, good or bad, shall work for their good; all things past, present, or to come; the past decrees of God, the present dispensations of God, and the future accomplishment of the purposes of God. All things in heaven, earth, and hell; all the mercies of heaven, all the malignities of earth, and all the malice of hell, shall work for their good. Let Joseph's brethren, moved with envy, cast him into a pit, or sell him



into Egypt; let Potiphar thrust him into a filthy prison; yet the wisdom of God comes into the game, and turns all about to a glorious and beautiful issue, to the exaltation of Joseph, and the preservation of thousands alive in famine. What though Mordecai suffer, and Haman reign and insult for a while? Infinite Wisdom holds the balance of providence in her hand, and will soon turn the scale. Thus I have hinted at a few of these *All things* that shall work together for good. But now the question is,

II. What is that Good that all things shall work for? that they who love God may know what they are to look for. Here, as on the preceding head, we shall take both a negative and positive view of the matter.

1st, Let us view it negatively. They are not to expect that all things that befall them, shall work for their temporal good and prosperity in the world. Sometimes, indeed, this good takes place, as Joseph said to his brethren, Gen. l. 20, "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." And as it was with the Israelites, Exod. i. 12, "The more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." Of this good the text may be understood; but it is not always to be expected; because, external prosperity is not always good for the people of God. Neither are they to expect that all things should work to this good of absolute exemption from the inbeing of sin, while they are here. God sees it good and fit that they live by faith, in the daily improvement of Christ, for purging away their sin. Nor are they to expect that all things shall work for their absolute freedom from losses and crosses in the world; because it is not good for us to be without them, and they are part of these things that work for their good. Nor are they to expect that every thing should work for the good that they have in view; but for the good that God hath in view, whose thoughts are infinitely higher than our thoughts. But then,

2dly, Let us consider the point positively. They may expect that all things shall work together for their spiritual good and eternal welfare. We would incline to branch this out in a few particulars.

1. All things shall work together for furthering their knowledge of, and acquaintance with God in Christ: and surely this is a notable good! "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ; whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. Now, all things shall contribute to make the saints know more and more of

the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory ; “ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory, 1 Cor. ii. 7. And to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ ; to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God,” Eph. iii. 9, 10. That, with the apostle, Rom. xi. 33, they may stand at the side of this ocean, and cry out, “ O ! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! ” And that, by all things, they may come to know more of the power, holiness, justice, truth, goodness, and glory of God in Christ. We use to say, “ Experience teaches fools.” Surely there is not an experienced saint, but will find, that by all the good things and bad things he hath been trysted with, by all the various vicissitudes and changes of providence, he hath come to see more of God than he saw before.

2. All things shall work together for their participation of the image of God, in a greater degree ; and surely this is good ; and it is brought about by the promises of God, 2 Pet. i. 4. By those we are said to be partakers of the divine nature : and also, by the providences of God, particularly trying ones ; “ He chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness,” Heb. xii. 10.

3. All things shall work for their further purification : they shall purge out some particular lust and corruption ; “ By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin ; ” Isa. xxvii. 9. This is a desirable good, whatever be the dispensation that contributes to that end.

4. All things shall work together for furthering their communion and fellowship with him ; whatever they have heard, or seen, or felt of the word of God, or of the rod of God, contributes to this good end—“ Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus,” 1 John i. 3. We can go to God boldly by the blood of Jesus ; and communicate the very secret of our souls to him, and find him communicating the secrets of his covenant to us.

5. All things work together for their further humiliation ; and this is good indeed ; “ He led thee through the great and terrible wilderness, wherein there were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and

drought ; wherein there was no water ;” there is a sum of the evil things that befel them ; but it follows, “ He brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint ; he fed you in the wilderness with manna, that your fathers knew not :” there is a sum of the good things that befel them ; well, but what was the end and design of all these things ? Why, it follows, “ That he might humble thee, and prove thee, to do thee good in thy latter end,” Deut. viii. 15, 16. It is good to be humbled and have low thoughts of ourselves ; we are apt to say in prosperity, Our mountain stands strong, and we shall never be moved ; we think, with Peter, that we are able to suffer with Christ, and to do great things for him : or with Zebdee’s children, that we are able to reign with Christ : but we need to be humbled and proved, that we may know what we are.

6. All things work together for their further consolation ; and this is a desirable good ; God doth, with all that befalls them, convey some joys and comforts of his Spirit, whether he bring them to the mountain or to the wilderness : this good end shall be reached in the Lord’s time. When he brings them to his holy mountain, then he makes them joyful in his house of prayer, Isa. lvi. 7. When he brings them to the wilderness, then he speaks comfortably to them, Hosea ii. 4. Yea, he even gives them the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and makes them sing there ; and as their sufferings abound, makes their consolation abound, 2 Cor. i. 4, 5.

7. All things work together for their good, even for furthering their life of faith, that they may know more what it is to live by faith on the Son of God, Gal. ii. 20. If sensible enjoyment were always allowed to believers here, in their present circumstances, they would be ready to surfeit on their provision ; therefore, with their sweet meals, the Lord orders some sour sauce for helping their digestion, in order that they may live, not by sense, but by faith ; in prosperity we talk of living by faith, and darken counsel many times with words without knowledge ; but in adversity, we come to have the practical knowledge of what it is to live by faith. And indeed that is a happy and blessed dispensation that tends to the rooting of a soul further in a crucified Christ, and to a living upon a promise, when there is no visible prop in all the world to lean to ; this is clearly believing.

8. All things work together for furthering their submission to the will of God, and holy contentment in every case, that they may learn with Paul, Phil. iv. 11, 12, in every state to be content ; and



know how to be abased, and how to abound ; and to say, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." I can welcome reproach, as well as honour and esteem ; a prison as well as a palace ; a hard stone for my bolster-piece, as well as a soft pillow ; though I praise, as well as others, and bless the Lord for comfortable accommodations and favourable dispensations, when God allows them ; yet, if he deny them, I am content : " Shall we receive good things at the hand of the Lord, and not receive evil ?" O sirs, how good is it to get this disposition wrought ?

9. All things work together for furthering their spirituality, for weaning their hearts from the world, and elevating their affections heavenwards, so as they may have less of the spirit of the world, and more of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in their hearts : 1 Pet. iv. 14, "Think not strange concerning the fiery trial, which shall try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Even the glorious Spirit of God, comforting and supporting you with the hope of the glory to be revealed. O ! what a good thing is this to have the good Spirit of God, the glorious Spirit of God ? Though a spirit of reproach be without you ; yet the Spirit of glory and triumph within will make amends. And, O what a good work is it, when all things work for putting out a base, carnal, worldly spirit, and for bringing in more of a glorious and heavenly Spirit ?

10. All things work together for furthering their preparation for heaven ; nothing shall hinder, but rather further their course towards heaven. As all trying dispensations of providence work for their having more of the Spirit, of which our apostle speaks in the preceding context ; so, they work for hastening their progress towards heaven, and can be no hinderance but a furtherance to it ; as appears from the apostle's triumphant language in the following context, towards the close of the chapter, ver. 35—39, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long ; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us ; for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angel, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of

God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Man's frowns may occasion God's smiles ; losses of worldly goods may make up your heavenly treasures ; " Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

In a word, as there would be no end of speaking of all things that work together for good to them ; so, there is no end of speaking of all the good which all things work in their behalf. The God that hath all things at his command sets all things a-working for them ; and makes even the worst things contribute to the best advantage. Herod and Pilate, Jews and Gentiles, combined to crucify Christ, " The Lord of glory," Acts ii. 23. Here is the worst thing that ever was done ; but, behold the act of free grace and deep wisdom in God ! that made this work to be the greatest good that ever was. We have a sample of all other things working for good to God's people, even the rage and fury of men and devils, contrary to their designs, working for their happiness ; and death itself, contrary to its nature, working for their eternal life.

III. The third thing proposed in the general method, was, To shew what we are to understand by their working and working together for good. This points out the harmonious influence that all things have upon the production of this good. How can all things, even the worst of things work for good ? " Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ?"

1st, In general, all things are in GOD's hand, who is the powerful agent, who works by these means ; they cannot work of themselves without God. They seem rather to work the ruin of God's people than their happiness and good ; but God's infinite wisdom and omnipotent arm can bring light out of darkness, life out of death, and good out of evil. Even as the word and ordinances themselves do not save by any intrinsic virtue, or power of their own ; but yet there is a passive fitness in them to serve the hand of Omnipotence for accomplishing saving ends ; a fitness of instrumentality, as there is an axe, or hammer for a workman's hand. As a sword cannot cut, or a pen cannot write, but in a hand ready for it ; so neither could all things work for good to God's children, but as these are in the hand of God. It is God that by these doth advance the spiritual and eternal good of his people. Therefore,

2dly, Their working together may have a fourfold reference.

1. To the God of providence. 2. To the particular acts of providence. 3. To the whole series of providence. 4. To the manner of their co-operation, wherein they are subservient for this good.

1. Their working together may have a respect to GOD, and his co-operation with providence, seeing, as I was just now saying, not one of these things of itself can do any good : but they work together with God, and in his hand. Though such a thing of itself be really a great evil, a crushing dispensation ; yet, let God alone, and wait upon him ; he can bring the greatest good out of that thing to thee. Though there be no natural or physical tendency in such an act of providence towards thy good, but rather towards thy hurt : yet there shall be such hyperphysical or supernatural virtue and efficacy attending them, as to make them work for good : for, they work with God, whose counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.

2. Their working together may have a respect to the particular acts of providence themselves ; not separately but conjunctly viewed. If we take one providence with another, we may find them working for good ; but if we take them separately, we cannot see their co-operation. Perhaps one act of providence smiles upon you, another act of providence frowns upon you, and speaks ruin to you : well, if you put them together, you may see them working together for good, but if you separate them, and take them asunder, then you cannot see either the beauty or good, nor yet advantage of the frowning providence. One providence seems white and pleasant ; another seems ruddy and bloody, coloured and terrible ; but let the red and white together, and then the beautiful complexion of providence appears : they work together for good.

3. Their working together may have a respect to the whole series and contexture of providence, from the beginning to the end. A hard beginning cannot still be discerned to be a good beginning, till we compare the beginning and end together. The dark side of the cloud of providence may contribute to illustrate and set forth the splendour of the bright side of it ; and, when we view both the one side and the other, there will appear a harmony in all the acts of providence. The godly man may be plagued all day long, and chastened every morning, Psal. lxxiii. 14 ; here is a dark side : but go to the other side and see the fair end of providence : " Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright ; for the latter end of that man is peace," Psal. xxvii. 37, whereas, the end of the wicked shall be cut off, though he flourish and prosper for a while.



4. Their working together way have a respect to the manner of their subserviency in working for good. All things work together; and so work not only harmoniously, but efficaciously. When God, and all things with him, work together for the good of a creature, then there is nothing to hinder its being made effectual. When all things work, what is there behind to let or impede the work? Again, when all things work together, it says they work marvelously and wonderfully. Good things and bad things have, in themselves, a quite contrary nature and tendency; but as the wheels of a clock, or watch, move, some of them forward, some of them backward; yet all these contrary motions tend to the regular motion of the hand that points at the hour: so, the wheels of providence, some with a direct, and others with a retrograde motion: yet all contribute to work for good to God's children. This is owing to him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working, to make these things that work against each other, yet to work together for this end.

IV. The fourth thing in the text is, To enquire into the character of those who are thus privileged, and to whom all things work together for good.

Why it is to them who love God, and are the called according to his purpose. In this character there are purposes that would fill many volumes; and therefore none will suppose that I can here treat them at any length. I shall therefore take a short view of this character given to God's privileged people, namely that they are lovers of him, and that by considering these four things concerning this love that the text carries. 1. The object of it, namely, God. 2. The act of it, namely, love to this God. 3. The immediate branch on which it grows, namely, effectual calling. 4. The head and original root from whence it springs, namely, the divine purpose, being called according to his purpose.

1st, The object of their love to whom all things work together for good, is God, who is to be loved above all things, and loved allenarly for himself; he will suffer no companion, or competitor, Matt. x. 37. Now, this love of God necessarily includes the love of Christ, or of God in Christ; for, as in Christ only he is well pleased and reconciled with sinners; so, out of Christ we cannot love him as a friend, but fear him as a foe, God is in Christ, and all his fulness dwells in Christ, Col. i. 19; and where God's fulness dwells, there doth the true believer love to dwell. This love to God

includes in it also a regular love to ourselves. It is manifest, when it is said in God's law, that we should love our neighbour as ourselves, that it is presupposed we ought to love ourselves: this is so much included in the love of God, that, as he that loves not himself, cannot love God; so, he that loves not God, cannot love himself. As a madman, in his fury, wounds his own body, and is pitied of all but not of himself: so wicked men, or natural men, destroy themselves, and are pitied of God, angels, and good men; but have no pity on themselves, no true love to themselves. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not, Mat. xxiii. 37. Again, this love to God includes love to our neighbour: for love to God and man is the fulfilling of the law of God: and, "He that loves not his brother, whom he hath seen, cannot truly love God, whom he hath not seen," 1 John iv. 20. And this love to our neighbour imports a rejoicing at, and desiring his good; and a grieving at, and relieving his misery. The unworthiness of no person whatsoever, must quench our love; but it should burn when the water of men's injuries would quench the same. See Matt. v. 44, 45, where we are called to love our enemies; to bless them that curse us; to do good to them that hate us; and to pray for them that despitefully use us; that we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven; for, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." True love to God carries in it benevolence towards all, and especially complacency in the godly, Psalm xvi. 3. And even with respect to those that are overtaken in a fault, we are to express our love to them by restoring them in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted, Gal. vi. 1. In a word, this love to God, with reference to the object of it, includes a love to every thing that God loves, and that bears the stamp of his image and authority; such as this gospel, and ordinances thereof, wherein his love shines. But,

2dly, Consider the act that terminates on this object, *love*. What is it to love God? and, how do his people love him? As this act supposes the knowledge of God in Christ, without which we cannot love him, no more than we can worship an unknown God; and faith in him, and his love and mercy through Christ; for this faith works by love: so it implies the powerful work of the Spirit of God in subduing the natural enmity against God, and drawing

out the affections towards him. The Spirit of all grace having first come into the soul, and brought love with him among the rest, he blows upon this fire that he hath kindled, and the flame of it ascends towards God, in heavenly desires and spiritual delights.

As to the manner how the believer loves God, we cannot describe it better, than by considering the rule that shows how he should love him. Love to ourselves and our neighbour must be limited ; but there is no measure set to our love to God. See the rule, Luke x. 27, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind."

1. With all the heart ; that is, cordially and affectionately ; with the heart, and with all the heart. If the world have our heart, God cannot have it : "Love not the world, neither the things of the world ; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. As one nail drives out another, so the love of Christ will force out the love of the world.

2. With all the soul ; that is, intensely and most entirely : as all the heart takes in all the affections of it ; so, I think, all the soul takes in all the faculties of it ; and to love God with heart and soul, imports a loving him most intensely and most entirely, so as to allow no faculty of the soul to swerve from this object, but to fix and terminate wholly upon him. It seems to be like that, Isaiah xxvi. 8, 9, "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my whole soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."

3. With all the strength ; that is, universally and zealously ; employing whatever gifts, parts, powers, and talents God hath bestowed upon us in his service, and returning them all to his glory ; yielding ourselves to the Lord, and our members instruments of righteousness unto God, Rom. vi. 13.

4. With all the mind ; that is, wisely and judiciously : people may love Christ with a hearty affection, and yet not with knowledge and understanding ; for it was so with the apostles themselves, John xiv. 28, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father ;" but they did not rejoice in this, nor knew the import of it ; and, therefore, though they loved him with the heart and soul, yet not with all the mind and judgment, or with knowledge and understanding. Now this is the manner wherein all God's children love him, or at least aim at loving him, whatever enmity and corruption remain. Thus of the act of love.



3dly, Consider the immediate branch on which this love grows, namely, effectual calling; they are CALLED. I speak of this as visible; in regard that it is the first evident effect of God's everlasting love breaks up above ground, which before this did run hidden under ground from all eternity; and because, though effectual calling be indeed internal and invisible to the world, yet it is a sensible turn of affairs within, making a visible change upon him without. Now, none love God but those that are called effectually, Rom. ix. 11. All men are haters of God naturally; and love to him grows not in the garden of nature, but of grace; and the first working of grace in the soul is an effectual calling. And if you ask what that is, you cannot have a better description of it than that in our Shorter Catechism? "It is the work of God's free Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel." Where you see, that as the outward means of it is the gospel, and the dispensation thereof; and the inward mean and powerful efficient is the free Spirit of God, accompanying the preached word; so, the parts of it are four, relating to the several faculties of the soul.

1. Effectual conviction of sin and misery, whereby the conscience is touched and awakened, and made to cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" Acts ii. 37.

2. Effectual illumination; whereby the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, Acts xxvi. 18. It is an opening of the eye of the soul, and turning it from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. "God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6.

3. Effectual renovation, whereby the will is renewed, according to that word, Psalm cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The new heart and the new Spirit promised, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, is given.

4. The effectual out-drawing of the soul towards Christ, persuading and enabling the heart to embrace Christ Jesus, as he is offered and exhibited in the gospel promise, John vi. 44, 45, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. It is written in the prophet, They shall be all taught of God;

every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." And thus the Spirit comes, with internal power, to make the soul, by the external call working in it, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure, Phil. ii. 13; and so he is called internally and efficaciously, and united to Christ. This is the immediate branch that love grows on.

4thly, Consider the origin and hidden root from which it springs, and that is the *purpose* of God; "called according to his PURPOSE." This is both the root of effectual calling, and the root of that love to God that issues from it; "We love him, because he first loved us." True love to God issues from his everlasting love to us. But this divine purpose relates here to effectual calling. I shall view it in relation thereto; and it seems to point out four things with reference to this call.

1. It points out the peculiarity of this call, not only that it is a special, internal call, limited by the special purpose of God, in contradistinction from the external, that many have, who yet come short of conversion; but it is a call peculiar to the elect, such as is mentioned, 2 Pet. i. 10, "Give all diligence to make your *calling* and election sure." It is such a calling as is joined with election; insomuch, that they that are thus called, may be as sure of election from eternity, as they are sure of their vocation in time. O sirs, let us admire the sovereignty of grace in dispensing this internal call to some, and not to others. Surely they that are thus inwardly and effectually called can never enough love and praise that God that has granted this special mercy to them. And let those who are yet only outwardly called, as all to whom the gospel comes are, let them hearken diligently to that external call, and be restless till they get grace to answer it, by coming to Christ; for, this outward call is the means of the effectual one, and let them not meddle with the purpose of God till once they are brought to answer the gospel call; for this is the rule you are to follow; whereas the divine purpose is a hidden secret, not to be revealed till you have followed the outward rule. The gospel offer is to all; "Whosoever will, let him come;" and, if you do not exclude yourselves by your unbelief from this open call and invitation, you shall never find yourselves excluded from any secret decree; for, whenever your heart opens to Christ, then the decree opens in your favours. Therefore, be diligent in the use of gospel means that tend to the opening of the heart to Christ. Why, say you, but if God did not decree my

salvation, my heart will never open to Christ ; and, therefore, what need I use the means ? Why, indeed, the antecedent is true ; but the consequent absurd. You may as well say, if God decree that I should live no longer, then I will die ; and, therefore, what need I take any more meat or drink, or use the means of life ? I imagine you will not argue so grossly about the life of your body ; and why will you suffer the devil to cheat you into such a trifling about the life of your souls to all eternity ?

2. To be called according to his purpose, points out the freeness of the call, that it flows out from mere grace ; for, if it be a call, according to his purpose, it is not a call according to our works, 2 Timothy i. 9, “ Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling ; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.” It must be free ; for the worst of sinners and the chief of sinners have been and are called effectually. Let the greatest of sinners be persuaded to look out after this sovereign grace of God, and plead that he would glorify his free grace in saving them.

3. It points out the efficacy and energy of the call ; for, God’s purpose is a standing purpose, “ His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.” Hence his call is irresistible, and yet without force and violence. It is irresistibly sweet, and sweetly irresistible ; here there is no compulsion, but that of love, cords of love.

4. It points out the perpetuity of the call, because it is the fruit of an unalterable purpose ; his purpose is irrevocable, “ The gifts and calling of God are without repentance,” Rom. xi. 29. Thus you see this love in the object, the act, the immediate spring, and the original root of it. Here then is the character of those to whom “ All things shall work together for good ; they are lovers of God by virtue of his call and purpose.”

V. The next thing proposed in the general method is, to shew whence it is that all things shall work together for good to such lovers of God ; and so to point out the evidence the apostle had for saying, we know that it shall be so ; and here also observe the suitableness and connection between the character of being lovers of God, and this privilege, of all things working together for good.

If you ask then, Why all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose ?



There is a general answer in the bosom of the text, and that is drawn from the divine purpose, the determination of God. There is a stated law in heaven from eternity for it; they are predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will, Eph. i. 11. There is not any thing that falls out in this world but was resolved upon and decreed from eternity, that things should be so and so. Men and devils may as well go up to the court rolls of heaven, and there cross and cancel the eternal statutes and decrees of God, as hinder our good, who love God, and are the called according to his purpose. "The foundation of God standeth sure." More particularly,

1. The first reason and argument, upon which we know that all things shall work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to his purpose, is drawn from the nature of God; why, he is the Lord of hosts, the God of armies, who hath all the hosts of men, and angels, and creatures, in his hand; and all the legions of devils at his back. He can command the stars in their courses to fight for his people, and against their enemies. He can create an army of frogs, and lice, and locusts; they want but a commission from him, and so they execute his purpose.

Again, he is a God of infinite wisdom, who knows what will work best for his people's good. Let God be doing with thee, O believer; whatever thy condition be, he knows when to send affliction, and when prosperity; he knows what afflictions to send, and by what hands and means, and how long to continue them. He knows also how to deliver the godly out of temptation and trouble. Prescribe not to infinite wisdom.

Again, he is a God of infinite power; he can do what he will; nothing is too hard for him to do. As he knows all things, so he can do all things, and make all things do what he pleases, and work what he has a mind. And he has made over himself to you, believer; and, with himself, his infinite power, to make all things work for thy good.

Again, he is a God of infinite love and compassion to them that love him; "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them;" and his everlasting love makes him carry on his loving design by all means whatsoever.

Again, as this is the nature of God, so this is the way of God to act for his people, in a suitableness to his nature; his usual way is even by contrary means to bring about great things for his people,

as you see in God's way with David, Daniel, Joseph, Mordecai, and others.

In a word, his providential government of the world is extended to all creatures, and more especially to his people. It extends to the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, and the hairs of the head ; and much more to them, Matt. vi. 28—34. Whatever men and devils design all shall come to nothing, and go no farther than God gives leave. Ezekiel's vision was a wheel within a wheel : though in a watch the wheels seem to go cross, yet the wise artificer knows what they mean. But,

2. Another reason and argument, upon which we know that all things shall work together for good to them who love God, is drawn from the Mediator, Christ Jesus. Why, he is entrusted with them by the Father, from whom he had a special charge of them given him from all eternity : " I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world, thine they were, and thou gavest them me," John xvii. 6. Now, Christ will be faithful to his trust ; yea, he hath received all fulness of the Spirit, and that not for himself, but for them, that he may improve it for their souls, Col. i. 19 ; yea, as Mediator, he hath the whole world given him ; and, " All power in heaven and earth," Matt. xxviii. 18. And, as he upholds all things by the word of his power," Heb. i. 2 ; so, all things are put under his feet ; and " He is given to be head over all things to the church," Eph. i. 22, that he may rule and over-rule kingdoms and nations as he will ; and make use of all the creatures to promote the good design the Father sent him upon.

Again, by virtue of this great power and commission, he is pleased to give a special commission and charge to millions of excellent spirits in heaven to look to his people ; " He has given his angels charge over them ; and, are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation ?" Heb. i. 14. And so they are compassed about with this invisible guard—" The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him." Yea, the Lord JEHOVAH himself is their life guard : " As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round them. The place of their defence is the munition of rocks."

Again, by virtue of the power of Christ, he has qualified several men with gifts and graces, and has given them a charge of his people, saying, as to Peter, *Feed my lambs*. When Christ ascended up on high, he received gifts for men, and gave gifts to men ; what

to do? It was for the perfecting of the saints. Christ going out of the world, to be crowned with glory and honour at the Father's right hand, he leaves coronation gifts behind him; and he is distributing some of these amongst you at this occasion.

Again, Christ has removed all things out of the way, that might obstruct the good of his people: that sin might not do it, he has condemned sin in the flesh, by giving himself a sacrifice for sin; that the devil might not do it, he has destroyed the works of the devil, and conquered principalities and powers, so as the gates of hell cannot prevail; that men in the world might not do it, he has overcome the world; and, that death may not do it, he has removed the sting of death. Why, then, what remains to obstruct their good, and hinder their eternal salvation?

Again, as he has removed all things that might obstruct their good, so he has purchased all things that can contribute to their good: "All spiritual blessings, in heavenly places," Eph. i. 3. The men of the world may deprive them of their riches, honour, liberty, and good name, and outward peace; but they cannot hinder them from peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost; nor deprive them of their right and title to glory. Christ hath purchased all these things, Luke i. 74, 75. Men cannot lay a restraint upon our spirit, nor hinder us to go to God.

In a word, Christ, by his Spirit, is always with them; he has promised that "He will never leave them, nor forsake them;" therefore, whatever way the wind blows, all weathers will contribute to their prosperous voyage heavenward. And, as Christ's own sufferings did work for his glory; so shall the sufferings of the saints in Christ. If physic be good for the head, it is good for the members of the body; but his love is mixed with the bitterest physic that he orders, and his love makes it work for their good; and nothing in the world can turn the tide of his love from them. And therefore, all things shall work together for good to them.

3. A third reason or argument, upon which we know that all things shall work together for good to them, is drawn from the covenant of grace and promise; there is a solemn vow and oath, on God's part, that he will do so and so for his people. All the believing children of Abraham have the same security with him: "God swears by himself, because he could swear by no greater, that in blessing he would bless them, Heb. vi. 14. And why does he confirm his promise by his oath; but to show more abundantly the immutability



of his counsel? "That by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for him to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." As "All the promises are Yea and Amen, in Christ," so the grand comprehensive promise is, "I will be thy God:" and, "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord!" This everlasting God, is the everlasting good of his people: he is the God that was, and is to come; and he is a good in the preterit, present, and future tense; therefore, all things past, present, and to come, must work for their good, to whom he is a God by covenant and promise.

4. The fourth reason or argument, whereby we know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, is drawn from the people themselves, to whom the promise is made; why, they are his relations and his lovers.

(1.) They are his relations: they are the birth of his everlasting purpose; being, in time, called according to his purpose; and so brought under a special relation to him. He is their everlasting Father; before they were children, he was their Father. He is their Husband: and what will he not do for his spouse, the bride, the Lamb's wife. He is their Head; and what will he not do for his members? He is their Physician; and what will he not take care of his patients? "I am the Lord that healeth thee:" yea, he will heal and help them in wonderful ways, by making all things work together for their good.

(2.) They are his lovers; and this leads me to another branch of this head that I proposed, namely,

To observe the suitableness and connection between this character of being lovers of God, and this privilege, That all things work together for their good. This love to God has a subserviency for making all things work together for good to such lovers; for,

1. Love to God in Christ makes them count all things loss and dung for the excellency of this glorious One, whom they love. Why, says God, do you count all things loss for me? Then I will make all things gain to you. You shall lose nothing; all things shall work together for good to you.

2. Love to God makes them suffer the loss of all things, and deny themselves of all things for his sake; why then, says God, I will make all things contribute to repair your loss; so that, if you lose all things one way, you shall gain all things another; you shall be co-heirs with him who is the heir of all things, Rev. xxi. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things."

3. Love to God inclines them to rely upon him, and to depend upon him for all things they need, and to put all things in his hand ; they put their wants and weaknesses in his hand, in order to be supplied and helped ; they put their diseases in his hand, in order to be healed ; they put their sin and guilt in his hand, in order that he may pardon them ; they put their enemies in his hand, that he may rebuke them ; they put their strong corruptions in his hand, that he may subdue them ; they put their burdens in his hand, that he may bear them ; they put their heart and soul in his hand, that he may keep them. What ! dost thou put all things in my hand, and that by warrant from my own call ! “ Cast thy burden on the Lord ! ” All things shall work together for good to thee.

4. Love makes them desire to do all they do for the glory of God ; he hath created them for himself, to show forth his praise ; and as he has given them a disposition to do all that they do, to his glory ; so he has a mind to make all that he doth and orders, contribute for their good. As the desire, whether they eat or drink ; or whatsoever they do to do all to the glory of God ; so I will not be behind with them : as they would have all things contributing to his glory, so he will make all things contribute for their good.

5. Love to God keeps in the soul good thoughts of God, do what he will ; knowing that he is most wise, holy, gracious, and loving ; and therefore doth nothing but what is best, and knows best what is good for his people. The apostle says, “ Love (or charity) thinketh no evil,” and surely true love to God can think no evil of him, and bode no evil at his hand : such a soul cannot be disappointed ; all things must work together for good. Indeed, unbelief works by enmity, and expects no good at God’s hand ; but “ Faith works by love,” and expects no evil at his hand, and shall find none ; because, whatever heavy trials such a loving soul meets with, love makes it take all patiently and pleasantly out of the hand of God ; for, as love thinks no evil, so it suffers long, doth not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked, but beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 7. Therefore, all things work together for good to the lovers of God.

6. Love to God takes the heart off from the world, and all things in it, and especially such things as would hurt it, namely, all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life ; the more perfect love is, the more it casts out fear, and casts off harm, as Paul did the viper off his hand into the fire. All

things must work for good to the loving soul that overcomes all things that would work for evil.

7. Love draws the heart to God, the chief good. Trials and afflictions set the soul in motion; and love draws it near to God: and what is the consequence of this; "It is good for me to draw near unto God," Psalm lxxiii. 28. Therefore, all things must work for good to the lovers of God.

8. As love draws the soul to God, so it makes the soul to abide with God, when brought unto him; for "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 14. And he that thus dwells on high, no evil can reach him "He dwells in the secret place of the Most High, and abides under the shadow of the Almighty," Psalm xci. 1, 10. Nothing can work for hurt to him, but all must work for good. And whatever seems to hurt him; yet this love is such a healing thing, and such a strengthening thing, love being stronger than death, and a powerful restorative, that by its active kind of energy it quickly makes all well again. Hence the more that the believer is in the exercise of love to God, kindled by a view of God's everlasting love to him, the more will he have of the sensible and comfortable relish of this privilege, and see all things working together for good to him; whereas the less love to God, by the faith of God's love to him; the less will he see and feel this truth to his advantage; but rather fear the contrary, with Jacob, saying, "All these things are against me."

Thus you see the influence and subserviency of this love unto this privilege; or the connection between the character of being lovers of God, and the privilege of all things working together for good; and so upon what solid reason and good evidence the apostle did, and all believers may assert and say, "We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and that are the called according to his purpose."

VI. The sixth thing proposed was, To make application of the subject.

Here is a foundation laid for a very large application; but I must confine myself within as narrow bounds as possible.

The first use I make of this doctrine is, of information. Is it so, That all things work together for good to them that love God?

1. Hence see and admire the infinite wisdom of God, and the depth of divine providence, even when he suffers all things seemingly to work for hurt to his church and people, that even then he is



making all things work together for good to them. O believer! do not believe sense; it is a fool and a knave, when it speaks contrary to God: whatever appearance things have, and be as they will, all things shall work for good to the lovers of God. It shall be so toward every lover of God in particular, and much more will it be so towards the whole community of lovers, and of Christ's friends.

Perhaps there was never greater evils of one sort and another taking place in the world, and even in the midst of the visible church, than now-a-days; yet I dare assert, that out of all the evils of our day, God shall bring forth much good to his friends and lovers. But if you cannot see to the bottom of his ways, which are unsearchable, believe upon trust, saying, as it is, Isaiah viii. 17. "I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." (See Micah vii. 6—9.) "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall know thy name; hear ye the rod, and him that hath appointed it." What! will a flood of errors, heresies, and scandals, ruining the church work for good? Yea, "There must be heresies, that they that are approved may be made manifest," 1 Cor. xi. 19. Storms shall manifest who are built upon the rock. Will blasphemies vented against the glorious Godhead of Christ, work for any good? Yea, his glory shall shine the more brightly, through the dark cloud; his friends shall be the more stirred up to put the crown upon his head, when enemies would trample on it. O the wisdom of God! that can make divisions, discords, and confusions in a church, to work for the good of a hidden remnant; even as he made the treason of Judas, the rage of the Jews and Gentiles, and the malice of the devil, to work for the redemption of the world, and salvation of sinners.

2. See the cause why God many times denies the outward blessing of peace to these on whom he has conferred the inward blessing of grace; and why he orders adversity instead of prosperity; why he designs their good. And it is upon necessity, in some

cases, that they must be given up to the hand of their enemies, because, when he gives them rest, they do evil again before him, Neh. xi. 28. He designs to convince the wicked that God's children do not serve him for outward things, as the devil reproached Job, when he said, "Doth Job serve God for nought?" He designs his servants should not bear a mercenary mind, in making gain of his service, and turning Christian patience into carnal covetousness, making gain of godliness. He designs his people should see need of more faith, and more wisdom; for, in fair weather, little skill in the mariner is required; but when storms arise, and the sea swells and grows troublesome, then he is put to it. He designs to convince them that this is their inn, and not their home; the wilderness, and not Canaan, a place of refining; whereof yet he says, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction," Isa. xlviii. 10. They are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world, 1 Cor. xi. 31. Outward and bodily prosperity is not always attended with inward soul-prosperity; no, no; many have fat bodies and lean souls.

3. See hence the misery of the wicked, who are enemies and haters of God, and live and die in that enmity. Ah! dreadful case; all things work together for evil unto such. To the godly, evil things work for good; but to the wicked, good things work for evil: "Their prosperity destroys them; their table is a snare to them." The ministry of the word, which is a savour of life to some, is a savour of death to them. O sirs, what is this, that the same word, the same breath, the same wind that blows some to heaven doth blow them to hell! The sacramental supper, which is an ordinance that works for the believer's consolation, works for the unbeliever's damnation; "He eats and drinks damnation to himself!" Yea, Christ himself, the greatest good that ever was sent to the world, works for their hurt; for he is to them a stumbling block, and rock of offence, Rom. ix. 33. 1 Peter ii. 7. Oh! may not this make a wicked soul to tremble! O mocker of God and godliness! is it nothing to you to understand that God is angry at you, as he is angry with the wicked every day; and every day you are treasuring up wrath to yourself against the day of wrath! O man, woman, if you put not in to be among those that love God, and are the called according to his purpose; and if the gospel call never work in you an effectual purpose of turning from sin to God, through Christ by faith; if it never work in you an effectual purpose to come out of

yourself, and in to Christ ; to die unto sin, and live unto God : then, O tremble at it ; it is a sign that God hath a purpose to destroy you. Alas ! “ Will you not tremble at the presence of God ? ” Jer. v. 22. The half of this dreadful news hath made some of God’s children to be distracted with the terrors of God, Psalm lxxxviii. 15. If your stout conscience doth not tremble now, yet the day of wrath and trembling is a coming.

4. Hence, on the other hand, see the happiness of God’s friends and lovers ; and what comfort this carries to them, that all things, the worst as well as the best, will work together for their good, whatever be their suffering lot, or afflicted condition : even when you seem to be lost, yet you are in your Father’s eye : when in the dark night of affliction, temptation, desertion, you can see nothing, yet, if you look up to heaven, you will see thousands of stars looking on you ; so is God’s eye ever on you. The child may lose the Father, but the Father will not lose the child ; you are in the hand of Christ, and none can pluck you out of God’s hand : and you are in that very hand that works for you, and makes all things work for your good. What though the policy of hell be against you, when the wisdom of heaven is working for you ; “ The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to nought ; he makes the devices of the people of none effect ; but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations, Psalm xxxiii. 10, 11. Blessed then is the nation whose God is the Lord ; and the people, whom he hath chosen for his inheritance.” What are multitudes of oppositions from men and devils ? Millions of hosts of men are millions of hosts of vanities and nothings to this infinite wisdom ; “ All nations before him are as nothing ; and they are counted unto him less than nothing and vanity, Isaiah iv. 17. I, even I, am he that comforteth you : who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of man that shall die ? and of the son of man, that shall be made as grass ? ” chap. li. 12. You have a wonder-working friend who cannot die, and that will never fail you : riches and worldly honours deal not plainly with us ; we know not when we have them, and when we want them ; but, amidst all changes, God is your unchangeable friend, in whom you are to rejoice. A certain prince, when he heard of the death of many friends in war ; yet comforted himself with this, *Vivit imperator, sat habeo* ; “ It is enough to me that the emperor lives.” O believer ! should it not be enough to you that the Lord lives ? “ As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me.



The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted, Psalm xviii. 44, 46. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands; they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee," Psalm cii. 25-28. What though your trials be very long, God's delays are the seed of greater mercies. The goldsmith holds his metal in the fire till it be melted and refined; "But the needy shall not always be forgotten; nor the expectation of the poor perish for ever," Psalm ix. 18. God's time is better than ours; and he knows when you are ripe for deliverance; he will let the fire burn till the dross come away from the metal; "The vision is for an appointed time." O believer, bless God for this pillar of hope and consolation, that all things shall work together for your good. And whatever state you are brought into, in providence, be content, be cheerful; all things are working together to bring you to that state, wherein you shall be no more tossed and troubled; wherein you will be above these regions that make changes of weather, and have no more any thick foggy days. Many times all your felicity here is to know that your misery shall end, and sin, the root of all misery, be plucked up. If he make all things work together for good to his people, then we may well say, "Truly, God is good to Israel;" whatever befalls them, YET he is good, as the word may be read.

OBJECT. "If it was only trouble and affliction that I was trysted with, perhaps I might take the comfort of this doctrine, that all things shall work together for good; but, alas! sin lies at the door; corruption prevails over me; and my spiritual enemies tread me under foot; and this makes me think all will work for my RUIN."

ANSW. This may be the case, and yet the dominion is on the children of God's side; because victory is not measured by one blow, but by the issue of the battle; "A bruised reed shall he not break, a smoking flax will he not quench, till he bring forth judgment unto victory," Mat. xii. 20. You may, with Paul, be led captive by the law of sin, Rom. vii. 23; and yet the gospel at length be victorious in the heart. Consider that the Spirit keeps the field, even in that same soul wherein the flesh hath a great power; "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against

the flesh, and these two are contrary," Gal. iii. 17. In a carnal man the Spirit is not on the field at all, and therefore he is a servant to sin, and not a captive; but when God's children sin, they are captives to it, and not servants; and when they sin, it is but with half of the will, and so the flesh hath but half a vote; and there is a protestation made on the contrary, by that supernatural instinct of the Spirit, that is given them. Again, the falls and foils of God's children are the seed of humility; and watchfulness, the seed of hunger and thirst after a fuller measure of grace, and of a more strict and circumspect walk; and thus sin, by the grace of God, helps to mortify itself. We read of David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 15, 16, 17, that he longed for a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that was in the midst of the Philistine's host; and when three valiant men brought it to him at the peril of their lives, he would not drink it, saying, "Is not this the blood of these men that went in jeopardy of their lives?" Hence we may learn, he that before shed innocent blood, is now troubled in conscience for hazarding the blood of these men in this rash enterprise; and he that before defiled another man's wife, does now repent for desiring to drink of the water of another man's well. But, passing other Inferences, I go on to an Use of Examination.

Try, therefore, O man, woman, whether you be the subjects to whom this privilege belongs, of having all things working for your good. Try it, for it is no trivial affair, no matter of moonshine; it is no trifle that you have no concern with, and need not trouble your head about; no, it is a matter of the highest moment, and most important concern; an affair wherein your everlasting welfare is concerned. Whether all things shall work together for your good? Because, if they do not so, they will all work for your hurt and perdition; for, the affirmative of the text strongly imports and includes a negative. Well, but say you, "I am persuaded this is one of the most glorious privileges that can be; How shall I know it, that all things shall work together for good to me?" You may try it two ways. 1. By the marks the text offers you. 2. By the begun experience of the thing itself.

1st, Try it by the marks the text gives of those to whom all things shall work together for good; namely, that they are such as love God, and are the called according to his purpose. These are the persons to whom all things shall work for good. And here four things are offered to you for trial. If you would reach to

the bottom of this question, whether you be a true lover, you are to try it. 1. By the object of your love, if it be GOD himself that you love, the true God. 2. By the qualities of the act, if it be true love to this God. 3. By the immediate spring of this love, if it be such as hath issued from effectual calling. 4. By the original root of it, if it be a love that results from the everlasting love of God to you, and his purpose of grace concerning you. I would therefore endeavour to help you a little into this search, wherein you and I both need to be sure what we are saying and doing; for, there is much false pretended love to God in the world.

[1.] Then examine your love by the object of it, if it be GOD, and him indeed that you love. See that it be not a God of your own imagination, and not the true God.

But here, perhaps, it may be enquired, How shall I know if it is God himself that is the object of my love? For answering this, I would ask you two questions.

1. What conviction have you ever got of your natural Atheism, and of your being without God, or Atheists, as all by nature are? Eph. ii. 12. If you never thought yourself an Atheist, nor saw that you were without God, it seems that you are without God to this day, and without love to him; for, since all by nature are without God, and have lost God, how can they love him till they have found him out whom they have lost? And surely they never found him who never saw that they lost him. The true God is the God whom we have lost; whose knowledge we have lost, whose image we have lost, whose favour we have lost; and therefore, if the God whom you pretend to love be a God you think you never lost, and so never saw yourself to be without him, it is not the true God that you love; you are but an Atheist still, having never seen yourself to be so, and to be without God.

2. What knowledge and apprehension have you got of GOD; for, love to God supposes knowledge of him; *Ignoti nulla cupido*. There may be, indeed, a great deal of knowledge without love; but there can be no love without knowledge. Now, has God shewed you his being and glorious excellencies, as infinitely above all creatures; and all the creatures to be insignificant nothings, compared with his all-sufficiency? And has he manifested himself to you, in Christ, in whom alone he is always well pleased; in whom alone he is reconciled; in whom alone his fulness dwells; and in whom alone his excellencies shine most brightly and savingly.



No sinner can love God who hath not seen him in Christ ; “He that hath seen me, says Christ, hath seen the Father.” He that hath not seen Christ hath not seen God ; and so hath not seen the true object of love. For a sinner to pretend that he loves God, and yet hath not got a view of him in Christ, is the grossest ignorance imaginable ; because, out of Christ, he is a consuming fire to sinners, a sin-revenging God. If you know the God whom you think you love, you would love him no otherwise, out of Christ, than as you do the fire that would consume you to ashes. But God in Christ is a God of love ; for, in him his law is magnified, his justice satisfied, his wrath appeased ; and therefore, if you truly love God, or love the true God, your mind has been enlightened to apprehend him in his glory in Christ. Has then the God that commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined in your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ ? 2 Cor. iv. 6. Have you discerned him in the light of the gospel, wherein Christ is held forth ? Have you discerned him in the light of the Spirit, accompanying the word powerfully ? For, it is a light of God’s commanding and creating. Have you discerned him in a light that shined into your heart, and not into your head only ? Have you discerned him in a light that gave you the knowledge of his glory ; the glory of his wisdom and power, the glory of his holiness, and justice, and truth, as well as, at the same time, the glory of his mercy, love, and pity ; the glory of all his excellencies ? And have you discerned this glory in the face of Christ, or in the person of Christ, as the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person ? Heb. i. 3. Have you discerned this glory of God shining in him as a JESUS, and as a CHRIST ; that is, as he is a Saviour, and anointed of God to be so ; sent and sealed of God to save by his blood and righteousness, meritoriously ; and by his Spirit and grace, efficaciously ? In this wonderful work of redemption and salvation through Christ, have you seen such marvellous devices, as become the infinite wisdom of God, and answer all the ends of the glory of God’s perfections, as well as of the salvation of the sinner ? In this case, your love is a true love, terminating on the right object ; if, at the same time, your view of God this way has been attended with so much application of faith, and persuasion of the love of God to you in particular, as at least to create in you kindly thoughts of God. Though you see him infinitely just and holy, and yourself a sinful guilty creature ; yet apprehending the atonement and propitiation in the blood

of Jesus, all harsh thoughts of God, as an enemy, have been removed, and kindly thoughts of him, as a friend, declaring his good-will, through Christ, in the word of grace. The persuasion of faith is here included, whether you have seen it or not.

[2.] Examine your love to God, by the nature and qualities of the *act*, if it be true love to this God. How shall I know this? Why, enquire how your love acts upon this glorious object. It is the nature of love, to make one desire fellowship with the object beloved: so, if you have true love to God, you will have a desire of more intimate union and communion with him. What then is thy great desire and request? Is it that Psalm xxvii. 4. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; that I may behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his temple?" It is the nature of love to make one impatient at the absence of the beloved object: so, if you have true love to God in Christ, his absence will be grievous to thee; and all other comforts will signify nothing to thee without him. "O that I knew where I might find him?" O how long, how long! It is the nature of love to delight in the presence of the object beloved; even so, if you truly love God, his presence will be thy delight: welcome, O beloved! well's me! that now I have got thee in my arms; "I will not let thee go. I held him, says the spouse, and would not let him go, till I had brought him into my mother's house, to the chambers of her that conceived me. O! stir him not up. I charge you, by the roes and hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor awake my love till he please." It is the nature of love to bear affection to everything that is like unto the beloved object; even so, if you love God, you will love all that bear his image; you will be a companion of them that fear his name: and delight in the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. How can they love God, that care not for those that bear his image? It is of the nature of love to hate whatsoever is disagreeable to the beloved object; so, where there is true love to God, there will be true hatred of sin; the love of God, and the love of sin are contradictory things. A believer may be overcome by sin; but he has no love to the overcomer: and this appears, because his sin costs him many a prayer, and tear, and cry, and sigh, and watching, and application to the throne of grace, and to the blood of Christ for cleansing and healing. The love of God destroys the love of sin, and the love of the world. It is the nature of love to think much

of the beloved object; so, where love to God takes place, it carries the thoughts towards him, and the mediation of him is sweet. Love may be known by our thoughts and meditations; many think they love God, and yet God is not in all their thoughts. They think of nothing but the world, and the things thereof; they cannot dwell upon this glorious object, nor are their wandering thoughts any grief to them. It is the nature of love to speak much of the beloved object; we may know by the speech of some, that they have no love to God, never a word of God, from morning to evening in their mouths, unless it be to profane his name. True love will make you speak of him in conversation, and speak to him in prayer, and speak for him, in defence of his truth and cause. In a word, it is the nature of love, to make a man serve where he loves. O! what service has God from you? Does the love of Christ constrain you to judge, "That if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died, that henceforth they that live, should not live unto themselves, but unto him that died and rose again?"

[3.] Examine your love by the immediate spring of it: or the means whereby it is wrought in the soul, namely, Effectual calling. None are lovers of God, till they be effectually called. Here it may be inquired How shall I know if my love to God be such as is the fruit of effectual calling? To this it may be replied, If your love be the fruit of effectual calling, then you will be convinced that it never grew in your heart naturally; and that it is not the fruit of your natural power, or free will; and that, by nature, you are haters of God, Rom. i. 30, viii. 7. If you never saw your enmity against God, and never suspected your love to him, nor never had any love to him, but what you had naturally all your days, I must tell you, your love to him is nothing but enmity against him; for true love grows in the garden of grace, and not of nature. Again, if your fruit be the fruit of effectual calling, then your affections have been drawn to Christ sweetly and irresistably, as with a cord of love; for this drawing power is put forth in effectual calling; "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee, Jer. xxxi. 3. We love him, because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 16. Again, if your love be the fruit of effectual calling, then the gospel of free grace will be very precious to you; for, that is the outward means of effectual calling; and that which is the means of the new spiritual birth, 1 Pet. i. 23, is still the mean also of spiritual growth: and therefore, they that



are effectually called and regenerate, have still an earnest desire after, and delight in it; "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2. If your love to God be not attended with a love to the doctrine of the gospel, it is but a spurious brood, and not of the right kind. Further, if your love to God be the fruit of effectual calling, then the Spirit of God will be very precious to you: because, it is by the power and efficacy of the Spirit that the call is made effectual; for then the gospel comes not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thes. i. 5. You will desire more and more of that free Spirit, for carrying on the work of faith with power, and for exciting any grace that ever wrought; your prayer will be, "Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden, and the spices shall send forth the smell thereof." You will always find the Spirit when he comes by his gracious motions, running only in the channel of gospel doctrine, that tends to lead men out to Christ and his righteousness; and not in the channel of legal doctrine, that has a tendency to lead men in to themselves, and their own works; for, thus the Spirit came to you at first in effectual calling: "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Gall. iii. 2. Surely your love is not the fruit of effectual calling, if the Spirit, that calls effectually, be not precious to you: if you can hear sermons from day to day, and never care whether the Spirit powerfully accompany them or not, your love is to be suspected; but, if he hath begun the good work in you, then you will find a need of the same power to carry on the work that began it; and your cry will be, "O for more of the Spirit! Oh! dead preaching and hearing, without the Spirit! O to see the power and glory of God, as I have seen it in the sanctuary!"

[4.] Examine your love by the original root of it, the everlasting love of God and his purpose of grace; for, it is a love that issues from a being called according to his purpose. Here an exercised person may say, "How shall I know, if my love to God be the fruit of God's everlasting love and purpose, in Christ, from all eternity concerning me? Is it possible to know, that my love to him in time is such as will evidence his love to me from eternity? O how shall I understand that?" Why, this may not only be known by the marks already delivered, but further, in these four particulars.

1. If your love to God be such as flows from, and evidences

his everlasting love to you, and purpose of grace concerning you, then this loving purpose towards you, has produced in you a loving purpose towards him. What for a purpose is it? It is a purpose of marriage with the Son of God. His purpose of marriage with you from eternity hath produced in you a purpose of marriage with him in time. Can you tell me, if ever such a purpose was wrought in your heart? It is true, there are purposes that come to no effect; but this is an effectual purpose, that hath taken effect; insomuch that you could find no rest till the match was made up, as Naomi said of Boaz, when purposing to match with Ruth, chap. iii. 18, "The man will not rest till he hath finished the thing;" even so, Christ Jesus, when betrothing a sinner to himself, as he will not rest till he hath finished this thing, so he works in the soul that purpose also, that he cannot rest till that thing be finished. Now, can you say thee was a time when the Lord wrought such a purpose of marriage with him in your heart, that you could not rest till it was some way finished, by a joining hands with the Son of God? Insomuch that when he offered his heart and hand to you, you were made to offer your heart and hand to him, saying, "Lord, take thou me to thyself; take thou me for such is the deceitfulness of my heart, that I know not if I dare say, Even so, I take thee: that is, indeed, what I would be at: but seeing it is thou, even thou only that canst make it sure work, and a sure bargain; therefore I put the making of the marriage in thy own hand. O take me to be thine for ever: I offer myself, with a thousand good-wills; O take me, take me: take me and my blessings to eternity. I put my heart into thy hand, and leave it with thee." Tell me, man, woman, were you brought to such a purpose as this? O poor soul, it is a fruit of his purpose from eternity of marrying you: it is a fruit of your being given to Christ in the council of peace: for Christ says, John vi. 37, "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me. Again, if his loving purpose towards you, has produced a loving purpose in you towards him, then it is not only a purpose of marriage with him, but also a purpose of cleaving unto him; a purpose never to leave him; a purpose to abide with him: as his purpose is to abide with them for ever, John xiv. 19; so it produces a purpose in them to abide with him for ever; saying with Ruth, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for where thou goest I will go; where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people; and

thy God my God," Ruth i. 16. It is a purpose to bed and board with him, if I may be allowed the expression ; to live and die with him ; and to live upon him, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Again, another part of the loving purpose in them that his purpose doth produce, is a purpose, through grace, to glorify him : they purpose to glorify him in time, and to glorify him through eternity. However little they reach of their purpose while here below, yet this is a peculiar disposition wrought in all that love God, by virtue of their being called according to his purpose, that they have a great inclination, a strong purpose to glorify him with their hearts, their lips, and lives. They are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, that they should shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness, to his marvellous light, 1 Pet. ii. 9. These are they who love him, and whose love to him flows from, and evidences, his everlasting love and gospel of grace to them.

2. If your love to God be such as is a fruit of his everlasting purpose towards you, then it will produce in you an everlasting purpose towards him : thus to cleave to him, and serve him and glorify him. There are some fleeting purposes which many have, which last but for a moment ; but the believer's purpose, to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever, is an everlasting purpose ; it is a firm, permanent, fixed, habitual constant purpose. Whatever winds may drive him from the thing he purposes : yet, no wind can drive him from his purpose, when once it is wrought of God in his heart. Temptation may drive him from seeking and serving his God sometime : but yet the temptation cannot drive him from his purpose of seeking and serving the Lord. He may be drawn to sin ; but he can never be drawn to a purpose of sinning, or a purpose of living in sin ; nay, if some strong corruptions prevail against him, and lead him captive, yet he can confidently appeal to heaven it was never his stated purpose ; and it was against his purpose, and against his prayers, and against his tears, and against his hope, that such and such an iniquity prevailed against him. It is with him as it is with a mariner that sets out for such a distant haven, with a full purpose to sail straight to it ; but, against his purpose he is carried to this port and that port, which he never designed ; and, perhaps, with cross winds, carried hither and thither ; yet still his purpose remains : and he never rests till he come to the place he designed.

3. If your love to God be the fruit of his eternal purpose and



decree, then your heart will be reconciled to these eternal counsels of God, concerning the choosing of some and passing by others. The doctrine of predestination, which the apostle here speaks of in the context, will not be a terrible and harsh doctrine to you : you are brought to such a view of the absolute sovereignty of God, that you dare not quarrel with his decrees ; nay, your heart will justify God and acquiesce in his wise and sovereign disposals, saying, " O ! is it not fit and right that the potter make of the clay what he pleases ? and that God have mercy on whom he will have mercy ? " &c. " Is there then unrighteousness with God ? God forbid," Rom. ix. 14, 15, 19, 20. Hence, by the bye, we cannot think that any Arminian can have a love to God : for, in principle, he pulls God down, in effect, from the throne of his absolute sovereignty and dominion.

4. If your love to God be the fruit of his everlasting love and purpose of grace towards you, then your love to him will be accompanied with the admiration and adoration of free and sovereign grace ; you will not only stoop to sovereignty, without quarrelling his decrees, but you will admire and adore the freedom of his distinguishing love, and ascribe all the glory and praise of every part of your salvation to this free and sovereign mercy of God. You will desire to say with the apostle, " O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! " Rom. xi. 33, and to acknowledge with the same apostle, " He hath found us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 6. You will desire to admire the beauty and glory of all the links of the golden chain here : " Whom he did foreknow, them also he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

2dly, Try whether all things shall work for your good, by the begun experience of the thing itself, whether you have found already the footsteps of this truth in your hearts, God's making all things work together for good. Try if he hath begun to make some things work already for your good ; for, if he has begun to make some or many things already work for good to you, hence you may conclude, he will go on to make all things work together for good to you. I shall reduce this to four heads.

1. Have ever any of you been brought under sickness and distress of body? Rub up your experience a little, and reflect upon it, whether or not has this done you good? Did it humble you to the dust that you were dwelling in the house of dust? And did it bring your sin and guilt before you, and make you fly for refuge to a Saviour? Did it bear in the apprehensions of mortality upon thy heart, and excite thee to seek after a happy immortality? Was it a praying time, a wrestling time, a mourning time, and a turning time? Some are the worse of affliction; but, are you the better? Can you say, "It was good for me that I was afflicted?"

2. Hath ever any here sustained some great temporal losses, so as you are brought low, in outward respects? Well, consider if ever it wrought for any good to you; was you made to search the cause, and see your sin lying at the door? and what particular sins provoked the Lord? And dost thou now see that these things are not the best things, and that vanity is written upon them, and upon all things under the sun? And, by this, thy heart hath been more set a pursuing after the one thing necessary. Do you see your loss made up in God, and in communion with him? and, thereupon, art satisfied in the last God you have got? For, the first gods you set your heart upon, were vain and perishing objects of love; but now you are where you should be, and where you would be; only you would still have more and more nearness to this true and everlasting, everliving God? Or, have you learned to live a little more upon the providence of God, and upon the promises of God in the use of lawful means? Are you brought to prize a little from God, and receive it with thankfulness? whereas before, you could nauseate a feast: "The full soul loatheth the honey-comb." Or, are you brought unto this disposition, to see more evil in thy heart, than thou wouldst believe was in it? That it is a murmuring, covetous, and impatient heart, as well as a hard, wicked, and wandering heart? And art thou humbled before God for the pride of thy heart? This is some good.

3. Has God left you to yourself to commit such and such sins, whereby God is provoked, and your peace is disturbed? Now, what good have you got of this dispensation? Hath it cost you many tears in secret? Many a long look to the fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness? Or, has the Lord thereby given you a sight of your nature? "I was conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity." Has it bred in you a holy watchfulness against every

sin? Or, hath it occasioned your admiring the free, absolutely free grace of God in Christ, and the long-suffering patience of God? Hath it made you pity others under the same temptation? and to lay out thyself more for honouring God than ever you did? Surely then it has wrought for good to thee.

4. Have you been brought under the hidings of God's face? and hath this been for good to you? Is sin imbittered, because it is the cause of it? Hath it endeared the presence of God more to you? Hath it awakened you to more frequency and fervency in holy duties? Hath it made you more useful and helpful to poor tempted and deserted ones than before, when they are saying, Alas! there was never any like me! I am a reprobate! it is in vain for me to wait on the means of grace? Well, you may tell such, If it be so with you, it was so with me: and this may give some relief. See what experience you have of God's beginning to make all things work together for your good. Hath he begun to do so? Well, "He is a rock, and his work is perfect." He will make all things work for good.

We shall now shut up the subject with an use of exhortation, both to saints and sinners. There are a few duties I would exhort believers unto.

1. Admire the wonderful goodness of this God, who makes all things work together for good to you. Well may you say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth whom I desire besides thee. Who is a God like to thee? How great is his goodness?"

2. I would charge every soul here, not to make use of this truth to indulge the commission of one sin, or to go on in the way of sin: "What! shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. Shall we do evil that good may come of it?" Rom. vi. 1. What God can do, in his infinite power and wisdom, is one thing: and what we, in faith, may expect, is another. Is any soul here engaged in love to any particular lust? Then, if ever you expect good at the hand of God, O bid adieu to your lusts, saying, "What have I to do any more with idols?" For, as all things work together for good to them that love God: so all things work together for hurt to them that love sin; and, therefore, away with sin.

3. Entertain good thoughts of God in all the ways of his providence, and whenever the dark side casts up, look over to the



bright side of it by faith, and you will see all his ways of mercy and truth to them who fear his name. Beware of harsh thoughts of God. Be restless till you have the persuasion of two things, viz., that God loves you, and that you love God. If you could live in the view of this always, believers, then you would always have this persuasion too, that all things shall work together for your good.

4. Whatsoever providence may expose you to, yet resolve to live by faith, and to live in love : and then whatever come to pass, you may be satisfied all is well still, and all will be well still. By a life of faith you will feel all things working together for good.

5. Beware of practically contradicting the design of providence in working for your good, or of having any hand in making them work for your hurt, so as to be the worse of them, which people may do many ways : as when, in affliction, they betake themselves unto unlawful means of relief ; when they use unlawful means without dependence upon God ; when they reckon God's former favours to be snares and entanglements ; when they refuse the comforts of the word under their affliction, *Exod. vi. 9* ; and when they weary of their life, with Rachel.

6. Beware of censuring and challenging providence, when yet it is working for your good. Men are guilty of censuring the providence of God, not only through atheism, in denying providence : but also through unbelief, in questioning the love of God ; through sensuality, in misconstruing all providences, which do not gratify their lusts and carnal desires. Sometimes through hastiness, in passing sentence upon providence, before these signal periods of it come, that would manifest its meaning. Sometimes from ignorance and want of consideration, not knowing that God may send lesser crosses to prevent a greater, *Jer. xxiv. 5*.

7. Put a remark upon all the good that you get by the providence of God. Remember how often the cross hath borne down your pride, restrained your predominant, sent you to your prayers, and to a God in Christ, the hearer of prayer. It is necessary to make this remark upon the good of providence, because, when it is made, and well improv'd, the crosses that you are ready to make arguments of your unbelief, would rather prove confirmations for your faith.

8. Join issue with providence, in endeavouring to get all the good you can out of every dispensation, and particularly out of affliction : and that by prayer, *Job xxvii. 10*, *James v. 13* ; and by being suitably exercised by them, not despising the chastening of

the Lord, nor fainting when he rebukes, Heb. xii. 13 ; nor despairing of a happy issue ; but expecting, according to the promise, that all things shall work together for good.

On the other hand, I would speak a word to the wicked and ungodly, who are enemies to, and haters of God. To you I would offer, 1st, A word of terror and conviction : but I have prevented myself in the third inference as to this, and so I shall conclude,

2dly, With a word of counsel. And the advice I offer is that which you have, Job xxii. 21. If you would have all things working for your good, then acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee. Be restless till you get saving acquaintance with God in Christ, as he is revealed in the gospel, whereby you are called outwardly to acquaintance, and to peace and reconciliation with him ; and wherein God prays you to be reconciled to him, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. In this gospel-dispensation he is calling and inviting you to come to him : and though the call will not be effectual without the efficacy of his grace ; yet how doth he make the call effectual, but by charming the heart with the outward call : therefore hearken to the voice of the charmer in the outward call ; wait for the Spirit to come, and draw out your heart towards him, in faith and love. Put not the gospel-call from you, under any temptation drawn from the secret purpose of God ; for, though all whom he calls effectually, are called according to his purpose ; yet that purpose is not the rule of their faith, nor the first object of the faith of any man. As you cannot know a man's thoughts, but by his words : so, you cannot know God's purpose, but by his promise. Do not first pore upon God's thoughts and designs, for that is not the first object of your faith ; but first hear and give ear to his word : and if you believe his word, with application to yourself, then you may be sure of his purpose and thoughts toward you, that they are thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. It is the faith of his promise you are called to, and not the faith of his purpose ; but, whenever you have the faith of his promise, then you may have the faith of his purpose : whenever you believe in Christ, as given to you in the word, then you may believe that you are given to him in the decree of God. You are to make first your calling, and then your election sure ; for, whenever you hear his call, and believe in him, according to his word, then you may conclude that you are called according to his purpose.

QUEST. What is he saying to me, in the outward call of the word that may engage me to hear him?

ANSW. He is saying, man, woman, will you enlist with me as a Captain, to fight all your battles for you? Will you match with me as your Husband, to protect and provide for you? Poor sinner! will you have me to be your portion? O diseased sinner, will you have me to be your Physician? O ignorant sinner, will you have me to be your Prophet to teach you? O guilty sinner, will you have me to be your Priest, to pardon you? O enslaved sinner, will you have me to be your King, to subdue your iniquity, to conquer your enemies, to break your rebellion and enmity? Poor bankrupt, will you have a Surety, to pay all your debt? Poor oppressed sinner, will you have a helper, to bear all your burdens? Will you have one that can supply all your wants, and heal all your wounds? Will you have one that can portion you for eternity? Poor mortal worm, that art to crumble into dust in a little, will you have one that can jointure you for eternity, and make you happy in death, and happy in judgment, and happy through eternity? Will you have eternal life? "He that hath the Son hath life:" and his complaint is, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." He himself is the true God, and eternal life. What say you? either are you content or not. If you be not content, and will not have salvation that is come so near to you, then, "How shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation?" Is not your ruin of yourself, when you will not have salvation from the guilt of sin, and from the power of sin? Must not your hell be the hottest? "Wo to thee Chorazin and Bethsaida! It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you: and thou Capernaum, that art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell." Turks and Pagans, that never heard the gospel, will be, may I say, set upon the surface of hell, while you must be thrust down to the centre of damnation. Christ says, "I would have gathered you, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." But, are you satisfied? You are called outwardly by the word; but are you made content to have Christ for yours in all respects, as a Prophet, Priest, and King, to save you from sin, as well as to save you from hell. Can you say it before God, men, and angels, that your heart is made content? Then you are not only called outwardly, according to his word; but inwardly, and effectually called, according to his purpose. The decree is open; and the everlasting love of God, that



runs under ground from all eternity, is broken up above ground in drawing you with loving-kindness, and making your heart content with Christ, and close with him in all his offices. And now, has his love manifested to you in the gospel, drawn out your heart's love towards him? Then you may apply all the comforts that the text bears; "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose."

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## SERMON CXLIV.

### TEMPLE DESOLATION MAKING WAY FOR TEMPLE RESTORATION.<sup>1</sup>

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."—JOHN ii. 19.

WHEN the hands of men and devils are lifted up to destroy, it is our safest course to look to the hand of Christ, that it may be lifted up to deliver, and to raise up what they pull down; for this he is able and ready to do, whenever ruin and desolation is come to a height, as is exemplified in these words of his, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The occasion of these words is, 1. Our Lord's having purged the temple, and driven the buyers and sellers out of it, verses 14, 15, 19; and having given the reason of it, intimating, that his Father's house ought not to be profaned, and made a house of merchandize, and that he had authority to purge it, as his Father's house; he being faithful as a Son over his own house, and filled with zeal, which did eat him up, made him humble and spend himself in redressing these abuses, and vindicating the honour of the temple. And, 2. The Jews, with their leaders, demanding a sign to prove his authority for so doing, verse 18. The Jews had, with their leaders, allowed that abuse and profanation of the temple; but, because they could not directly charge the work that Christ did, as if it was not a good work, to purge and purify the house of God from such abuses, when it was consecrated for holy use and divine honour,

(1) This sermon was preached at the opening of the Associate Synod, met at Stirling, April 12th, 1748. Published at the desire of the Synod.

therefore they question his authority, saying, "What sign givest thou us, to prove that thou art authorized and commissioned to do these things?" They had robbed the temple of its honour, and robbed God of his right; and now they would rob the Son of God of his office, and upon the matter declare that he wanted the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that he had no warrant to execute that office. They that apply themselves in earnest to reformation-work, may expect to meet with opposition, even from these that are concerned to give them assistance, as the Jews here, who should have stood by Christ, in vindicating the honour of their temple, instead of resisting him; but we are hereby taught, not to think strange of resistance in the work of God, even from these that should give assistance therein. Here is their question, "What sign shewest thou us, to prove thou art authorised and commissioned to do these things?"

The text then is our Lord's answer, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." What Christ had done, and was doing, did miraculously manifest his power and authority; therefore, he works no other miracle immediately to convince them, but gives them a sign in something future, the truth whereof was to appear by the event: and the sign was his own death and resurrection. Thus he refers them to that which would be: 1. His last sign, seeing you will not be convinced with what you see and hear, then you may wait; for, 2. It was to be the great sign for proving his being the Messiah, sent of God, because it was foretold of him, that he was to be bruised, Isa. liii. 10; that he was to be cut off, Dan. ix. 26; and yet that he should not see corruption, Psalm xvi. 10; and therefore was to rise up, and sit at the right hand of God, till his enemies should be all his footstool, Psalm cx. 1. If these things were fulfilled in him, and the truth appeared in the event, according to Deut. xviii. 21, then it was evident he was the true prophet, the true Messiah, the Son and Sent of God, having all power and authority in his Father's house.

This death and resurrection of Christ is here foretold in a figurative way, as afterwards, when he called it the sign of the prophet Jonas: so here, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This he spoke to them in parables, that, as it is said, Matth. xiii. 13. "Seeing, they might not see; and hearing, they might not understand: because thus for judgment came he into the world, that they who see not might see, and they that see, or were

puffed up with their knowledge, might be made blind." This figurative speech here proved such a stumbling-block to them, that it was produced in evidence against him at his trial, to prove him a blasphemer; Matth. xxvi. 60, 61, "At last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it again in three days." Had they humbly sought the meaning of his words, he would have told them, and it would have been a savour of life unto them; but they were resolved to cavil, and it proved a savour of death unto death. They that would not be convinced were hardened: and the very manner of the expression, and of the prediction here, proves an occasion of the accomplishment of that prediction itself, when, through wilful mistake of the meaning of his words, it was produced as an evidence against him. It is not the first time that testimonies, well intended, have been mistaken and misrepresented; and the words thereof turned to a quite other meaning than was designed, and thus produced as evidences for condemning the innocent. Our Lord's own words were thus abused; and no wonder such injuries be done to the words of fallible men.

The words here may be considered, 1. In themselves; and, 2. In their scope.

1st, In themselves. They contain a twofold prediction.

1. He foretels his death; "Destroy this temple;" that is, ye will destroy it: this is, as afterwards explained, "the temple of his body," verse 21. They took him to be speaking of the temple he had purged. We mistake Christ many times, when we take literally what he speaks figuratively. He shewed his zeal for that temple they spoke of: but he would have us know, that the holiness of it was but typical, and led to the consideration of another temple, which that was but a shadow of, the substance being Christ, Heb. ix. 9, Col. ii. 17. Some think, therefore, that when Christ said, "Destroy this temple," he pointed to his own body, and laid his hand upon it: however, we are here assured that he spoke of the temple of his body; "Destroy this temple:" this I prophesy and know you will, and I will permit you to do it.

2. He foretels his resurrection by his own power; "In three days I will raise it up:" others were raised, but he raised himself. Now, Christ choosed to express this by their destroying, and his raising the temple.

(1.) Because he was now justifying himself, in purging the



temple which they profaned. You that defile one temple will destroy another ; and, indeed, the defiling of the temple is the destroying of it ; and its reformation is its resurrection. Also he choosed this way of expression.

(2.) Because the death of Christ was indeed the destruction of the Jewish temple, and the procuring cause of it ; and his resurrection was the raising of another temple, the gospel-church, Zech. vi. 12. The ruins of their place and nation, John xi. 48, were the riches of the world ; See Amos ix. 11, Acts xv. 16.

2dly, The words may be considered in their scope : the scope and design thereof was. to prove his authority to purge the temple. I will prove it, might he say, by raising what you will destroy, and raising it in three days. As they were ignorant of the meaning of Christ's words, so of the almighty power of Christ, as if he could do no more than another man. Had they known that this was he that built all things in six days, they would not have made it such an absurdity that he would build a temple in three days ; but thus he proves both his ability and authority ; "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days." Now, it is especially from the scope of these words, that I deduce the following doctrine.

**OBSERV.** Christ's ability to raise up, or effectuate the resurrection of the temple of the human body, when destroyed by men, is a sure sign of his ability, and authority, and design to raise up and rebuild the temple of his church, or mystical body, when destroyed and ruined by men.

His ability to raise his own body in three days, is a clear sign of his ability and authority to repair the desolations of his church, when brought to destruction and death, as his own human body was. To this purpose see what is said, Isa. xxvi. 19, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise," &c. To the same purpose is that, Hos. vi. 2, "After two days he will revive us ; in the third he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." And hence it is said, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, that Christ died for our sins according to the scripture : and that he was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the scripture ; and he arose to be the resurrection and the life, and that his mystical body, being planted in the likeness of his death, might also be in the likeness of his resurrection, Rom. vi. 5.

We shall observe the following method, in prosecuting this observation :—

- I. We would offer some remarks for the explication of the text and doctrine.
- II. Some reasons for the confirmation thereof.
- III. Some inferences for the application of it.

I. We are to offer some remarks for the explication of the text and doctrine. And the remarks may be of two sorts, or under these two following heads :—1. Some remarks concerning the sign Christ here gives them ; “ Destroy this body, and in three days I will raise it up.” 2. Some remarks upon the thing signified, namely, his raising up the temple of his mystical body, the church ; or his repairing it when ruined by men.

1st, We would offer a few remarks concerning the sign here given by our Lord Jesus ; “ Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” For explaining of this, you may remark,

1. “ That our Lord Jesus here compares his body to the temple ; and, indeed, his body is the true temple, of which that at Jerusalem was but a type.” Why ? for the following reasons :—

(1.) Like the temple, it was built by immediate divine direction, 1 Chron. xxviii. 19. And thus Christ says, “ A body hast thou prepared me,” Heb. x. 5, This temple of Christ’s body, was indeed a more curious edifice, a building of God, a master-piece of his work, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of a virgin, and gradually built up to a perfect stature.

(2.) Like the temple it was a holy house ; and therefore called *that holy thing*, consecrated for the service of God ; a living temple, for the living service of the living God, who says, “ Behold my Servant,” Isa. xlii. 1.

(3.) It was like the temple, the habitation of God’s glory ; here the eternal Word dwelleth, the true Shechinah ; he is IMMANUEL, God with us ; and “ In him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily,” Col. ii. 2.

(4.) The temple was the place and medium of intercourse betwixt God and Israel ; there God revealed himself to them, and there they presented themselves and their services to him. Thus, by Christ, God speaks to us, and we speak to him. True worshippers look towards that house, as you see represented, 1 Kings viii.

30, 35, 38, &c. We must worship God with an eye to Christ; of whom, as the true temple, God says, 2 Chron. vii. 15, 16. "Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend unto the prayer that is made in this place; for, now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." God's heart and eye is set upon Christ as the temple, whence he shews himself precious to sinners.

(5.) In a word, the temple was a visible, outward edifice, capable of being demolished and destroyed by the hands of men; and accordingly was so in the event: such a temple was the body of Christ; it was a mortal body subject to death. This leads me to another remark here.

Remark 2. "That this temple of Christ's body was destroyed, as far as the hands of men and devils could destroy it; even as the temple of Jerusalem afterwards was." By this destruction of the temple of Christ's body, we are to understand the death of Christ, who was actually crucified, dead, and buried, according to the history thereof you have in the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The destroyers of this temple, instigated by Satan, cried out upon the matter, Raze, raze it to the foundation, when they cried, "Crucify him! crucify him!" and so accomplished the prediction of our Lord here, *Destroy this temple*. Hence,

Remark 3. "That this destruction or death of Christ's human body was ordered of the Lord; he permitted it: yea, God determined it, Acts ii. 23. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." God had a holy hand in that wherein men had a sinful wicked hand. "Destroy this temple;" it is not a command or allowance, but a prediction of what wickedness they would commit; yet God designed his death as man's Surety; therefore justice pursued him, and knocked down that temple: he died to satisfy that threatening; "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die." The destruction of this temple was designed for our deliverance. Therefore,

Remark 4. "This temple was raised up the third day after it was thus destroyed, according to the promise and the type." This temple behaved to be repaired and rebuilt; and that in three days. This holy temple saw destruction, but it was not possible it could see corruption. "David foreseeing this before, speaks of the resur-



rection of Christ, That his soul was not left in hell neither his flesh did see corruption," Acts ii. 31, compared with Psalm xvi. 10, and Acts xiii. 35. Arise, he must, to show that he was the Son of God, Rom i. 4; that he was the living God, a living temple, not made with hands, as other temples.

Remark 5. "That Christ by his own power, raised up again this temple in three days: 'I will raise it up.' " It is true, we are told, again and again, the Father raised him; and that God raised him from the dead; but then it is as true, that, as God, he and his Father are one; and therefore, he arose, by his own power, which was the power of God; for he is God-man. He declared that he had power to lay down his life, and power to take it again, John x. 18. And as Christ foretold it here, so he actually rose and Christ is risen indeed; the temple is raised up by his own power. And never was there a greater demonstration of the power of God than was put forth in raising this temple: it is called the power of his resurrection, Phil. iii. 10. As Lazarus behoved to be dead and buried for a time, that the power of Christ might be manifest in raising him; so here, the temple of Christ's body behoved first to be destroyed by death, and interred, that his own divine power might be illustriously displayed in the revival of it again.

Remark 6. "That this resurrection of Christ, or the raising up of the temple of his body, was a sign and demonstration of his power and authority to raise and repair the temple of his church, his mystical body." The Jews here sought a sign of his authority for what he did; but seeing his works and miracles did not convince them that he was the true Messias, he spoke in a figurative way of a sign, that should in itself be demonstrative of his being the true Messias, the true God, and should declare that he was the Son of God with power, and the glorious powerful Head of the body of the church. This leads,

2dly, To offer some remarks upon the thing signified, namely, his power and authority to raise up the temple of his mystical body the church, or his repairing it when demolished and ruined by men. Concerning this we may remark,

1. "That as the human body of Christ, so his church and mystical body is comparable to a temple, and frequently in scripture compared thereto. 'Know ye not that ye are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.' 1 Cor. iii. 16. Yea, their bodies are called the temples of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. vi. 19.

“What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; and God hath said, I will dwell in them,” 2 Cor. vi. 16. The church is a temple of God’s building, as Christ’s body was; “The Lord hath founded Zion, he buildeth Jerusalem.” It is also his holy temple, and called the mountain of his holiness, Psalm xlviii. 1. It is his habitation; yea, he hath desired it for his habitation, saying, “This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it,” Psalm cxxxii. 14. And further, it is the place of intercourse with God; there is no ordinary means of salvation but in the temple of his church, where his word and ordinances are dispensed; for, as “There is no name given under heaven, whereby to be saved, but the name of Christ,” the only Saviour published in Zion; so, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” This temple, indeed, hath both an outer and inner court; I mean, the church is either visible or invisible. “The catholic or universal church,” says our Confession of Faith, “which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all, Eph. i. 10, 22, 23, v. 12, 27, 32, Col. i. 18. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal, under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”

Remark 2. “That as the human body of Christ, when in his state of humiliation, was liable to destruction and death; so is the church militant, the mystical body of Christ, his temple, liable to destruction and defilement; and when it is profaned and defiled, it is said to be destroyed; “If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are:” It may be read, “If any man *destroy* the temple of God, him will God destroy,” 1 Cor. iii. 17. To this purpose we say in our Confession, in the forementioned chapter, “That the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no church of Christ, but synagogues of Satan; though yet there shall always be a church on earth, to

(1) Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. § 1, 2, with the scriptures there quoted.

worship God according to his will.<sup>1</sup> Thus we read, Rev. ii. iii. what errors the churches of Asia were filled with ; and Matt. xiii. 24, &c., what tares may grow up among the wheat. We read, Rev. xviii. 2, how the ancient famous Church of Rome is become a BABYLON, the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. We read of the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews and are not ; but are the synagogue of Satan, Rev. ii. 9, 1 Cor. xi. 19. "There must be heresies among you," says the apostle, "that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Thus the apostle Paul also foretold, Acts xx. 29, 30. "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

Remark 3. "That such temple destroyers and defilers are ordered of God in the visible church : by his determinate counsel and foreknowledge, they put forth their wicked hands to this destructive work." God says to them, providentially, not preceptively, as Christ said here, "Destroy this temple." When we see the wicked hands of men, and condemn them that are thus employed, we are to see the holy hand of God, and justify him, saying, "Thou art holy, thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Is there evil in the city, and I have not done it, saith the Lord?" Amos iii. 6. (See Isaiah xxii. 4, 5.) "Therefore, said I, Look away from me, I will weep bitterly : labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people ; for, it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts, in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains." But God's permitting such evils, for wise and holy ends, will never justify temple destroyers, no more than his determinate counsel justified the Jews in crucifying the Lord of glory, and destroying the temple of his human body. Therefore,

Remark 4. "After this destruction God hath promised a restoration and a rebuilding." Thus he promises, Zech. i. 16, 17, "Thus saith the Lord, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies ; my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, &c. The Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall choose Jerusalem." This is yet further explained in the vision of four horns, and the four carpenters. It is said, ver. 19, "These are the horns that have scat-

(1) Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. § 5, with the scriptures cited.



tered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." And ver. 20, 21, "The Lord shewed me four carpenters : Then said I, What come these to do ? And he spoke, saying, These are the horns that have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift his head ; but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lift up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it." The scattering horns were formidable, so that no man did lift up his head ; every body saw, even by the eye of sense, the power and policy of the church-destroyers ; but, says the prophet, "The Lord shewed me four carpenters," or *smiths*. Indeed it is by the eye of faith we see the church's safety, notwithstanding the destroying horns ; it is the Lord that shews us that, as he opened the eyes of the prophet's servant, to see a guard of angels round about his master. We may here observe, That if there be horns for pushing the church, there are carpenters provided of God, to fray and break them. Some by these four horns understand Zerubabel and Joshua, Ezra and Nehemiah, that carried on the work of God, in despite of the opposition given to it. Which way soever the church is threatened with mischief and ruin, God can find out ways and means to restrain the wrath, and make it praise him ; "The wrath of man shall praise thee ; the remainder thereof thou wilt restrain," Psalm lxxvi. 10.

Remark 5. "That this restoration of the temple is the work of Christ, the glorious Head of the body of the church ; ' In three days I will raise it up.' " It is by the power of Christ that the temple is built and rebuilt ; " Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts ; who art thou, O great mountain ? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain, Zech. iv. 6, 7. The man, whose name is the Branch, he shall build the temple, and bear the glory," chap. vi. 12. He will display the glory of his power in his resurrection work ; " He will arise and have mercy on Zion, he will appear in his glory, Psalm cii. 13, 16. This is the Lord's doing," Psalm cxviii. 23. "This is from the Lord," as in the Hebrew.

Remark 6. "That this work belongs to him, as he is the risen Head of the body of the church." Our Head is not like the first Adam, dead, and lying rotten in the grave ; but he is risen, and sitting at the right hand of the Father. He hath done with the temple of his body, as he said, " In three days I will raise it up ; " and he hath given this as a sign and demonstration of his power and authority to raise his church when ruined, and his power and

authority to purge the temple, and repair the desolations of Zion. This leads me now to the second general head.

II. The second thing proposed, after remarks for the explication of the text and doctrine, was to offer some reasons for the confirmation. The thing to be confirmed then is, That Christ's power and ability to raise up the temple of his human body, when destroyed by men, is a sure sign and evidence of his ability and authority, yea, and of his design, to raise up and rebuild the temple of his mystical body the church, when seemingly destroyed and ruined by men.

Reason 1. Because his raising up the body from the grave was a sure sign of his being the true Messias, the true God in our nature, the true Redeemer; "Being declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead," Rom. i. 4. It was declared, that as he raised the temple of his body, in spite of death and all the destroyers of that temple; so he is able to raise and restore his spiritual temple, when laid in ruins, and in a seeming hopeless case. This might appear marvellous to us; but, "Shall we think it marvellous to God?" Zech. viii. 6. No; he hath given proof of his being God the Saviour and Deliverer, by death, in death, and from death.

2. By this he hath given a sure sign of his being the Head of the body, the church, that died and rose as their public Head, the First-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence, who hath made peace by the blood of his cross, Col. i. 18, 20. For their sake he took that body to himself; for their sake he suffered in the flesh, and suffered the destruction of that temple; for their sake he rose again, or raised that temple. Yea, the sufferings and the resurrection of Christ were the exemplars and pattern of the sufferings and revivals of his mystical body; shewing, that as he the Head suffered and rose, so they should suffer and rise; and their restorations should succeed and come after their destructions; for, "He turns men to destruction, and says, Return, ye children of men." He brings them to the gates of death, so as to have the sentence of death in themselves, and then restores them to life and health; for, he killeth, and maketh alive, because he liveth; he that was dead and is alive, and liveth for evermore, having the keys of hell and death; they shall live also, in spite of death, and danger, and destruction. Thus it is many times with the mystical body of Christ, because of their union with and conformity to the glorious Head.

3. By this also he hath given a sure sign of his carrying on his Father's design, who is the God that quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were, Rom. iv. 17. The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, and all things to rise out of nothing, it looks like him to make life to rise out of death. Therefore, as he was able, when the temple of his body was destroyed, to raise it up in three days; so, he hath thereby given evidence that he is to carry on the work of God, in quickening dead souls, and raising his mystical body, after they are like dead and dry bones, scattered about the grave's mouth, by breathing upon these slain, that they may live.

4. By this he hath given a sure sign, not only of his ability, but of his authority and commission, as the risen and exalted Head, to raise his tabernacle when fallen, and to restore his mystical body from destruction. Hence it was, after his resurrection, he declared his commission in such plain terms, Mat. xxviii. 18, "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me;" and it is said, Eph. i. 22, "He hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be Head over all things to the church." Hath he not then evidently given proof of his power and authority to purge his temple when it is polluted, and deliver it from utter ruin, when it is apparently destroyed? "Him hath God the Father sealed" to be JEHOVAH-JIREH, that in the mount of the Lord it might be seen; he will provide, and make extremities, deaths, and destructions, the porch at which he will bring in deliverance and salvation.

5. By this he hath given a sure sign and pledge, that he will execute that commission of raising up the temple of his mystical body; for it was crucified with him, and raised with him. Hence the church invisible is said to be crucified with Christ, and to be raised up with him, and sit with him in heavenly places; and therefore, as sure as the Head was raised up, the body shall be raised. Not only the spiritual resurrection of dead elect souls is secured by the death and resurrection of Christ, and the resurrection of their body at the great day, which Christ so often spoke of and promised, John iv., "I will raise him up at the last day;" but also the resurrection of his dead and languishing body mystical in this world; for, even when he threatens to be as a lion, saying, "I, even I will tear and go away; I will go and return to my place;" yet it is only "till they acknowledge their offences, and seek my face; in their affliction they shall seek me early," Hos. v. 14, 15. Then it



follows, "Come and let us return to the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up," Hos. vi.

1. The Head of the body is both torn and healed; therefore, after the members of his body have been torn to pieces, he will heal them likewise; "He will revive his work in the midst of the years; and in wrath remember mercy," Hab. iii. 2.

6. By his raising up in three days the temple of his body, after it was destroyed, he gives a sure sign that he will not only raise and rebuild the temple of his mystical body the church, when ruined by the destroyers of it, but that he will soon and seasonably do so; "I will in three days raise it up;" "After two days he will revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight," Hos. vi. 2. Here a definite is put for an indefinite time; but it is defined by *three days*.

(1.) Because Christ raising up the temple of his body in three days was the virtual uprising of his church; their resurrection was included therein.

(2.) That there might be a resemblance betwixt his resurrection and theirs; what is spoken of the Head may be said of the members.

(3.) Because he will always raise and restore them in the appointed time, Hab. ii. 3, in the promised time, and in the fulness of time, and so,

(4.) Because now is the fit time for God to work and shew himself the God that quickeneth the dead. When the temple is destroyed, then it is God only that can repair it; therefore it is time for him to work. When Lazarus's body is now so long buried in the grave, that by this time it stinketh; it is time for Christ to go and raise it. When his own body was interred, and though it could not see corruption, yet, to all outward appearance now ready to corrupt, and all hopes of revival gone, then it was time to shew his power. Thus he gave a sign, a sure sign, that at such a time as this he would revive his work, and relieve his church out of the hand of death and destruction, and raise his temple out of ruins.

Thus you see the reasons of the doctrine; by which it is confirmed, that Christ's power and ability to raise the temple of his body, when destroyed by men, is a sure sign of his ability and authority, yea, of his purpose and design, to raise and rebuild the temple of his mystical body, when seemingly destroyed by men.

III. The third general head proposed, was, To deduce some

inferences for the application. In this text and doctrine, see what is justly applicable to the present time and circumstances wherein we are, whatever side of this text we look to; for it hath a dark side and a bright side; a dark side, that may excite fear and trembling, "Destroy this temple;" and yet a bright side, for exciting faith and hope, "In three days I will raise it up."

1st, Look to the dark side; and hence see whether or not our Lord be saying of the temple of his church and mystical body at this day, as he did of his body human on earth, "Destroy this temple;" not perceptively, by his command; but permissively, by his providence, he is saying to destroyers of his church in Scotland, "Destroy this temple."

The temple of God in this world stands in the midst of destroyers, on the left hand and on the right; and so does the temple of the associate church in Scotland at this day, whom God called forth to witness against the backslidings of the land, and the corruptions and defections of the day; they are now brought, as it were, to stand in the middle betwixt two extremes; the backsliding Judicatories, on the one hand, who are going on in these courses of defection, that were the ground of our secession from them, and hardening themselves from what rents are among us, in carrying on violent settlements of pastors over the belly of reclaiming congregations; these, on the one hand, I say, and the schismatical course of a number of BRETHREN on the other.

How the backsliding Judicatories have been, for a course of years, destroying that temple of the church of Scotland, is opened up at length in the Act and Testimony, emitted by the Associate Judicatory; so that I need not enlarge further on this head. But,

How, and whence it is, that a number of Brethren from among ourselves, have arisen to ruin and destroy this temple of the Associate church in Scotland, it is like may be reckoned proper, on this occasion, to consider; and, on this head, there are two questions I would speak a little to.

1. How and by what methods hath God suffered men to pull down, and left this temple of the Association to be destroyed, ruined, or demolished?

2. What are the sinful causes among us that have provoked God to order such a rent, rupture, and destruction; and to say in his holy providence, "Destroy this temple?"

[1.] As to the first question, How, and by what means and

methods, God hath suffered this temple of the Association to be so far destroyed and demolished?

I am not here to give a detail of all the particular things wherein the Lord hath left a number that were among us to pull down the carved work of his temple, and to raze what they built; particulars of this sort you have at length in prints among your hands.<sup>1</sup> Only in the general, God hath suffered men to destroy this

(1) The agreeable and beautiful harmony that had subsisted from the commencement of the Secession, among the Associate Brethren, was, by this time, quite obstructed by the unhappy difference which had taken place in the Associate Synod, in April, 1746, relative to the religious clause in some burgess oaths; The clause runs thus:—"Here I protest, before God and your Lordships, That I profess and allow with my heart, the true Protestant religion, presently professed within this realm, and authorised by the laws thereof; I shall abide thereat, and defend the same to my life's end, renouncing the Roman religion called Papistry." Various were the glosses put on these words; and strangely were they extorted and squeezed to support them. One part of the Synod viewed this clause as sinful, and accordingly condemned the swearing of it: while the other part considered it as lawful, and consequently defended the taking of it.

Though the sinfulness of the religious cause was condemned by a small majority of a thin meeting at the conclusion of the Synod in April, 1746; yet the full Synod which met in April, 1747, proposed, "Whether the decision concerning the religious clause in some burgess oaths, in April, 1746, should now or afterwards, be made a term of ministerial and Christian communion, ay and until the making the same to be so, shall be referred, by way of overture, unto Presbyteries and Kirk-sessions, in order to giving their judgment thereanent, &c. or not." This vote being carried in the negative, the party condemning the religious clause as sinful, immediately withdrew themselves from the Synod, and next day constitute themselves upon a new foundation, suddenly calling themselves the Synod, and the only Synod; and enacted, "That all Presbyteries, Kirk-sessions, and Communities in the Association, were subject to them; and that all Courts, whether Presbyteries or Sessions, that were not subordinate to them, were unlawful Courts; and that all Ministers and Elders, who were not subject to them, had lost the keys of the kingdom of heaven;" and thus materially suspending and exacterating all Ministers and Elders from their sacred offices, who could not yield subjection to their authority.

Our author himself wrote very elaborately on this topic, and published several pieces in defence of the Religious Clause in some burgess oaths: such as, *The Lawfulness of the Religious Clause of some Burgess Oaths asserted*; *Fancy no Faith, or a Seasonable Admonition and Information to Seceders*; *Observations upon the Conduct of the Separating Brethren*; with *Fancy Still no Faith, &c.* If the reader wants to be thoroughly informed concerning this debate, he may peruse the writings of others upon this head; such as, *A Review of a Pamphlet, entitled, A Serious Inquiry into the Burgess Oaths of Edinburgh, Perth, and Glasgow*; *The True State of the Question, upon which a breach followed in the Associate Synod*; *A Narrative of the Separation of the Majority of Members from the Associate Presbytery of Dunfermline*; *The Act of the Associate Synod at Stirling, October 29, 1747, declaring the Nullity of the pretended Synod at Edinburgh, April 10, 1747*; *The New Constitution Unmasked, &c., with other Tracts.*

But this was not all; they were even farther most unjustly accused, and accord-



temple, in so far as he hath suffered them to make rents and divisions therein; for, "A house divided against itself cannot stand;" and, indeed, "For the divisions of Reuben there have been, and are great thoughts of heart." The mother that was for dividing the child was not the true mother; surely, then, none can justly think these who were for dividing the true Associate body are the true Associate Synod. This hath been effectuated by the introduction of dividing questions about matters that were never our proper business; and, particularly, about a religious clause of some burgess oaths, wherein men promise to maintain the true religion, authorised by the laws of the land, renouncing popery; which was never our business to quarrel, but rather to commend, as a still standing testimony to that reformation which we ourselves profess to espouse.

Under the violent progress of this debate, it appears from the present writings of separating brethren, that some other thing hath been intended than was formerly pretended or professed, even the advancement of some wrong principle or opinion, concerning the kingdom of Christ, as subversive of the kingdoms of this world. Such wrong notions, it would seem, even the apostles of Christ were ready, before the infallible Spirit was poured out upon them, to embrace, saying, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" They dreamed of a temporal kingdom; and judged that Christ's kingdom was to bring down the state and civil government. It is evident some in our day err in this matter, not knowing the due limits set, by the word of God, betwixt the kingdom of Christ, in his church, whereby his ministers are properly the ministers of Christ; and the kingdom of God, in the world, wherein magistrates are the ministers of God, or of Christ as God. Upon a dividing question, that hath some error of this sort under it, the Lord, for holy ends, hath suffered the temple to be destroyed by these that have been leaders, and caused others to err. [What fightings some

ingly, in what they called their Acts and Proceedings, they found and declared, in the absence of their brethren, "That they had dropt and turned their backs on the whole of the Lord's cause; and renounced and abjured the whole of the testimony; and that all Courts that were not subordinate to them, were unlawful Courts, and that all Ministers and Elders have fallen from all right and title to any present actual exercise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven above committed by the Lord Jesus, to the office-bearers of his house; and consequently are not to be acknowledged as Ministers of Christ, by any that are cleaving to the Lord's cause and testimony."—All this, not only in the absence of their brethren, but before being libelled, or so much as called before them. See the above-mentioned Narrative, p. 57. Faith no Fancy, p. 13. New Constitution Unmasked, p. 30—34.

of us had, to keep out from our judicatories such bones of contention and division, several here have been witnesses unto.]

And that the foresaid dividing question did not want a relation to some erroneous notion concerning the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdoms of this world, appears evident from this, that no sooner did the separating Brethren, after their sinful separation and constitution, condemn the foresaid religious part, but they condemned also the CIVIL part of the burgess oath, relating to allegiance or fidelity to the civil magistrate, under colour of reformation.

From this spring of division many other methods of temple destruction have issued, namely, the building of the Babel of a new constitution; which is,

(1.) A constitution subversive of the national constitution of the church of Scotland, in all her reformation periods, by making the Revolution settlement of church and state to be Erastian; and that upon topics which evidently would prove, if they were true, that the church of Scotland was never lawfully constituted, but always upon an Erastian foundation, as is elsewhere demonstrated.<sup>1</sup>

(2.) It is now a constitution built upon a bloody foundation, as that of the murder of the sacred offices of their brethren, ministers, and elders; built upon a foundation that hath both shame and woe denounced against it in scripture. Shame, as in Obadiah, ver 10, "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee; and thou shalt be cut off for ever. Isa. lxiv. 5, Your brethren that hated you, and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified; but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed." And woe, Hab. ii. 12, "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establishes a city by iniquity. Mat. xxiii. 13, Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men." This is done remarkably when power is assumed to rob their brethren of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whereby they open the door of that kingdom unto men. And no wonder that such as have assumed and arrogated such unlawful power over their brethren, are left, some of them, to rob themselves of the keys of that kingdom, by making it a sin for their former hearers, that cannot jump with their new opinions, to come and hear them any more; Christ's commis-

(1) The reader will find this affair clearly treated by our Author, by consulting *Fancy still no Faith*, subjoined to a pamphlet, entitled, *Observations on the Conduct of the separating Brethren*, p. 94—97.

sion to his servants is, To preach the gospel to every creature ; but thus they rob themselves of that power, and the people of that privilege. Such contradiction to the declared mind of Christ shews strange delusion in such, to whom the Lord, in his wrathful permission, seems to be saying, " Destroy this temple."

Of this sort are these destructive methods used of reproach and calumny, casting iniquity upon brethren, that are honestly maintaining the testimony of the day ; and by doing this in a way of casting the Testimony itself into another mould and shape, than ever it was understood by Seceders formerly ; making it a Testimony renouncing the true religion ; that is, the presently authorised doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland ; and consequently, renouncing their former profession ; and because their Brethren cannot jump with them into these new and strange principles, defaming them as approvers of contradictory oaths, turning their new opinions into articles of faith, and terms of communion ; libelling, lashing, and loading with heavy charges, these who dare not make their new decrees any rule of faith or practice.<sup>1</sup> Such imposition our Lord discharges, and tells the imposers of them that they made void the commandment of God by their commands and traditions, Matth. xv. 3, " Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," verse 9. Compare this with Deut. xii. 32, " What thing soever I command you, observe to do it ; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." We must not deal with God's ordinances, as that tyrant Procostes did with men ; if they were to long for his bed, he would cut them shorter ; if too short, he would pull their limbs out of joint to make them longer. Such tyranny likewise over the consciences of men, would these practice, who would bind people implicitly to their new doctrines, dictates, and decisions. Sure these are temple destroying methods.

(1) Scarce did ever a spirit of calumny and reproach more prevail than upon this occasion ; if we consult their Acts and Proceedings, and other performances, we will find that, " Apostates and backsliders from the Lord's ways ; fallen stars ; departers from, betrayers and buriers of the whole testimony of the day ; opposers of the cause of Christ ; left their Bibles behind them ; begun to go back to Egypt ;" with such light appellations, were the usual epithets given to their brethren at this time ; and for no other reason, but because they affirmed the lawfulness of swearing the religious clause of the burgess oath, which binds to maintain that divine thing and precious treasure, the True Religion, presently professed and authorised by the laws of the land ; and which our standing laws term, " The true religion ; God's true religion ; Christ's true religion : God's eternal truth, contained in the Word of God, expressed in such and such Confessions of Faith, and sworn also to in our National Covenant."



Such are these also, of libelling after sentence pronounced ;<sup>1</sup> and then prostituting the ordinance of God, to the reproach of the world, by casting out of communion with them all such as cannot fall down and worship the image they have set up, or comply with their new precepts ; wherein they make themselves judges of the law of God, as Manton upon James iv. 11, speaks : “ Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law ; but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.” Whence, he observes, “ That to make more sins than God hath made, is to judge the law, as if it were not a perfect rule. Men, says he, will be wise beyond God, and bind others in chains of their own making. There is an obedience of faith, by which the understanding must be captivated to God, but not to men ; to the word, but not to every fancy. There is a double superstition, says he, positive and negative : one is, when men count that holy which God never made holy ; another is, when men condemn that which God never condemned : both these are like faulty. We are not in the place of God : it is not in our power to make sins our duties. ‘ Touch not, taste not, handle not,’ was the ordinance and precept of false teachers, Col. ii. 19. There are three things, says he, excepted from men’s judicature, God’s counsels, the holy scriptures, and the hearts of men. We should not dogmatise and subject men to ordinances of our own making, press our own authorities, and rigorous observances as duties. Justice and wisdom is good ; but to be just overmuch, and wise overmuch, is stark naught, Eccl. vi. 15, 16, that is, to be just and wise beyond the rule. Man is a proud creature and would fain make his morosity a law for others, and obtrude his own private sense for doctrine. It is usual to condemn everything that does not please us, as if our magisterial dictates were articles of faith. We must not come in our own name, but judge as the world judges, otherwise we judge the world. The Lord grant, he adds, we may consider it in this dogmatising age, wherein every one cries up his own private conceit for LAW, and men make sins rather than

(1) It was already observed, that immediately on the back of the Brethren’s new constitution, they materially suspended and exauctorated all Ministers and Elders from their sacred offices ; yet they afterwards put a Label into their hands, consisting of seven articles, which was the foundation of all the unparalleled censures passed upon them. The articles of this Label, with Remarks thereupon, by Rev. Messrs E. Erskine and Fisher, may be seen in a Preface, prefixed to our Author’s tract, entitled, Observations on the Conduct of the Separating Brethren.

find them." Thus far he speaks, as if he had been living and speaking in the midst of us just now, when men are, by this method among the rest, destroying the temple, and demolishing it.

I only add another method, used amidst these days of temptation and awful delusion, for destroying and demolishing the temple, and that is, the managing all under the highest pretence to piety, religion, and progress in reformation. And, indeed, Satan would never gain his design so much, if he did not transform himself into an angel of light, and busk up his black temptations with the fair colour of zeal for God and his glory. Thus Christ himself was arraigned and condemned, under colour of zeal for the Sabbath day, which his enemies said he profaned; of zeal for the law, which they said he transgressed; "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." Thus the apostles were cast out of the synagogue, under pretence of doing service to God." "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think he doth God service," John xvi. 2. Thus it was of old, Isa. lxvi. 5. "They that hated and cast out their brethren, said, Let the Lord be glorified." And thus it is, Micah iii. 10, 11, 12. "They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. Yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? &c. Therefore shall Zion, for your sakes, be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps." Well, even by these, and the like methods, the Lord is saying to temple destroyers at this day, with reference to the Associate church, *Destroy this temple*, by giving men leave to break, divide, and demolish it. But,

(2.) As to the second question here, What are the sinful causes amongst us that have provoked God to order such a rent, rupture, and destruction of the temple?

None of us can justify ourselves before God, whether ministers or people of the Association; "Who gave Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Hath not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned?" Our own wickedness correcteth us, and our backslidings reprove us: therefore let us not say we are innocent, and lay all the blame upon sinful instruments. Though we cannot justify them, yet let us not justify ourselves before God, though we may justify ourselves before men from many false charges they lay against us. Even in these we may see and adore the righteousness of God in chastening us; in such crosses as these, while we look to the hand of God, we are chastised for our sin; but from the hand of men we suffer for our honesty.

I shall lay before you some of the sinful causes of the rupture and breach, wherein the destruction of the temple is threatened.

1. Rashness at the beginning, in the way wherein many acceded to the Testimony of the day, without due consideration of the matter, as duty before God, but rather influenced thereto by the example of others. This may have provoked the Lord to say, *Destroy this temple*. In regard many are now giving evidence, that at first they were but followers of men, leading them one way ; for now they are followers of men, leading them just another way ; and even, perhaps, the same men leading them a quite contrary way. Thus the Lord is trying people's honesty, in the way of their first cleaving to the testimony of the day, and discovering their heart-pocrisy in believing as the church or other men believe, and following as men would lead them. Now, when people's fear towards God is taught by the precepts of men, this brings on heavy judgments, according to Isa. xxix. 13, 14. If men rashly receive the truth itself, without trying it by the word, or looking further than men's word, they receive it no otherwise than they would receive a fable. That faith stands upon a very tottering ground that is founded upon the will, or wisdom, or opinions of men. Hence so much unsteadfastness when the wind of temptation ariseth ; and many showing themselves but children, tossed to and fro with every wind.

2. Untenderness toward these we left in the Judicatories, when we made a Secession from them, without dealing more kindly with them, praying more for them, and bearing more with them ; especially such as were friends to the same Reformation cause, though not enlightened in the same manner of witnessing for it. Some began too soon to severities ; even in excluding such from their communion, which tended to restrain and keep them back from us. Though we began with some moderation towards them ; yet, through unsteadfastness, in standing to our first resolution, many proceeded soon to such heights as could not in the issue but terminate in a downfall. If, in this respect the bond of brotherly love was too soon broken, the Lord is righteous in ordering such a breach among us, as threatens the destruction of this temple, and to make them read their sin in their punishment. It is true, though all of us were not equally chargeable this way, yet we have been too indulgent towards such as were so ; and therefore cannot purge ourselves.

3. The Lord may have given orders to destroy this temple, because of the untender walk and conversation of many professed



witnesses, having no conversation becoming the gospel, nor becoming the high profession of religion and reformation they have made ; though they have professed to witness against the sins of others, what have they done, in their walk, more than others ? Have not many that profess to know God, given evidence that in works they deny him ? May not God justly plead a controversy for the manifold neglects of secret and family worship ? neglects of Christian society and fellowship ? neglects of spirituality in word and walk ? want of natural love and tenderness ? evil speaking, whispering, and back-biting ? bitterness of spirit against those that differ from them ? not becoming all things to all men, that we might gain them to the Lord's cause and way ? not sanctifying God's Sabbath, nor his holy name ? undervaluing gospel privileges, and former peace and plenty ? not rendering to the Lord according to his great goodness ? over-valuing ourselves, and our external privileges ?

4. Untenderness of brethren towards one another, not walking in love, as Christ also loved us ; not regarding or remembering the covenant of brotherhood, which should stand fast in Christ. When the precept and example of Christ is herein slighted and neglected, no wonder that the staff of Bands as well as Beauty should be broken, as it is said, Zech. xi. 14. "Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel." Then he is saying, "Destroy this temple."

5. Driving different designs, even in covenanting work. In some congregations there hath been a professing to renew our Solemn National Covenant, which our forefathers swore for maintaining the true religion, which hath been authorized by law, ever since the first Reformation after Popery : in this sense, some of us have renewed these Covenants : but others have been renewing these Covenants in profession, but not with the design of maintaining that true religion, but some other design known to themselves, different from that of our Reformers, and the reforming church of Scotland, even in the purest times ; which was, according to some brethren, never lawfully constituted, but in an Erastian manner. Where there hath been thus a prosecuting of different designs, it is no wonder that a rupture behoved to break forth ; for, surely, the Covenant of our forefathers was unlawfully and unwarrantably renewed upon one side : to this purpose read Mal. ii. 10. See also, ver. 7, 8, 9.

6. Unwatchfulness among the watchmen, and uncircumspection

in framing some of our public Acts and Testimonies, without due care and caution relating to some historical passages; not as to matters of faith and practice, but as to some matters of fact in history; which therefore need to be rectified; particularly with reference to the Revolution Settlement, as if the whole second Reformation period had been totally overlooked, from 1638 to 1649; while yet the Westminster Confession of Faith, received by the Church of Scotland, 1647, is expressly adopted and embodied with the Revolution laws, settling the Presbyterian church government. Though mistakes of this sort never were, nor can be any binding part of the Testimony; yet when they are found out therein, it opens the mouth of calumny, both among enemies to witnessing-work, and among these who had their own private opinions and new principles to build upon these passages in the said Acts; which others, by an oversight, and through want of due circumspection, suffered to pass. However, our God is a God of truth, and will not bear with any mistakes in a public Testimony, lifted up for his name and honour, but will have it purged, though it should be by fire, Mal. iii. 3. Therefore, he hath broken us to pieces, that we may acknowledge our mistakes. He will have truth brought forth into victory: he will have us humbled to own, that, according to our Confession, "All Synods or Councils, general or particular, since the apostles days, may err, and many have erred." It is agreeable to our principles and Covenant, when we fall into any error, doctrinal, practical, or historical, to acknowledge and rectify the same, without obstinate maintaining and defending what cannot stand with truth.

7. Another sinful cause of God's saying, "Destroy this temple," is, There is just ground to fear, that hands have been laid too suddenly upon some who were licensed and ordained to the holy ministry, contrary to the express command of the glorious Head of the church: "Lay hands suddenly upon no man." Hence some, it is like, have been sent forth to the ministry among us, who were novices, and unduly qualified; some that have given evidence they were little acquainted with the doctrine, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland.

8. Another ground of God's quarrel, that might procure temple desolation, may be, that in reformation-work there hath been too little regard to reformation-rules: as in the Act relating to the terms of ministerial and Christian communion, the going in thereto more suddenly and precipitantly than was requisite; that is, without ob-

serving the reformation-rules in the years 1639, 1640, 1641, appointing "things of general concern to be sent, by way of overture, unto Synods, Presbyteries, and Kirk-sessions, that the diffusive church might deliberate upon the same, before they be turned into acts in the supreme court." Perhaps the neglect of this hath not only given occasion for some complaints, but may have provoked the Lord to leave so many to make new terms of communion of another sort, without any regard to these reformation-rules; and without regard to the peace and unity of the Associate body.

9. Another sinful cause may be, the synodical Judicatory's allowing practisers to be voters in these matters judicially; wherein they had been practisers publicly. It is given by the Assembly, 1638, as one of the great crimes of the pretended Assembly at Perth, where the Five Articles were voted, "That the Bishops, who had been practisers in these articles, were suffered to vote." Now, some were known to be such public practisers about the burgess oath, before any question about it in the Synod was decided, that they made it a term of communion, and ground of excommunication, openly and publicly; yet even these were allowed to vote in that question, wherein they had been such practisers; whereas they ought to have been excluded from any vote in that matter. Therefore, no wonder that the Lord divided us in his anger, because of our allowing these to be judges in a cause wherein they had given such public determination. Yet here it is remarkable, though the Lord is justly breaking us for our neglecting to do our duty this way, yet as their being allowed to vote in that decision about the burgess oath, made the decision carried by their vote, to be null and unlawful: so, their excluding themselves from voting in the last vote, that was voted in their presence, about that decision being a term of communion, or not, made that very vote not only to be carried without a contradictory vote, but also to be just and lawful, which yet they made the ground of their separation. In this matter, therefore, the Associate Synod, meeting here, may humbly adore, (1.) The justice of God, in rebuking them for their sin and fault, in neglecting to exclude such members from voicing with them in this affair; and his righteousness, in ordering such a rupture, and suffering these Brethren to be, in his holy hand, the rod of his indignation against us. And yet, (2.) We may see and adore his mercy, in ordering matters so, that in this step of voting the decision to be no term of communion, it was rendered valid by their stepping aside so disorderly, and ex-



cluding themselves from voicing therein ; which is owing not unto us, but only to the holy providence, and merciful interposition of God ; and by their separating themselves from us, have rendered our deed about this affair, the more valid, lawful, and agreeable to the foresaid rule of that famous Assembly, 1639 : and our procedure, I hope, the more pleasant and peaceful : whereas, their pursuit of that dividing question so violently, made our meetings for many days full of disorder and confusion. On these accounts we ought to magnify both the holiness and goodness of our God, and to sing of mercy and judgment ; for, when our feet slipped his mercy held us up.

10. I add another sinful spring of our temple desolation which God hath permitted ; for, it is especially temple-provocation that brings on temple-desolation, and that is, not only our secret sins, in tampering with temptations to break our solemn vows and engagements in many respects ; particularly by withdrawing that heart-love that ought to have been kept burning towards one another : for, our holy God sometimes takes open vengeance on such inventions of his own people as in another case with David, 2 Sam. xii. 12 : but especially our more public sins committed in judgment : particularly, our partiality in our judicial proceedings ; for such things the Lord threatens with public and open castigation before the world : " Therefore also I made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law ;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, *have accepted faces*, Mal. ii. 9. Have we not reason to acknowledge, that we have been many times guilty, even in judgment, of paying too much of an idolatrous regard to some men, and of being slavishly afraid of their breaking off from us : and therefore, have yielded so far in certain points to them (which I could mention), and perhaps farther, than light could well allow ; at least, so far as to go to the utmost border of light in condescending to them : whereas, it had been better to have suffered them, a good time ago, to separate themselves, than by many yieldings, for peace sake, to wait till they had a greater backing. For these things a holy God hath justly ordered a more fearful rupture, such as hath tended to render our witnessing-work more contemptible before all the people ; though yet we hope, the Lord will bring good out of it, when he comes to make darkness light, and crooked things straight, and to rebuild the temple.

To this particular, I may add that piece of partiality we had been chargeable with, in not censuring duly several open scandals, committed even in judicatories; and such eruptions and out-breakings of passion and corruption, as hath been more scandalous and offensive to spectators than many other acts of wickedness and profanity. Though there is no doubt but there have been offences on all hands, through the upstirring of corruption amidst these temptations; yet these especially by whom such offences have come, ought to have been censured at another rate than ever they were: and the neglect of this hath issued in these who have been so far indulged and spared from such just censure their being left of God to pass most unjust and wicked censures and sentences, in their pretended courts, against these that sinfully neglected to pass just and necessary censures against them. Herein, therefore, though we cannot justify them, yet we may see good reason to justify God, in his having ordered such desolation and saying upon the matter, *Destroy this temple.*<sup>1</sup> But now,

(1) We had formerly occasion to observe, that the agreeable harmony of the Associate Synod was obstructed, with a short hint at the time, cause, and manner of it, together with the effect that followed; what now remains, is a little more fully to unfold the nature thereof, by giving a compendious view of the sentiments of both parties. It was already observed, That it was the Religious Clause, in some burgess oaths that gave rise to such a warm dispute, in the Associate Body, as at last terminated in a rupture. The members of court entertained different sentiments relative to the meaning of that clause; some of them viewed it as sinful, while others affirmed the swearing of it was lawful. The Condemners of this clause as sinful, alledged, That it homologated the omissions and defects of the Revolution Settlement of Religion, and was a conniving at, and acquiescing in the corruptions of the present Judicatories; and, in order to support their assertion, laboured to confound the True Religion professed and settled, with the profession and settlement, the thing sworn to; as there were no difference between a good profession and a bad practice. The Defenders of this clause, as lawful, rejected the allegation, and affirmed, That whatever omissions the Revolution Church or State were justly charged with, yet the True Religion was really settled at the Revolution, by the Revolution Parliament; in regard, the Westminster Confession of Faith, which contains the quintessence of true religion, was ratified thereby, as agreeable to the word of God, and embodied in their Fifth Act; and all bad acts, contrary thereto, and inconsistent therewith, rescinded and annulled; and all good laws, in favours thereof, ratified and confirmed, and the National Covenant, as renewed in the year 1638, and the Solemn League and Covenant, freed from the indignities of the preceding reigns of Charles II. and James VII. They farther affirmed, That the true religion, authorised and established by the Revolution parliament, is the same true religion that hath been, and now is, professed by Seceders in their Act and Testimony; and that the present profession of religion ought not to be confounded with the ancient settlement thereof; for, no deviation or defection, either in principle or practice, in professing the true

2dly, Let us look a little to the light and bright side of the text, namely, "In three days I will raise it up." The scope whereof as I have shewed before, is to give a sure sign of Christ's power and authority, and design, to raise up and rebuild the temple of his church, or mystical body, when destroyed and ruined by men, by his being able to raise his human body from the grave. Here then is the bright side of the cloud, for exciting our faith and hope; for all is not lost that is in hazard. Visible dangers and disasters are not designed to fright us away from God, as if he were become cruel and unkind, but for the exercise of faith on the invisible God: His thoughts are not our thoughts: We think many times all is gone to ruin, when yet a resurrection is at hand. Let it not be thought strange, that the mystical body of Christ, his temple, should be destroyed, as if there were no hope: let none say, now when destructive ruptures and breaches take place, Where is their temple? where is their hope? where is their God? For, "Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleaseth," Therefore, "O Israel! trust thou in the Lord; he is their help and their shield; O house of Aaron! trust in the Lord; he is their help and their shield: ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; he is their help and their shield," &c. He hath given us a sure sign that he will revive his work in the midst of the years, by raising his own body in three days; and therefore hath promised the same thing to the church, Hosea vi. 2, "After two days he will revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

I shall now close with a few lessons, deducible from this light side of the text and doctrine.

[1.] Hence learn that our Lord Jesus, who raised up the temple of his body in three days, hath his own ways of raising up the fallen tabernacle of David, even when it seems to be destroyed.

religion, could be couched in the bosom of that religious clause, seeing it only respected the true religion itself, formerly ratified on its ancient basis. And further, it was affirmed, That our Testimony was never lifted up against the true religion professed and authorised by the laws of the land, or against the Revolution settlement thereof, but against their omissions; and therefore gave it the epithets of happy and glorious Revolution, and our beautiful, valuable, and excellent Presbyterian Constitution; nor against the profession of religion, or the sound practice of the present Judicatories; but against their defections and corruptions, and abuse of their professed principles, by a course of backsliding. This, however, was a fruitless dispute; did much injury to the interests of real religion, by alienating the affections of professors from one another; and could, by no means, support the huge fabric the Brethren of the opposite party reared upon it; a parallel to which, in all its circumstances, cannot be found in all the annals and records of the Church.



QUEST. When may Christ be said to raise and rebuild his church, after it seems to be laid in ruins.

ANSW. 1. When he preserves it amidst the destruction, and reserves a remnant for himself amidst the ruins, like the tenth spoken of, Isaiah vi. 13. After the great forsaking spoken of in the midst of the land, it is said, "But yet in it there shall be a tenth, &c. A holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

2. When he causes it to take root, as it is said, Isaiah xxxvii. 31, "The remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward."

3. When he breathes upon the dead and dry bones, saying, as in Ezek. xxxvii. 9, "Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live; for not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," Zech. iv. 6. Then mountains become a plain before our Zerubbabel. Hence,

4. When he blasts the foolish projects of temple destroyers, whoever they be; though they were as a signet upon his right hand, Jer. xxii. 24. The Lord raises his temple, when he infatuates the destroyers thereof, and suffers them to go to their utmost in destroying work; making the wisdom of the wise man to perish, and the understanding of the prudent to be hid, Isa. xxix. 14. He raises his temple by defeating the designs of destroyers, and turning their counsels to foolishness, and bringing good out of what they designed for evil, whether it be the design of the men themselves, or the design of their work, as Joseph said to his brethren, Gen. l. 20, "But as for you, you thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, even to save much people alive."

5. When he catches destroyers of the temple in their own snares, and makes them to be snared in the work of their own hands who are destroyers; See Isa. ix. 16, "The leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed." And, when, instead of prospering their projects, he curses their cruel plots, even though he should bless their persons, as it is thought was the case of Simeon and Levi, Gen. xlix. 5, 6, 7, "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations;" or, as it is in the margin, "Their swords are weapons of violence." "O my soul, come not thou into their secrets; unto their assemblies, mine honour, be not thou united. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel; I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."

6. He raises up his temple, when he builds and beautifies Zion; that is, when the gospel of peace is published, the new and living way made known; when ministers and ordinances are given according to his order and appointment; when the elect are brought in, and the church gathered and established; when the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of Christ's house, are set up for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ; when peace is within the walls, and prosperity within the palaces of Zion; and when among the remnant that remains undriven away with the storm of temptation, there is a maintaining of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; then is Zion built. And then is it not only built up but beautified, when the church is privileged with the purity of the gospel ordinances, like the pure river of life, clear as crystal, Rev. xxii. 1. When there is a multitude of converts, according to that word, Isa. xlix. 17—22. "Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee. Lift up thine eyes round about and behold; all these gather themselves together, and come to thee," &c. When God sets off wasters and destroyers, and gathers in a multitude of children in Zion, then he builds and beautifies both. And when there is in Zion not only a multitude, but an excellency and splendour of professors, as it is said, Isa. lx. 12, "Thy people shall also be all righteous, &c. The branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." This is that glory mentioned, Hag. ii. 7, "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations, shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts."

[2.] Hence learn, that Christ alone is the great builder whatever means he makes use of: he is the great builder of the temple, and repairer of the desolations of Zion; therefore prays the psalmist, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build up the walls of Jerusalem, Psal. li. 18. God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah," Psal. lxxix. 85, See Psal. cii. 16, Isa. xiv. 32, "The Lord hath founded Zion. Behold the man whose name is the Branch, he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory," Zech. vi. 12, 13. The Lord indeed makes use of mortal men, as instruments, in raising up the gospel-temple, Paul to plant, and Apollos to water; but after all, he that plants is nothing, he that waters is nothing, Clay and spittle did as much to the opening of the blind man's eyes; the success depends wholly upon the Lord. I have told you

of some sinful causes why the Lord may suffer men to destroy his temple, but the sovereign cause of his suffering it to be destroyed utterly in appearance, is, that he may raise it, as Christ of his own life, John x. 17, "I lay down my life that I may take it again;" so he suffers the temple to be destroyed, that he may raise it again; and that it may appear it is he alone that raises it; that it is he alone that buildeth up Zion, when other builders build in vain; when vain is the help of man, his own arm bringeth salvation; therefore the work shall go on, maugre all opposition: by the speaking of one word he lays the foundation of a new heaven and a new earth; it is he that creates Zion a rejoicing, and her people a joy. If he says to Zion, It shall be inhabited; to Jerusalem, It shall be built: to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid: it is done. Whatever be the tool or instrument he employs, it is all one: great instruments do not further: weak instruments do not retard his work. If he will fight, it is all one to him, whether it be a sword or the jaw-bone of an ass. If he will take a city, he can storm it with trumpets made of rams horns, as well as with great guns. Again, if he intends to thresh the mountains, and beat them small; he can do it with a worm, even the worm Jacob. It is he that raises the temple.

[3.] Hence see, what is our Lord's usual time of raising up his temple, namely, not till there be a destroying and down-pulling of it; "When men are cast down:" or, as it may be read, "When there is a casting down, then thou shalt say, there is a lifting up," Job xxii. 29. His people are said to be cast down, but not forsaken, and when does he help them? Not till they be brought low, Psalm cxvi. 6, "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself concerning his servants; when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left," Deut. xxxii. 36. When did he help Israel in Egypt? Exod. v. 22, 23. Not till their distress came to an extremity, that they thought he had done them evil, instead of doing them good, and delivering them by Moses, who was sent on this errand, "But thou hast not delivered thy people at all;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, Delivering, thou hast not delivered. When did he help and deliver his apostles from trouble? Not till they were pressed out of measure above strength, insomuch that they despaired even of life, 2 Cor. i. 8. And it is said, ver. 9, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, who raises the dead." His time of raising up is, upon



the matter, not till the third day after death ; not till the temple be destroyed, and all hopes of relief in appearance quite fail. This he does, that he may shew our time of need, to be his time of love ; and that he may shew his glory, as in the case of Lazarus ; that he may make his work the more remarkable ; that he might heighten the faith, and prayers, and praises of his people ; that he may humble the loftiness of man, and that the Lord alone might be exalted.

[4.] Hence see, that the faith of a church's resurrection and restoration is to be built upon the power and virtue of Christ's resurrection on the third day. Here is the sign of his power, the signal of his grace, the sure document of his design to restore the ruined temple of his church, and of his authority, ability, and purpose. The sign is given, "In three days I will raise it up." The sign given hath taken effect : "He rose the third day ; and by him we may believe in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God ;" even our faith and hope of a spiritual resurrection, and of a church's restoration, notwithstanding death and destruction ; and if faith be excited, it shall not be disappointed. Indeed, sirs, the Lord will either do no more than we believe, or believingly hope for in Christ, and through Christ, the resurrection and the life : or, if he does, you will not have the comfort of what he does. However, here is ground for faith and hope, the glorious Head is risen ; therefore, "The vision is for an appointed time, in the end it will speak and not tarry ;" and though it seems to tarry, wait for it, and stay till the third day ; the wall is to be built in troublous times. When the extremity is come then in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will provide relief. Glorious is the design of God with reference to the raising up of his ruined temple. The building of Zion is his master-piece ; because it is the counter-pane, the counter-part of the resurrection of Christ. The rebuilding of it is both exemplified and insured by his rising the third day.

[5.] Hence see the sweet and easy, yet weighty and momentous work and business of Under-builders of the temple. What is their duty when the temple is defiled and destroyed ? Why,

1. Their duty is to look to the chief Master-builder of the temple, and to lay the stress and weight of all upon him, saying, "Who is sufficient for these things ? &c. Our sufficiency is of God ;" especially when men are left to busy themselves about destroying-work ; then they ought to employ their Master to come

and put hand to his building-work. Destroying-work is not his: though his holy hand may be seen, and his righteousness in suffering it; yet he is not the Author of confusion or destruction; he puts destroying-work away from him into sinful hands who are active therein: "Destroy this temple." It is his work to raise and rebuild the temple when it is destroyed; to purge the temple when it is defiled. Let not under-builders be discouraged, as if destroyers could hinder him in his work of raising up. There are four things he cannot do, and it would imply imperfection if he could. (1.) He cannot lie, "The strength of Israel cannot lie," Num. xxiii. 19. (2.) He cannot DIE; for "He lifts up his hand to heaven, and says, I live for ever," Deut. xxxiii. 40. (3.) He cannot CHANGE; "I am the Lord, I change not," Mal. iii. 6. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. 8. (4.) He cannot be HINDERED in his work, nor DISAPPOINTED of his design; "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou? The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Therefore,

2. Their duty is to put hand to this temple-building work, wherein he is all in all, and they are nothing; yet, as they would escape the curse of Meroz, they are to go forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Though he stands in no need of our help, yet as we that are under-builders are called workers together with him, 2 Cor. vi. 1; so our faith must not be an idle faith. It is a great dishonour not to have a hand, as instruments, in carrying on the work; but it is, and ought to be looked upon as our glory and credit, to put to our hand to this work. When the Lord builds up Zion, he appears in his glory; and if we put to our hand to the work, it is our honour and glory; and as God appears most glorious in repairing the temple when it is most ruinous; so it is a most honourable work, to be active in repairing the desolations of the temple; when men and devils are most active in pulling down the carved work; yea, dashing it down as with hammers and axes, and that under pretence of building and rearing it, and are destroying the temple and the builders of it both, let us work in dependence on the strength and wisdom of the wise Master-builder.

[6.] Hence see the duty of people, as well as pastors; and particularly, it may shew what is their duty, both with reference to the public concerns of the temple, and with reference to their own personal concern in this doctrine.

1. With reference to the public concerns of the temple of

Christ's mystical body, especially amongst the members of the Association, in such a day of dreadful temptation and delusion, wherein God is letting loose Satan in his instruments, even amongst some of the godly, to be destroyers of his work, and saying to them, "Destroy this temple." Surely it is our duty, without drawing hasty conclusions, and turning aside to any new and crooked way, to "Wait till the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and upon Jerusalem;" and till he accomplish his word upon his mystical body, which is accomplished upon his human body; "In three days I will raise it up." Christ said once to his disciples, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" And may it not be said here, What! cannot we wait for him three days, or stay till the third day? I mean the appointed time of repairing these desolations. Why, how long shall I wait? Indeed, whenever it comes to a destroying time, then may be expected a rebuilding time. Let not the eye of sense only look to what men are doing, when destroying this temple, but let the eye of faith look to what God is to bring out of these ruins, and wait a little; for, if we look upon a fine building, while it is yet amongst the workman's fingers, before he hath given it the finishing stroke, we may readily see nothing but a mass of confusion: but when the work is perfected, then doth the beauty of it appear; so, if we look upon the Lord's work about Zion by halves, we would sometimes think he is pulling it down wholly; but, as in the fore-cited word, Job xxii. 29, "When there is a casting down, then thou shalt say, There is a lifting up." O sirs, behold the wonders of divine providence towards his church. Sins and temple provocations bring on temple desolations; and then, in infinite mercy, temple desolations make way for temple restoration, with a "Nevertheless he saves for his name's sake." Meantime, O sirs, mix not with destroyers; but join with regular builders, under Christ the great Master-builder.

2. With reference to your personal concern in this doctrine; it is your duty, when the temple of your own body or soul is in a distressed or destroyed condition, to look to him that can in three days, or very quickly, raise it up. A certain limited time in scripture is often put for an unlimited time; therefore do not limit the holy One of Israel to a particular day; only when matters come to an extremity of distress and destruction in appearance, then you may look out for a time of reviving.

Well then, O let sinners, who have destroyed themselves, and



whom sin and Satan have destroyed, and even all temple-destroyers that have thus ruined themselves, hear and hearken to him who says, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help," Hos. xiii. 9. O sinners! Destruction is your name, and your trade; but though ruin and desolation is come by you, yet relief and deliverance comes by Christ; therefore look to him who says, "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22. You are the destroyers but I am the builder. Salvation is of the Lord.

O! come to Christ the builder, believing that he is able to build you up. Seek you a sign of his ability and authority? It is given. It is given, in that he is able, in three days to raise up his own body when destroyed. In three days he raised it up. Object not then, I am actually destroyed: there is no hope. Behold, his resurrection is an evidence of his power and authority to raise you from death to life; "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." O sirs, is the door of hope yet open to you? He who hath given proof of his power in creation-work, by raising up this world's fabric in six days, and a proof of raising up the temple of his body in three, is he not able, in a moment of time, to raise you up out of your spiritual grave?

O sirs, look to the power of Christ; for it is a saving power, a healing power. Though his work, as a Judge, is to damn and condemn the wicked world at the last day; yet his work, as a Saviour, is not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved; hence none of his miraculous works were of a destructive, but of a saving nature. It is remarked in this chapter, where our text lies, that the beginning of Christ's miracles here in Cana of Galilee, was the turning water into wine; whereas the beginning of Moses's miracles (the first of the ten plagues of Egypt) was the turning water into blood; pointing out the difference betwixt Moses in the law, and Christ in the gospel. The curses of the law turned water into blood: common mercies into waters of Mara, bitterness and misery: but the blessings of the gospel turn water into wine; common mercies into special mercies, and to blessings indeed.

O! look to a powerful Jesus; he can very soon turn your water of affliction into the wine of consolation: yea, and death and destruction, to life and salvation. O! what can he not do for destroyed souls, and destroyed churches, who could command death

and destruction to do their worst against him, and say, in spite of men and devils, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

## SERMON CXLV.

### THE BEST COMPANY IN THE MOST LONELY CASE.<sup>1</sup>

"And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."—JOHN. xvi. 32.

CONCERNING our Redeemer, who himself is God, and IMMANUEL, *God with us*, two things very glorious are testified, which deserve the highest attention of men and angels: 1. That God was IN him. 2. That God was WITH him. How God was IN him, is declared, 2 Cor. v. 19, "God was IN Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation." How God was WITH HIM is declared, not only by others, as Acts x. 38, where Peter shews, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was WITH him:" and by Nicodemus, John iii. 2, saying unto him, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for none can do these miracles that thou dost, except God was WITH him." But also we have it here declared, out of his own blessed mouth, how God the Father was with him, even in his most deserted and afflicted circumstances; when, as it is said, Isa. lxiii. 3, "He trode the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with him:" yet, how it fared with him then, he could best tell himself; "I am not alone, because the Father is WITH me."

We are expecting this to be a communion day, though it be a day of darkness, and of men's deserting us, most sinfully and shamefully: yet, from Christ's blessed experience, we may have hope of

(1) This Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, August 7th, 1748. To which is subjoined, the Discourse before and at the service of the first Table.

(2) Several expressions of a similar nature to these in this paragraph, are to be met with in this Sermon. The bond of union being broken by this time, in the Associate Body, gave rise thereto; and the extravagant and unprecedented measures of the separating Brethren, in breaking up communion with [at this occasion withholding their usual assistance] and passing sentences upon their Brethren, laid a foundation for them.

its being a day of God's presence with us; and that when communion with man is sinfully infringed, yet communion with God may be happily enjoyed.

The disciples of Christ having made a fair profession of their faith and proficiency, by his plain doctrine delivered in the verses preceding; he, knowing their frowardness and presumption, checks it in these words, verse 31, "Do you now believe?" And warns them here, how quickly their faith would be tried; and the want and weakness of it would discover itself.

Whence we may observe, That presumption amongst professors and disciples of Christ, portends a winnowing and sifting storm at hand: "Behold, the hour cometh; yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." Christ ushers in his warning with a Behold! that we may attend; for the doctrine of trials a-coming is but carelessly heard by secure and presumptuous Christians, and it is little pondered: but we are here taught, that the hour of trial is appointed and ordered of God; and that the storm may be very violent, like a scattering wind, such as seems to be blowing in our day: "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and leave me alone." This came presently to pass: for, "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled," Matt. xxvi. 56.

Hence, sirs, we may learn, that the scattering and dissipating of the society of God's people, is then not only the affliction, but the sin of professors; and their great weakness, when the trial and temptation makes them leave their good old Master, to turn aside from him, and betake themselves to some new shift.

"Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own;" that is as in the margin, *to his own HOME*; or to his own way, to his own side or party; "And shall leave me alone." Whence observe, that even real disciples may be deserters of Christ for a time; and so may these who are really suffering for the name of Christ, be deserted of true disciples, as Christ himself was. And now, though none could join with him in enduring the sufferings he underwent, whereby he redeemed his people; and though it was his care to have them exeeded from suffering with him, saying to the soldiers, "If ye seek me, let these go their way," John xviii. 8, yet it was a part of his trial to be thus left alone. Christ knew he was thus to be left of men; "Ye shall leave me alone:" and he was resolved to stand alone. Observe, that let never so many desert Christ, and his truth, yet he will own and stand to it: and we ought to stand to the truth,



though we should stand alone : nor ought we to be ashamed to be left alone as Christ was.

But now, Christ having prophesied, that his disciples should be scattered, and leave him alone, we have here the comfort he had amidst the affliction of solitude and dereliction of men. This he expresses,

1. Negatively ; “ Yet I am not alone : ” that is absolutely. Though left by you, yet I am not quite destitute of company.

2. Positively ; giving both the reason why he was not alone, and the account of that blessed company he had ; “ Because the Father is with me.” Our Lord Jesus knew, that, in all his sufferings, he would have the constant presence, and powerful assistance of his heavenly Father. In this matter, our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Head of the body, the church, exemplified, in his own case, the case and condition of his people when they are brought to suffering, solitary, desolate, and deserted circumstances : they are not so very desolate and solitary as men are ready to judge ; for, though they be left alone, yet they are not alone, while God is present with them.

Such is the mystical and spiritual union betwixt Christ and all believers, that seeing he and they are denominated one, 1 Cor. xii. 12, “ For as the body is one, and hath many members ; and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is Christ : ” therefore, I consider Christ here speaking as a public person ; even the public head and representative of his people : and, consequently, what was said by the glorious Head in his sufferings, and lonely circumstances, is applicable to, and may be said by, every member of Christ, in whatever afflicted, lonely, or solitary circumstances they are ; “ I am not alone, for the Father is with me.”

The doctrine, therefore, that I would discourse upon, as the Lord shall enable, for further opening of this text, is as follows :—

OBSERV. “ That as it was the comfort of Christ personal, in his lonely sufferings ; so it is the comfort of Christ mystical, the church, in all their trials, and desolating circumstances, to have it to say, I am not alone, for the Father is with me.”

God’s presence with Christ was enough to him ; and his presence with us, may be enough to us. No man is alone, who hath the presence of God with him.

In speaking to this subject, the method may be the following :

- I To speak of God the Father's presence with Christ, as it is here expressed, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me."
- II. Of God's presence with his people, as it redounds from Christ the head, to them as the members ; shewing how they are not alone, but have the Father with them.
- III. Point out the special comfort included in the presence of God, as represented or denominated by the first person of the glorious Trinity, "The Father is with me:" how this made for the comfort of Christ in his sufferings, and how it makes for ours.
- IV. Offer some grounds and reasons of the doctrine, why God was thus present with Christ, and why he is present with his people.
- V. Deduce some Inferences for the Application of the whole subject.

1. We are to speak a little of God's presence with Christ, in his mediatorial undertaking and sufferings, as it is here expressed ; "I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

In order to the explaining of this, we may take up the import thereof in the following views :—1. We may view it as it is negatively expressed, "I am not alone." 2. As it is positively expressed, "The Father is with me." 3. Relatively, as it is the Father's presence. 4. Subjectively, as it is Christ he is present with ; *With me.*

1st, View it as expressed negatively ; "I am not alone." Whoever do, or shall desert me, and whoever now be against me, so as I seem to be quite destitute, being really left of men, yet I am not alone ; that is, in point of company ; I am not alone, having the Father with me. I am at no great loss for want of company in my sufferings and solitude ; men have left me alone, yet I am not alone, while I have my best company still with me. Again, I am not alone, in point of number ; there are more with me than are against me ; the Father's presence is more than all the multitude of creatures, should they all leave me. Again, in point of friends, I am not alone ; though earthly friends have left me, my heavenly Father, and best friend is with me. Again, in point of fellowship,

I am not alone; though fellowship with men be withdrawn, yet fellowship with the Father is not. Again, in point of absence, I am not alone; for the Father is present, Psalm xvi. 8, "He is at my right hand; therefore I shall not be moved." Further, in point of distance, I am not alone; for the Father is near, Isa. l. 8, "He is near that justifieth me." Likewise in point of confinement, I am not alone; though now imprisoned, yet the Father is with me, to take me from prison, and from judgment, Isa. liii. 8. Nor will he leave my soul in hell, Psalm xvi. 10. Finally, in point of assistance, I am not alone; for, "The Lord God will help me; therefore I shall not be confounded, Isa. l. 7. Therefore will I set my face like a flint." In these respects, though others left him alone, yet he was not alone.

Again, upon this same negative expression, "I am not alone;" that is, I am not left alone in my present business and battles. He was not left to work alone; for, says he, John v. 17, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." And John xvi. 10, his words and works were both the Fathers; "Believest thou that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but my Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the work." He was not left to wrestle and fight alone, when he encountered principalities and powers; "Who is mine adversary? let him come near unto me; behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?" Isa. l. 8, 9. He was not left to suffer reproach alone; the reproaches that were cast upon him lighted upon his Father; therefore he says, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee hath fallen upon me," Psalm lxix. 9. He was not left to suffer violence and cruelty alone; for, though no creature was with him, the Father was with him, supporting him and helping him to bear all indignities cast upon him, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to him that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting; for the Lord God helped him," Isa. l. 6, 7. He was not alone in suffering death; for, though the Father did not die with him, when the human nature of Christ gave up the ghost; yet the Father was with him in death, and upheld him in suffering death and wrath both; "Behold my Servant whom I uphold," Isa. xlii. 1. He was not left alone in the grave; even there the Father was with him, setting a watch of another sort than Pilate and the chief priests did; theirs was but a pitiful watch with-



out, but his was a powerful watch within the tomb, defending his sacred body from the least putrefaction; "Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption," Psalm xvi. 10. Thus he was not alone.

2dly, View the positive expression, "My Father is with me." Why, not only as God was the Father with him essentially; for he could say, in this respect, "I and my Father are one," John x. 30, but as Mediator, God-man, in his whole mediatorial work of doing and suffering. And he was so in these following respects, which I must but name.

1. The Father was with him authoritatively, Exod. xxiii. 21, "My name is in him," says God. He came about his Mediatory work, in the name and authority of his Father, and so was sealed and authorised to be his great Ambassador; "Him hath God the Father sealed," and sent him upon his and our errand; and hence he says, John viii. 29, "He that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone."

2. The Father was with him operatively; he was no idle spectator of his work, but wrought in and by him, John xiv. 10, "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the work. John x. 25, The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." And in the work of witness-bearing, he saith, John viii. 16, "I am not alone: but I and the Father that sent me." And hence, again,

3. The Father was with him corroboratively, strengthening him. Christ is the man of God's right hand, whom he hath made strong for himself, Psalm lxxx. 17, lxxxix. 21. And it is to Christ primarily that promise is made, Isaiah xli. 10, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee," &c. It is said of him, Micah v. 4, "He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord." Again,

4. The Father was with him repletively, filling him with all his fulness, Col. i. 19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, chap. ii. 9, For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." O what a well-furnished dwelling-place is Christ! What a well furnished house is he! The Father hath taken all his plenitude and furniture with him into Christ. O sirs, here is good lodging for poor souls! The Father and all his fulness is with him. May we this day behold his glory, full of grace and truth! Again,

5. The Father was with him approbatively, approving all that

he did, and being well pleased with him, and in him; "Lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Mat. iii. 17. He was able to say, John viii. 29, "I do always the things that please him." He had his Father's approbation in every thing he did. Again,

6. The Father was with him affectionately; he had not only his approbation, but his love and affection. He was the object of his Father's love and delight, even in his doing and dying; "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again," John x. 17. "Behold mine Elect," says the Father, "in whom my soul delighteth," Isaiah xlii. 1.

7. The Father was with him victoriously, making him a glorious Conqueror, according to the promise, Psalm lxxxix. 24, "In my name shall his horn and power be exalted. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he hath set judgment in the earth," Isa. lxii. 4. And hence the prince of this world was judged by him; and he spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them in his cross. In a word,

8. The Father was with him perpetually, and will be with him for ever; in this respect he was never alone, for the Father was always with him; the promise, "I will never leave thee," was first to him.

3dly, The next view we may take of Christ's words here concerning the divine presence with him, is relatively; or of God under the relation of a Father being with him; "The Father is with me." And here we might expatiate on the import of the words, under this view, in pointing out what of the Father was with Christ, when he was left alone, and none with him but the Father. It says, in this view, these and the like things following, namely, That not only the Father's countenance was with him, when he wanted the countenance of creatures, and had no man to favour him, the Father's favour was present; "With favour did he compass him about as with a shield;" but also, the Father's Spirit was with him; for he said, "I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." He had the Spirit above measure given him. The Father's words were with him, as well as his Spirit; for, as he gave him the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary; so he said of him, "This is my covenant, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of

thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever," Isa. lix. 21. The Father's heart was with him ; he is the temple of which God hath said, " Mine heart and mine eyes shall be there continually." His heart-love is with him ; and he hath said, " His loving-kindness will he not take away from him." His heart's delight is with him ; and therefore he is called his beloved Son, that is in his bosom, his dear Son. Again the Father's hand, as well as his heart, was with him ; " His hand was upon the man of his right hand ; and he upheld him with the right hand of his righteousness. The Father's perfections were with him, and all his treasures ; for, " In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ;" yea he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God ; and with him is the mercy and truth of God ; " My mercy and my faithfulness with him yet still shall be." The Father's gifts and graces were with him ; " He received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them," Psalm lxviii. 18. The Father's secrets were with him ; and his mind, will, and council : " No man hath seen God at any time : the only begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." His Father's hosts and armaments were with him ; for he that is the Lord of hosts gave his angels charge concerning him ; and it is said, " He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor ; therefore his own arm brought salvation to him, and his righteousness, it sustained him. And he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head," Isaiah lix. 16, 17. Likewise his Father's ornaments were with him ; and hence he says, Isa. lxi. 10. " 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, and covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." What shall I say ? his Father's glory was with him : this was his great name, " The brightness of the Father's glory : " and this was his great end in coming doing, and dying, to glorify him on earth, who said of him, and to him, " Thou art my Servant O Israel, in whom I will be glorified, Isa. xlix. 3. The Father's majesty was with him ; for it was said, Mic. v. 4. " He shall stand and feed (or *rule*) in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty in the name of the Lord his God." The Father's rest was with him : here he found rest and satisfaction to his awakened sword of justice ; even in him, " Who gave himself for us,



an offering and a sacrifice, of a sweet smelling savour unto God :” and hereupon he hath said, “ This is my rest, here will I stay.” The Father’s blessing was with him ; therefore it is said, “ Thou art fairer than the sons of men ; grace is poured into thy lips ; therefore God hath blessed him for ever,” Psalm xlv. 2. He hath blessed him, and he shall be blessed, and “ Men shall be blessed in him.” Why, then, he is not alone, for the Father and all his furniture and fulness is with him.

4thly, The next view of this expression is to consider it subjectively, with reference to Christ, the subject or person with whom the Father is ; *With me*, says Christ, “ I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” The Father was with him in his sonship, as he was his natural Son. He and Christ could never part ; and as he was his federal Son, as the new covenant Head, Psalm lxxxix. 26, it is said, “ Thou art my Father, he shall cry ; thou art my God alone.” The Father was with him in his manhood ; he that prepared for him a body, a human nature, still sustained that nature ; and it subsists only in the Person of the Son of God ; and, “ Great is the mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh,” 1 Tim. iii. 16. The Father was with him, both in his voluntary undertaking the work of our redemption, and in the execution of the whole work : and hence the Father’s will and his will were both recorded together among the archives of heaven ; “ In the volume of thy book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God,” Psalm xl. 6, 7. The Father was with him in his prophetic office ; for, as he gave him to be a light to the Gentiles ; so he gave him the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to rest upon him ; so that he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes : “ Never man spake like this man :” for he had the tongue of the learned given him of the Father. The Father was with him in his priesthood, Psalm cx. 4. “ The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever.” And in this service, wherein he fulfilled the law ; and in this suffering, wherein he satisfied justice, the Father boasts of his assisting presence which he gave him ; “ Behold my Servant whom I uphold ;” and then he raised him up on the third day, and set him on his right hand, to make continual intercession for us. The Father also was with him in his kingly office, saying, “ I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion ; with my holy oil have I anointed him.” And how does he assist him in the work peculiar to this office ? By giving him all power in heaven and in earth, whereby he was able

to conquer subjects to his obedience, and trample his enemies under his feet. So much for the first head, concerning the Father's presence with Christ, included in these words, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

II. The second thing proposed was, To speak of God's presence with his people, as it redounds from Christ the Head to them as members; and how they are not alone, but have the Father with them. And here, without launching forth into this great subject of the divine presence, I shall confine myself to the views of it already mentioned, with relation to the glorious Head; in and through whom they share, according to their measure, of the Father's presence in all their duties and difficulties, so as it may be said, They are not alone, for the Father is with them. In so far as this takes place, so far shall we have communion with God in Christ to-day. Though the presence of God, with Christ the Head, as to the manner and measure of it, is ineffably superior to any presence of his with mere creatures, either in heaven or earth; yet, by virtue of the near union betwixt the Head and the members, even these on earth, they are made partakers of this privilege in the manner whereof they are capable, through grace, and in the measure wherein he sees fit to communicate himself. And,

1. It may be said negatively, They are not alone, though all the world should turn their back upon them, and leave them alone; Christ says, in his Father's name, John xiv. 18, 23. "I will not leave you comfortless. If a man love me, my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." And therefore, they are not alone in point of company, number, friendship, fellowship, or any other respects, before mentioned. Nor are they left to work alone; for, it is God that worketh all their works in and for them; and worketh in them both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. He does not leave them to stand alone in the battle; even when they may say, with Paul, "No man stood with me; Nevertheless the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." He leaves them not alone to suffer reproach and ignominy; for, he is at hand to mark it down: Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame and my dishonour; mine adversaries are all before thee," Psalm lxix. 19. He leaves them not to be alone in suffering persecution, by tongue or hand for his sake; nay, he says of that cross, not only half mine, but wholly so; "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He leaves them not to be alone in suffering violence, even when it

is covered with deceit and falsehood : he tears the covering to pieces, and redeems their soul from deceit and violence. He leaves them not to lie alone in the dark and cold nights of trials and tribulation : they always have his real presence, and they always affect his sensible presence, with the church, Song i. 13. "A bundle of myrrh is my well beloved unto me ; he shall lie all night between my breasts." Yea, he leaves them not to die alone ; he says, "Fear not to go down to Egypt," I will go with you ; nor down to the grave, I have gone before you, and will go with you. In the faith whereof they may say, when passing through the valley of the shadow of death, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Thus they are not alone.

2. It may be said positively, the Father is with them. And here there is some resemblance between the Father's presence, that Christ had, and his presence which they have through Christ. Was the Father with him authoritatively, having his name upon him ? Though none were ever clothed with such authority as Christ, yet his people share of his Father's name, in as far as they are helped to walk in the name of the Lord their God, for ever and ever, Micah iv. 5 ; and in the name of their God to set up their banner, Psalm xx. 5. Was the Father with him operatively, doing all the work ? So they have the Father with them, when they have it to say, Isa. xxvi. 12, "Thou hast wrought all our works in us and for us ;" and when they employ God in Christ as their doer and worker, saying, as Psalm cix. 21. "Do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake ;" and Psalm lvii. 2, "I will cry unto God most high ; unto God that performeth all things for me." Was the Father with him corroboratively, strengthening him in his doing and suffering ? Well, they may be said to have the Father thus with them, in and through Christ, when, with Paul, they can say, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening ;" and, Through God we shall do valiantly," &c. Was the Father with Christ repletively, filling him with all his fulness ? Believers have a large share of this presence, when they come to understand that of the apostle, Eph. iii. 19, even by knowing the love of Christ that passeth knowledge ; to be filled with all the fulness of God ; that is, with all that grace, knowledge, love, holiness, and joy that God allows gradually here, and more perfectly hereafter. And, indeed, we are but at best very small vessels, that can take in but a little of this ocean of divine fulness ; some have got such a fill as to cry out, Lord, the clay vessel can



hold no more. But again, Was the Father with Christ approbatively? So his people have his approbation, when they wait on him, and keep his way: they have his favourable presence; and hence it is said, "His countenance doth behold the upright, Psalm xi. 7. Was the Father with him affectionately? So the Lord is with them that love him; "I love them that love me. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, and that hope in his mercy," Psalm cxlvii. 1. And he sometimes, by inward manifestation, makes them know that he loves them, Jer. xxxi. 3. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Yea, sometimes by his outward dispensations, and certain tokens, makes their enemies know that he loves them, Rev. iii. 9. "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Again, was the Father with Christ victoriously? Even so, in and through him that loved them, they are made victors and conquerors, and more than conquerors over sin, and Satan, and the world, and the more they are made to triumph over their enemies the more evidence have they of God's presence with them victoriously. And was the Father with Christ perpetually? This indeed, does insure his perpetual presence with them; for, it is upon Christ's head he hath promised to each of them, "I will never leave, thee, nor forsake thee;" and therefore boldly may believers say, "The Lord is my helper; and I will not fear what man can do unto me," Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

3. It may be said also in the relative view of the words, respecting the Father, or what of the Father is with them, as with Christ. Why, his presence with them not only imports, that they have the Father's favour and countenance in and through Christ; but also the Father's Spirit and word which was promised to be with Christ, and with his seed, and seed's seed for ever: that they have the Father's heart and hand with them; that his heart is towards them; and he upholds them with the right hand of his righteousness; that his attributes surround them, as the mountains are about Jerusalem. His presence lies in his exerting these perfections for their good, while his wisdom is present to direct them; his power to protect them; his holiness to sanctify them; his righteousness to justify them; his all-sufficiency to supply them; his mercy to pity and pardon; and his truth and faithfulness to be a shield and

buckler to them; and to secure the accomplishment of all the promises of the covenant for them. Again, it imports that as the Father's gifts and graces, laid up in Christ, are communicated, in some measure; while out of his fulness they receive grace for grace; so the Father's secrets are with them in some degree: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and his covenant to make them know it," as the marginal reading is, Psalm xxv. 14. Also, that the Father's hosts are with them; for "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him." God's hosts and guard about them, make the name of the place where they are, *Mahanaim*, that is, *two hosts*, or *camps*, Gen. xxxii. 2. It imports, likewise, the Father's ornaments put upon them, that he put upon Christ; even that garment of salvation, and robe of righteousness, wherewith Christ rejoiced so much to be clothed for their sakes. It imports, together with an impression of the Father's glory and majesty in Christ upon them, their sharing of the glorious rest of God in Christ, the Father's Beloved; and so they have the Father's blessing with them, in him, whom he hath blessed for ever.

4. We may view the words subjectively, with respect to them with whom the Father is. As he was with Christ in his person, offices, undertaking, and execution of his offices, particularly when he was left alone in his sufferings, so he is with the followers of Christ, his members, especially in their solitary and afflicted circumstances; the Father is with them in their person, their names, their characters, and offices, when these are attacked by the fury and violence of men and devils; because he was with Christ in these circumstances, supporting and upholding him; and because the lovers of his name have his word for that chain of blessings and comforts promised, Psalm xci. 14, 15.

Because on me he set his love,  
I'll save and set him free;  
Because my great name he hath known,  
I will him set on high.

He'll call on me, I'll answer him;  
I will be with him still,  
In trouble to deliver him,  
And honour him I will.

The Father is with them to deliver them when distressed; to relieve them when oppressed; to strengthen them when weak; to comfort them when dejected; to direct them when bewildered and in darkness; to bless them when men curse them; to justify them when

men condemn them ; to honour them when the world defame them ; to hide them when the world pursue them ; to deal kindly with them when the world deal cruelly and proudly with them ; to be their company when father and mother forsake them ; when friends, and brethren, and familiars leave them alone, yet happy they that can say, with Christ, " I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

III. The third thing proposed was to observe the special comfort included in the presence of God, as represented by the first Person of the glorious Trinity, namely God the Father, or how this made for the comfort of Christ in his sufferings ; and how it makes for his people's in their trials.

1st, How it made for the comfort of Christ, in his sufferings, to have the presence of God, as he is God the Father ; " The Father is with me." In order to understand this, let it be considered that the word *Father*, out of Christ's mouth, when he was in this world, implies some things relating, 1. To Christ's frame towards God ; and also, 2. Some things with respect to the Father's demeanour toward Christ.

[1.] It implies some things relating to Christ's frame towards God, namely,

1. That Christ was under a humble acknowledgment of God's superiority over him. Christ, as touching his divine nature, was equal with the Father ; for, " Being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God," Phil. ii. 6 ; but, as touching his manhood, and mediatorial offices, he was inferior to his Father, as his servant ; and hence he says elsewhere, " My Father is greater than I." Our Lord here humbly acknowledgeth, that the Father is his superior ; yet under obligation to bear his charges.

2. The word Father here implies Christ's deep sense of God's affection to him. The sense of this strengthened him to act for his Father in his younger years ; when his parents missed him, and sought him sorrowing, he said, " Wherefore was it that ye sought me ? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?" Luke ii. 49. And this sense of God's dear affection to him, he maintained to the last ; and expresses it, John xvii. 24. " Father, thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

3. The word Father here implies, Christ's owning his obligation unto duty ; the duty of a Son and Servant ; who was also sure that God would not fail to act the part of a Father, by giving him



his presence and assistance : “ I am not alone, for the Father is with me.”

4. It implies Christ’s dependence upon God, and his self-insufficiency as man ; that is, Christ did not think that he could subsist, or persist, and hold out of himself. Though his human nature subsisted in his divine person ; yet, without the Godhead, which was one and the same in each person thereof, he knew he could not go through with his work ; and, knowing the unity of the Godhead, he could well say, as God the Son, “ I am not alone ;” yet, as the Son incarnate, he expresses his dependence upon the Three-one God, here denominated by the Person of the Father ; “ I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” And here ineffable comfort and support is enclosed and comprehended in this dependence of Christ upon the Father.

[2.] It implies, on the other hand, some things with respect to the Father’s demeanour towards Christ.

1. How much God the Father was endeared unto him, even as his dear Son ; “ His Servant, whom he upheld ; his Elect, in whom his soul delighted ; and his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased.” Here is comfort.

2. *Father* implies a determinate and inviolable purpose in God to promote and advance Christ as his Son and heir ; and to confer eminency and dignity upon him. God is here looked upon, by Christ, as the God that must advance him and exalt him, however he is now abased, humbled, and thrown down ; hence, John xvii. 1. Christ doth no sooner fill his mouth with the name *Father*, but his heart is full of hope and expectation of God’s advancing and glorifying him ; “ Father, glorify thy Son ; and, verse 5, “ O Father, glorify thou me.” Here then was ground of comfort.

3. *Father* imports friendship, and friendly dealing that he expects from God, when earthly friends were leaving him, and cruel enemies surrounding him ; many bulls compassing him about ; strong bulls of Bashan besetting him. When they were tearing to pieces, and bringing him down, the Father was a friend to bear him up. They were potent enemies, but here was an omnipotent friend at hand.

4. *The Father*, by way of eminency, imports not only the nearest relation to Christ, but the highest help, the most honourable and glorious assistance. The Father, who stands obliged to help me, might Christ say, not only as he is my Father, but as he is the

Father eminently ; even the Father of mercies ; the Father of lights ; the Father of spirits ; the Father of eternity ; the Father of mercies cannot be cruel or untender to me ; the Father of lights cannot leave me in darkness ; the Father of spirits cannot leave my soul in hell ; the Father of eternity cannot but make the death of his eternal Son to be the door of eternal life.

2dly, How does it make for the comfort of his people, that the Father is with them ; or that they have the presence of God, as represented and denominated by the first Person of the glorious Trinity, *the Father* ? I shall show you that this view is comfortable in several respects.

1. It is comfortable, as it imports the kindliest enjoyment of God's presence, namely, the Father of Christ, and a near relation of ours in him. We cannot conceive of God as our Father, without conceiving him to be first the Father of Christ, who is his eternal Son, our Lord and Redeemer, and as our Father in him, who calls us brethren, and is not ashamed to do so, Heb. ii. 11 ; only he must be owned to be the elder brother, and the first-born among many brethren. O ! what joy and comfort results from this view of our having one and the same Father with Christ, and his being our own God and Father in him, who says, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father ; to my God, and your God?"

2. It is comfortable, as it imports the highest enjoyment of God's presence ; it is the top enjoyment to have the Father with us. Though our enjoyment of God doth not begin with the enjoyment of the Father first ; for, we come first to Christ ; yet it ends or lands in the Father through Christ, the way to the Father, John xiv. 6 ; who being the first Person of the glorious Trinity, in the order of subsistence, it speaks out the most high, and honourable, and glorious enjoyment ; then does the soul indeed dwell on high, as it is said, Isa. xxxiii. 16.

3. It is comfortable as it imports the fullest enjoyment of God's presence. As God cannot be a Father without a Son ; so it imports communion with the Father and the Son ; "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3. And as the Spirit naturally proceeds from the Father and the Son ; so it imports also communion with the Father and the Son, by the Spirit ; and consequently, that plurality of the divine presence our Lord speaks of, John xiv. 23, "We will come, and make our abode with him."

4. It is comfortable, as it imports the surest enjoyment of the

divine presence. We may enjoy benefits from God, and yet not enjoy himself; we may have common influences and gifts of the Spirit, and yet be cast-aways. Yea, the disciples of Christ may see and enjoy him, and yet not be sure that they enjoy the Father's presence and favour; nor can they reckon the enjoyment of Christ sure work, unless they have the Father manifested to them, as appears from Philip's words to Christ, John xiv. 8, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" intimating, that while their faith looked only to Christ, as man, present with them, they were still uncertain and unsatisfied; therefore, as Christ pointed out their duty of looking so to him, as to see the Father in him; so it is remarkable, I think, in this chapter, where our text lies, that after Christ spoke so much to them of the Father, then they began to say, verse 30, "Now we are sure; now we believe." It is a sure enjoyment of God, to see the Father in the Son, or to see that God is well-pleased in him. Without this, our faith itself does not assure us of freedom from the Father's wrath; but viewing the Father in him, is sure work.

5. It is comfortable, as it imports the clearest enjoyment of God, yea, both clear in itself, and clearing to the mind and conscience. Our Lord's doctrine here in the context concerning the Father, made the disciples say, ver. 29, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb." Notwithstanding all that Christ had said of himself, and of the Holy Ghost, whom he was to send, yet their minds were in the mist, as it were, till they heard him speak more directly and distinctly of the Father; and then, though they were too confident of their faith, as appears by the check that Christ here gives them, yet they profess they were further illuminated than before; "Lo now speakest thou plainly. Indeed, the mind is clear when it views the Father in Christ; for then we see Christ truly and clearly, when we see God the Father in him. The conscience also is cleared, when it views the Father in Christ, and comes to the Father in the Son; for then it is justified in the court of the last resort; "It is God that justifies (even God the Father); who then shall condemn?" Rom. viii. 33, 34.

6. It is comfortable, as it imports the steadiest enjoyment of God; for, having the Father with us, and our fellowship with the Father, we can win no farther in our motion. While we believe in Christ we are on the way to the Father, John xiv. 6, "I am the way;" but when we come to the Father, and get the Father with



us, then we are just at the end of our way, the end of our faith, the end of our journey, as it were, and are fixed in the centre of rest. When you come to ordinances, must you rest there? No; you come to Christ in them, as the church said, Song iii. 4, "I went a little further, and I found him whom my soul loveth." Well, but when you come to Christ as the way, may you rest there? Nay; you must go yet a little further, and come to God in him, or to the Father by him; "By him we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God," 1 Pet. i. 21. A man never stands firm and steady till then.

7. It is comfortable, as it imports the needfullest enjoyment of God; or, such a divine presence as answers all the needs of the soul, and all the defects of a lonely case. Why, the heavenly Father being present, they enjoy all the privileges of these who are the children of such a Father. Do they need divine pity? The Father is with them for this end; "As a Father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him." Do they need divine sympathy? The Father is with them for that end; and in all their afflictions he was afflicted. He that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye. Do they need provision? The Father is with them to provide for his children. Do they need instruction? This is a father's work; and for this end the Father is with them to teach them to profit, and guide them with his eye. Do they need kindly chastisement? This is a father's work; and as a father chastiseth his children whom he loveth, and then backs the chastisements with embracements; see how God the Father doth both, Jer. xxxi. 18, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," &c. There is chastisement. Verse 20, "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For, since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." There is the embracement. Whatever they need of divine fatherly care to be taken about them, his being with them as the Father, answers and supplies all their needs, according to his riches and glory, by Christ Jesus.

8. It is comfortable, as it imports the sweetest enjoyment of God's presence; for, when the Father is with them, they drink at the fountain-head, where the water is sweetest, as it is said, *Dulcius ex ipso fonte bibuntur aquæ*. God the Father, who is the fountain

of the Trinity, in respect of the priority of order in subsistence, he is the fountain of living waters ; the fountain-head of our salvation and consolation. And however sweet the streams are, yet it is sweetest drinking at the fountain ; by enjoying the fountain, we enjoy all that can issue from it. And hence the enjoyment of God in Christ is never more sweet than when the heart leaps out at the mouth with an ABBA, *Father*, Rom. viii. 15, Gal. iv. 6. Then may the soul well say, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me." Thus you see the special comfort included in the presence of God, as represented by the first person, "The Father is with me."

IV. The Fourth general Head was, To offer some grounds and reasons why God was thus present with Christ ; and why he is present with his people, especially in their sufferings and lonely circumstances. And,

1st, Why was God the Father with Christ in his work of doing and suffering ?

1. The Father was with him because he was both his Son and his Sent. As he was his Son, he had a necessary, natural right to his presence ; for, "He and his Father are one." As he was his Sent, his sent servant, his sent ambassador, he had a necessary federal right to his presence, by virtue of the covenant God the Father made with him, Psalm lxxxix. 3, "I have made a covenant with my chosen." And hence he says, "He that hath sent me is with me."

2. The Father was with him, because he did always what was pleasing to him ; "He that sent me is with me ; the Father hath not left me alone ; for I do always these things that please him," John viii. 29. He was a Son and Servant, that never did a thing displeasing to God ; nay, he never did an action but what was pleasing to him.

3. The Father was with him, because he loved him from everlasting, being the Son of his bosom, his dear Son and his eternal delight, Prov. viii. 30, "I was daily his delight ;" and therefore he says of him, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold ; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. xlii. 1.

4. The Father was with him, because he loved a company, a world of mankind sinners, elect according to the foreknowledge of God ; for whose sake he sent him on the errand of their redemption, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son ; and he sent him, that the world through him might be saved," John iii.

16, 17. This saving work was what bred in the Father's bosom, where Christ lay ; whence he was sent upon this love-errand ; and therefore the Father was with him in the work.

5. The Father was with him, because he was with the Father. From all eternity he was always with the Father ; " The Word was with God," John i. 1. And when the Word was made flesh, and assumed our nature, he was always with the Father in his thoughts, and words, and walk. He was always with God ; and therefore God was constantly with him ; " I have set the Lord always before me ; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved," Psalm xvi. 8.

6. The Father was with him, still upholding him in his doing and suffering work, because his glory was concerned in that work, and Christ was to glorify him on earth ; therefore he said to him, Isa. xlix. 3, " Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." And accordingly Christ could say, John xvii. 4, " Father, I have glorified thee on the earth ; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." This God glorifying work, of suffering to the satisfaction of justice, behoved to be the work of God ; though Christ only was the sufferer, yet the Three-one God behoved to be the supporter of him ; that is, beside the divine nature of the Son, the super-eminent presence of God the Father, and the super-eminent unction of the Holy Ghost ; that the glory of the work might redound to the whole blessed Trinity, which is one God, who could not give the glory of this work to another ; " I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles, &c. I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another," Isaiah xlii. 6, 7, 8. Thus Christ brought glory to God in the highest ; and therefore God was with him, that God might have the glory of the work. " I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

2dly, Why will God be present with his PEOPLE, especially in their suffering and lonely circumstances ? In general, because he was with CHRIST, therefore he will be with *them*, and allow them his gracious presence. More particularly,

1. The Father is with them, because of his relation to them, and theirs to him, in and through Christ. He is their Father, and they are his children ; and will such an indulgent, merciful Father, from whom all other fathers derive their paternal affection, will he



leave them alone and deny them his presence, and forsake his children? Nay, Zion may say, through unbelief, "The Lord hath me, and my God hath forgotten me: but can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget: yet will I not forget thee, saith the Lord," Isa. xlix. 15, 16. There may be unnatural mothers: but he cannot be an unnatural Father: "Behold I have graven thee on the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

2. The Father is with them, and will not leave them alone, because this is the tenor of the new covenant, Heb. xiii. 5, "I will never, never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The five negatives here in the original, import the strongest assurance given, that he will not leave them alone but will be with them. He hath promised to abide with them by his Spirit, the Comforter, to abide with them for ever; and will he not perform his promise, who hath faithfulness for the girdle of his loins? Yea, "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but his kindness shall not depart from them, neither shall his covenant of peace be removed."

3. He is present with them, because he loves them: he loved them with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness hath he drawn them. And will he leave them alone whom he loves with such an ancient, everlasting transcendent, superlative, and distinguishing love? He loves them as the birth of his eternal decree, the purchase of his Son's blood, and the subjects of his Spirit's saving operation, having called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

4. The Father is with them, because he is the Father of Christ, their Head and Husband; so both the Father and the Son are intrusted with them. God the Father hath given them to Christ, and Christ hath given them back to the Father; John xvii. 10, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine; Father, keep through thy name these whom thou hast given me:" As if he should say, Thou hast given them to me from eternity, to be redeemed by me; and now I give them back to thee, and commit them to thy care. Christ, like an indulgent Father, being to leave his people, as to his bodily presence, commits his fatherless orphans, as it were, to the care of their Grandfather: and indeed his Father's care is his, and his care is his Father's; for he and his Father are one.

5. The Father is with them, because they seek him, and rely

upon him for his presence and assistance : " They that know thy name will put their trust in thee ; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee," Psal. ix. 9. Yea, he is good to them that wait on him, and to the soul that seeketh him : for " He never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain."

6. The Father is present with them, because they need his presence ; especially when they are tempted and afflicted. There is a need of these trials, as the apostle saith, " If need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations : " and there is a need of his presence under them. When men and devils are on their top, they need his pity and presence ; and he affords it, especially in such circumstances : because then, when they are left alone, his company and fellowship is most sweet and comfortable ; most welcome and acceptable ; most useful and seasonable ; most declarative of his name as a refuge for the oppressed ; a refuge in time of trouble ; and most evidential of his kindness, care, and compassion, when winds of temptation blow away other companies and comforts from them, and leave them alone ; then he comes saying, as Elkanah to Hannah, " Am I not better to thee than ten sons ? " Better than ten thousand friends and familiars, as the rising sun is better than ten thousand stars that are withdrawn.

V. The fifth general head proposed, on the general method, was, To deduce some inferences for the application. And,

1. Hence we may see the wonderful love of God the Father, in the concern he had about our redemption, manifested by the active support he gave to our Redeemer, in the whole of his redeeming work. He sent him to this work, and he was with him in it. The Father's good-will was the fountain-head of our redemption ; and as Christ came cheerfully to do his will, saying, " Lo, I come ; I delight to do thy will : " so, with heart and good-will, he attended Christ in the whole of his work, which was just a doing the Father's will ; by which will we are sanctified and saved ; and by which will the covenant of promise was sealed with the blood of Christ ; every promise whereof are so many expressions of his will : " I will be your God ; I will take away the heart of stone, &c. I will put my Spirit within you." O see the wonderful love of God the Father, as well as of the Son, in the glass of the Redeemer's doing and sufferings ! The Father was engaged to uphold the Son therein. This he declared to the world, that he would be with him to assist him therein, Ps. lxxxix. 16, 20, 21, " I have laid help upon one that is

mighty ; with my oil have I anointed him ; with whom my hand shall be established ; mine arm also shall strengthen him. Isa. liii. 10, 12. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. I will divide him a portion with the great, and shall divide the spoil with the strong." God the Father promised to bear down all opposition that should be made to him in his undertaking, Psalm ii. where you see the strong combination of the princes of the earth against the Redeemer, and yet how he should break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. He promised that the enemy should not exact upon him, nor the son of mischief wrong him ; that he should beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him, Psal. lxxxix. 22, 23. Hence he is called the mighty Redeemer ; the man of God's right hand. We find Christ solacing himself with the thoughts of this assisting presence of his Father, Isaiah xlix. 5, " Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord ; and my glory shall be my strength." Yea, not only solacing himself with the thoughts of it, but binding defiance to all his enemies on this very ground, Isa. l. 7, 8, 9, " The Lord God will help me, therefore I shall not be confounded ; therefore have I set my face like a flint," &c. Here these promises were accomplished, " I am not alone, for the Father is with me."

2. Hence see what need there was that our Redeemer should have his Father's presence. It does not imply any weakness or impotency in the Son ; for, considering Christ, as to his divine nature, he is one and the same God with the Father ; but it implies, the joint concurrence of both Father and Son, in carrying on this glorious work. And besides, Christ is not here to be considered simply as God, but as Mediator ; in which respect he is man, as well as God ; and in this respect he stood in need not only of habitual grace, but of actual and renewed influences. To clear this we should consider,

(1.) That as man, he was a creature ; and being a creature, he could not but depend upon his Father, for influences and supplies of grace.

(2.) There were special promises of influences made to him ; " And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord," Isa. xi. 1, 2.



(3.) We find him praying for actual support and renewed influences ; it is said, Psal. lxxxix. 26, " He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation ;" and accordingly it is said, that in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplication, with strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save him from death ; and was heard in that he feared, Heb. v. 7.

(4.) Unless that his human nature had been supported by the actual influences of the Spirit, it would have been entirely overwhelmed, under the pressure of wrath that lay on him as our Surety ; for, he had that weight upon him which would have broken the backs of all the angels in heaven, cracked the axle-tree of the universe, and sunk the whole creation to ruin. But, he was not alone, for the Father was with him.

3. Hence see the foundation upon which we may, with assured confidence, expect the presence of God with us, especially in all our sufferings and desolate circumstances : why ? because he was present with Christ, our Head and Surety, on our account, and when suffering in our nature, room, and stead, that this privilege of the divine nature might redound to the members of his mystical body. Because the Father was with him, we may be sure he will be with us. Hence comes it, that the Father's word and Spirit is with us : and hence we have his spiritual presence and spiritual union ; for, " He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit : " and his Spirit is in the believer as a well of water springing up to everlasting life. Hence comes his assimilating presence ; turning these that were haters and slights of God, to be lovers and seekers of God ; and putting a stamp of God's image upon them, and turning them from darkness to light, from death to life, through Christ, who died, that he might live. Hence his accepting presence ; being brought into favour with God, and accepted in the Beloved. Hence his assisting, sustaining, and supporting presence, by his everlasting arms underneath them, upholding them even when they want his sensible, comforting presence. Here is matter of joy and trust, even amidst all killing-like providences ; and, amidst all changes, they have still the unchangeable God with them ; who says, " Fear not, I am with thee." Cast them into prison, yet he is with them : Lay them on a bed of languishing, yet he is with them : put them in the fire, or in the water, he is with them, Isa. xliii. 2. And even when we apprehend him to be an absent God in many respects, saying, " Why hast thou for-

saken me?" yet he is still the present object and ground of our faith and trust.

4. Hence see a solid foundation laid for our communion with God, both in grace here, and in glory hereafter. It is laid in the Father's presence with the Son, our Redeemer. Why, the work of our redemption cannot but be now finished to the Father's contentment and satisfaction; for, Christ was not alone therein, the Father was with him. It is not possible it could be a mismanaged work among such hands; and, therefore, here is such ground for our faith and hope of communion with God this day, and of his being present with us, as well as of the hope of glory. This hope may be corroborated and strengthened with this consideration, that as God's presence with Christ, in his suffering state in this world, is the foundation of his presence with believers in all their trials; so, his presence with the Father, in his now exalted state, lays a foundation for our hope of being for ever with the Lord, and with his Father in heaven. Why, the Father was with Christ on earth, and now Christ is with the Father in heaven; for, "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Yea, as the Father was with Christ, so Christ was with the Father, even upon earth, in such a manner as to lay the foundation of our being with him," John xvii. 24, "Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am," &c. He says not, Where he will be afterwards; but, "Where I am:" intimating, that he was already with the Father; and importing, not only that his exaltation was as sure to him, as if he had been already exalted, but that he was actually with the Father in such an ineffable manner, as he expresses elsewhere, John xiv. 10, "Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" And, verse 20, "At that day ye shall know, that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Thus Christ was always with the Father; and always is, and will be with the Father: and, therefore, believers in Christ cannot be disappointed of having the Father with them, and of their being with the Father hereafter.

5. Hence see how sweet and comfortable Christ's visits are; for, when he comes, he comes not alone, but the Father with him, John xiv. 23, "We will come, and make our abode with him;" that is, with the believer and lover of Christ. When Christ is present, the Father is present; when he is with us, the Father is with us: he that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father. Here observe

then the reason of the reciprocal enjoyment of the Father and the Son, and why they that enjoy the one, enjoy the other ; he that enjoys Christ enjoys the Father, because he is never alone, for the Father is with him. Seeing God the Father is God with Christ, then he must be God with us in Christ. Christ is IMMANUEL, God with us, because he married our nature ; but God the Father is God with us in another respect, not so immediately, as Christ is, but mediately, through Christ, because he is God with Christ. "The Father is with me ;" *q. d.* The Father is God with me, and I am God with you : therefore, when I come to you, I bring the Father with me ; insomuch, that when you see me, you see the Father ; when you hear me, you hear the Father ; when you meet me, you meet the Father ; and when you have communion with me, you have communion with the Father in me : "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and the Son."

6. Hence see that God's presence fills up all wants ; be it the want of friends and familiars, or relatives of all sorts ; "Ye shall leave me alone," says Christ ; "but yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." Indeed fellowship with God is a fatherly fellowship : he is a friend in time of need, when friends and brethren turn their back upon us. God's children that cleave to him, are no losers by being despised, disparaged, and deserted in the world : they are happy in the midst of miseries. They have the best company when left alone ; and that in two respects :

(1.) They many times fare best when they are alone in point of secrecy and retirement : Mark iv. 34, "Without a parable spake he not unto the people ; but when they were alone he expounded all things to the disciples." Hence his people many a time affect retirement, Song vii. 11, "Come, my Beloved, let us go forth to the fields ; let us lodge in the villages : there will I give thee my loves."

(2.) Many times it fares best with them when they are left alone in point of dereliction and desertion of men, and solitude that way, as it was with Christ here : I am not alone, though you have left me : the Father is with me. God's company may be had to best advantage when men's company is lost ; when men cast us out of their company, God may take us in, as Christ did the blind man, whose sight he restored, and whom the Jews cast out, John ix. Our God is most kind, when men are most unkind and unnatural. He is sweetest when they are bitterest. And it is a piece of conformity to Christ, to have most of God's company when we have least of men's.



7. Hence see the mark of a worthy communicant, or of one that hath saving acquaintance with Christ, namely, he will be acquainted with the Father in the Son, or with God in Christ. None know Christ, but they know the Father; none have seen Christ, but they have seen the glory of God in his face: "The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. If you have got the mind of Christ, you have seen it to be the Father's mind; if you have got the Spirit of the Son, then you have got the Father's Spirit, evidenced to be so, by leading you to cry, ABBA, Father. Christ himself is denominated the everlasting Father, Isa. ix. 6. And if you be acquainted with Christ as your Father; you will be acquainted with your Father's Father; both which, though essentially one, yet are personally distinct. The most comfortable communion with God is to be let in to the Father's bosom, by his only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, John i. 18, and who says, Mat. xi. 27, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him." And what is all this, but just to enjoy the love of the Father, through the grace of the Son, in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost? O! it is glorious communion to be let into God, who is love through Christ, the Son of his love, by the Spirit, that sheds abroad this upon the heart. Now communion with God in his love may be known by the similitude betwixt his love to us, and our love to him; particularly in two respects,

(1.) His love is a love of rest; "He rests in his love:" the believer's love to God is a love of rest in God; "Return to thy rest, O my soul." And then,

(2.) His love to us is a love in Christ; we are loved in him, and accepted in him. Our love to God, when he is present with us, is a love to God in Christ: nor can we have communion with God the Father in his love, but through Christ; and then indeed the Father is with us.

8. Hence see the great duty of this day, namely, of coming to Christ in the word and sacrament; and the great motive that should induce us to come to Christ, even because the Father is with him. O sirs, here is one of the strongest motives to faith that I know in the world. Let guilty sinners, that never believed on the Son of God to this day, if they would avoid the Father's wrath, and have the Father's blessing, come to Christ this day; because he is not

alone, for the Father is with him. Let guilty saints, whose faith may be far to seek in this day of God's anger, be persuaded to take a new grip of the Son of God, from this consideration, that the Father is with him. If he were alone, or away from the Father, and had not the Father's presence, then you might be filled with fear and dread, that when you come to Christ for his blessing, then you might get the Father's curse, instead of the blessing; but, as Rebekah said to Jacob in another case, Christ says to you, "Upon me be thy curse, my Son; only obey my voice." Come, come; for, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." He was with me when I bore the curse for you, and is he not with me now when I have bought the blessing for you? Fear not the Father's wrath if you come to me, for he is with me as a reconciled, pacified, and well pleased God in me.

Christ was always with God, and God was aye with him, John i. 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God:" therefore, by coming to Christ, you come to God the Father; yea, into the Father's bosom where Christ lies. By coming to Christ, you come to the Father's favour and fellowship: to the Father's throne and kingdom: to the Father's rest and joy. O how sweet and alluring may the voice of Christ be to us when he is saying, Song iv. 8, "Come with me, from Lebanon, my spouse; with me from Lebanon!" If you knew who was with me, your heart would come leaping to me; for, I am not alone, because the Father is with me to welcome you as well as I. There is a Trinity of persons with me; a plurality to welcome you; even you whose heart hath been a vile run-away from me many a day; yet, "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee," Song vi. 13. There is better and greater company with me, than saints and seraphims; and my company wants to see and welcome you to their company and communion, even though men should excommunicate you, and exclude you from their company and fellowship.<sup>1</sup> When men betake themselves and turn aside to new crooked ways, then you will find they begin to have new crooked natures, full of rancour and rage, and bitterness, putting you out of their company and fellowship, with a "Stand

(1) Alluding to the rupture in the Associate Body, occasioned by the altercations about the Burgess oath, and the sentences that the separating brethren were passing on that account. The censures of the church were never more abused, improperly inflicted, and brought into contempt, than on this occasion.

by, for I am holier than thou," Isa. lxxv. 5. Well, would you have better company? "Return, return then, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you," and that you and we may be all one; for, this I have prayed for, John xvii. 21, 22, that you may be one in us, as we are one; and then part with you who will, you and we shall never part; "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to part us," Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Remember then, O sinner, who is speaking to you from this text, and inviting you to come, and by what a glorious argument, that might conquer the heart of devils, if the door of hope were open to them; but, to you, O men, does he call, and his voice is to the sons of men. To you, O man, woman, whether old or young, he is saying, "Come to me, for the Father is with me." Come, however black and vile you are, my Father is with me to beautify you by his Spirit and mine, that proceeds from him and me; therefore, "Though you have been lying among the pots, you shall be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold;" yea, we will make you borders of gold, with studs of silver. Come to me, laying stress upon my righteousness, my work of doing and suffering as Mediator, seeing you may be sure the work was wrought to purpose, and wrought to the Father's pleasure; for, I was not alone therein, because the Father was with me. Come, however guilty you are; for, my righteous Father is with me to justify you by my blood. Come, however filthy you are; for, my holy Father is with me to sanctify you by his grace. O hear him speaking to you, and saying, Come to me, however poor and needy you are, for my Father's fulness is with me! and my God and Father will supply all your wants, according to his riches in glory by me. Come, however woful and wretched your case is; for, my Father's mercy and faithfulness are with me; and mercy and truth hath met together, and kissed each other in me. Come, however lifeless, graceless, and spiritless you are in yourself, for my Father's Spirit is with me to bestow upon you: from him I have received gifts for men, and graces for men, and for you among the rest. Come, come, for my Father that is with me is saying, that he will not want you; and hath sent me to compel you to come in. O come to me however witless and weak you are in yourself! for my Father's wisdom is with me to guide you; and my Father's power is with me to draw you: with me is the wisdom of God, and the power of God."



"You need not say you cannot, you have not power and ability to come ; for, "Once have you heard, yea, twice, that power belongeth only unto God." And if, by a day of power, I have made you but willing, this is my errand on which I am sent to-day, even to reveal my Father's flaming love for firing your frozen hearts : and I want no more, but that your hearts open to let me in, in my own name, as the King of glory ; and in my Father's name, the God of glory. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock !" Surely my Spirit, by his motion, is knocking ; and I am not alone waiting for you, but my loving Father is waiting with me, and waiting to be gracious to you. Open, open then, ye everlasting doors, if not for my sake, and your own, yet for my Father's sake that is with me, that the Father may be glorified in the Son ; and glorified for ever in your eternal salvation by me."

O let men and angels wonder at the glorious court of attendants waiting on you this day ! Is there any here but may blush and be ashamed to slight and neglect such a courtship ? What say you then ? "Will you go with this man," and get his Father's blessing ? He hath said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him : " and, therefore, that you may be drawn effectually, he that is in the Father's bosom is come to declare the Father, and to touch your iron heart with the drawing loadstone of the Father's infinite and eternal love, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; and therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee : " there is my Father's strong cord let down to draw you to me ; for, "Whosoever hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to the Son."

Here then, might he say, further to move you to come to me, "My Father, that is with me, is stretching out his loving hands to draw you, and opening his everlasting arms to embrace you ; and now, if your heart be drawn toward me, from the view of my Father's love to me, and presence with me, take this for an everlasting cordial to you, that as I am not alone, because the Father is with me ; so, in a way of coming to me, and abiding with me, you shall never be alone, but always have the Father with you : "He will never leave you, nor forsake you." Though all the world should turn their backs upon you, and leave you alone, yet you shall not be alone, in any duty you go about, nor in any distress you come under : you shall not be alone at a communion table, my Father will be with you ; you shall not be alone in the hour of temptation,

or tribulation, and extremity, my Father will be with you ; if not by his comforting presence, yet always by his supporting presence, even as he was with me to the last moment of my sufferings : “ He and I both will come to you, and make our abode with you : ” and, by the blessed Comforter, whom I will send from the Father, I will put my very words into your heart and mouth : for, seeing I and my Father, will never part with one another, nor ever part with you ; therefore, you shall always have ground to say with me, “ I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”

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### A PART OF THE DISCOURSE BEFORE SERVING THE FIRST TABLE.

WE now go on to the great work of the day, the commemorating the death and sufferings of our glorious Redeemer ; in which work he was not alone, because the Father was with him therein ; and, therefore, the work we are about concerns not only our salvation, but also the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Now, these that have no acquaintance with Christ and his Father, can have no right to that communion-table to which Christ welcomes only his friends and acquaintances. Therefore a rail must be put about the table of the Lord, that enemies and strangers to Christ may not adventure to profane that holy ordinance. We therefore debar, exclude, and excommunicate from it, in the Lord's name, all the impenitent breakers of the moral law : and more particularly, &c.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, I do, in the name of the Lord, invite, to the Lord's table, all the friends of Christ, and his spiritual acquaintances. Who are these, say you ? Even all true believers, that have the faith of God's presence with Christ in his work : and the experience of God's presence with themselves.

1. All that have the faith of the Father's being present with Christ in his doing and dying. Have you got ever such a faith of the Son of God as to see and believe that in his redeeming work he was not alone, but that the Father was with him.

(1) A list of those who stand debarred from the Lord's table is condescended upon in Vol. I.

QUEST. How shall I know if I have the true faith of this?

We answer, If you have got the faith of this, it will make the work of redemption, by Christ, to be very great and glorious in your esteem; and make you see, that every thing that Christ did and suffered, had a stamp of God upon it, and something of the glory of God shining in it. The faith of this will be the eye whereby you see the love of God to be the very root of redemption: you will be sometimes admiring the wonderful love of God: that not only sent him on that saving errand, but also came along with him; who therefore says, "He that sent me is with me." The faith of this will make Christ very precious to you: why? Because the Father was always with him. You will see a dignity unspeakable flowing from this, that God was with him, and God was in him; and God is to be found nowhere, in mercy, but with him. The faith of this will make you see that men may be happy, though left alone and deserted of all the world, as long as God is with them; and happy though saints and disciples should leave them alone, because happiness lies not in man's company, but in God's. You will reckon them happy that have God with them, whoever be against them, or away from them: and will reckon yourself at no loss, though you wanted the presence of friends and brethren. If you have God's presence; at least, if want of that sort be bitter, here is what you are sure can sweeten it to you.

2. Christ's friends are these that have experience of his presence with themselves.

QUEST. How shall one know that he hath God's presence, seeing many think they have God with them, when yet they are in a delusion?

I cannot stand, just now, to offer many remarks. Only, with reference to the subject I was treating, inquire if ever you could say, for your own part, from experience, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me." When father and mother, friends and familiars in a world failed you, was you made to run away to God, and take him for your only true friend, and to take rest to your soul in him; and particularly, to solace yourself in him as a Father, by crying, ABBA, Father; viewing him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: as a heavenly Father in Christ; as a holy Father; as a righteous Father; and as a merciful Father in him? Can you tell to your experience, that when your mother's children were angry at you, and perhaps smote you, and wounded you, and the watchmen



that went about the city, took away your vail from you ; or when with Jacob you was obliged to leave your kindred, to forget your father's house, and the people that were yours ; when friends and familiars became your enemies, and former comforts became but heavy crosses to you : when these, or trials of that kind befel you, so as you was, in a manner, left alone, and deserted on all hands, then you have been made to run away to God, and you met with him in Bethel, and there he spoke with you, and you with him ; you mind the time and place where he visited you, and made you pour out your heart before him, and run into his bosom for relief ; and you found you was not alone, because the Father was with you, and found his company infinitely better than all the friends and familiars in the world ; you got such a whaff of his glorious goodness as made you forget your affliction, and remember your misery no more : and though you have not always the same comfortable presence of God, yet you have this sign of his real presence, that you have aye a kindly remembrance of the Bethel-visit he gave, and a kindly wish at the bottom of your heart, that he would renew the visit, and see you again, that your heart may rejoice !

O thou child of God ! come and share of the children's bread. Hast thou win to lisp after the language of Jesus, and to call God your Father ? Is that language become somewhat familiar to you, Father, Father ? At least you are helped to it sometimes ; as " No man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Spirit of God ; " so no man can call God, Father, but by the Spirit of adoption ; under the influence whereof, when you speak to God, and say, Father, Father ; it is not in a rash and precipitant manner, as thousands will say, " Our Father which art in heaven," who know not what they are saying, but take his name in vain : but you, believer, when you call God Father, it is with reverence you speak it ; it is with some holy filial fear you speak it out ; it is with some holy boldness, upon the ground of the blood of Christ, you say it ; and it is with humble blushing, as unworthy to be put among the children : you can hardly speak this language, but in the manner the returning prodigal did ; saying, Father, I have sinned. Well, have you win to call Christ's Father yours, or would you fain be at it ? And is this the privilege you value above all things, and esteem above all enjoyments in the world, to have the Father with you ; even to have the gracious presence of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and fellowship with the Father and the Son ? Christ then

is saying to you, however black and vile in your own eyes, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away:" come to my table, and put honour upon my Father and me, before the world, and be not ashamed of me before men. Would you have a meeting with God? Then come, come to me in this ordinance, and you shall not meet with me alone, but with my Father also; for, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

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### THE DISCOURSE AT THE SERVICE OF THE FIRST TABLE.

Now, my friends, you are come to commemorate the death and sufferings of Christ, and therein his redeeming love to you, together with the love of the Father that sent him, and was with him in that work. When Christ came on this errand, the Father came along with him, and accompanied him with his presence. In all Christ's sufferings, from first to last, the Father was with him supporting him. The first of Christ's sufferings in the flesh, was in his circumcision, according to the law, on the eighth day; the last of his sufferings was in his crucifixion.

In the beginning of his sufferings, namely, his circumcision, the Father was with him, may I say, giving him the covenant of circumcision. It is said, in another sense, indeed, of Abraham, that God gave him the covenant of circumcision, Acts vii. 8; for to him it was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and of the covenant of grace; but to Christ he gave the covenant of circumcision as a seal of the covenant of works, he was to fulfil in our room; for, thereby it was sealed, that he became a debtor to the whole law; "I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is become a debtor to the whole law," Gal. v. 3. The apostle's meaning in that word, when it is applied to any other than Christ, is, If you be circumcised, or do any duty enjoined by the law, and think to be justified thereby, Christ shall profit you nothing; you are fallen from grace, and plunged yourself into the gulf of a covenant of works; for, when you take hold but of one link of the chain of that covenant of works, or do anything in hope of justification by your doing, you draw the whole chain after you, which is impossible; you bring yourself

under an obligation to fulfil the law, both in its precept and penalty, and so bring the curse of the law upon yourself. But circumcision was indeed to Christ a seal of the covenant of works, or a sign that he was become a debtor to do the whole, and to pay the whole debt of obedience to the precept, and satisfaction to the penalty of the law. Here was, indeed, the mystery of Christ's first sufferings, wherein the Father was with him, giving him the covenant of circumcision, sealing him to be the surety and debt-payer in our room.

In the last of his sufferings, upon the cross, the Father was with him, even when he was crying out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet then the Father was with him, supporting and enabling him to pay out the last farthing of the debt that was owing to the law; and thus he magnified the law, and made it honourable. And we are now remembering that love of God in Christ.

"The same night in which he was betrayed he took bread," &c. Christ's flesh is meat indeed; it is just the full payment of all our debt, that we owed to law and justice, that is represented by this broken bread; "I am the bread of life:—my Father gives you that bread," &c.

"After supper he took the cup," &c. The Father's presence with Christ in his death was very mysterious. "Behold the blood of the covenant!" wherein God promised to be with Christ, even in the shedding of that blood. There was a twofold presence of the Father, or a twofold egress of the divine power; namely, a power smiting, and a power sustaining him; the power of his wrath, against sin, bruising him; and the power of his mercy, towards sinners, upholding him, and enabling him to suffer that wrath. No mercy, indeed, nor pity was shown to him; "God spared not his own Son. It pleased the Lord to bruise him." The power of the Father's wrath bruised him to death, and bruised out his blood, of which justice took a great draught, and drank to satisfaction; yea, to the full and condign satisfaction of justice; and God the Father allows you to pledge him in this cup; and to drink to the satisfaction of your hearts and consciences. But, withal, the power of the Father's mercy, towards us, was present with him, sustaining and supporting the Sufferer, who trode the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him; yea, the Father himself was not with him, either as a sufferer or sympathiser, but as a sustainer and



supporter : he was so far from being a sufferer or sympathiser with him in his sufferings, that he was pleased to bruise him ; and taking pleasure in his sufferings, not as they were a cruciating and tormenting of Christ's human nature, but as they were a satisfaction to divine justice ; therefore in that hour of suffering the Father was only with him as a supporter, strengthening him with one hand to bear all the wrath he could lay upon him with the other. God was then, as it were, holding him with one hand by his omnipotent power, and with the other hand lashing him with infinite vengeance, or pressing him to death. Two flames met together in Christ upon the cross ; the flame of God's infinite love to Christ, and the flame of his infinite wrath against sin, and hatred of it ; and both were expressed by Christ, namely, the full assurance of his infinite love, when he cried out, " My God, my God ;" and yet the sharp sense and feeling of his infinite wrath, when he cried, " Why hast thou forsaken me ?" a question not of complaint but condolence ; for, at the same time, his heart justified his righteous Father, saying, Psal. xxii. 3. " But thou art holy : " and commended his Spirit into his Father's hand, as it is expressed, Psal. xxxi. 5. " Into thy hand I do commit my Spirit, for thou art he, O thou Jehovah God of truth, that hast redeemed me." Christ, as the public head of all the redeemed, spoke here in the name of them all, when, after the finishing stroke of justice was laid on, and he had cried, " It is finished," and when he put his Spirit in his Father's hand. Though he alone was the sufferer, yet he gives his Father the honour of this redemption work, as his supporter ; " O thou Jehovah God of truth, thou hast redeemed me : " and in me all the company of elect sinners that thou hast given me. Thus the Father was with him.

Now, as the Father was with Christ, and is still with him, so we may hope he is with you, communicants. If you would know this, inquire how you stand affected to the Father's presence with Christ, and his presence with you.

1. How stand you affected towards his presence with Christ ? Doth it gladden your heart to think that Christ was not alone, because the Father was with him ? The more your heart is gladdened with a view of this, the more have you of the Father's presence with you ; for, what should make you glad on this account, if it be not that you are anointed with the oil of joy and gladness ; I mean with the Spirit of the Father, that rested upon the Son ? O bless God for this mark of his presence ! I hardly know a better

token of God's presence ; and glad may your heart be on this ground for the Father gladly anointed with that Spirit ; and glad was Christ when this oil was poured out upon him ; for thereby he was assured, that the Father was with him. And if you be glad at the heart to think that the Father was with him, you so far share of the joy and gladness of the Father and the Son, even by that Spirit that proceeds from them both. Again,

2. How stand you affected to the Father's presence with you ? How like you his presence in three respects ? Do you love to be with him ? that is, to be in with him, to be one with him, and to be up with him. I shall explain what I mean. Do you love to be in with him, in point of agreement and reconciliation ? "Two cannot walk together except they be agreed." Do you love to be in with him in favour with him, and would rather be out with all the world than not to be in with God ? Again, do you love to be one with him in point of union, according to Christ's prayer to the Father, John xvii. 21. "That they may be one in us ?" How do you affect and relish this oneness ? And again, do you love to be up with him ; I mean, in the mount of communion ? If you cannot say, with full assurance, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son ;" yet, can you say, Truly this is a privilege I would prefer to thousands of gold and silver ? And is it the desire of your souls not only to dwell in the higher house, and so to be ever with the Lord ; but even to dwell with him here below, saying, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple ?" Is it your heart's desire to bed and board with him ? To bed with him, by lying in his bosom ; and to board with him, by living on his bounty, and feasting upon his love ?

O how many sweet ways of being with him are expressed in scripture ! You may observe which of them suits best with your experience, formerly or presently. His children are said sometimes to meet with him, and he with them : "The Lord God of the Hebrews met with us." They are sent to abide with him, and he with them ; our Lord, speaking of his Father and himself, says, "We will come and make our abode with him : " hence their language, even after desertion, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee." They are said to stand with him upon mount Zion. They are said to sit with him at his table ; and "When the King sits at his table their spikenard sends forth the smell thereof." They are said to sup with him : "I will come

in and sup with him, and he with me." They are said to walk with him ; " Walk humbly with thy God." And sometimes they are said to wrestle with him ; yea, and to win the day, while they hold him, and will not let him go out of their arms of faith, love, and prayer ; and, " The King is held in the galleries." Hath he been with you, or is he with you any of these ways, and by his enlightening, quickening, strengthening, sanctifying, or comforting presence ? Then, O bless him ! that as Christ was not alone, but had the Father with him, so you are not alone, but have the Father with you, though friends or brethren have left you alone. O bless him ! if, on this occasion, he hath given you an experimental confutation of the amazing extravagancies of these that are presuming to tear our commissions and warrant for this work ; and saying, upon the matter, " Where is your God ?" You have left him, and he hath left you, and you shall be left alone for us ; yea, excommunicate and cast out from us ; nay, but let them know we are not alone, because the Father is with us. And as an evidence of the Father's Spirit with us, as he was with Christ, let us even cry, " Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Father, recover them from the error of their minds and way, their darkness and delusion ; Father, return to them, and turn back their captivity as streams in the south, &c.

Well, if God hath been with you on this occasion, then take it as a token for good, that all your blessings are blessed ; and that you are blessed in your basket and store : as a token that all your crosses are sanctified, as being the fruits and effects of covenanted love ; " Whom he loveth he chasteneth ;" as a token that all your wants are made up, though all worldly comforts should be removed ; " He is God all-sufficient ;" as a token that all your sins are pardoned ; for he is present as a sin-pardoning God : " Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee : " as a token also that all your prayers are accepted, as well as your persons ; for, " You are accepted in the Beloved : " and as a token that all your fears are groundless ; for he says, " Fear not, for I am with you." All things therefore shall work together for your good, be they never so frightful like ; he will make the wrath of men and devils to praise him, and to profit you, because he is with you. You need fear no evil, though you were passing through the valley of the shadow of death, because he is with you. What ground of fear can you have when he says, " Fear not, for I am with thee ; I will not leave thee ? " Yea, though you were left of all men, as Christ was, yet what he



said, you have right to say, "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

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## SERMON CXLVI.

### THE BELIEVER'S INTERNAL WITNESS; OR, THE CERTAIN EVIDENCE OF TRUE FAITH.<sup>1</sup>

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."—1 JOHN v. 10.

WE have, in the beginning of this chapter, two things observable.

1st, An exhortation to true obedience, and love of God, from its connection with the mutual love of God's children. This exhortation is pressed with several arguments, the first is taken from the nature and office of children; "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him," ver. 1. He that loveth the father, will love the child. But how may we know, if our love toward the children of God be of the right sort? This is answered, ver. 2, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Then is our love to our neighbour true, when it arises from our love to God, and is founded thereupon; for here he makes love to God, the fulfilling of the whole law; and this is the second argument for the love of God, namely, from the facility and possibility thereof: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous," ver. 3. The love of God is very possible to the children of God, seeing his commandments are not grievous, namely to believers; for to be a believer and a child of God are one and the same thing here. Now, to the believer the commands of God are not grievous, because by faith he fulfills the law in Christ his Head; and because, by faith, he is regenerate; and, by virtue of his regeneration, hath the love of God and his neighbour begun in him, and a new obedience according to all the precepts of the law. It is true, the commands are grievous to the regenerate, in so far as they are yet flesh; but not so far as they are

(1) This subject was handled in two discourses, at the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord Supper at Stirling, June 25, 1749. The first on the Saturday before, and the second on the Monday after the solemnity.

renewed, or as to the sanctified part ; therefore the apostle explains and amplifies this, ver. 4, "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world ; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Why is it that the commands of God are not grievous to God's children ? Because, though the reigning lusts of these that want faith make the commands of God grievous to them ; yet the children of God have that faith that conquers and overcomes all worldly lusts. Their faith hath influence on the mortification of the old man, and the vivification of the new man ; and so upon the purification of the heart. This is the principal way of faith's overcoming the world, namely, by its subduing and conquering worldly lusts, whereby others are captivated. This victory over the world he more particularly ascribes to believing, ver. 5, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?" Why, do not devils believe this ? Yea, but they do not apply it to themselves ; they cannot believe that the Son of God came for them ; but true faith is applicatory and appropriating ; applying and appropriating even the filiation and sonship of Christ ; leading the man to believe that he is God's adopted son, upon the account of Christ who is his natural Son. But now,

2dly, We have the confirmation of Christ's being the Messiah, from verse 6, 7, 8. Having shewed the excellency of faith, and that it consisted in a believing that Christ was the Son of God ; now he comes to confirm this foundation of faith, that Christ is indeed the Son of God ; "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ," &c. The typical administration of old was partly by water and legal washing ; partly by blood or bloody sacrifices. Now, Christ came to fulfil both these types. By working regeneration, he performs that which the legal washings represented ; and by purchasing redemption and reconciliation with the price of his blood, he performs that which the blood of the sacrifices of old adumbrate and point forth. And hereupon the apostle leads us to the testimony of the Spirit, which believers have within them, and so comes more directly to treat of the witnesses of Christ being the Son of God, particularly the witnesses in heaven, and the witnesses on earth.

1. The witnesses in heaven are three, ver. 7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost ; and these three are one." How eminently did these three witness Christ's Sonship when he was baptized ! The Father

from heaven with an audible voice, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Son present in our nature which he had assumed. The Holy Ghost visibly appearing in the shape of a dove, and resting on him. And many other ways do these three witnesses attest Christ's Sonship ; as in the word, in the miracles of Christ, in the ministry of the gospel ; but, in whatever way, these three are one ; not only one in essence, but one in will and consent ; they agree in their testimony.

3. The witnesses on earth are three ; the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Where by the Spirit we are to understand the effusion of the Holy Ghost, and his own immediate manifestation. By the water we are to understand regeneration and sanctification, represented by the old washing and cleansing with water. And by the blood we are to understand redemption and sanctification, through the blood of Christ. These give their testimony to this truth, and witness that Christ is the Son of God ; and they are said to do it on earth, even in all believers.

Now, having adduced all these witnesses, he shews them all to be divine witnesses ; and the refusal thereof to be extremely dangerous, for thereby we make God a liar. However, the ninth verse refers especially to the seventh, concerning the witnesses in heaven ; "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater ; for, this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son." But ver. 10, where our text lies, hath a reference especially to the eighth, concerning the witness on earth ; "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." The three on earth bear witness in the court of the believer's breast.

In the words of the text you have the believer described, or his faith accounted for, and unfolded, in these four things.

(1.) The act of it ; it is called a believing, namely, upon the authority of God testifying and declaring what he should believe. This believing is called a receiving of Christ ; "To as many as received him, to them gave he power [or *privilege*] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name," John i. 12. It is a receiving Christ, and receiving the testimony concerning him ; setting to the seal that God is true.

(2.) The object of this faith ; it is a believing on the Son of God. This object of faith is fully illustrated in the following verse, namely, "This is the record of God, that he hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." True faith then hath the



revelation of Christ as the only begotten, and eternal Son of God, and Saviour of the world, for its object. This is God's record and testimony, that Christ is his Son and our Saviour; that he is our salvation and eternal life, by God's appointment and constitution. But,

(3.) We have the evidence of it; He that believeth hath the witness thereof. By the witness here, I conceive, we are to understand what we have in the eighth verse, and in the close of the sixth. It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. The Spirit, together with the water and blood, is the witness on earth, and within believers, which concurs with the witnesses in heaven, and agrees with them in witnessing the same thing, namely, that Christ is the Son of God, and the true Messiah. This is the end and design of all these witnesses in general. But the special end and design of this internal witness to particular souls is, their own adoption, filiation, and salvation, through this Messiah. This is expressly declared to be the end, ver. 13, "That ye may know that ye have eternal life."

(4.) You have the subject of it; He hath the witness in himself. He that believeth the witness and testimony of God, testifying his Son to be our life and salvation, he hath the witness in himself, in his own heart, in his own soul. He finds and feels him as the Author of faith within him. It is not a fluctuating opinion, but an internal testimony; and internal sensation of what God testifies and speaks, namely, peace and salvation, in and through his son Jesus Christ. He that believeth in Christ hath the Spirit of Christ, of whom Christ hath said, "He shall testify of me," John xv. 26. And again, "He shall glorify me; for, he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you," John xvi. 14. He testifies in the man also by water and blood. He therefore that believeth hath a sufficient efficacious witness in himself, and needs not seek it elsewhere.

What is further necessary for explaining this subject will come in under the prosecution of the following doctrine.

**OBSERV.** That true faith carries its own evidence, or witness, along with it.

See for illustration of this, besides the text, the following scriptures, Eph. i. 13, "After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy

Spirit of promise." Rom. viii. 16, "The Spirit also beareth witness, with our spirits, that we are the sons of God." I think it was this evidence the apostle's faith carried along with it, when he said, 2 Tim. i. 12, "I know in whom I have believed." And the believers mentioned in the close of this chapter, ver. 20, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; this is the true God and eternal life."

The method we propose for illustrating this proposition, through the divine favour, shall be the following.

- I. To inquire what this faith is?
- II. What is that evidence and witness that it carries along with it?
- III. What this witness doth depone and attest?
- IV. What is the quality and property of this witness that the believer hath in himself?
- V. Why true faith hath this witness along with it?
- VI. Make application of the whole subject.

I. We return then to the first thing proposed, viz., to inquire What true faith is? The text would give us ground to inquire into two things, viz., 1. Into the object; 2. The nature of it.

1st, The object of it is the Son of God. Not the Son exclusively; God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the object of our faith; "He that receiveth his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true," John iii. 33. But this God would be as inaccessible to us, as fallen angels, were it not through his Son, who took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham! therefore it follows, in the last verse of John iii., "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life;" and in John v. 12, "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Faith centres on him as the Son of God, as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Were he not God, faith would want a sure foundation; "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and besides me there is none else." The salvation that we need is a salvation that God only could contrive, that God only could purchase, that God only could administer. This is a strong support to the soul in all things that can difficult it, that he is God, the Son of God, God-man, Mediator.

In a word, I understand here, the Son of God, and all these things in him, on which faith terminates. The object of our faith is the Son of God, as made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; the Son of God, whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation for our sins. When faith takes him up as the Son of God, it looks on him as a glorious object; "More glorious than the mountains of prey;" as an able Saviour, "Able to save to the uttermost," being the Son of God; as one dear and near to God, and in whom God cannot but be well pleased. He is well pleased with him as his own Son, and well pleased with him as our Saviour, and well pleased in him; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Mat. iii. 17.

2dly, As to the nature of faith: it is not my design to enlarge upon it at present; only a short account of such as believe on the Son of God, you may take in the following particulars:—

1. "He that believeth on the Son of God;" that is, he who is self-condemned, and hath the sentence of the law pronounced in his conscience, and thereupon finds himself lost and undone without Christ; "The Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost. The whole need not the physician, but they that are sick." For whom then is consolation prepared, but for these that are cast down? For whom is wisdom, but for the foolish? For whom justification, but for the guilty? For whom sanctification, but for the filthy? For whom salvation, but for the sinner?

2. "He that believeth;" that is, he that hath no expectation from the law as a covenant of works, whom the Lord hath divorced from that husband, in order to his espousal to Christ, who sees his own righteousness to be filthy rags, a bed shorter than that he can stretch himself upon; a covering narrower than that he can wrap himself into; who finds his best duties and holiness cannot over-mantle him, and be proof against the consuming fire of God's infinite justice, which requires infinite satisfaction; or vindicate God's infinite holiness, which requires perfect obedience.

3. "He that believeth;" that is, he to whom the Son of God hath been made known and revealed, according to that of our Lord, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, &c. But God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of the



Lord, in the face of Jesus." Accordingly, every believer hath got the Spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

4. "He that believeth;" that is, he who, from the discovery of his glory, hath had his heart drawn out towards him as the Lord his righteousness and strength; his righteousness, for justification; his strength, for sanctification. The man having seen his fittedness every way for his mediatory work, his eye hath affected his heart, and his heart made to go out after Christ, and to settle in him as the running river settles in the ocean. The man before this was unfixed, unsettled, running hither and thither; but now, having come to Christ, he is at rest, and hath no further course; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee."

5. "He that believeth;" that is, he that lives upon him, who by faith draws virtue from him, for every thing that appertains to life and godliness. The man hath cast himself into his arms, to sink or swim with him; he is swallowed up wholly in Christ as his all in all; his all, for light, life, strength, joy, grace, and glory.

6. He that believeth;" that is, he whose faith works by love, and draws out love. See verse first of this chapter. But these things I do not insist upon.

II. What is that witness that the believer hath in himself? This, according to the explication I give, is threefold, in verse 8th, namely, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood.

1st, The Spirit, by his own immediate testimony; "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirits," Rom. viii. 16. The Spirit, by himself, witnesses in a distinct way from that which is by water and blood, by shedding abroad the love of God upon the heart, in a soul-ravishing way; and ordinarily he makes the word useful in this way of witnessing; or, if not an express word, yet some scriptural consideration. Now, that the Spirit doth witness in believers this way, distinct from the water and blood, is evident,

1. From the apostle's ascribing it to the Spirit himself, in that forecited Rom. viii. 16. It is not said the Spirit, but the Spirit himself. The graces of the Spirit are witnesses; for, every effect is a witness of its cause; for the Spirit himself doth it, says Paul. A man does many things by his substitute; but when he is said to do it himself, it argues his doing in his own person.

2. It is evident from the fitness of many words and promises to witness immediately to a man, when the Spirit applies them; such

as that, "Fear not, for I am with thee ; Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." Now, the Spirit doth apply such words to particular souls ; for they are ordained on purpose for the believer's strong consolation ; and the believer hath a right to them, being in Christ, " In whom all the promises are Yea and Amen ;" and the Spirit is promised to take of the things of Christ, and shew them to his people.

3. It is evident from the number of the witnesses that are here owned in the context ; there are *Three* that bear witness on earth. Now, if the Spirit should not be a distinct witness from the water and blood, then there would not be three. The water and blood are not sufficient of themselves to witness ; but the Spirit witnessing by water is but one witness ; and the Spirit witnessing by the blood is but one witness ; and therefore, if the Spirit had not a distinct way of witnessing from its concurrence with these, there would be but two, not three witnesses. The Spirit witnesses with the blood and water ; but beside, he hath a distinct way ; enlarging the soul with the joy of God's salvation, in a more immediate way.

4. It is evident from the experience of the saints. Many of them have been brought to assurance in this immediate way ; and not merely by reflection upon marks, and signs, and qualifications within, which is the Spirit's witnessing by water, or sanctification. It is true that light that is darted in into the soul, doth discover grace, insomuch, that when the Spirit doth suspend his operations, the remembrance of the graces, that were then acted, may confirm and evidence to the soul, that it was really the Spirit himself that was witnessing within the man.

2dly, Another witness is the Water ; that is, sanctification, which was, under the law, typified by washing ; and it is called the washing of regeneration, Titus iii. 5. Now, that the Spirit doth witness in the believer by water, or by sanctification, is evident,

1. Because it is expressly here called a witness ; and there could not be three, if this were not one.

2. Because it is reckoned amongst the peculiar favours that believers receive from Christ, that he is made of God unto them sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30.

3. Because there is a necessary connection betwixt it and salvation ; " We are chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit," says the apostle, 2 Thess. ii. 13, therefore they are said also to have inheritance amongst them that are sanctified by faith, Acts

xxvi. 18. Whatever hath salvation coupled with it, being discovered, must needs have a witnessing power with it. And yet sanctification cannot witness our interest in Christ, without the Spirit irradiating and shining on us, and upon his own work, because this water is many times muddy, through the stirring and prevailing of corruption.

3dly, The third witness is the Blood ; that is the blood of Christ, by which we have redemption, remission, and justification. The blood of Christ, and the righteousness of Christ, are all one ; therefore we are said to be justified by the righteousness of God, and also by the blood of Christ, Rom. v. 9, 18. Now, that this blood is a witness, is evident,

1. Because it is here called a witness, and that distinct from the Spirit and the water.

2. Because this blood and righteousness of Christ is the ground of our boldness and confidence ; " Having boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus," Heb. x. 19.

3. Because the application of this blood of Christ is by faith, which makes it witnessing blood ; for, the blood cannot witness unless it be appropriated and applied ; now, it is the office of faith to make that general proposition of Christ's shedding his blood, for the redemption and reconciliation of sinners, to be of a particular advantage to the soul ; for, God is the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Thus " He that believeth hath the witness in himself." Now, the blood seems to be a clearer evidence than that of the water, which many times is so muddy that its testimony cannot well be perceived ; for, though a man, that hath no sanctification at all, which is the witness of water, cannot have the witness of the Spirit or the blood ; yet sanctification may lie dark, and yet the Spirit and the blood may witness within him ; as in a dark day, a man may conclude the sun is up, though he cannot see it ; so a man, acting faith on the blood of Christ, may conclude his sanctity, though he cannot see his own sanctification ; and the not drawing this conclusion, is the occasion of many fears, doubts, and disquietments in the souls of believers.

III. What doth the witness, that the believer hath within him, depone and attest ? For, we may speak of these three as one, because they agree in one, as it is ver. 8.

We reply to this in general. This threefold witness that the believer hath within him, doth testify that Christ is the Son of God,



which is the general scope of the preceding part of the chapter; they testify that he is the true Messiah, the only Saviour, whom God the Father had sealed and authorised to be our Redeemer: that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his son. More particularly,

1. The witness that the believer hath within himself doth testify and depone, that the believer hath an union to, and interest in Christ: that "He is in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ," ver. 20.

Perhaps you may say, How shall I know if I be in Christ, or have an interest in him?

Indeed, you cannot know unless this three-fold witness attest it: without them you cannot know it; but any one of them will discover it. If you have either the Spirit's immediate testimony; or the witness of water, in sanctification; or the witness of blood, in justification, you may thence conclude, as if you heard it by an audible voice from heaven; yea, and much more surely than by any voice from men or angels, that Christ is yours, and ye are Christ's! in regard, none of these witnesses can depone anything but matter of fact; therefore, when the witness speaks, the man can say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine," Song ii. 16, and vi. 3.

2. This witness that the believer hath in himself doth attest and depone, that he is a child of God; for "The Spirit witnesseth with our spirits that we are the sons of God, Rom. viii. 36. We are the children of God, by faith, Gal. iii. 26. And to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," John i. 12. Now, the witness within doth declare this, because it witnesseth that the man is a believer that hath received Christ; for, by the by, it witnesseth that his faith is no fancy, or delusion, but the work of God; a faith of God's operation, which once he had not, and now he hath, which no man could effectuate but the power and grace of God; and therefore the witness gives the man a persuasion, that as all that receive and believe in Christ, have authority to become the children of God; so, he in particular, thus believing and receiving him, is a child of God.

3. This witness that the believer hath within him, doth attest and depone, that he is freed from condemnation, and reconciled to God; for "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ," Rom. viii. 1. He that believeth on him is not condemned," John

iii 18. Christ was condemned that the believer might not be condemned. Nay, instead of condemnation, the deposition of the witness declares that he is absolved for ever from condemnation, and hath peace with God ; for “ We have peace through the blood of his cross ;” and being justified by faith, we have peace with God.”

4. The witness that the believer hath within doth depone that he shall be saved eternally ; that he hath eternal life in Christ, see ver. 13 of this chapter, “ He that hath the Son, hath life ; He that believeth shall be saved.” Salvation and eternal life is attested by the deposition of the witness within ; for, according to the clearness of the testimony that the witness gives, such is the believer's assurance of eternal life. (See 2 Cor. v. 1, Job xix. 25.) It was by virtue of this witness speaking in Paul, that he was able to say, “ I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give unto me,” 2 Tim. iv. 7.

5. The witness that the believer hath within him does testify and depone that nothing can be laid to his charge, Rom. viii. 33. “ Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifies.” The witness depones that justice can lay nothing to his charge, because Christ hath cleared off justice to the full : it depones that the law can lay nothing to his charge, because Christ hath stopped its mouth with a perfect obedience : it depones that Satan can lay nothing to his charge, because Christ hath bruised the head of the serpent, and judged the prince of this world : it depones that conscience can lay nothing justly to his charge ; for when the conscience is sprinkled with the blood of Christ, which is a concurring witness, here all its accusations fall to the ground. If God be for a man, who can be against him ?

6. The witness that the believer hath within him does sometimes depone and attest that the union betwixt Christ and him is inseparable and indissolvable ; that neither death nor devils shall part Christ and him ; “ I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,” Rom viii. 38, 39. The witness doth attest that his market is made for ever, that he shall be for ever with the Lord ; that his Redeemer liveth, and though after his skin, worms destroy this body, yet in his flesh shall he see God ; that this corruption

shall put on incorruption ; and that death shall be swallowed up in victory.

In a word, the witnesses do sometimes depone that all things shall work together for his good ; that though the Lord should hide his face, yet he will return with everlasting kindness ; yea, that though he fall he shall arise ; and though he sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to him ; that his grace shall be sufficient for him ; that the lines are fallen to him in pleasant places, and that he hath a goodly heritage ; that this God is his God for ever and ever, and will be his guide even unto death ; that he will never leave him nor forsake him, but keep him by his power, through faith unto salvation ; that the God of peace will bruise Satan under his feet ; that he shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb ; that when he shall appear he shall be like him, for he shall see him as he is ; that though he walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet he needs fear no evil, for his rod and his staff shall comfort him ; that he shall come to Zion with songs, and with everlasting joy upon his head ; that he shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. These, and many such things of the like nature, doth the witness attest and depone, when it speaks ; but, though the believer hath the witness in himself, yet this witness doth not always speak within him ; but when it speaks, its deposition and testimony make one or other of these things as clear as daylight to the believer. A waff of the Spirit's testimony, either by himself or by the water and blood, is sufficient to assure him of all this. I come now,

IV. To the fourth thing, namely, the QUALITIES of this witness which the believer hath with himself. What sort of a witness is it ?

1. It is a credible witness that the believer hath in himself, that cannot go about to deceive us. The Spirit cannot deceive ; for the Spirit is truth, ver. 6 ; he is the God of truth ; one God with the Father and Son. The water cannot deceive ; for sanctification is the very image of God, and holiness cannot lie. The blood cannot deceive, for it is the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb, without blemish and without spot. Besides, that water and blood do not witness without the Spirit, which makes the witness of undoubted credibility ; yea, there was never such a credible witness in the world, as the believer hath within him.

2. It is a competent witness. As the witness the believer hath cannot deceive, neither can it be deceived. Other witnesses may be,



and have been deceived, either when he witnesses immediately, or by the water and blood. People may deceive themselves with a vain confidence, and false assurance, because their blind mind, and erring consciences may be deceived; but the believer that hath this witness in himself may be sure that, as his witness cannot be deceived, so he may depend upon the testimony thereof, because it is truth, and no lie is of the truth, 1 John ii. 21—27. The same anointing teaching all things, and is truth, and is no lie, &c. And so,

3. It is a true and faithful witness. This is plain from what is said. If it be a credible witness that will not deceive, and a competent witness that cannot be deceived, then it is a true and faithful witness. This is a title that is given to Christ; and it may be given to his witnesses also, that witness for him; the three that bear record on earth witness truly for him, as well as the Three that bear record in heaven. The witness that the believer hath in himself is steady, will not say and gainsay; it will not attest the truth, and then retract. It is true, the believer himself may draw back; when the light of the Spirit is gone, he may be ready to throw all the witnesses' depositions away, saying, Alas! I thought I had seen God in such a way, and heard his voice, and felt his love; but now I fear I was mistaken. But the witness itself will not retract; for whenever the Spirit shines on his own work again, then he attests the same thing again, and makes the soul that remembered God, and was troubled, now to remember again the years of the right hand of the Most High.

4. It is a concurring witness that the believer hath in himself. The Spirit witnesseth together with the water and the blood; and "These three agree in one:" and, you know, "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." It is true, the Spirit may witness by water, or by graces and experiences, when he does not witness by his own immediate testimony; and, perhaps, may witness by his own immediate testimony, when his witness by blood and water is not so clear; but yet, as these three may witness conjunctly all at once; so, though they witness severally, yet, whenever any of them witness, they concur in attesting the same thing: the one never witnesses the contrary of what the other witnessed.

5. It is an evident and clear witness that the believer hath in himself, it is not dark but clear; therefore called *the* witness, by way of eminency and evidence. It is true, the witnessing of the Spirit

admits of degrees; as the operations of the Spirit are at one time more powerful and manifest than at another; so may the soul's persuasion of its adoption by it be, which is one of the great things that I told you the witness doth depone. At one time he acts so powerfully, as that all fears and doubts are banished; at another time it may not be so clear, but much overclouded, and yet accompanied with some degrees of persuasion that Christ is theirs, even though faith be weak. A rich man's window may be wider than a poor man's, and so the sun may make his house the more light, that the things within it may be the better discerned: but the poor man may really enjoy the beams of the sun, and see what is in his house: so the poorest, the weakest believer may know the Spirit hath shined into his heart, as well as others, that enjoy brighter beams than he hath been acquainted with.

6. It is an internal witness; he hath the witness in himself. You will say, In what court doth this witness depone? Why, it is even in the court of conscience; he hath the witness in himself; and he still hath the witness in himself, though the witness be not still actually deposing in that court: see 2 Cor. i. 12. The believer may not only say with Job, "My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high;" but also, my witness is on earth, and my record is in my bosom. He hath the witness in himself.

V. The next thing was the REASONS why it is that the believer hath the witness in himself? Why doth true faith carry its witness along with it? It doth so for the following reasons,

1. To distinguish it from false faith, which hath no such witness. The Spirit of God will not give witness to a lie. False and delusory faith is a lie; and none bear witness to it but the devil, who is the father of lies. Some will say, "God forbid, but we believe in the Son of God; we never made a scruple about believing that." Well, we may tell such persons, that they are deceiving themselves: but they will not believe us as long as the devil is confirming them in their lie. But herein true faith is distinguished from false; the man hath the witness in himself.

2. True faith hath the witness to demonstrate it to be true faith, and to put honour on this workmanship of God. God's work must have God's witness; and this is the mark and seal that God puts upon the forehead of all the followers of the Lamb. This mark distinguishes it from false faith, and demonstrates it to be true faith. God appends his seal to his own grace of faith: "In whom,

after ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise," Eph. i. 13.

3. True believers have the witness in themselves, because true faith receives the witness ; this is the office of faith, Gal. iii. 14, " That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." And, verse 2, " Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ?" Faith takes hold of the Spirit ; it takes hold of the water ; it takes hold of the blood ; it takes in the witness ; and so the believer hath the witness in himself.

4. Believers have the witness in themselves, because God hath promised this witness to attend believing. See a sweet promise of it, John iv. 37, 38, " He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," &c. See this water further spoken of, John iv. 14, " The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life : " that is, even the Spirit witnessing by water, or sanctification.

5. He that believeth hath the witness in himself, because outward witnesses cannot clear him with any comfortable evidence ; and the Lord wills that believers should have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them : but now, no means, no ordinances, no instruments, can clear, or comfortably attest his interest in Christ, his sonship, or reconciliation, unless the Spirit of Christ witness within him. The white of a wall, can as soon make day, as ministers, or outward means, can give comfort or clearness to a believer, unless the Spirit of the Lord concur with the mean, and witness in the man's bosom, either by himself, or by water, or by blood.

6. He that believeth hath the witness in himself, because true faith hath many false witnesses to rise up against it. The devil is a false witness, that many times suggests to the poor believer, saying, Thou hast no part nor lot in Christ ; thou hast no inheritance in the Son of Jesse : and, indeed, his faith would faint and fail, if he had not a witness in himself to declare the contrary. The wicked world are sometimes false witnesses, that accuse the believer of being a vain pretender ; that he is nothing but a hypocrite ; but having a witness in himself, it makes him easy. His carnal reason is another false witness : " Why, says carnal reason, do you believe that God will have mercy on the like of you ? Do you think that all the



sweet promises of the covenant will be made out to you? Do you think that such a privilege as an interest in God and Christ belongs to you?" Many such false witnesses rise up against faith; and therefore the believer needs to have this true witness within, that faith may be able to hold up its head. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." I come now,

VI. To the sixth and last thing of the general method, viz., The application; which we shall essay in an use of information, trial, and exhortation.

The first use may be of information. Is it so, That "He that believeth hath the witness in himself?" Hence see,

1. That though faith alone justifies, yet justifying faith is not alone: it hath its witness with it, even the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood: namely, manifest sanctification, as well as justification. This removes the reproach that Papists and ignorant Protestants cast upon the doctrine of faith, and justification, thereby alone, as if thus we were enemies to holiness and sanctification; but, though faith alone justify, yet justifying faith is not alone: it hath the witness with it, and particularly the witness of the water; that is, the sanctifying graces, fruits, and operations of the Spirit.

2. Hence see how false pretenders to faith may be unmasked and discovered: if none but he that truly believes on the Son of God hath the witness in himself, then the faith that hath no such witness is but a false faith. Never conclude that you have true faith, unless you find, or at least have found the witness within you giving testimony thereto. If you know nothing more or less of this witness, then it is plain you know nothing of true faith: for it is expressly said of all believers, weak or strong, "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself." What have you to say, man, woman? If you were upon your death-bed, and we should ask you, as we have done at some, if ever you have been made to believe on the Son of God? Yes, say you: but then we ask what evidence you can give of your faith? Can you produce your witness to attest? Can you bring forth the rings, the bracelets, and signet, the pledges and pawns of his love? Alas! that many people in that case, either they can say nothing to the purpose; and all that some can say, is much worse than if they could say nothing, while they were never brought out of their lying refuges, but go down to the grave with a lie in their right hand.

3. Hence see, what is the true matter of a believer's confidence and assurance : why, they have the witness in themselves ; and whenever the witness speaks, then they not only believe, but believe and are sure ; not only that he is Christ, the Son of the living God, but that he is their Lord and their God. And thus the man's assurance is not built upon a wavering foundation : though he may waver himself, yet the foundation stands sure ; it is built upon the testimony of God, or God's witnesses and deponents within him, which cannot attest a lie.

4. Hence see, that the believer's doubts, and fears, and jealousies are inexcusable and unwarrantable ; for, he hath the witness in himself : and his unbelieving doubts do nothing but give the lie to God's witness that is in him. Indeed, the clamours of unbelief may sometimes drown the voice of this witness, when it is not speaking audibly ; and the Spirit, who is the principal witness, being sometimes grieved, may cease to depone : but if the witness hath attested your interest in Christ, your sonship, your peace with God, O beware of such unbelieving jealousies as tend to deny what the witness hath declared ; for, this is to bear false witness against God ; if you be left utterly in the dark, rather suspend your judgment, and say nothing, than to say otherwise than the witness hath said ; delay your own verdict till once your witness speak again : and while it is silent, say not, that either its deposition was false, dark, or fallacious ; that it was a fancy or delusion : speak not an ill word of your witness, lest you thereby reproach God. When matters are at the worst with you, rather speak for God than against him. Your fears and doubts are no religion, but so many lies against the witness.

5. Hence see, what it is that may support a child of God amidst trials that he meets with in the world. He may be tried before several bars. He may be tried at the bar of providence ; one affliction on the back of another may try what metal he is of, and put him to all the corners of the saddle, as we speak. He may be tried at the bar of God's law ; it may examine and weigh him in its balance, to see what weight he bears, what conformity he hath to its precepts. He may be tried at the bar of conscience, and there accused of innumerable imperfections. He may be tried at the devil's bar, and there he may be winnowed and sifted as wheat. He may be tried at the bar of men, and brought before governors and kings for Christ's sake, falsely accused. Well, what-

ever bars he be set before, the witness within him is ready to appear at the bar with him : and whenever it speaks it will bear him out, and bear him up, and answer all that can be said against him, with one word : “ If God be for me, who shall be against me ? It is God that justifieth me, who is he that shall condemn me ? ” One word of this witness will answer a thousand accusations ; the secret testimony thereof will bear up the soul under a world of difficulties. See Prov. xiv. 14, “ A good man shall be satisfied from himself.”

6. Hence see, what a lonely desolate state an unbeliever is in. If he that believeth hath the witness in himself, then he that believeth not hath no such witness. An unbeliever wants a good bosom friend a believer hath. He that wants this witness in himself, wants good company within doors. There is no better company in the world than this witness that the believer hath. But the unbeliever is desolate and destitute in this respect : he hath no such company ; yea, he hath the quite contrary, he hath the devil and an ill conscience within him : he may have an erring conscience, that may attest a lie unto him and deceive him, to which the devil may concur, by keeping all quiet within ; for, “ While the strong man keeps the house, the goods are at peace : ” or he may have a seared conscience, that may attest nothing good nor bad, being stupified, and seared as with a hot iron.

The second Use may be for Examination. If he that believeth hath the witness in himself, then try if you be believers indeed ; or, if you can produce the witnesses of your faith. This inquiry is necessary to give satisfaction to the doubting, by differencing the testimony of the Spirit from the delusions of Satan, and the single testimony of our own spirits ; and necessary to confirm and establish these that enjoy this privilege of the witness within them. For your trial, then, I would, 1. Offer some general marks of these that enjoy the true witness within them. 2. Some more particular marks of the witnessing of the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

1st, In general, I would offer you these marks of a person that enjoys the witness in himself, upon his believing in the Son of God.

1. This witness fills the soul with a high and inexpressible admiration of the love of God, in bringing it into the number of his children : “ Behold ! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God ! ” 1 John iii. 1.



The soul sees God's wonderful love of good-will in the contrivance of its adoption and salvation ; and sees that it would have nonplust all the creatures ; and so admires that ever God so loved the world. The man admires God's love of compassion towards it, in the many strivings with it, while it was in a natural condition. He admires his love of delight which is discovered : O that ever he should take pleasure in such a worm ! And so also admires his infinite condescension that ever he looked upon such an unworthy wretch. He admires and wonders at the glory and excellency of the things which he is by the witness assured of : does he find the cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ ? O then, he sees an extraordinary glory and excellency in this blood and righteousness of Christ ; he prized it before, but now more than ever, when he finds the witness in himself.

2. This witness fills the soul with kindly sorrow and self-correction for former unkindness offered to the Lord. Oh ! says the soul, how miserably have I forgotten the Lord these many days and years by-gone ! And yet now I see he hath not been forgetting me ; for, now I feel his love ; and so the soul takes God's part against itself more than ever. The clearest sight of God causes greatest self-aborrancy ; whereas a delusion puffs up : and though hypocrites may have a shadow of humility at other times, yet there is least appearance of it under their highest attainments. Peter, after a love-look of Christ, O how he sighs and sobs, melts and mourns at the remembrance of his former denial of his master : under such heart-ravishing revelations that doth pierce and wound the soul, that the Lord should have had such unsuitable and ungrateful returns from it, after many large expressions of his love : " He looks on him whom he pierced, and mourns."

3. This witness, when enjoyed, fills the soul with great desires and endeavours after heart-purification : John iii. 3, " He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Delusions tend some way or other to unholiness ; Satan drives at some corrupt design therein ; but the true witness procures an expulsion of Satan. As Christ proved himself to be no impostor, by his casting out Satan, Matt. xii. 22 ; so, if the witness within tends to the casting out of Satan, this shews it to be no delusion ; for the binding of the strong man must be by the Spirit ; for he only is the stronger ; and, indeed, when Satan sees himself cast out, he will be incensed ; and hence floods of new temptations are to be expected, Rev. xii.

13, 14. And this is also part of Satan's subtle engine of causing the soul to doubt of the witnesses' testimony ; though he seeks to prevent any doubts or fears in his own, yet where he is cast out he will raise storms ; yet still the more the witness is enjoyed, the more is he and his work ejected, and the soul prompted to the utmost after holiness and purification. Again,

4. This witness fills the soul with earnest expectations of full communion with Christ ; for the soul at such a time, is upon the mount of communion with the Lord, and is exceedingly watchful against any thing that would interrupt its communion with Christ ; and though the most glorious revelations are oft-times followed with the most horrid and violent temptations, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9, Matt. iii. 16, 17 ; yet when the Spirit of God is the witness, he will make the soul watchful against sin, Song viii. 4, and ardently desirous after uninterrupted communion ; Oh ! " When shall the day break and the shadows fly away ?"

5. This witness fills the soul with a persuasion of the Lord's affording spiritual and suitable provision for it at all times, and on all occasions. Formerly it went drooping under fears that it should want protecting grace, under dangers ; preserving grace, under trials ; supporting grace, under sufferings ; the man feared he should never hold out to the end ; and did mistrust God in every condition. But now, when the witness speaks, he is delivered from these fears, and made to see the Lord's name to be JEHOVAH-JIREH, that " the Lord shall provide and see ;" that the Lord is his shepherd, he shall not want. Thus you have some of these general marks of the witness that the believer hath in himself.

2dly, I would offer some more particular marks, from the several ways of witnessing spoken of in the doctrinal part ; how a soul may know that the Spirit, the water, and the blood hath witnessed.

[1.] How may a soul know if the Spirit hath witnessed in a more immediate way, or not ? It is true, every one is not capable to make trial here : it supposes, that some strong impression of adoption be made upon the heart, otherwise there is no ground to pretend to an immediate testimony ; for the inquiry is, How we may know a strong opinion of our own spirits, and a delusion of Satan, from the testimony of the Spirit ? In answer then unto the question, I say, in general, that the immediate testimony of the Spirit is self-evident, while a soul is in the actual enjoyment thereof. More

particularly, I offer the following marks of the Spirit's immediate testimony.

1. These irradiations of the Spirit do carry with them such a clear demonstration of their coming from the Spirit, as puts it in some measure out of doubt, there are such sparkling of divinity in them : according to the degree of clearness in which the Spirit manifests his presence, such is the degree of the persuasion, weaker or stronger. The Spirit is appointed to this witnessing work as you see, ver. 6 of this chapter ; and he is the highest witness ; there can be none higher : for it is the Spirit that makes other things have a witnessing power. No grace or experience can witness without him ; and he is given for this end, among others, to make the children of God to know the things that are freely given them of God, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 12 ; 2 Cor. iii. 16, 17, 18 ; and 1 John ii. 27. All which shows that the testimony of the Spirit hath a property to discriminate and difference itself from these flashes that come from Satan. The Spirit's inhabitation and indwelling is appointed to be an evidence of our adoption ; and this is made the rule for trial, Rom. viii. 9, " Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 19. Know ye not that your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, that is in you." By all which it is evident, that the Spirit gives testimony to himself in his operations, so as neither Satan, nor any creature, can be the author thereof. For, though the Spirit be not discernable in his essence, but in his operations ; yet, as the Spirit gives effectual conviction of sin, that the soul cannot deny its guiltiness, and that without inquiring whether the Spirit hath done this or not ; so the Spirit doth work effectually in assuring and comforting the soul, though the soul doth not, till afterwards, reflect or enquire whether it was the Spirit or not ; and so the essence of the Spirit may not be discernable, and yet the testimony may be sure to the soul, while the Spirit not only gives the soul such a sweet persuasion, but also discovers such invincible grounds, and undeniable demonstrations of what he witnesses, that the soul must fall down before it, and say to the Spirit, as the disciples did to Christ, John xvi. 29, " Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb : " but this will be more clear by a

2d Mark of this immediate testimony, or witness of the Spirit, namely, that the Spirit, when he thus witnesses, makes some divine attribute to shine forth eminently in these witnessing acts ; for instance, the Spirit causeth the soul to take notice of the divine wis-



dom that shines in the application of the promise, which is a special work of the Spirit, wherein his presence is as discernable as in any other operation ; now, the soul is made to see what wisdom shines in the time and season when the promise came with light, life, and power to them ; wisdom in the suitableness of the promise to their condition ; wisdom in the manner of its working ; the soul finds how the heart was ravished, how Satan was defeat, how corruption was depressed thereby ; and then the man cries out, " O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !" The Spirit gives the soul also to see divine power improved for it in a glorious way ; even such power as raised Christ from the dead : the exceeding greatness of his almighty power, Eph. 18, 19. The child of God sometimes feels a divine power in the application of the promise, presenting thereof to the heart : but, perhaps cannot tell who is the agent, whether Satan or the Spirit : and therefore the apostle, in that place, speaks by way of question, with three remarkable *whats* : " That ye may know *what* is the hope of his calling ; *what* the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints ; and *what* is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe : " importing, that it may be known to be indeed the Spirit's power by its actings ; for, the Spirit's power is exerted in overcoming the heart, and powerfully persuading it to accept of the promise ; the soul see its own insufficiency to make the application, which now it hath felt, and an aversion thereto ; yea, was ready with Sarah, to laugh at the promise ; and to say with these, 2 Kings vii. 2. " If God should make windows in heaven, can such a thing be done ? " And yet now it was not able to withstand the sweet power that did draw it that way. The Spirit's power is thus exerted in overcoming the heart, and overcoming Satan, and discovering his subtilties. Again, the Spirit causeth the soul to observe the divine faithfulness that shines herein, Psalm lxxxix. 2, " Mercy shall be built up for ever : " and then it follows, " Thy *faithfulness* shalt thou establish in the very heavens. " After the Lord hath promised so and so to the soul, the soul faints and gives over hope ; yet the Lord returns to the man, throws the promised mercy into his lap, and so discovers his faithfulness. O ! how is the soul then taken up with the Lord's truth and veracity ! " Faithful is he that promised, who also will do it. " Again, the Spirit convinces the soul of the divine goodness, when he thus comes and makes application of the promise, Psal. xxxi. 19, 21, " O how great is thy *goodness*, which thou hast

laid up for them that fear thee !" &c. The man is swallowed up with admiration. The Spirit causes the man to see how ready he was to say, God had neglected him, yet nevertheless now he sees that God hath dealt graciously and marvellously, and nothing can make him deny divine love at the time. It would therefore seem needless to ask this question, By what evidence we may know the Spirit's immediate testimony ? Because thus it is also self-evident to such as actually enjoy the same ; but yet because after the Spirit may suspend his operations, and then the soul may question it ; and because some have strong opinions, that they enjoy this immediate testimony, when yet they are under a delusion. Therefore,

3. Another evidence of the Spirit's more immediate testimony, is the eminent acts of faith upon the promise, drawn out thereby. If the soul hath assurance, faith hath a hand in it, Heb. x. 22, and lives upon Christ in the promise for it, Psalm xxv. 2, " O my God, I trust in thee." When the soul hath a sight of its propriety in God, and interest in Christ, this puts it upon renewed actings of faith ; if it can say, " My God ;" it cannot but say, with holy boldness, " I trust in thee." Delusions rather hinder the actings of faith.

QUEST. When is a word, or promise, received by faith ? and so, When does faith discover a testimony to be no delusion ?

ANSW. (1.) When the heart is commanded by a persuasion of divine love, by the word, as an act of obedience to the Lord : not barely when there is a word given in, but when the Spirit over-awes the soul with the majesty that comes along therewith to yield subjection, Psal. xlii. 8, " The Lord will command his loving-kindness. Psal. cxxxiii. 3. The Lord commands the blessing." The Spirit commands faith to own the loving-kindness of the Lord. It is not every one that hath a persuasion that Christ is his, that doth enjoy the immediate witness of the Spirit ; for, Balaam said, My God, Num. xxii. 18, and yet had no interest in God. Thus Satan raises false confidences in many profane wretches, and backs them with scripture ; such as that, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners ; that God wills not the death of the sinner ; and their own spirits conclude that they are the sinners whom he will save ; but unless such scriptures, or rather the Spirit in them, have commanded their hearts to a persuasion, out of respect to the Lord, they are not to be regarded as the Spirit's testimony.

(2.) Then does faith evidence a testimony of the Spirit to be no delusion, when the sinful objections that swarmed in the soul are suppressed. If the soul hath faith upon Christ in any promise, then it is pained and afflicted with the sense of its former unbelief, Psalm xlii. 5, 8. Delusions do stupify men that they do not seek for a satisfactory deliverance from objections ; but the Spirit, like the sun, causes such mists of darkness to fly away, and puts abundance in the mouth to answer Satan in all.

(3.) Then faith evidences the testimony of the Spirit to be no delusion, when its reception of the word, or promise, causes self-abasement, Matt. xv. 27. There the woman calls herself a dog, then presently Christ owns her faith. Great faith causes great self-abasement, Mark xiv. 31. Peter declares his preferring Christ before his own life ; yet this was but the voice of his spirit, because it did spring from self-confidence.

(4.) Finally, when the heart is carried out Christward by the reception of any promise ; when the whole soul runs out after Christ, taking the promise out of his hand, Eph. iii. 6 ; owning him in the purchase of the mercy whereof it is assured ; building its confidence on him for the further communications of the promised blessing ; and being laid under strong obligations and engagements to Christ thereby, crying out, "What shall I render to him ?" Psalm cxvi. 12. You may have strong confidences of your interest in the love of God in Christ, such as no argument can beat you off from it, and yet you may be under a delusion, if your heart be not drawn out after Christ, in a suitableness to the strength of your confidence. But if your confidence be built and bottomed upon him, and his promise, Psal. xxx. 7 ; and if your affection to Christ rises as high as your persuasion of his love, then you have enjoyed the witnessing of the Spirit.

The act of faith may be a clearer evidence sometimes of the Spirit's testimony than the object ; for, a man may have a right object for his faith, and yet not a right act about that object : and so his faith can witness nothing. We are told, John ii. 23, "Many believed in Christ's name ;" here was a right object of faith ; and yet their faith was wrong and vain, ver. 24, 25. A man may put forth a natural act upon a supernatural object ; he may have a human faith about divine things, 1 Cor. ii. 5 : but the scripture declares, that such as do rightly believe, are adopted and justified ; and determines what faith is, John i. 12 ; Rom. v. 1 ; Acts xiii. 39,



which may make a man have a particular persuasion; though no scripture speaks expressly of any man, saying, Thou James, John, Thomas, art adopted and justified; for, its giving such characteristic notes and marks must needs be a particularizing of them, as well as if the Lord should call them by name: the soul is made to believe, when many others, that hear the same word, believe not; this makes the difference. But then,

4. Another evidence of the Spirit's immediate testimony is, that the soul is enabled, at such a time, to discern many of its former experiences. The Lord had manifested himself to Jacob at Bethel, Gen. xxxviii. 10—15: and for a long time we read of little intercourse betwixt God and him, at least no such signal manifestations of his glory to him as he had met with at Bethel: he had been serving Laban for twenty years; during all which time there is no word of Bethel; but when the Lord returned to him, calling him to return to the land of his kindred, when he came back to give him a new testimony of his love, he remembered him of his former loving-kindness, saying, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow unto me," Gen. xiii. 13. The believer may have very rich experiences of what the Lord hath done for him in former times; but yet the sense thereof may be much obliterate, and worn out, that he may be left to desperate conclusions, as Psalm lxvii. 7, 8, 9. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" But when the Spirit's testimony is again renewed, then he chides himself, saying, ver. 10—13, "This is mine infirmity; I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High: I will remember the work of the Lord; surely I will remember his wonders of old: I will meditate of all thy works, and talk of all thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary." The Spirit's breathing, and testifying in the believer, makes his old experience new to him again; and gives him a new feast upon an old meal, and surprises him with his love, grace, faithfulness, and constancy therein: he sees that "He is God, and changes not; and therefore the children of Jacob are not consumed," Mal. iii. 6.

5. The witnessing of the Spirit carries a glorious transformation into the image of the word. Many have had flashes of joy in the reception of the word, Luke viii. 13, yea, have been raised

to great hope and triumphing joy, Job viii. 13, "The hypocrite's hope shall perish. Chap. xx. 5. The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite for a moment—Chap. xxvii. 8. What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" But here, I say, these witnessings of the Spirit cause glorious transformations into the image of the word. Delusions do not imprint the word upon the heart, so as to change it; but these witnessings of the Spirit transform the soul into the image of the word, according to the promise of writing the word into the heart, Jer. xxxi. 33, Heb. viii. 10. Some dispositions, principles, and inclinations are wrought within, that have a lively resemblance in them unto the word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. The working of the Spirit in hypocrites is like the smell of an apothecary's shop, which one that passes by receives, though he never carry any of these odoriferous things along with him; but the witnessing of the Spirit, in the true believer, is by imparting the thing to the soul which is witnessed thereto, and making the man really to possess it; so that if a man could see the soul of a true child of God, he would see engraven upon it, mercy, peace, love, righteousness, life, joy; yea, and Christ himself.

6. The witnessing of the Spirit hath powerful operations in the heart towards the attainment of spiritual gospel ends there. The hearing of heaven and happiness is taking, even with carnal hearts. Many, with the young man in the gospel, may be inquisitive about eternal life, have desires after it, and be sorrowful at the thoughts of missing it; and these imply some taste of the heavenly gift, and the good word of God, Heb. v. 5, 6. A man may be elevated with raptures of joy upon a supposed interest in heaven: like Haman, he may think, Whom will the Lord honour but myself? But yet, with the young man in the gospel, he may mind earthly things more than Christ, or eternal life. Like a physician, who hath prepared a comfortable potion for the health of a friend; he may give to others a taste of it, to let them know how sweet it is; but not such a taste as to have any operation in the stomach; so the Lord may let some carnal men discern some goodness in Christ, and eternal life; but these tastes do not make them partakers of the refreshing power thereof; they may have great reformation and profession; but no such operation as to cause their hearts to mount up Christ-ward, and place their satisfaction in him alone. But the witnessing of the Spirit makes the soul to cry out, Song v. 10, "My

Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." The soul, at such a time, cannot but reckon Christ the top of its glory ; and carnal delights will have no relish with the man. O ! shall I be drunk with the sweet cups of worldly delights ! Is not the wine of Christ's cellar better ? O ! " Whither shall I go ? thou hast the words of eternal life."

[2.] How may a soul know if he hath the witness of blood : or, if the Spirit witness in him by blood ? For this is the other witness the believer hath in himself, namely, the blood of Christ applied for his justification. How may this be known ?

1. The Spirit's witnessing by blood may be known by the application of the blood of Christ, in the promise, by faith. We are not to think there is any application of material blood ; but the gospel discovers that the blood of Christ, which was shed, was intended for the justification and redemption of sinners. Now, the application of this blood is by faith, Rom. iii. 25. And, therefore, it must be by a promise ; for, faith must have a divine word to build upon ; so that if the promise be yours, then the blood of Christ is yours in the several uses thereof ; and that ought to satisfy the believer ; for there is an inseparable connexion betwixt the blood, and the covenant of promise ; therefore it is called the blood of the covenant. Now, " With the heart man believeth unto righteousness ;" that is, faith carrieth a man out of himself to find a righteousness in another, which availeth to justification : and that faith is cordial ; Christ owns not that faith where the heart is wanting, John ii. 23, 24, 25 ; Acts viii. 13, 21.

2. The witness of the blood may be known by the man's preferring that blood before all other things ; or that righteousness before all other things else : " Yea, doubtless I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : that I may 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. 8, 9. Is thy thirst unquenchable for this blood ? Can nothing give thy heart and conscience contentment but this blood ? The excellent uses and ends of this blood should raise our estimation of it : it is useful for justification and salvation, Rom. v. 9, 18, and for obtaining communion with God ; it is useful for reconciliation, Col. i. 20, Rom. v. 1. God will become a friend, open his bosom, reveal his secrets, express his love to these that obtain interest in this blood ; it is



useful for obtaining liberty for near approaches to God, Eph. ii. 13, "We are made nigh by the blood of Christ," Heb. x. 10. Sweet intercourse is obtained this way.

3. The witness of blood may be known by the renunciation of whatsoever stands in competition with the blood of Christ, in these uses and ends which it serves for. The believer hath no confidence in the flesh, or his own righteousness. A believer may, through want of sufficient illumination, or through violent temptation, rest on some particular duty; but his inward bent is against it. Many acknowledge that they could never have yielded perfect obedience to the law, and that they would have been under the curse, if Christ had not taken away the rigorous exaction of the law; and now they build their confidence upon Christ, in conjunction with their own acting, their praying, hearing, reading, offering no wrong to their neighbour, loving and serving God, and the like; but if you look for justification by any one work, and Christ together, you will have no advantage by Christ, Gal. v. 2, 3, 4, and are debtors to the whole law. Neither faith nor works can be the least particle of that righteousness which God hath promised salvation to; because the two ways of faith and works are incompatible one with another, and so admit of no mixture, Gal. iii. 12, "The law is not of faith;" that is, let no man think to mix them together: for the law presents to God a man's own righteousness, "He that doth them, shall live in them;" but faith receives Christ's righteousness, and presents this to God; in the way of works, a man is to fulfil this righteousness himself; in the way of faith, it is fulfilled to him by his Surety, Jesus Christ; and he is made partaker of it by receiving it, Rom. v. 17, 18, 19, 21, Heb. ix. 15, Gal. iii. 12, 13. If salvation were of works, then the reward should be of debt, but not of grace; either of which are contrary to Rom. iv. 4. Salvation is a debt to Christ; but only free grace, and the satisfaction of Christ, can make it a debt to us.

4. The witness of blood may be known by the efficaciousness of that blood. What power and efficacy have you found it having upon your heart? Have you found it sprinkling from an evil conscience? Heb. ix. 19, 22, xii. 24. Have you found your heart secured against the roarings of the law, and temptations of Satan, by opposing the blood of Christ thereto, and found a spiritual peace and tranquillity established by this blood? In a word, have you accepted of the blood of Christ, for the uses and ends it serves for

as recorded in the word, and made freely to choose it for these ends? Many are like him that has a gangrene, there is no way to save his life but by sawing off some member of his body; if the man submit to this, it is with abundance of unwillingness, not freely: so many may see an absolute necessity of the blood of Christ; they may choose it with reluctance: but the believer is made to choose it freely: and the heart is set upon it, and made to see that there cannot be a better or a sweeter way of salvation than by Christ and his blood. A man may come to God as a Creator, and cry for mercy, and yet never have it; he may plead a promise, and that with importunity, and the most natural sincerity, and yet miss salvation, if he take it not as in Christ; for God hath made no promise but in Christ, Eph. iii. 6, 2 Cor. i. 20. Not one covenant mercy but must pass through his hand to the soul. So that if your heart hath not freely owned his mediation, his blood cannot be witnessing; but the heart's freeness in choosing and accepting of the blood of Christ, for the ends and uses for which it is designed, may discover that we have the witness of blood.

[3.] How may a soul know if he hath the witness of water; or, if the Spirit witness in him by water in sanctification? There are two parts of sanctification, namely, mortification, and vivification; and the Spirit witnesses by water with respect to both.

1st, The Spirit witnesses by water in respect of mortification, or dying unto sin. That this is a witnessing thing is evident from Rom. vi. 16, "His servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness."

QUEST. How shall I know if sin be mortified in me, or the dominion of it broken?

ANSW. This may be known by the choice of the heart to part with sin. The very reign of sin consists in the voluntary subjection of the whole man to it; and therefore, a thorough unwillingness to sin, must argue freedom from the reign of it. A choosing and consenting doth express Paul's subjection to God's law, when he falls short in practice, Rom. vii. 16; and so a hearty consenting to part with sin doth argue freedom from the reign of it, even though you may be rushed into the act of it. Measure yourself by your choice. You may be restrained from gross sins, which others commit: but, if you choose sin, it is all one in God's account as if you acted it, Mat. v. 28. But because wicked men may have some unwillingness to commit some sins, I would give you some account of this right choice of freedom from sin.

1. It is free. When a man is free in his choice, and without co-action, then it evidences liberty from the dominion of sin. The apostle makes an opposition betwixt doing by constraint, and doing willingly, 1 Pet. v. 2. Many would choose rather to part with sin than be damned; as the mariner would rather part with his goods than be drowned; this is not willingly. But if it be a free choice, though there was no danger, no fear of hell, yet the nature of sin would make you deny subjection to it; then you are not under the dominion of it, Romans vi. 16, 22, John viii. 34, 36.

2. When the choice is universal, then it evidences freedom from the dominion of sin; when the man consents to part with all sin. Not that a man can really be freed from one sin, who is under the reigning power of other sins; but he may be restrained from many, and yet not be freed from the ruling power of any, Psalm cxix. 104, 128. The subduing of one sin may discover freedom from the dominion of all, when the heart is carried out against the nature of sin in that one; but the heart indulging one sin, though never so small, argues the dominion of all, James ii. 10, 11.

3. When the choice is absolute, without condition. If there be any condition in the world that will allure you to sin, it is not a hearty choice. Herod was unwilling to behead John the Baptist; but, for Herodias' sake, he would do it. A true choice is absolute, without condition; as also without parley, or any condition of agreement with sin. When there is a conflict betwixt the flesh and the Spirit, it discovers the truth of this choice, Gal. v. 17, 18, 19.

QUEST. But may there not be a conflict with sin, that doth not evidence the dominion of sin being broken?

ANSW. Yea, when it is not between the right parties, the flesh and the Spirit. There may be a struggle in a man's spirit, by the interfering of one sin with another; or betwixt the inclination of the will to the commission of some sin, and the dictates of the natural conscience; but the true conflict is betwixt the flesh and the Spirit, corruption and grace; but then is the opposition and war with sin, an evidence of sin's dominion being broken, when the opposition is made by the hiding of the word in the heart; "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee," Psalm cxix. 11. When the word within us is a seed that opposes sin, then it is evidential of sin's power being broken, 1 John iii. 9. You may have an hundred scriptures forbidding sin, which the flesh



lusteth after ; and as many promises of help against it : all sin may be eyed and thought upon, and your affections may be slightly touched therewith ; but if these words be not treasured up in your hearts, you may be into sin in the face of all these ; but when the heart engages against sin, by the word, then it is evidencing ; for, the word is the sword of the Spirit ; when, for example, faith acted upon a word of promise discerns the love of God, which constrains the soul not to meddle with the abominable thing he hates, and discerns the power of God therein engaged for its through-bearing, and hereupon is encouraged to oppose sin ; the choice, I say, of freedom is absolute, without condition of agreement. A right choice is also absolute, without condition of reconciliation. There is an irreconcilable opposition in the soul against sin ; mountains of gold cannot win the least token of favour or respect in the soul towards sin ; but it cries out under it, " Oh ! wretched man that I am ! who will deliver me from the body of this death ? " In this case the soul may conclude that it is free from the dominion of sin, having the Spirit witnessing by water ; for such a choice of freedom from sin does lead to, and end in the mortification of it, which is an evidencing adoption and spiritual life ; " If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live," Rom. viii. 13. There may be cessation from the actings of sin, and yet no mortification of it ; there may be a change of sin, and no change of heart ; but mortification strikes at the root of sin, and aims at the destruction of it, Rom. vii. 24, vi. 6.

4. When the choice of freedom from sin is evangelical, and upon evangelical accounts. A man may be incensed against sin, upon natural accounts, and yet be under the dominion of sin still, Rom. x. 2.

QUEST. When is a man's choice of freedom from sin evangelical, or upon evangelical accounts ?

This being a material question, I would answer it in some particulars.

1. When the heart is disengaged from sin upon the account of its contrariety to the will of God in Christ. We are, indeed, to look upon sin as a violation of the Father's will ; but it is his will, not according to the tenor of the old covenant, Gal. iii. 10, 11, but as he hath revealed his will in the new covenant. The least duty you perform ought to be done as a service to Christ. If your heart be carried out to duty, as a service to Christ as Redeemer, then it is

evangelical. And if your heart be not carried out against sin, as striking at Christ the Redeemer, it is not evangelical; but if a sight of the injury offered to Christ, by sin, doth carry out your heart against it, then it is evangelical. A man may have sorrow for, and hatred of sin, as it procures discredit, suffering, or the like; but when the soul is touched with a deep sense of it, in Christ's sufferings for and by it, when its piercing, wounding, and grieving of Christ does melt the heart for it, then the soul acts evangelically.

2. When a discovery of the love, goodness, and kindness of God in Christ is the constraining thing that keeps you from sin; or when the appearing of his grace teaches you sweetly to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, Tit. ii. 13; when the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; and when love overcomes the heart to the acknowledgement of sin; when the remembrance of the former loving-kindness of the Lord doth melt the heart for sin; this is soon swallowed up with a testimony of remission. See an instance of this, 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8, 9, 13.

3. Then the choice is evangelical, when the man aims at a conformity to Christ in his seeking freedom from sin, 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22, 23, &c. Custom, example, education, credit, and the like, may make a man to discountenance sin in some measure; but except Christ be the pattern of your imitation, and your sorrow be, that you fall so short of him, he regards it not.

4. When the man aims at the coming up to some special gospel grace, or the attainment of some special gospel privilege, in seeking freedom from sin, then it is evangelical. A man may see that sin is cross to his carnal interest, brings on diseases on his body, and the like; but then he acts evangelically when he is sorrowful for sin, and hates it because it hinders the exercise of some grace, or the performance of some duty, or the attainment of communion with Christ.

5. Then is it evangelical when it is by the application of the death of Christ, in a promise, that he makes resistance against sin, Rom. vi. 4, 14, Heb. ix. 14, Acts v. 31, Rev. xii. 9, 11, "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb." This must be an ingredient in all the former particulars; no freedom but by Christ, Luke i. 71-75.

6. When sin is really subjected. Sin cannot be both king and subject, in the same soul, at the same time. There may be a conflict with sin, and yet it may seem to have the upper hand for a

time ; but when the soul hath gotten sin under it, then it is evident that sin doth not reign.

QUEST. How doth it appear when the soul hath gotten sin under it ?

ANSW. Sin is subjected and brought under the soul, when the soul is enabled to a speedy mortification of it upon all its rebellions ; when sin, like a cowardly conquered enemy, comes out to the field, but is presently beat off the field again, and is not able to keep the field any longer. As a conquered enemy may run about and make resistance, but they hasten on their own ruin thereby ; so the motions of sin may be felt, but the soul is enabled to look to Christ, and to oppose the word and blood of Christ to sin, and is speedily saved, Revelation xii. 8, 9, 11. When corruption is laid lower by every onset, this says that it hath not the dominion.

Again, then is sin subjected under the soul, when even the former prevalency of corruption is made serviceable for spiritual ends ; as when the prevailing of sin doth produce soul humiliation, self-abasement, and fills it with more admiration of, and study after the advancement of the riches of free grace, in opening a way of deliverance from sin, Ezek. xvi. 61, 63, Eph. ii. 5, 6, 7. Thus the soul can triumph over sin through Christ ; and retain its assurance, notwithstanding that corruption works.

But here it may be asked, Can a soul retain assurance after the prevailing of corruption.

To which, it may be replied, You would know that there are sins of infirmity, or grosser sins, which are the failings of the saints ; you would know also that there is a nourishing of these sins, or there is an endeavouring the mortification thereof, through grace. Now, premising this, you would know for answer,

(1.) That as assurance, in the duration and continuance of it, hath a dependence upon the acting of the Spirit of God, witnessing with our spirits, who can, if he pleases, continue such acting, at such a time, so a man ought not to cast away his confidence, so long as scriptural grounds are given to found it upon. Many Christians, if they fall into sin, they presently reckon it their duty to judge their state ; this is very sinful ; the church is upbraided for saying, "The Lord had forsaken her, and her God had forgotten her," Isa. xlix. 14.

(2.) You would know, for answer, that the nourishing of sin and corruption hath a tendency to deprive the soul of assurance,



Heb. x. 22. Psalm li. 12. It is dangerous on this account to cherish the least sin. Therefore,

(3.) If you inquire whether assurance may stand with the nourishing of any sin? Either the question must look to the time past, present, or to come. If to the time present or to come; know that the Lord hath not granted you liberty one moment for the nourishing of any corruption; and so it is a sin to be studying to make assurance, and any sin to dwell together. But if the question respect the time past; though you did nourish some corruption, yet your after-mortification of it, through grace, is witnessing; it is a part of the witness of water.

(4.) I have no hesitation to say, that assurance may be retained after the prevalency of corruption; after not only sins of infirmity, but also the falls of the saints, when these sins are not nourished. That it may continue after sins of infirmity, is undeniable; because otherwise it were impossible for any to retain it, seeing the best of saints are daily subject to these sins of infirmity; and, for other sins, see 1 Sam. xii. 19, 20, 22. Micah vii. 8, 9: "I say, when these sins are nourished; for, if sin be nourished, then is the man's confidence, or assurance, highly suspicious; for, whenever there is sensible assurance, it will make opposition against sin in the soul; "Every man that hath this hope, purifieth himself, as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3. See also, to this purpose, 1 Sam. xii. 20, 24. Thus much of the witness by water, with respect to mortification.

2dly, I come to speak of the witness by water, in respect of vivification, or living to God. Now, if the question be, How may a man know his living to God, which is the other part of sanctification; or the witness of water? A man may know his living to God and Christ.

(1.) By his esteeming God and Christ above all other things: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25. Others desire Christ only for heaven; but the believer desires heaven chiefly for Christ. He may be interrupted in his motion toward Christ, in particular acts; but Christ is the prime and principal object his soul is set upon, Rom. viii. 5. Phil. iii. 20. Christ is ALL IN ALL: all other things are nothing to him, if Christ be not enjoyed in them. He is all, in all enjoyments; all, in all enlargements; all, in all duties; all, in all comforts. Hypocrites may apprehend that other things are little, and Christ is better; but this man reckons that all

other things are nothing, and Christ ALL IN ALL. Hence he spends all his desires and endeavours, after communion with God in Christ, Song iii. 3. Psalm cxxx. 5, 6. Phil. iii. 14. And he is willing to part with all other things at Christ's call, and for his sake, Luke xiv. 26, 33. Matt. x. 37. Hence also the carriage of his heart, under Christ's withdrawals ; why these procure such heart sickness as can be cured no way but by the Lord's returning, Song v. 6, 8. Although, or even when, he hath no fear of hell upon him ; yet, oh ! the sighings, sobbings, cryings, faintings of a love-sick soul for Christ's presence ! The soul may know its vivification, or living to God, by its enjoyment of the leading of the Spirit. This is a certain evidence of this witness of water, or sanctification ; and also of adoption, Rom. viii. 14, " For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

QUEST. When does a man enjoy the leading of the Spirit ?

ANSW. 1. When a compliance with the will of Christ becomes natural to the soul : suppose there was no wrath to follow upon disobedience, nor no reward the effect of gospel obedience ; yet the sweetness of wisdom's ways itself inclines the man to it ; " I have chosen thy way of truth ; thy judgments have I laid before me," Psalm cxix. 30, 137, see also ver. 35. Rom. viii. 7. The carnal man calls his liberty, that he takes in sin, freedom ; but such as are indeed freed from condemnation, and walk after the Spirit, they call this their liberty, to be free for Christ, and free from sin. A man may be exercised in external duties ; but he is not led by the Spirit, unless he hath a liberty of heart therein, and account it a high favour from the Lord, that he will employ him in any service ; and it is to him matter of lamentation that he cannot do more for the Lord, that he finds a backwardness in himself, and a contrary principle that seeks to obstruct and hinder his following the Lord in his ways ; " For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members," Rom. vii. 22, 23. Then he enjoys the leading of the Spirit.

2. Then hath a man the leading of the Spirit, when he hath corroboration and assistance against these impediments that would hinder his walking in the ways of Christ ; the Spirit removes these. Carnal men wonder that any should complain of want of strength unto duty ; they can easily come up unto these duties ; why, Satan is

quiet, and they are not sensible of corruption ; and they look mostly to the external part. But if you have been eagerly pursued by Satan, and he hath beset you with temptations, and you have found many and strong lustings of flesh to hinder you from following Christ in duty ; and if such mountains have been made plains, and corruption borne down even when you have found your heart so full of darkness, deadness, hardness, unbelief, and all manner of distempers, that you have even despaired of acting in duty, or of access in prayer ; yet these spiritual enemies have been conquered, and your heart let out toward the Lord, more than at other times ; here was the leading of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 13, 14, Gal. v. 16, 17, 18. Though you cannot do what you would, cannot perform the duties you would ; yet the will, in this case, does prevail against corruption, even when the duty is hindered, and sin acted in the soul ; yet that corruption is not predominant there : why, your love to Christ is predominant, and prevails over the love to other things ; your joy in the Lord is predominant, and prevails against carnal joy in the creature ; your peace by the blood of Christ helps to let you see the false peace which you have had upon other grounds ; and your faith is predominant against unbelief, which formerly discovered itself in causing you to choose other objects beside Christ.

3. Then hath a man the leading of the Spirit, when his heart is under powerful drawings toward Christ ; such as are spoken of, Eph. i. 19. The lowest duty requires the heart, Eph. vi. 6. If in the improvement of praying or preaching gifts, our hearts be carried out Christ-ward, though we should find more straitenedness of expression than at other times, yet we have enjoyed the leading of the Spirit, Jer. xxx. 21. If a man have had never so much enlargedness of expression in prayer ; yet, if his heart hath not been drawn out towards Christ, it is not witnessing. But if the duty hath been of advantage that way, then you have had the leading of the Spirit, however mean the duty hath seemed to be.

4. When the man is made to own the mediation of Christ, and to embrace the gospel promise in his acting, then he hath the leading of the Spirit. Many, in words, do make use of Christ for acceptance with God ; but, unless your heart have been held up, and drawn to make use of the name of Christ, and the sufferings and intercession of Christ, you have not the leading of the Spirit. Whereas these who attain to this, do find acceptance with God, John xiv. 13, 14, xv. 16, 23. Gospel promises also are the chariot whereby the soul



may ride towards the King of glory in triumph, 2 Peter i. 4, 2 Cor. i. 20. And when the soul is made heartily to make use of Christ by these, then it enjoys the leading of the Spirit of promise.

5. Then is the man led by the Spirit, when he is helped in gospel duties, to act for spiritual and gospel ends. When he desires to aim not at self advancement, or his own name and glory, as Matt. vi. 1, 4. But, when the great thing he would be at is the mortification of corruption, communion with God, increase of faith, growth in grace, &c. When he seeks outward mercies in a subordination to these, and in a way of subserviency to the interest and service of Christ; and when, as the ultimate end of all, he seeks the glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31; then he enjoys the leading of the Spirit, and consequently the witness of water or sanctification. And thus you see how the soul may know if he hath the witness in himself, viz., the Spirit, blood, and water, the three that bear witness on earth.

The Third Use is of Exhortation and Direction. And here I might address myself both to sinners and saints.

1st, We are to address unbelievers. Is it so, that "He that believeth hath the witness in himself?" Then you who are unbelievers, O be restless till you know what it is to believe on the Son of God, and so to have the witness in yourselves. Know that it is your duty to believe; and you perish for ever, if you get not faith. And yet know also, that you cannot believe of yourselves; and therefore, look to the Son of God for grace to believe in him, for he is the Author of faith; and, in this way seek to have the witness within you; for you will otherwise deceive yourselves, as you have been deceiving yourselves all along, while you have been taking the testimony of an erring conscience, or the testimony of men and ministers only, without having the testimony of the Spirit, and the witness within you; yea, perhaps, you have been taking the testimony of Satan, instead of the testimony of the Spirit of God; for Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, while you may reckon that you have the testimony of the word applied, not by the Spirit of God, but by your own spirit, or by an evil spirit.

QUEST. How shall we know the witness of the Spirit, from Satan transforming himself into an angel of light?

ANSW. Much hath been said for the discovery of this already; and therefore look back to what has been offered. Satan's witnessing doth exalt self; the Spirit's witnessing doth tend to self humiliation. Satan's witnessing encourages carnal liberty; the Spirit's

witnessing destroys the liberty of the flesh. Satan's witnessing confounds a man, and his natural darkness and ignorance continues; the Spirit's witnessing convinces, clears, and enlightens the man by internal gracious revelation. Satan's witnessing defiles and deforms the soul more and more, in the issue of it; the Spirit's witnessing is of a heart-purifying, sin-mortifying nature. But the text being directed especially to believers, therefore I would address myself,

2dly, To believers, who have the witness in themselves. I would offer you these following directions, in order to the strengthening and maintaining of the witness within yourselves.

1. O sirs, wait for the Spirit who is the principal witness, by asking him of the Father; "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13. Neither the water nor the blood, neither promises nor graces will witness without the irradiation of the Spirit; for, "The Spirit searches all things; yea, the deep things of God, and reveals them to us, and makes us know the things that are freely given us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 10, 12. A true dial hath an aptitude and fitness to show us the hours of the day: but unless the sun shine, you can know nothing by it; so it may be daylight with your soul, and you may have precious graces, that have a fitness and aptitude to witness your being a child of God; but they cannot do it, without the shining of the Spirit upon his own work. It is said, that the Sabin stone is of a dark duskish colour, till it be sprinkled with oil, and then it will burn of a light fire; so, graces and experiences are of a duskish colour, till the oil of the Spirit be poured upon them; then they will burn forth with brightness, so as to witness to the soul its adoption and reconciliation with God.

2. Mark the deposition of the witness, and take not the testimony of any other witness, but in an agreeableness with this. It hath been sometimes an objection among serious souls, "Oh! I have found my heart deceiving me, in passing judgment about other matters; and I had as many symptoms of my being led by the Spirit of God to these conclusions, as I have of his leading me in this, that concerns my eternal state; and therefore I fear I be deceived in all." Now, what shall we say to this? Why, in general, it is the work of the Spirit to discover both the sincerity and deceitfulness of the heart. Seeds of hypocrisy are in the best, as well as

other sins ; grace doth not totally destroy the being of any one sin. Peter's heart did deceive him when he was upon high resolutions for Christ ; and yet he was a believer. But never does a soul see more of the deceitfulness of his heart than upon the discovery of divine love, Job xlii. 5, 6. Isa. vi. 5. Ezek. xvi. 63. But further, upon this head, you would remember, that the believer may be deceived about some circumstances, and about the particular ends of some dispensations, and yet his judgment may be right in the main ; and, therefore, particular mistakes are not to be made general rules. Peter had a clear testimony of his adoption, and that from the mouth of Christ himself, Matt. xvi. 17 ; yet this did not preserve him from a delusion of Satan, that came afterwards, verses 22, 23 ; the same mouth that blessed him, quickly called him Satan. Christ's testimony was enough to secure him of divine love ; and yet it did not secure him against a false confidence, in a particular case ; nor against a sad fall, Matt. xxvi. 35, 70, 72. If your heart then has deceived you in some particular thing, do not conclude that you are deluded in all ; but let your particular mistakes provoke you to mark the deposition of this witness, and to watch against the delusions of Satan, and your own spirit, that you take not the testimony thereof.

Perhaps you may say, How shall I know these delusions ?

We have hinted at these already ; take these particulars, in short, as symptoms of a delusion, and beware of them.

(1.) Whatever hath a natural tendency to promote sin and unrighteousness, is a delusion : unholiness cannot be from the holy Spirit. Beware of that which gives encouragement to corruption :

(2.) That which arises from, and leads to security, is a delusion, Rev. iii. 17, 22. The Laodiceans, there, thought they wanted nothing ; but the Spirit of God thought otherwise ; and tells them that they wanted all things.

(3.) That which springs from a supposed self-sufficiency, or, in its own nature, leads to self-advancement, is a delusion ; " In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved," Psalm xxx. 6. David was confident that he should not be moved, because of his outward accommodations for self defence ; therefore he checks and corrects himself, verse 7, " By thy favour my mountain standeth strong." So, if you overcome this or that temptation, and thereupon conclude, that you are able to encounter with any : it is but the voice of your own spirit ; and it may be a small temptation will surprise you



shortly, yea, very quickly ; and so, if it tend to make you aspiring, as Gen. iii. 5, suspect it as a delusion.

(4.) That which begins not with, and ends not in Christ, is a delusion. Peter engages for Christ, but not in the strength of Christ ; and so he fell. Therefore, we say, mark the deposition of the witness, and take not the testimony of any other.

3. Beware of grieving your principal witness that you have within you, either by rejecting his testimony or indulging sin. There are several things that tend to keep off from assurance, which you should beware of. Beware of thinking that assurance is not attainable ; that it is attainable, see Isa. xlv. 24, lxiii. 16, 2 Cor. v. 1, 6, Rom. viii. 39. Some think it is their duty to live doubting, and imagine they would sin, if they would seek assurance ; but it is a duty commanded as well as other duties : " Wherefore, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure," 2 Peter i. 10. Beware of limiting the Lord to your time ; wait his leisure. Beware of grieving the Spirit, and resisting his motions ; " Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption," Eph. iv. 30. Beware of yielding to carnal and unbelieving reasonings ; reason your heart rather out of unbelief, saying, " Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? 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. Beware of spiritual sloth and security, Heb. vi. 11 ; or of nourishing any sin, Heb. x. 22. Seek to be sprinkled from particular corruptions by the blood of Christ.

4. Be much in the exercise of these duties of religion that have a tendency to cherish the witness within you. *e. g.* Frequent self-examination hath a tendency this way ; " Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves ; know ye not your own selves, how Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates ?" *i. e.*, unapproved or rejected, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Satan endeavours to beat off from this duty, because the end of it is to help the soul to the right understanding of its condition ; but exercise yourself much in it, especially when your eyes are clear, and not dim with desertion. Also a careful observing of the Lord's dealing with your soul, hath a tendency towards this. God's end towards the Israelites in their temptations, and miraculous preservation in the wilderness, was, that they might know that the Lord was their God, Deut. xxix. 3—6. A multitude of experiences must needs conduce

much to clear up the state. Renewed actings of faith have a special tendency this way also ; all opportunities that are offered, even for the most eminent acts of faith, are to be improved. Abraham's slaying of his son Isaac, seemed to be contrary both to God's command, that he should not kill ; and to God's promise that in Isaac his seed should be called ; yet his faith got over all, and he had a bright appearance of Christ after it, Gen. xxii. 11, 12, 16. Perhaps you are in an ill frame, a sad condition, and dare not act faith on the promise ; but it is your duty to believe, whatever your condition be, were it even a desperate, hopeless-like condition ; why, faith may then be most gloriously acted, when against hope, you believe in hope. Though the particular promise fail ; though sensible experience fail, so that is is a midnight darkness with you ; yet there is the name of God still to run to ; such as that Exodus xxxiv. 5, 6, that he is the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious. When you cannot see that he is gracious to you, or that he hath forgiven your sin ; yet, through grace, essay to stretch forth the withered hand, and to put forth an act of faith upon him through Christ ; and in that way wait for his being gracious, and for his forgiving your sin. A new act of faith is the best way to recover all.

But, perhaps, you cannot believe ; mountains of difficulties are in the way of believing : if you could get believed, you would not complain. But know, that the Lord himself may cast in matter of discouragement in the way of your believing, purposely to draw out the acts of faith, Rom. iv. 19, 20, Matt. xv. 24. Why, how could Abraham believe an apparent impossibility, he being old, and Sarah's womb dead ? How could the woman believe ? Christ called her a dog ; and tells her, " I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Seeming impossibilities may be in the way of his mercy, and yet it may be intended for the trial of faith, and not for the hinderance thereof ; but, in such cases, the Lord holds up the heart ; as this woman was the more importunate, the more repulses and seeming denials she had.

Christ never contradicts his own command, to forbid any soul to believe ; therefore, nothing should beat you off from this. In Psa. lxxxix. 34, 35, 36, the Lord engages himself by oath and covenant, that the throne of David should be established for ever ; and presently he was rushed under such dispensations as did threaten the non-accomplishment of what was promised, ver. 38, 45 ; " But the Lord's design herein was not to lead him into contradictory ap-

prehensions to his oath ; but to give an opportunity to believe above, and against hope.

In a word, it tends to cherish the witness mightily, when a man, at all times, in his pleading with God, makes use of arguments drawn from God himself. Do not present the Lord with your prayers, or any performance of yours ; but urge his name, his nature, his word, his free promise, Isa. lxiii. 15 “ Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness, and of thy glory ; where is thy zeal, and strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards me ? are they restrained ? ” Then follows assurance, ver. 16, “ Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not ; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer ; thy name is from everlasting.” See Num. xiv. 17, 18, 20.

Finally, It tends to this, that a man make much use of the scripture ; “ Search the scripture ; ” for it is by the word that the Spirit doth witness. If a word suitable to your case be given, bless the Lord for it ; if not, seek out one, take it and pray over it, till the Lord make a powerful application, by drawing you out after Christ by it ; for, though you should get never so many words hinted into your heart, they will be of little advantage, unless your heart be thereby drawn out after Christ.

I shall yet add another thing that may tend greatly to the cherishing of confidence about your state, who are believers, and that is, holding fast the doctrine of perseverance ; the Lord hath promised that he will put his fear in your heart, that you shall not depart from him, Jer. xxxii. 40, Psalm lxxxix. 30-34. He will not cast off his people ; if they sin, he will correct them, Isa. liv. 8, 9, 10. A saint may fall into sin, but he cannot fall from his faith,” Luke xxii. 32, with John xxvii. 20. Let go the doctrine of perseverance, and your peace will be like the morning dew, that passeth away ; but retain this, and then you may rejoice in hope of the glory of God. If ever the Lord hath wrought this grace of faith in you, plead he may increase your faith ; for, if he that believeth hath the witness in himself, then, the more faith, the more evidence ; the more of believing, the more of the witness is discernible.

May the Lord himself give you to know from sweet experience that “ He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself.



## SERMON CXLVII.

THE REPOSE AND REPAST OF FAITH, UNDER THE SHADY AND FRUITFUL TREE OF LIFE.<sup>1</sup>

“I sat down under his shadow with great delight; and his fruit was sweet to my taste.”—Song ii. 3

My friends, though I do not determine that the forbidden fruit, of which our first parents did eat, and poisoned themselves and all their posterity, was the fruit of an apple-tree, yet I have ground, from this text, to make proclamation this day to you, that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Apple-tree whose fruit is a blessed antidote against that poison. The tree of knowledge of good and evil proved, in the issue, a tree of death and destruction; but here is the tree of life that grows in the heavenly paradise above; yea, in the gospel paradise below; and happy they who can, or shall have it to say on this occasion, “I sat down under his shadow with great delight; and his fruit was sweet to my taste.”

These who are my ordinary hearers, know I have preached, for some time, on the verses preceding; wherein we have these two things more generally.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Bridegroom of the church, commending himself, ver. 1, saying, “I am the rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valleys;” then commending his bride, as a sharer of his beauty, notwithstanding her afflicted lot in this world, ver. 2, “As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”

2. We have the bride of Christ taking her turn in commendation of him, verse 3. Wherein I have observed,

(1.) The compellation she gives him, My Beloved. He had named her his love; and here she names him her Beloved; his love to her fired her love to him.

(2.) The commendation she gives him, in the following comparison; “As the Apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons.” He had commended her as the fairest among women, the most beautiful among the daughters: and now

(1.) This Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Dunfermline, July 16th, 1749. To which is subjoined the Discourses before and at the service of the first table.

she commends him as the most excellent among the sons, as fairer than the sons of men; infinitely fairer than the most excellent creatures, men or angels; this she expresses metaphorically, taking a view of his comparative excellency, as the apple tree in the garden among the barren trees of the wood, "So is my Beloved among the sons."

(3.) We have here the confirmation of this from her experience, or the improvement she made of Christ under this view of him as the apple tree; "I sat down under his shadow with great delight; and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Here is faith's improvement of Christ as the apple tree among the trees of the wood.

More particularly, you have here these five things following.

1. The subject of faith, namely, the believer, the bride of Christ, supposed to be in a scorched, wandering, weary, toiled condition: "I sat down."

2. The object of faith, namely, Christ as a shadow; or a shadow tree for the scorched and weary soul.

3. The act of faith expressed under the notion of a sitting down; "I sat down under his shadow."

4. The manner of faith's acting, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight."

5. The feast of faith that follows, or the consequent good that issues upon this acting of faith; "His fruit was sweet to my taste."

I shall endeavour the explication of each of these particulars in the prosecution of the following doctrinal proposition.

DOCT. That faith's improvement of Christ, as the tree of life, in whatever sad case the soul was into before, is a sitting down under his shadow with great delight, and feasting sweetly upon his fruits.

Here we see the bride of Christ in her present scorched, sun-burnt, weather-beaten case, what she did in these circumstances; "I sat down under his shadow with great delight;" and then what she felt in that situation, "His fruit was sweet to my taste." The doctrine being so much the very words of the text, I shall essay the explication of the several branches thereof in the following method.

1. Consider the case of the believer here supposed.

- II. Speak of the object of faith, Christ as a shadow and shelter for him.
- III. Speak of the act of faith, as it is a sitting down under that shadow.
- IV. Of the manner of faith's actings, sitting down with great delight.
- V. Of this feast of faith that follows, his fruit being sweet to their taste.
- VI. Apply the whole in sundry inferences.

I. The case of the believing soul, the bride of Christ, here supposed is, that she was scorched with heat, wearied with labour and toil, and disquieted, while here in the weary wilderness wherein she needs a shadow to protect her. She had said, Song i. 6, "The sun hath looked upon me," so as I am sun-burnt; and my mother's children were angry with me: I am persecuted, reproached, and abused, and stand in need of a shadow from the heat, a refuge from the storm. There is a fourfold account on which the shadow is needed by his people.

1. Consider them in their state by nature, before conversion, they have no rest there, but are as the raging sea, casting forth mire and dirt. Here they may see their way vanity and folly; and yet their corruption carries them over all their convictions and resolutions, even to that which they see to be vain; and this is the case of all by nature. In which state they are liable to the scorching wrath of God, and cannot be safe till they get under the shadow of the apple tree.

2. Consider them after conversion; and both in the pangs of the new birth, and after they are born again, they need a shadow from the fiery darts of temptation; "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked,"—Eph. vi. 16. They are ready to be scorched with this fire, that, for ordinary, flies upon them suddenly like a dart, and is hot and scorching like a fiery dart, and ready to consume and destroy the soul, and make it cry out with Jonah, "Better for me to die than to live," chap. iv. 3. In this case, how much do they need a shadow from the heat of temptation!

3. Consider them in their wandering case, even after they have been comfortably drawn to Christ, they are ready to run away from God, and forget their resting place: they will find, in the issue, that



by their departures, through an evil heart of unbelief, that they have forsaken their own mercies, and turned again to folly, Psal. lviii. 8; and that they have made but an ill bargain: the Lord hedges up their way with thorns, and makes them see it is best for them to return to their first husband. Indeed God's people are the greatest fools imaginable, when they begin to think that apostacy will thrive in their hands; for a storm will meet them in the teeth, and make them see the need they have of returning to their nest, under the shadow of the apple-tree. New discoveries of sin and guilt may be ready to make them think their case to be hopeless; and yet these discoveries open the door of hope, even as the law before was their school-master to lead them to Christ.

4. Consider them even in their best case, in this world, when coming a-new unto, and abiding in him, without departing from him; yet they may lay their account, that their condition in this world will be such as that they will still need a shadow: for, partly Christ will give them much ado, that he may be employed by them, and get work put in his hand by their daily errands to him; and partly also they must look for a scorching sun from the world, because they are not of the world, and therefore they may expect that the world will hate, persecute, and abuse them; they need to be armed against daily difficulties, daily storms, and scorplings; and fenced against the heat of that sun spoken of in the first chapter, "The sun hath looked upon me;" this is a fiery sun of worldly tribulations, that,

(1.) Consumes, sometimes, the man's estate and worldly fortune, as it did Job's sheep, and oxen, and cattle, and servants; all taken away.

(2.) It sometimes scorches and consumes their relations and friends, as it did Job's sons and daughters; as they were eating in their elder brother's house, a wind comes and smites the corners of the house; this was a scorching flame indeed, insomuch that Job rose up and covered himself with ashes, and cries out, "Naked came I into the world, and naked must I return," chap. i. 13—22. It is a terrible scorching heat that strips a man naked of all his relations, friends, and brethren.

(3.) It sometimes scorches their body; and I need go no further than Job in this also; he was scorched and smitten with sore boils, from the sole of his foot to his crown, that he took a pot-sherd to scrape himself withal, chap. ii. 7, 8.

(4.) It sometimes scorches their good name, and in a manner consumes it; as not only Job's wicked wife, chap. ii. 9, but his godly friends reproached him, and laid to his charge much sin, and wickedness, and hypocrisy. This was one of the hottest beams of the fiery sun with which he was burnt black; and it made him cry out, "O that my grief were weighed, and my calamity laid in the balance: for now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea," chap. vi. 2, 3. And while men and devils were throwing darts at him, he saw the hand of God drawing the bow and shooting the arrows at him; "The arrows of the Almighty are within me: the terrors of God set themselves in array against me; the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit," chap. vi. 4. Thus the New Testament saints also were scorched, Heb. xi. 36, 38, "They had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, and bonds, and imprisonments: even they, of whom the world was not worthy, they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Thus you see how the bride of Christ may be scorched and sun-beaten.

If it is inquired, For what reason is all this? Why, one great reason is, their distance from the Apple-tree, when they are not below the shadow thereof: and the reason of this distance is either more extraordinary, when the Lord, in sovereignty, withdraws; as it was with Job, from whom God did not withdraw for his sin; for he commends his servant Job, as a perfect and upright man, none like him in all the earth, chap. i. 1: or, the more ordinary reason is, the bride's withdrawing from under his shadow, through unbelief, and sinning against God; "Your iniquities separate between you and your God," Isa. lix. 2. Yet it is to be here remembered, the distance is neither total nor final; for he said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5; and that though, when distance takes place, they want the refreshing benefit of the shadow, yet they have his love, and his goodness and mercy to follow them; and "Though for a small moment he hide his face from them, yet with everlasting mercies will he gather them; for, He will not contend for ever, nor be always wroth, lest the spirit should fail before him, and the soul which he hath made. He will see their ways, and heal them; and restore comforts to them." Which proves, that his love is never altered towards them.

In a word, the case of the soul, that comes to sit down under this shadow of the Apple-tree, is such a sore scorched case, that

sometimes the scorplings of the fiery law are great, and the scorplings of the awakened conscience are severe. It is said, "The Spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Prov. xviii. 14. The soul of a man will bear his bodily troubles; but when the soul itself is troubled and wounded, who can bear him up? Who but he that healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds, Psalm cxlvii. 3. Although a real convert, after the first convictions have issued in conversion, doth not receive the spirit of bondage again unto fear, in the manner as before, yet after grievous backslidings, he may, in a manner be sent back to mount Sinai, and find great flames of the fiery law flashing in his face; his convictions may be greater, and the scorplings hotter than before, because now he sees he hath sinned against so many mercies, so much light, and so many experiences of God's goodness, so many sweet enjoyments and enlargements, that he hath sinned the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost: though the trouble on that head gives him the lie, and manifests that that is not the case, yet the wound is deep, and the soul is thus scorched almost to death, till, in answer to the call, Return backsliding children, for I am married to you," it returns again to its resting-place, and sits down under the shadow of the Apple-tree. I go on, therefore,

II. To the second thing proposed, To speak of the object of faith, Christ, as a shadow and shelter for the scorched soul. And here you may take both a negative and positive view of this shadow.

1st, View it negatively; and remember there is no other shadow, no other rest for the soul but Christ; all other shadows are but refuges of lies: "There is no other name under heaven given, among men, whereby we must be saved; neither is there salvation in any other," Acts iv. 12. Other shelters are broken reeds. What says God to them that trusted in the shadow of Egypt, and in the strength of Pharaoh? "The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame: and trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion?" Isa. xxx. 2, 3. They that trust to any other shadow, both rebel against God, and ruin themselves, Isa. xxxvi. 5, 6, Jer. xlviii. 45. "Truly in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel," Jer. iii. 23. All other shadows that men betake themselves to, will bring them to a bed of sorrow, Isa. l. 11; they will prove as Jonah's gourd, having a worm at the root that will wither them.



Whatever shadow men trust to, whether it be the shadow of worldly props and mistaken providences, the shadow of unsound experiences, the shadow of natural and common graces, the shadow of gospel-privileges, the shadow of legal righteousness; duties of civility, morality, or whatever else, unhappy are they to find a shadow to rest under without Christ; "Their sorrow shall be multiplied that hasten after another God;" their sorrows will but gather into a dam, to meet them in their extremity, when they have little need of such an encounter. Happy only are they that find no rest for the sole of their feet till, with the dove, they come to the ark, Christ. Here, by the bye, is a touch-stone of a good or bad condition; he that is in a bad condition, any shadow, without Christ, will satisfy and content him; but he that is in a good condition, no shadow, in the world, but Christ, will ease and please him.

2dly, View this object positively: Christ is the shadow indeed, and he alone, for the relief of poor scorched souls, the sun-beaten and sin-bitten soul. I shall direct you to some scriptures for shewing this; and then observe that he is a shadow for all sad cases, and having all good qualities.

1. For the scripture-expressions hereof, see Ps. xxxi. 20. He is said to "Hide them in the secret of his presence, from the pride of men; and keep them secretly in a pavilion, from the strife of tongues." Hence says David, Psalm lvii. 1, "In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, till these calamities be overpast:" and Ps. xci. 1, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Psalm cxxi. 5, 9. The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right-hand; the sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. Isa. iv. 6. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat; and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm, and from rain. Isa. xxv. 4, "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat," &c. Isa. xxxii. 2. "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."

2. Here is a shadow in all cases, particularly in the four following ones:—

(1.) A shadow and shelter against the wrath of God, for guilty sinners to fly to, that would fly from the wrath to come: he is

"Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come," and from the curse of the fiery law ; for, he hath righteousness without the law to give, whereby he justifies the ungodly, in a way that magnifies that law, by paying all the debt of obedience and satisfaction it can crave ; and so is, "The end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

(2.) He is a shadow against all challenges and charges whatsoever, in so much, that the believing soul, that sits under this shadow, may say, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth ?" Rom. viii. 33, 34. He is a shadow against every raging and impetuous lust and corruption, that tosses and vexes his people like the raging waves of the sea ; and that by the mortifying virtue of his death and blood ; hence these two things go together, Rom. xiii. 14. "The putting on Christ Jesus the Lord, and the making no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof:" the raging heat of corruption is abated under this cool shadow. He is a shadow from all fears and cares, anxieties and grievances relating to worldly circumstances, when a believer hath the faith of Christ's care and providence between him and the storm, according to that word, Mat. vi. 31, 34, "Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what you shall drink, or wherewithal you shall be clothed. Take no thought for to-morrow, for to-morrow shall take thought for itself." And Phil. iv. 6, "Be careful for nothing, &c.—1 Pet. v. 6. Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you."

(3.) He is a shadow from the scorching heat of the fiery darts of Satan's temptations : for, who is it that rebukes the tempter ? It is the Lord Jesus Christ, with a "Get thee behind me, Satan." Who is it that prays always acceptably for the tempted and scorched believer ? It is Christ : "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired thee, that he may sift and winnow thee as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Who is he that is always a friend at hand, when the believer is at the last gasp, ready to be scorched to death ? It is Christ ; 1 Cor. x. 13, "There hath no temptation taken you, but what is common to men ; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able to bear ; but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." What should one do for relief against all the temptations and delusions of the day, but just come under the shadow of the Apple-tree, "Christ himself suffered, being tempted, that he might succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 18.

(4.) He is a shadow against the scorching heat of afflictions, and that either when he prevents them, and keeps them off, and "Stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind : being a present help in the time of trouble : " or, when he sanctifies troubles, and blesses them to the advantage of his people ; " By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; " or, when he supports under trouble, and enables them to bear, and by faith to quench the violence of fire, and out of weakness makes them strong : or, when, whatever be their losses by affliction, he makes up their loss with a hundred fold more ; and makes them, with all other things, to work for their good, though some trials may separate them from friends and brethren ; but here is a shadow against that sorrow, namely, " Who shall separate me from the love of Christ ? " &c. Rom. viii. 35—39.

3. Here is a shadow with all the good qualities of a shadow : particularly, a thick, a broad, a lasting, and a living shadow.

(1.) It is a thick shadow. Some trees have shadows, but in hot days the beams of the sun will pierce through them, because they are thin ; but this is a thick shadow : no scorching wrath of divine displeasure can get into the soul that is under it. The destroying angel, that slew the first-born of Egypt, could not come near the door that was sprinkled with the blood of the lamb ; no more can the wrath of God reach these that are under the cover and shadow of the blood of Christ, that spotless " Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

(2.) As it is a thick, so it is a broad shadow, it covers the whole man ; and it covers all that come under it : notwithstanding of the multitude of the receivers of Christ ; yet a numberless number may get room here : notwithstanding all the redeemed, from the beginning, who have come, yet there is room for more : " Whosoever will, let him come. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

(3.) It is a lasting shadow : not like Jonah's gourd, that came up in a night, and withered in a night ; it fenced him from the sun's heat, and from the east wind, and that only for a night, and then went away ; but, this is a shadow of goodness and mercy, that follows the believer all the days of his life, as the pillar of cloud that followed Israel in the wilderness, and never left them as long as they had occasion for it ; Christ never leaves the soul till he sets it beyond all hazard and danger in the heavenly Canaan. Whatever



are or may be your trials, this is a shadow that was, and is, and is to come. For,

(4.) It is a living shadow ; it is the shadow of the Tree of life, that hath life in itself, and that gives life and health to all that sit down under it ; “ The leaves of this tree are for the healing of the nations,” Rev. xxii. 2. Was there a healing virtue in Peter’s shadow, Acts v. 15, that the sick were brought forth to the street, and laid in beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by, might overshadow some of them ? O ! what must be the healing and quickening virtue of this shadow of the Tree of life itself, from which Peter’s virtue was borrowed ? O dead and diseased soul, look to this Apple-tree to overshadow you, and sit down under this shadow. This leads,

III. To the third thing proposed, viz., To speak of the *act* of faith, as it is expressed by a sitting down under this shadow. And,

1. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports deliberation ; it is a deliberate act : when one sits down, he is not rambling nor rushing headlong, but acting deliberately and considerately. Here he acts, from a manifold conviction. From a conviction that it is lawful and warrantable, and no presumption for him to do it : Why, here is a shadow proposed to me to make use of ; I am a poor sinner, in danger of wrath, God holds out to me the sceptre of grace, and calls and allows me to take up my rest under this shadow. He acts from a conviction of necessity : I must do it or be undone to eternity ; but I must not abide in Sodom, for the fire of God’s wrath will destroy me there : I must put myself under this shadow, or perish. He acts from a deliberate conviction of profit and advantage that is to be had under this shadow ; If I were once there, may he say, what blessed fruit will I find upon this Apple tree ? Peace with God, and access to him, and communion with him ; what justification from all guilt, what manifestations of God’s love, what consolations of his Spirit may I expect ! Therefore I will do it, because I may do it, and because I must do it, and because it is the best, the only shift, and the most profitable course that can be taken.

2. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports not only deliberation, but design also, for present rest and present ease. The man is pursued, and wants a city of refuge ; scorched, and wants a shadow from the heat ; and so he comes, and receives, and rests upon Christ alone for salvation. He sits down for rest

from a troubled conscience, and from all the challenges thereof, under this shadow: his heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience; here the law cannot touch him: "Christ is the end of the law:" here justice cannot condemn the Mediator, and I am under his shadow; wrath cannot win through to me here. He sits down for rest from his excessive desires after created good, which he vainly pursued before, saying, O for this and that worldly thing! "Who will shew us any good?" But, when he comes to Christ, he finds contentment; he is where he would be; and finds no want; he hungers and thirsts no more insatiably after vanity: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Though streams should fail him, he now hath the ocean; though the stars should be withdrawn, he hath the Sun. He sits down to be free from the turbulency of corruption: there is a great struggle between a man's light and his lusts; his lusts driving him contrary to his light; but, under this shadow, his lusts are brought into subjection to his light: grace gets above corruption, and faith purifies the heart. He sits down, to be free of scorplings that annoy him. Faith is acted to be free of all hot pursuits whether from law, justice, conscience, or from any other quarter: from the heat of fiery lusts, which only can be quenched with the blood of Christ; from the heat of fiery temptations, this shadow is a shield for safety in this case; also from the heat of wrath-like dispensations: "If thou mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" When trying and fiery-like providences come, who can abide them, till they lay themselves down under this Apple-tree? Faith acts likewise to be free from the heat of "Fearful looking for of judgment, spoken of, Heb. x. 17, and fiery indignation, that shall consume the adversaries;" from the fear of death, the king of terrors, with its sting; and from the fear of an awful tribunal, and a wrathful sentence issuing from it. Where shall I be secure from these fears, but under this shadow of the Mediator's blood and righteousness? It acts, in a word, to be free from the curse of the fiery law, saying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them;" to avoid this, says the believer, I cast myself under Christ's shadow; "I fly to thee to hide me." I quit the law as a covenant, and want to be married to another Husband.

3. Faith, as it is a sitting down under his shadow, imports, a centering here. When restless, wandering souls come to Christ, they need go no further; if they come indeed to God in Christ, they

may now sing a *Requiem* to themselves, "Soul, take thy rest." Christ, as Mediator, is the way, and as God, is the end of that way. The bride of Christ here was like a weary traveller walking through a wood; and whatever tree she met with, she found some defect and barrenness in it; but coming to the apple-tree here, she found none; and therefore goes no further. When one comes to Christ, and to God in Christ, then he is at his journey's end; he may set up his staff, and take himself rest. And hence also,

4. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, a continuation of the act thereof. When we meet with Christ, we should sit down, and make him our home, our house of residence, our habitation, to which we may continually resort. The true improvers of Christ must abide with him: though sensible comforts should be withdrawn; yet they must not quit their resting-place. It is a sitting down without purposing to rise again. Every believer should have a firm purpose to live by faith on the Son of God, under all possible changes and alterations that fall out, either in his spiritual or temporal condition; he is to make use of Christ while he is living, and when he is dying. When he is deserted, he must live upon Christ, saying, "I will wait on the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob." When he is dismayed and afraid, he should live upon Christ, saying, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." When he is weighed with work, he should live upon Christ, saying, "I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness and his only." When he is oppressed with burdens, he should live upon Christ, casting all upon him, and saying, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him."

5. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, a ready act of faith, and catching the opportunity. No sooner is the apple-tree discovered to the bride here, in the superlative excellency thereof, than she just takes hold of the occasion, and sits down under the shadow of that tree. No powerful corruption, no assaulting temptation of Satan, no dark dispensation of providence, no great or greatly aggravated sin, nor long continuance in sin, should hinder or make a delay in the acting of this faith: but the feeling of these maladies, the present feeling of the scorching heat, and the seeing of what a thick, and broad, and living, and lasting shadow this is, should make us quickly sit down here. Nothing must hinder you from making use of Christ; neither sins against law, nor sins against



gospel, nor sins against vows, mercies, crosses, providences : instead of hindering they should hasten you, that here you may get relief.

6. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, a full and entire acting of faith, the whole man upon a whole Christ ; I sat down. The believer leaves not one part of himself from under the shadow. " I sat down under his shadow ;" he makes use of all the shadow for all the good that God gives him for. Some through unbelief, fear it would be too bold for them to expect all the benefits that are to be had in Christ, viz., wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption : but true faith acts fully for all the good of the gospel. Some, like the prodigal son, think God will not make them sons but as hired servants ; but this faith is a sitting down where no drop of wrath can touch you, and where you may have all the fruits that grow upon the apple-tree, and have perfect rest.

7. Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, the activity of faith through grace. The soul being acted is active in sitting down, saying, " Return, to thy rest, O my soul," Psalm cxvi. 7. I was weary with wandering from one barren bush to another ; but whenever I got a view of the glorious apple-tree, the Tree of life, some invisible secret virtue came from it that caught my heart, and made me take up my rest here ; and so " I sat down."

8. And lastly, Faith, as it is a sitting down under this shadow, imports, as composed a posture of soul as can be had in this world. Christ is elsewhere compared to the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, Isaiah xxxii. 2. The rest to be had here, by faith, will always be different from, and short of the rest that remains for the people of God hereafter ; it is therefore a rest amidst trouble : " In the world ye shall have tribulation, says Christ ; but in me ye shall have peace," John xvi. 33.

Let us not mistake the nature of this rest and recumbency under this shadow ; some may think they have been essaying to sit down and rest under this shadow ; but they cannot find that which they can call a rest ; but, in order to remove this difficulty, you will consider the nature of this rest. It is not like the rest of a big rock on the land, or in the sea, that doth not shake or move when the waves beat, or the storms blow and make a tumultuous noise about it : but it is like the rest of a ship at anchor, that may be tossed and moved to and fro in a storm, and some waves going over her, but she is secured against splitting, or sinking, or being cast away, as long as the anchor does not drive : such is the nature of this rest :

it is a rest with fighting and exercise, a rest that secures the main point from ruin as long as the soul keeps under Christ's shadow. And this is the rest and recumbency of faith that we should look for in time; and if we thus took up the nature of this quiet rest, under the apple-tree, it would loose many doubts, and help to break many snares, and temptations, to which we expose ourselves many times, because we cannot get that rest we would be at.

In a word, faith's sitting down under this shadow, imports, that faith is a composing grace, making the soul easy, quiet, and composed amidst all troubles, saying, "Though my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well-ordered in all things and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither should fruit be found in the vine, &c.; yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation, Hab. iii. 17, 18. Though the earth should be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, &c., yet there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God," Psal. xlv. 2, 3, 4.

IV. The fourth thing proposed, was, To touch at the way and manner of faith's sitting down under this shadow, namely, with great delight: "I sat down under his shadow with great delight," &c. It is observed, that the word may be read, as in the margin, "I delighted, and sat down;" intimating, that the delight was both an antecedent and a concomitant of her sitting down under his shadow. The shadow of a tree is comfortable and refreshing to those that are parched with the scorching and boiling heat of the sun; so is Christ to his church under hot persecutions, being in the world as a lily among thorns, and under the heat of wrath revealed in the law; therefore, with so much delight does she rest under his shadow, who hath delivered her from the wrath to come, according to his word.

Remark 1. This delight is very much spoken of in scripture; hence Psal. cxix. 50, "This is my comfort in mine affliction, thy word hath quickened me—Psal. lxiii. 5. My soul shall be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness—Psal. xciv. 19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul—Psal. iv. 6, 7. Many say, Who will shew us any good? But, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance; then shall I have more gladness, than in the time that their corn and wine increaseth." O what great delight is to be had under Christ's cool and refreshing shadow!

2. This delight carries always along with it, a delight in tender walking, and a delighting in the law of the Lord, as the rule of holiness ; Psal. i. 2, " His delight is in the law of the Lord." Christ is not a shadow to screen wickedness. This tender walk evidences their delight to be no delusion.

3. The Lord having designed a fulness of delight for his people hereafter, as it is, Psal. xvi. 11, " In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore : " it pleases him to grant some delight in time as a pledge of that ocean of pleasures they are to enjoy above, that new wine of consolation that they shall drink in their Father's kingdom.

4. This delightful frame in closing with Christ, and improvement or use-making of him, is a very excellent and necessary frame ; for, besides that he is in himself a very delightful and lovely object, this delight is a token for good, evidencing that the heart is warming towards him ; and it is more than half an enjoyment of him, and tends to ensure a further and fuller enjoyment of him ; having so much in hand he hath the more in hope ; and as this delighting in him is begun enjoyment, so it is a mean of preserving and continuing the enjoyment ; because, when the soul is satisfied and made up in him, it warms the heart and cherisheth praise ; yea, delight and satisfaction will beget praise, and praise is a notable preserver and fosterer of the good which we enjoy ; whereas, on the other hand, a discouraged and dissatisfied disposition, a murmuring, quarreling, discontented person soon clouds his clear days, and cuts short his enjoyment through his peevish ingratitude ; whereas a blessing and a praising frame, quickens our prayers and supplications for the continuance of what the soul delights in. It is said, 1 Sam. ii. 1, that Hannah prayed to God, when yet all she says is praise and thankfulness : intimating, that delight in God, begetting praise, is a noble supplicant.

But more particularly, this faith that sits down under Christ's shadow, brings with it great delight on these accounts following.

1. Because it reconciles us to our consciences that accused us for guilt : for, under that shadow we have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, Heb. x. 22.

2. Because it reconciles us to our uneasy crosses, and quiets us under them ; " Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee ; because he trusted in thee," Isa. xxvi. 3. It makes a calm, though the soul before was a raging sea.



3. Because it begets pleasant views of God ; for we cannot make use of Christ, and yet find the Father displeased ; because faith is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ ; so that, when we see him, we see the Father, and the Father to be well pleased in him.

4. Because it lays hold on a complete salvation and an incomprehensible good, that, as it were, swallows up the understanding to take up the worth of it, "Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls," 1 Pet. i. 19. The lively exercise of faith, takes just a great salvation in its arms ; and the man sees himself a saved man, and that there is no difficulty in all the world can stand in the way of his salvation ; this creates joy.

5. Faith's act must be delightful, because it is accompanied with comfortable views of providence ; for when a man comes under this shadow, then he can say, Come what will, and let the Lord do with me what he will ; yet all things shall work together for my good.

6. It is attended with comfortable views of the meaning of the scriptures ; for they become so savoury as to be the savour of life. Lively faith makes scriptures have another lustre than before. It was a good saying of an old Reformer, "That the Christ, which is pointed out in Scripture, could never scare a sinner." When conscience is awakened to see what the law says, it is terrible ; but let a man have the lively exercise of faith in Christ, then the scriptures have the smell of a pleasant garden ; the very threatenings of the scripture are pleasing ; for a man can say, They have frightened me to my resting-place. There is not a word in the Bible but what is savoury to the believer, as seeing God's good-will in it.

In a word, under this shadow the man hath a pleasing view of death, judgment, and eternity : for here he finds himself well secured against all evil, and well provided with all good ; therefore, he cannot but sit down with great delight.

V. The fifth thing proposed was, To speak of the feast of faith, "His fruit was sweet to my taste." After one that hath been hotly pursued, comes under a shadow or shelter, yet if it be not well provided with necessities, he may starve ; one may be famished in a stronghold, and faint, if he hath not food there ; but in Christ there is maintenance as well as protection. Instead of all the heads that might be proposed here, relating, 1. To the fruits ; 2. To the sweetness of the fruits ; 3. The sensible tastes and experiences thereof ;

and 4. Christ's standing property therein, even when given out of his hand into the bride's mouth, "His fruit ; my taste : His fruit was sweet to my taste : " instead of enlarging on all these, we may take up the import of this part of the text in these following particulars.

1. That the necessities of God's people are not few but many ; they need a feast, as well as a fence ; and fruit, as well as a shadow. Our Lord keeps them under many wants, that they may have many errands to his door ; and that he may have many vents to let out of his fulness, and give proof of what is in him for their good. His full breast of all sufficiency and affection needs all their wants, as vents to let out himself by many ways, and many communications to them. The day comes when they shall enter into the joy of their Lord, that cannot now enter into them ; their vents are so narrow that they cannot let in what he hath, and what he is in himself for them, and whereof they are not capable now, notwithstanding their manifold necessities. Hence you that are acquaint with manifold necessities, if you look upon them abstractedly, you may get an embittering sight of them, and may wonder and cry, Woe is me that I am so full of wants ! but look upon them with an eye to Christ's design, and they will be another thing : you will see that he keeps you under many wants, that he may have much work about you and them ; he keeps you empty, that his fullness may be in request. And if thus you look upon them, it will serve not only to encourage you, but to make you lament that you should be so straitened in your own bowels, when you are not straitened in him ; yea, sense of want would be more desirable, in order to supply ; considering, that when all your wants are laid together, yet you have but straitened bowels to take in what he is willing to let out. The

2. Particular here imported is, That the necessities of Christ's followers, and of his bride, are not only many, but their improvement of Christ will be so far from diminishing the sense of their necessities and wants, that new wants will be discovered, and new enjoyments will beget new appetites. When does the bride need fruit ? Even when she is set down under Christ's shadow, and begun to make use of him. The scope of the metaphor teaches this. A person scorched and pursued, sees no more needful at that time but a shadow ; yet when he hath got under that shadow, his other necessities and want of provision pinches him : so here, when the scorched bride is driven to her shadow, and set down under it, then

she finds her other wants. This is the kindly fruit of well improved enjoyments, that they still raise a new appetite for more. These that have tested that the Lord is gracious, will, "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word," 1 Pet. ii. 2. Hence, take a right look of the growing discovery of wants; you may think it is an evidence of a worse condition than you was in before; but mistake not, it is a great evidence of communion with Christ, and that you are come under this shadow, when even there your faintness calls for fruit. It is a sad evidence of distance, and that people are not making use of Christ, when their wounds begin to close up, and the sense of their wants is diminished. But, on the contrary, there is no better evidence of communion with Christ, of nighness to him, and that your enjoyments are real and blessed to you, than when your enjoyments discover want, and beget appetite for the supply thereof.

3. Another thing imported is, That communion with Christ, and closing with him, should not be entertained with idleness, but with diligence. The bride of Christ here hath no more ado than to sit down under his shadow with great delight: she finds that, in that case, she is called to gather fruit under the Apple-tree; and eat, and improve that opportunity she hath gotten, by taking his fruit and feeding thereon; communion with Christ is given us, not to set us idle, but to make us busy on such a happy opportunity: and that partly,

(1.) Because we know not what may be upon the back of that opportunity; it may be like that which Elijah got under the juniper-tree, 1 Kings xix. 5, 6, 7, where the angel desires him to eat, for the journey is great he hath to go; and he got forty days fasting after that double meal; little know we what may be on the back of a banquet, how hardly we may be put to it.

(2.) Because idleness will soon cut us short of our enjoyments.

When Christ and the bride are together at a feast, Song v. 1, on the back of it she falls asleep; though it was but a slumber, her heart waking, yet he thereby was put to the back of the door, ver. 2. Ill improved opportunities may strip a soul of all its enjoyments before it be aware: "Emptiness and distance may steal on, as one that travels; and poverty as an armed man." Under the happy shadow we should be holy epicures, diligent feeders, and greedy eaters of the fruit of the Apple-tree.

4. It is here imported, that the necessities of the saints cannot



be so many but Christ hath supply for them all. If they be assaulted and tempest beaten, or scorched and sun-burnt, he is a shadow ; if they be faint, he hath fruit ; and his fruit is,

(1.) Refreshing fruit ; and is called fruit, in conformity to the metaphor of his being the apple-tree : the purchased and promised allowances of Christ to his people are refreshing and satisfying, like savoury fruit.

(2.) This fruit is solid fruit ; the believer feeds not upon wind, as it is said of Ephraim, Hos. xii. 1, but fruit ; he does not feed upon ashes, as it is said of idolators, Isa. xxlv. 20, but fruit ; he does not feed upon poison, as it is said of the wicked, Job xx. 16 ; nor does he feed upon husks, as it is said of the prodigal son, before he returned to his father, but the fruit that grows upon this Apple-tree, the Tree of life.

(3.) This fruit is not only pleasant and solid, but plentiful and sufficient to answer their necessities and all their wants : " Where sin aboundeth, grace doth much more abound." O sirs, it is an useful study to study the fullness of Christ, in his natures, in his person, in his offices, in his states of humiliation and exaltation, and his words and precious promises ! Here is wine and milk ; both special and common allowances, Isaiah lv. 1. Again,

(4.) As this fruit is durable fruit ; so it is good to study the durableness of his allowances ; for John iv. 14, it is, " The water that springs up to everlasting life." The fruit of the tree of life is still green and fresh, Rev. xxii. 2 ; and still ripe and ready for eating : and all these rich, full, and durable allowances are thine, poor needy soul, according as thou dost need them ; and thy need is thy pass and warrant for closing with them, Isaiah lv. 1, " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." John vii. 39, " If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." The thirsty ground is the ground that needs a shower ; the thirsty soul is the soul that needs a drink, even as the hungry man is the man that needs meat ; and the more need, the more let be your errands to Christ for supply. Have you much to do ? Well, in him you have much to do it with ; here would be your life, to take up Christ's fulness rightly and to improve it as your need is discovered to you.

5. " His fruit was sweet to my taste," it imports, that there is a pleasant relish and sweetness in Christ's allowances to his people. Concerning which we may remark,

(1.) That his allowances to them are not only sufficient, and

enough, "Bread enough and to spare;" but they are sweet and delicious. Christ's fruits are like the tree cast into the waters of Marah, that made them sweet, Exod. xv. 25. It is like the meal cast into the prophets' pot, that took death out of it, 2 Kings iv. 41. So that if you would have any sorrowful or bitter condition sweetened, then no method is so commodious, nor mean so sure, as to take the fruit of this Apple tree to season it; they are much to be pitied that are under any hard and bitter lot, and have nothing of Christ to sweeten it.

(2.) As Christ's fruit is sweet in itself, and sweetens other things, so the saints will acknowledge it to be sweet when they are in a right frame, and their taste not corrupted and vitiate; for then they are like persons in a fever, their taste marred; and the sweetest things seem to be bitter to them; but when the saints of God are in a right frame, they will not fall in that fault which Eliphaz suspected in Job, chap. xv. 11, "Are the consolations of God small to thee?" Yea, when their souls are in health, even his words of reproof will be sweet, even as the wounds of a friend that is faithful to a right discernor, and as excellent oil, that will not break their heads. Surely then his honey, and honey comb allowances will be sweet unto them; and they owe this testimony to the truth of the matter, That his fruit is sweet. We are not complimenting him, when we commend him and his fruit; we ought to commend him thus to others, saying, with the church, "His mouth is most sweet:" and, with David, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." When we repine, and quarrel, and fret, because of our scanty allowances, O how ill bred are we! And as the full soul, that loathes the honey comb, it is a sign our spiritual sense and discerning is corrupted when we cannot attest that his fruit is sweet.

(3.) The Lord is pleased sometimes to satisfy his people with the sweetness of his fruits, without putting them still to the trouble of believing a bare word: he can, by sensible comforts, make the greatest doubter and drooper to call himself a liar, that ever he should have brought up an ill report of Christ and his allowances. This is sometimes the privilege of God's people; and, though it were but once in a life time, or though it were, as in Jacob's case, twenty years between one sweet Bethel and another, he should be blessed for it: it is not their ordinary to have these sun blinks, or to be overcome with love and sweetness; for ordinarily they walk by faith, not by sight; by these warm blinks he sometimes gives

faith a breathing. And therefore, surely they make a wrong use of these sensible comforts, who cannot live without them : and who think God is gone, and Christ is gone, and all is gone, when these comforts are gone : Asaph calls himself a beast, for thinking so, Psalm lxxiii. 22, 23, "So foolish was I, and ignorant ; I was as a beast before thee : Nevertheless, I am continually with thee ; thou hast holden me by my right hand." Under my temptations I questioned all my religion as vain, and thought God was gone ; but now I see that, at my worst, his hand was round about me.

(4.) Yet it would still be remembered that these sweet comforts and sealing favours are the effects of faith, if they be real and not delusive ; "I sat down under his shadow ;" then follows the sweetness and sensible tastes of his goodness and grace ; these are sent, in order to cherish faith ; and to exercise faith in Christ is the way to have more of these : "In whom, believing, we rejoice. After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." When comforts are gotten in a way of believing, then they are free of delusion ; yea, then they are strengthening, and do much good ; "The joy of the Lord is your strength," Neh. viii. 10.

6. It imports, that these fruits that are so sweet and delicious to the believer's taste, they are still his fruits. It was he, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, that from all eternity decreed the communication of that fruit ; it is he that purchased all the fruit : it is he that is the storehouse in whom it is laid up ; for "All fulness dwelleth in him ; and out of his fulness we may receive it." It is he that is the donor and dispenser of the fruit, according as his wisdom and love sees met, he lets it out to them, not as they would, but as they need ; it is he that guides the fruit he gives them, otherwise they would misguide it : and it is he that will make a good account of it all in due time ; the day comes, when "He will be glorified in the saints, and admired in all that believe." You may question, If this fruit be in his hand to give out, how you came to be so scrimped ? But, as he is wise, so he will be true to his trust ; and will bestow all in due time. In a word, it is his fruit, for it grows all upon him that is the Apple tree ; and this makes the fruit to be ineffably sweet, that it is all his ; and, as the water of life is sweetest at the fountain head ; so the fruit is sweetest to the believer's taste that is seen to be growing on the tree of life, and to be all in him who is fulness and sweetness itself.

VI. The sixth and last thing proposed, was, To deduce some inferences for the application. And, in general, from the church's



practice here, after her commending of this Apple tree as matchless, her sitting down under his shadow, saying upon the matter, I am an experimental witness of his singular and matchless excellency ; my experience is an orator to set forth what Christ is, we may see,

1. That a commendation of Christ and an improvement of him should go together. For Christ will accept of no commendation or fair language, as a proof of sincerity and uprightness, unless it be attended with an improvement and use making of him. Christ is not only fair and beautiful, but also full and bountiful ; and therefore he wants not only to be commended but improved, that men may come to him for life, John v. 20. And unless they come and taste and see that he is good, Psalm xxxiv. 8, he values not, but despises their flattering him with their mouth, Psalm lxxviii. 34. He wants not only that you speak good of him, but that you make use of the good that is in him. Know also that right improvement of Christ rises from a due sight and esteem of him as singular and matchless ; they that come and see, will come and share ; " We beheld his glory, full of grace and truth : " then it follows " Out of his fulness have all we received, " John xiv. 16. The knowledge of Christ draws men to improve him ; and the improvement of him draws forth commendation of him : these mutually influence one another. Christ is none of these who, the more they are known, the less they are esteemed ; no : his half cannot be told nor known : admiration and sitting down speechless as overcome, is the highest pitch they can fly in his commendation. You that are strangers to Christ, should try him, before you say he is a wilderness ; you cannot judge of colours while you are blind ; if you would come and see, or come and taste how good he is, you would, as the Samaritan, John iv. 42, not commend him only from hear-say, but from your own experience ; your experience would tell more than we can say. You that know him, and have any experience, see that you bring up no ill report of him ; you owe him a testimony : let him not be to you as other beloveds, but extol him above them all, even from your own experience ; and let it be seen that you are at your centre, when you meet with him, and that there is no room for a *plus ultra*, that you need go no further, unless it be to grow in your knowledge and esteem of him.

2. Hence see, that all we have ado in the improvement of him, is to take of him what he hath to communicate ; if we be weary, to sit down and rest ; if scorched, to get under his shadow ;

if faint and hungry, to eat of his sweet fruit. It is said, Acts xx. 35, "Remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Thus it is Christ's blessedness to give, and not to receive; and it is our blessedness to have to do with such an one, to whom we are called not to come and give, but to come and receive: we have nothing to give, and he can receive nothing: we have nothing but wants; and he seeks nothing but necessities and wants to be brought to him: we have nothing but weakness; and he delights to make his strength perfect in weakness, 2 Cor. xii. 9. He delights to be washing and making white these that have lain among the pots, Psalm lxviii. 13. Yea, he delights to welcome apostates, and these that have played the harlot with many lovers, and to heal backslidings, Jer. iii. 1., Hos. xiv. 4. In a word, Christ alone is the only market for poor worthless souls; be thy case what it will, he is even as meet for you as you could wish; and be thy case what it will, if you make use of him, you are happy; and if you be brought to trade and traffic with him, whose blessedness is to give, and not to receive.

3. Hence see, that Christ is to be improved in every case, as being fully furnished for, not only some, but for all wants: if you want rest, or want a shadow, or want food and fruit; "He is a sun and shield, he gives grace and he gives glory;" Psalm lxxxiv. 2. And if these be not enough, then it follows, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."—Coming under his shadow, your grievance may grow, your troubles and difficulties may grow, but they cannot out-grow his all-sufficiency to supply; as your state alters and changes, he can give you change of raiment and change of armour; for, "They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength; and make you able to do all things through Christ strengthening you:" and make you content, how to be abased, and how to abound. If you be called to suffer and bear heavy reproaches, and heavy burdens that the world lay upon you, he can make your back invincible, so as they shall sooner weary to lay on burdens, than he shall weary to support you. In a word, believer, you are so complete in Christ, that it ill becomes you to go to another door; nay, let all your wants be upon him, and improve him for all. And you should employ him not in lesser difficulties only, and then give him over when surprised with great troubles, saying, "This evil is of the Lord; why should I wait on the Lord any longer?" as that wicked king did, 2 Kings vi. 33, no, by no

means. Nor do you employ him in greater troubles, and think to wrestle alone with lesser; for the least trouble and temptation will be too hard for you, when you are alone without him; but, "In all thy ways acknowledge him:" and, "In every thing make your requests known to him."

4. Hence see, that closing with Christ, and sitting down under his shadow, is the way to taste of his fruits, and to have communion with him; to make use of him in every case, is the way to have a pleasant feast with him: "In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God:" and then it follows, "The peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus," Phil. iv. 6, 7. Only you are not to choose and use him for adversities only, or to help you in particular exigents, but to sit down under his shadow, and take up your rest in him as your everlasting rest. Hence the bride of Christ runs to no other door, to no other tree, "Knowing there is no other God, (though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many, and lords many;) but one, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." There are many trees that people run to for shelter; but the believer runs to Christ, and cannot rest any where else. The bride here had the watchmen to go to, the daughters of Jerusalem, but none of them please in his absence; "O tell him I am sick of love; if you find him tell him." Your company will not please me, pastors, ordinances, public and private, means, duties, and devotions cannot be a shadow to me: Christ is the only relief to a scorched soul. Mary came to seek Christ in the sepulchre; she sees two angels in white, pointing out their glory; one might have thought that that sight might have sufficed her, and made her say with Peter, "It is good to be here:" no; but she wept, and said, "They have taken away my Lord." The sight of angels could not satisfy her, when Christ was away; she could not sit down under any other shadow but that of the apple tree.

5. Hence see the folly of these who have such a shadow as Christ in their offer, and yet trust in a lie, and sit down under the shadow of the trees of the wood, &c., that will fail them in the day of their need. I am afraid, that even in this company, there may be some that are expecting relief under some tree of the wood, and not under the shadow of the Apple tree. Some rest themselves



securely under the tree of civility, as a scone from any heat in the world ; but remember, though you be civil, and moral, and honest good neighbours, this will be a poor withering gourd that will never shelter you from the wrath of God ; the publican that smote upon his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," went home justified more than the Pharisee, that could say, he was not as other men, no extortioner, unjust man, or adulterer, but fasted twice a-week, and, "I give tithes of all that I possess," Luke xviii. 8-13. Some set themselves under the tree of legal righteousness, their good works and good frames joined with Christ's righteousness, which they think reasonable, seeing they do not offer to join with it their sins nor their evil works, but their righteousness ; nothing but what the law of God requires, and the gospel of Christ calls for ; but there is no other shadow but Christ and his righteousness ; for, "If righteousness come by the law (in part or in whole), Christ died in vain," Gal. ii. 21. Some trust to the tree of their own feigned faith : we read of a faith unfeigned ; but many have but a feigned faith : they say they trust in God, and believe in Christ ; and these are but feigned words, and words of course ; and they but sit down under the shadow of their feigned faith, not under the shadow of the apple tree. Some trust to the tree of rude repentance ; when they commit a sin, they run away to God, and say, "I have committed this ; Lord, pardon me, and I shall never do it again." Many lean much to this tree ; but, as Judas repented and cast away his idol silver, and said, "I have betrayed innocent blood," and yet perished ; so will these that trust to any other shadow, but that of the apple tree ; "They walk but in the sparks of their own kindling, and will lie down in sorrow," Isa. l. 11.

But these only are wise and happy that sit down no where else but under the shadow of the apple tree by faith ; for, here is the fruit to be reaped, namely, justification ; being justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, Gal. ii. 19. Sanctification : we read of them that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus, Acts xxvi. 18. Adoption flows from this ; "We are the children of God by faith ;" and, "To them that believe he gave power to become the children of God," John i. 12. Fellowship with God flows from this ; for, Christ is said to dwell in the heart by faith, Eph. iii. 17. Here is the door of communion with God in grace and in glory.

6. Hence see that faith is a composing grace ; it is a sitting

down under Christ's shadow, under the covert of his blood, under the shadow of his righteousness. And we may try our faith by this improvement it makes of Christ amidst all outward or inward scorings, whether by outward afflictions or inward tossings, from the apprehension of God's wrath, and assaults with the fiery darts of Satan's temptations. It views Christ as a complete shadow and the sovereign cure of all, and makes use of him for that end ; and in this use-making of him just interposes Christ between us and wrath, and between us and whatsoever is troublesome and burdensome to us ; this faith is just a man's quieting himself upon this ground ; casting anchor here when tossed with tempests and not comforted, saying, "Why art thou discouraged, 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. Return to thy rest, O my soul ; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee," Psalm cxvi. 7.

7. Hence see, that as the exercise of faith is a pleasant and delightful exercise, so there is not only pleasure and composure of soul in this employment, of taking the benefit of the apple tree for a shadow, but also sweetness and satisfaction in sharing of the fruits that grow upon that tree ; here they eat and feed upon his fruits, that are exceeding sweet to their spiritual taste and experience. What fruit of his ? His words, his works, his manifestations, his communications.

(1.) His words are sweet ; hence David cries, "How sweet are thy words to my taste ! sweeter than honey to my mouth," Psalm cxix. 103. The Jews confessed that "Never man spake like this man ;" and Peter says, "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

(2.) His works are sweet ; his incarnation, death, resurrection, and all the fruits of them ; his ascension in our nature, leading captivity captive, and giving gifts unto men ; his sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, in our nature ; making continual intercession for his people ; his presence in time of trouble, his protection in time of danger, and all the works of his Mediatorship.

(3.) His manifestations and communications are all sweet. How deliciously entertained is the believing soul, when he manifests himself to him in another way than he does unto the world ; and communicates of his grace, mercy, and loving-kindness unto him.

8. Hence see the duty of all sinners and believers both. It is the duty of sinners to come to the Saviour ; if they would have a

screen and shadow between them and the wrath of God, they are to come to Christ as the apple tree, and sit down under his shadow. It is the duty of believers that have been wandering from their resting place, to return to their rest, and take their seat again under his shadow. As Moses, being a type of Christ, stood in the gap to hold off the wrath of God, Psalm cvi. 23 ; so Christ the Mediator of the new covenant stands betwixt us and the heat of God's wrath, and of the wrath of men and devils. O come under the shadow of this apple tree. "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after other gods," and that run to other trees for shade and shelter ; but comforts shall be multiplied on them that come to this apple tree, and sit down under the shadow thereof. Christ is the apple tree, and he is able to help you ; "A man shall be a hiding-place from the storm, 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." Here the weary shall have rest ; the scorched shall have shelter ; and the faint shall have fruit. As he is able, so he is willing to give all comers welcome entertainment ; "Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out : " Nay, I will be so far from casting him out, that it will never enter into my mind ; "I will in no wise cast him out." Our Lord hath a commission to receive all comers, and to loose all the prisoners of hope ; "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; for he hath appointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to open the prison doors to them that are bound, to preach good tidings to the meek," Isa. lxi. 1. How heartily does he invite you to come ! "On the great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried, If any man thirsteth, let him come to me and drink ; if any man hunger, let him come to me and eat." Wherefore are we sent out to you, but to bring you to the apple tree.

Permit me next to address myself to you by way of advice. Let me advise you,

1. To be sensible of your great need of this shadow. If any here present be insensible of their need, there are three hands I would send you to for your conviction.

(1.) One is to the law ; for "By the law is the knowledge of sin ;" hear what the law says to you, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before the Lord," Rom. iii. 19. "When the command thus comes, sin will revive, and you will die," Rom. vii. 9.



(2.) Go to the Spirit of God, and hear what the Spirit says : " When he is come he will convince the world of sin : Of sin because they believe not on me," John xvi. 8, 9. As the law shews that you are unrighteous, so the Spirit shews you are an unbeliever : the Spirit, by the law, shews your malady, and by the law and gospel both, shews your aversion from the remedy.

(3.) You are to hear what conscience says ; when the law condemns you as a transgressor of the law, and the Spirit convinces you of sin, because you believe not the gospel ; then the proper work of conscience is to pass the condemnatory sentence against you, and to pronounce it in your bosom, making you to say, I am the man, I am the woman that hath violated the law of God, and vilified the gospel of God. But when you are convinced, you must not rest here ; for,

2. O esteem highly of the apple tree, and the shadow thereof. How will a scorched, sun-burnt man desire a shadow ! and what would a fainting man give for sweet fruit ? Such is to be had under the shadow of Christ's righteousness. This is the manner and order of the Spirit's work : having convinced of sin, he convinces next of righteousness ; he brings first to the fiery law, and then to the fair apple tree. Let your esteem of him be attended with desire after him and delight in him. I told you the words may read, " I delighted, and sat down ;" it supposes some heart-panting after him, as the hart panteth after the water brooks, Psalm xlii. 1.

3. O ! will you go to the apple tree. You should not only be sensible of your lost state and condition, and not only desire to be at him, and highly prize and esteem him ; but just go to him. How can you sit down under his shadow, if you go not to him ? That is, being sensible of your need of Christ, and assured of the worth of Christ, you turn your face towards him, and your back upon every thing opposite to him ; to turn your back upon all the trees of the wood, upon all created confidences wherein you was ready to trust, and to go only to the apple tree for relief.

4. When you come to the apple tree, then sit down under the shadow thereof ; and what is this ? It is just sit down ; and,

1. Interpose Christ between you and all things that annoy you ; put him between you and all fears ; between you and all temptations ; between you and all hazards ; between you and every scorching sun.

(2.) Sit down and stay with Christ, and never part with him,

depart who will ; let your language be with Ruth, "Intreat me not to leave, or to return from following after thee ; for whither thou goest, I will go ; where thou lodgest, I will lodge ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God," Ruth i. 16. It is remarkable, Christ says to his disciples, "Will you also go away?" No, says Peter ; "Whither shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life ?"

(3.) Sit down and quiet yourself in Christ. The poor spouse of Christ was wandering and restless ; she can get no rest without or within doors ; she goes hither and thither ; she met with the watchmen, and then with the daughters of Jerusalem ; but no rest till now that she is come to the shadow of the apple tree.

(4.) Sit down and take refreshment to your weary souls ; come and feast upon the apple tree ; and, as you come, be convinced you cannot come alone ; Christ hath told you, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him ;" therefore put up your prayer to God, and say, "The Son of thy love, O Father, hath told me, I cannot come under his shadow, except thou draw me ; therefore now, O good and gracious God, for the sake of Jesus, draw me ;" and under the influence of this drawing grace, come and sit down and gather apples. "I am the true vine," said our Lord Jesus, "and my Father is the husbandman ;" even so, he is the true apple tree, and his Father is the gardener ; and he is now come to shake the tree, to let down the apples about your hands that you may gather, or to bend the branches down to you, that you may pluck what apples you need.

What apple, say you ? Why, we shall tell you of eight sorts of apples. Well here is,

1. The apple of imputed righteousness for you that are guilty sinners. Your own righteousness is a rotten apple, good for nothing but to be cast away with all your other idols, to the moles and to the bats ; but the righteousness of Christ is a sweet apple, a fresh apple, a ripe apple, ready for eating ; and if you taste of this apple you shall live a life of justification. By eating the forbidden fruit you was condemned ; but by tasting of this apple you shall be justified : "By one man's offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation ; but by the righteousness of one, the free gift comes upon all men unto justification of life ; for as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners ; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous," Rom. v. 18, 19.

2. Here is the apple of implanted grace you may pluck from off this tree of life. Do you want even the grace of faith and ability to pluck? It grows upon this tree; Christ is the author of faith, and the finisher of it. Do you want the grace of repentance? It grows also upon this tree, Acts v. 31, "Him hath God exalted, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sin." Do you want love? It grows upon this tree; his love is the seed of love; "We love him, because he first loved us;" his doing, dying, rising, reigning love is the seed that being sown in your heart, will make heart love to him grow there. Whatever grace you need you may get it upon this tree of life; for, "Out of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace;" or, as it may read, "Love for love."

3. Here is the apple of peace. Is not peace with God and peace of conscience a sweet apple? And does it not grow here? "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace;—He made peace by the blood of his cross." O! who would not be in hands with this refreshing apple, that will clear the heart against all the disquiet in the world! This peace in Christ is like a dry house within, in a rainy day without doors. It is like a quiet harbour in stormy weather; or a safe haven in a terrible tempest.

4. Here is the apple of joy, joy in the Holy Ghost; and this also grows upon the apple tree: "Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. A taste of this apple makes all carnal joy tasteless to you; for, it is unspeakable joy, full joy, glorious joy, and unspeakably full of glory; the very dawning of the day of glory.

5. Here is the apple of contentment that grows upon this tree of life; contentment with every lot, every cross; "Godliness with contentment is great gain." When a man tastes of this apple, it makes him say with Paul, "I am poor, yet possessing all things; I am sorrowful, yet always rejoice; I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." This sweet apple sweetens every lot, be it never so bitter.

6. Here is the apple of communion with God, and access to him, that grows upon this tree; for, "Through him we have access by one Spirit to the Father; putting the soul, in case to say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." This makes the soul to invite others sometimes to come



and share, saying, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; for, that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you may have fellowship with us;" while we have fellowship with the Father, in his electing love; with the Son, in his redeeming love; and with the Holy Ghost, in his applying both the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son. This communion is sometimes only in desire; "The desire of our souls is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." Sometimes in delight; "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desire of thine heart."

7. Here is the apple of spiritual liberty that grows upon this apple tree; "If the Son make you free, you are free indeed." When we taste of this apple, we preach at liberty, and pray at liberty, and hear at liberty, believe at liberty, and walk at liberty; "I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts," Psalm cxix. 45. It is a heartsome feast to the soul where all bonds and fetters are loosed, and the heart at liberty to love; the hand at liberty to work; and the feet at liberty to run; "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart."

8. Here is the apple of assurance that grows upon this tree; assurance of God's everlasting love is one of the sweetest apples that ever was tasted; and a taste of it makes the man to cry out, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," Job xix. 25. "I know in whom I have believed," 2 Tim. i. 12. "I know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, I have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. i. 5. "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 38, 39. This apple, being tasted, leads the soul up to the pinnacle of praise, according to that word, Psalm cxl. 13, "Surely the righteous shall give thanks to thy name; the upright shall dwell in thy presence."

In a word, there is no telling of all the apples that grow on this tree of life; there is no end of the number nor the sweetness of them; because all the treasures of heaven are the apples that grow here; for, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." All the perfections of God are the apples that grow upon this tree; for, "He is the wisdom of God, and the power of God; and in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." All the graces of the Spirit are the apples that grow upon this tree: "We

beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." All the promises of the covenant are the apples that grow upon this tree; for "All the promises of God are in him Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God."

O my dear friends, if one should throw but a lapful of green apples among a company of reapers on a harvest field, what a running, and striving, and struggling would there be, who should get their pockets best filled! Allow me the homely comparison, where yet there is no comparison; only our Lord being here compared to the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and you being allowed not only to sit down under his shadow with great delight, but also to take of the fruit that shall be sweet to your taste. Is there no appetite here, no disposition to gather the fruit of this apple tree? for "He that eateth of this fruit shall live for ever," John vi. 5, 8. Here you may gather a store of apples that will be provision for the day of death, and for a long eternity. Now, the great God, the great gardener, is, by this gospel offer, shaking the Apple tree. O strive who shall get the greatest fill of this fruit! Which of these apples are you for? Or, rather, are you for them all? Do you need them all? Why, then, they are designed for the poor and needy; therefore, "Whosoever will, let him come and take freely;" be what you will, and whatever you have been, or are, if you think that this fruit would do you good, or that these apples would do you service, now when you are under the Tree, lay your hands about you. Say not, I dare not put to my hands, my hands and my heart are so polluted; but if I were so and so prepared and qualified, I would put to my hand. What is this you are saying, O proud sinner? Are you bringing your money as a price to buy this fruit that comes papping and falling down freely to you? If you do not humble yourself to take all freely, you and your money shall perish. Would you bring fruit with you before you come here, where all the fruit is growing or hanging down to your hand, even in him who is made of God to you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and every thing: You affront the Apple tree, if you come to give, and not to get. Nay, you have nothing to give; and here you have all to get.

QUEST. How shall I get all the apples of this tree of life? I will tell you, the short way is just to take the tree to yourself, and then you get all the apples; for, here is a wonder, though innumerable apples may fall down amongst your hands, yet they never fall

off from the tree ; like beams of the sun, that fall down upon you, yet they are never separate from the sun, nor fall off from it. Whatever sweet fruits fall down from this apple tree, yet they never fall off from it ; they are all growing, and growing for ever upon the tree ; therefore, take the tree to yourself, and you get all the fruit, and all the apples that grow upon it ; take the person, Christ, and you have all his benefits and blessings with him.

QUEST. How shall I take the tree ? And what should I do with it ? You are just to take it by faith ; " He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life : " and take the tree and plant it in the garden of your heart, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Say not, I am a dead sinner, and can do nothing ; remember it is not doing but believing, you are called to ; and therefore, though you have no life in yourself, yet mind this apple tree is the tree of life, the living and life-giving tree ; the leaves of that tree which is for the healing of the nations, is such as hath power, not only to heal the sick, but to quicken the dead ; and, therefore, seeing he is the God that quickens the dead, let the dead hear what he says, even he who by a word could bring all things out of nothing ; " I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life," John xi. 25.

May you see the matchless glory of this apple tree, and there sit down under his shadow, and his fruit be sweet to your taste.

## A PART OF THE DISCOURSE BEFORE SERVING THE TABLES.

WE are now to proceed to the special work of commemorating the death and sufferings of our glorious Redeemer ; and to make way for their sitting down at his table, who have sitten down under his shadow. But there are many absolute strangers to this exercise ; and such are to be excluded from his table. All, therefore, that remain securely in a natural state, and are still sitting under any other shadow than that of the apple tree, and are feeding upon husks, &c., we debar from this holy table. More, particularly, we, in the Lord's name, exclude all the impenitent breakers of God's commands ; all Atheists, &c. &c., all that make provision for the flesh,



to fulfil the lusts thereof; and that are satisfying themselves with the fruits of the flesh, instead of having the fruit of the apple tree sweet to their taste. The fruit and works of the flesh are these, Gal. v. 19, &c.

On the other hand, we invite to the Lord's table, all those who, whatever they have been formerly, yet have come to Christ, and, upon a view of him, in his matchless glory, have sat down under his shadow with great delight, and have found his fruit sweet to their taste.

QUEST. Who are these that have sat down under his shadow?

1. They are such as have seen the matchlessness of the Apple tree beyond all the trees of the wood; I mean, the singular excellency of Christ beyond all others; as a Beloved beyond all other beloveds. You will give him his due above all others; some are called lords, but he is the Lord of lords: some are called kings, but he is the King of kings; some are called gods, but he is the God of gods; some are called saints, but he is the King of saints; some are called angels, but he is the Angel of the covenant; some are called stars, but he is the Bright and Morning Star. He is matchless in your view.

2. You have been made to see the great need of Christ as a shadow and shelter to you from the scorching heat of divine wrath, and of the fiery law; you have been pursued and found yourself weary with toil and trouble, vexation and restlessness, and have found that none of all the trees of the wood could afford you any rest or repast; that they were all bare trees, that could not shelter you with a shadow; and barren trees, that could not sustain you with fruit, but what was sour and bitter; and that vain was the help of man, and vain the help of creatures, and vain the help of all other trees, so as your confidence in the flesh hath been killed.

3. If you have sat down under this Apple tree, then you have found a shadow refreshful. A man that sits down is easy, in comparison of what he was before he sat down; now he gets rest to his soul: "Come to me," says Christ, "all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You have got some rest to your heart and conscience, rest to your hope, your desire, your care, having cast all your care upon him. A man is easy, when a heavy burden is rolled off his back: you have found ease to your mind, and composure upon your closing with Christ.

4. A man that hath sat down under this shadow of the Apple tree, he loves to keep his seat, and desires not to rise, but says, "This is my rest, here will I stay;" at least, he is loth to be disturbed, but rather charges all about him, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, not to disturb his rest; and when they that come to Christ are disturbed by temptations, and put away from their resting place, they are like Noah's dove, they cannot rest till they return; and they desire to fly as doves to their windows, and to lie as the child in the mother's lap. When the soul is full of restless vexations, fluctuating and tumbling up and down, in a whole ocean of perplexities and fears, and can see no shore, no land, no haven of comfort, then it must get to the ark, and use the soliloquy of the psalmist, "Return to thy rest, O my soul."

5. The man that hath sat down under this shadow, hath found inexpressible pleasure in doing so: "I sat down under his shadow with great delight: I delighted and sat down." The soul is delighted with the shadow, and delighted with the seat under it: he hath joy and gladness more than the wordling can have when his corn and wine increaseth: you have found wisdom's ways pleasantness, and such great delight as disgraces all carnal delights.

6. You have found the fruit of the apple tree sweet to your taste: and not only that it was a shady tree for sweet solacement, but a fruitful tree for sweet entertainment. Can you not say, You have got such an experimental taste of his goodness, that his name was as ointment poured forth to you, and all his garments smelled of aloes, myrrh, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces? So sweet, that the taste raised your appetite after more and more of it; and sweet, as being a pledge of the love of God, and a foretaste of his glory? O sirs, you that have taken your seat under the shadow of the apple tree, the tree of life; see that you take your seat at his table, even though at present you should want the sweet and sensible experience of the deliciousness of his fruits; if you sit down by faith under his shadow, you will find sense in due time; but, you are to live by faith, and not by sense: your life lies in the tree itself; and, therefore, let your life be a life of faith on the Son of God, and the sweet fruit will drop down in your lap in his time, who hath made everything beautiful in his season, and who is the tree of righteousness that brings forth his fruit in his own season: he knows the proper season of shaking the tree, and giving you a sweet fill of his fruit; only abide under his shadow by

faith and dependance : give evidence of your sitting down under his shadow, by sitting down at his table ; do not dishonour him by staying away, when you have so much need, and more need, perhaps, than ever : he hath been speaking to you ; yet, may be, you do not know so much, till he make himself known to you in the breaking of bread.

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### THE DISCOURSE AT THE SERVICE OF THE TABLES.

Now, believing communicant, you are come again to sit down under the shadow of the matchless Apple-tree, under the shadow of the blood and righteousness of Christ ; and as there is no want of protection under such a thick shady tree ; so there is no want of provision under the shadow of such a fruitful tree : this tree of life, is also the bread of life, and the water of life.

The bread of life is here ; for, “ in the same night wherein he was betrayed, he took bread,” &c.

Here is also the water of life, represented in the communion of the blood of Christ. After supper he took the cup, &c.

Now, believer, you are called to eat the fruit, and to drink the juice, of the apple-tree, while you sit under the shadow thereof ; and you should do it with great pleasure and delight. It pleased the Lord to break and to bruise that tree ; the sacrifice Christ offered of himself to satisfy divine justice, was a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God : justice was delighted with it ; Christ, whose delight was with the sons of men from everlasting, in the prospect of this work of redemption, delighted to do the Father’s will in this doing and suffering work ; and when he sees the travail of his soul, he is satisfied and delighted : with delight, then should we sit down under the shadow of this tree ; for, Christ’s delight lies in seeing poor hell deserving sinners hiding themselves from the wrath of God under the shadow of his sufferings. Here is one of the grand motives to faith, that you do God a pleasure, you do Christ a pleasure and satisfaction, when you sit down under his shadow with pleasure and delight, and eat the pleasant fruit of his labour, and toil, and death, and resurrection : he seeks no more satisfaction from you, for all his



soul-travils, but that you make use of his sufferings, and the sweet fruits thereof. It is a satisfaction to Christ, when that which gave satisfaction to justice, gives also satisfaction to your heart; and when you that have nothing in yourselves to boast of, are cheering and delighting yourselves in him, and in that which is in him. This day would be a day of the gladness of his heart, and a joyful feast to him, if you be brought joyfully to feast upon his flesh and blood: that is, his incarnation, that he took on our nature; and satisfaction, that he gave to justice therein. He takes pleasure in them that hope in his mercy venting through this channel, to the glory of justice, and that rest upon his grace reigning through his righteousness to eternal life: "He meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness," saying, "In the Lord only have I righteousness and strength." In this manner we are to sit down under his shadow with great delight, giving him employment for pardon of sin, for peace with God, for sanctification, and for consolation. What a delightful communion will this be, if Christ and you be both delighted! He sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied; and when you see it, and are satisfied too. O what a powerful argument is this to excite faith, as it is a sitting down under his shadow with great delight! namely, That by making use of his death and sufferings for our happiness, holiness, and comfort, we not only satisfy and save ourselves, but make glad the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ; yea, we cannot please, nor satisfy him, but by sitting down with delight and satisfaction under his shadow. We give him satisfaction, when we take delight and satisfaction in him for our own good. O what a wonderful Saviour is here, that will not be pleased and satisfied with us, unless we take rest, pleasure, and satisfaction in him! He is the sovereign Judge; and the day comes, when, if you had all the world, you would give it to please him, and who will pronounce the sweetest or the sadest sentence upon you, namely, "Come to me, ye blessed;" or, "Depart from me, ye cursed;" and that according as we have satisfied him in this matter or not, of sitting down under his shadow with great delight, that he may be delighted as well as you, and satisfied for his pains and travails in doing and dying for you. It is as if a physician should say to a sick or dying patient, Here is a healing medicine for you, that will bring you to life and health, and I will not be pleased nor satisfied unless you take it off my hand. Or, as if a parent should say to a child, I have bought such a fine suit of clothes for you, and I will

not be satisfied unless you put it on and adorn yourself with it. It is a feast to him to see a poor soul feeding and feasting upon the fruit of his purchase. The more bills you draw upon him for clearing all your accounts, and paying all your debt, the more you please and glorify him ; the more employment you give him to kill and subdue your sins and corruptions, the more you satisfy him ; the more burdens you cast upon him, and the more weight you lay upon him, you do him the more pleasure ; yea, it is all the compensation he seeks for all the wrong you have done him, and all the satisfaction he requires for all the good turns he hath done to you, that you just sit down under his shadow with great delight, that in this way you may find his fruit sweet to your taste ; for sweetening all the bitter things in your lot in this world, bitter troubles, bitter reproaches, bitter waters of Marah ; and for keeping the taste of your mouth till you eat to the full at the upper table, that shall never be drawn.

Now, though you rise from this table, yet never rise from your seat under his shadow : the life he calls you to in this wilderness, is a life of faith on the Son of God, which is a sitting down, and sitting still under his shadow with great delight : and there may his fruit be always sweet to your taste.

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## SERMON CXLVIII.

### THE HAPPY VICTOR ; OR, SAINTS MORE THAN CONQUERORS.<sup>1</sup>

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.”—Rom. viii. 37.

GLOBOUS things are spoken in the preceding part of this chapter, particularly from verse 28, concerning the love and goodness of God to his chosen people, in the co-operation of all things for their good ; and that by virtue of a golden chain, reaching from eternity, in their predestination ; to eternity, in their glorification ; in contem-

(1) This Sermon was preached on a thanksgiving day, after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Kinross, Aug. 14th, 1749.

plation whereof the apostle breaks out in proposing two questions, full of comfort, ver. 31. The first is, "What shall we say to these things?" How glorious are they! And the next is, "If God be for us, who can be against us!" We may bid a defiance to all our opposers. This text I have read, relates not only to these, but especially to other two questions, that are both high notes of triumph and encouragement, and the first is a question of triumph and encouragement against all sin and guilt, ver. 33, 34. "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," &c. The second is a question of triumph and encouragement against all sorrows and afflictions, ver. 35, 36, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.)" All these questions import a strong negation: who can be against us? Who can charge us? Who can condemn us? Who can separate us? Can men or devils do it? No; none can do it. But the apostle rests not in the negative, but proceeds to the positive determination of the point: *Nay*, says he, "in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."

In these words we have, 1. A victory proclaimed; "Nay in all these we are more than conquerors." 2. The ground of it, it is "through him that loved us."

1st, A victory proclaimed; where it is, 1. Asserted; "We are conquerors." 2. It is amplified: "We are more than conquerors."

1. It is asserted; "We are conquerors;" that is, we are victors and overcomers, as believers are frequently called, Rev. ii. iii. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, &c. Rev. xxi. 7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things."

2. It is amplified: "Nay, we are more than conquerors." There is none so humble as a true believer, and yet none so confident even in the most desperate cases; though yet upon the most safe and solid grounds. It is with holy boasting the apostle speaks; as if he had said, Let not our enemies think, when they have done their utmost, that they have won the day, and got us ruined; "Nay, we are conquerors, and more than conquerors;" even conquerors to the greatest advantage, and double gainers by the battle.



2dly, The ground of the victory is, through Christ that loved us. The ground of the conquest is astonishing! How come we who are believers, united to Christ, justified and sanctified in him, to be more than conquerors? Why, it is through grace we are what we are; it is not through our own strength, but through Christ's strengthening us we can do all things. But the attribute through which, in a special manner, the glorious victory is obtained, is that attribute of love; this title of Christ was very familiar to the apostle; "He loved me, and gave himself for me;" and here the apostle chooses to speak of Christ's love, more than anything else, because all that ever Christ did for us, issued in so many grains and branches from this great root of love: and all our victories are owing to the banner of love he places over our head, Song ii. 4, "He brought me to the banquetting house, and his banner over me was love;" intimating, that as we are not to think strange to hear of a banquet and a battle at the same time; for a feast of love, and the sight of faith are very sib; so the victory is only to be obtained under the banner of love, or owing to him that loved us. This shews,

1. The deficiency of our own strength: it is nowhere said in the whole scriptures, that we fight in our own strength, far less that we overcome; and least of all that we are more than conquerors; but only through Christ that loved us, and that must do all for us.

2. It denotes that efficiency of his strength in our behalf, and the power and efficacy of his love; it is strong as death, and conquered death itself for us; "Through him," then, we are more than conquerors.

OBSERV. Christ is a lover, through whom every true believer, in all cases, be they never so hard, is more than a conqueror. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors," &c.

The method we propose for handling this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, is the following:—

- I. To speak of the Christian conqueror.
- II. Of his being more than a conqueror.
- III. The grounds of the conquest, viz., the love of Christ.
- IV. Deduce inferences for the application.

1. We are to speak of the Christian conqueror. Two things seem necessary here to be considered, viz., (1.) The enemies he conquers. (2.) The nature and import of the conquest.

1st, As to the enemies that the believer overcomes and conquers.

1. The first enemy is sin ; sin is the grave of all our mercies ; and the mother of all our miseries ; and it hath a twofold power that must be overcome, a condemning power, that binds the sinner over to eternal death and wrath ; and a polluting power, that makes the soul ugly and abominable in the sight of a holy God ; but the believer overcomes both these ; the one, viz., the guilt of sin, he overcomes completely by justification : and the other, viz., the pollution of sin, he overcomes gradually by sanctification ; this conquest is asserted in the foregoing part of the chapter, particularly, ver. 30.

2. The world must be conquered, and all the friendly blandishments thereof : for, the friendship of this world is enmity against God. It is hard to stand against such an adversary, because here we have temptations suited to all our natural inclinations, 1 John ii. 19. If we are for carnal pleasures, here are the lusts of the flesh to wallow in ; if we value ourselves for riches and full coffers, here are the lusts of the eye ; if we be for honour, here is the pride of life presenting itself. But these are what believers must overcome.

3. The devil is an enemy most powerful, spiritual, and subtle, we have to conquer : his great design is to tempt us to the practice of sin, and to hinder the exercise of grace, and to destroy immortal souls : for, "He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour ;" but he that establisheth Zion, on a lasting foundation, hath promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it : he hath promised to bruise Satan under our feet ; and his promise is like a mountain of brass that cannot be removed.

4. Raging persecutors are enemies to be conquered ; or personal enemies, that are Satan's instruments ; being either wicked men, that are confederates with Satan ; or wickedly disposed men, though otherwise gracious, as Job's friends, Aaron and Miriam, &c., Acts xiii. 50. The believer overcomes, either by well-doing, or well-suffering ; Sometimes by well-doing, which is a notable conquest, 1 Pet. ii. 15, "For, so is the will of God, that with well-doing, ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Thus, says the apostle, Rom. xii. 20, 21, "If your enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink ; for in so doing, you shall heap coals of

fire upon his head ;" if not coals of conversion to melt him, yet they will be stones of confusion to astonish him, and consume him, and burn him up. Sometimes we overcome personal enemies also by well-suffering, a Christian conquers by patience, constancy, and resolution, and perseverance, in the faith ; the saints have conquered, even by suffering unto death, Rev. xii. 11.

5. They have personal afflictions to conquer ; such as these mentioned in the two preceding verses ; viz., tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and famine, nakedness, peril, or sword. The godly are liable, to these evils : but they are helped to conquer, by looking beyond the hatred of men, that have a sinful hand therein, to the love of God, who hath a sovereign hand ; and so looking on them as loving chastisements, and signatures of adoption : by faith they can see God venting his love, even in these things wherein men may be venting their rage, revenge, and resentment. There are three ways further whereby personal afflictions are conquered, either by prevention of them, or by cheerfulness under them, or by profiting by them.

(1.) Sometimes by prevention of them, as when the Lord either prevents and diverts the dint of the stroke, that it shall not fall, or the damage of it, that it shall not harm, as it is said, Prov. xxvi. 2, "The curse causeless shall not come."

(2.) Sometimes they conquer these afflictions by cheerfulness under them : men are conquered so far as they are dejected and cast down, and when their hearts, like Nabal's, die within them : but they are conquerors, so far as they are hearty and courageous in a spiritual sense, having the Spirit of God and glory resting on them ; and are enabled to rejoice in tribulation ; and are delivered from fainting in the day of adversity. This cheerfulness is not only a natural affection, but a spiritual grace : Paul and Silas did sing praises in the prison ; and the apostles rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake, Acts v. 41. A believer is a conqueror over his afflictions by contentment : "When troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed," 2 Cor iv. 8, 9. And again,

(3.) They conquer by their profiting by affliction. Then have we the better of affliction, when we are the better by them, and get meat out of the eater. The believer looks upward to the providence of God, and he looks inward to his own heart, that he may improve



and get all sanctified, sweetened, and blessed to him. Thus a man may have benefit even by his adversaries, whether they will or not, which is the greatest victory over them.

6. The last enemy they have to be conquered is death, 1 Cor. xv. 26 ; and over this enemy also the believer shall be victorious. Death shall not be able to separate Christ and him, as you see in the verses following the text ; nay, death makes the union the more close. This union begins to be more perfect at death, as to the soul of the believer ; for it wins nearer to him when it enters into glory ; and the body being still united to Christ, rests in the grave till the resurrection, when both soul and body shall be blessed with the full enjoyment of him. Hence the song of triumph over death and the grave, “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ,” 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57.

2dly, As to the nature and import of the conquest ; believers being conquerors, supposes and imports these following things :—

1. That they have got some saving acquaintance with the Captain of salvation, having abandoned the old general, the devil, under whose standard all the children of men are still fighting, before they inlist with Christ ; but the believer is one that hath deserted the devil’s camp, and listed himself a soldier of Christ, in whom he sees all the magazine of military provision, and all the furniture for the spiritual war ; having no expectation of reaching this victory by himself, or any creature, but only by the Spirit of Christ, he expects to mortify the deeds of the body, and to bruise the head of the serpent ; knowing, That not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit, must the victory be obtained.

2. The conqueror is one that resolves upon, and hath some acquaintance with the warfaring life of the Christian ; that this life is a fighting life : the conquest supposes a battle, and weapons of war, and a putting on the whole armour of God ; “ I have fought the good fight,” says Paul : I have had hell and devils to fight against, but now I have overcome, and arrived at the crown. The conqueror knows, that the Christian life is one of the sweetest of lives, and yet one of the sharpest of lives, in several respects ; for they that would follow Christ, must not expect to be always in the mount to behold him transfigured before them ; they must come sometimes down to the valley and fight ; and, perhaps, as Paul did, “ Fight with beasts at Ephesus :” they must not expect still to sail with a fair wind,

but oftentimes to sail in the dark, and in a storm, when Christ seems to be absent. This resolution of a warfaring life would arm the Christian against many stumbling-blocks, and prevent fainting when the trial comes to a height, and saying, Why am I thus?

3. The conqueror is one that is acquaint with the nature of the war; that it is spiritual, and that the weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, &c.; that it is managed through grace, and that sometimes by flying, sometimes by fighting, and sometimes by watching.

(1.) Sometimes by flying; a Christian soldier may conquer by flying; *Flee fornication*, says the apostle: fly from sin, and you fight against it; fly from both inward and outward abominations; drunkenness, whoredom, lying, cheating, Sabbath-breaking, ill-company; shunning all appearance of evil: it is dangerous to parly with temptation, or to reason with the devil, whether you should venture on such a sin, or not; for, though you should muster up arguments, yet you may find the devil a better politician than you. But there are some evils you cannot fly from; and therefore,

(2.) Fighting must take place: when you cannot get fled, the next best is to stand your ground; "Put on the whole armour of God, that you may stand against the wiles of the devil," Eph. vi. 12. Stand fast in the faith, with an entire dependence upon Christ for new recruits of grace and strength from him; for, "We are not sufficient of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God: I live, yet not I," says the apostle, "but Christ liveth in me;" even so, may a believer say, I overcome, yet not I, but Christ overcometh for me.

(3.) By watching: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." The work of a sentinel is not to fight, but to watch the enemy's approach; and when he sees them, he tells the captain, and prays him to draw out his forces to oppose them, and so conquers: even so, the Christian soldier may conquer by watching; and upon the approach of temptation, praying the Captain of salvation to come with help against the enemy. The conqueror is acquaint with the war by flying, fighting, and watching.

4. The conqueror is one that is acquaint with, and his conquest imports acquaintance with, the power and policy of his spiritual enemies, and with the means of the victory, and the way of using the spiritual weapons. Such acquaintance hath he with the power and policy of the enemy, that he hath had the sad experience of many foils and falls in the battle; yea, the saints may lose many

battles, though they win the war at last : the liveliest of the saints may have some deadness ; the holiest have some sin : the most humble have some pride ; the most spiritual and heavenly have some earthliness and carnality ; and the most denied have some self : hence they may be frequently overcome, and lose their liveliness, though not their life altogether. It is true, the doctrine of the foils and falls of believers may be dangerous to the secure, and a rock of offence to them over which they may stumble. " Why, say they, I am daily overcome by sin, and my heart dead like a stone in prayer ; but my blessing on the minister, that tells me, Believers may be just like me ; and so I conclude myself to be among the number of believers, and hope to be saved, as well as the best." O beware, man, lest this kind of reasoning prove your spot, to be none of the spots of God's children ; a saint may be foiled and fall, but he will not lie among the dirt, nor wallow in the puddle, like a swine in the mire ; but struggles like a sheep in the mire, and is restless till he get out.

The believer also is one that knows the way and means of the victory, viz., the spiritual armour ; and the way and manner of using these weapons, particularly these four :

(1.) The weapon of the blood of Christ ; They overcome by the blood of the Lamb, Rev. xii. 14, they know that this blood cleanseth from all sin, and so washeth away the enemy as a flood ; they make use of this blood, as sin-expiating, wrath-appeasing, promise-sealing, and victory-purchasing blood.

(2.) The weapon of faith ; 1 Pet. v. 9, " Whom resist stedfast in the faith." It is by this shield of faith they quench the darts of Satan ; yea, " This is the victory whereby they overcome the world, even their faith," and by this they overcome the god of this world.

(3.) The next weapon is the word, which is the sword of the Spirit, Eph. vi. 17. By this, Christ the Captain, defeateth the devil, saying, " It is written ;" it is written so and so. When people observe only what is said by such and such a man, they are in danger to be tempted, and conquered by temptation : but when they resist temptation, by minding what is written in the word, they overcome.

(4.) The fourth weapon is prayer ; Matt. xxvi. 41, " Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." This weapon Paul used when he besought the Lord thrice. The prayerless man is



the vanquished man ; but as long as one can pray in faith, and pray in the Holy Ghost, he is armed against the devil, the world, and the flesh. The wrestler with God in prayer is the conqueror.

II. The second head of the method was, To shew in what respects believers are more than conquerors. The word *HYPERNIKOMEN* is very emphatic, and such as we cannot easily reach in our language ; it is as if we should say, We over-overcome. Now I shall shew, in eight or ten respects, how true believers may be said to be more than conquerors. And,

1. They are more than conquerors, in so far as their Captain, who fights for them, is more than man, more than a complete match for all his enemies. Christ, the Captain of their salvation, is their almighty General : this is the ground of their conquest : it is through him that loved them, as we may shew afterward. Only here we may observe, that having him on their side, it may well be said, as in ver. 31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And as Elisha said to his servant, 2 Kings ii. 16, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them : " and when his eyes were opened at the prayer of Elisha, behold the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

2. They are more than conquerors, in so far as they can glory in their cross ; and not only bear it with patience, but triumph in it with pleasure, as the cross of Christ ; for a man to glory in his own crown is no great matter, but to glory in his cross is more than a victory over it ; thus did Paul, Gal. vi. 14, when he is opposing himself to the false teachers of his time, who sought to glory in these as their converts, whom they could persuade to be circumcised, and to submit to the legal yokes they wreathed about their necks ; but, says Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." Thus were the apostles more than conquerors, when they could glory in tribulation, Rom. v. 3, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake, Acts vi. 41.

3. They are more than conquerors, in so far as they conquer the greatest enemies in a little time ; and with the least ado, or with little strength ; and by very weak and feeble means. Amongst men it is usual for that party that hath the greatest forces to carry the day ; but take a view of grace when first cast into the soul, particularly faith, it is but like a grain of mustard seed : it is like

nothing, were it not for the strength of Christ that helps and makes it victorious. If a great army conquer a small handful, it is but a victory : but if a small handful conquer a great army, this is more than a victory ; as when that small grain of mustard-seed overtops and overcomes the whole world ; for, “ This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” The children of God sometimes conquer with a little strength, and by very weak and feeble means : it is all one to God to conquer by many or few.

4. They are more than conquerors, in so far as they can conquer without any loss to themselves, but rather gain. When one army defeats another, but with loss of thousands, or of the greatest part of the army, it may be called a victory ; but when the one routs the other, without any loss, and with great gain, then it is more than a victory. What does the believer lose, when he conquers the world and its lusts, when he conquers the devil and his confederates ? Nay, he gains unspeakably by the conquest ; for, he divides the spoil ; he reaps profit and advantage by his tribulations ; for, “ Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed ; because the love of God is shed abroad upon his heart, by the Holy Ghost.” They conquer with the least loss, and yet the greatest advantage to themselves.

5. They are more than conquerors, in so far as they conquer to the greatest loss and disadvantage to the enemy. Their greatest enemies are at first disabled, and at last destroyed. A man may conquer his enemy for the present ; but he may recruit and recover again, and fall upon him with a second encounter, and be stronger than ever he was before ; but a child of God, in conquering his enemies, not only foils them, but disables them ; for the heaviest stroke the devil and his instruments can give, brings in most profit to them, and does most disable the enemy ; as the last stroke the devil gave to our ever-glorious Head, did most of all disable the devil ; for, when he bruised the heel of Christ’s human nature to death, our Lord gave the serpent’s head a kick, as it were, and thereby break his legal power ; for, “ By death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Thus the most bloody stroke the enemies gave tends most of all to disable and weaken their power, while the believer renews his strength the more, and waxes valiant in fighting. Our Lord Jesus, the Captain, is also to sit at the Father’s right hand, till all his

enemies be his footstool: and therefore all the believers' enemies shall be at last perfectly subdued unto them, sin, and misery, and tribulation, and sickness, and death itself, they shall be all swallowed up in victory, 1 Cor. xv. 54.

6. They are more than conquerors, in regard they can be sure of the victory before the war be at an end. What assurance have they of this? Why,

(1.) Christ their Head, hath overcome, and gained the prize already; and there cannot be a victorious head, and a conquered body: if the head be raised from the dead, the body shall rise. Their final victory is as sure, as Christ their Head is already victorious.

(2.) Their weapons are invincible; the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, cannot fail to be victorious.

(3.) They are assured by the promise of God; for it is promised, that the God of peace will bruise Satan under their feet.

(4.) They are assured by the earnest of the full victory; the Spirit enabling them sometimes to mortify the deeds of the body: and as this Spirit is the earnest of the inheritance, so the earnest of the full and complete victory. "God is a rock, and his work is perfect:" he hath begun the good work, and will perfect it. If then he that is assured of the victory before the war was ended, is more than a conqueror, every believer in Christ may be so.

7. They are more than conquerors, in regard that they conquer, even when they do not fight; for, even the rest of God's people is glorious and victorious, Isa. xi. 10. They are sometimes called just to stand still, and see the salvation of God: "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace, Exod. xvi. 13, 14. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong:" but when his children only go to the field of battle, he just takes their work and warfare off their hand, as the church, Song ii. 3, "I sat down under his shadow;" thereafter it follows, "He brought me to the banquetting house, and his banner over me was love." He took me off my own hand; "His own arm got him the victory."

8. They are more than conquerors, in regard they conquer when they are conquered, and overcome the enemy, even in that wherein the enemy thought to have overcome. Any man can overcome in his victories; but the child of God overcomes in his foils and defeats, that he meets with; his very losses themselves are



victories; what enemies design for their greatest overthrow and debasement, issues in their greatest honour and advancement; "But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive," Gen. l. 20. He overcomes even there where he is beaten and overthrown. And hence these things that seem to be the means of ruining, are the means of raising him; yea, matter of gloriation; most gladly therefore will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong; his strength is made perfect in weakness," 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. Hence also here the apostle says, "In all these things we are more than conquerors." What things are these? You see them in the preceding verse, "Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword." These things which seem to be so distant and remote from conquering, so opposite and contrary to conquest, even "in all these things we are more than conquerors." The devil's aim, in all the sufferings of God's children, is to draw them off from Christ, to make them murmur and despair, and desert their colours; but, in this he is defeated and disappointed: for, God inspires his children with such a generous and noble spirit, that sufferings abate not their zeal and patience, but rather increase it: as one of Julian's nobles said to him, "We Christians laugh at your cruelty, and grow the more bold and resolute." Thus they beat their enemies with their own weapons.

9. They are more than conquerors, in regard that they conquer and overcome themselves: *Fortior est, qui se quam qui fortissima vincit, mœnia*: "He that can, through grace, conquer himself, is more than he that can conquer a castle." "He that ruleth over his own spirit, is more than he that taketh a city," Prov. xvi. 31. Here is a notable conquest, for a man to have a command and victory over himself, and his own heart; for, it enables him easily to defeat all other oppositions; this we could never do, if we do not conquer ourselves; for, he that is a slave to his lusts, will be a slave to his enemies; he that never conquers his carnal affections, will never conquer his crosses and afflictions. The carnal nature man is a captive to every temptation that he meets with: he is like a city without walls, that is easily taken. Where the strong holds of sin in the heart are pulled down, other enemies would be the sooner

subdued ; " O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways ! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries," Psal. lxxxix. 13, 14. This is the way to get adversaries subdued ; " He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations ; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron," Rev. ii. 26, 27.

10. In a word, *lastly*, They are more than conquerors, in regard they conquer HIM that is unconquerable, and overcome him that is invincible. The children of God, to speak with holy reverence, do in some respects conquer GOD himself : and that two ways, namely, by the beauty of their graces, and the efficacy of their prayers.

(1.) By the beauty and loveliness of their graces, which he himself hath adorned them with ; " Turn away thine eyes from me ; for they have overcome me," Song vi. 5. These are the words of Christ to his spouse, the church of true believers : *Thine eyes* ; that is, the beauty and lustre of thy graces ; Christ is in a manner charmed and ravished with the graces of his own Spirit in his people ; " Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse ; thou hast ravished my heart, with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck," Song iv. 9.

(2.) By the efficacy of their prayers ; the prayers of faith holds his hands, as it were, and will not let him go ; as one says, *Ligat omnipotentum, vincit invicibilem* : " It binds him that is omnipotent, and overcomes him that is invincible." He suffers a wholly humble wrestler to command him ; " Ask of me things to come, concerning my sons and concerning the works of my hands command ye me," Isa. xlv. 11. It is said of Jacob, " He held him, and would not let him go, till he blessed him : " and hence he is said, as a prince, to have prevailed with God, and to have had power over the angel ; and so much was signified in the change of his name from JACOB to ISRAEL. How prevalent was Moses' prayer, when God said, " Let me alone ! " How powerful was the prayer of Elijah and Elisha ! God gives himself up to be bound and held by their prayers ; and thus " The King is held in the galleries."

This victory in prevailing with God, is the great foundation of all other victories. They that can conquer God, and bring him to their will, may soon conquer every thing else : having him for their friend, they need not care who be their enemies. They that can

prevail with God, and have power with the Most High, may grapple with all encounters ; and are vastly more than conquerors over all other things. But now,

III. The third general head was, To speak to the ground of this conquest ; it is through Christ we are more than conquerors. How ? “Through him that loved us ;” even through this glorious and mighty Lover. This name of Christ, as our Lover, through whom we are more than conquerors, imports these following things :

1. The humble frame of the believing conqueror. To boast of being more than conquerors, looks very big ; and seems to smell of self-confidence and presumption : therefore it is here corrected and qualified, namely, “through him that loved us ;” and through his strength and power. The conquest we have over sin and suffering is not from ourselves, or our own strength ; no : we may say, “Thanks be to God which gives us the victory,” 1 Cor. xv. 57. And as Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 17, “No man stood with me, nevertheless, the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me ;” and it is through him strengthening that we can do all things : “I laboured more abundantly than they all ; yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me.” When we are in a cheerful frame, we are ready, with Peter, to be too confident of our own strength : and this is dangerous : for then we grieve his Spirit by presumption ; and he is thereby provoked to grieve our spirit by desertion, and withdrawing of his Spirit from us ; to prevent this in Paul, a thorn in his flesh, and messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him ; because it is better to be under the power of an affliction, than under the power of a lust.

2. The expression imports a suitable name and title given to the Captain of salvation, through whom we are more than conquerors : he is described from his love ; and, indeed, by this name, as our Lover and Friend, he is best known to us. This name we frequently meet with in the sacred records ; “He loved his church, and gave himself for it,” Eph. v. 25. “Who loved me, and gave himself for me,” Gal. ii. 20. “Who loved us, and washed us in his blood,” Rev. i. 5. The apostle mentions troubles and afflictions, things seemingly opposite to love : therefore it was pertinent, for the preventing of mistakes, to set forth Christ in his love.

3. It imports, that love was the spring that moved him to make us conquerors, and more than conquerors. Love made him take on our nature, 2 Cor. viii. 9, “Though he was rich, yet, you know, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he became poor, that we



through his poverty might be rich ;" that is, though he was God, yet he became man, in rich grace and love towards us ; " Though he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God ; yet he took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation," Phil. ii. 6, 7. And indeed, that he should marry our nature to his own, and take it into the union and subsistence of his own divine person, it was the lowest abasement on his part, and the highest advancement on ours ; " In this was manifested the love of Christ towards us." His being born, living, dying, raising, and redeeming us, were all the effects and results of his love, whereby we become conquerors.

4. " Through him that loved us," it imports the power and efficacy of his love, and the conquering nature thereof ; his love was strong as death, and conquered death, and came off victorious ; and through him this last enemy shall be destroyed : for, his love conquered all the curses of the law ; he being made a curse for us, it conquered the wrath of God, and underwent this for us. This love of his conquers all our guilt, and takes us with all the guilt we have. His love conquers our unwillingness to take him, and conquers our willingness to depart from him. Here was the greatest difficulty and obstacle imaginable, yet love came skipping over all these mountains. His love hath fought the battle and gained it, so as we have nothing ado, but chase and pursue the conquered foe.

5. " Through him that loved us," it imports, that love is the principle of his assistance that he gives us in the war. Not only did love buy the weapons, for he bought grace at the rate of his precious blood ; but love confers and puts on the weapons. His love rubs off the rust off the weapons ; when they are out of use, he blows on our graces with a fresh gale, a rousing north wind, or a refreshing south wind ; he gives strength to exercise grace, and to go from strength to strength ; and carries on the victory to perfection, making the feeble as David, and David as the angel of the Lord, Zech. xii. 8. Our strength is God alone. There are three things that in love he gives us for our assistance in the conquest over sin and affliction both, namely, his example, his word, his Spirit.

(1.) His example, 1 Pet. ii. 21, " Christ hath suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps." He hath conquered before us, having spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross,

Col. ii. 15. He tells us, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;" and therefore we are required to keep our eye upon him; "Looking unto Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, &c. Consider him that endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds," Heb. xii. 2, 3. His victory makes for ours.

(2.) His word is what in love he gives us; and in this he goes forth conquering and to conquer; it is his chariot of triumph; "Now, thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, making known the savour of his knowledge by us in every place," 2 Cor. ii. 14. Hence it is said, 1 John ii. 14, "Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you;" and that in all the kinds of it, threatenings, precepts, and promises. This was the weapon whereby Christ foiled Satan, so and so it is written; and so must we overcome, even by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

(3.) The Spirit is what in love he gives for our assistance in the war. He enables us to conquer by his Spirit, that dwelleth in us. The apostle John, speaking of Antichrist and seducing spirits, says, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world," 1 John iv. 4. It is by this victorious Spirit of Christ that first we ourselves are conquered, and then are conquerors, and enabled to conquer all other things; we are first conquered and overcome in the powerful work of conversion; and then, by the same Spirit, he works in us all conquering and commanding graces, whereby we may be able to overcome. He works the grace of faith, which is a conquering grace; for, "This is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith," 1 John v. 4. This faith doth, by apprehending and laying hold on Christ, and drawing strength and virtue from him: whatever power there is in Christ himself, that power is interpretatively in faith, which is nothing but an improving and making use of that power of Christ. He works love, which is another conquering grace; for, "Love is strong as death;" and constrains the soul to fight under the banner of love, and overcome. He works humility; and as there is nothing nearer ruin than pride; so nothing is nearer victory than humility; God himself resists the proud, and gives battle against it; but he gives grace to the humble, and success with it. He works also the grace of patience;

and this earnestly encounters with the greatest evils ; he conquers that suffers.

6. "Through him that loved us, we are more than conquerors," it imports, that the faith of his love influences the conquest ; whenever we look to the banner of love that he causes to be carried over our head, then we conquer, and are more than conquerors, in all these things ; even in all tribulations and distresses. I think there is an emphasis here, intimating, the believer's safety in the midst of trouble, under the broad banner of love ; here is not only a conquest over all these things ; but a conquest, and more than a conquest, in all these things, even while we are in the midst of them. Why ? because our heavenly Lover spreads his banner of love over us ; and it is a banner so extensive that it stretches itself over all these things, while we are in the midst of them, so as we are not only safe from them, when they are over ; but safe in them, while they are burning like fire about us, and we like the burning bush amidst the fire. Why, the banner of love that is over us, is over all these things that would annoy us ; over all the flames of the fiery furnace that would consume us. His love is extensive love, that spreads itself over all these things, that in them all we may be conquerors, and more than conquerors. Let these tribulations, be never so extensive, never so high, never so deep, never so broad, never so long, the love of Christ is more extensive, being a love that hath a height, a depth, a breadth, and a length unutterable ; even as high as heaven, as deep as hell, as broad as time, as long as eternity.

Therefore, what shall I tell you, sirs ? Something more honourable can be said of the believer's conquest on earth, than can be said of the glorious conquerors about the throne in heaven ; the church triumphant above may be said, through him that loved them, to be more than conquerors above all these things, and above all tribulations, above all distresses, above all persecutions, above all perils and swords, above all the killing swords of human fury and violence ; but something more honourable yet can be said of the militant church below, and of the poor believer, that hath the faith of the love of Christ, that he is more than a conqueror, even in all these things, in all these tribulations, distresses, and persecutions, and swords of violence, when troubled on every side, yet not distressed, nor defeated, but defeating, and conquering, and gaining more than a victory.



How this? Even because they can see what the redeemed above can see no more; that is, when they see the banner of love over them, they see it extended so far as to see love in these tribulations, love in these distresses, love in these persecutions; fatherly love, even in, and over-topping all these rods of his anger, that may be filled with the fury of men, yet fraughted with the love of God, who says, "Fury is not in me." Thus, through him that loved us, and through him as our Lover, and in the faith of his love, we are more than conquerors; the glorious victory is wholly owing to the Lord our Lover; love leads the van; love fights the battle; love carries the day; and under this banner we are more than conquerors.

IV. The fourth thing proposed, was, To make some application. If it be so, as we have said, hence see,

1. That the Christian life in this world is not only a wayfaring, but a warfaring life. The conquest supposes a battle; "If any man will live godly in Christ he must suffer persecution;" he must resolve to fight, and not to lie in a whole skin, or to live an idle life. The apples of paradise will not drop into our mouth without any toil, or trouble, or pains; "Strait is the gate that leadeth unto life;" and there must be a striving to enter, and striving in earnest, in sad earnest; for, "Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able," Luke xiii. 24; *i.e.*, they who only seek, but do not strive, for violence must be used; "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

2. Hence see the dignity and excellency of all true believers. The world looks upon them as contemptible, and easily conquered, and overcome; and therefore every person is ready to tread upon them, and trample them under foot; nay, but they are conquerors, and more than conquerors, and can triumph over all opposition. A true believer is one like a king, against whom there is no rising up, Prov. xxx. 31, unconquerable; he is a prince that prevaieth with God; and who can prevail against him when he is in good terms with God? He may be conquered in his person, but cannot be conquered in his cause; that will always hold out; the apostle Paul was neither conquered in his cause, nor conquered in his spirit, Acts xx. 24, "Bonds and afflictions, says he, abide me; but yet none of these things move me." So may all the true and faithful servants of Christ, through grace, preserve themselves in a courageous frame of spirit.

3. Hence see what ground of comfort and encouragement it

is to the faithful servants and followers of Christ that they stand not by their own strength and power, but by the power of Christ; their conquering is not from themselves, but only from him; "We are conquerors through him that loved us;" mark it, sirs; he says not, Through him whom we love; which might be truly said; but then it would have seemed to attribute somewhat of our victory to ourselves, and our love to him, which would have taken very much off from the sweetness and efficacy of the comfort and consolation, as if our victory depended upon us; but "through him that loved us;" this gives the glory of it all to Christ: "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory," Psalm cxv. 1.

4. Hence see this victory proceeds from the love of Christ, which draws out his power. By his own strength shall no man prevail, but by the strength of Christ, under his banner of love. Our conquest springs from his unspeakable love. "Nothing," says the text, "shall separate us from the love of Christ:" Why? Because his love is so prevalent for us, as to unite us, and keep us close to himself; this being the nature of love, especially of divine love, to join itself to us, to join us to it, and so to preserve what is joined to it. It is from his love that he afflicts us; and it is from his love that he strengthens us, and enables us to endure affliction. Many are ready to judge of God's love by other things, as by corn, wine, and oil they enjoy from him; but it is best to try and discover his love by this fruit of it; namely, in the matter of victory, especially over our spiritual enemies. What strength have we to resist temptations? What ability to subdue corruptions? What power to submit to afflictions? What fortitude to bear up under, and glory in tribulations, distresses, and persecutions, and to make a sanctified and holy use and improvement of them? Here is a discovery of Christ's love to us.

5. Hence see what matter of comfort it is to fighting believers, who, though their life be a fighting under the cross, both without and within; it is much for him, even to overcome himself, and his own unbelief, impenitency, and selfishness; and, though he has his own difficulties in this fight of faith, yet he is so much more than a conqueror, that his victory is not dubious, but certain and manifest: the devil is legally disarmed, and evidently disappointed: the victory that the believer hath in Christ is won, and cannot be lost again: it is a sure and continuing victory; for, whatever hurt or damage the church and people of God may receive, by a particular

assault from a present cross, a fiery dart, or a frightful temptation, yet it is sure they shall have the full and absolute victory in the close. The light of nature, the Pagan philosophy, could never carry men beyond a doubt about their future happiness. The famous Aristotle is said, in view of death, to have expressed himself thus—*Anxius vixi, dubius morioa, nescio quo vado*: “I have lived in anxiety, I am dying in doubtfulness, and know not where I am going.” But you, believer in Christ, may be sure, upon the word and oath of God, Heb. vi. 17—20, where you are going: you need neither live nor die in doubt, if you live and die in the faith. The victory is not dubious: the crown of life is sure to him that is faithful unto death.

6. Hence see, that proud and wicked persecutors take a hard task, and an ill trade in hand, to fight against the faithful servants and people of God. The sons of pride and violence will come off with shame and disgrace; but the people of God, the children of light, will come off with honour and victory; “Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at the word, your brethren that hated you, and cast you out for my name’s sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified:” they killed you under pretence of doing God service, saying, with a solemnity, “Let God be glorified; but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed,” Isa. lxvi. 5. Happy the followers of the Lamb, who are listed under his banner: they may be oppressed, troubled, persecuted, they may be separated from the society of men, and ranked amongst devils; but can tribulation and distress, can persecution or sword, separate them from the love of Christ? Nay, by no means: “Nay, in all these things they are more than conquerors.” Men may wickedly curse, and commit them to the devil; but the devil will not take the prey; but be obliged to cry out, saying, “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel; according to this time, it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought,” Numb. xxiii. 23.

7. Hence see what an useful name our Lord Jesus Christ bears in relation to us, even when we are in the field of battle; why, the name of the Captain is a Lover of ours; for the conquest is through him that loved us, whose love is the victorious banner, under which we are more than conquerors: and that even in all these things that bear the image of hatred. When men are haters, he is a lover; their hatred is a killing hatred, but his love is a conquering love, over all their tyranny and treachery. This name of his tells us how



he conquers, and by what engine, namely, that of love ; and how we may conquer, namely, by believing his love, and imitating his love. This name of his tells us how we may get amends of our persecutors, and how to be more than conquerors over them, even by following the example of Christ, who conquered them that murdered him, by praying, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We conquer our persecutors, and have the better of them, when we do them good for evil, and bless them that curse us, and do good to them that persecute us, and despitefully use us ; then we have the day of them, and heap coals of fire on their head, which will either melt them down, or burn them up ; either convert, or consume them. This name tells us, that they mistake much, who think that tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and a drawn sword against us, are signs of God's hatred ; nay, it is the direct contrary, for his love mixing with all these things, is the ground of our victory, and the cause why in all these things we are more than conquerors. When the viper fastened upon Paul's hand, the ignorant people thought it was a sign of God's hatred, and that he was a murderer, whom vengeance would not suffer to live ; tribulations, distresses, persecutions, perils, and swords, are vipers that may fasten upon God's children ; but think not the worse, but rather the better of them ; because they may be rather signs of love than of hatred : they shall shake off the viper into the fire, and catch no harm.

8. Hence then let us see the duty both of saints and sinners.

(1.) The duty of saints, that are Christian soldiers, and would desire not only to be so, but also triumphant conquerors. In order to this, it is your duty to keep your eye upon your general, Christ, and serve yourselves heirs to his victories, believing his love, and fighting under his banner, remembering that it is the fight of faith you are called to ; therefore, you are to fight in the faith of his love ; your valiant Captain is a vehement lover of yours ; therefore, aim at believing in him, by sitting down under his shadow, Song ii. 3 ; and then, though you have no strength in your own hand, he will take you off your own hand, and that both for provision and protection, as he did the spouse, in the following verse ; as to provision, you shall have it to say, " He brought me to the banquetting house ;" and, as to protection, " that his banner over me was love:" and in both he will take you off your own hand ; for when you essay stretching out the withered hand, or endeavour to sit down under his shadow, or in the use of appointed means to be active, then he

will make you sweetly passive, by taking you up in his arms : " He brought me to his banquetting house ;" and, by lifting up his banner over your head, " his banner over me was love." In this way you cannot fail not only to be more than conquerors in the issue, but even in the midst of all your adversaries and adversities ; " In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Live under this conquering banner:

(2.) See the duty of sinners, that are strangers to this glorious and victorious Captain of salvation, through whom all believers and lovers of him are more than conquerors through his love ; you are yet slaves to sin and Satan, captives to the world, and the flesh, and the lusts thereof, warring against God ; but " Who can harden himself against God and prosper ?" Your duty is, if you would not live and die in captivity to sin and Satan, and remain in perpetual slavery and misery, O come and enlist with our Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, that through him you may become conquerors over sin, and Satan, and death, and misery.

I have a ministerial commission, which neither men nor devils can take from me, and it is to take on soldiers to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to call them to come under his banner of love : his name is the Lord that loved us, he is a lover of ours, even of mankind sinners ; and he courts you with his love, with a word of love, and a word of reconciliation. What ! Is he willing to receive such a rebel as I am ? Yea, he not only says he is willing, " Whosoever will, let him come, and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out ;" but he swears that he is willing : " As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of sinners ;" as sure as death will be in earnest with you ere long, so sure is he in earnest, praying you to be reconciled to him.

O enemy, will you henceforth lift up arms of rebellion against that God who hath thrown down his arms of war and wrath against you, saying, in Christ, " I am pacified toward you, for all that you have done?" What ! pacified in Christ toward you ! And, for shame ! will you not be pacified, or at peace with him ? If you will not be drawn to him with these cords of love, nor conquered to him with the power of his love, to your eternal salvation, you shall be conquered by the power of his wrath, to your eternal perdition. If you would not be crushed with his anger in the day of wrath, O refuse not to be conquered with his love in the day of grace. O sirs, slighted mercy will bring you to the hottest hell ! If this offer of

mercy be slighted, it will gall you to the heart for ever, as the murderer that, when he was to be executed for many murders, confessed that nothing stared him in the face, nor galled him so much as his murdering a pleasant child, when it was smiling in his face. Well, will you fight against mercy when it is smiling in your face, and spurn against the bowels of love that are moving and yearning towards you? If you do so, nothing will torment you in hell so much as this. Therefore, remember his name that is calling you to come to him: to whom is the gospel calling you to come? It is to him that loved us; it is to a lover. Oh! will you render him hatred for love? Is there any here saying, Is there love and mercy for me, for the like of me? Yea, for the like of you; though you have been like a devil for enmity against God hitherto. He speaks to you like a God of love; and if this fire of divine love melt your heart, and conquer your enmity, and draw your heart to him, then you may go away with a glad heart, triumphing in this valiant lover, that was able to win such a heart as yours, and saying, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."

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## SERMON CXLIX.—CL.

THE DAY OF EFFECTUAL CALLING, A LEVELLING DAY: OR, THE HEIGHTS FROM WHICH SINNERS COME DOWN IN THE DAY OF EFFECTUAL VOCATION.<sup>1</sup>

"Zaccheus, make haste and come down."—LUKE XIX. 5.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ is such a wonderful Physician, that he has a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady, and a cure for every case, that any sinner on earth can possibly be in. In the close of the preceding chapter we find him miraculously healing Bartimeus of his bodily blindness; and here, in the beginning of this chapter, we find him curing Zaccheus of his spiritual blindness. Bartimeus was a poor man, sitting by the way side begging; and

(1) This subject was handled in two discourses, on a sacramental solemnity, at Falkirk, May 20th and 21st, 1750. The first on the Sabbath, the second on the Monday.



he is mercifully raised up to be effectually cured of his disease. Zaccheus was a rich man, sitting very high on a tree by the way side, gazing ; and he is mercifully brought down to be effectually cured of his disease. Whether people be in low or high circumstances, there is suitable help and relief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, this Zaccheus is here described in the context six different ways.

1. By his nature and nation, ver. 1. He was a Gentile, and a man of Jericho ; a place once destroyed and cursed by Joshua : yet even in this very place, as there was a Rachab to be saved, so there was a Zaccheus to be converted by the Lord Jesus. The baseness of a place does not hinder Christ from calling his chosen. Heaven is open to one place as well as another ; therefore, wherever ministers of Christ go, they may open up their heavenly commission, and preach the gospel to every rational creature under heaven, not knowing where a blessing may light. The cross of Christ, if we may allude thereunto, had four corners, inviting the four quarters of the world to come to him. If we consider the body of Christ upon the cross, we may learn how every part of him bids welcome to all comers : his feet fixed on the cross, to wait and expect all passengers ; his arms stretched out and spread abroad, to embrace all that come to him ; his head being down to sound into sinners' ears, " Behold the love of a Saviour !" his blood gushing out like a stream, to refresh all that come ; and none shall be excepted, but these that except themselves. But, again,

2. He is described by his profession and occupation, verse 2. He was a publican, and the chief among the publicans. They were persons detested by the Jews ; for, after the Jews were subject to the Roman empire, they received the tribute money ; and they were Romans and heathens ; and he being the chief of the publicans, it is probable also that he was a notorious sinner, for we find frequently that publicans and sinners were joined together. When Christ would describe a notorious and incorrigible sinner, he says, Matt. xviii. 17, " Let him be to you as a heathen man, and a publican." Now, this Zaccheus was a publican, and so hated by the Jews ; a sinner, and so hated of God, who is angry with the wicked every day ; but Christ came to call sinners to repentance, and so bring them into favour with him, as all that belong to Christ will be, they being loved in him with an everlasting love. Let no sinner then despair of mercy through Christ. It is true, if they go on in sin,

and live and die in a sinful, Christless state, they have ground to despair, and everlasting horror and despair will be their latter end ; but if they come down with Zaccheus to the Lord Jesus, and so leave off their sinful course, as he did, they shall meet with the same welcome. Despair of the mercy of God in Christ, which is infinite and flowing, is one of the most prodigiously aggravated sins. Cain sinned more in despairing of mercy, than in killing his innocent brother. Judas sinned more in hanging himself, through despair, than in betraying his Master, through avarice. It is dangerous to pass a peremptory sentence upon any man's final state ; here is a publican called.

3. He was described by his quality : he was rich, ver. 2. It is hard for a rich man to enter into heaven, when he makes his wealth his strong tower ; and hence, " Not many rich and noble are called ;" but some there are. Riches, in themselves, are not hindrances to Christ. One observes, concerning Joseph of Arimathea, he was a great man in the eyes of the world, but a greater in the eyes of God : the wise men that came out of the east to worship Christ were both rich and honourable. Neither the poverty of blind Bartimeus, nor the riches of this man, Zaccheus, did hinder the Lord Jesus Christ from showing favour and mercy towards them. Let rich and poor, high and low, and all sorts of sinners here, " Look unto him, and be saved," and seek after a sight of him, as Zaccheus here did ; who is described,

4. By his present disposition and intense inclination, verse 3, " He sought to see Jesus." It would seem, from the event, that it was something more than curiosity that prompted him to seek after a sight of Jesus. It is probable that by this time the Spirit of God had convinced Zaccheus that he was a sinner, a great sinner ; and now he hears the report of Christ as a Saviour sent from God ; and, while the convinced sinner is hearing of a Saviour, even before effectual calling, he may be under such impressions, by the common motions of the Spirit of God, as tend to carry him out toward a blind yet ardent desire after a yet unseen and unknown Jesus ; though yet these convictions, impressions, and desires may have nothing in their nature saving ; however, in the elect of God, they may be saving evidentially, by virtue of the divine decree connecting them in the issue with his saving work. Thus Zaccheus, while other rich men were despising Christ, and would not give a farthing for a sight of him, is filled with an earnest desire after a sight of Christ, even

before Christ manifests himself to him. It is a hopeful thing that some saving good is to follow, when a secret desire is wrought in the heart, after a sight, even of a yet unknown Christ ; and when the report of Christ, works in a people a desire of acquaintance with him. But here you may observe the impediments which hindered Zaccheus from getting a sight of Christ ; and there are two mentioned ; the first was outward from the people, namely, the press ; the second was inward from himself, namely, that he was of little stature. Hence we may observe, That when people desire to see Christ, and win near to him, there are manifold impediments to hinder it, both from without, and from within. From without, the hinderance may be a press ; pressing business, pressing company, pressing crowds of worldly incumbrances, that tend to divert them from Christ and spiritual things. From within ; as Zaccheus was of little stature, and could not get a sight of Christ ; so in spirituals, they are of little stature, having little affection to Christ, little conviction of their need of Christ, little sense of sin and wrath, and of the dreadful curse they lie under, while they are without Christ : the stature of the good inclinations may be so little, and low, that they cannot see over the head of the pressing multitude of their outward worldly vocations ; yea, from within, there are not only privative but positive impediments, not only little good about them, but much evil, especially an evil heart of unbelief. However, Zaccheus pursues his desire to see Christ, notwithstanding of the impediments. And so,

5. He is described by his endeavours that backed his desire, and the measures he took for attaining his desire, ver. 4, “ He ran before, and climbed up a sycamore tree, to see Christ, because he was to pass that way.” O but it is good for people to cast themselves in Christ’s way ! though there be no infallible certain connection, by divine promise, between natural and saving grace ; yet the poor beggar, that keeps the way side, where the king passes, is certainly wiser and nearer his purpose than the man that should go up to a distant mountain where the king never comes. It is good to be about God’s hand in the use of means, even though we should mistake the right manner of using them ; for the Lord may send a word of power to direct them to the right way of entertaining him, as here he did Zaccheus, who here manifests his ardent desires to see Christ, by climbing the tree that was in the way where Christ was to pass ; his desires were attended with endea-



vours: "The sluggard desires, and has not; for, his hands refuse to labour;" but here the desires of Zaccheus set both his hands and feet a work, to climb up the tree. Rich men are generally proud, and would scorn to climb up upon a tree before a multitude; and reckon it mean and below them to expose themselves at that rate; but here Zaccheus, though he was rich, and a kind of prince, and chief among these that were of his order and office; yet he is not ashamed to climb the tree like a child, which perhaps he would have blushed to do had any earthly prince been passing by; but now, he values not the scorn of the multitude, might he get but a sight of Christ.

Remark, "That they that truly desire a sight of Christ in ordinances, will not regard the reproach and scorn of a wicked world." Many in our days, especially of the rich sort, think shame to be seen climbing the trees of duties and ordinances, for fear their neighbours gaze and laugh at them, and mock them; but that is an evidence that there is no secret heart desire to see Christ excited within them, otherwise they would despise the reproach of fools.

6. Zaccheus is described, by his effectual vocation, ver. 5, where our text lies. Where you may observe two things. 1. The means. 2. The manner of his vocation, or effectual calling.

[1.] The means thereof. And here you may observe four powerful means.

(1.) The first mean was Christ's coming to the place; and, indeed, the day of effectual calling is the day wherein Christ comes by his gracious presence; it is not running nor climbing, nor using any endeavours that will be effectual, till the Lord himself come to the place. We may say of the place where we are met, What though people are come, and ministers are come; if Christ himself do not come, by his spiritual presence, nothing will be done. As Martha said to Christ, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" so we may say, if Christ be not here, we will remain dead in sin and security; but if Christ be here, his presence will quicken us to a lively hope, to a lively faith, to a new and spiritual life.

(2.) The next mean was Christ's looking up. Zaccheus had climbed up the tree with his hands and feet; and, behold! Christ follows him with his heart and eyes: "He looked up." Observe here, That wherever any person is, that belongs to Christ, he will surely give a look of love, and cast an eye of pity toward that per-

son, whether he be down among the crowd, or up among the branches of a tree; let him be a cripple on the ground, or a climber on the boughs, Christ will be at him; though he were as far down as Bartimeus, sitting by the way side, begging; or as far up as Zaccheus, sitting on the tree, gazing; Christ will look over thousands, and give a look to him; "He looked up." Most of these whom Christ is about to call to himself are in such circumstances that Christ must, in a manner, look up to him; and, O! what amazing grace is this! It is a wonder when Christ condescends to look down from heaven to us on earth, but for him to come down to earth, to look up to us here, is a wonder of wonders! That he should put himself among the rank of worms, Psalm xxii. 6, "I am a worm, and no man;" and that for this end, that he might look up to men, placing themselves upon, and pleasing themselves in their own heights and altitudes; this is wonderful! Christ and sinners are sometimes represented in such a situation as if the world were turned upside down, as indeed it is by sin: Christ is brought down so low, that, when he looks to the sinner, he must look up; and the sinner exalted so high, that when he looks to Christ, he must look down. High attempts, and lofty endeavours of our own will never do us any saving good, till Christ give us a saving look; and, as it were, look up to us with pity and compassion, so as to cause us to look down with shame and confusion.

3. Another mean was Christ's seeing him; "He looked up and saw him." Christ not only looked up to the tree, but he saw Zaccheus there; he went there to see Christ, and Christ went there to see him; and so they behoved to see one another. Hence observe, That when a poor soul is seeking to see Christ, it is a happy omen that Christ is seeking to see that soul, and that they will not be long asunder. Here is a notable spur and incitement to diligence when we are seeking after Christ, Christ is seeking after us; when we would have communion with Christ, Christ would have communion with us; when we have an eye towards Christ, Christ hath an eye toward us; it is, notwithstanding, to be observed here, that as we do not read that Zaccheus saw Christ, till first we are told that Christ saw him; so it is sure, Christ's looking to us prevents our looking to him; no soul can look to him with an eye of faith and hope, till he look to that soul with an eye of pity and mercy. If any seed of spiritual desire after Christ was now sown in Zaccheus's heart, it was a fruit of Christ's seeing him. Though

exercised souls are not always sensible of this, but may be, sometimes, through ignorance, thus speaking with themselves; "O! how willingly would I see Christ! but I know not if he be willing." What, man! this is a piece of blasphemy; if you be truly willing, his will has prevented yours; if your eye be towards him, his eye has prevented yours; "He looked up and saw him." Zaccheus could not see him till he looked up and shewed his face to him; none can see him savingly till he shews and manifests himself. It is true, Christ saw the multitude about him, and they saw him; but it was in another manner that Christ and Zaccheus saw one another; Christ conveyed himself into his heart with the look that he gave to him, and the word that he spake to him. Christ saw Nathaniel down below the tree, when he little thought that Christ was looking to him: "When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." And here he saw Zaccheus upon the sycamore tree when he little thought he would notice him.

(4.) The fourth means of this effectual calling was Christ's speaking to him. Hence we may learn, That when Christ gives a merciful look, he gives a merciful word; where he gives a look of love, he gives a word of power; his gracious looks and his gracious words go together; the ordinary means of effectual calling is by the word of Christ accompanied with the power of the Spirit of Christ; "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." But now, what said Christ to him? This leads me to the other part of the text, viz.,

[2.] The manner of his vocation, or effectual calling. Here again we may observe these four things concerning it.

(1.) It was a particular call; he speaks to him by name, Zaccheus. It is said of Christ, John x. 3, "He calls his own sheep by name." Here remark, That the effectual call is a particular call: they that are thus called are dealt with particularly, as if God were speaking to them by name and surname. I might here observe the signification of the name, Zaccheus, which signifies, pure, clean, and undefiled; but surely he was never rightly called Zaccheus till now that Christ called him so; and, by the particular call, did effectually sow the seed of holiness and purity in his heart; and that it was effectual appears from the event, his joyful answering the call, ver. 6; his repentance and reformation, verse 8; and Christ's declaration concerning him, ver. 9.

(2.) It was a declarative call; special direction being given



him with respect to his present duty, *Come down* ; as if he had said, That place, that situation you are in is too high and inconvenient for seeing and entertaining me ; come down from the height, that you may better see me. The nearest sight of Christ is best ; while you are too high, you are too far from me ; *Come down*. Here observe, That these who desire to see Christ are ready to climb to such heights, and so take such ways of their own, as afterwards they will find themselves obliged to descend from, and abandon ; so it is vain to think of getting a saving sight, or a right view of Christ in a way of climbing up by our own natural and legal endeavours, “ Come down, Zaccheus,” you must descend from your own natural heights and legal altitudes, to the gospel valley, and the low path where Christ walks. If Zaccheus had been where he ought to have been, Christ would not have called him to come down. It is true, it was a lawful and laudable shift for him, considering the great press and his low stature, to climb up to the tree that he might get a sight of Christ : but if he should sit still and rest upon the sycamore tree, when Christ the tree of life was come so near, to be the only resting place of his soul, all his pains and labours would have been lost. There may be very lawful, laudable, and commendable means and endeavours, that people may betake themselves to, and they may climb very high therein, that they may get a sight of Christ ; but if they sit down and rest upon the tree of their own duties and endeavours, whatever external, common and passing views of Christ they may get, yet there is no saving sight, or special acquaintance with Christ they can have, unless they come down from all dependence upon means down to Christ himself. The call here is directive ; and the order and direction he gets is, “ Zaccheus, come down.” Whom Christ calls, he directs to proper duty ; and it is the first duty of souls that would have communion with Christ, to come down, that they may meet with him.

(3.) It was a hastening call, “ Zaccheus, make HASTE, and come down.” As you ran before the rest, and made haste to get up ; so you must make haste to be down. The call of Christ requires a present answer, without delay ; “ Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation ; to-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” The outward external call by his word is such a hastening call, that no man ought to delay a moment to come to Christ, at his call ; for a delay is dangerous : why, if the next moment should cut his breath, and so cut the thread of his life, before he come to

Christ, he is eternally and irrecoverably lost. The internal and effectual call is such a hastening call, that whosoever are the subjects thereof cannot find in their hearts to delay a moment. No sooner did Christ speak the word, than Zaccheus made haste and came down.

(4.) It was a kindly and a loving call, as appears from the reason of it: "For to-day I must abide at thy house:" Come down, for I must be your guest: I will sup with you, and you with me to-day. Here is a blessed guest inviting himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a place of entertainment, "Thy house." Here is the fulness of the visit, it was not passingly and transiently; but he was to abide at his house. Here is the necessity of it, "I must abide at thy house:" a sweet necessity of love and kindness; I must do it. And here is the time when this was to be done, "To-day I must abide at thy house:" the time to favour thee with a merciful visit is come. Here is surpassing and preventing love and mercy, Christ kindly calls upon Zaccheus, when Zaccheus was ashamed and afraid to call upon him: Christ invites himself to his home, when Zaccheus was thinking of nothing but a passing view of him by the way. And here it is remarkable, Zaccheus not only gets what he desired, but much more; he gets Christ to be his guest. When Christ calls, he shows his kindness far beyond all our desires and hopes; and whom he calls effectually, he draws with the cords of love; having loved with an everlasting love, he draws with loving-kindness. So much shall suffice for the explication. I now confine myself to this one doctrinal proposition:

OBSERV. That there are certain heights people are apt to ascend, from which the Lord Jesus, in the day of effectual calling, causes them to come down, in order to their having communion with him. "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down."

Christ, in the day wherein he manifests himself, speaks to his people, as Joseph did to his brethren, Gen. xlv. 9, "God has made me lord of all Egypt, come down unto me, and tarry not." So, says Christ, "The Father hath put all things into my hands;" yea, "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me:" come down unto me, and tarry not; make haste and come down in a way of subjection and submission to me and my righteousness, renouncing all dependence

upon other means. When they would help themselves, and add some cubits to their own little stature, by climbing up to sit on a tree, he calls them to come down and sit in the dust; as the expression is, Isa. xlvii. 1; and to see that in Christ only is their help, and that by no means or endeavours of their own can they add one cubit to their spiritual stature, nor advance their own spiritual welfare, but in a way of coming down from all confidence in the flesh. There is no communion with God in Christ, but in a way of believing, or by faith; and what is faith, but a down-coming grace? It is a quitting grip of all boughs and branches of creature-helps, that we are ready to climb up unto, and rest upon; and of taking hold of the man whose name is the Branch, the tree of life, under whose shadow alone we can be safe. Our safety lies not in climbing up to any other tree, but in coming down below the shadow and covert of the blood and righteousness of Christ. Here alone communion with God is to be had; hence, says the church, Song ii. 3, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

The method we propose for the further opening up this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to countenance, is the following:—

- I. To speak of some of these heights from which people must come down, that would answer the gospel call.
- II. Shew in what respects they come down.
- III. Offer some remarks on the day of effectual calling.
- IV. Assign the reasons why the Lord calls them to come down, and that with haste.
- V. Deduce some inferences for the application.

I. We would speak of some of these heights and altitudes, from which all must come down, that would answer the gospel call. And,

1. The sinner must come down from his high thoughts, and towering imaginations; his high and lofty reasonings that exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ; for, this is one of the great ends of the gospel to level these heights; "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Proud reason in man is so far out of reason, that many reason themselves out of all religion, and set up reason against faith, mustering up millions of thoughts



and imaginations, and carnal objections against believing in God, and against believing also in Christ.

② The sinner must come down from the height of his natural efforts to save himself, by the strength of his own free-will, or natural power and ability ; for, as by nature we are without strength, Rom. v. 6, for any spiritual work, not being sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves ; so, by strength shall no man prevail ; and, " It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Hence,

③ Sinners must come down from the height of their own legal endeavours, in going about to establish their own righteousness, Rom. x. 3. This is a tree that all men naturally attempt to ascend, whenever awakened to a thought of heaven and hell ; but in vain do men set their duties against their sin, as if these could take them away ; for it is only the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, John i. 29. In vain do they set their works against the wrath of God ; that fire will devour them as stubble ; it is Jesus that delivereth from the wrath to come. Yea, in vain do men set the strength of Christ against the righteousness of Christ, which they do, when they get strength and enlargement from him to pray, and perform this or the other duty, then they make that a ground of their being justified. From this legal spirit it is that men confound assistance with acceptance, and think themselves accepted because assisted ; but men may be assisted to do miracles in Christ's name, and yet never be accepted, Matt. vii. 22. The ground of acceptance is only in the Beloved, Eph. i. 6. From this legal spirit it is also that men confound the marks of faith with the grounds of faith ; and so think they have no ground of believing while they want the evidences of faith.

4. Men must come down from the height of their false maxims concerning God, as if he were such an one as themselves, and did approve of their sin, Psalm l. 21 : false maxims concerning Christ, as if he were a Saviour to save them in their sin, while they want not to be saved from their sin ; false maxims concerning themselves as if they had good hearts toward God, not knowing their hearts to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, Jer. xvii. 9 ; false maxims concerning religion, as if they could be religious without being regenerate and born again ; whereas Christ says, " Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 3.

5. Men must come down from their heights of false hopes, that are withering branches; for, "The hope of the hypocrite shall perish," Job viii. 13. Many hope they will mend afterwards, though they give themselves a latitude for the present; they will get grace between and the grave. Thus multitudes ruin themselves. Many presumptuously hope in the mercy of God, as the devil would have Christ casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple; for why, "The angels will hold you up." No, says Christ, "Get thee behind me Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," Matt. iv. 5, 6, 7. So it is, when Satan, or the flesh, say, Plunge yourselves into sin, mercy will help you out; but the mercy of God should lead to repentance, not to rebellion.

6. Men must come down from the height of worldly props and carnal confidence in arms of flesh; "For the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them," Jer. ii. 37. These are refuges of lies, as Israel found when they were brought to say, "Asher shall not save us, neither will we ride upon horses," Hos. xiv. 3. As if they had said, We have formerly trusted that the Assyrian would save us; that our horses and cavalry would help us; but we find them all to be vain confidences; Lord, it is in thee the fatherless find mercy; in thee the helpless find relief, and in no worldly props.

7. Those that would answer the gospel call must come down from the heights of notable attainments, whether in respect of unsound experiences, natural graces, or gospel advantages. They are unsound experiences; some have convictions and awakenings, like these of Cain, Saul, and Judas; terrors and tremblings, like those of Felix, when Paul preached of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; fears and sorrows, like those of Esau: joy and affections moving like those of the stony ground hearers, partial reformations, like those who, through the knowledge of Christ, escaped the gross pollutions of the world. These are slender branches to trust to and rest upon; you must come down from them. There are natural and common graces also, that people must quit the hold of, as well as false convictions, some have a cradle faith, that they had all their days, this is so far from being of a saving nature, that men may have a temporary faith, like Simon Magus, who yet was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, Acts viii. 23. They may suspect their graces, who were never humbled for their contraries; who have faith, and yet never were convinced of, nor humbled for their un-

belief; who have love, but never were convinced of, nor humbled for their enmity; and have knowledge, but were never humbled for their ignorance. There are gospel-advantages that many have, and yet abuse; but, in as far as they are abused, they are rotten branches to hold by. Some abuse a gospel-profession, contenting themselves with the form, without the power of godliness: they abuse gospel privileges; and, in respect of these are exalted to heaven, and yet shall be brought down to hell. Many abuse gospel grace, and turn the grace of God into wantonness, and to encourage them in their sin. Many abuse gospel-promises, by making a loose, carnal application of them; and of the blood of Christ, and of redemption purchased thereby, without seeking after the effectual application of it to us by his holy Spirit. Many abuse gospel liberty and freedom from the law, as a covenant, by taking liberty thence to sin, as if they were free from the law as a rule of life too. Many also abuse gospel principles, such as this, That without Christ we can do nothing: as true a word as in all the Bible, that without him we can do nothing spiritually, formally, and acceptably good, however, men may do things materially good; but hence the carnal heart of many infer, Seeing the whole work is Christ's, in point of power: therefore they will do nothing, in point of means, but leave all to Christ; and so make Christ a lackey to their idleness, and a pillow to their sloth. Though the use of the means hath no casual influence in obtaining the good promised; yet there is a necessary connection of order, between using the means and gaining the blessing; thus, though the Lord promises many signal blessings, in absolutely free promises, Ezek. xxxvi. 25—29; yet, "For all these things he will be enquired off by the house of Israel," ver. 37. That persons ought to be in the use of means, and have reason to expect a blessing in so doing, is evident from many places in scripture, particularly, Prov. viii. 32, 33, 34, Mat. vii. 7, 8. These are wicked abuses of gospel advantages, by these who receive the grace of God in vain. These and the like attainments, experiences, graces, and advantages, are vain boughs and branches, from which they must come down.

(8.) I mention another height that men must come down from, that would answer the gospel call, and that is the height of vain apologies and excuses for their sin. There are some shifts and apologies that are very poor, mean, and low ones: but I will name two that are very high and proud apologies. And,



(1.) The one is drawn from the translation of sin upon others, as if they were not guilty, but only such as tempt and ensnare them : hence some blame the devil only for that which is their own sin. But, if you father your sin upon the devil ; it may be, indeed, he is the father begetting ; but the flesh is the mother conceiving and bringing them forth : “ Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,” James i. 14. Some father their sin upon God himself, as Adam did when he said, “ The woman which thou gavest me, gave me to eat,” Gen. iii. 12. As if he had said, “ If thou hadst not given me this companion, I had not eaten.” But, says the apostle, “ Let no man say, when he is tempted, he is tempted of God,” James i. 13. Yet thus men are ready to justify themselves and condemn others : yea, and God himself.

(2.) Another proud and lofty apology is drawn from false comparison ; men comparing themselves with others that are worse ; like the Pharisee, that compared himself with the Publican ; “ God, I thank thee, I am not like other men,” Luke xviii. 11. As if he had said, “ Lord, I thank thee, I am not so ill as such a man, such a rake, such a debauchee,” &c. ; and so hiding themselves under the covert of a comparative righteousness. But, as runners in a race hasten their pace, by looking to those that are before them ; but do not slack it by looking to those that are behind them ; what a folly is it, if we be running the Christian race, to look to those that are behind, and reckon we are farther forward than they, and therefore we need make no more speed in religion ! But rather we are to look to these that are before us, and be ashamed that we are so far behind, and put the spur to our dull and naughty flesh, that we may “ Run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,” Heb. xii. 1, 2. You do not use to look to a poor beggar, and say, I am richer than he ; and need no more : and will you deceive yourself in the matter of religion, saying, I am better than such a man ; and, therefore, I am right enough. From these and the like heights, men are to come down. “ Come down Zaccheus.”

II. The second thing proposed, was, To shew in what respects they come down, who answer the gospel call. And here it may be enquired, by what steps they come down ; and to what place or situation they come down.

1st, By what steps they come down. We name only these four.

1. The first step is Consideration : none come down from the height of their vain confidence, till they be brought to consideration

and thought ; " I thought on my ways, and then I turned my feet to thy testimonies," Psalm cxix. 59. God complains of men for want of thought and consideration ; " The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider," Isa. i. 3. And it is the first thing God calls people to, when he wills them to come down to meet with him, Hag. i. 5, " Now, therefore, saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways."

2. The second step by which they come down is Concern ; people may make a little step by consideration, and presently step back again, and let the thoughts pass away ; like these who are slight hearers of the word, that opens up and discovers their case ; but like men beholding their natural face in a glass, and go away, and straightway forget what manner of persons they were ; therefore the next step must be concern, deep concern about salvation, saying, with the jailor, " What shall I do to be saved ?" Or, with Peter's hearers, " Men and brethren, what shall we do ?" The man is awakened to a restless concern, in the use of appointed means, how to get down from that dangerous and dreadful height, whence he is ready to fall into utter ruin.

3. The third step is despair and disappointment ; finding all his legal hopes and expectations failing him ; all his legal endeavours vain and useless : yea, vanishing, dying, and giving up the ghost. When a man comes down to this step, viz., to despair of help in himself, and to despair of relief from creatures and means, of themselves, saying, as it is, Jer. iii. 23, " Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, or from the multitude of mountains." By this step he just quits the grip of all those branches which he had hold on, and trusted to. He finds himself disappointed of these confidences, and that he cannot prosper therein ; " The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them," Jer. ii. 37. Some are wrathfully disappointed ; for, the Lord destroys them and their confidences both, as the word here will read ; " I will destroy thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them." But others are mercifully disappointed ; when God famishes their false confidences, it is a plague even for a man to prosper in them, and a mercy to be starved out of them, and to be brought down by despair and disappointment.

4. The fourth step I mention is resolution ; the soul now resolves through grace, to quit hold of all these lofty to-looks, and to

come down and take hold of Christ alone, saying with the prodigal, when he came to himself, "I will arise, and go to my father," Luke xv. 18. If he had not been starved, but had got bread enough abroad, he would not have risen up to go to his father's house. Thus when the Lord hedges up our way with thorns, that we may not find our paths, then we come to say, "I will go and return to my first Husband," Hos. ii. 6, 7. Indeed, none would come to this resolution, if the Lord did not blast their vain confidences so as to make them ashamed of them; "Thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria; yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head," Jer. ii. 36, 37. This resolution to come down to Christ, though it be the best, yet it is the last shift that men take; see the disposition of man naturally, Hos. vii. 11, "Ephraim is like a silly dove, without heart; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria." The dove's young are taken from it every two months; and yet, like a silly bird, as it is, it builds in the same place, where it was deprived of its young, never remembering it will be robbed again and again, even as oft as it builds there; just so do men build their residence, where they cannot but be still bereaved till God bring them to put in practice this resolution to come down and build low, upon the sure foundation. This leads me to the next thing here; as by these, and the like steps, they come down; so,

2dly, To what place or position do they come down? I shall here but name these four things they come down to, when they answer the gospel call; "Come down, Zaccheus."

I. They come down to self-denial, Mat. vi. 24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself," says Christ. Self must be abased, and Christ exalted; the soul that comes down to Christ, is brought to self-abasement, self-abhorrence, self-judging, and self-condemnation: yea, self-hated and detestation; "Now mine eyes see thee, said Job; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and in ashes," Job xlii. 5, 6.

2. They come down to the gospel terms of life and salvation: that is, to the renouncing of all legal terms and conditions, to which you can never come up. You have heard, perhaps, men speak of coming up to the terms of the gospel, saying, You must be so and so qualified, humbled and penitent, before you can come to Christ; why, this is indeed an ascending up, instead of coming down. But the call is, "Come down, Zaccheus," to the terms of the gospel-



market ; that is, to get all things freely, without money, and without price ; all things for nothing, Isa. lv. 1.

3. They come down to God's righteousness, and submit to that, quitting all righteousness of their own as filthy rags. This, proud man has no will, by nature, to come down or submit to : " They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. They that answer the gospel-call, they come down to the sure foundation that God has laid in Zion, disclaiming all confidence in the flesh ; all confidence in their duties, prayers, tears, frames, and good affections or actions.

4. They come down to God's will : both his commanding and disposing will ; to his commanding will, saying, " Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? " Brought down to an appropriation of the holiness of the law, and to a disapprobation of themselves, for want of conformity to it. They are brought down also to the disposing will of God, to a submission to his providence, though he should order poverty, adversity, reproach, and contempt, if it be for his glory and their good. The man is delivered from the power and rule of a murmuring spirit. It is much for proud nature thus to come down.

III. The third thing proposed was, To offer some remarks on the day of effectual calling. We observe only these things shortly from the context concerning it.

1. " It is a particular day, wherein the Lord gives a particular call to such and such a person, as it were, by name ; Zaccheus, come down : " I have called thee by name." Though God, in calling his children, doth not give them all the particular names wherein they were baptized ; yet he particularizes them so, as they are made to see that they, in particular, are called, as it were, by name : for God deals with their heart as particularly as if he were speaking to none else ; yea, the Spirit of God directs the word as close as Nathan to David, " Thou art the man."

2. We remark, " That the day of effectual calling is a day of dispatch : Make HASTE and come down, says the text." Much business is done and dispatched in that day : and the Lord does not suffer the soul to linger, but hastens it, as the angels did Lot out of Sodom. When Lot lingered, the angels pulled him out. God cries to us by his word, saying, " Haste you, man, woman ; come out of this world, lest you partake of the judgments thereof." Men delay,

and are even averse from coming to God ; but, in the day of effectual calling, Christ, the Angel of the covenant, by his spirit, pulls them out, and compels them to come down in haste : in the day of effectual calling, the soul makes haste. "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. I made haste ; I delayed not to keep thy righteous judgments."

3. I remark, "It is a day of love and kindness, wherein Christ gives a kindly look, as well as a kindly word." It is here said, "Christ looked up to Zaccheus, and saw him." Zaccheus wanted to have a look or a sight of Christ ; but he little thought that Christ wanted to give a look to him. But as Jesus looked down upon Peter, when he was too low, in order to bring him up ; so, we may say, he looked up upon Zaccheus, when he was too high, in order to bring him down. In both these cases the look was a kindly look. Christ enjoins us to look unto him and be saved ; but he must give the first look.

4. We remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a day wherein Christ invites himself to an interview with the poor soul : for, "To-day, says Christ, must I abide at thy house." Here Christ invites himself : and, indeed, when he calls effectually, he invites himself to the house, to the home, to the heart of his people. He seeks not our invitation, but prevents it : he is said to "Prevent us with the blessings of goodness," Psal. xxi. 3. Kindness begins on his side ; he lays himself in our way, by promises, and proffers of mercy. O ! happy these to whom Christ is saying, "This day I must come to your house, to your family, to your closet, to your dwelling."

5. I remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a necessary day ; "This day, says he, I *must* abide in thine house." There is a blessed necessity he is under ; as it was with Christ, when he met with the woman of Samaria, John iv. 4, it is said, "He must needs go through Samaria." And, as it is said of his bringing in his scattered flock, John x. 16, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." There was a necessity of purpose, of purchase, of promise ; and a necessity of love, in the case ; and the thing must take effect.

6. We remark, "That the day of effectual calling is an abiding day, so to speak : it is a day wherein Christ comes not to make a transient visit, but a designed visit ; designing to tarry and abide : "This day I must *abide* at thy house." It is a set day,

wherein he designed from all eternity, to meet with such a soul. As it is said of Israel, Psalm cii. 13, "The time to favour her is come; yea, the set time." A time set and appointed for his stay and abode, in order to shew his favour; and though his sensible presence is not still abiding; yet he gives such a visit, as to leave a pledge of his constant abode: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever," John xiv. 16.

7. We remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a meeting day between Christ and the sinner; a day of communion and fellowship between him and them; wherein he makes homely and free with them and theirs: "To-day I must abide at thy house." As if he had said, "You and I must be housed together; your house must be my house; your table my table; yea, your heart must be my home: I will not only stand at the door and knock, but I will make king's-keys; you must open to me, and I will come in, and sup with you, and you with me."

8. I remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a notable and remarkable day." The day of effectual calling is a remarkable day, and that in two respects, viz., The remarkable names, and the remarkable signs and properties of it.

[1.] It hath remarkable names in scripture; it is called a day of power, Psalm cx. 2. A day wherein God exerts his power, for breaking the rebellion of the nature; as he did in the case of Zaccheus the publican. It is called a day of espousals, and a day of the gladness of Christ's heart, Song iii. 11. For then the match is made up, between Christ and the believer. It is called a day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." It is true, every gospel-day may be so called: but, in a special manner, the day of effectual calling; for then, as Christ said to Zaccheus, it may be said, "This day is salvation come to thine house." Again, it is sometimes called a day of vengeance, Isa. lxi. 2, "The day of vengeance is in mine heart; for the year of my redeemed is come." Then the Lord takes vengeance on all spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, and strong corruption; the vengeance of God and the temple pursue them. Sometimes it is called a day of small things? Zech. iv. 10, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" The beginnings are ordinarily small, but the latter end may greatly increase. It is called a day or time of love, Ezek. xvi. 8. "Behold, when I saw thee polluted in thy blood, thy time



was a time of love ; for then he gives many a love-token. It is called a day of life from the dead, as the day of the conversion of the Jews shall be, Rom. xi. 15. Then "The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live," John v. 25. In a word, it is called a day of the Lord's making, Psalm cxviii. 24, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it. All days are of his making, but this especially ; ministers cannot make such a day.

[2.] It is remarkable for the signs and properties of it. I name four. It is remarkable for success, liberty, victories, and discoveries.

(1.) The day of effectual calling is remarkable for success, because then the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hand, and hearts are drawn to him, as Zaccheus's heart here was ; for, he made haste and came down. Why, then Christ rides in his majesty, according to Psalm xlv. 3, 4, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty ; with thy glory and thy majesty ; and in thy majesty ride prosperously ; because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness." O man, woman, came there ever a word of power to your heart, that made you a volunteer to the Son of God ? Such a word as went out-through, and in-through your heart, and opened all the bolted doors thereof to the King of glory ? It is a day remarkable for success.

(2.) It is a day remarkable for liberty ; "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound," Isa. lxi. 1. Many have come hand and feet bound, tongue and heart bound to preachings and sacraments ; but there came a word of power that opened all their prison doors. The entrance of the word gives light, life, and liberty ; liberty and freedom from all the threatenings and curses of the law ; freedom to enjoy and make use of all the promises of the gospel : freedom to go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only. Then the man is at liberty to walk, to run, to fly, for his strength is renewed ; he mounts up on wings as an eagle. Such freedom had Zaccheus, when he not only received Christ joyfully ; but frankly forsook his former wicked way of living, and made restitution of all the wrongs he had done, ver. 6th and 8th of this chapter, where the text lies. "And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the

poor : and if I have taken any thing from any man, by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

(3.) It is remarkable for victory ; victories over hearts, victories over corruptions, victories over Satan. O sirs, do any of you remember the day when, though one would have given you all the world, you could not get heart to follow the Lord in duties and worship ; yet, lo ! quickly you had it to say, " Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." When though you were frightened with legions of devils, and legions of lusts, and great regiments of corruptions within you, or ever you was aware, you was made to believe and lay hold on Christ, and so, by faith, to turn to flight the armies of the aliens, and say, " Through God I shall do valiantly : Thanks be to God who giveth the victory," 1 Cor. xv. 57.

(4.) It is remarkable for discoveries ; such discoveries of God, as makes the soul to say with Job, " Now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore I abhor myself." Such discoveries of sin and self, as makes one say with Asaph, " So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee. Truth, Lord, I am a dog : " I am a devil, a monster. Such discoveries of the world and the vanity thereof, as makes it appear nothing. Pleasures, and honours, and crowns, and sceptres, all vanishing nothings. Such discoveries of spiritual and eternal things, as make them appear in their excellency, and makes the man to give transient thoughts to transient things, and permanent thoughts to permanent things. But especially such discoveries of Christ by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, as makes him to be seen and admired in his infinite worth and excellency, so as all things appear worthless in comparison of him. The man sells his all for this pearl of great price. He is seen in his fulness and sufficiency, as he in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ; in his fulness of merit and Spirit, beauty and bounty, majesty and mercy, grace and glory. He is seen in his wonderful meetness and fitness for glorifying all the perfections of God, and for answering all the needs, straits, and wants of the soul. The work of redemption is seen in him to be a work worthy of God's glorious excellencies, and suiting to the soul's lost condition, which is made to go into this method of salvation with wonder and admiration. O sirs, have you ever seen the King in his beauty, and beheld King Solomon with the crown upon his head ? Have ever the beams of his glory shined in upon your

heart, according to 2 Cor. iv. 6, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ?"

Some may think, O! what is that the man is talking of? A sight and discovery of Christ's glory! That must be some wild enthusiastic notion; for our part, we never saw any glory beyond that of the sun, moon, and stars. O poor soul! saw you never any greater glory than that? I tell you, there is an infinitely greater beauty to be seen; and if you say you believe the Bible, you must own it. Is not that word in the Bible, "All we beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image; even as by the Spirit of the Lord?" 2 Cor. iii. 18. Is not that word in your Bible, "The word was made flesh; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?" John i. 14.

But may some think, What do you talk of seeing Christ! Is he not at the right hand of God in heaven? It is true, we do not speak of seeing him with the bodily eye; "The heavens must retain him, till the time of the restitution of all things." It is not by any light like that of visionaries, nor light within like that of the Quakers; but we see the God-man by the eye of faith, and spiritual understanding, in the glass of the word. We see a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. We see his grace, his glory, his beauty; though yet we cannot express what we see, we cannot explain to the world what we see; words cannot represent the beauty and glory that is in Christ, or the sweetness and comfort that is felt in him, when discovered. They that see him, can say no more but that they see him all grace, all glory, all beauty, altogether lovely: and it is no fancy or imagination of him. It is no imaginary idea of Christ as man;<sup>1</sup> but it is, according to scripture, an intellectual apprehension of him as God-man: witness Paul's experience, Gal. i. 16, "He revealed his Son in me:" and David's experience, Psal lxiii. 2, "O to see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen it in the sanctuary!" In a word, it is just such a discovery of Christ as he was pleased to give of himself to Zaccheus here, ver. 10, "This day, said Christ, is salvation come to this house. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." It is a view of

(1) This important distinction is elaborately handled, and satisfyingly cleared up by our Author, in his treatise entitled, *Faith no Fancy; or, A Treatise of Mental Images.*



Christ as the Seeker, the Saviour, and Salvation, of the poor lost sinner. So much concerning the day of effectual calling.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, To give the reasons why the Lord calls them to come down, and that with haste, in the day when he calls effectually ; “ Zaccheus, make haste, and come down.” And,

1st, Why he calls them to come down. He doth so, for the six following reasons, amongst others,

1. We are called to come down, because it is God’s great end, in the dispensation of the gospel of his grace, that self may be abased, and Christ may be exalted. See Isa. ii. 11, 17, “ The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down ; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.” The high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, cannot bear with high and lofty men, who inhabit houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust. Men must come down either in a way of judgment or mercy, that the Lord alone may be exalted.

2. The Lord calls men to come down, because, while they ascend too high, they are in a dangerous state. Before they be effectually called down, they are in danger of falling down and destroying themselves. If they come not down at God’s call, and with his help, they will be brought down with shame and disgrace ; for “ God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble ;” whereas, they that come down, and humble themselves under his mighty hand, they shall be exalted, 1 Pet. v. 9.

3. He calls us to come down, because the farther down we come, in a state of due humiliation and abasement, the higher shall we be set up in a way of exaltation and advancement. As it was with the glorious head of the body, the church, his humiliation to the lowest, made way for his exaltation to the highest honour ; “ No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven ; even the Son of man, which is in heaven,” John iii. 13. Where, by the bye, we may observe what a wonderful person our Redeemer is. In one respect he was never out of heaven ; for, when he was on earth, he calls himself the Son of man, which is in heaven ; and yet, in another respect he both descended from heaven, and ascended to heaven ; and both this low descent, and high ascent, were necessary for him as our Surety : “ Ought not Christ to have

suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" John xxii. 26. And, indeed, in some conformity to him, all that ascend, must in some respect descend; and the lower they come down, the higher will they be raised up.

4. They are called to come down, that so Christ may have a footstool on which he may mount his throne, and that free grace may be exalted in their salvation. While men are proud and lofty, and standing upon their altitudes and eminences, boasting of their own strength, glorying in their own abilities, resting on their own righteousness, and building their hope and confidence in their own excellency, industry, endowments, natural or acquired, Christ is put out of his throne, and free grace, reigning through his righteousness, cannot be exalted. But when once a man begins to come down, he is content to be, as it were, a stepping stone for Christ to be mounted up; satisfied to be a debtor to free grace reigning through the blood of Christ to all eternity. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. It is excluded!" "By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith," Rom. iii. 27. "Christ is made wisdom and righteousness," and all, "that no flesh might glory in his presence; but that he that glorieth, might glory in the Lord."

5. They are called to come down, that they may be valley ground for receiving the seed of the word, and being fruitful, which they cannot be, while they remain on their heights, no more than the tops of high rocks can be expected to prove a fruitful soil. "Christ is the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys," Song ii. 1. He loves to deck and beautify the low valleys, and make them fruitful and fragrant with his presence.

6. They are called to come down, that they may meet with Christ, and be housed with him, who loves to dwell and be housed with the humble; "For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isa. lvii. 15. This was the reason why Christ called on Zaccheus to come down, that he might meet with Christ, and that Christ and he may be housed together: "Make haste," says he, "and come down; for to-day I must sup at thy house." And this comprehends many more reasons, why, in a day of effectual calling, they are called to come down. Why they must come down to get a better look of Christ than they can have by climbing upon a tree.

They must come down to embrace Christ, and receive him in their arms. Down to entertain him in their house and in their heart. Down to worship at his feet, of whom the Father has said, "And let all the angels of God worship him." They must come down to tread in his steps, and keep the same ground. And, in a word, they must come down to walk with him, Micah vi. 8, "Walk humbly with thy God." Or, as it is in the Hebrew, "Humble thyself to walk with God." Proud man scorns to walk with a meek and lowly Jesus; yea, with the high and glorious God, but wants to be as gods, and above God; but you must come down and humble yourself to walk with God.

2dly, Why must they make haste and come down? What is the haste, say you? Why, there is need of that haste here which David speaks of, Psalm cxix. 59, 60, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies. Then it follows, "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments." There is need of answering the gospel call in haste.

1. Because time is hasting away; the wings of time are flying with the utmost speed. O, sirs, time, time; short and precious; therefore, make haste and close with Christ, while it is the accepted time, and day of salvation.

2. Because the day of salvation is hastening away; gospel offers, sermons, and sacraments, ministers and ordinances, all are in haste. I have read of the birds of Norway, where the days are shortest, that the birds are swiftest. The day of grace being a short day, there is need of haste: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

3. Because death is making haste. That black scythe is mowing down old and young, like grass, here and there; and death shuts the door of gospel offers for ever; therefore there is need of haste.

4. Because judgments are making haste; temporal judgments and spiritual judgments; and the particular judgment at death, and the general judgment of the great day. All are making haste, and crying to us to make haste to get into the city of refuge before it betoo late, and the avenger overtake us.

5. Eternity is making haste. "The angel is about to cry, with his hand lift up to heaven, and to swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no more," Rev. x. 5. What then will follow? Nothing but eternity; eternity of well or woe.



6. Because Christ is calling on us in haste, saying, Come, come ; "Whosoever will, let him come." His language not only is, Come to me, poor soul ; but also, Come with me ; "Come with me from Lebanon." He is making haste to put a close to his work of redemption by power, even as he was in a haste to accomplish the work of redemption by price ; and he will never rest till he hath it to say of this, as of the former, "It is finished."

V. The fifth thing proposed, was, To deduce some inferences for the application. Is it so, That in the day of effectual calling, there are heights to which men are apt to climb, from which the Lord calls them to come down, and hastily to come down ? Then hence, I infer these following things.

1. See how high and haughty men are by nature ; for, as mean and low as they are, yet they affect heights from whence they must come down. The heights to which they aspire are several ways expressed in scripture, and whence they, like Zaccheus, need to make haste down. Some are as high as the towers on which they build their hope ; thus it is said, "The rich man's wealth is his strong tower." Some are as high as the mountains on which they confide ; but in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, or multitude of mountains ; "Truly in the Lord only is the salvation of his people." Some would be as high as the clouds ; but they are called clouds without water, and morning clouds that pass away. Some would be as high as the stars, but they are called wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Yea, some are said to be as high as heaven in respect of certain privileges ; but though they are exalted unto heaven, they shall be cast down to hell. What shall I say ? Men affect to be even as high as God. Ye shall be as Gods," was the first temptation ; and this prevailing, men set themselves in the throne of God ; yea, would exalt themselves, like so many Antichrists, "Above all that is called God ;" and hence spurn at the government of God, and strive with their Maker ; and hence no wonder that men seek to be above one another ; yea, to be gods over others. The spirit of Diotrophes, and love to have the pre-eminence, and to be lords over God's heritage, and over men's consciences is too evident in many.

2. Hence see, that the gospel-market may be called a down-coming market ; and gospel grace down-bringing grace. Men generally have a false notion of the gospel. So much do they affect

to be high, that they think, if they see Christ, they must climb up, and be very high, very holy, very good, very penitent, yea, very eminent folk ; but know not that they must come down from their heights, from their imaginary holiness and goodness, and be laid flat with the ground, and be nothing. They must come down from that thought that they are rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing. This thought will keep them away from Christ. But they must think, and know, that they are poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked ; and that they stand in need of everything. Hence, I say, the gospel-market may be called a down-coming market, where the price of wares doth not rise, but rather fall. It is true, all the gospel wares and riches are bought with the price of blood, blood of infinite value.

It was a high price to Christ ; but to you in the gospel-offer, the price is no price at all ; for all the buyers are to buy, without money, and without price. Yea, the price falls lower than men can think or imagine. This market is lower than the Popish market, where good works are the price ; lower than the legalist's market, where such and such good qualifications are the price. Lower than the Arminian market, where the act of believing, by the power of free-will, is the price. It is not a market of man's free-will, but of God's free-grace ; nor of the power of nature, but of grace. It is a flying on the wings of grace, to the throne of grace ; and this sovereign grace brings down all to her footstool, that share of her royal bounties. They are made content to be debtors to free grace.

3. Hence see the reason of God's dispensations towards his people that are of a humbling and down casting nature. As he calls them by his word, so also by his providence, to come down and lie at his feet. The children of grace have no reason to grudge the want of these things, which they are naturally ready to trust to. It is mercy to be brought down. It may be, God denies you riches ; well, perhaps they would have been your confidence. Perhaps he denies you frames and enlargements ; well, it is possible, you would have rested on these, as your refuge and righteousness. People may be mistaken concerning God's way towards them ; it may look like wrath, when it is love. God disappoints you in all your ways and shifts, and that by down-pulling dispensations, breaking the branches you hang by. The fiery serpent stings you ; why ? It is not to kill you, but to make you look to the brasen serpent, Christ, on the pole of the gospel. The avenger of blood pursues the

soul out of all his lurking holes ; but it is to drive you to the city of refuge. A deluge of heavy judgments may come ; but it is not to drown thee, but force thee to the ark. Personal afflictions, family afflictions, national afflictions, all are levelled for breaking down your false confidences, and bringing you down to Christ. See Hos. ii. 8—14. The matter is, if God has a mind to convert thee, he will never leave thee, without some one thing or other upon thy soul, tossing thee, wearying thee, vexing thee ; that thou shalt never have quiet, till at length thou land upon Christ. Such is the baseness and degeneracy of man's nature ; we are like Joab, Absalom sent for him, he will not come : then comes the second summons, no ; he will not answer. Well, says he, I will give a summons of another nature, and so he goes, and sets all Joab's corn fields in a fire ; destroys all his confidences, as Jer. ii. 37. The corn field of hopes and props must be set a fire ; thus Manasseh could never be brought down till brought to extremity among the thorns in Babylon, and then he knew that the Lord was God.

4. Hence see the nature of true faith ; it is a coming down. It is sometimes called a coming out, when it respects a leaving this world, and the Antichrists therein ; " Come out of her, my people," Rev. xviii. 14. Sometimes it is called a coming in when it respects a being housed with Christ ; " Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled," Luke xiv. 23. Sometimes it is called a coming up, when it respects a mounting heavenwards : " Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved?" Song viii. 5. Sometimes it is called a coming down, as here, and elsewhere, particularly, Isa. xlvii. 1. " Come down and sit in the dust," &c. And thus faith may be designed, as it respects the soul's descending from all these heights men are ready to climb and aspire unto. It is a coming from self-exaltation to self-humiliation. No grace sets a man so high in God's esteem, nor so low in his own esteem, as that grace of faith ; which, viewing God's infinite excellency, makes the creature sink to nothing. By unbelief we set ourselves up above God, but by faith we come down.

5. How reproveable are they, who, instead of coming down and sitting in the dust, are setting themselves up on such heights as to ascend presumptuously the very throne of God ; pretending a zeal for Zion's King, and yet abusing his authority, and prostituting his royal prerogatives, by their pretended censures and excommunications, passed without any power, but what is sinfully arrogated and



assumed, without any cause or ground, but what is imaginary and fictitious, as hath been documented unto the world. Yea, prosecuted violently to the exposing of the discipline of God's house, and matter of laughter to a vain and profane generation, while exercised against those whom it cannot be executed against by the law of God, or man; nor by any rule of scripture or reason. If any enquire, how the proceedings of the separating brethren, in these matters, appear to be sinful heights, and unwarrantable extremes, and extravagancies, and a sinful climbing up, instead of coming down to keep upon solid ground? Why, that this work of separatists is not of God's approbation, or agreeable to his word, will appear in these particulars.

(1.) If it is a work that deviates from the good old way, 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, chap. xviii. 15. Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burnt incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up."

(2.) If it be supported and carried on with lies, calumnies, and reproach, Isa. xxviii. 17. "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies; and the waters shall overflow the hiding places. Ezek. xiii. 12. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life."

(3) If it cover violence with a mask of zeal; God hates robbery for burnt-offering, "For I, the Lord, love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering," Isaiah lxi. 8. And him that loveth violence, his soul hateth," Psalm xi. 5.

(4.) If, consequently, it turn the keys of the temple into swords and staves, and instruments of fury, and fiery persecutions: "Then Jesus said unto the chief priests and captains of the temple, and the elders which were come to him; Be ye come out against a thief with swords and staves; Luke xxii. 52. "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee; and thou shalt be cut off for ever," Obadiah, ver. 10.

(5.) If it bear the mark of madness, or of men's being plagued in their prudentials; "Therefore, behold I will proceed to do a

marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder ; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid, Isa. xxix. 14. The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come ; Israel shall know it ; the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad ; for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred," Hos. ix. 7.

(6.) If it foster pride, arrogance, and lordly pre-eminence ; Zeph. ii. 10, 11, " This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts. The Lord will be terrible unto them, for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and men shall worship him every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen, 3 John, ver. 9, " I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not." And if it lead men to act the part of lords over men's consciences.

(7.) If it shun the light. John iii. 20, " For every one that doth evil, hateth the light ; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

(8.) If it make men unnatural and unsociable ; Rom. i. 31, " Without understanding, covenant-breakers ; without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful. The prodigious heights, that are of such a nature and tendency, and have such concomitants, that they that climb them, must come down humbly, otherwise they will fall down headlong.

6. Hence see, that few are called effectually, because few have come down to entertain Christ in their hearts and houses. They have no will to come from the tree they have climbed ; they hold fast by the branches thereof. Many hold so long by some rotten branch that they are in danger of letting Christ go his way, and call no more, saying, " My Spirit shall no longer strive with them." But here is a mark of effectual calling ; the soul is made gladly and hastily to come down to Christ ; down to his school, as a Prophet, to be taught of him ; down to his altar, as a Priest, to be accepted in him ; down to his footstool, as a King, to be blessed and ruled by him. Why, say you, must we not come up to Christ, and up to his terms ? Nay, man, you are far enough up already ; you are for more terms than he is seeking of you. He seeks that you come down from all terms, conditions, and personal qualifications ; to a renunciation of your all, which is nothing, and to an embracing of

Christ's all, which is "all in all." The soul, in effectual calling, is made to come down from self-love to self-loathing ; from self-estimation to self-abhorrence ; from self-will to God's will ; from self-ease to an enduring of hardship, and a taking joyfully the spoiling of our goods, by plunder, and the spoiling of our names, by reproach and calumny ; down from self-confidence to a renouncing of all confidence in the flesh, and a placing our confidence only in God ; from self-fulness and sufficiency to self-emptiness, and contentment to be beggars at the door of grace's all-sufficiency, and daily travelers between creature-emptiness and Christ's fulness. Down from self-righteousness to a counting all our own righteousness but filthy rags. A sight of God, as so glorious in holiness, that this attribute cannot be vindicated without a perfect obedience ; and so glorious in justice, that this attribute cannot be satisfied without a condign satisfaction of infinite value ; both which are only to be found in Christ. This brings down all lofty thoughts of self-righteousness, and makes the soul cry out, "In the Lord only have I righteousness." In a word, a day of effectual calling is a down-coming day ; the soul that was rich and increased with goods, comes down to his shop to buy his wares, his tried gold, his white raiment, his eye-salve. The soul that was climbing too high, comes down to sit under his shadow, who is the tree of life ; down to his pasture, who is the good shepherd ; down to his wine-cellar, to be fed and feasted with him in his banquetting-house ; down to his green bed of fellowship with him, in his pleasant fruits.

7. See hence how unkind it is to delay, when Christ is calling us to haste and come down, and saying, "To-day, even to-day, I must abide at thy house ;" I would be into thy heart ; "Now is the accepted time." The present time is the time wherein God calls you to come down and work in his vineyard. When death comes, he will call you no more. The present time is the time wherein he is casting open his door to all beggars, saying, To-day ye may be saved ; if ye delay till to-morrow the door may be for ever shut. The present day is the day wherein the judgments of God are begun ; his judgments are in the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are to learn righteousness. Come down, and own that ye are yet to learn the lesson of coming down, instead of climbing up. There are three things should be considered by you that are lingering and putting off the time.

(1.) Your delay hardens your heart ; "Go thy way, said Felix,



I will hear thee at a more convenient time ;” but that time never came. Time is not at your command.

(2.) Your delay wearies God, and not man only ; “ I am weary with forbearing,” saith God ; and with waiting on this generation ; “ If it be a small thing to weary man, saith the prophet, will ye weary my God also ?” If you wear out his patience, you are undone for ever.

(3.) Can you tell how long God will spare you ? Can you tell me that you will be out of your grave till this day eight days ? Do you know what a day may bring forth ? Then, this moment, hearken to his call, when he is saying, “ Haste, haste ; “ Make haste, and come down.”

8. Hence see the duty of all that hear the gospel, namely, “ To come down, and sit in the dust ;” and to quit hold of all the branches by which they are holding, that they may come and take hold of Christ, the righteous Branch. Let me here exhort, excite, and direct you.

[1.] Let me exhort you to come down, and quit hold of all the branches wherein you confide. What branches ?

2. Some hold to the branch of worldly confidences, minding only earthly things, and cast anchor there ; making earth their heaven ; but this world is like a floating island, such as some we read of, where it is folly for sailors to cast anchor, lest the land swim away with the ship. Oh ! dangerous trusting to floating and flying things.

2. Some hold by the branch of carnal excuses, when invited to come down to the gospel supper with Christ, Luke xiv.<sup>o</sup> 18, 19, 20, “ They all made excuse ;” and, among the rest, one said, “ I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.” Augustine made these to represent the five senses, which men want to gratify, instead of coming to Christ ; called a *yoke*, because we have them, as it were, in pairs ; two eyes, for seeing ; two ears, for hearing ; two nostrils, for smelling ; two jaws, for tasting ; and a two-fold feeling, outward and inward ; and a *yoke of oxen*, because occupied about the earth, and earthly things ; but, “ Come down, Zaccheus ;” “ Come down from the top of Amana and Hermon ;” from these mountains of vanity.

3. Some hold to the branch of proud Self, setting themselves above all others, and embracing even the doctrines of devils, such as that, of “ Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from

meats," 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3. This, in a literal sense, is applicable to Papists; but in a spiritual sense, applicable to those, who so far are forbidding marriage, as they are pretending to loose the marriage-relation between pastor and people; whom God hath joined, they would put assunder by their pretended sentences of deposition and excommunication; and hence so far commanding to abstain from meats, as to be discharging people to feed upon these green pastures, wherein their souls have been formerly nourished. If it be the doctrine of devils to forbid marriage, and command to abstain from meats, in a temporal and literal sense, how dangerous and deadly must the doctrine be, that doth so, in a spiritual sense! However, so it is, that these who are caught in such a snare, after their credit is engaged, their pride holds them like a chain, and makes them ashamed to return and acknowledge their folly. But pride must come down, for it is abominable in the sight of God.

I have read a pretty story, or a pretty fable, "of an angel and a hermit travelling together; the first thing they met with, on their way, was a stinking carrion; at which the hermit stopped his nose, but the angel smiled; afterwards they saw a strumpet decking herself proudly and pompously, at which the hermit smiled, and the angel stopped his nose." The moral teaches us, That nothing is more abominable to God, and his holy angels, than pride and vanity; and of all pride, none more hateful to God than religious pride; men's saying, "Stand by, for I am holier than you; they are a smoke in his nose, a fire that burneth all the day," Isa. lxv. 5.

4. Some hold by the branch of human precepts and examples; their fear towards God is taught by the precepts of men, Isa. xxix. 13; for which God there threatens to make the wisdom of their wise men to depart, and vanish into folly, ver. 14. When people make the precepts and examples of men, be they never so good, their rule, their Bible, no wonder that they turn aside into crooked paths, and be led forth with the workers of iniquity. I mentioned some heights formerly, that men attempt to climb in vain, and from which they must come down; I do not here resume them.

5. Some, I may add, hold by the branch of their own good purposes and resolutions; some by the branch of their own good duties and earnest prayers; but these confidences will fail you; therefore, "Come down, Zaccheus;" come down to Christ; For

(1.) Alluding chiefly to the conduct of the separating Brethren, formerly laid open.

many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able," because they come not down to Christ, and to the strait and narrow way; so strait and narrow is the gate, that you cannot enter with the branch upon your back, whether the branch of sin and wickedness, or the branch of your legal services and righteousness.

6. Some hold by the branch of their good affections; they have been so and so affected in hearing and communicating; they have shed tears at ordinances sometimes, and wept abundantly; and therefore may they not expect that this will do them good, and render them the more acceptable to God? Nay, man, what a tender twig is that you are trusting to. You may be as joyfully affected at a comedy, or dreadfully affected with a tragedy; is there any religion in these affections? or any thing beyond nature? or any real mark of grace therein? Nay; "Come down, Zaccheus," to the Jordan of the blood of Christ, and wash there, and not in the puddle of thy own tears, otherwise thou hast no part in Christ. Come down, and let him wash you, who says, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me."

7. Some, again, hold by the branch of their own home-bred faith, saying, "We believe as well as we can; and may we not hold there?" Nay, nay; "Come down, Zaccheus;" the object of faith is the author of faith, and the *all* of faith; yea, the act of faith, whereof we are the subject acting, is an owning Christ to be all, itself to be nothing. The faith of God's operation quits its hold of all things; and of itself too; and throws itself into Christ's arms, that he may take and keep hold of it.

Finally, Some hold by the branch of legal hopes and expectations, saying, "Why, if I cannot believe of myself, I will wait;" not doubting but this they can do; still some twig of old Adam they will hold by. But, "Come down, Zaccheus;" and know that you are not sufficient of yourself to think any thing as of yourself; your sufficiency must be of God in Christ; therefore, come down.

[2.] I shall endeavour to excite you by a few motives. Meantime, this call concerns sinners and saints both; for, as unregenerate, proud nature, that is still aspiring to climb and clasp about the forbidden tree, needs to come down, so the remains of proud nature, in the regenerate, makes it the duty of saints to be still coming down. Honest communicants, though they have communicated never so worthily and acceptably, and have come down to entertain Christ in their house and heart; yet, through the remaining power of natural pride and self, being ready always to put confidence, even



in received graces, frames, enlargements, attainments, or some old covenant twig; some good thing done by them, or wrought in them, instead of trusting only to the righteousness of Christ, and living wholly upon the grace that is in him; therefore, they need daily to be coming down, and walking humbly with their God, and keeping themselves down with him in the low valley.

The exhortation then concerns sinners and saints both; and, for motives, consider,

1. That the market of grace is as low as ever it was; therefore come down, if you would buy the pearl of great price. Here you may buy cheap, and sell dear; "Buy the truth, and sell it not." You are to buy the pearl for nothing, by taking it freely; but you may not sell it for a thousand worlds. Here is the richest pearl for the lowest price. It is to be had at a lower rate than ever you, or any mortal could have expected. If you bid high you cannot have it; the market is as low as your heart could wish. Christ offers himself freely to the vilest and blackest sinner here; and if you cannot think or imagine it is so, then I must tell you that the market of grace is lower than you can imagine it is, or than your proud heart can think it is. Your lofty spirit thinks always there must be some terms or conditions required of you as the price; but come down, for the market is fallen far below your price. For, as all things are ready to your hand, so all things are to be had without money, and without price, Isa. lv. 1. It is lower than you can think it; therefore, come down with every high thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of Christ.

2. Come down; for, while you are climbing too high, you are in danger of falling and breaking your neck. It was by climbing too high at first that our first parents fell down to the pit of ruin. The prevalence of that temptation, "Ye shall be as gods," made them fall into such a low state, that instead of being as gods, they became as devils. Again,

3. Consider further, That you must come down with a vengeance, if you come not down by choice to Christ, when he calls you. "God has sworn by himself, that every knee shall bow to him," Isa. xlv. 23, Rom. xiv. 11. If you come not down to kiss the Son, voluntarily, with a kiss of subjection, you must be brought down violently and wrathfully; therefore, come down, "Lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little," Psalm ii. 12.

4. Consider, That God hath come down already in many tokens of his wrath, against us, and the generation, because of our delaying and refusing to come down to Christ, to give him entertainment in our hearts and houses; unbelief, in refusing the kind offers of Christ in the gospel, is the mother sin, that is fertile and productive of all other sins, in so far as it is a refusing subjection to Zion's King, and setting ourselves above him, and above his word and will. For this the wrath of God is come down in many respects, insomuch that wrath is upon all ranks. Signs of his anger and absence are upon nobility, gentry, and commonalty; signs of it upon the Judicatories of the established Church; and signs of it upon Seceders, and professed witnesses for truth. The anger of the Lord hath gone forth against all ranks.

5. Down-coming days seem to be hastening; and therefore, make haste, and come down. It may be these instances of divine wrath are but the beginning of sorrows; and, indeed, "If judgments begin at the house of God, where will they end?" Days of great tribulation seem to be hastening on; church trouble, national trouble, family trouble, and personal trouble; and whether you will or not, you must come down to the gates of death and the grave. The day of death is hastening; therefore make haste, and come down to Christ.

6. If ye do not come down, ye cannot come speed. Many come up to ordinances, they come up to communion solemnities; but they do not come speed, they reap no success, because they do not come down. They come best speed who come down to Jesus' feet, to wash them, and wipe them with the hair of their head.

7. Consider that to come down is the way to come up, even as humiliation is the way to exaltation: "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and he will exalt you." Yea, the farther down you come, the farther up will you mount. The deeper root you take downward, the more fruit will ye bring forth upward, to the praise and glory of God. For,

8. Consider, the great and high God loves to come down, and dwell with those who come down; "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isa. lvii. 15. He loves to come

down to be all in them, that come down to be nothing in their own eyes. He loves to come down and dwell with those that dwell low; and to come down and sit with those who sit in the dust. His voice is, "Come down and sit in the dust," Isa. xlvii. 1. And afterwards his voice will be, "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust," Isa. xxvi. 19. He will go down with them, and dwell with them, till he bring them up; even down to the grave with them, from thence to bring them up; "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit, that dwelleth in you," Rom. viii. 11.

[3.] We shall now close with a word of direction. Would you fall in with this call, to make haste, and come down to Christ; there are two advices I would give. 1. Study, through grace, to open your eyes to see him. 2. To open your ears to hear him; for, if ye but see his face, and here his voice, you will quickly come down to him.

1. Study to open your eyes to see him; and there is a twofold look you are to take of him. 1. To look down and see how low he was. 2. To look up, and see how high he is.

(1.) Look down, and see how low he was in his state of humiliation. Christ came down to you, and for you, that you might come down to him; he came down to this earth, in assuming your nature; down to the womb of a virgin; down to a manger; down to a sorrowful life; down to a shameful death; down to the grave! O sirs, has God come so far down to you, and will you not come down to him? O proud sinner, it well becomes you to come down to his feet, down to the dust, down to nothing before him. Yea, he has not given over coming down to you; for, now he comes down by his word, and down by his Spirit, to deal with you to come down to him.

(2.) Look up, and see how high he is, in his state of exaltation at the Father's right hand. The higher he is, the lower doth he look down towards you; and the lower he looks down, and deigns to cast his eye upon you, the more will you hasten down to hide yourself in the dust; especially if you look up and see how high and lofty his throne is, and what a glorious, rich, and opulent Lord he is. Here I may allude to what Joseph said to his brethren, Gen. xlv. 9, "Haste you, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all



Egypt, come down unto me, tarry not." O sirs, look up, and see how high Christ is now; "God hath made him both Lord and Christ;" Lord of heaven and earth, and all things; therefore, down to him and tarry not. "Make haste, Zaccheus, and come down."

2. Study to open your ears and hear him; hear him calling to you, as he did Zaccheus, "Make haste, and come down;" and hear him promising, as he did to Zaccheus, "To-day I must abide at thy house."

(1.) Hear him calling you particularly, as he did Zaccheus, "Make haste, and come down;" who, whenever he heard Christ calling on him in particular, then he came down. O then, hear him calling you man, you woman, whether old or young, though he does not give you your particular name, John, James, or Mary; yet, if your general name, a guilty sinner, be also your particular name, then you guilty sinner, in particular, are called upon to make haste, and come down to him, quitting hold of all your vain confidences, and false rests, and carnal refuges. On these heights you will not see Christ, so as to entertain him in your heart and house. Therefore, hear the call; O hear him calling on you in particular, and then you will come down. And, again,

(2.) Hear him promising, as he did to Zaccheus, "To-day I must abide at thy house." O sirs, whenever Zaccheus heard him thus promising, he speedily came down; and so will you, if you hear him promising, and found your faith upon his promise. Well, sirs, the Lord is in haste, speaking to you, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Why, to-day, I must be in your house, in your hearts; there is a blessed necessity on my part and yours both. I must be in, and you must make open doors unto me. Another promise of this sort you have, John x. 16. "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." I must bring them, and they shall hear my voice. O sirs, hear then a promise with a promise, importing the necessity of the accomplishment. Do you hear him saying, in effect, O poor sinful creature, many a call you have sitten and slighted; but now I will take one refusal more; to-day I must be in; this day, this hour, this moment, I must be in; I must have your heart. Well, if Christ's necessity and your necessity meet together; that he must have you, and you must have him, then you will come down joyfully to him. Hear him then in his promise; and let your faith be founded upon his word of promise, and not up-

on this or that good in you ; for this is to stay up, instead of coming down. It is a piece of pride, as if you scorned to come to him in rags, like beggars ; but down, down, man, upon your knees, before him. Be content to come to him in rags, that he may clothe you ; in your poverty, that he may enrich you ; and with all your plagues, that he may heal you.

Faith must stand upon God's great and precious promise. Some will say, If I had faith, I would believe. But, what sense is here ? This were to build your faith upon your faith. O my dear friends, consider this, for your eternal good ; is it not more reasonable to say, If I had good security, I would believe ; if I had God's bond, his word, his promise, I would believe. Now, God has given to the whole visible church many gracious promises, "To them belongs the covenant ; the promise is to you and to your children ;" and your right thereto is sealed in baptism ; and upon these promises you are to build your faith and hope. And if thus you hear him calling, and hear him promising, then it is impossible you can stay any longer away from him. You will come down speedily, and entertain him in your heart, and house ; and walk humbly with him all your days, till he take you up to walk with him in white, in the higher house.

May the Lord bless his word, and to his name be praise.

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## SERMON CLI.

MOUNTAINS OVERLEAPED: OR, CHRIST'S COMING TO HIS PEOPLE, LEAPING AND SKIPPING ON THE MOUNTAINS AND HILLS IN HIS WAY.<sup>1</sup>

"The voice of my Beloved ! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills."—Song ii. 8.

My friends, if we shall have any communion with God this day, it will be only in Christ, who is the way to the Father ; for, "No man

(1) This Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Dunfermline, July 8th, 1750. To which is subjoined, the Discourses before and at the Service of the first table, and at the Conclusion of the Solemnity.

cometh to the Father but by him." If we have communion, it will be by two means, namely, by his voice, and by his visit ; that is, by his word, and by his Spirit.

1. If we have communion with him by his voice, it will readily be such a kindly voice, such a kindly word, as to surprise your heart with the sweetness of it, and to make you break silence with such an abrupt speech of soul as this, "The voice of my Beloved !" The voice of Christ in the gospel is the voice of a friend, a beloved, of whom God says, "This is my beloved Son ;" and of whom the believer says, "This is my beloved, this is my friend ! I hear his voice.

2. If we have communion with him by his visit, and by his coming in the power of his Spirit, his motions will readily be so remarkable, that the sense of the great distance that hath been betwixt him and you, will make his gracious approach to be very welcome and wonderful, so as to produce such language as that of the church and spouse of Christ here ; "Behold, he cometh ! leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills !"

In the preceding part of this chapter, we have the bride of Christ, feasting sweetly under his shadow, brought to the banquetting-house, with his banner of love over her, and her soul wrapt up in his kindest embraces, and in all circumstances of happiness ; and evidencing the deepest concern to be safely kept from every thing that might create disturbance to her beloved, or mar the sweet communion she had with him, from verse 3 to this. But here, there seems to be a distance between him and her, and such a distance as that there are hills and mountains intervening betwixt them. The sweetest circumstances the Lord's people can be in here, are not permanent, but variable ; just now they may think their mountain stands strong ; by and bye, the Lord may hide his face, and they are troubled.

But now, in the words of the text, there is a blessed discovery she gets of his return to her ; and that, 1. By hearing his voice ; and 2, By observing his motion ; 'The voice of my beloved : behold, he cometh !'

(1.) She hears his voice, in his word and ordinances. Indeed, the voice of Christ must be heard believingly, before we can have communion with him : "Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 20. So here, she did not see him com-



ing, till she heard his voice. The word and voice of Christ never failed any that heard and trusted to it; it never put a lie in their right hand. If the bride of Christ hear his voice, and thereupon look out, she will see himself: hence, after she hears his voice,

(2.) She observes his motion: for, says she, "Behold, he cometh!" And, "Blessed are they that hear and believe, for they shall see: Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" The word rightly understood, will deceive none that trust to it. It is a sure word of prophecy, more sure than a voice from heaven, and more free from the hazard of delusion, that if we had an extraordinary revelation on every emergent; what men or angels say, may put a cursed cheat upon us; but what the word says, we may venture our souls upon, Rom. x. 8, 1 Pet. iv. 19. "Behold he cometh!"

Here, more particularly, we may observe these three things. 1. The motion; "He cometh." 2. The notice she takes of it; "Behold, he cometh!" 3. The manner of it; "Leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills."

1st, The motion itself; "He cometh." There are several sorts of Christ's comings that we read of in scripture.

1. His coming in the flesh, in his incarnation; "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; Behold, thy King cometh!" Zech. ix. 9. Some are of opinion, that the Old Testament church here hath a respect to Christ's coming in the flesh, rejoicing to see his day afar off, as Abraham did.

2. His coming in the clouds, or unto judgment, called his second coming; "Behold, he cometh with clouds! and every eye shall see him," Revelation i. 7. This is not the coming here spoken of; but our communicating this day is to be in the faith of it: for, by the sacramental supper, we shew forth his death till he come again,

3. His coming in the word, and in his ordinances and providences: these are the outward means and chariots of salvation, Hab. iii. 8, wherein he comes for the support and comfort of his people; hence he says, "Fear not, be strong;" why? "your God cometh with salvation: I will come and save you," Isa. xxxv. 4.

4. His coming in the Spirit, which seems here to be spoken of. Concerning this coming, see John xiv. 18, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come unto you; I will send the Comforter." And it is his coming in the power of the Spirit that I take to be especially here understood.

2dly, The notice she takes of it ; “ Behold he cometh !” Here remark, what effect the word had, after she hears his voice ; it rouses her to a “ Behold, he cometh !” As his word is a sure word, as I said, so it is a rousing word ; yea, the word received and believed, is but the forerunner of a more near manifestation or approach.

QUEST. But does every one that hears his word, see him coming ?

ANSW. It is not the naked word of Christ that rouses us up, or affects us duly ; but the word received and believed ; and therefore many never see him, because they do not hear his voice believingly, nor observe it as the voice of their Beloved. His near approaches are the fruit of a tender and loving entertainment, and observation of his word, and not of a coldrife bare hearing, without understanding and concern. Her *Behold* here is not only,

1. A note of certainty, denoting the reality of the thing, as when it is said, Jude ver. 14, “ Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints ;” it is sure and certain ; But,

2. It is a note of observation ; “ Behold, he cometh !” She was no idle hearer of the word ; but the voice which she knew led her to the person of Christ : in the glass of the word she sees himself by faith ; “ Behold, he cometh !” And not only so, but,

3. It is a note of wonder and admiration, as when it is said, “ Behold, a virgin shall conceive !” &c. ; it is matter of wonder : the believing soul, after distance and desertion, is always filled with wonder and amazement at his return ; Yea,

4. It is a note of joy and exultation ; “ Behold, he cometh to seek and save :” The soul cannot but rejoice in his salvation. Such as by saving acquaintance with Christ, know his voice, and his approaches, are exceedingly filled with joy and gladness at even the distant sound, or small whisper of his voice, or noise of his feet upon the mountains ; hence the bride here breaks forth abruptly, “ The voice of my Beloved ! Behold, he cometh :” From these parts of the text, I have, for some time bygone, deduced and spoken to several observations, before this occasion, and particularly from that middle clause, “ Behold, he cometh.” But it remains that I consider,

3dly, The manner of his coming, that is, “ Leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills.” This is spoken evidently in allusion to the roe and young hart, spoken of in the beginning of the following verse, “ My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart,” which nimbly skips over the hills and mountains, and so points out

Christ's cheerfulness in coming; his swiftness and celerity, speed and dispatch, in coming seasonably to his people's help; together with his power in surmounting all difficulties in his way; of which more afterwards. I need not then here stand to enquire what is to be understood by the mountains and hills, nor what is the distinction between mountains and hills; what is mainly aimed at thereby according to interpreters is, that they signify difficulties and impediments, greater or lesser, over which he comes leaping and skipping, so as, be what they will, they shall not be able to hinder him; so easy is it for him to remove them all. That this is no forced explication, appears from Isa. xl. 3, 4, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert, a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." Every difficulty shall be removed.

From this last clause of the text, which I now propose to speak upon, the only doctrine I offer is as follows:—

OBSERV. That however strange and wonderful it be, yet it is sure and certain, that when Christ hath a mind to come to his people, no mountains of difficulties standing in the way, shall be able to hinder him.

In the opening up of this subject, as favoured by divine pity, we incline to observe the following order:—

- I. We would offer some remarks concerning Christ's coming to his people.
- II. Touch at some of these mountains and hills over which he comes.
- III. Speak a little of the manner of his coming, imported in his leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills.
- IV. Consider the strangeness of his coming, and yet the certainty of it; together with the reasons why no mountainous difficulties shall be able to hinder him.
- V. Make application of the whole subject.

1. We return then to the first thing proposed, which was, To offer some remarks concerning Christ's coming. And,



1. You may remark, "That Christ's coming to his people, particularly in the ordinances of his appointment, is a spiritual, not a bodily approach. It is by his Spirit, not in the flesh." Thus, indeed, he came in his incarnation, when the Word was made flesh ; and thus he will come at the last day, when every eye shall see him. But till then we cannot expect a bodily sight of him ; for, "The heavens must receive him, till the time of the restitution of all things." But we may expect his spiritual presence, which is better for us than his bodily presence ; for, it was expedient for us, that he should go away, because if he had not gone, the Comforter would not have come ; but seeing he is gone, he will send him unto us, John xvii. 7. See John xiv. 16, 17, "I will not leave you comfortless," I will come ; how ? "I will pray the Father, and he will send another Comforter," &c. Now, if it be enquired, How Christ comes by his Spirit ? Why,

(1.) He comes by his Spirit, when he brings sinners under trembling convictions of sin, and of God's anger and absence because of sin : hence Christ says, "When the Spirit cometh, he will convince the world of sin ;" and hence when Christ begins to appear to his people, they not only see a far way, but a ragged way of mountains and hills between him and them ; and not only distance, but impediments that are insuperable for them to get over, if he himself comes not over them.

(2.) He comes by his Spirit, when he reproves them for their sin, that procured his absence, or made the distance. Though they are ready to look on this, as no evidence of his coming to their souls, yet it is even a merciful dealing, when he does not cease to be a reprover ; yea, be the instruments of reproof who will, they have reason to say, "Let the righteous reprove me, and it shall be a kindness and an excellent oil," Psal. cxli. 5.

(3.) He comes by his Spirit, when he turns their darkness to light, and when after they have gone mourning without the Sun, he comes and scatters the thick clouds, and makes darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.

(4.) He comes by his Spirit, when he revives them, and quickens them who were like dead and dry bones, scattered about the grave's mouth ; when he sanctifies, seals, and comforts them, and makes the joy of the Lord their strength, who before were sunk in sorrow, and drooping in discouragement ; when he sends his word,

and heals them, and rouses and awakens them, so as they have ground to say, "This is my comfort in mine affliction, thy word hath quickened me.

Remark 2. "That his gracious coming is sometimes more, and sometimes less discernible." There is a difference between his real coming to his people, and his doing so sensibly. Jacob, at Bethel, had much of the divine presence; and yet, for a time, understood not so much; he had no distinct reflection on it; which made him say, "Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not." Christ may deny his sensible-presence for a long time; hence such complaints as that, Psal. xiii. 1, "How long wilt thou forget, O Lord? how long wilt thou hide thy face?" &c., yet he is not wholly or really away, when he is helping them to look after him, and lament his absence; and to seek him from ordinance to ordinance, from communion to communion: "Thou Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee; nay, he is nigh to all that call upon him, all that call upon him in truth." Notwithstanding they may be complaining of the want of his sensible presence, and saying with Job, "I go forward, but he is not there; backward, but I cannot perceive him;" yet he is really present in his ordinances, his glory is to be seen there, although a cloud cover their eyes, that they do not apprehend him; for he says, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee," Exod. xx. 4. His sensible approaches depend upon his own will and good pleasure; they are arbitrary, he is absolute sovereign of his visits.

Remark 3. "That Christ's sensible approach to his people is sometimes very sudden and surprising when they are not looking for it." Or ever they are aware he bows the heavens and comes down; Jacob found this: he never dreamed of a vision when he laid his head upon a stone for a pillow; "Surely this is none else but the house of God." Thus the bride is here surprised; mountains intervened between him and her; she is suddenly surprised, both with his voice and his visit; "The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!" Where also it is to be remarked, That however great the distance betwixt Christ and the believer is apprehended to be, yet still they are in speaking terms; Christ can easily and quickly reach the soul by his voice, which ushers in his visit. He speaks to them by his ordinances, and sometimes by his providences; sometimes by a voice of consolation, sometimes by a rod of correction: and the believer hears the voice, hears the rod, hears the

sound of his feet upon the intervening mountains. And as they hear his voice, so he hears their voice ; his ears are open to their cry, and their ears are open to his call, as well as their eyes to his approach : hence he no sooner speaks than, with surprise, she says, "The voice of my Beloved !" and no sooner appears, than she cries out, "Behold he cometh !" &c.

Remark 4. "That there are different kinds of his gracious comings and approaches to his people ; such as by communication, manifestation, and operation." He comes by communications ; such as the communications of light, scattering the darkness and making noon day, so as in his light we see light clearly. Communications of life, quickening the soul ; no minister, no sermon, no sacrament can quicken till the communication come, and then the man stirs to his feet, and duties become sweet and easy. Communications of strength, making the man strong in the Lord ; the soul's weakness is a patch to set off the Mediator's strength, when it is made perfect in our weakness. There are communications of joy ; hence, "I will go to the altar of God, says David, to God my exceeding joy ;" my superlative and top joy. He comes also by manifestations ; he manifests his everlasting love, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Thus he is said to manifest himself to his people, as he does not manifest himself to the world, John xiv. 22, 23, he manifests the secret of his covenant, Psalm xxv. 14. He comes likewise by his operations, and the vital influences of his grace, setting the graces of his Spirit aloft : he gives the former and the latter rain. Perhaps after the soul has been long without these influences, then he pours water on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground ; then the operation is powerful, subduing sin, weakening corruption, healing diseases ; then comes sweet intercourse and familiarity between him and them ; mutual embracements, mutual love, mutual care and concern.

Remark 5. "That there are different degrees of his comings and approaches to his people." He sometimes comes and shews himself through the lattice ; and sometimes is said to walk with them in the galleries ; sometimes he makes them ride in state, as it were, and in his chariot, paved with love ; sometimes they are represented as sitting at one table, like husband and wife : how are they feasted there, when the King sits at his table ? O wonder, that we who fed upon the devil's husks, should be invited by the



King of glory, to sit down at the table with him! Yea, it may be spoke with astonishment, that the fellowship he allows, is such, as that they are said to bed as well as board with him; "Behold, our bed, which is king Solomon's! also, our bed is green:" representing, the greatest communion with God in Christ, by similes drawn from the marriage-supper, and the marriage-bed; but it is strawed with the green flowers of holiness, which forbids vain and vile thoughts. His coming to allow the highest degree of fellowship, brings in the highest strains of holiness, as well as comfort.

Remark 6. "That the Lord, in his comings, exercises sovereignty in many respects." Sovereignty with respect to the persons; some being admitted to the inner court, while others are but in the outer court all their days. Sovereignty is exercised with respect unto the frequency of his comings; to some he comes and visits them once a day, or once a month they will get a discovery of him, or a meeting with him; others may, for many years, go mourning without the Sun, so as it may be twenty years betwixt the sweet Bethel and the Peniel visit; some may go from year to year, and from communion to communion; yet, like Absalom, never see the King's face. He exercises sovereignty with respect to the time and season of his coming; his first sweet visit he makes, is in the day of espousals; this is the day wherein the man is changed, and brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, from sin to holiness, from hell to heaven, and to the contrary of what he was. When he retires inward, and looks to the hell of lusts he was troubled with, he finds them disappearing for a time at least, lying, as it were, expiring, during the sweet impressions of the Lord's presence, the new nature, the joy and peace in believing; but afterward, through the remains of corruptions, beginning to work and war against him, he needs the Lord's coming again and again with new succour and relief; and the Lord exercises a sovereignty in the season of his new visit. I shall mention some of the special times and seasons. We cannot limit the holy One of Israel; but there are these following times, wherein he is pleased to come in a sweet and satisfying way to his people.

(1.) After the saddest and darkest night, as it was with Job, after he was made to cry, "O that I knew where I might find him!" And after all the thick and black clouds he was under, what a blessed visit got he? And what a glorious discovery, that made him say, "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear; but

now mine eye hath seen thee ; wherefore I loath and abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes ?" Yea, sometimes the Lord comes in a sweet manner, when they are at the point of giving over, and ready to despair, and to think he will be favourable no more, then he comes skipping on the mountains ; " When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy held me up." See Psalm xxxi. 22, " I said in my haste, I am cut off from thine eye ; nevertheless, thou heardst the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee." He may come when their strength is gone, Deut. xxxii. 36.

(2.) He comes when the springs of sublunary enjoyments are quite dried up, and they see nothing but emptiness and vanity of vanities written upon them ; then he may bow the heavens and come down. Thus, when Elijah was obliged to retire to the wilderness, and hide himself from Jezebel, God visited him there, and provided him with meat and drink, in the strength whereof he travelled forward.

(3.) He comes, sometimes remarkably, when they are, or before they be engaged in great duty or danger, that they may be in the better case to perform duty, and bear up under danger. Joshua was to lead forth the armies of Israel, against the armies of Canaan. God comes to him, and says, " Fear not, I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Thus before Paul was exposed to his shipwreck, Christ came and comforted him by his angel ; " Fear not, Paul, for thou must be brought before Cæsar ; and lo, I have given thee all these that sail with thee."

(4.) Sometimes he comes very sweetly, when they are or have been exposed to suffering for his sake ; when the fury of devils and the wrath of men have been let loose, then the Lord hath been pleased to make good that promise, Isa. xlii. 2, " When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee," &c. This was accomplished literally in the three children, cast into the fiery furnace ; because they would not worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, then they had the sweet presence of Christ himself. This care the Lord many times takes of his children, when men cast their names into the black furnace of reproach and calumny ; because they will not bow to the idol of their usurped authority, or arbitrary dictates and dogmatisms, instead of the institutions of Christ ; this care he expresseth, by granting his spiritual presence in that case ; " If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the Spirit of glory, and of God, resteth on you," 1 Peter iv. 14.

(5.) He cometh sometimes when they are attending upon him in solemn ordinances ; there they use to hear the voice of their Beloved, in the preaching of the word, and especially in commemorating his death in this sacrament we have in view ; he hath made himself known in the breaking of bread ; some have got so much of his presence there sometimes, as to be content to be carried in a death-chariot to the communion table above. But then, to add no more on this head,

(6.) He comes sometimes to his people at death ; when expiring breath is sitting upon their lips, he hath bowed his heaven, and stood by comforting them ; though herein also he exerciseth sovereignty, hiding himself from some of his dear saints, at their last moments, yet sometimes he makes them sing sweetly of his presence, in the midst of the dark trance between time and eternity, saying with David, " Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil, for thou art with me," Psalm xxiii. 4. And when a believer finds him thus coming, well may he say, " O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? " 1 Cor. xv. 55. But I proceed,

II. To the second head of the method, viz., To speak of some of these mountains and hills over which he comes ; and here the text gives occasion to observe, 1. The nature and kind of these mountains in general, that stand up and intervene betwixt Christ and us. 2. The multitude of them, they are mountains and hills, in the plural number. 3. The qualities of them, both mountains and hills. 4. The impassability of them as insuperable by us, and such as could be overleaped by none but himself, our Beloved, who is like a roe, or a young hart, leaping and skipping upon them.

1st, As to the nature and kind of these mountains in general, they may be all reduced to one kind, and that is, they are mountains of distance and separation betwixt God and us : and they are therefore all called " The mountains of Bether," in the last verse of this chapter. Now the mountain of distance is manifold, in respect of the various tops, and heads, and risings of the vast mount of distance between God and us, both natural and moral. O how great is the distance betwixt God and the creature ; betwixt him who is infinite, and us who are finite nothings ! O what a distance is there betwixt his high and lofty habitation, and the dust of which we are, and in which we crawl ! What a distance does sin and guilt make betwixt a holy just God and us sinful wretches ! What a distance



on account of our unworthiness that we should be taken notice of by him, for what are we that the blessed and self-sufficient God should look after us ! What a distance, on account of justice requiring satisfaction, which we cannot give, nor ever shall be able to do ! What a distance between God and our nature, in which the satisfaction is to be made, if ever the distance be made up ! Such is the distance betwixt God and us as dust, and vile dust ; as creatures, and sinful creatures : may it not be a wonder of wonders if ever there shall be a meeting betwixt God and dust, betwixt a holy God and sinful creatures, betwixt a just God and guilty creatures ? When the mountain of sin, and of a broken law, the mountain of the law-curse, the mountain of incensed justice and divine wrath, are standing in the way, who can come and overleap these mountains ? “ Who is sufficient for these things ? The voice of our Beloved ? Behold, he cometh ! ” And, in his condescension, is said to “ Bow the heavens and come down,” Psalm xviii. 9 ; he is said to “ Rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains may flow down at his presence,” Isaiah lxiv. 1. He overleaps the mountain of sin and guilt, by becoming sin for us, and paying our debt, and undergoing the punishment that was due to us. He overleaped the mountain of a broken covenant, by coming to fulfil all righteousness in our room ; the mountain of incensed justice, by coming to give condign satisfaction ; as to the curse of the law, he was made a curse for us ; as to the wrath of God, he bore this mountain on his back, and was in an agony, that we might feast on love ; as for our unworthiness, he paves the way by these means fore-mentioned, for magnifying his mercy and free grace, in justifying the ungodly ; and, as to the vast mountain of distance betwixt God and our nature, he leaps over this, by stooping to take on our nature, and subjecting himself to the common miseries of mankind.

And as our Beloved leaps over mountains of distance between God and us, so his love skips over hills of separation between us and him. He overleaps and overcomes our enmity and unwillingness, when he makes us willing in the day of his power. He overleaps and overcomes our natural willingness to depart from him, by establishing with us a covenant of grace, wherein he promises, to put his fear in our hearts, that we shall not depart from him, Jer. xxxii. 40. Such as these, then, are the mountains of distance and difficulties, that love comes skipping over.

These great mountains of distance between God and us are made by sin, which causes the great distance, as it is a violation of the law of the most high God; "Your iniquities have separate betwixt you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you," Isaiah lix. 2. Oh! what mountains of original and actual sins hath Christ to come over? What mountains came he over to Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, and thousands of others. But,

2dly, As to the multitude of these mountains; indeed there would be no end of speaking of them in particular, they are more than can be numbered; for every one may join issue with David, saying, "Innumerable evils compass me about;" and, indeed, these innumerable mountains which Christ had to come over. The mountains I have mentioned, produce many other mountains and hills, which the Lord Jesus hath to come over, and which cannot hinder him when he hath a mind to come. The mountains of sin and guilt cannot hinder his coming, when he says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake," Isaiah xliii. 25. You are, it may be, ready to cry out, "Oh! a vile and abominable guilty creature that I am! I cannot think Christ will come to the like of me;" but let the mountains be never so great and many, they can never hinder his coming; though you have gone on frowardly in the way of your own heart, which might provoke him to tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver you; instead of that, how wonderful is the word, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: and I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him!" Isaiah lvii. lvii. 17, 18. But further, to name some more of the many mountains he will come over:—

1. He comes over all the mountains of unbelief, when his people, under the prevalency thereof, may be crying that they are forsaken and forgotten of God, he comes over these saying, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, but I will not forget thee," &c., Isaiah xlix. 15.

2. He comes over all the mountains of perplexing fears and faintings, on account of outward violence, when his people are brought under apprehensions that the rage of men will swallow them up, and the reproach of men will ruin them; see how the Lord levels this mountain, Isaiah li. 7; "Fear ye not the reproach of men; neither be ye afraid of their revilings: for the moth shall eat them like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool.

Verse 12, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you : who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of man, that shall die ? and the son of man, which shall be made as grass ?"

3. He comes over mountains of deadness and indisposition in his people : when they are quite unable to apply themselves to duty, he by his Spirit breathes upon them, and quickens them, according to his promise, Hos. vi. 2, "After two days he will revive us : in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight," &c.

4. He comes over mountains of temptations ; when the devil assaults and bathes his fiery darts in some one poison or another, and when the soul thinks it will be overcome, and buried under this mountain, then the Lord sweetly comes and manifests himself by such a promise as that, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," Rom. xvi. 20.

5. He comes over the mountains of backslidings ; when they have, by the power of temptation, and of indwelling sin and corruption, fallen again into the mire of sin and pollution, he will not suffer them to lie there ; but will, in his own time, return and restore them, according to his word, Jer. iii. 1, 14, "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers yet return again to me, saith the Lord : turn, ye backsliding children, for I am married unto you. Hos. xiv. 4, "I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely," &c.

6. He comes to them over all the mountains of external tribulations and afflictions ; when they are sore broken and heavily oppressed with calamities, so as heart and hope begin to sink and fail, even then he rejoices over them to do them good, saying, "Fear not, for I am with thee. Fear not, worm Jacob." Many times his people have both a heavy sense of sin, and a heavy load of trouble at the same time, and then the dispensations of providence, that are awfully dark and dismal, may make them cry out, O great mountains ! For, mountains in scripture being also emblems of enemies and opposition, when the Lord withdraws, not only guilt and unbelief heightens the distance, but sad dispensations follow upon both ; when he smits, and is wroth, and hides his face ; when he hastens them with the chastisement of a cruel one, Jer. xxx. 14, how vast then do the mountains of distance appear, when there is such a range of mountains, sin and guilt, and heavy dispensations, all intervening betwixt God and them ? But, O how soon can he



melt the mountains, saying, "Who art thou, O great mountain, before our Zerubbabel? thou shalt become a plain," Zech. iv. 7. Yea, he will turn the world upside down, before he want a way for driving his chariot of love to his people. So that when we have viewed the mountains, in their greatest height and altitude, we must extol his all-sufficiency above them, and see love leaping on the mountains. Hence,

7. He comes to his people sometimes, over all the mountains of discouragements; when their souls are cast down within them, and their spirits are ready to sink like a stone, and ready to cry out, "There is no sorrow like my sorrow;" then he comes with such a word as that, Isa. liv. 11, 12, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted; behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. Thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear: and from terror, for it shall not come near thee."

8. He comes over all the black mountains of desertion, God's hiding himself under a cloud; this makes a great distance betwixt Christ and the soul in two respects. 1. If we consider the guilt procuring desertion. 2. The sense of the deserted soul when awakened.

(1.) The guilt procuring desertion. It is the sin of the saints, which is a sinning against love, and a sinning after they have smarted under the folly of former wanderings, and a sinning after the Lord hath come over many mountains and impediments they laid in his way, and been kind to them; and after he hath come through a great storm, his head being filled with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, and they put him to the back of the door when he called for entry, Song v. 1. A sin so circumstantiated and aggravated, doth justly procure great distance. A deserted soul, when it tampers with temptation and folly, may think little of it; yea, the bride of Christ may think she will sleep, and have her heart waking: yea, but this carriage holds him out, and keeps him at the door, Song v. 2, 3. Samson may think he will sleep in the lap of Delilah: and imagine when the Philistines come upon him, to bestir himself as at other times; but, when he awakes, he finds his locks cut, and God departed from him, Judges xvi. 19, 20. The sluggard may think he will take a little sleep; if that be too much, he will take a little slumber; if that be too much, he

will take a little folding of the hands to sleep ; but he considers not that that brings poverty upon him, as one that travels, and his want as an armed man, Prov. vi. 10.

(2.) The sense of the deserted soul when awakened to apprehend the distance, [partly by love, and partly] by unbelief, will make the mount of distance appear the more. Partly, I say, by love and affection, and languor to be at Christ ; and this languor checked and choaked with the sense of guilt, that caused the desertion, O this makes the distance and impediment seem the greater. Why, much affection and languor will make every hour a day to be at him ; and the least distance a journey of a lifetime. Whatever reality of distance and impediments guilt makes, love will look upon that distance in a magnifying glass, and upon the mountains in a multiplying glass, it would so willingly be at that which it loves. Partly also by unbelief, the sense of the deserted soul will magnify the distance, and multiply the impediments : conscience of guilt, magnified by unbelief, makes the distance very great, and the mountains many, unbelief itself being a great mountain in the Lord's way, Mat. xiii. 58 ; yet even over all this range of mountains that appear betwixt him and the deserted soul, he comes, while for the abounding of sin and guilt, he hath superabounding grace, to make grace much more abound ; for frequently renewed provocations he hath endless compassions that fail not. When he hath a mind to rend the heavens and come down, mountains of guilt and provocation flow down before him, Isa. lxiv. 1. And for unbelief and despondency he hath invincible and strong consolations to bear in against both ; " For who hath despised the day of small things ? for they shall rejoice," Zech. iv. 10

3dly, As to the qualities of these mountains I shall observe shortly,

1. That some of them are greater and some less ; hence called mountains and hills. David saw the mountains of his sins to be great mountains ; " for thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." High aggravated sins are great mountains ; and it is a great matter when love comes skipping over them.

2. They are high mountains, in respect that the guilt of sin and the cry of it reaches to the very heavens ; and if mercy were not higher than the heavens, it would never come over such high mountains of sin and guilt, heaped up above the clouds.

3. They are some of them lofty mountains ; not only high in

respect of sin's heinousness ; but lofty in respect of its haughtiness and pride. The pride of man is hard to level as a mighty mountain ; but when the Lord comes graciously, " The loftiness of man is brought down, and the haughtiness of man laid low, that the Lord alone may be exalted," Isa. ii. 17.

4. Some of them are fiery-burning mountains. Christ had the burning mountains of God's wrath and of the fiery law to come over, which could not be done without quenching that fire with his precious blood, which is the blood of God. He had the burning mountain of the wrath of men and devils to come over in this conflict ; " He came from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah," Isa. lxiii. 1. He hath still men's fiery passions and burning lusts in his way to impede him in his coming ; but that that may not hinder him, he brings water in his hand to quench that fire : he opens the fountain of living waters ; and as it were, the fountain of the great deep, to drown a world of burning lusts and corruptions in his way ; and he pours water on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground ; such powerful floods, as to cover or carry down the mountains with them.

5. Some of the mountains are dark mountains, such as we read of, Jer. xiii. 16. " Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains ; and while you look for light he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." Our Lord Jesus, in coming over these mountains, to redeem by price, had the dark valley of the shadow of death to go through, which may be called a mountain as well as a valley, as it was an impediment in his way ; and when he comes to redeem by power, he hath the gross darkness of ignorance to come over, and in this mountain he hath the face of the covering cast over all the people to destroy, and the veil cast over all nations," Isa. xxv. 7. So dark and misty are the mountains at the best that even his bride cannot see him upon the top of them till he come very near, so as she may hear his voice, and the sound of his feet upon the mountains ; " The voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills."

6. They are strong, mighty, and unmoveable mountains so as no power of angels or men can move or remove them ; they are strong holds that cannot be cast down with carnal weapons, but by such as are mighty through God. It is only the coming of Christ,



the presence of the Lord, the presence of the God of Jacob, that can make these mountains to skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs, P'sal. cxiv. 4. Which leads me to the last thing on this head, viz.,

4thly. The impassability of these mountains, as insuperable by us, and such as none can overleap but himself, who is like a roe, or a young hart, leaping and skipping upon them. The bride of Christ here admires his grace and love in coming over these difficulties, that were impossible for her to surmount. And indeed, his discovering them to be such to us, is but a preparing of his way to coming over them. It is with the believer at a distance from Christ; when brought to a discerning of that distance, as it is with a weak person, that hath a journey before it, and is not only weak, but clogged with impediments, and hath mountains and hills in the way, that it is impossible for it to get over; therefore the poor creature is ready lay down and give over. Whence, indeed, four things here are to be observed,

1. That all should beware of laying impediments in the way betwixt Christ and them; for, in the time of security and spiritual sleep, men are ready to think that but a mote, which, when God reckons with them, in order to recovery, they will see to be a mountain; therefore, there should be no boarding or dallying with that which may provoke him to withdraw and abstract his company. You that know anything of fellowship with Christ, entertain it tenderly, as you would not raise a mountain betwixt Christ and you; and as you would not, with Samson, have your eyes put out, and be put to grind in the prison: little do many mind this, till they be brought to lose Christ's company in the crowd, and be put to seek him sorrying, and to many sad thoughts, whether he and they shall ever meet together again.

2. Whence, likewise, here is a touchstone for shewing your awakened and sensible condition. They that are at a distance from Christ and see many mountains betwixt him and them, if they would know whether there be a token for good in it let them see.

- (1.) If they discern the distance, and the reason of it; and that they be not, like Samson, that know not when the Lord was departed from them: see if they can say, as Isa. lix. 12. "Our iniquities are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them." And,

(2.) See whether or not distance be bitter, even as impassable mountains are afflictive to a traveller; and when you cannot possibly recover former proofs of the Lord's kindness, when thy wickedness corrects thee, and thy backslidings reprove thee, then thou art finding it to be an evil and bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that his fear was not in thee Jer. ii. 19.

3. Yet after all, though it is justly humbling when we usually raise mountains between Christ and us, that are impassable and insuperable by us; yet it is also encouraging, and contributes to the reviving of hope, that when he shows the mountains to be insuperable, he is so far on his way to come over them, and preparing us for his coming, and making out that word. Zechariah viii. 6 that which is marvellous in our eyes, should not be marvellous in his eyes. His discovering and holding out the insurmountable difficulties and impediments that we can never get over, is but to make way for the magnifying of his free grace and mercy in removing them, and remedying what is hopeless as to us, and desperate Therefore,

4. We would still be encouraged to give him the glory of what he can make out of our hopeless conditions, and to put them in his hand in expectation of a good issue; when you are so afflicted with a multitude of mountains and impediments, that you have given over hopes of meeting with him, upon your part, the mountains and hills being so many and so high, that you see you will never win over them; yet leave room for what he can do, leave room to him and his power, and pity, and promise; give him this glory that he can get over them to you, though you cannot get over them to him: put the case that is desperate in itself, and as to what you can make of it, over upon him, who can soon come leaping on the mountains and skipping on the hills. This leads me,

III. To the third general head of method, viz. :—To speak a little of the manner of his coming, imported in his leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills. Much of the beauty and sweetness of the text lies here; and therefore I shall endeavour to hint at the import of this manner of his coming. And,

1. It seems to import his coming gradually and progressively: leaping and skipping are gradual and progressive motions; and, as it were, from mountain to mountain: one leap after another: hence his going forth is said to be prepared as the morning. The Lord's

gracious approach to his people is regular and gradual. He first enlightens the understanding, and strikes out a window in that dark dungeon: then, having convinced the conscience, the will is prevailed with to yield to Christ. Herein Christ's saving work differs from Satan's deceitful operations: Christ works upon the understanding and will: and then the rest of the faculties, the heart and affections, follow; but Satan's work is counter to, and the opposite of this; he begins with the lower faculties, allures the carnal appetites, wins in upon the affections, and either charms or amuses, and so abuses them, and carries them headlong, darkening the judgment that ought to be first well informed; thus Eve first was tempted with the sight of the fruit; and without any more, loved it, and took it; so also Achan did the golden wedge. But the bride of Christ is here first taught by the word. "The voice of my Beloved!" And then she sees him coming, "Behold, he cometh! And observes his gradual approach, "Leaping upon the mountains, and skipping on the hills."

2. His coming thus imports his kind, loving, and affectionate approach. Love makes him lift up his feet upon the dark mountains, and come leaping into the embraces of his bride, who here espies him as her Beloved, and as a loving roe, or young hart, upon the mountains. The love of Christ made him think nothing of all the mountainous difficulties that were in his way of coming to seek and save poor sinners. "He loved me, and gave himself for me," says Paul. "He loved us, and washed us in his blood," says the church. A bloody spouse she hath been to him; but his great affection appears in making all impediments but stepping-stones, so to speak, to advance his way to us.—Hence,

3. It imports his coming, not only with love and affection, but with joy, pleasure and delight. O how delightfully did he come over the highest mountain, saying, "Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O my God!" What he doth for his Father, and for his Bride, he doth with pleasure, "He rejoices over his people to do them good;" and he does it with his whole soul. O how evident is his delight with the sons of men, that when we cast up mountains and hills, he not only comes over them, but comes leaping and skipping! It is no heavy task to him, but a sweet and joyful service, wherein he sees the travail of his soul and is satisfied, Isa. iii. 11.

4. His leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills,



imports the activity and celerity, the speediness and swiftness of his motion to his bride : he does not come creeping to his bride ; but, as it were, in full flight, with great speed, as well as with great affection and delight. A lifetime would be little enough for some weak people to crawl over a number of steep mountains and hills ; but a swift roe or hart can swiftly come over them : even so, Christ will not be long of coming ; when he pleases he can in a moment make a sudden change in the condition of his people : that which, if their duty and diligence should take in task, would be insuperable, he can effect in a trice ; even when they come to duty, even in a desperate case, under their difficulties ; he can with them in an instant, and make them like the chariot of Aminadab ; he can, from the height of heaven, his holy habitation, come down to the lowest pit of discouragement in haste ; " Behold he cometh quickly." He loses no time when he comes, however this poor people, under darkness may be crying, " How long, O Lord ? how long ? " Yet he is on his way, and will come in the season, and in the time of need.

5. When he is said to come " leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills," it imports his eminent and conspicuous way of coming, even in state and in majesty. As one upon the top of a mountain, running with speed, is well seen and conspicuous ; so Christ makes his coming evident and eminent sometimes : when the highest One is seen upon the highest mountains in his way, how does his glory appear ! The higher the mountains are that he comes over, the more doth the glory of his grace appear ; we make the distance, and he makes it up ; we raise the mountains and he comes over them. O the majesty of his grace and his mercy !

6. His leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills, imports the easiness of his approach ; that whatever impediments we lay in the way betwixt him and us, and however insuperable they be to us, yet it is easy for Christ to come over them : he comes with a conquering power ; mountains and hills cannot hinder him ; his motion is irresistible and unobstruable : with great ease he removes all difficulties that are lying in the way. In his quick and nimble motion, he leaves all the mountains and hills behind him, turning his back upon the mountains, and his face upon the poor sinner, that his sins may no more stand like mountains betwixt them ; " Thou hast all my sins behind thy back," Isa. xxxviii. 17. Yea, it is not only a leaping over the mountains and hills that is here spoke of, so as to leave them untouched with his feet, and untrod upon ; but his leaping upon the mountains seems to import

his treading on them, and treading them down in his way ; and how far down may we suppose he treads them, when, by another metaphor, he is said to cast all our sins into the depths of the sea ? Micah. vii. 19. Yea, it is such a leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills, as seems to import his leaping over the valleys and making nothing of them, he treads down the mountains of sin and guilt in his way ; but as to the deep valleys of grief, shame, sorrow, discouragement, and fears that his people had on the account of sin, these he kindly overlooks, or rather fills up these deep valleys, when he treads down the mountains, as it is said, Luke iii. 5, 6. “ Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought down ; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”—So much shall suffice concerning the manner of his coming on the mountains ; he cometh in majesty over principalities and powers.

IV. The fourth head proposed was, To speak a little of the strangeness of his coming thus, and yet the certainty of it, together with the reasons why no mountain or hill shall be able to hinder him. And,

1st, As to the strangeness and wonderfulness of it. It may justly be reckoned strange and wonderful, as in all the respects already mentioned ; so,

1. If we consider the person thus coming ; who is he, but the king of glory, the heir of all things, the eternal Son of God, the holy one of Israel, the infinitely holy God, so as the heavens are not pure in his sight, and he charges the angels with folly, is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ! How stupendous is his condescension, that he should come to us leaping and skipping on all the hills and mountains of sin and provocation ! Is not this wonderful ?

2. If we consider the persons to whom he comes this way ; even to those that have busied themselves in raising mountains, and heaping up hills between him and them : even the bride of Christ was but a base harlot ; “ Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers.” O ! will he come again leaping over mountains and hills to her ? It is vastly wonderful !

3. If we consider how high and how many the mountains are which he comes skipping over. Did justice break out against the old world in a deluge of water ; against Sodom in flames of fire ;

against Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, by making the earth open, and swallow them up alive? And instead of treating you in that manner, shall love and mercy come leaping and skipping toward you over all these mountains of sin that ruin the rest of the world? O surprisingly wonderful!

4. If we consider how kindly he comes to his unkindly and uncomely bride, lifting up his feet over all the ragged rocks in his way. O the heart-hardness, heart-deadness, heart-enmity, heart-rebellion, heart-aversion from, and opposition to the way of God! the formality, selfishness, hypocrisy, deceit and desperate wickedness of our hearts! If we see that rugged path he hath to come, we cannot but admire and wonder at his coming, and coming in such infinite kindness as may ashame and confound us for our unkindness. He that came over the mountain of divine vengeance, due to us, and trode the vine-press of infinite wrath alone, he comes skipping over all these lesser mountains; they are no bigger than motes beneath the feet of love coming over them. And,

5. It is wonderful, if you consider how often and how frequently he comes leaping over all these mountains. That he should come again and again, as he says to his disciples when he left them, "Now you have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice;" and especially when we have sinned him away, that ever he should come again, is a wonder. But as coming is his trade, so he is a daily comer to his bride; coming by his word, by his Spirit, by his providence, by his daily supports. And he never comes, but he hath new mountains and hills laid in his way, if he could be hindered by them. And hence,

6. It is wonderful and strange, if you consider the bad reception he meets with, when he comes, even leaping and skipping on the mountains. No wonder that the bride say with astonishment, "Behold he cometh leaping, notwithstanding all the ill-treatment he met with! Does he not often come to a sleepy, drowsy bride? The spouse was asleep in the bed of security, Song v. 2, 3. And is he not often put to the pains of much knocking before he get entrance to our hearts? "I have put off my coat," said she, "how shall I put it on?" I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" He knocks at every one's door by the gospel call; and the wise virgins, as well as the foolish, may be asleep, but with this twofold difference.

(1.) Christ and believers are always in speaking terms; "I



sleep, but my heart waketh ; she hears, as it were, through her sleep, even the voice of her Beloved.

(2.) In the believer's heart there is always a hole of communication ; " My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him," Song v. 4. However, his coming is always wonderful, whether he come to strangers, to make a hole in their hearts, for communicating himself to them : or to his friends, to put in his hand by the hole that was already made in their hearts for him. His coming to strangers and aliens must be leaping over the high mountains of an unregenerate state, and an unrenewed heart and nature to level that mountain in his way ; and his coming to his unkind friends must be in a way of leaping over such sins against love, as are yet higher mountains, and more highly aggravated sins than the unrenewed and unregenerate are capable of. O then, in this respect his coming thus is wonderful, and far different from the way of creatures one with another ! How unwilling are they to forgive injuries, and come over any affronts done them by men, like themselves, and especially if they be above them in their worldly station ? If any such shall freely forgive you an injury you have done him, you reckon it an act of marvellous generosity and condescension in such a person ; how much more, when the great JEHOVAH, who inhabits eternity, is pleased to come over the mountains of all your provocations, and to forgive and forget all the affronts and indignities you have done to him ! Yet,

2dly, I come to show the certainty of his coming thus : and why no mountain or hill shall be able to hinder him. Now, that however strange and wonderful it be, yet it is sure and certain, that when he hath a mind to come to his people, no mountain or hill shall be able to hinder, but he will come leaping and skipping over them : why this is sure,

1. Because of his promise, who is the true and faithful witness, that cannot lie, he hath said, " He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry," Heb. x. 37. He hath said, " Now ye have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice ; and your joy no man shall take from you," John xvi. 22. And that he will come over all mountainous impediments that intervene between him and them, appears from his promise, particularly to his deserted and distressed church ; " In a little wrath I hid myself from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. O thou afflicted, tossed with tem-

pests, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours," &c., Isa. liv. 8, 11—14.

2. It is sure, because of the perpetuity of his love and mercy, which surmounts all the mountains in his way: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee," Isa. liv. 10. "He is God, and changeth not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed," Mal. iii. 6, "He remembers them in their low estate, because his mercy endureth for ever," Psalm cxxxvi. 23. See also Psalm lxxxix. 30, 33.

3. It is sure, because it is his ordinary and usual way of coming to his people, in answer to their prayers, that he would rend the heavens and come down, and that the mountains may flow down at his presence, Isaiah lxiv. 1. See how it was answered, verse 3, "When thou didst terrible things, that we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence." It is his way to bring them to difficulties, and then to bring them out, "Thou broughtest us into the net: thou hast laid affliction on our loins; thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire, and through water, but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." Psalm lxvi. 11, 12.

4. It is sure, from the encouragements he gives us, for checking all our unbelieving fears lest the mountains never be overleaped, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Fear not, only believe." And again, "Fear not, for I am with thee," Isaiah xli. 10, 11. Behold, all they that are incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded." And again, ver. 13, 14, 15, "Fear not, I will help thee. Fear not, worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel, I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff.

5. It is sure, from the strong desire that he hath created in his people after his presence, that he will come over all impediments. Where he creates a desire, he will give satisfaction to it; for, "He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry with good things." Their cry is, "O how long, how long wilt thou hide thy face? As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after God, the living God," Psalm xlii. 1, 2. The hart is of a dry con-

stitution, and hath great thirst, especially after it hath been hunted upon the hills ; such is the spiritual constitution of God's children, especially after being hotly pursued by the fury of men and devils. O how do they pant for a drink ! and he that gives them a drought, will give them a drink, and not let them starve ; “ When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them,” Isaiah xli. 17.

6. It is sure, from the experience the Lord's people have of his coming, that when he comes it is always leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills of sin and guilt in his way, and over the mountains of difficulties ; all his remarkable approaches are ordinarily experienced to be, when they are brought low, and, as it were, buried below the mountains of distance and distress ; then he knows their souls in adversities, “ I was brought low, and he helped me ;” and these experiences work hope of his coming again, and encourage their faith of his delivering them out of the depths ; hence, says the Psalmist, “ Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, will quicken me again, and shall bring me up from the depths of the earth ; thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side, Psal. lxxi. 20, 21.—Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me, and thy right hand shall save me,” Psal. cxxxviii. 6.

7. It is sure and certain from the office of the promised Spirit. It is the office of the Holy Ghost, to discover the mountains of sin and guilt, and unbelief, that stand betwixt Christ and us, “ When he is come, says Christ, he shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me,” John xvi. 8, 9. It is his office also to discover Christ to be the roe and the young hart, leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills : for it is his work to testify of Christ, and glorify him. Yea, it is the work of the Spirit of God to remove the mountains and plain them ; “ Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts ; who art thou, O great mountain ? before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain,” Zech. iv. 6.

8. It is sure that when he hath a mind to come, no intervening mountain or hill shall be able to hinder him, because he is the power of God, and to him, as Mediator, all power in heaven and earth is given. He is able to save to the uttermost, and to level the highest mountain. Whenever he comes leaping and skipping



on the mountains and hills, he makes them leap and skip like rams and lambs, Psal. cxiv. 4. Yea, the touch of his feet upon the mountains makes them vanish like smoke, as it is said, Psal. civ. 32. "He toucheth the hills, and they smoke."—So much for the doctrinal part. I go on now,

V. To the fifth head proposed, namely, The application. Is it so, That however strange and wonderful it be, yet it is sure and certain, that when Christ hath a mind to come graciously to his people, no mountains of difficulty in the way will be able to hinder him? Then, hence see,

1. That gospel grace is surmounting grace, and herein we may learn the difference betwixt the law and the gospel. The law, as a broken covenant of works, shews nothing but mountains of sin and guilt, and wrath betwixt God and us; for, "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" but the gospel shews Christ to be the nimble roe, and the young hart, skipping on the mountains, and leaping on the hills. The law shows the mountains and hills to be impassable, and insuperable by us, or by men, or angels: the gospel shows how easily they are surmountable by grace, and the great leaps that grace makes; O the strange leaps that Christ hath made, and does make! such as, his leaping from heaven to earth, in his incarnation and humiliation! from earth to heaven, in his ascension and exaltation! from thence down again, in the communications of his promised Spirit! and just from mountain to mountain, in the operations of his grace, coming over all impediments in his way. In a word, the law shews the mountains to be before us, and in our way betwixt God and us; but the gospel shews the mountains and hills all left behind Christ's back: or, if they seem to remain intervening betwixt him and us, the gospel shews Christ coming leaping and skipping upon them, and making nothing of them.

2. Hence we may see what is Christ's business, even when he is not present with his people; yet he is coming again to them. When he removes from his people, it is in that posture wherein he went from his disciples, with his face towards them: "I go away, but I will come again," John xiv. 3. His name is the Comer; and, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," Psal. cxvii. 26. When he goes, he is on his way to return; and all that he doth, in his real or seeming absence, is in order to his coming. And, indeed, we ought to construct well of Christ in his absence; for, though he be not present, he is coming: and though he be not

always seen upon the top of the mountains, yet when he is out of sight, he is but down to the valley ; and when he comes in sight again, he is pleased to tell where he was, Song vi. 11. "I went down to the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded ;" *q. d.* I was on my way, but only down in the valley ; nor was I idle there, but observing what fruits were produced in my absence : and it was to try your behaviour, and make preparation for another visit. O but this should learn us to beware of misapprehensions of him, and jealousy of his kindness when he is away and out of sight ! and to remember that though these difficulties be insuperable to us, he can soon get over them. Amidst darkness and distress, we should learn the prophet's language, Micah vii. 8. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy ; when I fall I shall arise ; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

3. Hence see, that the love of Christ, which we are to commemorate this day, is a strong love, that levels mountains, be they never so strong and high ; that is active love that comes leaping over all the fiery mountains of God's wrath, due for our sin, and over all the fearful mountains of sin and guilt, that we have reared up betwixt him and us. O ! the freedom of the grace of God in Christ, that cannot be stopped in its course by any lets or hinderances ! If we be allowed any sweet communion with him on this occasion, whatever enjoyment or allowances we attain to, it must be wholly attributed to his condescension and his activity, and not to our diligence and activity ; "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto his name be the glory," Psal. cxv. 1. If you get a sight of the King's face, and if God be not a terror to you, but your hope in the day of evil, and your help, and comfort, and support in such a day of absence and anger, it comes not from thy activity, but from the activity of Christ, in coming to bestow his purchased blessings, and overleaping all the mountains and hills in his way. To be crying down ourselves, and crying up his active grace and pains in all enjoyments, is the way to have them blessed, and increased, and continued.

4. Hence see, with what wonder and admiration we should entertain the activity of the love of Christ. His coming is wonderful, and much more coming in such a manner. His presence was a wonder to the wisest man ; "Will God in very deed dwell with man on earth ?" Will the infinitely wise God come down to a

company of fools? a holy God to a carnal wretch! the Creator to a bit of clay! But will he come in such a manner, with such celerity, dispatch, and delight, leaping and skipping over all the mountains in his way? O how should we entertain his coming and overcoming kindness with wonder and admiration, as the bride here doth, "Behold, he cometh, leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills!" What a great iniquity were it to entertain this kindness in a coldrife and careless way; David, when he got a proof of divine love, sat down, and wondered, saying, "Who am I, and what is my Father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?"

5. Hence see, how contrary the way of Christ is to the way of men in this world. Men will not come over motes and atoms; but Christ comes over mountains. Men will not come over the least affront or injury, real or supposed, that is done to them; but Christ comes over mountains of injuries and affronts done to him. Men's work is to cast up mountains in the way betwixt God and men, and also between man and man, to hinder their fellowship with one-another; but it is Christ's work to cast down such mountains, or to come leaping over them.

Some are, and have been, for some time by-gone, strangely occupied in raising up mountains of ungodly and ungrounded censures, and pretended excommunications; mountains of open and shameless prohibitions, discharging people to hear and join with these, from whom they have so sinfully disjoined themselves; mountains of public stratagems, profanely pretended to be in the great name of God, whose authority is thus abused and trampled upon, and some poor blindfolded people frightened with these terrible temptations of Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light, and a zealot for reformation; some frightened, I say, by these means, from their wonted food, and former fellowship with ministers and people, with whom they took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in company; mountains, I say, of unlawful means are used to hinder the former communion of saints, and communion with God in ordinances. The wrath of God, for the sin of professed witnesses, justly procures such awful tokens of his displeasure: but on man's part, these things are the fiery mountains of men's wrath, which works not the righteousness of God; but if our Lord hath a mind to come, none of these mountains shall be able to hinder him, or to impede our fellowship and communion with him, and with



one-another in the Lord. He can soon make the wrath of man to praise; and, in spite of earth and hell, grant a glorious communion day, giving ground to say with the bride here, "Behold he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills."<sup>1</sup>

6. Hence see, in the glass of this text and doctrine, what a beautiful person our Lord Jesus Christ is, from head to foot. The glory of Christ, who is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousands, is described, as it were, from head to foot, Song v. 11—16. But my present subject leads me especially to notice the beauty of his feet when leaping and skipping upon the mountains: and here may we not say with the prophet, Isa. lii. 7. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"—Hence may be drawn a mark of a believer and beholder of Christ, namely, he is brought to a *nonplus* in his heart, to tell how beautiful his feet are upon the mount of ordinances: when his people see his stately steppings in the sanctuary, they find it impossible for them to tell how beautiful his feet are upon the mountains of Bether, and on the hills of sin and guilt, and separation, when he comes leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills; for then he comes with the good news of peace and reconciliation with God, the good tidings of salvation from sin and wrath. O! his feet are so beautiful, that the sight of them makes the poor creature, that was lying half dead, start to his feet, that he may go out and meet him. These tidings of peace and salvation that he brings, make him say, "The voice of my Beloved!" And the noise of his feet upon the mountains, makes him say, "Behold, he cometh!" And here may we not allude at least to Psalm xcvi. 11, 12, 13. "Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad, &c. before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh!" Christ's coming is so sweet a morsel to the psalmist, that he cannot let it out of his mouth; "He comes, he comes!" Beautiful are his feet upon the mountains.

7. Hence see the good reason why the sacramental feast should be kept, and a communion table should be thronged, by all that

(1) The edge of this paragraph is levelled directly against the unaccountable conduct of the separating Brethren; who, not satisfied with sinfully withdrawing themselves from their Brethren, for having different sentiments about the burges oath, but pretended to pass the highest censures of the Church against them, and otherwise calumniate and reproach them.

love to hear the joyful sound of Christ's feet upon the mountains! See how the Spirit of God joins this duty with this argument, Nahum i. 15. "Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts." Behold, then, upon the mountains, may I say, the feet of him that cometh leaping and skipping upon them! and therefore, O thou beholder, "Keep thy solemn feast, and do this in remembrance of me." Every leap that his feet make upon the mountains, may make your heart leap within you for joy; and your feet go leaping and skipping to the feast of love, joyfully to commemorate the wonderful, fair, and fast travel of his feet, which was the travail of his soul over all the high mountains that were between him and you. There is a door of communion opened to all believers and beholders of Christ by faith; and a door that the great God hath opened, and no man on earth can shut it, or if they pretend to do it, they are but running in madness upon the thick bosses of his buckler, and counteracting his orders. Therefore, let no proud mortals pretended excommunications, tempt any poor souls here, to slight the orders of the God of heaven; "O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts:" let no poor souls, that love to hear of Christ's feet upon the mountains, excommunicate themselves from the rights of the Christian church: "O Judah, O believing soul, and friend of Jesus, keep your solemn feasts.—Do this in remembrance of me."

8. Hence see the door of faith and hope cast open, both to sinners and saints: to sinners, at the greatest real distance, and yet know it not; to saints, at the greatest sensible distance, that see and know it.

(1.) To sinners at the greatest distance, and yet do not see what mountains of sin and guilt are between Christ and you, and are insensible of the distance.—Though that may be thy case, yet I dare not say that the door of faith and hope is shut against you, we know not where sovereign grace may light; and since faith cometh by hearing, and particularly by hearing what mountains Christ can and will come over, know that he can come leaping over that mountain of darkness, ignorance, stupidity, and insensibleness about thy soul, wherein thou knowest not that thou art poor, miserable, wretched, blind and naked; and though thou knowest not thy need of Christ, yet the door of faith and hope is open to thee. "This is the command of God, that thou believe in his Son Christ;" and this is the council of Christ, that thou, even thou, come to him

for eye-salve, that thou mayest see, Rev. iii. 17, 18 —Come to him, believing that he can overcome and overleap that dark mountain, and give thee light and sight to see the mountains that stand between him and thee, and to see how he can come leaping over them. Art thou in a state of enmity against God, in an unregenerate state, wherein thou art in danger every moment of hell and everlasting wrath? O! who can leap over that mountain, and save thee out of that state? Who but God's beloved and ours; the heavenly Roe, the young Hind? Doth the word say, "Behold, he cometh?" O look to him in the word; and let your heart say, *Even so come*; and invite him to come leaping on that mountain. The doctrine you have heard leaves no room for unbelief and despair, but casts open wide to the walls the door of faith and hope; and there would be some hope in Israel concerning you, if you were brought to see and complain heartily and heavily to God of the many and massy mountains that are between him and you, viz., the atheism, enmity, ignorance, hardness, deadness, and desperate wickedness of your heart.—O tell him of the great mountains that stand between him and your soul, and that you have been heaping up between him and you since you was born; that they are such as you cannot remove, and therefore he must come over them; that your sins are such as nothing but infinite and omnipotent power and grace can subdue; your guilt such as nothing but sovereign grace and mercy, reigning through the righteousness of Christ, can pardon, it is so great. It is true, mountains of sin and guilt cannot be grounds of hope, nor arguments for faith, when in themselves they are rather grounds of despair; but all the encouragement is to be drawn from Christ's ability and agility to leap and skip\* over them all; and that it will enhance the glory of the heavenly Roe, that he is able and willing to overleap such high mountains. You may, and ought, indeed, to aggravate your sins as much as you can, and not diminish them; magnify them, by acknowledging that they are very great and heinous, very high and impassable to you; and argue from your own weakness, impotency, and insufficiency: but never think them so great and high, as if he were not able to overleap and overcome them; nor magnify them above the mercy of God; for, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his his thoughts high above your thoughts," and [his mercy above all the mountains of your sins. The acts of faith that this doctrine, therefore, calls for, are soul-humbling, self-emptying, and God-exalting acts: that is,



a putting work in Christ's hand, which Omnipotency only can effect, viz., to level mountains that are insuperable by men and angels, to invite him to come over them, and to welcome him, when he says, "Lo, I come," &c.

(2.) To saints that may be at the greatest sensible distance. May I not say, What do you hear, poor soul; do you hear nothing to make you say, "The voice of my Beloved?" What do you see, poor soul, through the glass of this word? Do you see nothing to make your heart cry out, "Behold he cometh! leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills?" If no such thing is heard or seen, O where are you? And where are your ears and eyes? Where is your faith and hope? Be the distance never so great betwixt Christ and you, and the mountains of Bether, and hills of separation never so great, and high, and many, is there not a door of faith and hope opened wide to you? For, "Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills!"

Some, it is like, are allowed his sensible presence; and may be in case to say, Behold, he is come! he is come to my heart, he is come in to my arms. Let such be humble and thankful; and we wish them much joy in their Beloved, so as the joy of the Lord may be their strength, and so as they may hold him, and not let him go. But his visits of this sort are usually seldom and short; he no sooner comes than he is away: "I opened to my Beloved; but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone."

But most part of believers at this day, and perhaps, most of them in this house, are complaining of sensible absence, and of great mountains of distance between him and them: let such, from this doctrine see, that though they cannot say, Behold, he is come to feed their sense; yet their faith and hope may have good feeding upon this, "Behold, he cometh, leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills." Let it satisfy you for the present, that when he hath a mind to come, mountains and hills shall not be able to hinder him; nay, his active motion upon the mountains should excite you to the active exercise of faith: let his activity encourage your motion to be setting out to meet him. It is true, the mountains and hills are insuperable to you; but when, through grace, you stir up yourself, and crawl to be at him, who knows how soon he will "Make your feet like hinds feet, and make you walk upon high places? Habbak. iii. 19.—Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him," in his ordinances, and to meet him at his table.

Behold, he cometh towards you, leaping on the mountains, go ye out leaping to meet him. Who knows but activity set about, not only from a sense of duty, at his call and command, saying, "Rise my love, my fair one, and come away;" but set about from a sight of his condescension, and a view of his hasting towards you, on the top of all the high mountains, may quickly elevate you above yourself, and your ordinary frame, and set your heart a leaping to meet him: for he can soon make the lame man leap as an hart; or, if you want feet, he can give you wings, and make you mount up on wings as eagles, and meet him on the top of the mountains; for, "Behold, he cometh, leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills!"

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### A PART OF THE DISCOURSE BEFORE SERVING THE FIRST TABLE.

WE are now to celebrate the memorials of Christ's marvellous love, in coming over the great mountains of the fiery law and flaming justice of God, by his doing and dying, his obedience and satisfaction, in our room. Christ hath come a far way, over many mountains, to pay you a visit, and give you a feast, if you be now friends with him, and have welcomed him into your heart. But enemies are to be excluded, who were never charmed with his voice, as the voice of their Beloved; and who never saw their sins, like mountains, between him and them, nor his feet beautiful upon them, as a Saviour, to save them from their sin, and remove these mountains; and who remain contentedly at a distance from him: such, therefore, we must, in the name of the Lord, debar doctrinally; and we tell you, that the Word of God debars all the impenitent breakers of the moral law; such as, &c. See that black catalogue, Rom. i. 29—32; 1 Cor. vi 9, 10; Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.<sup>1</sup>

But, on the other hand, I invite to this table of the Lord, all the friends of Christ, that are acquaint with his voice, as the voice of their Beloved; and acquaint with his visit, so as they have joyfully welcomed him, with a "Behold he cometh, leaping on the

(1) If the Reader inclines to see a specimen of the manner in which the tables are usually fenced, he may consult Vol. I.

mountains, and skipping on the hills!" and who, with a glad heart, have met him, saying, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." O believer, even come again and again; come and lay your weary head in his bosom; and his left hand shall be under your head, and his right hand shall embrace you. He enjoins you to "Do this in remembrance of me." Therefore, in coming to the elements of bread and wine, come to him by faith, to eat the flesh, and drink the blood of Christ, believing his incarnation and satisfaction, with application to yourself.

Come and put your heart in his hand; though it be a hard stony heart, he can take away the heart of stone, and give you an heart of flesh. Come with all your doubts and difficulties to him; he is our true Daniel, than can answer all our doubts and difficult questions; yea, a greater than Daniel is here. What perplexities are you under? Be what they will, lay them all in one balance, and Christ in another, and then see if you dare stay away. The devil and his instruments, of one sort and another, have been busy to raise mountains of perplexities in the minds of the Lord's people, that, perhaps, have hindered you, before this, from coming to him in these ordinances, wherein you have formerly been feasted; and the design of his temptations is to damp the heart of God's children, and discourage from their duty. But, as Christ said, even to a Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me;" even so say you: and never suffer the devil to get his will of you, though he appear in Samuel's mantle; yea, as an angel of light. His false light is a damping and discouraging light; yea, a darkening, confusing, disordering, and perplexing light, leading to new and by ways, and out of the good old way. But these mountains the enemy hath been raising are not able to hinder Christ's coming to us, leaping and skipping over them. Therefore, come leaping to him.

O come to him, though you want good qualifications, that you may get them from him. It is all the better you see your want of them, for your qualifications will not buy mercy. His counsel is, Art thou poor? Buy of me gold. Art thou naked? Buy of me white raiment. He invites you to come to him because you want. If you were not a wanter, you needed not come to Christ. But if you are so poor that you want all good things, then behold he is saying, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor," Isaiah lxvi. 2. Whatever be your case, and whatever be your objection, let just necessity put you on it to come to him; for "To whom will you go?"



O poor drooping believer, if you cannot see him for the mountains of sin and guilt, that you see yet standing betwixt him and you, are you saying, I dare not draw near to him at his table, for I seldom went to a communion table but I fear I betrayed him, and I fear I do so again ; my distance from him hath been great, and of a long continuance ; he will never bestow a look on the like of me ? But, O poor soul, though, with Jonah, you were in the belly of hell, yet look again to his holy temple ; look to him who says, " Look unto me, all the ends of the earth, and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else." When the ark and Jerusalem were far from Daniel, he opened his window and looked towards them ; so do you ; open your heart, and send sighs and groans to him. In Lamentations iii. 55, the church is in a low dungeon, and prays, " Hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry." Your neighbour, that sits nearest you doth not hear your breathing, but God hears it.

Come, O poor believer, whatever great mountains you see in your way, that are insurmountable by you, yet if you believe that he is able to surmount them, come to him, and you will see him leaping over them. If you see any mountain between him and you to be higher than he can overleap, then I must tell you that you are looking at it through the devil's spectacles ; but, O sirs, cast away these glasses that magnify too much, and look to Christ, through the glass of his own word of grace and promise, and you will see not only that no mountain is insuperable to him, but see him leaping over the highest hill between him and you ; " Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel ? Thou shalt become a plain."

Though you have raised up devils that you cannot lay, and reared up mountains that you cannot level ; yet, O sirs, forgot not the property of the heavenly Roe ; " Our Beloved is like a roe or a young hart." It is his property and pleasure to come leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills. And when he hath a mind to come, no mountain can stop his motion toward you. Therefore, come to his table, inviting him to his delightful work, to come over the great mountains in his way. And as nothing can hinder his coming to you, so let nothing impede your drawing near to him. May the Lord himself draw you, and powerfully persuade you.

THE DISCOURSE AT THE SERVICE OF THE  
FIRST TABLE.

CHRIST having leaped over the mountain of sin and separation, comes now to feed on the mountain of myrrh ; and hath said of it, that, " In this mountain he will make a feast of fat things, and wines on the lees ; of fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined ;" namely, to feed us on his flesh and his blood.

It is a part of the song of Debora, Judges v. 5, " The mountains melted before the Lord." It is all one to Christ to leap over mountains, and to make them melt down at his presence. O ! his gracious presence can soon dissolve all mountainous difficulties, and make them disappear and evanish. It is no wonder that his presence makes them skip like rams, when the faith of his operation is able to remove them ; " If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, be thou removed, and cast into the midst of the sea, and it shall be done." To that faith which lays hold on omnipotency, all things are possible.

Now, my friends, we may well suppose, that the faith of the Old Testament church, had a higher mountain to climb, than we under the New Testament dispensation—I mean the mountain of infinite distance betwixt God's nature and ours, by believing that God was to become man, that the Word was to be made flesh, and therein to be made a sacrifice for our sins, and to yield obedience to death, even the death of the cross. Now, what they believed, we see ; for, we have his flesh and blood amongst our hands, in the symbols thereof. They, with Abraham, rejoiced to see his day afar off, and they saw it, and were glad ; they believed it as firmly as if they had seen it with their eyes ; and therefore said, " Behold, he cometh, leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills." Their faith saw him coming in the flesh as a Saviour, and so leaping over that mountain of infinite distance betwixt God's nature and ours ; this is called his first coming. The faith of the New Testament church relates especially to his coming in the clouds as a Judge, which is called his second coming ; and our communicating at this table hath such a concern in it, that it is a shewing forth of his death till he come again. Him that was crucified at Jerusalem actually, we have crucified before our eyes sacramentally ; and we are now shewing forth his death. He came in our nature, and died

in our room, and so we are shewing forth the truth and accomplishment of what the Old Testament church believed ; the object of their faith is so far made the object of our sight and sense ; and, as this is to be shewn forth under the New Testament till he come the second time without sin unto salvation, so our faith in his second coming hath no such high mountain to ascend as theirs ; for the incarnation of the Son of God, for these purposes which we commemorate, was not only a leaping over that infinitely great mountain of distance that was betwixt God and us, which, to the conception of men and angels, would have been for ever insuperable and impassable, but also was a pledge and evidence, that no other mountain could stand in the way, nor be able to hinder him when he is pleased to come.

The faith, therefore, of his second coming hath no such difficulty to surmount. He that said of his coming in the flesh of old, *Lo, I come !* he hath said of his coming in the clouds, “Behold, I come quickly !” The first being accomplished, secures the second. There is no such mountain now in his way as this ; and yet he was able to come leaping over it : all the other mountains he hath to overleap, for the accomplishment of his other promises are but little hills in comparison of this. His coming in the flesh not only makes a plain and evident way for his second coming at the great day to judge the world in righteousness ; but for all his other gracious approaches and promised comings that intervene between the first and second ; and, particularly, for his promised coming in the Spirit, over all the mountains of sin and guilt that stand in his way. Why, Christ hath not only come in the flesh, to our earth, and finished his work there ; but he hath taken our flesh to heaven with him, under promise that he will send the Spirit ; “If I go, I will send him ; and he shall come and testify of me, and glorify me :” and may we not now expect his coming thus, and say, in the faith of it, “The voice of our Beloved ! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills ?” He that came over the greater mountains can speedily come over lesser. Did it cost him but a leap or two to come over the mountain of infinite distance betwixt God and us, God’s nature and our nature, God’s holiness and our sin, God’s justice and our guilt, and mountains of God’s flaming wrath ? O then how easily may you think can he come over all the mountains of your sin and provocations ? If he has come by his Spirit with pardon and healing, O bless him for his hasting to your help.



If the Spirit is not yet come as a Comforter, bless him, if he be come to convince you of sin ; to pave the way for his comforting you afterward. Is he convincing you of your aggravated sins and mountains that you have raised up between him and you ? O invite him to come and undo the mischief you have done, to dissolve the mountains that you have reared, and to skip over the hills that you have heaped up ; for he can come at a leap, like a nimble roe, or a young hart upon the mountains ; his name is called, Wonderful ! miracles of mercy are no strange or marvellous things to him.

If, therefore, he does not come just at your time, but, to your apprehension, delays his coming ; yet wait upon him, as knowing what he can do. Mind, believer, even at your lowest case, when you are at the bottom of the mountains of separation, when you cannot see him coming over them, you would be very low indeed, before you give over waiting on him who can in a moment leap over them. Indeed, put a carnal heart to it, it would say, "What ! should I wait on the Lord any longer ?" 2 Kings vi. 38. Yea, put a believer hard to it, and he will say with the church, Lam. iii. 18. "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." But, in believing how speedily he can come, you are not to lose hope, but to wait on him, Psalm lxi. 2. There the psalmist, as to his outward lot, is at the end of the earth, far from the sanctuary ; and, as to his inward frame, his heart is overwhelmed within him ; yet in that extremity, he cries, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." And so he finds afterwards, Psalm xciv. 18, "When I said, my foot slippeth (like a man on the brink of a pit, and his foot slipping, and he ready to fall down into it) thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." Hence, also, Job professes that God's slaying him should not crush his confidence, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." He can soon make a motion amongst the dry bones, and seek out the free among the dead. Though the mountains in your way be such as you cannot come over, do not give over waiting, so long as they do not pass his power, or surmount his ability to leap, and agility to skip over them.

It is not come to that, say you ; I think he is able to save to the utmost, and to come over all the mountains of sin and guilt betwixt him and me. What, man ! dost thou believe he can come over such high mountains as you have raised between you and him, even between him and you ! Then there is not a great distance now between him and you ; according to your faith of his ability, so

be it unto you. You see him higher than the highest mountain, stronger than the strongest mountain ; greater than the greatest mountain ; you see him above them all ; why then, he is near to your faith, that sees him on the top of the mountains ; therefore, now say, " The voice of my Beloved ! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills !"

Seek him now, also, to melt down the mountains between him and the Church of Scotland, between him and the generation, between him and witnessing ministers and people ; to level mountains of temptation ; also to melt the mountains that separate between him and your family. O pray him to come leaping to you and them ; and may you come leaping to him ; and may you go from this table, with hearts leaping after him, and meeting with him on the mountains.

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### THE DISCOURSE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SOLEMN WORK.

Now, my friends, when you are about to go away, I shall dismiss you with a few advices, in consequence of the doctrine I was delivering, concerning Christ's coming, in the manner described in these words, " The voice of my Beloved ! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills !"

In general, the advice I would give to these that came here strangers to our Lord Jesus, and are like to go away so, having never yet heard the voice of Christ in his word, so as to believe it ; nor got a visit of him, by his Spirit, so as to behold how he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills ; O go not away, supposing that there was nothing for you at this occasion ; and that the word of this salvation was not sent to you. What ! was not the door of hope opened to you in this word, " Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains." If you be sinners, that have been leaping upon the mountains of sin and guilt between him and you, was there no good news here for you, that he comes as a Saviour to save you from your sin, and to melt down these mountains ? And does not faith come by hearing such good tidings ? How do you expect that Christ should come to you, or that you should meet with him, but in such a word ? For you need not say, " Who will ascend to heaven to bring him down, or descend to the

deep to bring him up? The word is nigh, even in your heart and mouth: That is, the word of faith which we preach," Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. If you live and die slighting this word of salvation you perish in your unbelief. And therefore, I advise you, as you would not lose the benefit of this solemn occasion, to retire to some secret corner, and plead with God, that what you have heard and seen may be blessed to you, and when the word says, "Behold, he cometh!" even to save such sinners as you are, that have great and high mountains standing betwixt them and him, and that, therefore, according to that word, he would come to you, and glorify his grace, in leaping over them to you to visit you with his salvation, and to set your heart a-leaping after him, whose word says, "Behold, he cometh!" so as to meet him, by saying to him, "Behold, we come unto thee! for thou art the Lord our God."

But the advices that I would more particularly offer to all the Lord's people, especially communicants, are these following:—

1. Seeing the communications of the love of Christ are so eminent and conspicuous in his coming and leaping over mountains and hills towards you, O study his love, so as it may beget more love in you to him. He loves, notwithstanding all difficulties we put in his way of coming to us: he loves the most unworthy. O what a shame is it for us, that we love him so little, who is most worthy; "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" He loves them whom he corrects and chastises; and ought we not to love him when he corrects? But, alas! our love decays, when we get a rod or a cross to bear. His love is constant love; "Whom he loves, he loves to the end;" but how small a matter interrupts our love, and creates mistakes and jealousies? This is a sad requital we give him, when so little of our love is kindled by his to us.

2. Seeing our Lord Jesus, though he comes so kindly, yet comes sovereignly when he pleases, O beware of tampering with temptations, and raising up mountains and hills between him and you; for, though when he comes, he leaps and skips over them, yet he may, in righteousness hide himself, and withdraw, you know not how long; and it may cost you many a long look before you see him again on the top of the mountain, yet, it may cost you many a troubled heart lest he should never come again, and lest his absence should be a perpetual absence; "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever?" Psalm xiii. 1. What a sad thought is that, to be forgotten for ever?



3. Seeing Christ, when he comes, comes speedily, like a roe upon the mountains, then, O wait his coming without complaining, and wait on him dutifully in hope of his coming speedily ; the bride here sees him coming and skipping.

QUEST. How does his speedy coming appear, when the complaint is, "O why tarry the wheels of his chariot? and how long does he hide himself?"

ANSW. That in his speedy coming he does not respect our flesh, nor regard the foolishness of Nabal ; the flesh indeed it is, when quarrelling at his delay, which is a provoking him to stay away longer : the most compendious way to enjoy his speedy approach, is not to make haste, but to wait in the use of means ; "He that believeth, maketh not haste." Our impatient haste is our unbelief, which tends to retard his motion ; and yet he comes speedily whenever he comes, and that in three respects, wherein it may be said, the vision does not tarry.

(1.) Because he comes long before we be ready for his coming. If you consider the task he puts in your hands in his absence ; such as, the discovery of the wild beasts, that creep out of their dens and lurking places in the night of absence ; the humbling of the uncircumcised heart, to accept of the punishment of its iniquity ; the bearing of the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned against him ; the kindly taking with chastisement, and with the rod of correction, and submission to a sovereign God, his providential and perceptive will. Does he not come speedily, when he comes before that task be done ? If he stayed away till thou didst perfect that work, it would not only be long before he come, but there would be a continual separation between him and thee. In this respect then he comes speedily.

(2.) He comes speedily, notwithstanding thy complaint ; because he never comes out of time when he comes. A physician may come out of time to a sick person ; he may come and find him past cure when he comes. A friend may come out of time to another friend, so as he cannot help when he comes. But when Christ comes, he can make all things as well, as if he had come the first moment he was sought after. It is all one, whether he comes to Lazarus when he is sick, or when he is dead ; for, when he comes, he raises him from the dead, and gets the greater glory. Hence,

(3.) He comes speedily, because he comes always in the most acceptable and fit time. A particular consideration of times and

circumstances, makes out this from time to time, that he is a present help in trouble ; therefore, we should learn to believe, and not to quarrel his delay. Let us study that faith of the saints, which is conspicuous in the patience of the saints, Rev. xiii. 10 ; for, amongst other means, the way of winning to a speedy outgate from under desertion, or any difficulty, is to leave off quarrelling, and to rest satisfied with, and submit to his dealing ; and when you put blank in his hand, saying, " Thy will be done ; " this were the way to a speedy outgate. Here it is to be observed, that the quarreller is ordinarily an idler and neglecter of duty : therefore, if such were turning their quarrelling to diligence, they would come the better speed. It is the Lord's complaint against complainers, Hosea viii. 5. " How long will it be ere you attain to innocence ? " We should turn our complaint against ourselves, and not charge God foolishly ; this would hasten his coming.

4. The manner of Christ's coming should commend him to you, and make you commend him to others. The bride here commends him who thus comes, and apprehends the excellency of his person. Many would have Christ coming speedily to help and save them, saying, " Arise, and save us," Jer. ii. 27, in the time of their trouble ; but whenever they got what they wanted, they have done with him, and with any more correspondence with him. This is the sad temper of many in the visible church ; they receive favours from Christ, as Jonathan said to Saul, " Thou sawest it, and didst rejoice," 1 Sam. xix. 5. They will take a good turn from Christ, if they can get it ; but they will have no more ado with him. All the favours that such meet with from Christ, that lead them to an estimation of himself, are the saddest of snares and plagues ; and therefore to be dreaded ; this is a case to be trembled under. But let the favours of Christ commend the person of Christ to you : for so it is with the bride here ; " Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills ! Whereupon she commends him, saying, " My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart."

O commend him by your walk and conversation ; by your talk and communication ; commend him by imitating him, by being like a roe, or a young hind, in following him, whithersoever he goes : whatever mountain of tribulation it be on which he calls you to follow him ; let it be the mountain of persecution or reproach, yet follow him leaping and skipping upon the mountains that are in the way. You that would be faithful witnesses for God and reforma-

tion at this day, have mountains on every hand of you: the growing mountains of backsliding and defection in the Judicatories on the one hand, and the hideous mountains of delusion and extravagance among Separatists on the other hand: I know not how you can follow Christ, or imitate him, if you suffer your feet to rest on any of these mountains; nay, if you tarry there, you will stay to your hurt, or stumble on the dark mountains; but if you follow Christ, it will be in a way of leaping and skipping joyfully, "Counting it all joy, when you fall into divers temptations or tribulations," in following him: yea, "Rejoicing that you are counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake;" were it even the shame of men's curses and anathemas, their hideous excommunications; for "The wrath of man shall praise him." And little do some men consider what honour they have been putting upon us, and what shame upon themselves, as instruments of putting on our Master's crown of thorns upon our heads; and, "God forbid that we should not glory in the cross of Christ." We were never worthy to suffer shame for his sake.

5. The next advice I offer is, O learn with the church and bride of Christ here, to be still observing his coming; "Behold he cometh, leaping!" It is not expressed in the preterite, "He did come:" nor in the future, "He will come:" but in the present tense, "Behold, he cometh!" intimating that he is always coming; it is his trade, it is his work, his daily constant business, even as much as it is the property of the roe, or young hind, to be daily leaping and skipping on the mountains. Though Christ be not still coming sensibly, to comfort you; yet even in his real or seeming absence, he is always coming, either wisely, to try you, or fatherly, to correct you, or mercifully to humble you; by the dispensation of his providence, be what they will, he is always coming therein upon some love design; and, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord" Therefore, as he is still a comer, be you still an observer of his motions.

6. The sixth advice, to add no more, is, that you remember that his coming is still over some mountain or other, and with a design to move or melt down some mountain between him and you. When he comes, in a smiling way to you, it is to level some mountain of despair, despondency, or discouragement. And when he comes in any frowning dispensation, it is to level some mountain of



pride, presumption, or ingratitude. Our Lord Jesus, when he came in the flesh to the work of our redemption, he came leaping and skipping over the mountains of the wrath of God, and the wrath of men and devils; and, indeed, when he comes in the Spirit, to visit with his salvation, he still comes over mountains of one sort or another; and sometimes over the mountain of wrathful-like dispensations. As to the mountain of man's wrath, it is not a mote in his way, even when they have gone to their uttermost, and made the objects of their wrath as odious as they can, and the mountain of separation between them and us, as high as they can; yet there is no danger if the mountain of sin and separation betwixt God and you be removed; he can soon make you thresh all the other mountains; yea, beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. However, mind that his coming is still to level some mountain or other. And therefore, the believer, whose spiritual ears and eyes are open, may still have occasion to say, "The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills."

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## CHAPTER CLII.

CHRIST'S LOVE-SUIT REINFORCED AND REPEATED: OR, HIS  
KINDLY GOSPEL-CALL RENEWED.<sup>1</sup>

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.—SONG ii. 13.

IF our Lord Jesus Christ is come here this day to court a bride, in terms of this text, they show, that never was there such an affectionate or importunate Suitor: his affection will appear in the kindly names he here gives her, which show what a loving and heart he has; "My love, my fair one;" his importunity appears in the suitable call and invitation he gives her, which shows what a lazy and loitering case she is in; "Rise, and come away." More sweet compellation cannot be given to a loathsome bride; "My love, my fair one:" more meet invitations cannot be given to a

(1) This Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, on Sabbath, July 21st 1751.

lingering and backward bride ; “ Arise, and come away,” and more documents of his being in good earnest cannot be given, than in his repeating these kindly words, and ending his arguments with them here : so he begins with, ver. 10. “ Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away ;” where the church and spouse of Christ relates the gracious words he spoke to her, and is a faithful recorder of what he said to her soul, and a faithful relater thereof, for the encouragement of others ; “ My Beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.” And having told how kindly he invited her, she next tells how strongly he urged the invitation, with motives and arguments, saying, “ For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone ; the flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard on our land ; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape, give a good smell,” ver. 11, 12, 13, *q. d.* If thou wilt hearken to my call, and come to me, thou shalt be delivered from the sad winter-like case and condition thou hast been in, and have a pleasant delightful life, a flourishing spring-tide of spiritual joys, which shall be still on the growing hand, until it end in a harvest of glory : thou shalt have advantages beyond all the rest of the world ; thy walk shall be in the garden of the Lord, where the sweet promises, and the precious blessings thereof, are as so many fruitful trees, pleasant to the eye, savoury to the taste, delightful to the ear, with the singing of birds upon the branches thereof ; and in all respects, ravishing, melodious, and commodious. I now invite thee to come and share of the sweet spring I have brought along with me. It is a pleasant season : “ The voice of the turtle is heard in our land, the flowers appear on the earth ; a fragrant and fruitful season, “ The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape, give a good smell,” ver. 12, 13. The spiritual flourishing and fruitfulness is represented by these various similitudes ; all which show how, that as Christ's absence makes a winter, his presence makes a summer, yea, he brings a spring with him, were it even in the midst of winter. Sad and heavy times may pass over the Lord's people ; yet his approach and return can make a winter-like dispensation heartsome with abundant up-making.

Our Lord having given the call, and urged it with motives drawn from the heartsome spring-time he brought along with him, in so many parts of it (all which I have formerly spoke to at large),

he comes, in the close of this verse, to renew the former invitation, saying, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

In which words you have three things to be considered:—  
1. The kindly compellation; "My love, my fair one." 2. The earnest invitation; "Arise, and come away." 3. The words considered in connection with ver. 10, and the arguments intermixed between that verse and this, are a repetition of the same call from an affectionate Suitor, who will not take a refusal, nor a nay-say; "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away;" and again, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

Having spoke formerly to the context, and particularly some months ago to these words as they stand in the 10th verse, as I need not enlarge upon them now; so my especial design is to consider them as a repeated call, and a renewed invitation, a courtship earnestly insisted upon; "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." From which words we may observe the following doctrine:—

OBSERV. That the repeated call and renewed invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ to his drowsy and disconsolate people, whom he makes his *love* and *fair one*, is that they rise, and come away with him.

You see here that the vision is doubled; the truth of the doctrine is established by the repetition of the same words, and the renovation of the same suit.

In speaking to it I would, through supernatural aid, observe the following method and order:—

- I. Premise a few things with relation to the party here, to whom the invitation is directed.
- II. I would open up a little the import of the titles here given to that party—"My love, my fair one."
- III. The import of these calls—"Rise, and come away."
- IV. I would point out what may be implied in the repetition of these words, and why the call and invitation is thus renewed; and then—
- V. Deduce some inferences for the application.

I. We would premise a few things relative to the party to whom the call and invitation is directed; and—



1st, In some sense it may be viewed as directed even to sinners who are dead in trespasses and sins, whom Christ hath a mind to quicken by his kindly voice in the gospel:—"You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1. It is true, it is not the immediate intent of this text to call the unconverted—yet it may be useful for engaging and bringing in strangers to Christ, as well as for recovering and rousing these that are brought in already. He speaks to sinners, that are the objects of his benevolence and good will, as well as he speaks to saints, that are already the objects of his complacency and delight. Even as the sacramental supper, though it is not, in its immediate design, a converting ordinance, for bringing in sinners, but a confirming one for establishing saints; yet God may bless a sacramental occasion, as often he has done, for bringing in strangers to a saving acquaintance with Christ. Thus the call given to Christ's dull and drowzy bride, to rise and come away to him, may be useful for rousing dead sinners out of their natural security: yea, the general call of God in the gospel being directed to mankind sinners, on account of his PHILANTHROPIA, philanthropy, or mankind love, Tit. iii. 4, may be supposed to be in these terms, "My love, my fair one, rise, and come away;" for he calls them by names which are not their natural names, when he is courting their heart; but courting them by kindly and winning names, which will be truly applicable to them, whenever they answer his call.

There are two sorts of names he gives men whom he courts:—  
1. Some names from what they are in themselves; 2. Some names from what they are in his purpose and design.

1. The names he gives them as secure sinners, lying sleeping in their natural estate. In this respect he calls them children of disobedience, children of wrath, a generation of vipers, stout-hearted sinners, and far from righteousness, ignorant creatures, not knowing that they are poor and miserable, wretched, blind, and naked; by many such names as these they are called in Scripture, pointing out what they are by nature; and what a dreadful wrath they are obnoxious to, by the curse of the law they are under.

2. He names them sometimes from what they are in his desire towards them, or his decree and design about them; which, though it be a secret, as it relates to eternal election, yet it is no secret, as it is laid out in the word of grace, for sinners of mankind to claim and apprehend in the gospel order—that is, by apprehending Christ

himself, and the promise in him ; and, consequently, that very name, “ My love, my fair one ;” for, though in themselves they are not his love, nor the objects of his love, but rather of his hatred, as enemies in their minds by wicked works ; and, though in themselves they are not fair, but foul, black, and deformed ; yet, in a way of rising and coming at his call, and laying hold on Christ, they will evidence that in Christ, they were from all eternity his love, his fair one, “ Chosen in him before the foundation of the world, and now saved in him according to his purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ before the world began,” Ephesians i. 4 ; 2 Timothy i. 9. “ I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee,” Jer. xxxi. 3. And, indeed, it cannot but be most astonishing to a sensible sinner, if, in a day of conversion, the cord of love be let down in such surprising compellations as these, “ My love, my fair one, rise, and come away ;” for, how can either these that are dead in sins and trespasses, or believers themselves, while they are in this world, lying among the pots, all defiled with the spots and leprosy of sin, be honoured with these titles, “ My love, my fair one ?” But the matter is, Christ speaks of them and to them, not with respect only to what they are at present, but with respect to what he intends to make them to all eternity ; yea, even at present when he makes the call effectual, his word of power, by that call, makes them to be what he calls them, namely, his love, his fair one ; for their needs no more to make them so, as Rom. ix. 25, “ I will call them my people ; and her beloved, that was not beloved ”—of which more perhaps afterwards.

*2dly*, The call and invitation here is directed immediately and of purpose to the converted bride ; and that as she is considered either,

1. In a secure, sleepy, and up-sitten condition ; laid by from duty, being asleep, and unmindful of her duty, till he, by his voice, rouse her up as he had done before, when she started, as it were, to her feet, saying, ver. 8, “ The voice of my beloved ! behold he cometh !” Or,

2. In a disconsolate and discouraged condition—like a disconsolate wife, in the absence of her husband, sitting solitary, till he comes and invites her to rise up, and go with him to the field, to refresh herself with the pleasant spring and fair weather, that are so charming when the winter storms are all over.

The nature of the invitation, “ Rise, and come away,” supposes to be her present case, that either she is in a dull and sleepy, or in a

damped and discouraged condition, or bath ; and, I think, both are here intended, as appears both from the motives drawn from the sweetness of the spring-time she is invited to come to, and share of ; and also from this renewed call, prosecuted, ver. 14, that she should come out of her lurking holes, and appear with confidence before him. He speaks to her partly as secure and dead, to quicken her, and set her to her duty ; and partly as discouraged, in order to encourage and cheer her up—of which more afterwards.

II. The second thing proposed was, To open up the import of the titles here given to her, “My love, my fair one.” There are four things imported therein :—

1. It imports an interest and property that Christ has in his people : “They are mine,” says he, “my love, my fair one.” They are his peculiar treasure ; they are set apart for him from all eternity. For them he became man, and died, and suffered, and rose again ; for them he made and upholds the world. They are his flock ; “The Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance,” Deut. xxxii. 9. Thus he concerns himself in them as his all : “They are mine,” says he, “even my peculiar portion. O ! how should we meet him, and make him our peculiar portion, and boast of him, and of this relation, saying, “My Beloved is mine, and I am his ?”

2. These titles, “My love, my fair one,” import the strong affection that he has to his people ; being his peculiar portion, they are the objects of his peculiar affection, and his special love and delight. He had a love of choice and designation for them, as in Christ, from eternity ; but he has now a love of delight and complacency in them, as united to Christ by faith, even to him in whom God is well pleased ; yea, he loves them “because he loves them.” It is a consideration that may put an end to all debate on this head ; he set his love upon them, not because they were more in number than others, for they were the fewest of all people, but because he loved them, Deut. vii. 7, 8. His love to his people must not be looked upon as the result of merit in them ; nay, on that account, they are the objects of his indignation, as meriting hell : but we must look upon it as the result of interest : they are his, and therefore he loves them.

3. These titles, “My love, my fair one,” import, not only his warm affection towards them, but his high estimation of them, as perfect beauties in his sight, his love is his fair one ; thus he says,



chap. iv. 7, "Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee." On what account doth he give this verdict of them? and in what respects are they perfect beauties in his sight? They are so,

(1.) In respect of imputed righteousness, which is a solid ground of reckoning; for "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them," Rom. viii. 5, through the imputed righteousness of Christ; and so they are accepted as righteous in his sight, through the doing and dying, and perfect righteousness of Christ; yea, hence said to be the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21. O how fair are they who are clothed with the Sun, the Sun of righteousness!

(2.) In respect of communicated holiness. They are perfect beauties, as to the perfection of parts; as we say a new-born child is perfect, having all the parts; so are his people, having all the parts of the new man, in regeneration; hence called new creatures in Christ, 2 Cor. v. 17. This will at last resolve in a greater beauty of holiness; that is, a perfection of degrees in heaven, when they shall be like him, by seeing him as he is. This may encourage saints against all the deformities they now see in themselves, while they see but in part him from whom they derive all their beauty.

(3.) In respect of their Head and Husband, Christ, in whom God looks upon them; they are all fair; and hence they are said to be complete in him, Col. ii. 10, "And you are complete in him, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

(4.) In respect of their desire, and endeavour, and aim; though their desire itself is not perfect, yet the object of their desire as new creatures, is perfection; the desire of their souls is to his name, Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. Their endeavour also, through grace, is to press after perfection; hence, though they count themselves imperfect, and not to have apprehended; yet, forgetting the things that are behind, they press toward the mark, Phil. iii. 12. They approve themselves in no want of holiness, and indulge themselves in no sin. Their upright desires and endeavours are set down in Christ's count-book, for that which is desired and endeavoured; and, however spotted they are, yet a mourned-over spot is a beauty in his sight. "Therefore," he says, verse 14, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, and secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, for it is comely."

(5.) In respect of the divine design and determination; or in respect of his purpose and promise to make them perfect beauties.

They are his fair ones: he resolves to present them to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that they should be holy, and without blemish, Eph. v. 27. And God names his people many times from what they are in their desire and his design ; “Thou art all fair, my love: there is no spot in thee.” Their future perfection is present to him. And,

(6.) In respect of his love they are fair and perfect beauties ; being his love, they cannot but be his fair one ; for love covers all infirmities, and esteems its object beautiful, be what it will. Isaiah xliii. 4, “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable ;” and therefore beautiful too. And if thus he esteems our borrowed beauty, how should we be ashamed that we esteem not more his infinite beauty ?

4. These titles here, “My love, my fair one,” import the intimation of his high esteem of her ; and that as Christ observes the beauty of believers, amidst all the spots that are upon them ; so he is pleased to let them know so much : he does not think it enough behind their back to tell it, but in her face he says, “Thou art my love, and my fair one.” It is true, this is not his ordinary ; he is a wise lover that knows when to keep up the intimation of love, and when to let it out ; but there are times when he will make no secret of it—times when he will put it beyond all dispute or debate in the souls of his people. The times and seasons when he makes such intimations are in the Father’s hand, and in his power ; he is sovereign in the grant thereof. Some have got the intimation at their first conversion, as the woman of Samaria, to whom Christ said, “I that speak unto thee am he,” John vi. 26. Some have got it at a second conversion, even after backslidings and returnings into folly, through the remains of corruption in them ; when they have gone a whoring after their old lovers ; yet the Lord has pitied for his name’s sake, and intimated his love in such words as these, “Return, backsliding children, for I am married unto you. Return, return, O Shulamite ; return, return. Return to thy first husband ; for then it was better with thee than now.” Some again have got intimation, when they have been humbling themselves by fasting and prayer, and diligently seeking the Lord ; as Daniel got, to whom it was said, “O man, greatly beloved !” Dan. x. 19. Sometimes he lets out his love when he brings them to a wilderness of affliction, distress, and tribulation ; “I will allure her, and bring her to the wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably to her ;” yet, he

ordinarily makes the valley of Achor a door of hope, that they may sing there ; yet, after all, his Bethel visits and Peniel views, that he gives his people, when he intimates his love to them, and esteem of them, saying, " My love, my fair one," are but rare enjoyments. I shall say no more thereof ; only, when those are withheld in a sensible way, live by the faith of it, that you, believer, are still his love and his fair one ; and when you get any such intimations, improve it aright, if he commends you, so surely it sets and becomes you infinitely more to commend him.

III. The third thing proposed, is to speak of the import of his call and invitation here ; " Rise, and come away."

There are these following things seem plainly supposed and imported here. In general the terms of the call and invitation suppose the case of his people to be a sleepy, secure, and drowsy case ; and hence also a discouraged, disheartened, and disconsolate case. Notwithstanding, these titles he here gives her imply, that she is very beautiful in his esteem, and that he has a great affection toward her, as well as a near relation to her ; yet there are several defects and disorders about her, that he would and must have amended by his repeated calls and invitations.

1. This call and invitation, " Rise and come away," supposes and imports that great security, and love to carnal rest and ease is an usual fault among the people of God ; they are ready to sit up, without making the progress they should make heaven-wards, like the sluggard, Prov. vi. 9, " How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard ! when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep ?" Like Jonah, chap. i. 6, " Arise thou sleeper, and call upon thy God." Like even the wise virgins, Matt. xxv. 5, that were fast asleep as well as the foolish : and like the disciples, Luke xxii. 46, " Why sleep ye ? rise and pray lest ye enter into temptation." This is the sin of the generation, which is sadly evident by the little due improvement of mercies or judgments, and by the great neglect of duty and the great formality in the use of means, and by the many black spots that stain the faces of professors. If sorrow fill their hearts on account of sad things in their lot, they are like discontented and ill-natured infants, who weep themselves asleep, and like the disciples who sorrowed themselves asleep, Luke xxii. 45. If even the disciples of Christ be found sleeping in times of stormy dispensations, it is a sign that they should look upon themselves as the Jonah, that has contrived to raise the storm ; and, if they do not awake and arise when Christ



calls them, it may be a sign that he will awaken them to their cost. Profane people may fall into a lethargy, and get leave to sleep the sleep unto death, and may meet with nothing to awaken them, till the flames of hell do it, as it fell out with the foolish virgins ; but for the wise, though God should save them as by fire, and pluck them out of the burning, he will have them awakened ; and it may be with a dreadful storm they were not expecting.

2 This call, "Rise, and come away," imports, that when Christ comes to his people, he contents not himself to intimate that they are wrong, but he wants that what is wrong to be mended ; and that lazy and careless saints be roused and raised out of that secure state and condition, and be set to their feet again ; and, though nothing will awaken secure souls that man or angel can say, yet if God breathe upon a call, he can make it prevail ; for, says Christ, "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me," John vi. 45. Christ's errand to his church and people, in coming over mountains, is to raise them up to their duty : and if they be but raised to seek him, let them not complain of desertion ; Christ is not far off from them whom he will not suffer to sleep in a bed of security, but stirs up to be spiritually busy ; for, "Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee", Psalm ix. 10. "The Lord is nigh to them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth," Psalm cxlv. 18. The rising and seeking soul is not a forsaken soul.

3. "Rise up, and come away," it imports, that as conviction of sloth is not enough without uprising and diligence, so diligence is not enough without constancy ; not only must we *rise up*, but *come away*, and proceed in our motion ; convictions may make people rise and get to their feet, but it comes to little account if it be but a flash and away again : Some may begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh, Gal. iii. 3. Some may run well, but who hinders them ? The call of Christ is, that we "rise and come away ;" that being set on our feet we sit not down again : this call is directly levelled against the upsitten case of God's people at this day.

4. "Rise up, and come away," is a call importing something the Lord would have his people leave, relinquish, and turn their back upon. There are terms from which we must rise and come away. As the gospel call concerns unconverted sinners, it requires them to come out of a state of nature and unregeneraey, out of a Christless state unto Christ, and to a gracious state in him : for it is

the call of that God who quickens the dead ; and he can make his call effectual to bring them from death to life. But then, as it concerns believers, who were once quickened and made alive in Christ, and have relapsed into a deadness of disposition, there are many things they are called to abandon and leave behind them : they are called to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly righteously, and godly in this present world, Tit. ii. 12. Particularly, there are four things they are called to leave, and are to relinquish or come away from, namely,

(1.) The world, and the things of time ; and that not only in judgment, apprehending them to be vain and vanishing, yea, nothing but vexation of spirit ; but also in affection and esteem, counting all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, so as to be delivered from the plague of minding earthly things ; and likewise in practice by a moderate, sober, and mortifying walk, making no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

(2.) The unrenewed frame of spirit, the remainders of the world, and the lusts thereof, are what they are called to relinquish and come away from. They must forget their own people and their father's house, Psalm xlv. 10. They are called daily to be leaving and lamenting over a body of sin and death, Romans vii. 24. We need to be always turning our back upon ourselves with loathing, Job xiii. 6. Christ's disciples must deny themselves, Luke ix. 13. And hence—

(3.) From their own righteousness they must rise and come away to the Lord their righteousness ; being dead to and divorced from the law, and being clothed with the sun of righteousness, they must seek, with Paul, more and more to be found in him, not having their own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God through faith, Phil. iii. 9 ; and saying with the church, “ We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags,” Isa. lxiv. 6.

(4.) They must relinquish their attainments, Phil. iii. 13. “ Forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, and pressing toward the mark.” When people make the things they have attained to, their sleeping bed and their pillow, then their attainments are ready to be their neck-break ; but from all these, and the like things, the call is, “ Rise, and come away.” To beware of claiming new acquaintance with

their renounced delights ; like Lot's wife, glad to be out of Sodom, but very quickly looking back again ; and like Israel, glad to be out of Egypt, but soon they made a captain to return back again.

5. "Rise and come away," the call imports something to which they are called to come ; leaving the things that are behind, there must be a coming to what is before them. There are some professors who let out a devil at one door, but let in seven worse at another. It is not enough to turn from what is evil, but there must be a turning to what is good ; a turning from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God ; it is a coming away to Christ, the glorious Bridegroom, shaking off every thing that may hinder you from following after your husband, Christ Jesus, and removing every impediment that may obstruct your fellowship and communion with him. Rise, and come away with me, to share of my righteousness, for justification ; my grace and holiness, for sanctification. The two extremes here from which and to which we are to rise and come away, are from sin, and every thing that may mar communion with God ; to Christ, and every thing that tends to further this fellowship with him. And then,

6. "Rise, and come away," imports, a looking to the motion that is made between these two extremes, that it be a speedy and an honest motion, and also an affectionate motion, as it were, on the wings of love. Though a slow and simple motion, if it be but a real and upright is what has the promise. "Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out ;" yet the scripture speaks of a hasting, striving, running, fighting, and wrestling that should be aimed at. A man that is running from the greatest misery to the greatest happiness, would endeavour to have his motion such as would evidence his hatred at the one, and his love to the other ; his great loathing of the one, and his great liking to the other. "Rise up, and come away," then, imports such a progressive motion towards Christ, as may witness our abhorrence of what we come from, and our delight in what we come to ; and particularly our love and estimation of Christ, and our earnest desire to come to him at his call, with a "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

In a word, the strain of the call and invitation, taken altogether, imports the notice our Lord Jesus takes both of the good state and bad frame of his bride ; her good state is noticed in the compellation he gives her ; "My love, my fair one ; her bad frame,



or her dead, dull, and discouraged case, is noticed and imported in the invitation; "Rise, and come away." Our Lord takes notice of every thing about his children; and while he shows his love and approbation of their persons, he will show his disapprobation of their sins. The same word that bears an intimation of their loveliness in Christ, bears also a reproof of their laziness; "Rise, and come away." But while he takes notice of the dull and disconsolate case of the believer, it is with pity and compassion; for, as it is, Psal. ciii. 15. "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him; for he knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust;" therefore, in such a call as this, he shows his design of recovering them from their security, distress and distrust; and his design of making the call effectual, and bringing them to communion and fellowship with him; and by this call signifying his will that they may come away with all holy and humble boldness and confidence to him

IV. The fourth head proposed was, To enquire why the call and invitation given, ver. 10, is renewed; or the import of the repetition thereof.

Between that verse and this, he had used a good many motives and encouragements, showing that he had removed the winter-storms of the law, and the heavy rain of the curse and bondage thereof, and that he had brought along with him a sweet spring-time; "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear," &c. verses 11, 12, 13. And now, upon the back of all this, Christ resumes and repeats the exhortation which he had given before, that his bride might not abuse these encouragements; but remember, that all of them are afforded her for this very end, that she might be roused from her security, and raised from her discouragements, to come to him and with him, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Now, the import of this repetition may be opened in the following remarks.

Remark 1. "That Christ is very true and constant in his love to, and esteem of, his people; and therefore doth repeat over again, that the bride is his love and his fair one." Lest any should think that his calling her so in the 10th verse, was but the result of inadvertency, or that unawares such a commendation had fallen from his mouth; therefore, he repeats it here, to show that there is a rooted love and fixed esteem of his people in his heart; and that when he repeats the exhortation, he remembers what he had called

her, and so repeats also the compellations and commendation he had given her. This may encourage the bride of Christ to lean unto, and rely upon his declared and manifested love in his word, as a thing that is true and constant, and may be trusted to. Much flattery and many fair words we may get from men, that common prudence will not suffer us to lay weight upon, because they flow from some design, dissimulation, or inadvertency ; but our Lord Jesus Christ ponders every word that he speaks to the advantage of his bride, and will never retract any of his words again, on which he has caused his people to hope, Isa. xi. 6, 7, 8. "The voice said, Cry ; and he said, What shall I cry ? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth ; but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Therefore, they may well lean to all the expressions of his love.

Remark 2. "That Christ Jesus is real and serious in seeking the welfare of his people." He doth not make a fashion of dealing with them for his exoneration ; but when they are out of the road, in a dead and discouraged case, he follows them with call after call, saying, Arise ; and again, "Arise my love, my fair one, and come away." He is serious and instant in desiring and seeking the good and welfare of his church and people. Hence comes his constant affording the means to them, to set them right when they are wrong ; and his sending his messengers, rising up early, and sending them, because he had compassion on them, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, till it is said (viz. of the most part of the visible church, thus privileged) they mocked his messengers, despised his word, and misused his prophets, and his wrath rose against them, and there was no remedy, verse 16. Hence also are his heavy complains of, and lamentations over, people that will not hear his repeated calls, Psalm lxxxi. 11, 13, "My people would not hearken to my voice : and Israel would none of me. O that my people had hearkened unto my ways !" Isaiah xlvi. 18. "O that thou hast hearkened to my commandments ; then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." Thus Christ, in the midst of his triumph, when all were crying Hosanna to him, fell a weeping when he beheld Jerusalem, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace ; but now they are hid from thine eyes !" Luke xix. 41, 42.

Remark 3. "That sloth and security in the people of God, once given way to, is very hard to cure ; and, when discouragements

and deadness are encouraged, it will require call upon call, and stand a pull before ever these evils can be shaken off again." When the bride of Christ is lying drooping within doors, and not at her work, not in his company, he must call upon her once and again; "Arise my love, my fair one, and come; and again, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away," before ever he gets an answer. When crushing discouragement is given way to, it will not need another cross to be joined to it, to make them sad; for then, though a man would comfort himself, it will not do; Jeremiah was crushed, chapter viii. 18. "When I comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me." Discouraged souls are like wounded persons; if you bring a surgeon, and offer to lance or pounce their wounds, they are ready to fall into a swoon under the surgeon's hands: and the bonds of security are no less strong; when one has laid himself down on a bed of security, then you may cry, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard; when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" Nay, his best answer will be, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep," Prov. vi. 10. And of all security, that is the strongest which is the product of discouragements: he that is fallen asleep in the bosom of an idol, when God blasts that idol, he may see his folly, and creep to his feet again: but he that is fallen asleep in discouragements, whatever providences or ordinances and orders come to call him to rise, and even though he essay to get up to his feet, discouragement knocks him down again, and crushes all endeavours and resolutions in the bud: discouragement tells him, that all will be to no purpose. So that these evils given way to, are not easily shaken off: these bonds are not soon broken.

Remark 4. Concerning the import of the repetition here is, "That Christ's love to his people, and to their company, is so great, that he will bear with their untowardness, and carry on his suit, till he get their consent." If his first call will not do the turn, he will renew it; yea, if neither first nor second will do, he will triple it. So he does here, ver. 10, 13, 14, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." He will follow his bride till he bring her to himself, and make her claim her relation to him, and the old kindness, saying, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his: I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine," Song ii. 16, chap. vi. 3.



O sirs ! if we should get our will, every outcast between Christ and us would be an everlasting discord, and irreparable breach ; every fit of darkness and discouragement that we take would sink to the pit : but, glory to him, his love to us will not let him quit us so. If security be indulged by his people, he will not only follow them by repeated calls, as here he does, but he will pluck them out of the burning, saying, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ? Zech. iii. 2. He will famish all the gods of the earth, and make men worship every one from his place, Zeph. ii. 11. He will bring his people into the wilderness, and there speak into their hearts," Hos. ii. 14. You have a notable word to churches and saints, that we should pray may be made out to both as they need, Ezek. xx. 32—37, "Ye have said, You will be as the heathen, to serve wood and stone ; but that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all. I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. I will cause you to pass under the rod, and bring you into the bond of the covenant." As if he had said, "You shall not get leave to make the apostacy you would gladly make ; I will pluck you out of the burning, and reclaim you." Again, as thus he deals with his church and children when in security ; so, when under discouragements, she is saying, "Labour not to comfort me, I will weep bitterly," Isa. xxii. 4, and, as it is, Psalm lxxviii. 2. "My soul refused to be comforted : " it is even then in his heart to make out that word, Zech. iv. 10, "Despise not the day of small things, for they shall rejoice ;" he undertakes that they will rejoice ; though, through unbelief, they may be ready to cast out themselves as castaways ; and though men too may presume to cast them out with a profane abuse of God's name, saying, "Let the Lord be glorified : yet he will appear to their joy, and their persecutors shall be ashamed," Isa. lxvi. 5.

Remark 5. From the repetition of the call here, is, "That there is enough in Christ's company to invite souls to get up and follow him." Hence this exhortation, begun ver. 10th, is now subjoined to the former motives ; showing there is a sweet spring he brings with him, to be enjoyed by them that will rise up and come away with him. Any other condition, compared with that of being in his company, is like a person drooping within doors, compared with being abroad in the open field, or in gardens among sweet smelling flowers. There is enough in Christ's company to outbid all the vanities of time. Saul said to his servants, "Can the son of Jesse

give every one of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds?" 1 Sam. xxii. 7. What can this world give you, in comparison of that which is to be had in the company of Christ? The light of his countenance is preferable to all things else, and will give you a more glad heart than the world can have, when their corn and wine increaseth, Psal. iv. 6, 7. In him there is enough, not only to make up all wants; but also to comfort against all sorrows: a drink of the blood of this vine will make a man, that has a heavy heart, to forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more, Prov. xxxi. 6, 7.

Remark 6. "That opportunities of enjoying Christ's company, and of a time of love, should not be slighted." And therefore, when he brings a sweet spring, a time of love, a time of the singing of birds, when the voice of the turtle is heard in our land, the exhortation is again repeated, "Rise up and come away;" that we may not quench the Spirit, and lose the opportunity, we should listen to the call: we will not always get a spring time: therefore, to-day if we will hear his voice, let us not harden our hearts. Let us remember now the things that belong to our peace. The enemy threw a trench about Jerusalem, and laid her even with the ground, because she knew not the time of her visitation, according to Christ's words foretelling it, Luke xix. 43, 44. Precious seasons misimproved, and the greatest mercies neglected, leave the saddest guilt behind them; and when they are removed, men will be made to remember them with sorrow, for not improving them, Lam. i. 7. O may we, through grace, improve present mercies, present calls, considering our former pleasant things, that once we have had, and are stript of! and that the further abuse of present blessings we yet enjoy, may not be followed too with a sad after-game.

Remark 2. "That our Lord Jesus Christ wants that his people should have a full feast of love, and a comfortable enjoyment of him." His heart is much set upon this; and therefore he calls them again and again to rise and come away with him, and share of the precious fruits of his purchase, to enjoy the benefits of the spring that he has brought with him, and to rejoice in his goodness, and in the fair weather that his presence makes. It is unbelief that makes the church to sigh and sob, when he is calling her to sing; this was the fault of Zion, Isa. xlix. 13, 14. When he is bidding all sing, saying, "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted

his people, and will have mercy on his afflicted;" but instead of that, Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me." We should shake off the rags of discouragement and drooping, when the Lord calls us to put on our beautiful garments; for, as it is, Neh. viii. 10, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." And it is a great sin, when Christ is kind, and when his gracious returns makes winter to vanish, and the spring to return, not to study encouragement and cheerfulness in joining company with him at his repeated calls; "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

Remark 8. "That it is a pleasure and delight to our Lord Jesus Christ to have his people with him, feeding and feasting upon the provision he has made for them." And this pleasure and delight he shows, both by the repeating of this call, and the repeating it in this manner; he does not bid her rise and go, and be refreshed with the spring; but rise, and come away with me. When he feasts his people, he feasts himself also with them, Song v. 1, "I am come to my garden my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey: I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." And thus Song vii. from ver. 11th, when he and the bride go out to the villages, and to the vineyards, to view the vines flourishing, and the tender grapes, &c., it is a feast laid up by her for her Beloved. He loves them to go along with them, and to feast them and himself both; and therefore importunes them to go along with him, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

V. The fifth thing proposed was, To deduce some inferences for the application of the subject.

Is it so, That the repeated call, and renewed invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, to his drowzy and disconsolate bride and people, whom he names his *love, fair one*, is that they *rise, and come away* with him? Hence see,

1. That no change of frame or condition in God's people, and no change of his dealing with them, can alter the state of their persons before him. Whatever he has to say to them, and whatever he does to them, they are still his love and his fair one; whatever be between him and his bride, he speaks always in relative and affectionate terms," "My love, my sister, my spouse," in several places through this Song. Yea, thus he speaks to her when she is



fallen asleep, and ready to hold him out, when he calls to be let in, Song v. 2, 3. Why this? Even because he is an unchangeable God; "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed," Mal. iii. 6. And as he is unchangeable, so the marriage relation between him and her is indissoluble, notwithstanding she has many faults that deserve reproof and correction, and though she meet with them both; let this therefore be a cordial to the children of God, amidst the various lots and changes that time produces within you, or without you, that nothing shall be able to separate from his love; the faith of this would keep all fast in the greatest storm.

And is she still his love and his fair one? Why does she, through unbelief, daily lose the faith of her reconciled state, upon every change of her frame and condition? This is a great fault among believers. Though real guilt should sound a quarrel between God and a saint, faults are things to be repented of and amended; they are things that may and will be reproofed, and chastened of God; but still the relation stands; and faith should keep fast hold of it, saying, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." For where the faith of this relation is cast loose, upon falling into faults, and feeling of changes in God's way of dealing, the reproofs that should fall upon our corruption, to correct that; do light upon our grace to weaken it. We serve Satan's design, when we fall raising the foundation of our state; while, instead of that, we should be mourning over our faults, and amending them; whereas when we tamper with the foundation, and at the same time fall amending our faults, we put away that which should fortify us, and encourage us to amend them: for though God says, "There is hope in Israel concerning this thing;" yet unbelief says, "There is no hope:" all is gone, the foundation is sapped: then corruption is strengthened, grace is weakened, while the faith of this relation is dashed.

2. Hence, see, that a secure, sleepy, and up-sitten case in the people of God, is very opposite to his will and their well. Christ is at vast pains, by his calls, to bring them out of that case, which tends so much to reproach Christ and religion; it says, in effect, that his consolations are small, that his allowances are little worth; it says that he is a barren wilderness, and a land of darkness, Jer. ii. 31. Which makes us say, as in the following words:—"We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." By this up-sitten case professors bring a reproach upon themselves. They were some-

times on their feet and alive, and now it may be said to them, "Where is the blessedness you speak of?" Gal. iv. 15. Where is the sweetness you said you found in the Lord's way? Where is the gain of godliness you made a great noise about? "You did run well: who hindered you, that you should not obey the truth?" They bring a reproach on themselves, that have been active and diligent, and now are loitering. The children of God cannot expect to prosper in such an up-sitten way; God will hedge up your way with thorns that you shall not find your path, Hosea ii. 6. It is the mercy of God's people that they shall not prosper in a way of hardening themselves against God, and his word, and rod. Meantime, their security stands in the way of many mercies which otherwise they might enjoy: while they do not rise and come away they lose the benefit of the spring time of gospel ordinances: the Lord is there, and they are not aware; he is shewing his glory, and they are sleeping it over; they lose many a sweet proof of God's love, and many a sweet hour that is between Christ and the lively up-risen believer does the upsitten soul miss.

3. Hence see the wonderful condescension of the Lord Jesus, that he is at pains to give a kind visit to a secure and upsitten bride, lying drooping and idle within doors, that he should miss her company; and when, by her sin and security she is laid by from coming to him, yet he will come to her, and give her a call to rise and come away to him. O! how may we wonder at the constancy of his love amidst all his people's vicissitudes and changes, and estrangements of affection from him, that he breaks not up with us quite at every miscarriage, but is constant in his love, even to these in his family that are crushed and broken, and upsitten in security? O! what encouragement lies in this, that we are prevented with his calls, as it was said to the blind man, Mark x. 49, "Be of good comfort; rise, he calls thee!" They who would willingly get up to their feet may read a strong encouragement from a preventing call of God to them to rise and come away. Why, he that is able to draw you to him, is shewing his will to have you with him, by letting down this cord of love, wrapt about this repeated invitation, "Rise, my love; rise, my love, my fair one, and come away." O! poor souls, do not suspect his love, though you be under a temptation to sit still and resist his call; for here you see that even she would fain have lain still, saying, in effect, I cannot rise; and she who, in the following verse, would gladly have hid herself in the

clefts of the rocks, and secret places of the stairs, is yet invited to come forth and show herself; however black and vile she is in herself, and in her own eyes, and however ill set in her mind against the call, yet she is encouraged with an O! my dove! and here with an "O! my love, my fair one; rise, and come away." O! see and admire his wonderful condescension, designed to conquer you!

4. Hence see, that the children of grace have good reason to lean unto and rely upon the words of grace that proceed out of Christ's mouth; and to depend upon the expressions of his love and esteem, seeing he never takes back his word, but repeats it; and as he repeats these commendations frequently, so we should think and ruminate upon them frequently. He spares not to call her his love, and his fair one: O sirs, we should not spare to think upon that, so as thereby to be led, not only to admire his condescension, and wonder at his esteem of them who are nothing, yea, less and worse than nothing; but also to be comforted and confirmed in the faith of it. He that knows all things knows what we are in ourselves, even vile treacherous ones, that played the harlot with many lovers; yet he that knows all things knows what we are in him, and in his love and esteem, that courts us back again to him, not with a single word only, saying, "Return, for I am married to you;" but with so many repeated calls, "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return;" with so many expressions of his loving kindness, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away." O could we read the kindness of his heart, in the kind repetition of his words, our hearts would be caught with his loving-kindness!

5. Hence see ground to justify God, when matters go not well with his church and people, and when he seems not to deal kindly, but severely with them: surely he takes no delight in striking them: the strokes are forced from him, by their slighting his kindness, who seeks so earnestly the prosperity and welfare of his people. He sometimes says of the visible church, "What could I have done more to my vineyard?" Isaiah v. 3, 4. His outward pains with them, and his repeated calls to them to come to him, will not only justify him, but show that their destruction is of themselves. Hos. xiii. 9, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself?" and that, therefore, instead of murmuring and quarrelling him and his providence, when sad things befall us, we should mourn over ourselves and our provocations; and it may aggravate our sorrow that we have not him and his kindness to blame, but our own rebellion against his



kind calls and invitations; for he may justly say to us, as he did, Mat. xxiii. 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Many calls has God given to the professors of Scotland, and particularly to some that seem eminent professors, by some of his servants; and for which of these may it not be said, do they now stone them with slanders, and kill them in their offices and characters? But who knows what desolation will be the issue? "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." But withal, seeing Christ is so instant and serious in seeking again and again the welfare of his people, how should this encourage and excite them to be serious and instant in promoting the same design? You that are serious, either in praying for the peace of Jerusalem, or for your own true welfare, you may be encouraged herein from this, that you have one joining with you that is serious and instant in promoting the same design with you; for, would you have a character of our Lord Jesus Christ? He is one that takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, Psalm xxxv. 27, more than you can take; and, he taking pleasure in it, will promote that design in which you take part with him; yea, our Lord takes pleasure in his people, Psalm cxlix. 4. And what follows? "He will beautify the meek with salvation:" he will make it visible and evident, in some adorning proofs of his love to them that carry on the same design with him. We have reason then to justify him when he strikes, because his heaviest rod comes to resent our slighting of his kindness; and we have reason and encouragement to plead for his pity and favour because this is what he takes pleasure to show.

6. Hence see what great need the children of God have to take care how they draw on upon themselves the bonds of security or discouragement, seeing nothing but Christ's word of power repeated can break these bands of death and disorder. Little do God's people consider that when they give way to these evils, they not only sin against God, but make chains for their own neck, and fetters for their own feet, that will not be got easily broken. Yea, God may give up his people to take their fill of carnal security when they give way to it, and to discouragements; to try that trade which they have chosen; and though no judicial plague be inflicted, yet these bonds are fearful bindings, and may make you go many days with

a bowed down back. However, let it commend the mercy of Christ to you, that ever he brake such bonds ; for it was not so great a wonder that the Babylonish captivity came to a period, that the captives of the mighty should be taken away, and the prey of the terrible should be delivered, Isaiah xlv. 24, 25, as to see the bands of security and discouragement broken off, and to see the weak hand strengthened, and the feeble knee confirmed, Isaiah xxxv. 3. O ! how should it be looked on as a matchless mercy, when as the Lord plucked Lot out of Sodom, he plucks any poor soul out of the bands of security, out of the pit, the horrible pit of darkness and discouragement, and out of the miry clay of corruption wherein they are sunk, and that he shews such good will to this work, “ Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

7. Hence see, if Christ thus follows his people with call upon call, till he get their consent ; as we would beware of abusing this, by laying by (without stirring up ourselves to take hold of him, as the word is, Isaiah lxiv. 7, by neglecting the means, the word, sacrament, and prayer) till he prevail with us, whether we will or not ; for, this is to abuse his goodness, that should lead us to lay hold upon him ; so it may teach the Lord’s people the folly of their wandering : for, seeing he will reclaim them from their wandering, it is surely great folly to sit his summons that he is giving them to rise and come away ; because by sitting his summons, they lay a foundation for more sorrow than has yet befallen them, before he bring them back again ; for, “ Their sorrow shall he multiplied, while they follow after other gods,” and multiplied more and more, till they be willingly disposed to return to their first Husband : yea, they may come to see, what an evil and bitter thing their apostacy was when he recovers them. And, indeed, we may say, O how great is the mercy showed to them in whose hands apostacy thrives not ! O what a proof of love is in that, when, though they walk on frowardly in the ways of their own heart, notwithstanding his being wroth, and smiting, and hiding himself ; yet, “ He sees their ways and heals them !” O ! is there not here some encouraging ground of hope of recovery out of a case that is hopeless in itself ; that when you are laid by, he has not done with you ; and that, like “ Rachael weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they were not, she shall come again from the land of her captivity ; and there is hope in her end,” Jer. xxxi. 15, 16, 17. O what encouragement is in this, that irrecoverable conditions may be recovered, and

helpless cases helped by him ! O how should it endear Christ to us, and how should his kindness be magnified that bears thus with the untowardness of his people, and will not leave off dealing with them till he get their consent, but will help self-destroyers, saying, "In me is thy help !" Though thou hast been doing all thou canst to undo thyself, yet I will not suffer thee thus to ruin thyself : Come, come then ; "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

8. Hence see (omitting many other inferences) that our Lord Jesus allows no objections to be made against his calls and invitations, and will admit no excuse, nor will accept of any refusal at the hands either of sinners or saints whom he courts this day : he will be so far from allowing any objection, admitting any excuse, or accepting of any refusals of his repeated calls and renewed invitation, that the final refuser and rejecter thereof shall perish ; for "He that believes not shall be damned ;" he that now calls, saying, "Come to me, and be blessed ;" shall say to the refusers, "Depart from me, ye cursed ;" and will frown them down to the pit of perdition, and frown upon them for ever ! But the day of judgment is not yet, it is to come ; the day of grace is present, wherein the voice of the turtle is heard in our land ; and that voice is saying, Come, come ; "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

Let me, therefore before I close, urge this exhortation upon sinners and saints,

1st, Upon sinners, who never yet came to our Beloved to be joined in marriage with this wonderful match, but have sitten all the numerous calls and offers of his love and grace to this day, and remain at a total distance from Christ, and never rose up to come at his call, To you I would say, what God says, Eph. v. 15, "Awake, thou that sleepest : arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." For motives to excite your compliance, know and consider,

1. You are certainly sleeping in the arms of some idol or other ; "Your hearts are going out after your lovers, and you forget me, saith the Lord," Hos. ii. 13. You are surely married to something else : either to the world, to sin, or Satan. And, alas ! it is a black bargain to be married to the devil, the god of this world, that is bewitching you with the lusts of the world ! He is a black husband for you. You cannot live in this world, without being wedded to some thing or other. But,

2. Consider, a King from heaven makes suit for your love : a great King, who has upon his vesture and thigh a name written,



"King of kings and Lord of lords;" even the King of glory, the Lord of glory," Psalm xxiv. 10. He is pleading with you to rise up, and come away, and match with him who is the Lord of life.

3. Consider, that if you keep at a distance from him, you shall die in your sins; for you are not only dead in law, but dying sinners, ready to die the second death; your damnation is every day nearer and nearer! the sentence of death is already passed by the law; "He that believeth not, is condemned already."

4. Consider, that there is life to be had in Christ; the life of grace here, and of glory hereafter: it is all in him to be communicated to dead sinners; and even dead sinners are called to rise out of their graves, as Lazarus, and come away to Christ. It is no absurdity to tell you, that the God who quickens the dead, calls you to rise out of that dead state and come to him that complains on sinners, saying, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." He that calls you can make the call effectual; and we order you to come at his call, and rise at his command. It is necessary you believe that it is God who calls you, saying, "Look unto me, and be saved, for I am God;" and that it is Christ who invites you, saying, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Some have been quickened with such a word as that, "The master is come, and calls for you;" the Master calls you, the Lord of life calls you.

5. Consider, that though this may be the last call you shall get, yet it is not the first you have got; he has called you again and again: and to shew his good-will to men on the earth, and his good-will to the worst of sinners in this company, the repetition of the text is another call to you; he is renewing his calls that you may believe. I allude to that word, Exodus iv. 8, where it is said, "If they will not believe, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign; they will believe the voice of the latter sign." Well, if you have not come at the voice of the first; then will you come at the voice of the latter call? He is renewing his call to backsliding sinners; "Return, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you," Jer. iii. 12. To the straying sinner, that has played the harlot with many lovers, verse 1. To the most polluted sinner, whose sins are of a deep dye, as scarlet and crimson, Isaiah i. 18. To the oldest sinner here, to whom he may be saying, "Forty years long have I been grieved with you in this generation;" yet now, "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." God has

dealt with some here, it may be, twenty, thirty, forty, and it may be sixty years ; and you have one offer more, and then it may be, the door of mercy may be shut. Therefore, take this caution, because Christ continues to call, take heed you do not continue to refuse ; renewed calls are doubled mercies, but renewed refusals are tripled sins. It is dangerous, if Christ should pass by you, without giving you a call ; but it is more dangerous if you pass by him, and refuse his call when he comes to give and renew it. Take heed also of this, that because you have enjoyed many offers, beware of presuming you shall have more. Christ has said to some, " How often would I have gathered you, to share of my bounties, and you would not ; but now they are hid from your eyes."

6. Consider, that Christ's call to you admits of no excuse, drawn either from your present circumstances, or the present times.

[1.] As to your present circumstances. If any sinners here, that ever came to Christ before, understand the present circumstances that they are in, namely, That they are without God, and without Christ ; undone and unconverted ; it is possible they may think this call cannot be to them, because the tenor of it is, " Rise my love, my fair one, and come away : " and how can these titles be given to such as cannot be named, either his love, or his fair one ? and therefore the call cannot be to me. To this it might be replied, Though this call be properly to believers, and converted ones that are married to Christ, to return to their Husband, Christ Jesus ; yet consider,

(1.) That as Christ may be called, and is really the Head and Husband of the visible church, that are by profession and federally married unto him, which relation Christ frequently owns, as *Jer. iii. 14*, speaks of their departure from him, to other lovers, as a real adultery, which declares a real marriage between him and them, even though most of them were never savingly united to Christ ; so, when God is pleased to own the relation, and not to put a bill of divorce into their hands, he may speak to them lovingly, in the terms suitable to that relation ; for, though these terms, " My love, my fair one," are unsuitable to them, as they are *vi e harlots*, committing adultery with other lovers, yet they may be suitably applied to them, as they are his bride ; especially when he is courting them back to him, saying, " Return, for I am married to you, though you have scattered your ways to strangers, under every green tree, and have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Return, O back-

sliding children, for I am married unto you," Jer. iii. 13, 14. It is one thing what a visible church may be called, as to their moral characters, namely, backsliders and harlots, as in the scripture here cited; and it is another thing what they may be called, as to their married relation, or as the bride of Christ, that in this respect is his love, and his fair and spotless one; hence he is said to behold no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel, Num. xxii. 21; and yet it was their character, "A stiff-necked and rebellious people," as their fathers had been. God, as a loving husband, will see no faults in his bride, but overlooks them, and courts her, with a "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."

(2.) Though you cannot be called his love, and his fair one, while, and as you are in a state of black nature and unregeneracy; yet God has two glasses through which he looks to sinners; the one is his law-glass; and in that he sees them to be what they are in themselves, "Transgressors from the womb;" and calls them, "Children of disobedience, and children of wrath." The other is a gospel-glass; that is, the glass of his own grace and goodness through Jesus Christ, in which he sees you to be what you are, in his present desire and design by this call; and calls you by what he wills you to be, even his love, and his fair one. They are titles of serious courtship, showing both what you should be, namely, his lovers and his beauties; and what you shall be if you be brought to take with these titles, and so, believe his love and kindness therein, and be drawn with these cords of love. What was his purpose from eternity is none of your immediate concern, till once you fall in with his revealed will and present design in courting you in these kindly terms. He is not flattering you with fair words, nor needs he, but is in good earnest calling you to him, as death and judgment will be in good earnest shortly with you; and if you cannot take with such kindly calls and invitations, nor believe his good-will towards men on earth, and towards you in particular; but remain an enemy to him, because you look upon him as an enemy to you: your ruin will be of yourself, and of your own enmity and unbelief. But if you can hear him saying, even to you in particular, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away;" and wonder at such kindly words of God to such a polluted creature as you; for this is not the manner of men, but the manner of God, to catch the hearts of rebels with kindness; and if your heart be touched, and taken, and drawn towards him, whose name is Wonderful, and that



by the means of such love-cords, then you may come to see there was need of such strong expressions of love and esteem of you, to gain your love and esteem of him: and may come to see also, by falling in with his promise, desire, and design by this call, what was his eternal purpose before the world began; for now, being drawn by this cord of love, the decree is declared, Jer. xxxi. 3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness will I draw thee."

He allows, therefore, no soul here to object against his call, from their present circumstances, as if they were excluded by these titles, "My love, my fair one, rise, and come away;" for even in these terms he calls all and every one, and you in particular, that cannot think them applicable to you, that are so vile and black like hell; "To you, O man, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." If I should design you by the name you deserve, and by no other name, I would frighten you away from me, but I invite you by names that show my love to you, and my desire towards you, and your eternal happiness and welfare; however these names do not become you to have, yet they become me to give, in sovereign favour to you: therefore, let me allure you, "Rise, then, my love, my fair one, and come away." Make no abjections, therefore, from your present state and circumstances; nor yet,

[2.] From the present time. If any sinner here says, This is not the fit time: let them remember, the call here is in the present time, "Rise, my love:" this is the call of Christ from heaven to you to-day; remember, therefore, that every moment's delay to come to Christ, is an affront done to him, as if his will was not to be regarded, nor his company worth your while. Remember also, that every moment's delay of coming to him makes you the more unfit to come; therefore, it is that the call is here repeated, "Rise, rise; come away:" which imports haste. Delays here are the most dangerous delays: for none knows what a day may bring forth; life is posting away, time is running, death and judgment are hasting on, eternity is at the door, the present season is the gospel spring-time, the winter is past, the legal dispensation over, Christ is come and away again; but he has sent his spirit to call you to come after him: the voice of the turtle is heard; now is the time: all impediments are removed; the way is paved; the law, and justice, and holiness of God are satisfied by the doing and dying of him that now calls you to rise. O sinners, come to a

Saviour; rise and come, for he calls you: though you were the vilest sinner on earth, if he calls you, even you, his love, and his fair one, he calls you nothing but what he will instantly make you to be whenever your heart listens to his call, and comes away to him; you shall no sooner have a heart to rise and come to him, but that moment you are his love, and his fair one, though you was as black as hell before; he is the "God that quickens the dead, and calls things that are not as though they were," Rom. iv. 17. And he has no more ado, to make you his love, and his fair one, but to call you so; "I will call them my people, that were not my people; and her beloved, that was not beloved," Rom. xi. 25. Therefore, give way to the word of God, and it shall be a word of power; let him call you his love, and his fair one, and welcome his change of names; his powerful call can soon rifle hell, and herry the devil's nest, and make it a holy temple for himself. And now, if your heart and soul gives way to these alluring names and designations, with an "Even so be it, Lord; let me be thy love and fair one, according to thy word;" then I am sure your heart will give way also to his exhortations that accompany these sweet names, "Arise, and come away." You will not be able to resist his love: but be ready to resign yourself to it, saying, Lord, seeing such love and grace towards the most unlovely, come wholly of thyself; the power also is wholly thine; therefore, Lord, draw me, and I will run; raise me, and I will rise; help me, and I will come away." Well, if even in this way he makes you willing, he makes you welcome too; for "Him that cometh to me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out."

2dly, I come now to urge this call upon saints, that have some time a-day been raised and quickened by the voice of Christ, and the grace of the gospel; but now are fallen under security or discouragements, by reason of some weary winters that have past over them, and some nipping storms of sad dispensations without, and deadness and carnality within, that have brought on a dreadful decay; so as they are not what they have been, either as to the lively exercise of grace, or the lovely diligence of duty, that some time formerly took place; "How is your gold become dim, and your most fine gold changed!" Your case now, it is like, is a weary case, a winter case, a withered case, so as you are quite laid by; that you cannot rise, but are lying among the pots, and loitering in security: well, this call comes particularly to you, poor souls;

and it is the call of your loving Lord, saying, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

He that has formerly called and quickened you by such a kindly invitation, is now repeating and renewing his call, that you may renew your old acquaintance with him, and regain that communion and fellowship with him, which you have been deprived of since you fell into such a sad and upsitten case ; his repeated call then to you is, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away." O poor believer, that art in such a drooping and upsitten case, I call you, in his great name, to rise and come away to him, and then to his table. In order to persuade you to this, consider,

1. None else can remedy your case ; who can help you ? who can ease you ? but he that says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Mat. xi. 28.

2. Consider, that the love of Christ is still the same to thee that ever it was. There is still the same love in his heart, whatever frowns have been or are in his dispensations ; and whatever changes have been in your case and frame, yet he has never changed your name ; notwithstanding all your faults and follies, you are still his love and his fair one ; therefore he calls you thus, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away "

3. Consider, that you are expressly called by your marriage-name to communion and fellowship with him, as his bride, the Lamb's wife, saying, "Return, for I am married unto you. It is true, there is a relation between Christ and the visible church, as he is their Head and Husband, as I said above ; but this general marriage-covenant and relation infers no saving benefit to any, but such as make particular application thereof to themselves, which is done when God makes a soul to lay claim to God, as his God and Father ; or to Christ, as his Head and Husband. I name two instances of this particular application of that general relation, whereby the special relation is constituted ; one is Jer. iii. 19. "How shall I put thee among the children ?" &c. God only can answer the question, and he does it in the following words : "Thou shalt call me Father, and shalt not turn away from me." Another instance is, Hos. ii. 16, "And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, thou shalt call me *ISHI* ;" that is, *My Husband* ; or, as it may be read, *My MAN* : O wonderful homely appropriation of faith here, that makes of God man, *My MAN*, *My HUSBAND* : "Thou shalt call me *ISHI*." To the same



purpose it is said, in the last verse of that same second chapter of Hosea, "I will say unto them that were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." This is once and again said by the church, in this book of the Song: "My beloved is mine, and I am his—I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine," Song ii. 16, iii. 6. Now, believer, his calling you to rise and come away to him by that name, "My love, my fair one," is a call to fellowship with him, as one married to you, not only in a general, but in a particular and special manner, by your having given your heart and hand to him, some time a-day, and your having called him by faith your own God, yea, your own Man, your own Husband, your own and only Beloved; and now, though you have been by a whorish heart playing the harlot with other lovers, and laying yourself by from fellowship with him; yet in infinite kindness and pity towards you, he wants you to return to your first husband, for then it was better with you, than since you left his company.

4. Consider, that our Lord Jesus is instant and earnest in shewing himself to be so; not only by repeating and renewing his call, but also urging and pressing it with the strongest motives and arguments, drawn from the sweetness of the season, that he brings along with him, when he comes to court you back to him; see these from the tenth verse of this chapter where the text is; and they are every way suited to the remedying of your sad circumstances. And,

(1.) Are you a frightened bride, that has been terrified with the dangers of the dismal winters that have gone over your head? Then, behold, he brings safety with him, saying, "Lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;" therefore, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

(2.) Are you a black bride, all deformed and withered? Then, behold! he brings beauty with him; therefore he says, "The flowers appear on the earth;" the flourishing beauty of holiness comes along with him when he comes; therefore, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

(3.) Are you a dejected and downcast bride, sunk in the depths of melancholy? Behold! he brings joy and melodious music with him; therefore it follows, "The time of the singing of birds is come; and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;" here is the joyful sound! therefore, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

(4.) Are you a barren bride, like a barren tree that has fallen into a decay, and has lost its sap and substance? behold, he brings fruit with him, and greenness and savouriness to these that have lost their former freshness and fragrance; for, behold! "The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs; and the vines with the tender grapes, give a good smell;" "Rise, then, my love, my fair one, and come away" with me, to share of the blessings and benefits I bring along with me. Thus our Lord is urging you with arguments, that answers all the great needs and sad cases that your soul can be in.

Therefore know, believer, that he allows no objection to be made against your yielding to his earnest call, and loving invitation. Object not then the badness of the time, or the sadness of the season; for our Lord brings a spring-time with him, as appears in all these parts of the description of the gospel-spring. O! he can make a sweet spring in the heart, and that in the very midst of winter, though it should be just now a deep winter case with you; is it not enough to make instantly a pleasant heartsome spring, for him to say, "Rise, my love;" "For, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;" the storm of law-curses, and the shower of God's wrath is over your head, and it has lighted upon my head with a vengeance, that you might escape? "Rise, then, my love." Again, object not, that others are giving you no example, but lying in carnal security as well as you. Let this be no excuse to you, for the call here (as has been formerly observed to run in the original) is, "Rise up" FOR THYSELF, verse 10. Every one is to rise up and come away for himself, though none should join you; though nobody should rise up with you, yet say thou, with Joshua, "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." The multitude of sleepers will not be a shelter to any that follow the crowd in that woful trade. Yea, though other wise virgins, as well as the foolish, be slumbering and sleeping at this day, the more need you have to be awake; "Rise up for thyself," and for thy own profit and advantage, which the word also imports. It is thy interest and happiness to rise up and come away to Christ. Again, object not, That you are but a single one by yourself; can he be speaking to me? Yea, man, woman, to thee, even to thee he is speaking. Though Christ speaks to all and every one that is here, yet he sometimes has a secret word to one soul by itself, as he had to the woman of Samaria by herself; yea, when he is speaking to thousands at once; yet he is sometimes speaking to the heart of one among them, and

only to the ear of the rest. However, though thou art one by thyself, yet he is speaking to thee in the singular number, "My love, my fair one;" and calling thee by name, a poor and pitiful one, that has been lying among the pots, but thou shalt be like the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold; therefore, "Rise, my love, my dove, my fair one;" it is thee I am wanting to have, and I will by no means want thee; "Rise up, and come away." Again, object not against coming to him, because of the former slights you have put upon him: for he makes not that, nor any other objection against you: and therefore is renewing and repeating his call. Make not your present security and discouragement an objection; for the call is to you to arise out of that case; he wants to deliver you out of that horrible pit and miry clay. Object not, that he has no favour or kindness for thee, when he is saying the contrary; "Rise, my love." Object not against coming, because of your deformity and defilement, when he is saying, "Rise, my fair one." O happy soul that art black in thine own eyes but comely in Christ's eye! Object not, that your sin has broken up the relation between him and you; when yet he is claiming the relation over and over again; "My love, my fair one, rise, and come away." Object not, that you cannot rise and go to him: for he is not calling you to rise and go your way alone, but his call is, "Rise, and come away" with me, in my company, and by my help to be continually with me, that I may hold thee by the right-hand.

O then, sirs, has his word captivated your heart? Has his kindly call made your heart rise out of the hollow and depths you were in, out of the damps and discouragements you was under, and made you glad at the heart, at the bottom of your soul, to rise and come away with him, that is such a mighty Lord, and such a matchless lover? Then his next call to you is to come and take your supper with him, that you may sup with him, and he with you at his table, to which he invites you; not to go without him, but to come away hand in hand with him; for still his sweet call is, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away."



A PART OF THE DISCOURSE BEFORE THE SERVING  
OF THE TABLES.

MY friends, our kind Lord has been courting the hearts of sinners here, to come with him, and share of the great benefits of redemption purchased by his blood : which benefits are represented in the context, as I formerly observed, by the blessings of the spring ; that are laid out as so many arguments to move souls to embrace that glorious Lover, who is the Father's Beloved, and the church's Beloved. Some souls, I hope, are gained ; and some hearts have been by his kindly call quickened, who before were dead in sins and trespasses ; and quickened to an ardent desire to rise at his kindly call, and to come away with him, and to bid farewell to all other lords and lovers ; these are to be invited to the table of communion and fellowship with him.

But there is a generation of rejectors of Christ, whose hearts were never moved, with any of his sweet and kindly calls, to rise out of their beds of sin and sloth, and to come away with Christ, and choose his company ; but, on the contrary, choose rather to stay away from him, and to maintain fellowship with his enemies, these base lusts and idols ; these must be excluded from the table of the Lord : for it is said, 1 Cor. x. 20, 21, " Ye cannot have fellowship with God, and fellowship with the devil ; ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils ; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils." And therefore in the Lord's name, we excommunicate all the enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ, who show their enmity, by their disobedience to the call of the gospel, and consequently to all the commands of the law ; more particularly, we exclude all impenitent breakers of any of the ten commands, such as, &c. In a word, all the slights of that great command of God, 1 John iii. 23, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another ; these have no right to the Lord's table, that are not lovers of God, and of his saints, and that are not disapprovers of sin in sinners, in saints and in themselves. These that are approvers of personal, national, public, private, or secret sins ; these ought to be excluded, that are approvers of the corruptions and defections of the Judicatories at this day on the one hand, and approvers of the delusions and disorders of new

Separatists on the other hand. [And sure they exclude themselves from this communion table, that are approvers of the pretended and profane censures and sentences past against a number of ministers and elders, because of their maintaining of their old Reformation and Revolution principles and profession, and adhering to the true religion presently professed and authorised by the law in this land. The approvers of these sinful sentences, founded upon libels of lies and calumnies, what are they doing but rashly and ignorantly crucifying Christ in his members, killing the prophets and stoning these that are sent to them, fiercely thrusting their old ministers and messengers of Christ through the heart, with drawn swords of rage and reproach, and dipping their hands in the blood of their sacred ministry, under pretence of doing God service, and under the conduct of some leaders that cause them to err, and leaders that are not able to answer the public refutations of their horrid extravagancies ; and far less will ever be able to answer to God and conscience for their conduct ? Our hearts should pity the poor weaklings of the flock of Christ, that are caught in these deceitful snares ; and we pray the Lord may restore and recover them from these crooked ways, to which they have turned aside ; and that the Lord may avert the awful and desolating judgments that such dreadful profanation of the name of God, under the mask of zeal, doth portend.] But we use to sum up the doctrinal excommunication, by reading some catalogues of such whom God excludes ; such as, Rom. i. 29, —31, Gal. v. 19—21.

But, on the other hand, we come to invite the friends of Christ, to whom he says, “ Eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved : ” and I call them all friends of Christ, whatever they have been before, who have through grace, been made to answer Christ’s call and invitation, saying, “ Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away. ” You know, that as Christ calls his people by opening their eyes, and turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God ; so the manner of his calling is, 1. Externally, by ministers, ordinances, and providences. 2. Internally, by his Spirit, when he speaks to their hearts, which he does by four ways. (1.) By conviction of sin and misery. (2.) By illumination of a God in Christ, the Saviour. (3.) By excitation, and raising the soul to spiritual life. (4.) By determination, inclining and enabling the quickened soul to rise actively and come voluntarily at his call, with a “ Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. ” Lord, I come at thy call ; O help me up, and draw me to thee.

I offer a few of the marks and properties of the call, when it is effectual, that believers in Christ, and comers to him, may know that they are so ; and may be distinguished from these that are excluded.

1. The call has been a preventing call : when you was in a sad and dismal case, and when you was ready to think all hope was gone ; yet he prevented you mercifully with the blessing of his goodness, Psal. xxi. 3.

2. It is a particular call he gives you, like that of Christ to Mary, John xi. 28, "The master is come, and calleth for thee. He calls his sheep by name, and leads them out," John x. 3.

3. It is a penetrating call, that pierces the heart, and moves the bowels, Song v. 4. "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him ;" or "moved in me," as it may be read.

4. It is a discernible call ; the believer can distinguish it from all other calls ; "My sheep know my voice, says Christ, and they follow me," John x. 4, 5. They know not the voice of strangers, so as to follow them ; they know the difference between his voice and theirs : his call makes them say, "The voice of my Beloved ! Behold, he cometh !"

5. It is a conquering call ; it reaches farther than the ear ; the drowzy soul is awakened with it ; the hard and stony heart is sweetly wounded and kindly melted with it, according to the promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." The hard stone is softened, and the rebellious will is conquered and captivated ; for the weapons of the gospel warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. And hence,

6. It is a quickening and enlivening call ; "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii 1. This call brings life and warmth to the soul, that was dead and cold. It is true, great partial deadness and coldness may be contracted after this quickening and warming call, and that to such a degree, as nothing but like a smoking flax may be to the fore ; yet it is what our Lord Jesus will not quench, but quickens again by his repeated calls.



And now, you that have been thus called effectually to himself, he calls you again to his table, saying, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away." O wonder men and angels! that his language to a loveless bride should be, "Rise, my love;" and his language to a black bride, "Rise, my fair one!" O can you find in your hearts to resist such a kind and wonderful call, accompanying his sweet command, "Do this in remembrance of me." Come with an appetite; he satisfies the longing soul. Come with boldness, like the King's bride. Come affectionately; all lovely things are in him. Come with hope and expectation; he is a God in Christ.

Remember withall, he is not calling you to rise and go alone, or upon your own legs that are but lame; nay, he is calling you to rise and come away with him: he is ready to gather you with his arms, and carry you in his bosom, Isa. xl. 11, and therefore, just allow him to take you in his arms to his table. Why, say you; what mean you by allowing him? Or how shall I manifest my allowance? O shew it, 1. By not resisting him; for your wicked hearts are ready always to resist the Holy Ghost, and his holy motions. 2. Show it more actively, by inviting him into your heart, saying, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without" doors, knocking and calling? Open the everlasting doors and come in thou King of glory. Well, do you allow him thus, and would you be glad at your hearts, to be carried in his arms? Why, he wants no more but your heart and hand: though your heart be a worthless heart, and your hand a withered hand; yet his day of power has made you willing, and given you a willing heart to stretch forth the withered hand: therefore, be your heart never so worthless, and your hand never so withered, he is bidding you welcome, welcome: welcome, with a thousand good wills: and saying, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

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### THE DISCOURSE AT THE SERVICE OF THE FIRST TABLE.

Now, communicants, I hope your coming here to this table is the effect of Christ's calling you first to himself: and then to his table, by his word and Spirit. Has he courted you with his kindness? Has he said to you, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away,"

and drawn you so, as to cast the marriage-knot between Christ and you? Why, then, it is fit you share of the marriage-feast; and now he is ready to feed your soul with wonders of the most substantial nature. There are three great wonders that eternity will never unriddle, and they are all to be seen in this sacramental table.

1. That God feeds our bodies with bread, and our souls with the flesh and blood of his own Son. O! how he loved you, to give you his own flesh :

2. The next wonder is, That his love was stronger than death, for, love held him on the cross, when death could not hold him in the grave : he burnt between two fires ; the fire of his love and affection for us, and the fire of his suffering and affliction for us ; yea, all the wrath of God could not quench this love.

3. The third wonder is, That he should die for us, when on earth ; and nourish or feed us, with himself, now when he is in heaven. O ! wonder that the Author of life should become the bread of life. The sacrament is the shadow and representation of these substantial things : it is the presence of things distant, the sight of things absent, and a taste of things inconceivable. O the miracles of Christ's love, that is now represented under these elements !

In the same night wherein Christ was betrayed, he left us a supper to feed upon, till he should come again ; " He took bread, and having blessed it, he brake it," &c. That God should dwell in flesh, and that this flesh should be our food, is wonderful ; yea, that he should do more than die for us ; for he not only desired to die for us, when he had this bloody baptism to be baptized with and was straitened till it was accomplished ; but he also desired to live for us, and to live for ever in heaven for us. O sirs, there was never such a fire of love in any breast ! O ! who can freeze and be cold over such a fire ! Ah ! our carnality, that spends our thoughts so much upon other things, who have such a Saviour to take them up.

Here is not only his flesh to eat, but his blood to drink ; " After supper he took the cup," &c. O what love was this, to take the cup of trembling and wrath, that he might give you the cup of mercy and blessing ! O his loving work flowed from his loving heart : and his loving heart vented itself also in loving words ! What a worder is it, that ever his love should have made him call the like of you his love, and his fair one ; you, a spotted leopard, a black Ethiopian, yet his love, his fair one, his beautiful and comely

bride; when he makes you comely, through his comeliness, and beautiful through his beauty put upon you, and looks to you, not through the glass of your vile and sinful nature, but the glass of his own grace and love! And since he, by a miracle of grace and condescension, calls you his love, his fair one, his beautiful bride; O tell me, what should you call him? What names does he deserve at your hand? O sirs, may you not call him your fair, fair, fair, infinitely fair Head and Husband? Ought you not to call him what he calls himself, by virtue of the marriage relation between him and you, which you are now getting the seal of, Isa. liv. 5. "Thy Maker is thy Husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called!" Here is a wonder in every word, as that text may be read: and particularly five wonders, for your faith to feed with wonder upon. 1. Thy Maker is thy Husband; there is one wonder. 2. The Lord of hosts is thy Husband; there is another wonder. 3. Thy Redeemer is thy Husband; there is a third wonder. 4. The holy One of Israel is thy Husband; there is a fourth wonder. 5. The God of the whole earth is Thy Husband; there is a fifth wonder. O believer! why does he claim his marriage-relation to you, by so many names, may you say? I answer, It is partly to prevent your fear and jealousy; partly to show what great things you have to expect from him, that is clothed with all glorious perfections: and partly to magnify his condescension in coming under this relation to mortal worms. But, if you ask again, Wherein lies the wonder? Why,

1. "Thy Maker is thy Husband!" Where is the wonder here? Why, he that brought thee out of nothing, and breathed into thee the breath of life, and made thee a living soul, capable to enjoy himself? O astonishing! He that made has become thy Husband! He that advanced thee from nothing to a rational being, and after thou hadst made thyself worse than nothing by thy sin, he made thee over again a new creature, and matched with thee! It is grace for a servant to match with her master; but for a creature to match with his Maker, O! "What is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him? or the Son of man, that shouldst visit him?"

2. "The Lord of hosts is thy Husband!" He that is Lord of all the hosts of angels, another sort of beings than man; he that



is Lord of all power, and commands so as the winds and seas obey him : he that can raise children to himself elsewhere, though he had destroyed all the posterity of fallen men ; yet he has matched with thee ! though he is a God of infinite power, to whom are subject all the hosts of men and devils ! O the wonder !

3. "Thy Maker is thy Husband !" Who is that ? Even he that has all grace to bestow, and has thought good to bestow it on the like of you and me, by whom he can never be the better ; he that has all merit, and has bought you with his blood, and bought your beautiful robes, wherein he sees you to be his love, and his fair one, and loved you when lying in your blood.

4. "The holy One of Israel is thy Husband." What is that ? O ! it is even he that cannot look upon sin, but is of purer eyes than to behold it ; and he that cannot dwell with sinners, but of whom it is said, "Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee," Psalm v. 4. God and Belial cannot dwell together ; yet he dwells with men and sanctifies them for himself.

5. "The God of the whole earth is thy Husband." He that has all things to give, and puts down one, and puts up another ; he that has all things at his command and nod, and that needs none of our services or sacrifices ; to whom all nations are but as the drop of a bucket, and as the small dust in the balance ; who sits upon the circle of the earth, and all the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers before him ; and of whom it is said, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." This God of the whole earth, is thy Husband. O wonder of wonders !

And what art thou, a monster of sin and guilt, that he should call thee his love, and his fair one, and himself thy Husband ? Behold ! the Maker of all things is pleased to become a Husband to them that are nothing, and have nothing, and can do nothing, and are worse than nothing : the Lord of hosts is pleased to become a Husband to a poor insect : the glorious Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, a Husband to a vile, polluted, and unholy creature ; the God of the whole earth, a Husband to a grain of animated dust, that was an heir of hell, but now matched with the Heir of all things. Surely God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways ; but, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts higher than our thoughts. Does he commend thee as his love and his fair one ? What commendation wilt thou give him ? O had

you all the tongues of men and angels you would not be able to speak out his praise! O wonder! wonder! that ever he invited thee to rise and come away with him. Is it not now highly incumbent on you to abide with him, and keep him company? Whoever turns aside to any crooked way, he will take it ill if you do so. What! "Will ye also go away?" says Christ, when many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him, John vi. 66. Some of his disciples in our day have gone back and turned aside to many strange ways; some to terrible and horrible ways; and you, believers, are in danger of turning aside to your old lusts and lovers; but, O believer, that art so highly honoured, and so well matched, why should you be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of his companions? O tell your Husband this that he may keep his everlasting arms about you, and keep you back from presumptuous sins: O tell him never to suffer you to turn aside out of his company, Lord, why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

Now, when you rise and go away from this table, see that you abide close with him in a way of duty and dependence on him, till he call you to rise and come away to the upper table, that shall never be drawn. When I spake to this text some time ago, as it is laid down, verse 10th, some that were then hearers found it a sweet summons given them to rise and come away to heaven. I heard of two Christians in this congregation, going into eternity about that time, who got these words applied to them at their dying moments, as their last invitation, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." And who knows, believer, but this may be the next explication and application of the text to you? For you must away out of this world as well as others: and happy these that shall drink no more of the fruit of the vine till they drink it new in their Father's kingdom; and that shall go away to be for ever with the Lord, at the upper table of full and everlasting communion, after this low communion table is drawn. Therefore, O abide close with him by faith, and love, and praise, till he repeat this invitation again to you in another manner, saying, Now, I will not want your company any longer, nor shall you want mine any more; for now the time of your departure is at hand, and you shall have finished your course in this world: "I went to prepare a place for you;" and I said, I would come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there you may be also, John xiv. 3. And now I will not let you tarry

any longer in this weary land, this vain and wicked world ; “ Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon ; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, and from the lions’ dens, and from the mountains of the leopards.” Come away from this noxious place of sins and snares.

We read of a trumpet, Rev. iv. 1, that said, “ Come up hither ; when behold a door was opened in heaven. Let this text be like a trumpet to you, believer, wherein you may hear the voice of Christ saying to you, “ Come up hither ;” and in this sense take his sweet call and invitation along with you to your death-bed, that the king of terrors may be no terror to you, but rather a trumpet of triumph, when the King of glory shall be saying, in effect, “ Come up hither” to me ; “ Rise my love, my fair one, and come away.”

## SERMON CLIII.

### FAITH IN CHRIST THE SUREST WAY OF RELIEF IN THE SADDEST CASE.<sup>1</sup>

“ Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight ; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.”—JONAH ii. 4.

THE Spirit of God, in the words of inspiration, acquaints us that many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all. Many are their troubles, though believers : and hence the exercises of the children of God in this world are sometimes very sad, and at other times very sweet. It is a very sad exercise that the prophet is employed in, in the first clause of this verse, “ I said, I am cast out of thy sight :” and it is a very sweet exercise, and exceeding reviving, that he is employed in the next clause of the verse ; “ yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.”

There is shortly in these words. 1. The sad case that Jonah was in ; “ I said, I am cast out of thy sight.” 2. The cure of that case ; “ yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.”

1. There is the sad case he was in ; “ I said, I am cast out of thy sight.” No wonder he feared he was cast quite away, when he

(1) This subject was handled in two discourses, on a Sacramental occasion at Dalkeith, in the year 1751.



was now cast into the belly of the whale, and ready to be quite devoured. Jonah had proved disobedient to his God; he refused the message that God had given him to go unto Nineveh, and proclaim, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Jonah possibly thought this very unpleasant work; and perhaps he thought that the people of God, Israel themselves, will not be reclaimed by my preaching: why should I go to these that are strangers unto God? According to some he might have thought this; a proud thought that he would be disappointed in his design; Nineveh would destroy him for coming with such a disagreeable message; or, if it was successful, God would repent, and not execute judgment: and then he would be reckoned a false prophet: Whereupon he wilfully disobeyed the heavenly message. But God pursued him in the way of fatherly wrath and indignation until he is brought into these sad circumstances here; and he was never awakened until he is thrown into the sea, and brought into the belly of the whale, which he calls the belly of hell. Jonah was fast asleep in the midst of the sea, while he lay by the side of the ship; and he was not awakened with the storm. Sirs, when people are asleep in the time of a storm, or wrathful times, it is a sad sign that the storm comes for their sake, and that they are the Jonahs that brought on the storm. However, God had a mind that Jonah should be awakened; and therefore he never fell a crying unto God until he was in the belly of the whale, and there he had his fears, "I said, I am cast out of thy sight," &c. Jonah knew he was in the presence of God, as God is essentially everywhere; for now God was pursuing him. Here notice, that Jonah was in a very sad case and condition, for he apprehended God had quite cast him away; "I said, I am cast out of thy sight." As if he had said, I have now no ground to expect God's gracious presence; there seems to be now no mercy for me. Thus it continued with him until faith gets in its word, and so here is relief, "Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple." Here is,

2. The cure of this sad and pitiful case; faith's beholding God's holy temple. Jonah knew what it was to look to a God in Christ; God's holy temple. The temple typified Christ, wherein was the ark of the covenant; there was the propitiatory sacrifices, that were typical of the only propitiatory sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jonah looked to God in his adversity, and his relief came in by this act of faith.

In these two cases there are these two things observable,

1. "That the true children of God may be brought under great fears and apprehensions that they are cast out of God's sight: or, that gracious souls may sometimes be brought under prevailing fears that they are quite cast off, and that there is no mercy for them," "I said, I am cast out of thy sight."

2. "That the surest way of relief from the saddest case the people of God can be in, is faith in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ; or, faith's looking anew unto God's holy temple;" "Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple."

It is the first of these observations we propose to open up at the time, viz.,

That a truly gracious soul may sometimes be brought under desponding fears lest they be cast out of God's sight.

And the method we would lay down for handling it, through divine aid, shall be the following:—

- I. Explain a little the term, "I am cast out of thy sight."
- II. Offer a few remarks concerning the fears that the Lord's people may have lest they be cast away.
- III. Lay down some of the grounds of these fears.
- IV. Deduce some inferences for the application.

I. We propose to explain a little the term, "I am cast out of thy sight." This we shall essay in the three following particulars:—

1. "I said, I am cast out of thy sight;" it is, as if Jonah had said, Now I am cast off from being a prophet unto God any more; the Lord will not employ me henceforth. I am cast off from this office, and there is no more use for me in God's vineyard.

2. "I said, I am cast out of thy sight;" that is, I have no more hope that I shall see the glory of God in the sanctuary: I have seen it formerly, but I shall see it no more. I do not expect that God will ever give me a blink of his countenance again.

3. I said, through unbelief, when I am brought under sad circumstances, that now there is no ground for hope; I see nothing but ground for despair. I apprehend there is no mercy for me with God. O sirs, it is a melancholy case with the soul, when the hope of God's pity is gone, and when it says, I am cast away; God will never give me a look of his gracious face again.

II. We are to offer these three or four remarks concerning the fears the Lord's children may have.

1. Remark, That it is certain that these that are in a state of union to Christ, they shall never be totally or finally lost. There is something that secures them: Christ will not cast them quite away. The unchangeableness of the love of Christ secures them; "Whom he loves, he loves unto the end." The immutability of his grace and covenant says they shall never be quite cast away. The promise of God says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. iii. 5. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but the covenant of my peace shall not be removed, saith the Lord," Isaiah liv. 10.

2. Another remark is this, That though the Lord will never altogether cast off his people; yet they may really be deserted for a time; and they may be so far cast out of his sight as that they may really apprehend that they are quite cast away, that they are in a mistake, Psalm xxxi. 22, "I said, in my haste, I am cast off." He said it, but it was through unbelief, and in his haste, and hence he immediately corrects himself, "Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication." But although a child of grace may be in a mistake, and think they are cast off when they are only deserted for a season; yet they are in a mistake in saying they are cast off altogether, Isaiah liv. 17, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee." I say, this shews there may be real desertion: and we find this was the case with the glorious head of the body; he cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And so his people may be really deserted, and cast, as it were, out of his sight.

3. I remark, That there are degrees of God's deserting his people; he may be at a distance, and sometimes standing, as it were, behind our wall, not far off; and sometimes his comfortable presence may be farther away. And, indeed, when they depart far from God, it is a sad evidence that the Lord is far away from them. There are many degrees of desertion; and it is hard to tell how far God may desert a child. This desertion is sometimes called his hiding his face. Sometimes his shutting them out of his presence; and shutting out their prayers, as in Lam. iii. 44.

4. I remark, concerning the Lord's children, that there is nothing more afflicting to them than the Lord's deserting them: That is most heavy and afflicting unto them that are the true children of God. And hence their cry is, "How long, O Lord, wilt thou



hide thyself?" and, "Will the Lord cast off for ever?" And this leads me to the next head of method.

III. The third thing we proposed, which was to notice some of the grounds whence these fears proceed, that God's children may have. And they may arise from such things as took place in Jonah's case.

1. Jonah was troubled with heavy dispensations of providence; So, when the Lord's people find that they are surrounded with awful providences, this augments their fears, and they cry out, "I am cast out of thy sight."

2. Jonah was brought into the greatest danger of death that a man could be brought into. Jonah could not now expect to be saved, but by a miracle; and he could not expect that God was to work a miracle for him, that had rebelled against his command. The same is often the case of the people of God.

3. Jonah could see no way how he could be delivered from destruction: So the fears of the Lord's people, they many times flow from this, that they are under heavy circumstances, and they see no way of escape; they see no way how the promise of God can be accomplished.

4. Jonah's case was this, the Comforter was gone. The comfortable hopes of heaven was withdrawn from him. So this often fills the Lord's people with fears, lest they be cast away. "The comforter that should relieve their souls is far removed from them."

5. The case with Jonah was this, the wrath of God was pursuing him; and this is another reason why a child of God may fear, lest he be cast away. He sees one wave upon the back of another.

6. Another thing that was the cause of Jonah's fears was this, his conscience is now awakened, and his sin is staring him in the face. I am, might he say, in the greatest danger; but it is my sin that has brought me into this case. My sin hath brought me to the gates of death. So it is this that makes the children of God apprehend that they are cast away. A consciousness of guilt flies in their faces; and therefore God is pursuing them, and they have raised the storm. These are some of the grounds why the Lord's people do fear they are cast away.

IV. The fourth general head was the application; from what I have said we may infer.

1. How thankful any of the Lord's people ought to be, if they are delivered from such desperate thoughts, as to conclude they are

cast away. It is a melancholy case when a child of God fears he shall be cast away. "God gathers the outcasts of Israel; but unbelief may make them say with Jonah, I am cast out of thy sight." Yet there is still ground of hope, when they go to God himself.

2. Hence we may infer what the Lord's people ought to be, lest they provoke God to cast them out of his sight for a time; lest they provoke him to give them up to themselves.

3. We may see, that though doubts and fears be inconsistent with faith, yet they may be where true faith is. Hence Jonah, who was a prophet and a believer, he is brought to these doubts, I said, I am cast out of thy sight.

4. Hence we may see that these doubts and fears will prevail with God's children until faith get in its word. Jonah thought he was cast out until he got a view of God in Christ.

Secondly, This doctrine may be improved in a way of trial, for all these that belong to our Lord Jesus Christ, and apprehend themselves to be under desertion. Let them examine themselves whether or not they be under real desertion. How shall I know that the desertion I am under is real desertion? I shall acquaint you with two things that were in Jonah's case.

1. It was his continued rebellion, and giving way to sin and corruption, that proved that he was under real desertion: So, when the children of God are giving way to sin, way to rebellion, and yet going on frowardly in the way of their own heart, be sure it is a sign of real desertion.

2. It is a sign of real desertion, when people can sleep easily under a guilty conscience, as Jonah did. The storm awakened the heathen mariners, but it could not awaken Jonah. When persons are sleeping under guilt, it is a sad sign they are under real desertion. When the Lord's people have his presence with them, they are awake, and are ready to say with the church, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please." But at other times we find the church so fast asleep, that there was no rousing of her. When her Lord knocks at her door, she was unwilling to be awakened, and unwilling to be raised; "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" When a child of God enjoys the presence of God, the least guilt upon the conscience makes him have an errand to the throne; but when he can sleep easily, with con-

tracted guilt upon the conscience, that is a sign of real desertion

On the other hand, I would have you to notice, if there be any thing hopeful in your case. I will tell you of two things that were hopeful in Jonah's case.

1. One thing was hopeful about him, he had honourable thoughts of God in the midst of his desertion: he spake like the Psalmist, Thou art righteous in casting me into this hell of misery: "Righteous art thou, O Lord. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? But thou art holy." Thou hast forsaken me, yet thou art holy. So Jonah here justifies God in casting him into this tribulation. It is therefore some hopeful thing, when persons entertain honourable thoughts of God, and justify God in their trouble.

2. It is a hopeful thing in Jonah's case, that he had some desires after a departed God, as appears in the clause following. "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." That soul is not really deserted of God, that has longing desires after a deserting God.

Thirdly, I come now to an use of exhortation. I might offer a word of exhortation to these that are in a deserted case, the case of these that are crying, "I am cast out of thy sight." I would exhort such to beware of concluding, that they are quite cast out: there is hope in Israel concerning thy case; although thou art in the belly of the whale, yet the door of hope is opened, while Christ Jesus is exhibited as the gift of God unto you, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and so to be an antidote against all misery. And it would be an evidence of your sharing of these blessings, if ye were brought off your self-wisdom to Christ, being made wisdom to you; brought off your self-righteousness to Christ, being made, of God, unto you righteousness; brought off your self-holiness, self-goodness, and all conceit of your self-qualifications, unto a view of the absolute need of Christ for sanctification; and if you were brought from a sense of your misery to Christ for complete redemption. O then, beware of saying, that the door of hope is shut against you, such conclusions Satan fosters them, that he may lead you away from Christ. O, say you, I find dreadful wrath and anger in God's dispensations. It may be so, but did not Jonah find the same; And yet says he, "I will look again toward thy holy temple." But, say you, I am plunged in the depths of misery; and it is my sin that hath brought me into these depths.



Well, be it so ; but was not this the case with Jonah ? His rebellion against God brought him into these terrible depths : and yet says he, " I will look again toward thy holy temple."

What I have been saying concerning believers, that have been brought into such great depths, is not for you that are strangers to such exercises, or know not how to exercise faith. You see faith expressed by looking in this and many other places of scripture ; " Look unto me, and be saved." This is the call of God unto believers, to look again and again towards God's holy temple. Ye that never yet looked to Christ, his call is, " Look to me and be saved." He says, I am the great God, cast yourself out of the old ships, in which ye hope to be saved, and come to the Rock of ages ; and in order to your coming to him, I would have you believe the law. I do not expect that you will believe the gospel until ye believe the law : that is, believe your undone case without him ; believe the absolute need of coming out from under the old covenant, and of casting yourselves out of the old ships.—People that are ready to be shipwrecked, they will be very loth to cast themselves upon the waters, unless the mariner be skilful, and tell them, there is no hope, if they do not cast themselves upon the waters and swim to shore.

Well, this is the case with lost sinners, they are very loth to cast themselves out of the old ships ; they trust to their own doings, they think, if they do so and so, God will be favourable unto them ; and they will not cast themselves out of the old ships, unless they be informed by that faithful mariner, the Spirit of God, that they will perish in the depths of divine wrath, unless they swim to the Rock. O, but say you, I cannot swim to the Rock. But, O sirs, cast yourselves out of the old ships, and essay looking to him : " Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else." This was Jonah's case here ; " Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple."

## SERMON CLIV.

“Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.”—JONAH ii. 4.

[The second Sermon on this Text.]

THAT salvation is of grace, is a notable argument, and vast encouragement unto the faith which is in this text, namely, To look again and again toward God’s holy temple: This is the exercise of faith that Jonah was now brought unto. Jonah had been sleeping when he was in the ship: but we have him now awakened, praying and calling upon God, when he is in the belly of the whale. In the greatest danger, the Lord does good unto his own by afflictions, and often brings on storms to awaken them. Convictions arise in the conscience, and prayer is poured out, as in Isaiah xxvi. 16, “Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening hand was upon them.” Thus we find Jonah here exercised.

I entered upon these words yesterday: and, after some introduction, found in this text, 1. The case that Jonah was in; “I said, I am cast out of thy sight.” 2. The cure, and that is faith; “Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple.” From the first clause of the verse I observed, “That gracious souls may be sometimes under “desponding fears lest they be cast off.” “I said, I am cast out of thy sight.” This proposition I first explained; and then offered some remarks anent the fears they may have; I next gave some grounds of these fears; and, lastly, deduced some inferences for the application of what was offered on the subject.

I now go on to the second doctrine laid down from the second clause of the verse; “Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple.” Why is it thus expressed, and in what respect it is called a looking unto God, I have already explained.

DOCT. “That the surest way of relief, from the saddest case, the people of God can be in, is faith in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ; or, faith’s looking anew unto God’s holy temple.”

The method proposed, through divine assistance, for handling the subject, is the following :—

- I. To offer a few remarks for clearing of the doctrine.
- II. I propose to inquire into the import of that resolution of Jonah's in the text.
- III. I would take notice of some of the special discouragements that faith has to surmount and grapple with, when it looks towards God's holy temple.
- IV. I would next offer some reasons why this is the best way of relief, from the greatest difficulties, the children of God can be in.
- V. I would, lastly, make application of the whole.

I. We return to the first thing proposed in the general method, which was to offer a few remarks for clearing the doctrine.

1. I remark, That there is a mighty struggle in the best of God's children between their faith and unbelief; Here we see a struggle in the text. There are two sentences in one verse: there is the power of unbelief; "I said, I am cast out of thy sight." The other is the sentence wherein the victory of faith is expressed; "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." So that the believer in Christ is a mysterious kind of creature: he has, as it were, two nations struggling within him.

2. I remark, that corruption and unbelief frequently have the ascendent before faith and before grace. Here we see it in the text; unbelief saying, "I am cast out of thy sight." The power of unbelief may be so great that faith may be quite out of sight, as it certainly is, when the soul is saying, "I am cast out of God's sight."

3. Remark, however low the actings of faith may be for a time, yet faith will get up its head in triumph; for the author of faith is the finisher of it, and he is the supporter of it. Our blessed Lord has prayed for his people that their faith fail not. He has engaged to keep them by his mighty power.

4. I remark, that the first thing that revives the soul, and the first grace that is revived in the soul is that of faith; when once faith acts in a way of looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, then all the other graces come to be revived also; for faith influences love, and works by love and excites repentance; "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn." Faith influences all the



other graces : and it is the first thing that is revived in the soul after it has been sore kept under by the powers of hell.

5. I remark, when faith comes to be revived, after a great decay, then the spirit of prayer comes along with faith. This is evident, if ye consider how the words are spoken unto God in a way of prayer : “ Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple.”

11. The second thing proposed, was to inquire into the import of the resolution, “ Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple.” We find faith comes under various names in scripture, according to the many names that its object is represented by. If Christ is held out as matchless ; then faith is called a beholding, “ Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon.” If he is exhibited as a gift, then faith is called a receiving this gift, “ As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” If Christ is represented as meat and drink ; then faith comes under the name of eating and drinking : eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of God. If Christ is represented as a rock, or foundation, then faith is called a resting on this foundation. If Christ be represented by a city of refuge, then faith is a flying unto him as a refuge. If he is represented as a glorious object, then faith is called a looking to him, “ Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else.”

In the import of this resolution there are these four things we shall take notice of. 1. The act of faith, and what may be imported in this looking. 2. There is the resolution of this act, “ I will look.” 3. There is the object of this act, “ Thy holy temple.” 4. There is the circumstances of this resolution. It imports a looking to him with a *yet*, “ YET will I look again toward thy holy temple.”

1st, There is the act of faith. Faith is called a looking ; and faith, being thus expressed, may import these following things :—

1. This act of faith imports the knowledge of Christ, or a sight of him ; it is a seeing of the Son ; it is a knowledge of him as an immutable ground of confidence unto his people. Jonah had the knowledge of God ; and knew a God in Christ, when he viewed him as the temple of God.

2. It imports the soul’s despairing of help from any other airt, “ In vain is salvation expected from the hills, or the multitude of mountains.” The soul, in believing, sees all other refuges fail him ; and so his eyes come only to be set on Christ.

3. This act of faith, here called a looking unto the Lord Jesus

Christ, it has in it a view of his sufficiency. This is in faith, an apprehending of the ability of the Lord Jesus to save, as well as his authority, that he cometh in his Father's name, importing his authority to save; and faith looks upon him as well qualified to save to the uttermost.

4. In this act of faith, this looking unto Jesus, there is not only a view of his sufficiency, but there is a hope of being helped by him. Where there is no hope, there is no looking to the Lord Jesus Christ; but this look of faith saith that the door is cast open; and by this looking we are to understand the soul's rolling itself upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and taking rest in him, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is the soul's flight unto Christ, as a city of refuge." And,

5. This looking to Christ imports the soul's waiting upon him in the midst of all difficulties! "I will wait on the Lord, who hideth his face from the house of Jacob."

2dly, There is the resolution of this act, "I will look AGAIN toward thy holy temple." This resolution imports the four following things:—

1. It imports, that Jonah had looked formerly to God's holy temple. He had looked before to Jesus Christ, when in a distressed situation, and had found benefit and advantage in doing so; and therefore resolves to look again to him, "They looked unto him, and were lightened," Psalm xxxiv. 5.

2. It imports, that this is the best way, the only way, "I will look again toward God's holy temple." The child of God, when in perplexity, can find relief and comfort from no other quarter, but by looking to a God in Christ. This is the course the Spirit of God directs to, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," Isaiah xlv. 22.

3. It imports, that this way is as safe a way as ever it was, "I will look again." As if Jonah had said, though I have offended God, by disobeying the heavenly message; yet I know that he is pacified and reconciled in Christ; and therefore, "I will look again toward his holy temple," as the only safe way for me to get his anger turned away.

4. It imports, that he is persuaded that he was never right since he looked any other airt; and since he ran away from God, by disobedience to his call, "I will look again." Yea, "I will go, and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now."

3dly, The third thing was the object of the act, "I will look toward thy HOLY TEMPLE." The temple was a type of Christ. There was the sanctuary ; there was the altar ; there was the sacrifices offered ; these were so many symbols of the presence of God, all typical of our Lord Jesus Christ. So that "I will look again," imports these six things.

1. That wherever God goes, there faith goes ; where the fulness of God goes, there faith will go. God had gone out of the first Adam, and all his natural seed ; God is in the second Adam, and faith must follow God. Faith pursues after the fulness of God wherever that dwells ; and it is in Christ that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells.

2. It imports, that faith's acting upon God is not upon God immediately, but in and by the intervention of means ; and, particularly, by the great mean, Jesus Christ. It is God in Christ that faith looks unto. It cannot have access to an absolute God ; it dare not face an absolute God ; but we may come to God by Jesus Christ, and look to God in his holy temple.

3. Faith, considered as looking towards God's holy temple, imports, that faith has its eye upon the holiness and purity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and upon this ground expects admittance into the presence of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ was holy, harmless, and undefiled. He was heard in that he feared : He was heard for his purity, as it may be read. The holiness of God is in him ; and faith looks to the holiness of Christ, and expects to be heard through his purity and holiness. "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple."

4. Faith, as exercised in looking to God's holy temple, it imports, that in the act of believing, it consults the honour of God's holiness, "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple : There does beauty shine : " there does the holiness of God shine ; there does all the attributes of God shine ; and faith expects salvation from God, through Jesus Christ ; "I will look again toward God's holy temple."

5. Faith, in looking to God's holy temple, it views Christ as the consecrated way to God ; "I will look again toward thy holy temple." It is God's way ; God's consecrated way. I hope to win near to God through this way ; it is the way consecrated through the vail of the Redeemer's flesh. "I will look again toward thy holy temple."



6. This act of faith, as it is a looking to God's holy temple, imports, The bold approach of faith unto God, through Jesus Christ. "We have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus." However guilty and filthy of ourselves, here is a foundation of boldness. This boldness of faith is expressed in God's face, in the words of the text, "Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple." Thus I have given you some view of the import of faith as it is a looking; a looking again; and a looking unto God's holy temple.

4thly, The fourth thing is the circumstances how faith looks towards God's holy temple; and that is with a *notwithstanding* or a *yet*. Notwithstanding all that is come and gone; notwithstanding all difficulties I have undergone; notwithstanding I concluded I was a cast away; yet faith surmounts all difficulties. "Yet will I look toward God's holy temple."

III. The third thing in the general method was, to notice what are the discouragements that faith has to grapple with, as imported in the *yet* of the text. Faith is a grace that has to surmount many difficulties; yea, all difficulties. Now, if it be enquired, what are these difficulties? I confine myself to the context. And here I shall observe three grand difficulties that were in Jonah's way of believing, and giving this look to God's holy temple. And many difficulties there are in the way of many of the Lord's people, if not in them all. They are these: 1. Egregious and great guilt may be in the way: 2. Strong and powerful corruptions: 3. Angry providences, and dreadful dispensations, may be in the way.

1st, There may be great guilt in the way of believing that yet faith must surmount in looking towards God's holy temple. This is exemplified in Jonah's case here. Was there not great guilt lying upon his conscience?

1. There was the plain command of God to go and preach unto Nineveh, and tell them, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." But he obstinately rebelled against the command of God.

2. His guilt behoved to be great, in regard God hereby was to prevent the ruin of Nineveh; yet he would not go to deliver God's message to them.

3. The excuses that Jonah made, or the inducements that hindered him from executing this commission, were most unworthy of a prophet of God. He was displeased that God should show mercy unto the Ninevites.

4. His sin and guilt was greatly aggravated from what mercy God had shewn unto him. He had given him grace; he had dignified him to be a prophet; he had given many things that aggravated his guilt exceedingly. And now, what shall become of the man? Why, faith surmounts these; "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." How does faith get this great guilt surmounted? Why, it looks to the mercy of God; it sees God to be the Lord God, pardoning iniquity, merciful and gracious, in the temple? It sees pardon and remission of sins in this temple; it sees all the promises, yea, and amen in Christ Jesus: it takes up the promise, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquities, and I will be merciful to thy unrighteousness." Faith getting a view of God's temple, or of the Christ of God, sees the bowels of mercy that are with God: and sees God a promising God, and so wins off this difficulty of grievous guilt that lies upon the conscience.

2dly, Another difficulty is, strong corruption. This was the case with Jonah; he not only lay under great guilt, but his corruption was strong; his enmity against the will of God was strong. 1. Observe, Jonah sinned against a great deal of light: his corruption overcame his conversion. 2. Jonah covered the light from them in this case. 3. Jonah by reason of the power of corruption was hardened. He could not pray, and call upon his God; no, his heart was alienated from the duty of prayer, until he was thrown into the belly of the whale. 4. By reason of these things he was brought to the brink of ruin.

Well, when there is such powerful corruption, what can the soul do? Can Jonah expect that God will work a miracle for him that was rebelling against God? With what face can he look towards God, when God was pursuing him with wrath and indignation? But faith gets up its head and surmounts these difficulties. How? by looking to God's holy temple: "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." Why, what is to be seen there suitable to the power of corruption? Why faith sees Christ, the power of God, is not only able to take away the guilt of sin, but also able to take away the power of sin. It sees Christ to be the power of God: "I will look to thy holy temple." In this temple faith sees the promise of God, not only with reference to the pardon of sin, but with reference also to the taking away of the power of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

3dly, There is another great difficulty in the way of believing,

which needs a looking with a *notwithstanding* or a "Yet will I look again;" and that is, angry providences, dreadful dispensations. Oh! was not this the case with Jonah? Yes, truly. He was under terrible dispensations of providences: for, he was now quite deprived of the comfortable presence of God: The comforter that should relieve his soul, was far from him; and at the same time, God was pursuing him for his disobedience. Every one that reads the history here may see what terrible dispensations he was brought under. God, for his disobedience, pursues him and all that were about him. I remember that the mariners that were with Jonah, they are said to belong to Nineveh; and after they went home, remembered what had befallen them; how God had cast Jonah into the sea; and how he was swallowed up of the whale; and how God had wrought a miracle for him; and this made his preaching take the more effect upon them. However, Jonah was under very strange and fearful-like providences; and, among other things, Jonah might reckon that his looking to God's holy temple was not ingenuous work; it was out of necessity and fear, and not out of choice, when he was brought to this sad pass. But we have his faith conquering all these difficulties; "I said, yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." And, in this providence, we may notice how faith gets the victory by these and the like means.

1. Though the soul, in straits, be driven unto Christ, under its difficulties; yet the soul that makes Christ its last shift, will be welcome to our Lord Jesus Christ; and faith comes to act more kindly afterwards.

2. Faith is a grace that can look to the mercy of God amidst all the angry dispensations of God; it can see mercy in the midst of wrath. Again,

3. Faith looks to the angry providences of God, and his dreadful dispensations that the soul is trysted with; yea, it looks to them in the glass of the promise; and particularly that promise that was cited in the former sermon, Isa. lvii. 17. "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Here was a very trying providence; here was wrath kindled; and here was wrath pursuing the soul; and here were heavy providences, as it were, rousing corruption, and making the person fight more against God; "He went on frowardly;" and yet, in this very case, faith looks to sovereign mercy; "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." Again,



4. Faith, in the midst of terrible times, wherein God is shewing himself angry : faith, I say, overcomes in looking to God's holy temple ; and looking over all angry dispensations in the way. The woman of Canaan, Matt. xv. she cometh to Christ, saying, "O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me." Well, she got one repulse on the back of another. The first was, "He answered her not a word ;" he, as it were, disdained to regard her. And when his disciples came to intercede for her, a second discouragement is cast quite in her way ; "I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Well, the woman comes again the third time, and worshipped him, saying, "Lord, help me." But here is another repulse ; "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." Well, this was enough to fill her with despair ; but faith was at hand, and draws arguments from that which might have been matter of discouragement ; "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table." On this our blessed Lord says, "O woman, great is thy faith." So it is with faith looking to Christ, notwithstanding all the difficulties that are in the way, and amidst angry dispensations of divine providence.

IV. The fourth general head in the method was, to give some reasons, why faith is the surest way of relief, from the saddest cases that the children of God can be in. I shall briefly assign these four reasons following :—

1. Because it is the way that God has commanded. God hath ordered us, in the greatest trouble, to trust in him ; "Trust in the Lord forever ; for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength." God hath commanded us to take the way of looking to his holy temple.

2. Another reason is, because the promise is annexed to this way ; "He that believeth shall be saved."

3. This is the way that all the saints in all their difficulties have taken ; "By this way the elders obtained a good report." And ye see how they wrought miracles by faith, Heb. xi.

4. This is the way wherein his people have won nigh unto him : and they found this to be the safe way. It is said, "They looked to him, and were lightened ; this poor man cried, and the Lord helped him." And I trusted in him, and I am helped. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living."

V. We now proceed to the application of the subject. And we may apply it an use of information, trial, and exhortation.

1st, We may try it in an use of information. And,

1. Hence we may see, why faith is the eye-sore of hell. Why, Satan fights against neither small nor great, but against this grace of faith. Why, it is by faith that we bruise Satan's head; it is by faith that we have power with God, and prevail.

2. Hence see what is the ground of all the discouragements which the people of God meet with. Why, it is their unbelief; they are not employed in looking unto God's holy temple.

3. Hence see what is the duty of backsliding believers, and backsliding churches and professors, that have turned away their eyes from looking to God's holy temple; why, their duty is to return to the Lord, from whom they have fallen by their iniquities. This is the duty of the generation; and of backsliding Scotland, to return to the Lord. It is the duty of those that have turned aside unto crooked ways, to return to the Lord. It is the duty of those that have gone aside out of God's way, and deserted their holy profession, to return to the Lord. In so far as any desert their holy profession, wherein they were baptized, in so far have they turned away their eyes from God's holy temple. It is the duty of the backsliding generation to return; and, indeed, those who have been professed witnesses for God, and his cause, they have more work upon their hand than they had. They have not only the corruptions of the Judicatories to witness against, which witnessing was the original design of the Associate Court, while we maintain the doctrine, discipline, worship, and government of the Church of Scotland; but we have more ado; that is, to witness against the extravagancies of new Separatists. We need not speak, as if we were designed to expose them: No; by their violent and furious methods they have exposed themselves to the rational world: like these, in 2 Tim. iii. 3, of whom he says, "They shall proceed no farther, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men." However, we may apprehend dreadful judgments coming on the generation, especially because of growing defection. O sirs, cry that the Lord may recover such as have been ensnared by the temptations of the times, that they may return unto the good old way, and look again towards God's holy temple.

4. Hence see what a blessed thing it is to have one look of Christ. O what a good thing is that, when such a person is brought

into straits ! his relief is at hand, just to look again, and there find relief. O sirs, they have great advantage who have got a sight of God in his temple, and have seen his glory in his sanctuary ; whatever changes may befall them in the world, yet, O what advantage has the believer to think upon this God of Bethel, that he is what he was ? “ I am the God of Bethel.” So the believer in Christ, let him be brought to never such a strait, if once he has looked to Christ, he hath but just again to look to Christ. But,

Use 2. For trial. Try, O sirs, if ever you have looked to Christ, who is the holy temple. Got you never a sight of God’s holy temple ? that is, a sight of God in Christ. How shall I know this ? Why, try it by these following things :—

1. If you have been made to look to God’s holy temple, then some time or other you have been cast into the sea of trouble. Sirs, people never get the pledge that God vouchsafes kindness unto them, until they be ready to sink in the ocean of divine wrath.

2. Try if your eyes have been opened to see the holiness of God in his temple, in Christ Jesus ; and to see the way of salvation through Christ, to be such as brings honour to God’s holiness, and glory unto all the attributes and perfections of God. This is a sight that faith gets, when it looks to God’s holy temple.

3. Try what effect this has had upon you. If ever you looked to God’s holy temple, did ye not find it a heart-melting look ? and did ye not find it a heart-conforming look ? By beholding his glory ye have been changed into his image. Did ye not find it a heart-humbling look ? And did ye not find it a heart-weaning look : weaning you from the world, and making you count all things but loss and dung for Christ ? And did you not find it a sin-killing look, making you to say, “ What have I to do any more with idols ? ” Did it make Christ precious unto you ? “ To them that believe he is precious.” Enquire what virtue is in the look ye got of Christ ; it will make you look with disdain upon all other things.

4. Try if ye have looked to God’s holy temple ; then certainly you will follow your look, and follow on to know the Lord. Sirs, they that have once looked to Christ, they will follow their look ; it will not be one look that will satisfy them ; they will look again and again. They will look to him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. So, I say, if you have looked to Christ, ye will follow your look ; your life will be a believing life ;



"The life they live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God." It is true, unbelief many times gets the ascendent over them; but when unbelief prevails, that is not the believer's life, it is rather his death and disease; His life is a life of faith on the Son of God.

5. Try by this, if you have looked to him, it will be, and has been, with a *notwithstanding*, or a *yet*, as in the text: "I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." And though ye have had difficulties in your way, and yet you have got them mastered; ye have had mountains in the way, and yet ye have won over them; ye have been brought to believe on the Son of God, notwithstanding of the great guilt you have been lying under, and notwithstanding strong corruption. "Yet will I look;" and notwithstanding angry providences, and heavy trials, yet ye have been made to look again towards God's holy temple. And though you are brought to think that your case is the most dreadful case, the most desperate case, the most terrible case that ever a soul was brought into, yet thou hast said, "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple."

Use 3. For exhortation. This doctrine may be improved in an use of exhortation. 1. To these that never looked to Christ, God's holy temple. 2. To these that have once looked, but are under such exercises that they dare not look again. 3. To such as are come to this resolution in the text, and are saying, notwithstanding of all difficulties, "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple."

1. To you that never looked to Christ to this day; ye that never got faith.

(1.) I would have you to consider, that you have been viewing not God's glory, but vanity all your days. What are you looking to? to passing shadows, the vain profits and pleasures of time. Ye have been beholding nothing but vanity all your days.

(2.) What will ye do in the day of visitation? what will you look to, when death looks you in the face; and when ye must look upon death, judgment, and eternity? Where will you look for help?

(3.) Consider, ye that never looked to Christ, what a miserable case you will be in, when all things else leave you?

(4.) O bethink yourselves what you are now called unto. Surely you are eternally undone, unless you give a look unto God's holy temple. Therefore, O sinner, I advise you to take the holy

Spirit of God to anoint your eyes, with eye-salve, that you may see the Christ of God, and look to him; for there is no salvation in any other name, by which you can be saved, but by the name of Jesus. O come to him, who is the Rock of ages; rest not in the old ship, in a secure state, or in your own legal righteousness under the covenant of works; there is no safety there. You must throw yourself out of that old ship, and swim unto the Rock of ages. When people are in great danger of sinking, or splitting upon a rock, they will be loth to come out of the ship, until their skilful mariner tell them, that they will sink and perish, unless they throw themselves out and swim unto the rock: even so, sirs, ye that are sailing in the old ship, under the covenant of works, thinking yourselves good enough, and imagining that ye can believe well enough; and thinking you have a good heart to God; and that God will be pleased with you when you do as well as you can. O come out of that old ship, and swim to the Rock of ages.—O say you, I cannot swim. O sirs, your misery will not lie in this, that you are unable to come to Christ, but in that, that you are unwilling. If you cannot swim to Christ, look to him; “Look to me, and be saved.” O sirs, he wants but a look: the rock is a living rock, and can come to you. Look to the rock, and the rock will draw you to him. I remember it was said by a little maid, who was servant to Naaman’s wife, “Would to God that my master would go to the prophet of Samaria; he would heal him of his leprosy:” So say I, Would to God ye would look to Christ, he would heal you; his name is, “JEHOVAH-ROPHI, I am the Lord that healeth you.”

2. A word to you that have looked to Christ, but dare not look again. Is unbelief saying, “I am cast out of thy sight?” So it was with Jonah; and yet he looked. Are ye under greivous guilt lying upon your conscience? So it was with Jonah; and yet he looked towards God’s holy temple. O my dear friends, let nothing hinder you from looking to Christ. It is a very greivous trouble that exercises you, viz.: an angry God: So it was with Jonah; and yet he looked. Is your sins the cause of the storm of wrath blowing at this day? So it was with Jonah; Jonah was the cause of the dreadful storm that blew upon the waters, and yet he looked again towards God’s holy temple. Say not that ye dare not look again; I looked once, but now my case is such, I fear I will be welcome no more: why, what ails you poor soul, that you dare not look again? Is not Christ as good as ever he was? Whatever

changes befalls you, he is God and changes not. Therefore let nothing hinder you from coming to him.

3. A word unto these that are brought unto this resolution in the text, that though they have apprehended themselves to be cast out of God's sight, yet are resolved to look, and to look again towards God's holy temple. Is this your work? Is this your resolution? O then, the blessing of God will attend this work. O look not to man, nor angels, nor creatures; look not to ministers; look not to your duties nor your frames; look to God's holy temple. Look to it notwithstanding all the difficulties that may be in your way; pursue your resolutions; a firm resolution may do much. The mariner sets out at such a port; his resolution is to go to such another port; his resolution carries him to the haven, although he meet with storms in the way; many storms that might have set him quite back, yet the man pursues his resolution, and at last comes to the desired haven. Has God wrought such a resolution in you, as to look to his temple? O pursue the resolution, and that will bring you to the desired haven at last. Looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, living on him, resting upon him. O look to the temple where God dwells: there is enough for you in God's holy temple. Although unbelief may have a great ascendant over you, and make you say, "I am cast out of thy sight;" yet, notwithstanding of this, faith acted upon the Lord Jesus Christ will be relief unto you when your way is like that of Jonah's here. "Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple." Amen.

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### A MINISTERIAL TESTIMONY, WARNING, AND DECLARATION;

With Relation to the Invasion attempted on Mr. Erskine's Pulpit and Ministry, by Mr. Henry Hardie, Minister in Culross, and by appointment of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, Sabbath, June 6th, 1742. Read publicly to the Congregation.

WHEREAS I understand, that the pretended Presbytery of Dunfermline did, on Wednesday last, appoint that my pulpit should be henceforth occupied by other ministers and preachers than myself; and that, in prosecution of that appointment, Mr. Henry Hardie, minister in Culross, has adventured to take possession thereof, in order to the excluding of me from the exercise of my ministry



therein ; and in regard that I judge there are many who are not aware of the iniquity that is involved in this invasion made upon my pulpit, and intrusion made upon this congregation : Therefore I reckon myself obliged, by virtue of my ministerial office, as a watchman set upon the walls of the city of God here, to give warning to the people of this congregation of the sin and danger that attends this encroachment upon my ministerial labours ; that they may not involve themselves in the guilt of supporting, owning, or countenancing the said intrusion and invasion ; and, in order to this, I shall briefly notice the rise and spring of this violent obtrusion.

The pretended General Assembly, that met in the year 1740, having passed a sentence against eight ministers, whereby they pretended to depose them, in the manner expressed in their act ; and this not for any error in their doctrine, nor immorality in their practice, nor negligence in their ministry, the said Assembly themselves being judges ; but merely because they were endeavouring to fulfil that ministry which they had received of the Lord, by bearing a judicial testimony to Scotland's covenanted reformation, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and Presbyterian church government, against that stream of defection and backsliding that was running through the land, and particularly among the ministers and judicatories of the present establishment ; the said Presbytery of Dunfermline have now thought fit to sustain themselves executioners of this unjust sentence by appointing my charge to be supplied, and my pulpit to be invaded ; I do therefore give my testimony, in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, against this deed of the Presbytery of Dunfermline. And this I do for the following grounds and reasons.

I. Because this deed of the said Presbytery of Dunfermline carries in it an approbation of the unjust and sinful sentence of the foresaid Assembly against these eight ministers, and me among the rest ; it is their setting their seal to that sentence that God never set his seal to by his approbation. That this procedure of the pretended Presbytery both involve them in this guilt is evident to all that have any understanding, because it proceeds upon a supposition that this congregation is totally vacant, which it can be no other way, while I am yet living and officiating in my ministry here, than by the said sinful sentence of Assembly, of which they are now the sinful executioners.

II. Because this deed is an evident robbing of this congrega-

tion of their present lawful pastor, and an intruding of ministers upon them, without their consent, and without their being lawfully called or convened to inquire if they wanted two ministers in the place. Insomuch that this deed is a manifest robbing the people of this congregation of their Christian liberty, and falls in among the common intrusions made in the land : in regard I know not of seven or eight persons among all the seven or eight thousand examinable persons of this congregation but seem to be still satisfied to subject themselves to my ministry in the place. This procedure, therefore, infers also an approbation, or a practical homologating of all the violence done to God's heritage by the judicatories for many years bygone.

III. Because this deed carries in it a strong attempt to involve this congregation in the sinful breach of a solemn engagement between them and me, before the great God. For here I must observe, that, in every orderly settlement of a minister among a people, there is a mutual covenant between the minister and the people, which is binding before God, the principal party in all covenants between man and man. By which covenant I become bound and obliged to the duties of my pastoral office and calling amongst the people of this congregation ; and, in like manner, they did bind and oblige themselves to give due respect to me, as one of Christ's ministers to them, and obedience and submission to my ministry in the Lord ; and to do what in them lay to strengthen my hands, and encourage me in the great work of the ministry as becomes a dutiful people to their lawful pastor. Heritors, elders, magistrates, town councillors, and heads of families, did all concur in the above solemn engagement in their call given to me about one and thirty years ago. And though I am very conscious to myself of much sinful weakness, and many failures in the discharge of my pastoral duties, yet I can appeal to the consciences of the people of this congregation, if I have not, according to the measure of ability and grace given me, endeavoured to discharge the duties of my office amongst them, particularly by preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ unto them ; and I have some satisfying hope and persuasion that I want not some seals of my ministerial work, and of my call to the same among the people of this congregation. Therefore, as this deed is an attempt to separate what God has been joining these thirty years, and a rending of my people and me asunder in the midst of my ministerial work amongst them : so it is a giving way to their

incurring the guilt of a notorious breach, on their part, of that mutual covenant between them and their lawful pastor, to whose ministry they had professed submission for thirty years' space. And if ever there was a call scriptural, harmonious, and unanimous, fixing the pastoral relation to a people; if ever there was a call that had all the evidences of its being the call of God, it is that which now the said Presbytery of Dunfermline attempt to annul.

IV. This present deed involves in it the guilt of all the corruptions and defections of the time; in so far as it is a putting to their hand to slay the witnesses for a covenanted reformation in Scotland, relating to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of Christ's house therein, for which I know not now of any judicial testimony, save what is in the hands of those that are associate for the defence of it, on which account some ignorantly reproach us as schismatics. The authors of this present deed have shewn themselves enemies to the work of God, and the testimony of the day, by casting out one of those that are lifting it up.

Therefore, and for all these and the like grounds and reasons, I do, in the great name of our Lord God, whose I am, and whom I desire to serve in the gospel of his Son, admonish and warn the people of this congregation, that they give no manner of countenance to the ministry of such as are thus sinfully obtruding themselves upon my charge, robbing you and me of our rights, lest you thereby involve yourselves in the guilt of homologating and approving of that sinful sentence of Assembly 1740, in killing the witnesses for Scotland's covenanted reformation; and lest you involve yourselves in the sin and guilt of the Presbytery of Dunfermline in abusing their authority, for supporting of that unjust and unlawful sentence, and in doing thus what in them lies, to cast a testimony for Christ, and for Scotland's covenanted reformation out of the church of Dunfermline. Again, lest you involve yourselves in the guilt of justifying an intrusion upon my ministerial labours, and so of trampling upon my commission and ministry that God hath given me amongst you; and of bearing down a testimony, which I hold in conjunction with others, for the honour of Christ, and the rights of his injured crown and kingdom. And finally, lest you be found guilty of joining with those that are evidently crucifying Christ, in his cause and truth, at this day, whercin the anger of the Lord is great, and his awful judgments are going round. For all these reasons I warn and admonish all the people of this congregation, to beware of countenanc-



ing those that do, or shall continue afterwards to occupy the charge that belongs to me, invading my pulpit, excluding me from my ministry therein, and obtruding a ministry upon you without your call and consent ; lest by countenancing them, and partaking with others in their sin you come also to share with them in their judgments.

I refer the conduct of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, and of such as, by their orders, do now, or shall hereafter, obtrude themselves upon my pulpit and ministry here, to be judged and cognosed by the chief Shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, at the day of our compearance before his glorious tribunal.

In this testimony and warning, however it may be mocked at and ridiculed by some, galling and vexing to others, and tormenting to them that dwell upon the earth ; yet therein I have endeavoured to exoner myself to discharge my duty, and deliver my soul and the souls of others that hear me. And though this warning should, through ignorance, be disregarded by some, or through wickedness be despised by others, yet I incline to follow the example of our glorious Master, who said, " Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Even so I desire to pray, Lord, forgive them, and lay not their iniquity to the charge of this congregation.

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A Warning offered by Mr. Ralph Erskine to the Congregation of Dunfermline,  
Sabbath, August 22d, 1742.

UNDERSTANDING that the pretended Presbytery of Dunfermline have, on Wednesday last, taken some steps, in concurrence with some in the parish applying to them, toward the calling of a minister, in my room and place, to this congregation, as if that place were lawfully voided ; or, by divine allowance, vacant, and could be lawfully, and by divine allowance, supplied with another minister as long as I live, and continue in the exercise of the ministry, to which I was regularly and unanimously called by this congregation ; and fearing lest many in this place, either through ignorance or inadvertency, be not aware of the danger they are in, if they shall give their assent or consent, by their subscription for, or submission to, another minister in my room, I thought it my duty at present to represent the danger thereof, and to give them fair warning. Let it therefore be considered,

I. That none can have a hand in calling another minister in my room, as matters at present stand, without involving themselves in the sin and guilt of those pretended judicatories, that have first passed, and then executed a wicked sentence against the associate ministers for maintaining reformation principles against a course of defection therefrom: pretending to depose them from their ministry, in the several charges to which God had called, and me among the rest. And since the calling of another minister in my room, must be upon the ground of a supposed vacancy, occasioned by the said sinful sentence, and sinful execution thereof, none of this Parish can give consent to such a call, without being involved in that sin and guilt, and, upon the matter, consenting to my being deposed, and excluded from my ministerial charge and work in this congregation.

II. Those that shall have a hand in calling another minister, in my room in this congregation, become guilty of a very great inconsistency with themselves, if they consider the ground upon which I am persecuted, and excluded from my charge by the said judicatories, namely, the ground upon which I engaged to stand when I was licensed and ordained minister here, viz.: the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland, grounded upon the word of God, and sworn to by our covenants, national and solemn league. Before the Presbytery then in being, (which looked indeed like a reforming Presbytery; and, were they not all now in the dust, they could witness that before them) I owned the binding obligations of these covenants; and declared my resolution, through grace, to stand to these covenanted and reformation principles. And my continuing to stand upon that ground, from which the present judicatories have gone off, is the present persecuting violence against me. And if any in this congregation, by calling another minister, consent to the deed of the present judicatories, they act so inconsistently with themselves, as to reject me for the reason and ground upon which they received me, and upon which they have been remaining under my ministry these thirty years and more; for I stand upon no other ground than I did at first, and have done all along. I have no new Bible, no new Confession, no new principles, no new terms of people's communion with me; but the very same covenanted principles as before: and why I should be rejected now, more than before, let those that are disposed to do so, consider, and see how they shall answer to God for such inconsistency with themselves.

This, by the bye, answers the ignorant objection of some, "Why, you have left the kirk, and her judicatories; you have left the presbytery, that is now carrying on the call for another." It is easy to answer, from what I have said, That by no means did I leave them, till they left me standing upon the very ground upon which their predecessors set me: But they have left both their predecessors and me, by rejecting a testimony, given in to them judicially, against the present defections from these reformation principles. If a great overflowing stream should carry down a vast company of people, and leave but a few of them standing where they were, How ridiculous would it be to say, that these that are standing have made a schism, by leaving or separating from their brethren that are carried down the stream? Even so absurd is it to say, that those are guilty of schismatical separation from, or leaving their brethren, who are standing where they were, to their old presbyterian principles, and the rest carried down the stream of defection from them: And if I be standing where I was, only with a new testimony in my hand, for my former old principles, those that now shall discard me as their minister, by calling in another in my room, can never reconcile themselves now, with themselves formerly, but by owning practically that they are content to be carried down the stream of defection with the rest of the present backsliding generation.

III. Those that consent to the calling of another minister to this place, in my room, will involve themselves in the guilt of perjury and covenant-breaking; for minister and people, once married together by a regular [gospel-call, such as mine was, are bound by covenant, before the great God, to mutual fidelity one toward another; he to a faithful discharge of his ministerial work among them, and they to a continued submission to him in the Lord: And whom God hath thus joined, it is not lawful for men to put asunder, unless there were lawful and scriptural grounds for a divorce.

Now, perjury and covenant-breaking, in such a case as this, where the relation is sacred and spiritual, must run very deep: And the longer the relation has subsisted, the more aggravated will their sin be that endeavour the dissolving of it; since the longer it has stood, the more firm and numerous are the bonds by which it has been established. If my ministry has been blessed, to the conversion of some, and, from time to time, to the edification of converts; or even to the awakening and alarming of others in this congrega-



tion, so that they are conscious to themselves of its having been useful, at sundry times, for touching and reaching their hearts and consciences, as well as enlightening their minds and understandings; then their giving consent to the extruding of me, and the intruding of any other in my room, while this relation is not lawfully dissolved, must be a sin against all such light as they have seen, and all such experience as they have felt under my ministry: and a sin of this sort must run deeper than they are aware of; and must be of that nature, as cannot but stare them in the face, when God arises and makes his deputy conscience, to awaken upon them.

Some may here object, "What shall become of the rest of the parish that now desert your ministry? Should they remain destitute, and the other place of worship, where you do not now preach, remain desolate? Is it their sin to seek after another?" I answer, If they should be destitute, they have made themselves so by casting off my ministry; and they have now indeed involved themselves in such circumstances, that it is both their sin that they want a minister, and their sin that they seek another in my room. For, while things stand as they are, they cannot choose or submit to another, without being guilty of a continued act of covenant breaking, and trampling upon the ministry of one whom they called, and God sent to them to be their minister. And as to my not preaching now in the other ordinary place, you all know it is merely owing to my being excluded by violence, such as I could not resist, unless I had designed, by carnal weapons, to fight my way to it; which, you will own, was neither suitable to my character and profession, nor any way adapted to your edification. But,

IV. Those that have a hand in calling another to this congregation in my room, they are exposing themselves to that wrath of God, that is threatened in his word against such as are guilty of misusing the messengers of God, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16, where it is said of that people, "The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messenger, because he had compassion on them: But they mocked the messenger of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." The poor people of this place do not know, but in rejecting me, they are rejecting him that sent me: And though they could get one that shall preach to them as an angel of light, this iniquity is and will be marked before the Lord. They cannot get one as sent of God, and commisionate of him to them, as long as

my commission to be their minister remains valid before God. They cannot seek another in my room with a good conscience ; nor can another come with a good conscience into my room, because it cannot be done without an obtrusion upon my lawful ministry here ; and therefore they cannot, in this way, expect to have one in mercy, and with a blessing, but rather in wrath, and with a curse.

Although I am persecuted, because I do not side with the present times, and my persecutors may think they do God service, and that there is no persecution in the case ; yet I reckon my being persecuted in my office and ministerial work, more gross and heinous than any outward corporal persecution, and what tends to bring on the greatest wrath. The people of this place, that are guilty, know not that they are treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath ; greater wrath than that which will fall upon heathens, that never enjoyed the gospel. Precious Christ, and his everlasting gospel, is become a stumbling-block to them ; and they to support their present practice, are a prey to every bitter lying spirit, that tends to disparage the ministry which they abandon. As, of old, the Pharisees received every false and reproachful account of Christ they could pick up, to justify their opposition to him ; so, when once people begin to desert, disown, and disregard a gospel-ministry they have been long under, they will be glad to entertain every lying story, every false and caluminating report they can get, to justify their practice in deserting it : And God, in his righteous judgment, will let those stumbling blocks be put in their way, and let them fall and stumble upon them to their ruin, 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8 ; Isa. viii. 14, 15. Christ himself could not be so openly rejected, with any grace, by the Jews, Pharisees, and people of old, if their woful contempt of him had not been rendered, as it were, justifiable, by its being gilded over with the notion of Christ's being a blasphemer of God, and thereupon their opposition to him looked on as a duty and service to God. But the slighting of Christ and his message will be pursued with heavy judgments, though this sin should be covered over with a mask of duty to God, and though it should be fortified with Sanhedrims and Judicatories in its favours. " I would have gathered you, but ye would not, says Christ ; therefore behold your house is left desolate," Mat. xxiii. 37, 38.

V. Those that have any hand in this sin of calling another minister to this congregation in my room, do by this deed, give scandal to this congregation that adhere to my ministry, and do

thereby exclude themselves from the benefit of any sealing ordinance to be dispensed by me, until they shall confess their sin, and be purged from the scandal and offence they give thereby. And the scandal may appear plain and evident, not only from what is said, but if it be considered,

VI. That those who shall call, and submit to any other in my room, they not only reject their own lawful pastor, without any ground, but reject him at the last and most noted period of his life, when in holy providence, he is become more than a ministry to them, as formerly, a public witness for the persecuted truth and cause of Christ: And, to reject my ministry, in such circumstances, is not only a pouring contempt on the whole of my thirty years' ministerial work in this place, and a declaring that the gospel has never been a saviour of life, but of death to them; but also a despising of the whole witnessing work of the day, and the public testimony of the time, wherein God hath honoured me to be concerned. And, indeed, if the people of this place had contrived a way to get rid of my ministry, twenty years ago, their guilt had not been so aggravated as now, when a testimony is put in my hand, wherein the glory of God, and the credit of his name and truth is so much concerned: For now they cannot cast off my ministry for another in my room, nor countenance those that are carrying on such an obtrusion, without involving themselves in the guilt of all these public defections that I and others are witnessing against; and trampling upon these truths of God that we are witnessing for, and casting behind their back all these reformation principles, whereof I have been called, all along, to be professor and a preacher, but now to be a confessor and a witness.

Upon all these accounts, I see it my present duty to warn the people of this place, to consider what they are doing in this matter, as they have any regard to the glory of God, the credit of the gospel, the salvation of their own souls, their peace in a dying hour, and the great account they are to make before God's tribunal, of what improvement they make of the gospel ministry he hath sent to them.



A Third Ministerial Warning, read publicly to the Congregation of Dunfermline, on Sabbath, May 1, 1743.

WHEREAS I understand, that last Sabbath-day there was, by appointment of the pretended Presbytery of Dunfermline, an intimation made, of the admission of one to be minister in this congregation, in my room and place, upon Thursday next; and notwithstanding I have formerly given, and publicly read solemn warnings to this congregation on this head, both when the said Presbytery appointed my room to be supplied with other ministers, and afterward, when they appointed the moderation of a call for another minister in this place; and though these warnings have been printed and published, so as every one has access to see and read them, and none that I know has ever yet offered to answer them, and consequently I may be judged to have exonerated myself sufficiently on this head: Yet, lest any should misinterpret my silence on this occasion, as if I, or any of this congregation, might now be easy or indifferent in this matter, or were any way conniving at this sinful and remarkable obtrusion; and lest any should afterwards allege, that this designed settlement was carried on without any dissenting or reclaiming voice in this congregation, and that such an open and wicked encroachment was made without any kind of opposition: though I neither design nor desire, that any outward opposition be made, nor that any external disturbance in the least be given, by word or deed, to any that are, or may be concerned in this affair. Nay, so far on the contrary am I from the use of any such carnal weapons, to oppose the public corruptions of the time, or this noted obtrusion among the rest, that I desire and expect, none that have a regard for my ministry, and for the cause of Christ, so much run down at this day, will in the least offer to countenance that obtruding work; they that give their presence seem to give their consent, and to involve themselves in the whole guilt thereof.

All the opposition I propose that you or I should make against this designed admission, is only by a sober, meek, serious, and practical witness-bearing against it. Therefore I do, in my own name, as lawfully called of God, and of this congregation, to the work of the gospel ministry therein, and in the name of all that shall adhere to me, and my ministry, and in the fear of that God, to whom I must be accountable for all that I do, before him and this congrega-

tion, give my testimony against that intended admission, in so far as it is a palpable intrusion designed to be made upon my charge, and against the voice and consent of all in this congregation that are still cleaving to my ministry, and professing to witness for the reformation cause.

Again, In so far as it is contrary to the rule of God's word, and the gospel order of discipline and government in the house of God, a violence done to God's heritage, a sinful robbing this congregation of their right to, and interest in their only lawful minister ; an open violation of the sacred bonds and obligations this Parish is under to encourage me in, and cleave to my ministry ; so long as it is not so much as pretended that I am either convicted of error in doctrine, or immorality in practice, but merely persecute for non-compliance with the defections of the judicatories, and judicial witnessing with others against the public defections and deviations from our reformation purity, and covenanted doctrine, worship, discipline, and government.

Again, I give testimony against this obtrusion, in so far as it includes an approbation of, and siding with the judicatories, in their unlawful and unwarrantable acts and sentences, past against a number of ministers witnessing for the reformation work ; and as it includes a contempt poured upon the dispensation of the gospel here, accompanied with a testimony for the whole covenanted reformation principles.

In so far likewise, as it includes evident perjury and treachery, not only in violating the particular oath of God toward me, as minister in this place, when I was unanimously called thereto, by all sorts of people therein ; but also of breaking of the national vows for reformation, which both the ministers of this Presbytery, and the people of this place have formerly professed to be binding upon them : And consequently, as it includes the sin of apostacy after the knowledge of the truth, and a turning their backs upon the good ways of the Lord.

Likewise, I testify against it, as it is an open laying of a foundation for a perpetual schism and separation here from the true Presbyterian Reformation Cause which this congregation has been professing with me these thirty-two years. As it is for adhering to that cause I am excluded from the former legal advantages I enjoyed, so the judicatories, for deserting that cause, are chargeable with the schism and separation that is now like to be perpetuate

here, and for which reason all that join with and cleave to the said established judicatories, in their present corrupt way, are guilty of concurring with, and involved in that schism.

Again, in so far as this obtruding work in view is an opening of a way for other sinful settlements in this congregation, wherein no other vacancy can be filled up, but such as will be collegiate partakers with the intruded and intruding fraternity; and consequently such as either will have no other conscience of the corruptions of the times, and the danger of running without being called and sent, or else must be reckoned to be brought in over the belly of all the light and conscience that God has given them; which is a very heaven daring provocation, and may justly bring wrath to the uttermost upon this place, and make God pursue a heavy quarrel with the inhabitants thereof, and with their posterity after them, who shall be involved in, and accessory to the wickedness and guilt of these settlements so opposite to the order and appointment of the God of heaven.

In so far also, as it is an opening of a wide door in this place, for planting and perpetuating a lax and erroneous ministry, a carnal, loose, and latitudinarian ministry, to the perverting of the gospel of Christ, and the ruining of immortal souls, that cannot well distinguish between sound or unsound, legal or gospel doctrine: while the most part of people are subject to be easily seduced by corrupt teachers, and are matter fit for them to be cast into any form; if they satisfy them with a few plausible sermons, they are malleable and fit to be hammered into any shape, Jer. v. 31, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so," Amos iv. 5. "This liketh you, O house of Israel," or, as it is in the margin, "so you love." It will be no wonder, if dismal effects of this sort take place, before half the years pass over, that have elapsed since I was called to be minister here.

On all these accounts, and for all the reasons contained in the two Warnings I read before you not long ago, and that are published, which I hereby advise you to look over again and consider, and likewise for all the reasons contained in the Act and Testimony of Declinature emitted by the Associate Presbytery, against former and present defections of the established church, in so far as this intended obtrusion contradicts that Testimony, and homologates these defections, I give this open testimony against it, and however it may be despised by some, and derided by others, yet for my own



exoneration, and for your warning, and especially that God may be glorified, whatever be the effect, I leave this testimony, to be marked down by all that hear me in the register of your consciences, as one of the books to be opened in the great day of accounts, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

FOURTEEN SERMONS ON PRAYER,

FROM

ROMANS XII. 12.

“CONTINUING INSTANT IN PRAYER.”

EDITED BY

DONALD FRASER, D.D., KENNOWAY.





## PREFACE BY THE EDITOR.

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THE importance of prayer is generally admitted; and an impression appears to prevail among serious and intelligent Christians, that the present aspect of Providence particularly demands the powerful inculcation of this interesting duty. Though of late years an increased attention may have been given to personal, social, and public prayer, many good men entertain the apprehension that a deplorable indifference still exists; and that, with regard to frequency and earnestness, the supplications preferred for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are not in keeping with the vigorous efforts put forth for the diffusion of knowledge, and the advancement of real Christianity at home and abroad.

"There appears to be a growing conviction among Christians of the present day," says the Rev. Dr. HARRIS, in his introduction to his valuable work, entitled, "Union, or the Divided Church made One," "that the Church of Christ, notwithstanding its increasing activity and enlargement, is labouring under many and serious evils."—"The result of the writer's observation and reading would lead him to infer that the principal evils to be deplored are reducible to three heads—covetousness, schism, and *indivotion*. In other words, that the great wants of the Christian church are liberality, union, and a spirit of prayer."

Similar sentiments are avowed by Mr. DOUGLAS of Cavers, both in his "Thoughts on Prayer at the Present Time," published in the year 1830, and in the pamphlet, entitled, "The Revival of Religion," which has lately appeared. That pious and eloquent writer ascribes the comparatively little success of great missionary exertions to the neglect of fervent and united prayer. "Small means," says he, "have often been more abundantly honoured, because prayer was minded, and the glory ascribed to God."—"Universal prayer," he observes again, "must precede a universal revival."—"Christians, however few, yet if the spirit of Christianity were active in them, would ask, and would obtain—a little one would become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation."

If these views are correct, the Christian public may be expected to countenance writings which are calculated fully and concisely to explain the nature and necessity of prayer, and to stimulate the godly of every class and denomination to abound more and more in this holy and delightful employment. The encouragement afforded to several excellent treatises of this description, that have recently issued from the British press, seems to justify the hope, that the Discourses contained in the following pages will also meet with a considerable portion of the public favour.

Not less than seventy-four years have now elapsed since the publication of two large volumes in folio, containing the Sermons and other Practical Works of the Rev. RALPH ERSKINE of Dunfermline. Of the Sermons included in those volumes,

a great proportion had never been printed during the Author's life-time, but were selected from his manuscripts by surviving friends posterior to his death. Though the contents of the folio volumes have subsequently undergone a number of impressions in other forms, no additional discourses have hitherto been given to the world. To whatever cause this omission may be owing, it cannot justly be attributed to the lack of materials. His note-books, still extant, contain an ample store of unpublished sermons on a great variety of points, both doctrinal and practical; which, whilst he made use of short-hand characters, he completely and carefully wrote out for the pulpit. The late reverend and worthy JOHN BROWN of Whitburn often called the attention of the Editor to this subject, and earnestly urged him to publish some more of his great-grandfather's Sermons. On examining the manuscripts of his revered ancestor, it occurred to him that his Sermons on Prayer might serve, by the Divine blessing, as well to edify the church of Christ, as to do justice to the Author's memory, as a preacher prepared not only to exhibit the doctrines of grace, but with the same zeal and assiduity to inculcate the duties of the Christian life.

Mr. Ralph Erskine's qualifications for elucidating this department of Christian duty will not be questioned. Whilst he was thought to excel in theological knowledge, he possessed the high advantage arising from a truly spiritual and devotional temper, and from a habit of fervent and unceasing prayer, formed in youth, and zealously maintained amid all the vicissitudes of future life. In his second sermon on this topic, indeed, he modestly alludes to his own experience, as one of the sources from which he had derived those lessons which he warmly inculcates on others.

By glancing over the contents, the reader will easily perceive that though, agreeably to the practice of the times, he confined himself, when treating of prayer, to a single text of scripture, he took an extensive view of the subject in its various bearings. In these discourses, as in the sermons long since published, his divisions are numerous, according to the custom of his age; but nevertheless his illustrations are often rich, and his frequent allusions to facts in history and biography striking, and pleasantly instructive. His diction is at once simple and nervous, homely and impressive; and his addresses to the conscience are uncommonly pungent.

These Sermons on Prayer, we may notice, were studied and delivered in Spring, 1715, some time prior to the agitation of the Marrow Controversy, and about twenty years before the rise of the Secession. They are thus entirely exempt from those party allusions, which frequently occur in many of the sermons formerly given to the public, and some of which might, without impropriety, have been withheld. The reader may rest assured that they have been faithfully transcribed from the Author's own notes, which are still perfectly legible. The only corrections hazarded are purely verbal; and even these, as the discerning may learn from intrinsic evidence, have been very sparingly made. That the Editor might have improved the arrangement by transposing a number of the divisions and paragraphs may be plausibly alleged. After due consideration, however, he concluded that no important advantage could result from such alterations, whilst he should have felt himself open to the charge of using unwarrantable liberties. On the same principle, he determined to retain a few passages apparently unsuited to readers of the present age, but peculiarly interesting to the people to whom the sermons were preached; as his references to the affliction and death of the Rev. Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Erskine's first colleague, and to the discourses which that minister had delivered to the congregation on the same topic, shortly before his decease.

Readers to whom elegant composition, and fashionable modes of arrangement and address, form the chief recommendations of sermons, will certainly not be attracted by the present volume. Yet the seasonable instruction it conveys, the excel-

lent spirit it breathes, and the energetic appeals with which it abounds, may possibly earn the approbation of learned and refined individuals, provided their piety be equal to their literature and taste ; while Christians occupying the humbler walks of life, who have found their spiritual interests advanced by perusing the former publications of the Author, will receive, with a cordial welcome, a series of discourses, which now, after sleeping among his manuscripts for a period of upwards of an hundred and twenty years, unexpectedly present themselves to their notice. A well of pure water is not the less prized by the thirsty traveller, because it happens to have been long overlooked ; nor does a box of precious ointment suffer in the estimation of those who delight in sweet-smelling odours, because a lengthened interval has passed between the day of its preparation, and the time when its seal is broken and its fragrance emitted.

That the Divine Spirit may give efficacy to the Scriptural truths, consolations, and reproofs comprised in this little work, and make it in some degree conducive to the revival of religion, is the prayer of

D. F.

KENNOWAY, 29th April, 1840.





# SERMONS ON PRAYER.

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## SERMON I.

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON PRAYER.

“ Continuing instant in prayer.” Rom. xii. 12.

THERE are two things whereby the spiritual state of the believer is distinguished from the rest of the world, namely, his graces and his duties. Of all graces faith obtains the crown; therefore, says the apostle, “above all, take the shield of faith.” Among all duties prayer seems to challenge the garland of honour, it being, as it were, the commander-in-chief, having all things, yea, even God himself, in some respect, under its command, by his own consent; therefore, says God by the prophet, “Concerning the work of my hands command ye me.” Prayer is the favourite in the heavenly court to whom the King of kings can deny nothing. This duty is of such weight that it is frequently put for God’s whole worship,—“Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face evermore” (Psal. cv. 4). God’s temple, which was the beauty of holiness, the habitation of the Most High, was baptized by God himself with this name, “Mine house shall be called an house of prayer” (Isa. lvi. 7). God’s people, who are higher than the kings of the earth, are known to be nobly born by this practice, “This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah” (Psal. xxiv. 6). Yea, God himself is pleased to wear prayer-livery, and distinguish himself by a royal title of relation to this duty; he is called the Hearer of prayer (Psal. lxxv. 2): “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.” There is no duty which

has more precept for it, or more promise to it, than prayer; and sure I am there is no duty gives more honour to God, or receives more honour from God; and,\* therefore, nothing more incumbent upon Christians than this apostolic precept of “continuing instant in prayer.”

Without enlarging on the analysis of this chapter, you may notice, from the ninth verse, several apostolic aphorisms and divine precepts, very short and sententious, and very substantial and comprehensive. The first aphorism is, “Let love be without dissimulation.” We are not to love God or our neighbour in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth. When we love with dissimulation, our love is hypocrisy towards God and deceit towards man. The second aphorism is, “Abhor that which is evil.” We are not to hate sin merely with a slight disrespect, but with a great abhorrence; as David says of the wicked, “Do not I hate them that hate me? yea, I hate them with a perfect hatred.” We must hate and abhor every thing wherein is the evil of sin, as being the abominable thing that God hates.—The third aphorism is, “Cleave to that which is good.” As we are not to abhor evil in a cold lukewarm way, but with a perfect abhorrence; so we are not to love that which is good in a cold and indifferent manner, but to embrace it in our arms, to get our affections agglutinated, our hearts glued to it, so as to become one with it.—The fourth aphorism is, concerning that brotherly, loving, kindly affection, which people should have one to another. “This new commandment give I unto you,” says Christ, “that ye love one another.” The Latin proverb is sadly verified in experience, “*fratrum concordia rara est.*” It is a pleasant thing but rare, to see brethren walking together in unity. We should all behave towards one another as brethren in Adam according to the flesh, and in Christ according to the Spirit, adding to “godliness, brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness, charity.”—The fifth aphorism is, “In honour preferring one another.” This is much to the same purpose with that word you have elsewhere (Phil. ii. 3): “Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.” Here, modesty and civility towards every one according to their due, is required.—The sixth aphorism is, “Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” As we are to have his glory still before our eyes in whatever we do, so we are to do all the duty incumbent on us, not in a lazy and slothful manner, but



with fervency and assiduity. Some copies, instead of "serving the Lord," have read,—*"serving the time,"* that is, observing the occasion and fit time and opportunity of duty; but the Greek copies have it always according to our own version, *"serving the Lord."*—The seventh aphorism and precept relates to affliction and adversity. *"Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation."* *"Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed."* Hope and patience are two excellent anchors for holding fast the vessel of the believing soul in the tempests of providence.—The eighth aphorism is in the words of our text. *"Continuing instant in prayer;"* which words may come under a twofold consideration: 1st, Relatively, as connected with the former part of the verse, and thus it may be adduced by the apostle as another remedy against affliction and tribulation. *"Continue instant in prayer."* Though God should cease to afford his help, yet we must not cease to pray, for in due time *"we shall reap if we faint not"*—God will at length hear. *"Call on me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."* 2dly, We may consider the words absolutely in themselves as a moral precept binding upon all Christians, at all times and in all cases, *"Continuing instant in prayer."*

In these words we have two particulars—1st, We have a work incumbent upon all Christians, namely, prayer. 2dly, The way how we are to perform it, namely, to continue instant therein. 1st, I say we have a work and business incumbent upon all people, namely, prayer, which imports two things. 1. It imports a want. It is only because of want that we pray for a supply; we are made up of need and necessity, want and weakness, and therefore we are to give ourselves to prayer. 2. It imports that our help is only in God, for he is the object of prayer. *"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help."* It is to him we are to pray for grace to help in time of need. 2dly, In the words you have the way how we are to perform this work, we are to *"continue instant"* therein; where you will find two notable qualifications of this duty, namely, we are to be constant and instant therein. 1. To be constant, *"continue"* in prayer. We are not to weary in well-doing, nor to weary in prayer, for we shall reap if we faint not. It is much to the same purpose with that word, *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thess. v. 17). It must be the employment of every day; it must be our morning, evening and mid-day sacrifice; and then in

scripture language we may be said to pray always. 2. We are to be instant as well as constant, “continuing *instant* in prayer,” that is, to pray with zeal, fervour, and importunity. We should in prayer with ardency of soul come and disburden ourselves in the bosom of God, as it were, and diligently attend his answer. Many come to heaven’s gate, like little children playing themselves at a man’s door; perhaps they knock at the door and immediately run away, they care not whether he open the door or not. We are to ask till we receive, to seek till we find, and knock till it be opened to us, continuing instant in prayer.

Now, having chosen this text only as a foundation of what I would offer on the subject of prayer, I shall take no further notice of the text in a particular way, but apply myself to the general matter thereof. The subject may seem very common and easy, and perhaps may appear to be needless, for nobody denies that prayer is their duty. I shall only say that I wish it were needless for me to stir you up to this duty, and that all that hear me were under such a conviction of the necessity, pleasure, and profit of this duty, that I needed not to say any more of it. But to suppose this were an excess of charity, and would contradict that earnestness with which the Spirit of God recommends this duty in scripture, and which supposes a backwardness in mankind to this work. Therefore, by the divine assistance, I resolve to prosecute this subject somewhat fully. I may propose this general doctrinal observation, That constant and instant prayer to God is the indispensable duty of every rational soul, man or woman, young or old: “Continuing instant in prayer.” In the prosecution of this subject I would,

- I. Premise some general considerations concerning prayer.
- II. Speak of the nature of prayer.
- III. Speak of the various kinds of prayer.
- IV. Speak of the necessity of prayer.
- V. Illustrate the excellency of prayer.
- VI. Draw some inferences for the application of the whole, and therein answer objections and offer directions in order to this necessary duty.

I. I would premise some general considerations concerning prayer.

1. Prayer, in the general notion of it, is either mental or vocal.

Mental, consisting in the heart without the voice, such as Moses' prayer (Exod. xiv. 15), when Moses is said to cry unto the Lord, and yet he was saying nothing. Vocal prayer is that which is pronounced with the tongue, as Christ, in the fifth of the Hebrews, is said, in the days of his flesh, to have offered up prayer with strong cries and tears. Mental prayer is the affection of the mind ; vocal prayer is the expression of the mouth. Mental prayer may be true and honest where yet there is no vocal prayer ; but vocal prayer cannot be sincere where there is no mental prayer for there may be lip labour where there is no heart labour. Mental prayer may be made at any time, in any place, or without any company ; the heart of the believer may direct a prayer to God without hindering any other work that a person may be engaged in ; but vocal prayer requires a convenient time, or place, or occasion.

2. The second consideration I propose is, that prayer is an immediate worship of God ; therein we have to do immediately with God. It is different, in this respect, from several other parts of God's instituted worship, which do necessarily require company. In the preaching of the word there must be a hearer ; in administering the sacrament there must be partakers, hence the supper is called a communion. But it is not absolutely or essentially requisite to prayer that there be a society. One man or woman by himself, or herself, may perform this duty acceptably to God, as well as in a company of a thousand saints.

3. In prayer we ought to employ our soul in meditation. Meditation is, as it were, the soul of prayer, and prayer the body and substance of meditation. In praying we should seriously meditate on the majesty of God, from whence arises reverence ; on the promises of God, from whence arises confidence to be heard ; on our own vileness, from whence arises humility and self-abasement. We should meditate on our absolute need, from whence arises fervency and importuning ; on our constant want, from whence arises frequency in prayer.

4. Prayer is a very prevalent duty. A poor single person on his knees in a corner, without any creature to help him, may undertake to grapple with the omnipotent and eternal God, yea, by his strength may have power with God, as Jacob who by single wrestling, hand to fist, as it were, wrestled a blessing, and was crowned a prince on the field of battle. One poor Elijah could stand against four hundred priests of Baal and prevail, having recourse to the liv-



ing God by prayer. Yea, the apostle tells us that this Elijah, though but a mortal man, yet shut and opened heaven, that it rained and rained not, according to his prayer; hence he infers an universal maxim, that the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (see James v. 16-18). But some may object, Elias was a great prophet, an extraordinary person, he might prevail when we cannot; he answers (ver. 17) that he was but a man, yea, no more than a man, and a subject to like passions as we are, a sinful creature; he prevailed not for any merit of his own, but through faith in the Mediator of the covenant, and so may we. Prayer is in some sort omnipotent; as one says, *vincit invincibilem legat omnipotentem*, it can conquer the invincible Jehovah, and bind the hand of an omnipotent God, so that God cries out to a wrestling Jacob, "Let me alone."

5. The last consideration I propose is, that prayer has the advantage of all other duties. I shall tell you a twofold pre-eminence that prayer has above all other duties whatever.

(1.) In regard of the universality of its influence. Prayer has an influence upon the sanctifying of every thing; whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we are to set every piece of work apart by prayer. We pray not only before we eat or drink our bodily nourishment, but before we feed on the bread of the word. Prayer is requisite to make every providence and every occurrence blessed to us; prayer is needful to make our lawful callings successful; prayer is the guard to secure the fort-royal of the heart; prayer is the porter to keep the doors of the lips; and what the key is to the watch, that prayer is to religion, it winds it up and sets it agoing.

(2.) It is before other duties in regard to opportunity for its performance. A Christian cannot always hear, or always read, or always communicate, but yet he may pray always. No place, no company, can deprive him of this privilege. If he be on the top of a house with Peter, he may pray; if he be in the bottom of the ocean with Jonah, he may pray; if he be walking in a field with Isaac, he prays when no eye sees him; if he be waiting at table with Nehemiah, he may pray when no ear hears him. Though he be in a mountain with our Saviour, he may pray; though he be in prison with Paul, he may pray; wherever he is, prayer will help him to find out God.

Let these considerations be weighed and pondered by you. I

shall make no further progress in treating this subject at present, but close with a short applicatory advice.

O improve this noble privilege that you have allowed to you. You have a freedom of access to the throne of grace. The Persian kings took state upon them, and enacted that none should come near to them uncalled, on pain of death ; but O, sirs, the gates of heaven are always open, you have liberty night and day of presenting your petition, in the name of Christ, to the King of the whole earth. Elisha offered his courteous landlady a great kindness, when he asked her what favour he should do unto her. "Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" (2 Kings iv. 13.) But, oh ! how greatly are you privileged that you may speak to the King of kings yourself, and be welcome, and need not be at the charge of having either saints or angels for your mediators, or any of those heavenly courtiers to bring you to the King's presence. The Son of God offers to do it for you *gratis* ; "in him we have boldness." Are you in doubt about your eternal welfare ? you may go by prayer to him who is wonderful in counsel, and have his advice for nothing. Are you full of spiritual diseases and distempers ? you may by prayer knock up the true Physician at midnight, and prevail with him to hasten to your help. Are you surrounded with many bloody enemies within and without ? you may, by prayer, send post to heaven, and he will meet the messenger half way, and come in timely to your rescue. Are you in trouble and distress, and many ways afflicted ? sighing in God's ear will ease your heart ; for prayer is like a ring which Queen Elizabeth gave to the Earl of Essex, bidding him, if he was in any distress, send her that ring, and she would help him. God commands his people, if they be in any perplexity, to send this ring to him. "Call on me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Are you in a state of nature ? knock, by prayer till the door of grace be opened to you. Are you in a state of grace ? prayer must be your companion, till you come to the place of praise. If you pray not in secret, and in your family, you wear the atheist's livery ; "they call not upon the Lord." (Psalm xiv. 4.) They are dumb in this sense, they cannot speak to God. Oh ! it is a dreadful condition to be possessed with a dumb devil. When once men grow speechless, it is a sign that death is at hand ; so, if you be prayerless, it is a sign that eternal death is at hand. Many lay by their prayer, as some do their best clothes, till they go to church again. This is a

sad sign that prayer, which should be your element, is your torment. Oh ! may this text then be the badge and character of all that hear me. It would be a hopeful congregation, if it could be said of you, that you are all *continuing instant in prayer*.

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## SERMON II.

OBJECT OF PRAYER—THE FATHER, THROUGH THE SON, BY THE SPIRIT.

“Continuing instant in prayer.”—ROMANS XII. 12.

It is said of the Pope, he can never want money while he can hold a pen ; his writing of pardons and indulgences fills his coffers. So we may say of every true Christian, he can never want if he can hold up a prayer to God. Prayer is a key to God’s own coffers, wherein there are infinite treasures and all sorts of comforts. If you have a praying heart, God will have a helping hand ; it is but ask and receive, seek and find, knock and it shall be opened. God has been pleased to command this duty of prayer not only because of his dominion over us and for his own glory, but also because of his compassion towards us and for our good ; that by prayers, as men far distant do by letters, there may be a constant and uninterrupted intercourse and correspondence between heaven and earth. For this end he requires our continuing instant in prayer. Having stated some general considerations, I come now to the

II. Second Head proposed, which was the nature of prayer. And I cannot give a better account of it than the description given in the Assembly’s Shorter Catechism : “Prayer is an offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.” As Scripture is God’s letter, wherein he opens his mind to man, so prayer is man’s letter wherein he opens his mind to God. Prayer is like Jacob’s ladder, the bottom of which was on earth, but the top reached to heaven. A thought can fly speedily to the uttermost parts of the earth, so can prayer in a moment fly to the highest heavens. One of the Fathers compares prayer to a chain, the one end of which is tied to man’s tongue, and the other end to God’s ear. Another calls it *ascensus mentis ad Deum*, “a lifting up



of the mind to God." A child of God who cannot speak a word may put up an acceptable prayer, for it is an offering up, not of our words but of our desires to God. Suppose the tongue, which is the organ of speech, were cut out, yet a saint cannot thereby be obstructed in his access to God by prayer, for, as Amesius says, "Prayer is formally the act of the will." Desire is the soul of prayer, and therefore God is said to hear desires, "Lord thou hast heard the desire of the humble." (Psalm x. 17.) A saint's desire is real prayer. If the desire be right, words are but the outer garb, habit, or clothing of prayer. Words are the shell, and desires the kernel of prayer.

But that I may clear this useful head, there are four things I would speak of regarding the nature of prayer. I would speak, 1st, of the Object of Prayer; 2dly, of the Subject of Prayer; 3dly, of the Parts of Prayer; 4thly, of the Properties of Prayer.

1st, As to the object of prayer, to whom we are to make our address in prayer, you see that we are to offer up our desires to God in the name of Christ. This obviates a case which daily occurs, viz., To which of the persons of the Holy Trinity are we to direct our prayer, whether to the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Ghost? I answer, that as the living and true God, the great and eternal Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the only object of divine adoration, so the most distinct manner of apprehending him as the object, is to direct our worship to the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Ghost; or to offer up our desires to God in Christ by the Spirit. Here, then, that I may clear up the object of prayer, I shall show, first, that God is the only object of our worship; secondly, that it is in Christ that we are to worship him; thirdly, that it is by the Spirit.

1. God is the only object of prayer. This is manifest from the consideration of the very nature of God. He being the first, the greatest, the best Being, the independent, unlimited Creator, who bounds and limits all other beings—from whom they have their subsistence, upon whom they have their dependence, and to whom they must be accountable. The law of nature challenges of all the creatures a due homage of divine adoration, especially from the rational part of the creation. Worship is either civil or sacred. It is true there is a civil worship that is due to some of the creatures. There is a civil deference and respect due to them that are in exalted stations upon the earth; therefore they are called gods among men.

Magistrates, especially supreme, whom God hath established as his vicegerents on the earth to maintain government in the world and preserve peace, that the world may not turn to a theatre of disorder and confusion—there is a civil respect due to them ; let honour be given to whom honour is due. But that respect which we call sacred, divine adoration, supreme worship, is due only to the Supreme Being ; and no creature is to be worshipped with a divine adoration. Though the papists blasphemously practise otherwise, alleging that worship is due to saints, angels, and to the Virgin Mary, which they are bold to call subordinate worship, dreaming that through these we are to have access to the supreme object of divine adoration ; as when we make ourselves known to great persons, our way must be introduced by favourites. This is the doctrine of that mother of abominations, the Church of Rome, which they endeavour by specious arguments to defend. But the impiety of this doctrine is conspicuous, if you consider this one argument. The most exalted creatures, the choicest of saints and angels, when divine adoration was offered to them, did deprecate and abhor it with the utmost detestation, as being the prerogative royal of their common head and master, God and Christ. When Cornelius came to Peter and offered to fall down before him in a way of divine adoration (Acts x. 25), you see that he took hold of him, saying, “Stand up, for I myself also am a man.” When the people that, upon the healing of the cripple with a word, thought Paul and Barnabas were the gods come down to them in the likeness of men, calling Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurius, and thereupon brought oxen and garlands to sacrifice to them, you see how they flee from it, saying, “Sirs, why do ye these things ? we are men of like passions with you.” (Acts xiv. 15.) And as saints have refused this worship and adoration, so have angels. (See Rev. xix. 10 ; Rev. xxii. 8, 9.) John perceiving a glorious creature, in a very majestic appearance, giving him glorious revelations, probably might think it was the great Angel of the covenant, Christ, who sometimes of old had assumed an angelical appearance ; but the angel restrained him—“Do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant.” Now, if the saints and angels, the most glorious among the creatures, did with the greatest vehemence utterly refuse and deprecate these divine adorations, then certainly no mere creature is to be worshipped, and it is a heaven-daring impudence and blasphemy for papists to defend and practise it.

(I.) That God only is the proper object of worship, I shall establish by these two or three arguments.

[1.] He is called the Hearer of prayer in a peculiar manner. "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." And indeed it is only God that can hear prayer, for he is omniscient, who, by one simple and eternal act of his understanding, knows all persons and all things, in their nature, order, causes, qualities, and operations. He only it is, that is intimately and constantly present with all his supplicants, being omnipresent. How can saints and angels, for example, Paul or Gabriel, hear the prayers of many thousand saints that may be presented to them, unless they were immense in their being, omniscient, and omnipresent; which the Church of Rome dares not affirm, this being God's prerogative only. But they have another evasion; God, say they, makes the supplication and prayer known to them, that they may supplicate for them. What a ridiculous subterfuge and gross absurdity is this! For thus it behoved us to make our prayer to God, that by him our prayer may be presented to Peter, and Paul, and Gabriel. Some will say they know our prayer by intuition, by looking upon God who knows all things, and in him they know all things. Alas! what is this but in a blasphemous way to deify the creature? Seeing God only knows all things, he only is the searcher of hearts. Can any rational soul allege that a mere creature and finite being should be possessed of the incommunicable perfection of the eternal Deity? Those empty fig leaves will never be able to cover them who thus dishonour the great Jehovah, and contradict his word of truth, which plainly says that the saints in heaven are ignorant of us. "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel (that is, Jacob) acknowledge us not." (Isaiah lxiii. 16.) They know not so much as the names, far less the various supplications of the saints on earth; and sure if any knew our supplications it would be those high saints, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the like, but they know us not; and why should we pray to them who know us not? Nay, God only knows us, God only hears us.

[2.] As God only is the hearer of prayer, as he only can hear us, so he only can help us; therefore he is the only object of prayer. He only can deliver us from all our trouble. Can saints or angels, or the Virgin Mary, relieve the distressed conscience, heal heart plagues, supply spiritual wants? Therefore we are not bid call upon them; but "Call on me," says God, "in the day of trouble;



I will deliver thee." And to whom should we make supplication but to him who is mighty to save, whose eyes are upon the righteous, and whose ears are open to their cry?

[3.] It is evident that God only is the object of prayer, because he only is the object of faith, Rom. x. 14. You see the connection: "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" We may challenge all the papists in Europe to answer the force of this argument of the apostle. He that is the object of prayer, must be the object of faith; and if we pray to saints and angels, then they must be the object of our faith, and so our Gods, our Saviours, our Redeemers; which is blasphemy, and which they themselves dare not advance, though they practically maintain it. If they be not at all the object of our faith, then why do they pray to them, either by a supreme or subordinate supplication; for how shall we call on him in whom we do not believe?

[4.] God challenges this as his prerogative royal, which he will not have alienated to any creature. "I am the LORD, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." (Isaiah xlii. 8). You see, then, what they have to answer for, who sacrilegiously alienate from Him that tribute of prayer and praise that is only his due. Thus you have it cleared that God only is the object of prayer.

(2.) We may inquire further, in what respects is God the object of prayer? I answer, that God, as the object of prayer, is to be considered,

[1.] In his majesty. He is in heaven and we upon earth; we are therefore to come to him with the deepest veneration as the Maker of heaven and earth—with such impressions of his incomprehensible majesty as you have recorded, Prov. xxx. 4, "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?" Who but God can take a view of the celestial orbs above, and descend to give us a description of them? or, who but Christ is perfectly acquainted with both worlds? He descended to take our nature upon him, and ascended again to heaven in that nature, thus to settle a correspondence between heaven and earth. This seems to be a description of the majesty of his kingdom of grace; and then follows the majesty of his kingdom of providence: "Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?" &c. To the same purpose is the unsearchable majesty of God held forth throughout the 38th chapter of Job, and in the 40th of Isaiah, from the 12th verse: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, meted out heaven with a span, compre-

hended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? All nations before him are as the drop of a bucket, and the small dust in the balance; they are before him as nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity." Therefore, we are to approach to him with reverence and godly fear, as the great God who breathed us into life, and holds our soul in life.

[2.] We are to consider him in his all-seeing nature; we are to offer our desires to God under the confidence of those perfections that make him capable of observing us, knowing that every creature is manifest in his sight, and all things naked and open before him. This, indeed, overthrows that voluntary humility and worshipping of angels which the apostle reproves; for God, who searches the heart, can only know what is the mind of the Spirit. (Rom. viii. 27.) It was under a strong impression of this that Job rolled himself in dust, imploring peace to a wounded soul, and pardon to a guilty one. "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." (Job xlii. 2.)

[3.] We are to consider him in his power as almighty, and to offer up our desires to God with an assurance of his capacity to help us, knowing that he is a great God and of great power, and that his understanding is infinite. In this duty of prayer we look upon him as "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Eph. iii. 20.)

[4.] We are to consider him in his mercy and grace—in praying, to remember the great name he hath proclaimed before us of "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious." (Exod. xxxiv. 6. If he should mark iniquity, who could stand," either in his temple or at his bar? "But there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared; with the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption." He has made it one of the glories of his nature that there is no God like unto him, who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage.

[5.] We are to consider him in his holiness and justice; that his holiness hates the wicked, and his justice will punish them. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; therefore we are to wash our hands in innocency, and so to compass his altar; for if we regard iniquity in our heart he will not hear our prayer.

These, and such like, are the perfections that our thoughts should be full of, in the discharge of this duty of prayer; for "he

that comes unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Thus you see that God is the object of prayer.

2dly, It is in and through Christ that God is to be worshipped; for God absolutely considered, in his essential perfections, is not accessible; but he is so in Christ, who makes the divine majesty accessible and amiable.

This is plain, that we are to approach God only in Christ. "Whatsoever ye ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it." (John xiv. 13, 14.) Christ has also said, "Verily, verily, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." (John xvi. 23.) "I am the way," says he, come where I am; "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." "In him we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him." As God will not look upon us but in the face of Christ, so we must not dare to approach his bright and glorious dwelling-place, but in and through his Son. This is shown by that excellent type of Moses. When the Lord gave forth the law upon Sinai, you see in what a formidable manner he appeared. The mountain trembled, the voice of the Lord spake with a terrible accent out of the flame, and neither man nor beast, nor the priests themselves, durst touch the mountain on pain of death. Yet Moses had access, and by Moses Israel had correspondence with God, to let us understand that God is a consuming fire to the sons of men, and that there is no access to him but in and through Moses' great antitype, Christ, who is gone to heaven to appear as our High Priest for us; so that God, in and through Christ only, is the object of prayer. We are to offer up our desires to God in the name of Christ.

(1.) But here it is proper to inquire, What it is to pray in Christ, or in the name of Christ? I answer,

[1.] To pray in the name of Christ, is to pray in the faith of his command. He has interposed his authority that we should be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication make our requests known unto God. His word of command is our warrant, and ought to be our great motive. This word of command is Christ's authority emitted, to excite and warrant us in the performance of this duty. Even as Christ is said to come in his Father's name, that is, by the Father's warrant, command, and authority; so when we are to pray in Christ's name, it is by his warrant com-



mand, and authority. It is not merely education, natural conscience, or the power of the spirit of bondage, or any earthly interest, that must excite us to the duty, but respect to the authority of God in Christ, who requires this as his due.

[2.] To pray in the name of Christ is to pray in the faith of Christ's death and suffering as the only propitiatory sacrifice which can render our persons and services acceptable to God. All our prayers must come flowing to God in the blood of his Son; for our boldness to enter into the holiest of all is by the blood of Jesus." (Heb. x. 19.) Our prayers must be perfumed with the incense of his merit, as the only thing that was sufficient to satisfy justice, expiate sin, remove distance, and establish friendship between God and man. Therefore, to pray in the name of Christ, is chiefly to look for acceptance through the virtue and value of the blood of Christ. The chief office of his priesthood was to give himself a sacrifice for us to God; and herein lies our encouragement, that he has reconciled heaven and earth through the blood of his cross. Those, therefore, who would adventure to approach to God without Christ, or without a regard to his death and suffering, may be expostulated with in the words of Isaac to Abraham: "Here is the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" If we offer to bow down our knees and lift up our voice without Christ, the Lord may say, Here is a man and a sound of words in prayer, but where is the atoning sacrifice? where is the Lamb of God that was slain to take away sin? When we come to approach the King of heaven and earth, we must bring the King's Son in our arms. It was a sacred law among the Molossians, that whoever came to the king with his son in his arms should be pardoned, whatever offence he was guilty of; and therefore the Athenian general, being banished his country, fled to Admetus, the king of the Molossians, his deadly enemy, and prostrated himself before him, with his son in his arms, and found favour. God and man are enemies; there is no appearing before this dreadful King without his Son in our arms; but with him there is no fear of a repulse. Faith in Christ does justify both our persons and performances instrumentally, because it lays hold on Christ who justifies them meritoriously.

[3.] To pray in the name of Christ is to pray through the virtue and efficacy of Christ's intercession for us in heaven. As we are to pray in the faith of his command, in the faith of his blood, so

also in the faith of his prayer. Christ appears as our Head, in our name, to make supplication for us; and if we truly believe in him as our Advocate with the Father, we are sure of prevailing; for the Father hears him always, because of the virtue of his blood, which is a loud speaking argument, that obtains success in heaven. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Now, we must put our bills in the hand of our Advocate, before the Judge will hear us. If our prayers be put up in our own name, without the virtue of Christ's intercessory prayer, God will say, Whose image have these? But if we put them up in the name of Christ, that will be current coin, and pass in the court of heaven.

[4.] To pray in the name of Christ, is to pray in the faith of his assistance. To pray in the name of Christ, is to pray in the strength of Christ, for without him we can do nothing, but through him strengthening us we can do all things. As we are to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, so we are to pray through the grace that is in Christ Jesus. God will not hear our prayers, unless they be put up in the strength of Christ, and by power derived from the Head. We must improve Christ, not only for righteousness to make satisfaction for us, but as our strength to work abundantly in us, both to will and to do, saying, "In the Lord only have we both righteousness and strength."

[5.] To pray in the name of Christ is to pray in the faith of his acceptance. This is an essential point, to look only for audience in and through Christ, not looking upon our own righteousness but as rotten rags, desiring to be found in Christ not having our own righteousness which is after the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith. It is a sin that sometimes the best are liable to—when in prayer they have found abundant assistance, meltings, quickening, and enlargement, here they rest satisfied. But O boast not of your enlargements! Dare you appear before a holy God in these rotten rags? Though they be rags of velvet, yet they are rags still, and too scanty a garment for your naked soul. If you rest on these without Christ, let me tell you that you come to unlock the ear of God and open his heart with a wrong key. We are accepted only in the Beloved, not because we are enlarged. It is true, evangelical assistance may be a sign of acceptance, but no cause of it. Will you tell me, man or woman that think to be accepted because you were assisted and enlarged in duty, are you content to

be judged of God according to the best duty that ever you performed? Really, if you have no other plea for acceptance, you and your duty will sink to the bottom of hell. Remember it is better to be without enlargement and depend on Christ, than to depend on enlargement and be without Christ; and hence it is better sometimes to be straitened, and so driven to a trust in Christ for acceptance, than to be constantly enlarged, and so in hazard of trusting to attainments.

To pray in his name, then, is to pray in the faith of his command, in the faith of his death, in the faith of his intercession, in the faith of his assistance, and in the faith of his acceptance, or of acceptance only in him. If you pray thus, then your prayer, like Jonathan's bow, should never return empty.

(2.) It may be asked, Why are we to pray in the name of Christ? I answer,

[1.] Because by nature we are afar off, and in a state of distance from God, and we are only brought nigh by the blood of Christ.

[2.] Because this is for the honour of our Redeemer. Thus his name is above every name, when under it we pay our deepest homage, and through it we receive our greatest happiness. Yea,

[3.] Because this puts a reputation upon the divine nature itself, that our devotions should be offered and answered this way, for "thus the Father is glorified in the Son" (John xiv. 13).

*Thirdly*, I told you with reference to the object of prayer, that it is to be directed to God in Christ, through the Spirit. You have heard that prayer is to be directed to God—also that it is to be directed to God in Christ; and now we come to show you that it is through the Spirit, or by the help of the Spirit. Prayer must be by the Spirit's enlarging influences; hence he is called "the Spirit of grace and of supplications" (Zech. xii. 10). Though the profane world are loading the Spirit's help with scorn and contempt, which shows how much better they are at blasphemy than arguments, yet that scripture will stand out the banter of atheistical men: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26). As the child of God has the blood of Christ pleading for him, so he has the Spirit of Christ pleading in him; Christ interceding in heaven, and the Spirit of Christ interceding on earth. And if thus we pray



in the Spirit, our prayer must reach the ear of God, for he knows the mind of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 27). This praying by the Spirit's help is sometimes in scripture called a "worshipping God in the Spirit" (Phil. iii. 3), sometimes a "praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20).

(1.) Let us inquire what assistance the Spirit gives in prayer. This is either as to the matter of the prayer, dictated by the Spirit, or as to the manner of praying, the soul being actuated by the Holy Ghost.

1. As to the matter, the Spirit tells us what we are to pray for; for we know not what to pray for as we ought, but as he guides us into all truth (John xvi. 13, 14). It is from his influence that every one knows the plague of his own heart, that knowing it they may seek the remedy. The Spirit of God helps people sometimes to proper words, and how to order their speech before the Lord. Though sometimes they are put beyond words to unutterable groanings, and sometimes are more under the influence of the Spirit than at other times, yet frequently the Lord even directs their speech; for in this sense it may be said that the way of man is not in himself—it is not in man that speaks to order his speech, but even as the Spirit of God gives utterance; and when he is pleased to open a door of utterance, then "their heart inditeth a good matter, and their tongue is as the pen of a ready writer."

2. As to the manner, the Spirit of God directs his saints how to pray as they ought. As the Spirit of bondage he moves them with fear to flee from the wrath to come, and as the Spirit of adoption he moves them with boldness to come to the throne of grace. As a Spirit of humiliation he empties them entirely of themselves, that so he may fulfil the desire of the humble; for he prepares their heart, and then causes his ear to hear (Psal. x. 17). O sirs, your own spirit will never carry your prayers the length of heaven; for that which is from the earth is earthly, and rises no higher than the earth; but the Holy Ghost will elevate your soul to heaven! O, therefore, beg the Spirit, yield to his motions, and improve his operations. Cry to God that the north and south wind may awake; pray for some fire from heaven to burn up your sacrifice, or else it will be no true holocaust of pure incense before the Lord. The Spirit only can scatter the mist of ignorance, and drive away those flies of distracting thoughts, that your heart may be with God. Consider that these things, sirs, are not extraordinary attainments,

which the lower sort of Christians never felt ; for there are none who are Christians indeed, but they have, in some measure, the Spirit of God in them. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his ;" and wherever the Spirit is, he is the Spirit of grace and supplication ; and it follows natively upon their having the life of a convert, that they must have also the breath of a convert, a breathing after God in prayer. "Because ye are sons," says the apostle, "God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father" (Gal. iv. 6) ; and again, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii. 17).

(2.) We may now inquire, What is the difference between the assistance and liberty that the Spirit of the Lord gives, and the liberty that flows only from our own heart ? I shall endeavour to show you the difference, as far as the Lord has given understanding from his word, and from experience in this matter.

1. The liberty of the Spirit in prayer will make the creature low, and beget in it a deniedness both to the duty and the liberty found therein. O what am I, poor dust and ashes, that I should speak unto the King, the Lord of hosts ! Carnal liberty puffs up the creature, and makes it to be taken up with the liberty which it finds in duty more than with Christ, the fountain of that enjoyment.

2. The liberty of the Spirit in prayer begets high and lofty thoughts of God. As the debasing of self, so the exalting of God, is the great end of the Spirit's saving motions ; therefore he fills the soul with awful and reverential impressions of the sovereignty and majesty of God, under which the soul stoops down to the lowest cell of humiliation ; and indeed as God is exalted in the soul, self sinks down in its socket. Carnal liberty may make a man think more of his prayer than of God the object of worship.

3. The liberty of the Spirit in prayer will carve out work for the soul. Carnal liberty may make a man lazy and negligent, but spiritual liberty will stir up the soul to its work ; for the Spirit of God works in the soul both to will and to do. The Spirit of the Lord is not an idle but an active Spirit in the soul that is under his influence.

4. The liberty of the Spirit in prayer will make a soul take part with the Lord's Spirit against the unrenewed part of his nature. The man or woman that knows spiritual liberty in prayer, will know what it is to attain more conformity to God by prayer, and more victory over sin and lusts by prayer. Carnal liberty

gives a man liberty to sin, but spiritual liberty gives a man liberty from sin ; for he is a sanctifying Spirit.

5. The liberty of the Spirit in prayer breaks the heart, and then the broken heart is the sacrifice wherewith God is well-pleased. It makes it, like the heart of Josiah, tender and malleable, soft and pliable, and therefore called a heart of flesh. Carnal liberty, and natural common tears, are consistent enough with a hard heart. Water may spring from a rock, and yet it continue a rock still ; but here, in spiritual liberty, the rocky heart itself is turned to water, and the heart, like water, is poured out before the Lord.

6. The liberty of the Spirit in prayer is not in the creature's power ; no, the believer will find himself having all his natural helps and advantages at another time, and yet win to nothing of that liberty. It is otherwise with false liberty, for ordinary. For the hypocrite may, by common aids afforded him, work himself up to a frame whereby he may deceive himself, and perhaps wash himself with his own tears, and not with the blood of Christ ; he may have tears at his command. But spiritual liberty does more transcend the power of nature, for "the Spirit bloweth where he listeth," and hence it is the ordinary experience of believers, that sometimes they have met with a place where they might say, O ! there God turned away the face of his throne, and did veil himself with a cloud, so that I knew not where to find him ; and there was another place which he might call a Peniel, where he saw God face to face.

But thus I have enlarged more than I designed in speaking of the object of prayer, and also taken occasion to show how this object is to be addressed, that our prayer is to be directed to God through Christ by the Spirit—to the Father in the Son by the Holy Ghost. I should now come to the rest of those things that I proposed, in opening up the nature of prayer ; but I dare not encroach further on your patience ; I only close with a word by way of application.

O Sirs ! seek after the knowledge of God as the object of prayer ; seek to have the merit of Christ for your acceptance, and the Spirit of Christ for your assistance, in prayer, and then you shall pray successfully. Go to the Lord Jesus as the disciples did, and say, "Lord, teach us to pray." Remember that the prayerless soul is a graceless soul. Follow a prayerless person to the market to-morrow or the next day, and you will see him to be loose, untender both in his words and actions ; he can drink and swear, and



steal, and lie, without a check. If you expect to have a good market, you should be much in prayer; for whatever action, natural, civil, or religious, you enter upon, prayer should be to you, as the Baptist was to Christ, the messenger to prepare the way before thee. Those mercies will be most savoury and sweet to you which come flying on the wings of prayer; for they will fly back again to God on the wings of praise. You may suspect that you have outward blessings with a curse and not with a blessing, if they steal in at the window, and come not in at the door of prayer. If they come in at a back door, they will readily go out at a back door too. They come with a curse and go with a curse; for the prayerless and wicked man is cursed in his basket and store.

In a word, to restrain prayer before God is the nearest way to hell that I know: for prayer is the only artillery that wins heaven by violence, and takes it by force; a powerful prayer to God through Christ by the Spirit will force up the gate of heaven. Indeed, the prayers of the generality of people have little pith; they are so lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, that God cannot digest them, but spues them out of his mouth, which puts me in mind of a vision which Drexelius tells us a religious man had at prayers in the congregation. "He saw," says he, "an angel at the elbow of every one present, ready to write down their prayers and suits. Those that prayed heartily and believingly, their angels wrote with gold; such as prayed coldly, their angels wrote with water; such as prayed customarily from the mouth forward, their angels wrote also, but it was with a dry pen, and no ink in it; such as slept at prayer, their angels laid by their pen; such as had worldly thoughts, their angels wrote in dust; such as had malicious thoughts, their angels wrote with gall." Well, the moral at least is of use; for if God has a bag for our sins, as Job says, and a bottle for our tears, as the Psalmist says, surely he has a book for our prayers also, and he writes bitter things against those that pray as if they prayed not. If we must answer for every idle word we speak to one another, much more for every idle word we speak to God. It is constant and instant prayer that my text recommends; and it is such frequent and fervent prayer to God through Christ by the Spirit, that will prevail with him. The Lord enable you all then to be *continuing instant in prayer*.

## SERMON III.

## SUBJECT OF PRAYER—RULE OF DIRECTION.

“Continuing instant in prayer.”—ROM. XII. 12.

PRAYER brings into the world all those mercies that are contained in the womb of the promise. The promises of the covenant are very pregnant, full of rich blessings, and those blessings are brought forth especially by means of prayer: “for these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel.” And suppose there were no other arguments to engage people to pray incessantly, this one were sufficient, that it opens the womb of the promise, which will be found a miscarrying womb to the unbelieving prayerless soul. Prayer is one of the galleries wherein the believer walks with God; it brings heaven down to men, and carries men up to heaven; and they have never more of heaven than when they are continuing instant in prayer.

I am yet discoursing on the second general head proposed here, namely, the nature of prayer; where I promised to speak of the object, the subject, the parts, the properties of prayer; I have spoken at large of the first of these, the object of prayer.

2dly, I come now to speak of the subject of prayer, or the subject-matter thereof—what we are to pray for. Many people err in the subject-matter of their prayer; “they ask and receive not, because they ask amiss.” Balaam would need ask of God, that he might be the devil’s chaplain, to curse Israel; but behold the issue, he had an ironical concession to go on, to his own destruction. The Israelites, on a sudden, are all in a hurry for a king. Well, God gave them a king in his anger, for their punishment rather than for their protection; the king and people, at least many of them, perished together. And as many people err in the subject-matter of their prayer, so do many err in the matter of their praise and thanksgiving, which is one of the parts of prayer. We read of some who, when like thieves they had robbed others, looked up to heaven and blessed God for a good booty, that they had prospered in their sinful calling: “Thus saith the Lord, Feed the flock of the slayer; whose possessors slay them; and they that sell them say, ‘Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich.’” (Zech. xi. 4, 5.) As if one should enrich himself by robbery and

murder, or enrich himself by stealing and cheating, tricking, and dishonest methods, and then, forsooth, bless God that he is rich. That spurious brat which the devil hath begotten upon their cursed hearts they lay at God's door, as if he were the father of it. By this means people, instead of worshipping, do dishonour God, and therefore we need to consider what should be the subject matter of our prayers. In general, then, the subject of prayer should be things agreeable to the will of God, as it is expressed excellently in our Assembly's Catechism: we are to offer up our desires to God for things agreeable his will. For the Spirit makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. (Rom. viii. 27.) You have a plain scripture to this purpose in 1 John v. 14, "This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us." You see then in general what we are to ask of God: but more particularly, you will say, What are those things agreeable to his will, which are to be the subject of our prayer? In answer to this question, then, the most usual heads of request may be summed up in these four:—

- I. All things that concern the advancement of God's glory.
- II. All things necessary for our own good.
- III. All things that concern the welfare of others.
- IV. All things that are contained in the rule of prayer. These things are agreeable to the will of God, and should be the subject of our prayer.

1. Whatsoever concerns the advancement of God's glory or the Mediator's interest, this should rise first in the Christian's prayers, and be uppermost in his wishes; therefore we should pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love her. Our dearest happiness is lodged in the success of those petitions. It is according to the will of God that we pray thus, for it is according to his good pleasure that he does good unto Zion. (Psalm li. 18.) These things are agreeable to the will of the King of Zion.

2. Whatsoever concerns our own good and advantage we are to make the subject of our prayer, whether it be with reference to soul or body. As to what concerns the salvation of our soul, this we are to pray for, and everything that leads thereunto; hence we are to pray for union to the Lord Jesus Christ, pardon of sin, and such like, which are things we cannot want without being undone



for ever, saying with David, "O hide thy face from my sin, and blot out all mine iniquity." Hence also we are to pray for holiness of heart and life, a thing most agreeable to him who is the holy God and the Author of sanctification ; therefore we should pray with the apostle, that the very God of peace would sanctify us throughout in soul, spirit, and body, and preserve us blameless to the coming of Christ; for, says the same apostle, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." We should then pray for a supply of all grace from the fountain. As to what concerns the body and outward man, here we are to regulate prayer, and take heed that we do not over-rate any temporal mercy; for God has not declared his will in those absolute terms concerning the state of believers in this life, therefore we are to pray that the Divine care may be decisive of our lot—not to seek great things for ourselves, as Barak is enjoined (Jer. xlv. 5), but having food and raiment, therewith to be content; seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all other things shall be added. We may indeed be instant for a temporal mercy, when the granting of it does plainly bring a revenue of glory to God, as you see David, where, praying against his enemies, he says, "Show me a token for good; that they who hate me may see it, and be ashamed." (Psalm lxxxvi. 17.) We are to pray then for those outward things, as far as they tend to the glory of God.

3. Whatever concerns the welfare of others is also to be the subject of our prayer. Thus, we are to pray for our relations in particular, as Abraham did for his son, "O, that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Gen. xvii. 18.) The apostle's heart's desire and prayer for Israel was that they might be saved; and you see he prayed for them, as they were his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh. (Rom. x. 1, compared with Rom ix. 3.) We should pray that they may have a nearer relation to Christ than they have to us. The husband should pray for the wife, and the wife for the husband; "for what knowest thou, O wife," says the apostle, "whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" (1 Cor. vii. 16.) We are to pray for people in their several places; this is agreeable to the will of God. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, and prayers, and intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority." (1 Tim. ii. 1—3). Nay, Christianity obliges us to pray for our enemies; "Bless them that curse you," says Christ, "and pray for them that despitefully

use you." But special supplication ought to be made for all saints (Eph. vi. 18), though they be such as have not seen our face in the flesh. Thus Paul is said to endure a conflict for many that had not seen his face in the flesh, that their hearts might be comforted and knit together in love. (Col. ii. 1, 2.) And in particular, we are to pray for those that labour in word and doctrine, that utterance may be given them, that they may open their mouth boldly in making known the mystery of the gospel. He that loves his child will often mind the nurse that feeds it; so he that loves his precious soul will often mind and pray for the minister that brings his spiritual portion to him, that his breast may be filled with the milk of divine fulness. Now, in these three heads that I have noticed the whole subject of prayer may be comprehended, namely, the glory of God, our own good, and the welfare of others; but that I may not seem to straiten such a wide field, I add,

4. That all things agreeable to the rule of prayer are agreeable to the will of God, and to be the subject of our prayer. If you ask now what is the rule of prayer, you have a good answer in your catechism, "The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's prayer:" where you see both the general and the special rule for regulating the subject-matter of our prayer.

(1.) The general rule is the whole word of God. A man who understands his Bible and has his memory well furnished with the scripture, can never be at a loss in the practice of prayer either for want of matter or suitable expressions. The apostle exhorts, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;" and if the word dwell in your heart, then out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. If people would get fastened upon their hearts but one scripture in a day, and employ it in prayer, which, one would think, were easy to be done by the weakest memory, it would in a little time furnish them with a stock of matter. Some pretend they cannot pray, which is a sign they make little use of their Bible. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." (Col. iii. 16.) There is indeed a mighty emphasis in what is here added, "in all wisdom." We are to understand the *sense* and *use* of the holy scriptures — the *sense* and meaning of them, for otherwise we will utter in prayer words without knowledge; the *use* and design of them, for then only does the word of Christ dwell in us in wisdom,

when we know how to apply it to the ends and purposes of its revelation. For though we be capable of praying with the words of of heature, yet if we do not pray with the sense and meaning of [the and the of God in these words, we give to God no other than the apostle, t. of fools. But then,

soul, sp<sup>ic</sup>.) The special rule whereby people may be furnished with Chri<sup>st</sup>subject-matter of prayer is that which is called the Lord's prayer (Mat. vi. ; Luke xi.), in which prayer all things to be asked are comprehended. I have sometimes formerly, when lecturing on the Lord's prayer, spoken of the manner how it is to be used, and also the way how it is ordinarily abused. I am not to enter on that dispute again at present, designing rather to be practical than polemical. Only this I will say, I am so far from being against the use of the Lord's prayer, that providing people would say it with understanding, I would rather wish that they would kneel down with their family and say nothing but the Lord's prayer, than that they should use no prayer at all. However, seeing it is not given us merely as a form, but mainly as a rule whereby our prayers are to be regulated, they that know and understand this prayer need not be at a loss for the subject-matter of their prayer, for it is the most perfect directory for the matter of prayer, as will appear in these following particulars.

[1.] Because we should approach to God under an impression of his great majesty and our own distance and unworthiness, and go under a sense of the relation we bear to him as his creatures, and therefore we are to pray in this manner. "Our Father which art in heaven ;" beginning with such expressions as import our drawing near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father able and ready to help us, praying with and for others.

[2.] Because God is the chief Being whose glory should be uppermost in the hearts of all who own him to be their heavenly Father, we should seek the advancement of his glory in this manner, "Hallowed be thy name," praying that God would enable us and others to glorify him in all that whereby he makes himself known, and that he would dispose all things to his own glory.

[3.] Because God's name cannot be hallowed where his kingdom and rule have no place, therefore we are to pray in this manner, "Thy kingdom come"—praying that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it, and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.



[4.] Because the kingdom of God is not come where his will is not sincerely and cheerfully obeyed, therefore we are to pray in this manner, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven"—seeking that God would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven.

[5.] Because God's will cannot be done on earth among men, unless their earthly tabernacle be supported by his tender providence, therefore believing that the earth belongs unto the Lord, and that all the good creatures therein are at his disposal, we are to pray in this manner, "Give us this day our daily bread"—begging that of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.

[6.] Because men do not live by bread alone, therefore, as we are to pray that our bodies may be fed with bread out of the basket of his providence, so we are to pray that our souls may be fed with pardon out of the basket of his covenant, saying, "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive them that sin against us"—pleading that God for Christ's sake would freely pardon all our sins, which we are the rather encouraged to ask when by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.

[7.] Because it is not enough to have sin pardoned unless we be kept from sin for the future, therefore we are to seek deliverance from the power of corruption and dangerous suggestions, saying, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"—entreating that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted.

[8.] Because God's glory should be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, in all our petitions, therefore we are to end as we began, saying in this manner, "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen"—taking our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers praising him; and in testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard we should say, Amen.

Thus in exposition of this prayer I have kept by the words of our catechism, for the help of your memory. Here, then, is a large field for the subject-matter of your prayer; and sure I am, if people seriously ponder these things, and be sensible of their own needs, and sensible of God's mercy, they can never want subject-matter for prayer.

## SERMON IV.

PARTS OF PRAYER—PETITION, CONFESSION, AND THANKSGIVING  
—PROPERTIES AND KINDS OF PRAYER.

“Continuing instant in prayer.”—ROMANS XII. 12.

3dly, I COME now to the third thing proposed for opening up the nature of prayer, and that was to inquire into the parts of prayer. And I think I need not insist long upon this, for it is generally known that the parts of prayer may be summed up in these three, viz., petition, confession, and thanksgiving.

1. Petition, or an opening up of our desires to God ; and these petitions and desires of the soul in prayer import,

(1.) A sense of want, for what a man knows not the want of, that he will not pray for. They who think themselves rich, and think they stand in need of nothing, being increased with goods, as it is said of the church of Laodicea (Rev. iii. 17) ; these people either pray none at all, or else they pray and do not imagine that they want what they pray for, and so they mock God.

(2.) Petition not only imports want, but need ; the poor believer is not only sensible of his want of spiritual blessings, but he sees an absolute need of them, because without these he cannot be happy either here or hereafter. Therefore, as he sees himself to be wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, so he sees the need of Christ to be for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to him, and so prays for the supply of his necessity.

(3.) Petition imports a high estimation of those blessings we implore. There is something in them attractive to a man's best affection. Spiritual mercies, such as pardon of sin, peace with God, grace and glory, should be the one thing which we desire of the Lord and seek after (Psal. xxvii. 4), and should have the highest room both in our affection and petitions, for we must have them. God cannot be actively glorified by us without them, and without them we cannot be happy. Though the blessings of this life may have a place in our affection, yet it is a very far inferior one, because, comparatively, they have no place at all in our happiness.

(4.) Petition imports an inability to help ourselves, and a full dependence upon God for his help. “Lord, I know,” says Jere-

miah, "that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." This is very true of all the mercies we pray for, that every good gift and perfect gift comes from above. Our pardon is only from him—"I, even I, am he that blotteth out all your transgressions for my name's sake." Our sanctification is only his work, for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" therefore our whole request must be directed to Omnipotence, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." The protection we always need is only from him, for he only is "able to keep us from falling" (Jude 24). In a word it is "the living God that gives us all things richly to enjoy."

(5.) Petition imports a disclaiming of all merit. They are desires that we offer up to him, not demands upon any supposition of worthiness in ourselves. "We present our supplications before thee," says Daniel, "not for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies" (Dan. ix. 18). All the blessings we have come freely, so that in begging them, we should lie down in our shame and our confusion covering us. This, then, is one part of prayer, namely, petition.

2. The second part is confession of sin; both of original sin, which has left a common stain upon our nature, and of actual transgressions that discover original sin to be within us. Our confessions of sin ought to be embittered by the aggravations under which we are guilty: that our way of doing it was in defiance of a Judge, in contempt of a Saviour, against the clearest light, and against the dearest love. Confession of sin imports,

(1.) Self-accusation and self-condemnation. And, indeed, by judging and condemning ourselves, we prevent the devil from accusing us; he is called "the accuser of the brethren," but when we accuse ourselves his mouth is stopped. Yea, by judging ourselves and condemning ourselves we prevent God; for when he sees a poor creature humbling himself for sin, and passing sentence against himself, instead of ratifying the sentence that the poor thing is passing against itself, he passes a sentence of absolution. Judge yourselves, that ye be not judged.

(2.) It imports a knowledge of the law of God, the commandments of which are exceeding broad; for we cannot know sin but by the law, and by the law is the knowledge and sense of sin—as also the knowledge of the gospel of Christ, for the conviction of sin which the Spirit of God gives to the world is that they do not be-



lieve in Christ (John xvi. 8, 9). Thus, confession of sin flows from the sense and persuasion of the great authority that the law and the gospel of God have over us ; this makes the soul cry out with Paul, " O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death ?"

(3.) Confession of sin imports a believing acknowledgment and recognition of God's justice, that should he cast us off we have deserved it: " Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest" (Psal. li. 4). True confession of sin clears and justifies God, though he should destroy the sinner. " Righteous art thou, O Lord."

(4.) This confession imports a shame for being so unlike God we come unto, and a desire that we may be renewed after his image. The man lies down in his shame before God, and his confusion covers him, acknowledging how unlike he is unto that holy nature, that pure Being to whom he approaches, and also desiring renovation of soul ; for true confession carries hope in the bosom of it. We are not to confess sins, only as a convicted malefactor to the Judge, assuring ourselves of death, and looking for no favour, but as a sick man to a physician, that hopes to be cured by him. Wicked men confess their sins as Judas, but despair swallows them up, they look for no mercy ; but when a child of God confesses, he says there is hope in Israel concerning this, as David, " If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who can stand ? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" Psal. cxxx. 3, 4.

(5.) Confession of sin imports a resolution, through grace, to sin no more ; for he that confesses and forsakes shall find mercy. It is a mock confession, if a man resolves to go on in the sin he confesses. Many people think their confession makes atonement for former sins, and therefore they may safely take on a new debt, like the whore in the Proverbs, " I have offered peace-offerings ; this day I have paid my vows ; come, let us take our fill of loves," our fill of sins. This is a devilish and damnable confession. The language of true confession is, " Henceforth we will not go back," " What have I to do any more with idols ?"

3. The third part of prayer is thanksgiving, or, as our catechism calls it, " thankful acknowledgment of his mercies:" which imports,

(1.) A sense of the greatness of God's mercies. " O, how great

is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men!" (Psal. xxxi. 19). O, how great are spiritual mercies in the eyes of a holy praying person! How blessed is the man whose transgression is pardoned, whose sin is covered! what a great mercy is it to be justified freely by his grace! O, who can show forth all his praise!

(2.) Thanksgiving imports a sense of the freeness and undeservedness of his mercies. As his mercies are great and glorious, so they are free and gracious. We have the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. It is of his own will that he hath begotten us by the word of truth. His working in us both to will and to do, is of his good pleasure. Yea, eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Nay, even the mercies of this life which we thank him for are free and undeserved; for we are less than the least of all his mercies.

(3.) This thanksgiving imports a high valuation that the soul conceives of God as excellent in himself and kind to us—"Who is like unto thee?" "Among the gods there is none like unto thee." The enlightened grateful soul takes up something of the greatness and goodness of God in the mercies he receives, and views him as the inexhaustible fountain of all.

(4.) This thanksgiving imports adoration and praise. "Come, let us bow down before him; give unto the Lord glory and strength, give unto the Lord the glory due to his name." The soul, when filled with holy gratitude for the divine goodness, would be glad to have all the creation joining with it to praise God, and would invite sun, moon, and stars, men and angels to praise him; he so admires the mercy of God in Christ.

(5.) It imports an acknowledgment of our subjection to him, and his superiority over us, as well as his bounty towards us. This is what the created vassal owes to the great creating superior—to trumpet forth his praise in the most lofty strain, elevated flight, and accented hymn imaginable. O, what is man, that he is mindful of him, and the son of man that he should visit him! That he who humbles himself to behold what is done in heaven, should humble himself so far lower as to look upon man. Will God in very deed dwell with man in the earth? Will the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, look to him that is of a poor and contrite spirit? Had the soul which is enlarged in thankfulness as many

tongues as there are drops in the ocean, and as many souls as tongues, he would employ them all in praises and thanksgiving to God. Here is our duty, and oh, that it were more our attainment and exercise. You see, then, the several parts of prayer.

4thly, The fourth thing proposed in opening up the nature of prayer was the properties of it; and here I shall not multiply particulars, but only adduce the two that are in the text and doctrine, namely, Our prayer is to be *constant* and *instant*—"Continuing instant in prayer."

I begin with the latter of these.

1. Our prayer should be *instant*; which seems to import these two things (1.) That our prayer should be hearty; (2.) Fervent.

(1.) *Hearty*. Our tongue and heart should keep time and tune. "Give ear to my prayer," says David, "that goeth not out of feigned lips" (Psal. xvii. 1). If in prayer you be as Ephraim, a silly dove without an heart, and give God only the calves of your lips, they will be as unacceptable as Jeroboam's calves at Dan and Bethel, which provoked the Lord to anger. The Jews have this sentence written in their synagogues, where they meet to pray, "A prayer without the heart is like a body without a soul. What a deformed, loathsome spectacle is a body without a soul! truly so is your prayer without your heart." God regards principally the heart; man minds the expressions most, but God minds the affections most. "Let us draw near to God with a true heart," says the apostle. Let us lift up our hearts, with our hands, unto God in the heavens. God looks not so much to the elegance of our prayers, how neat they are, nor to the geometry of our prayers, how long they are, as to the sincerity of our prayers, how hearty they are. The heart is the metal of the bell, the tongue is but the clapper. Under the law the inward parts were only to be offered to God in sacrifice, the skin belonged to the priests; so God loves truth in the inward parts. Prayer without the heart will be a sacrilege, not a sacrifice. When the heart is right, then indeed the voice is sweet in God's ear: "O! my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song ii. 14). "The Lord is nigh to them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth."

(2.) *Fervent*. This seems also to be imported in praying instantly. Prayer must be fervent, and hence it is called a crying



unto God, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee," says David. The true beggar is very earnest for spiritual alms ; he will not let God go without a blessing. When you are praying for pardon, O how should you pour out your soul ! "Have mercy upon me, O Lord," says David, "according to thy loving kindness ; after the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out mine iniquity. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean ; wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow." If you get not pardon, you perish eternally ; if sin be imputed, you are damned. O ! then how earnest should you be. When you are praying for grace and purity, O how fervent should you be, considering how offensive sin is to the glorious God, how destructive it is to your precious soul, and in what absolute need you stand of holiness. It is the intentness of the spirit that gives efficacy to our petition ; fervency in prayer is like wings to the bird, by which it bounds up to heaven. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The mother will let the child alone, if it only whimper and whine a little in the cradle ; but when it cries outright, then she hasteth to take it up ; so it is here. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles." This poor man cried, there is his fervency ; the Lord heard, and delivered, there is his prevalency. Other duties are a serving of God, but prayer is a seeking him, and they that seek him early shall find him. A little voice does not cause a loud echo, neither does a lazy prayer procure a liberal answer. Impunity prevailed with the unjust judge ; much more will it prevail with a righteous God. Though God be almighty, yet a fervent prayer has through grace held his hand ; "Let me alone," says God to Moses, "that I may consume them." (Exod. xxxii. 10.) "Who held the Lord ?" says Austin, "Moses' earnest prayer was the cord which, in a manner, bound the hands of God." Indeed the lack of this fervency is the loss of many prayers ; the lazy petition tires before it comes half way to heaven. But here a caution will be necessary ; the fire of your fervency must be from heaven, not such strange fire as Nadab and Abihu offered to the Lord. It must not be the voice of nature, but the voice of the Spirit : this fervency, if it be prevalent, must be spiritual in its rise, and spiritual in its aim.

[1.] Spiritual in its rise ; it is only that which descends from heaven which will ascend to it : this fervency must be wrought by the Spirit of God. Natural fervency may proceed from our own hearts, but spiritual fervency comes from the Spirit of God, whose help is absolutely necessary, as I showed last Sabbath day.

[2.] It must be spiritual in its aim. We must be fervent and instant for spiritual things. Our prayer must run parallel with God's promise; for when it is a sighing for the accomplishment of his promises, then it is spiritual. Our Lord's prayer has five petitions for spirituals, and but one for temporals. God has promised spiritual things absolutely, therefore we are to pray for them absolutely; and, O! what a mercy is it that God, though like a wise father, he gives not his children leave to cry instantly for the thorn of this world which might prick us, and for the candle which might burn us, yet he gives us liberty, nay, commands us, to give him no rest, to be instant, urgent, and fervent with him, that our persons may be justified freely, our natures sanctified thoroughly, and our souls and bodies glorified eternally.

2. Our prayers ought to be constant. This is another property assigned in our text, "Continuing in prayer." Now, this constancy seems to imply these two things—Unwearied submission and perseverance in prayer.

(1.) Submission, or submissive and humble waiting on God's leisure; for as he that believeth maketh not haste, so then shall we reap, if we faint not. We are not to turn away from God in a pet, and restrain prayer before him, if we get not presently what we pray for; but with humility and submission to attend upon his majesty, whose sovereignty cannot be limited to our time and ways, but will give his answer in his own time and way. This continuing in prayer, then, implies an attendance upon him, and waiting at his door-post with submission and humility. We must own that if God gives what we seek, it is a favour; if he refuse, it is just; therefore we are to wait upon him humbly. The hasty proud beggar never got any thing at God's door. It is observable how the children of God, though they were never so rich in grace, yet were poor in spirit and humble in their language and carriage when they approached to the Lord of glory. "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak to the Lord, who am but dust and ashes," says Abraham. "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies which thou hast showed to thy servant," says Jacob. "I am a worm, and no man," says David. "So foolish was I and ignorant even as a beast before thee," says Asaph. "I am more brutish than any man, I have not the understanding of a man," says Agur. "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips," says Isaiah. They have all learned the same lesson, as scholars in the same school; they all speak the same language, as children of the same father; but then,

(2.) As this constancy or continuing in prayer, imports an humble submissive waiting God's leisure, so it imports perseverance without cessation. A Christian's prayer may have an intermission, but it is not to have a cessation. This fire of devotion, like that on the altar, must never go out night nor day. Gregory writes of his aunt Trucilla, that her elbows were as hard as an horn by frequent leaning upon a desk when she prayed. There is no duty enjoined a Christian for his constant trade so much as prayer—"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit." (Eph. vi. 18.) And again, "In every thing by prayer and supplication make your requests known unto God." And again, "Pray without ceasing." But why is all this? Would God have his people do nothing else but pray? Must they cast by their calling and be always upon their knees? No, but by constant praying, or praying without ceasing, we understand,

[1.] That the soul must be always in a praying frame. The soldier has his weapons ready, though he be not still fighting with his enemy. The church's lips are compared to a honey comb. (Song iv. 11.) A honey comb does not always drop, but it is always ready to drop.

[2.] By praying constantly we understand making prayer your trade. The husbandman has his vacant hours, and times for meat and sleep and other necessary things, and yet he is said to be always ploughing, and sowing, and reaping, because he makes it his trade; so we may be said to pray constantly, to pray always, when we make prayer our trade and employment every day.

[3.] We pray constantly, when no business is undertaken without prayer. We are God's servants, and we should ask his leave in all we do. The Christian, like the chemist, extracts all good things out of this one body of prayer.

[4.] He that prays constantly, or continues in prayer, has his daily set times for prayer. The morning and evening sacrifice was called the continual sacrifice; read Numb. xxviii. 4. The true Christian has his set meals for his soul every day, as well as for his body, and it is a pity that the body should have more meals than the soul. Sure I am a morning and evening meal is the least we can allow to our poor souls, that they famish not. Prayer is the key in the morning to open the door of mercy, and prayer is the bolt at night to shut us up in safety.

[5.] He that prays constantly does upon all occasions through the day put up his supplications to God. He has his ejaculation,



his holy parenthesis, wherewith he interlines his outward labour. O but this may be improved as a noble privilege, and may redound to a soul's unspeakable advantage. Whatever company he is in, whatever work he is about, he may be now and then giving a stolen look towards God, darting up his desire to heaven according to his wants and indigency; this would both prevent much evil and procure much good; and I dare say it is an exercise that believers are not altogether strangers to. So much for the properties of prayer: and thus I have opened up in short the nature of prayer in the object, the subject, the parts, and properties of it; which was the second general head.

III. The third thing proposed was to speak of the various kinds of prayer. This being one of the chief things I had in view, to clear up to you the several kinds of prayer so as you may be convinced of the obligation you lie under to exercise yourselves unto the several kinds of prayer. I cannot undertake to finish this head at present. Only that which I design to do is, 1st, To propose the several kinds of prayer; 2dly, To prove them from arguments which may bear home our obligation to perform them.

I begin with the first, which shall be all I shall do at present, namely, to propose and lay before you the several kinds of prayer. You may take up the several kinds of prayer, then, in these following and usual distinctions. There is ejaculatory prayer, and that which is more stated and solemn.

1. I say there is ejaculatory prayer, which, as I hinted before, is the sudden flight of sorrow, desire, or joy, that may go up from the heart in a moment towards God. This sort of prayer is both a great sign that a man is spiritually minded, and a great mean of our being spiritually minded. (Rom. viii. 6.) This kind of prayer ought to be mingled with all our other duties. Thus, in reading the word, you may waft up every command you read with a hearty wish, as David did, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." (Psalm cxix. 5.) You may wind up every promise you read with a petition, "Lord, make out and remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope." Yea, when you are hearing the word, ejaculatory prayer may be made; the heart may put up a short desire to that purpose, "Lord, come along with the word, powerfully strike home upon my heart;" and even in every natural and civil action, as well as religious, this kind of prayer is seasonable, and it seems to be included in that precept—"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." The frequency

of these ejaculatory prayers gives a religious perfume to the Christian's life, and keeps him in the fear of God all the day long. But, then,

2. There is a more stated and solemn kind of prayer, which leads me to a second distinction, namely, that solemn and stated prayer is either solitary or social ; solitary or secret, which a person does alone, or social, which we carry on in the company of others.

(1.) There is solitary or secret prayer, spoken of Matt. vi. 6, where our Lord says, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." There are things in dependence between God and a man's own soul, and therefore they need to retire from the world and communicate their heart unto God. O but more such prayer would help you all to profit by word and ordinances. Many sermons are lost for want of a soul's taking them home to their closet and turning them to prayer. The main trade of a Christian, as one says, is his home trade, which is spent in secret between God and himself ; here he drives an unknown trade, he is away to heaven and home again before ever the world knows where he has been.

(2.) There is social prayer, which is managed in company with others, and this leads me to a third distinction. Social prayer is either more private, or more public.

[1.] By private social prayer I understand the duty of families according to Joshua's resolution, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." People complain of the want of public reformation, the decay of godliness, the inundation of profaneness ; but the best remedy against these evils is domestic piety, for the church and commonwealth consist of families. We should all sweep before our own doors, act for God within our sphere, and this were the way to advance national reformation. But many masters of families, as if they had not sins enough of their own, must needs espouse the guilt of their whole family. Some would rather hear their children and servants crying in hell torments than convene them together to cry to God for their salvation. But beside prayer in families, I find from Scripture that persons of several families should meet together for prayer. This also may be brought under the head of more private prayer. The promise of Christ has left a particular credit upon this kind of prayer, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven : For where two or three are gathered

together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 19.) Fellowship meetings for this kind of prayer is very much out of doors among people notwithstanding of the divine warrant, the precept and promise of God annexed to it. I have several times, now and then, spoken of it, and laid it home to you as a duty which makes the consolation of Christ and the fellowship of the spirit to circulate in the worst of times. Read Mal. iii. 15—17. But,

[2.] Another kind of social prayer is public, when people meet with a religious assembly to call on the name of the Lord. This is one part of our solemn devotions, and has been so in all ages; and because of the necessity of public prayer in the congregation, the apostle argues against doing it in an unknown tongue, because they that were illiterate or unlearned could not be edified. (1 Cor. xiv. 14—17.)

Thus I have laid before you the several kinds of prayer; ejaculatory prayer, closet prayer, family prayer, public prayer.

And now the second thing which I proposed on this head, and the main thing to be done upon it, was to prove these four kinds of prayer by irrefragable arguments, and set home our obligation to them, but this will give abundant matter for another exercise, and therefore I shall not enter upon it at present. Only ponder what has been said, and give yourselves in earnest to this necessary duty. Let not your hearts, like Jonah, fall asleep in the side of the ship, when you should arise and call upon your God, especially in secret and in your families, when you are gone from the sanctuary. It were a successful work to us if we could all pray as that holy man of whom I read, Mr. Bradford, of whom it is said that, when he was praying, he never left confessing till he found in his heart some sorrow for sin; he never left petition until he got some sense of the worth of mercy, and never left thanksgiving till he found some solace and joy in God. O sirs, there is enough of ripe fruit in God's covenant for you all: but if you expect that any of it should fall down upon you in mercy, let prayer shake the tree, and then you may expect that the fruits of his favour will come popping down upon your head and hearts, for he hath not bid the seed of Jacob seek his face in vain. Therefore look to the Lord for grace to help you to be *continuing instant in prayer*.



## SERMON V.

## ON EJACULATORY AND SECRET PRAYER.

“Continuing instant in prayer.”—ROM. XII. 12.

It may yield matter of real concern and terror to our mind that multitudes are guilty of a woeful neglect, and others of a dreadful indifference, in this duty of prayer. This is a prime source of that irreligion and wickedness that overspreads the land we live in, for which the Lord may justly pour out his wrath upon all ranks of people. To avoid which no course can be more proper and effectual than to return by our prayers to the God of heaven, whom we have highly offended by our sins. “Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee.” (Job xxii. 21.) The best way to prevent wrath, and procure good from the hand of God, is to acquaint ourselves with him, and the best way that I know to be well acquainted with him is for people to give themselves to this duty of prayer, and to follow the apostle’s direction in the text, that is, to be “continuing instant in prayer.”

2dly, I come to prove those several kinds of prayer which I proposed, namely, ejaculatory prayer, secret prayer, family prayer, and public prayer.

1. I begin with the first of these, ejaculatory prayer. This kind of prayer is not much controverted, and therefore I shall not say much of it; however, it is much neglected and omitted, and therefore I shall not altogether pass over it. There are these four things, then, that may engage us to, and persuade our consciences of the duty of ejaculatory prayer.

(1.) Then, this duty may be cleared from the command of God. This kind of prayer is certainly contained in those general precepts of praying always, praying without ceasing, and continuing instant in prayer; “In every thing, by prayer and supplication make your requests known unto God.” *In every thing*; and again, “In all thy ways acknowledge him.” We cannot well conceive of these precepts without including this kind of prayer, which the Lord’s people are to give themselves to at every turn. For they fill but little time and hinder no other work. But,

(2.) This kind of prayer may be cleared from the examples of it which we have in Scripture, where holy men of God, you will

find, were given to it. See Gen. xlix. 18, where Jacob is blessing his sons, and telling them what should befall them in the latter days. He takes breath, and makes a pause with an ejaculation, "I have waited for thy salvation, O God." These ejaculations are the holy apostrophes wherein believers do sometimes turn their speech from man to God in an internal and inarticulate way. Another example you have in holy Nehemiah (Neh. ii. 4) ; when he had the king's cup in his hand, he could steal a moment for the service of a greater by praying to the God of heaven. He had a great favour to seek of Artaxerxes the king, and the king asked him what he would have, but it is remarkable he would not open his mouth to the king till he had opened his heart unto God. It was by such an ejaculatory prayer and speedy desire as this, that David consigned over his enemies to vengeance ; "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Abithophel into foolishness. (2 Sam. xv. 31.) This kind of prayer, then, ought to be our practice upon any emergency.

(3.) This kind of prayer may be cleared from the necessity thereof. It is necessary in regard of the sudden danger whereinto people are many times brought, which will not afford time for continued prayer. When you are surprised with any danger, whether of sin or suffering, should you not look up to God by ejaculatory prayer, and beg his help and deliverance ? It is necessary in regard of the frequent working and stirring of corruption in the heart of God's children. Many sinful, lustful, atheistical, blasphemous thoughts are apt to rise in their heart, which calls for sudden prayer. It is necessary in regard of the manifold mercies, blessings, and deliverances, which unexpectedly we meet with from God, even in common providence, which give occasion for ejaculatory prayers and thanksgivings. This kind of prayer is an excellent mean of avoiding danger, overcoming difficulties, and even prospering in your lawful designs, as you see in that instance of an honest servant in Gen. xxiv. 12. "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day ;" and when he came speed, you see his ejaculatory praise and thanksgiving, ver. 26, 27. David knew this kind of ejaculatory prayer and praise to his sweet experience, and therefore says, "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall be continually in my mouth."

(4.) This kind of prayer may be cleared from the utility of it. This liberty is a great privilegè, and the practice of it may turn to wonderful advantage. You must not think that these loose and un-

connected petitions are in vain; for there is not so much as a word in our tongue but the Lord knoweth it altogether (Psal. cxxxix 4). Yea, there is not so much as a thought in our heart, or a desire in our soul, but God is privy to it. I might tell you several advantages of this kind of prayer; as,

[1.] God's gracious acceptance and remuneration of the same: as David's ejaculatory prayer against Ahithophel, that he would turn his counsel to foolishness, was graciously heard and accepted, for his counsel was defeated. The poor penitent thief upon the cross had a short ejaculation—"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" and it was graciously answered, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Christ, upon the cross, darted up a short ejaculatory prayer for his murderers—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and, as an answer to it, many thousands of them have been converted, and we expect a more full answer of this prayer in the further conversion of the Jews. When Noah was cursing Ham (Gen. ix.), he had a short ejaculation for the blessing on Japheth, "God shall persuade Japheth to dwell in the tents of Shem;" which prayer has been answered, and shall be answered to the end of the world. We Gentiles fare the better for that prayer. Such prayers, though short and sudden, seldom return empty.

[2.] Another advantage of it is this, that these ejaculatory prayers are special means for the improving of every opportunity and occurrence of providence to our spiritual advantage, and for keeping us in the fear of God all the day long. These short breathings may fit us for a long race; they keep life and warmth within, and give believers meat to eat which the world knows not of.

So much, then, for clearing of this kind of prayer; but before I leave it I would give you a twofold caution on this head.

Beware, in the first place, that you content not yourselves with these ejaculatory prayers, as if there were no need of any other prayers, or any longer prayers, either in the morning or evening, in lying down or rising up. As a little needful refreshment between hands does not jumble out people's ordinary meals, so these ejaculatory prayers must not jumble out your closet or family prayers. God will not be mocked.

Beware, in the second place, of formal and profane ejaculations—from the lip and not from the heart. As some people content themselves when they rise and lie down with an overly, "Lord, be



merciful to me," and the like ; so, some people, in the whole track of their conversation through the day, have their mouth filled with formal and profane prayer, such as "Good Lord," "good God," "Lord bless me," "God help me," and the like ; and yet perhaps in the meantime rather upon a subject of laughter than upon an occasion of prayer. Remember, sirs, that this kind of prayer, instead of being an hearty ejaculatory prayer of that sort which I am speaking of, it is a direct profanation of the name of God, for which without true repentance, God will not hold you guiltless. So much then concerning ejaculatory prayer.

2. The second kind of prayer that I promised to clear up is secret and closet prayer ; and as secret and family prayer was mostly in my view when I chose this text, therefore I design, as the Lord enables, to clear them up in a more full manner, that your obligation thereto may be charged home upon your consciences. As for secret prayer, then, it may be cleared up and proved many ways.

(1.) From the express command and appointment of Christ, and the reasons with which it is enforced, and you may find them mentioned together (Matt. vi. 6), where you have,

[1.] The command. "But I say unto you, When thou prayest, enter into thy closet." It is given with an air of authority ; he speaks as a lawgiver, in distinction from Moses, and in opposition to the Pharisees. Nothing can be required more plainly and punctually, more directly and authoritatively ; and surely every signification of his will, who is the Lord of all and Head of his Church, is binding upon all Christians. For his authority should oblige our consciences to the duty he commands. The will of God in this matter is signified in many other places of scripture : "I will that men pray everywhere" (1 Tim. ii. 8) ; and if everywhere, then in their closets and retirements. This divine incense should perfume every room, and should ascend to heaven from chambers as well as churches. People should consecrate every room in their house to be a place of private devotion. As Abraham reared an altar to God wherever he came, so should we make every place a place of prayer ; but,

[2.] We have here not only the command, but the reasons of it, which will contribute so much to confirm the duty that I shall take particular notice of them, and we may find four grounds for secret prayer here : 1. The conveniency of privacy—"the door being shut." 2. The relation between God and the praying soul

—"Pray to thy Father." 3. God's omniscience—"He seeth in secret." 4. His munificence—"He shall reward thee openly."

1. The conveniency of privacy and retirement, which may be gathered from the particular care that Christ wills us to have anent retirement—"Shut thy door." Let none come near thee to disturb thee in thy conversing with God, nor overhear thee, if possible; for in true closet prayer there should be a confining of the voice as well as of the body, for if people pray so loud in their chambers as to be heard in the streets, this is not secret prayer, seeing it does not attain the end of this retirement, which is an approving of the heart only to God, and avoiding all shows of hypocrisy and vain-glory. It is true, I do not altogether disapprove of people's using their voice in secret prayer; for I know that sometimes for people to use their voice in secret, so far at least as to hear themselves, may be an outward means to prevent wandering heterogeneous thoughts, providing this may be done without ostentation. For everything that looks opposite to self-denial and singleness in this great affair, is to be shunned. Secrecy is here required by shutting the door upon ourselves, or shutting up ourselves, so that none in the world should know what is a-doing between God and the soul. Now, there are two things that make privacy very convenient, or a secret retirement very proper, for this duty of prayer.

(1.) It is a wonderful help to self-abasing thoughts, gestures, and expressions. Self-abasing thoughts get some room in secret; for when a man finds his heart hard, dead, dull, and disorderly, he can in secret make a pause, chide himself, complain of his malady, and then return back again to his purpose, and revolve it over and over again, till he get his heart brought to some better tone; all which would not be so convenient and seasonable, when others join in the duty. Secrecy also favours a man sometimes to self-abasing postures and gestures. A praying person, for an evidence of greater humiliation, may find it requisite to prostrate himself before the Lord, and use such gestures perhaps as would not be fit in the sight of others; also in secret he may come to use such self-abasing expressions as perhaps would not be proper for others to hear. There are many things wherein a praying person wins to his freedom in secret, which otherwise he cannot have.

(2.) Secrecy is a great help against distraction. The fancy quickly closes with every diversion in prayer, and therefore it ought to be performed, as much as possible, without distraction.

When Abraham went to worship in the mount, he left his servants in the valley, lest they should obstruct his communion with God. It is true, I do not mean that secrecy will free you from all distraction, for if we take our hearts with us we take a principle of diversion; but the worse our hearts are, the less do we need any noise or visible objects to draw us from God. This is the first ground of secret prayer here enjoined by our Lord, drawn from the conveniency of retirement.

2. Another ground and reason is drawn from the relation between God and a praying soul—"Pray to thy Father who is in secret."

(1.) If a child has any special business with his Father, he will take him aside from company, or whisper to him, that none may hear him: so God's children have their errand to God that none must know of. As Ehud said to Eglon (Jud. iii. 19), "I have a secret errand to thee, O King," so a gracious soul may say, "I have a secret errand to thee, O my King, my God, my Father—a sin to confess, a mercy to beg, that I would not have another to know of." In this case we may say, "Keep the doors of thy lips from her that lieth in thy bosom." (Micah vii. 5.) There are some things that a saint tells God of, that he will not acquaint father or mother, or wife, or friend with, though they be to him as his own soul, but only his heavenly father; he hides nothing from him, he tells him his best and worst, and opens his heart to him, because he knows his heart. "The spouse of Christ," says one, "is modest, and cannot so freely let out herself to her Beloved before others as in a corner." "The heart knoweth its own bitterness," says Solomon, "and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy." But, then,

(2.) As a child communicates his mind more to his father in secret than before others, so a father communicates himself more familiarly to his child in a corner. God has something to tell the believer sometimes that the world must not know of. Joseph, when he made himself known to his brethren, could not refrain himself; he cried, "Tell every man to go out from me. (Gen. xlv.) Then he wept aloud, and said, I am Joseph, I am Joseph, whom ye sold." So it is between our Joseph and his brethren, Christ and his members. When he comes to them, and passes by former unkindness, backsliding, and rebellion in them, and manifests himself, saying, in effect, "I am Jesus, I am Jesus whom ye sold and crucified—this melts and humbles their rocky hearts, and, being broken, he pours



in the oil of consolation. It is a remarkable word you have, Isaiah li. 2, where God says of Abraham, "I called him alone, and blessed him." When God had called Abraham alone from all his friends, then he blessed him; and you know what the blessing of Abraham was, even a covenant blessing. Such blessings God uses to distribute to his saints, when he has withdrawn them from company to a corner. This made an ancient profess, that "a town was his prison, and a solitary place his paradise." (*Mihi oppidum carcer, solitudo paradisus.*)

3. A third reason that our Lord gives for this command of secret prayer is drawn from God's omniscience—"He sees in secret," and consequently is omnipresent also. The God to whom we direct our prayers in secret, is in secret with us, he is not a God far off but nigh at hand. He sees into the secret corner of the heart. Indeed secret prayer is an explicit acknowledgment of the divine omniscience—"Thou God seest me." (*Gen xvi. 13.*) There are many reasons for secret prayer included in this one reason.

(1.) God sees in secret, therefore he takes notice whether we pray in secret or not. God looks after you when you go to such a secret chamber and solitary place, saying, as it were, What! will that person go so often into such a secret place, such a room or closet, and never find time to fall down upon his knees and visit me? Has he so much to do in the world, that he has no leisure to look up to heaven? God knows what you do in secret, and what you leave undone.

(2.) He sees in secret, therefore he has seen your secret sin. Your close and closet sins are naked and open before him, and should not your closet prayer testify your sound repentance? As those who sin publicly must be rebuked before all, so those who sin secretly should mourn in secret. We may hide sin from men, but we cannot hide it from the Lord; therefore to him we should go and pray with David, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." (*Psalms xix. 12.*) There is none of you but has your secret sins.

(3.) He sees in secret, and therefore you do not lose your labour. Though men do not know where you are and what you are doing, content yourself with this that God and conscience are competent witnesses of your uprightness. Remember when you pray in secret, you do not your good work *incognito*. "All my desire is before thee," says David, "and my groanings are not hid from thee." (*Psalms xxxviii. 9.*) Your God takes notice of you. Secret

prayers in a chamber are as well known to God as public prayers in a church.

(4.) He sees in secret, therefore secret prayer is a solemn acknowledgment of God's omniscience and omnipresence. When you pray in a corner you testify your faith of God's ubiquity, and look upon him as filling heaven and earth, which we are commanded to believe. "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I should not see him? do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Yea, saith the believing soul, wherever I am I cannot run away from thee, and wherever I am I may approach to thee. God is still with us by his omnipresence, and we should be still with God by our prayers. I read of a good man who used to say, "My God and I are good company." O! but God is good company, sirs, and we should testify our love to his company by being still with him, as he is still with us. "When I awake, I am still with thee." O give God you company, sirs, since you have always his. Some think very little of God's company, for they give God very little of theirs.

4. The last ground and reason of secret prayer with which our Lord enforces this command is drawn from God's rewarding openly—"Thy Father that seeth in secret will reward thee openly." "He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him." "He will reward thee;" so that our praying to him in secret will be worth our while, it shall not be a fruitless service. Yea, "he will reward openly;" though you pray secretly, you shall be rewarded openly. O but there is much in this reason.

(1.) He will reward openly by giving a visible answer to secret prayer. There was no witness of Moses's intercession for Israel in the mount, but behold, all the congregation were witnesses of God's hearing his prayer for sparing an idolatrous people. None saw Jacob wrestling with the Angel, but all might observe the loving embrace between him and his hostile brother Esau, which was the answer of his prayers. Cannot some of God's children say, I find it is not in vain to seek God in private, for I obtained such a mercy from him; and I may call it *Naphtali*, for with great wrestlings have I wrestled with God and prevailed. As Hannah said of Samuel, "For this child I prayed;" so for this mercy I prayed,—it is won by prayer, and shall be worn with praise.

(2.) He sometimes rewards openly by discriminating provi-

dences in a common calamity. God ordinarily takes them to the chamber of protection, who retired themselves into the chamber of devotion. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over past" (Isa. xxvi. 20). The secret mourners in Zion get a name upon their forehead. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

(3.) God rewards secret prayers openly by conferring upon secret wrestlers more evident gifts and graces of his Spirit, and such as shall even be taken notice of by others. They that are most instant in secret prayer are sometimes most evident in open prayer; such as, with Moses, converse with God in the mount shall have shining faces. When a soul has been wrestling with God in a corner, the effects of it are so remarkable, that others must take knowledge that he has been with Jesus, he brings away with him a smell of heaven in his talk and walk; and it must needs be so, for a conversing with God is of a transforming nature: "All we, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18). God's institutions are as glasses through which we may see the face of God. Now, there are two sorts of these glasses, broader and narrower; the broader glasses are public ordinances, and the narrower glasses are these private duties; in both these the soul may seek and see the face of God, and so become like him. Sometimes a soul may miss Christ in public ordinances and find him in secret: "It was but a little that I passed from them, and I found him whom my soul loveth;" and when he is found by the soul, he makes it have a sweet perfume;—then his smell is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed,—the savour of religion is upon him; and as he excels carnal men at all times, so now he excels himself. Where has such an one been? surely he has been conversing with God. As all godly persons are more excellent than their neighbours, so those godly persons who wait much on God in secret, they are more excellent than most of their godly neighbours.

(4.) God will reward secret prayer openly at the day of judgment. Then they shall be openly acknowledged and accepted, when the whole world shall be summoned before him, and every one shall receive according to what he has done in the body, whether it be good or bad. Then the Judge will single out the seed of



Jacob, and tell them that they have not sought his face in vain. These people and I were mutually acquainted long ago, and I remember the kindness of their youth and the love of their espousals; they have visited me in duty, and I shall visit them in mercy; mutual embraces of love have passed between them and me in secret when none in the world knew it. Whenever they had any doubt, or fear, or want, or affliction, I heard from them in a closet or corner. When others have been sporting away their time in vain recreation, and damning their souls with profane practices, these ransomed believers, when they could steal a little time, ran away to a corner, and there made their moan to me, and sometimes I sent them away with a cheerful heart and a thankful tongue; and now take notice, all ye angels and men, behold, I accept their labour of love, pardon all their imperfections, and set them in my immediate presence in eternal mansions. They who separated themselves from the world shall now be separated from the goats, and set at my right hand. They who thus longed to enjoy me, shall live in the enjoyment of me to all eternity. O blessed day! O transcendent reward! Will not this be a rewarding openly,—“Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Thus, you see the command of our Lord, and the reasons with which he enforces this duty of secret prayer, which were the first arguments I proposed for clearing up of this duty. I find I cannot proceed further at this time. Only meditate on that which you have heard. Family prayer and public prayer will be a sweet and easy task, if once you win near to God in secret, as you see our Lord here commands you,—if you own the authority of Christ, to whose government you profess to resign yourself, and by whose merit you say you hope to be saved. If there be any force in these powerful reasons of his, you cannot but think yourself obliged to pray in secret, and will not easily be able to shun the evidence of this duty. Alas! many are like the nightingale in the woods, of which it is said that she sings most sweetly when she thinks any one is near her. An hypocrite can pray best when he is taken notice of by men; you will seldom see him at work with his own heart in a closet. Some go to hell with a candle in their hand, Christ's colours in their hats, and his word in their mouth; they have a form of godliness, but want the power of it; a form of prayer, but want the spirit of it; a shell, but want the kernal. O remember

that thousands eternally perish besides those that are openly profane; for though they make a profession of prayer, yet they know not what it is to wrestle with God in secret. O, then, when you go home, choose retirement, and begin this happy work, and then go on *continuing instant in prayer*.

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## SERMON VI.

### CONTINUATION OF SECRET PRAYER—FAMILY PRAYER.

“Continuing instant in prayer.”—Rom. xii. 12.

As naturalists observe of the salamander, that though she lives constantly in the fire, yet she is never the hotter, so we may observe of the most part of gospel hearers, that, though they live constantly under the word of God, which is compared unto fire, because it warms the affections and burns the corruptions of some—the most part, I say, are never the hotter, never the better for all that they hear. Let them be called to their duty never so frequently, never so fervently, yet they give a deaf ear, they take no care to answer God’s call. You have been called several times since I entered on this text to the duty of prayer, but alas! we may begin the call anew, for we fear you pray no more than you did for all that is said and certified to you from the word; but this text will be a witness against prayerless persons, who are hereby called to “continue instant in prayer.”

(2.) Secret prayer may be cleared from example as well as precept. This has been all along the practice of good men from the beginning of the world. I shall instance some of them:

[1.] Take an example of Abraham, the father of the faithful, who conversed with God alone, Gen. xviii. 22. There he was left alone, and it is said, “He stood yet before the Lord, interceding with God for that wicked place Sodom;” and Gen. xvii. 3, there you find him falling on his face, and God talking with him; he had much communion with God in secret prayer.

[2.] Take example from Isaac, the son of the promise (Gen. xxiv. 63). He went out unto the field to meditate in the evening;

or, as some of you have it in the margin of your Bible, he went out into the field to pray. And indeed the word in the original signifies both to meditate and pray; there is a near affinity between these two sweet duties, prayer and meditation.

[3.] Take example of Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 24), he was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him till the breaking of the day. Who this man was Hosea tells us: It was God—angel—yea, it was God himself; by his strength he had power with God (Hos. xii. 3, 4). It was the angel of the covenant; but how did he prevail? The same prophet says that with prayers and tears he wept and made supplication. Jacob came off a conqueror. O, unequal match. Indeed, the God who was conquered was Jacob's only assistant.

[4.] Take example of Moses, that man of God, whom God knew face to face. How often do we find God and Moses together, and none with them (see Exod. xxxii. 7, 9, 11). God bade Moses let him alone, as if he was binding the hands of Omnipotence, and you see his prayer that follows—he would not let him alone. What thinks Moses, since God tells him that secret, how Israel had made a calf and worshipped it, and so were in hazard of being destroyed. Since I am now with God, I will ply the throne of grace, and improve my interest for that poor people, which accordingly he did.

[5.] Take example of David, a man after God's own heart; how much skilled was he in secret prayer;—he prevented the dawning of the morning and cried. The title of the 142d Psalm is, "Maschil of David; a prayer when he was in the cave." Many of his Psalms of prayer and praise were first composed in caves, wildernesses, and solitary places, and this for instruction to us, as Maschil signifies, to instruct us in the duty of secret prayer.

[6.] Take example of Elijah, whom God honoured so far as to take him up to heaven in a fiery chariot. It was by secret prayer that he restored the widow's son from death to life (1 Kings xvii. 20). He carried him up to a loft, where he abode, and there cried to the Lord. It was a great undertaking; none but God could raise the dead; however, by wrestling with this God in secret he obtained what he sought, and yet the scripture records he was a man of like passions with us.

[7.] Take example of Jeremiah, who was sanctified from the womb, yet he wished for a lodging in a wilderness, that is, in some solitary retirement, that there he might take his fill of weeping for



the sins of his people (Jer. ix. 1, 2). And again he says, "My soul shall weep in secret places for your pride (Jer. xiii. 17).

[8.] Take example of Daniel, that man greatly beloved of God. Although he might justly plead, there is a lion in the way, and I shall be slain in the den for my work in the chamber, yet he feared nothing, but would rather venture on his prince's displeasure and the lion's hungry stomachs, than omit his chamber worship; read Dan. vi. 10; see for connection ver. 7, 8, &c. Well, but did Daniel blow a trumpet and hold out a flag by setting open his windows to declare to men that he was about his prayers? Was not this contrary to the rule of secret prayer, where we are commanded to shut the door? and may Daniel open his window to be seen? Nay, sure we are this good man did not open his window out of vain-glory to be seen, or out of hypocrisy, but to show his resolution, courage, and constancy; outdaring this impious and impudent command of men, he did not fear to be seen now in so plain a case, nor would he think shame of his devotion now when the honour of his God was at stake. What a miserable case are they in who will rather give themselves to the roaring lion the devil, and incur the wrath of the King of heaven, which is more terrible than a thousand hungry lions, than solemnly perform this useful duty of secret prayer!

[9.] Take example of others in the New Testament as well as in the Old. Peter, a famous apostle, went up to the house-top to pray,—to the top of a flat house, which was a private place, and equivalent to a closet (Acts x. 9). In that prayer he fell into a trance, and in that trance he got a vision concerning the calling of the Gentiles. Many sweet mysterious discoveries of divine love and grace have been made to the Lord's people when they have been employed in secret prayer. Cornelius was praying alone when the angel appeared to him; and it was remarked of Saul, as the first evidence of his conversion, "Behold, he prayeth."

[10.] Take example of our Lord Jesus himself, who left us an example of obedience, as well as suffering, that we should follow his steps. He prayed much, and prayed often in secret; this is particularly recorded by all the evangelists with a remarkable variety (See Matt. xiv. 23; Mark i. 35; Luke v. 16, and vi. 12). Wherefore was all this? was it not principally for our sakes, that we should follow his example, who yet had not all the reasons for prayer that we have?

(3.) Secret prayer may be cleared, as from precept and example, so from the advantages thereof; for,

[1.] Secret prayer is a great evidence of sincerity and uprightness of heart. In praying with others, we own our common relation to, and dependence upon, God; but in praying in secret, we own our personal relation to, and dependence upon, him. As the proverb is, "He mourns truly who mourns in secret" (*Vere dolet, qui sine teste dolet*); so we may say, he prays truly who prays in secret. A sincere praying person will pray where there is no eye to observe him but the eye of God, and none to notice him but God; this is a proper evidence of sincerity, when the motives and principles of action are conscience of duty and regard to God.

[2.] Secret prayer is advantageous for secret purposes, personal wants, and difficulties, which it does not concern others to know; therefore every man ought to go to God upon his own errand. Every man has private sins to confess to God, the plague of his own heart, the secret workings of corruption, atheism, ignorance, enmity, and unbelief. The troubled mind will mostly vent itself in secret prayer.

[3.] Secret prayer is proper for drawing forth every grace into exercise in the believer. It keeps alive a holy reverence and awe of God; it cherishes love, faith, hope, joy, and all the graces of the Spirit; it is a secret way of thriving in grace and improving in spiritual life, like dew upon the mown grass.

[4.] Secret prayer prepares the soul for every other spiritual work and performance. When you come out from secret worship unto family and public worship, then you may hope to come best prepared, to have your heart better disposed, and to meet with a greater blessing from God. O, sirs, you would find public ordinances more improving, more advantageous to you, if you were frequently with God in secret, praying for a blessing upon them.

[5.] Secret prayer is a powerful preservative from sin. It is a privy key whereby we open the treasury of all God's blessings, and fetch out strength to war against corruption. The more frequent and fervent any Christian is in secret and closet prayer, the less power will sin have over him. Joseph had no opportunity but of secret prayer in Potiphar's family, and yet was enabled to preserve his innocence under a powerful assault of temptation.

[6.] Secret prayer is the Christian's relief in affliction, for there he gives vent to his troubled soul, and fetches in supplies from

heaven. Hezekiah was nigh to death, and received a message from God to set his house in order, and he turned his face to the wall from all company; and notice, "he prayed to the Lord." Yea, the apostle directs it as a proper course for relief, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray."

[7.] Secret prayer is advantageous in this respect, that ordinarily the Lord's people enjoy most sweet communion with God therein. When Daniel was praying, he had sweet communion with God; yea, God intimated his everlasting love to him, and said, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved" (Dan. x. 11; ch. ix. 20—23).

[8.] Secret prayer is that wherein the saints of God do ordinarily enjoy the freest and fullest communications from God. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and wrestle with him in secret. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?"

(4.) It may be cleared from the danger of neglecting secret prayer.

[1.] Neglect of secret prayer is an evidence of secret infidelity and unbelief. The evil heart of unbelief lies at the bottom of every departure from the living God. Do we indeed believe the divine omniscience? are we thoroughly persuaded that God is present in secret as much as in public, when we do not pray in secret?

[2.] Neglect of secret prayer while we profess to pray with others is an argument of great hypocrisy, to regard the eye of man more than the eye of God. Do you pray in public because the eye of man is upon you, and your fellow-creatures are witnesses of what you do, but neglect secret prayer, because no eye of man sees you? Alas! does the eye of man signify more to you than the eye of God? know that God searcheth the heart.

[3.] Neglect of secret prayer is an evidence of an earthly mind and addictedness to this world. Why do you not pray in secret? It may be because you are very seldom in secret, and rarely enter into your closet at all; you live in a constant crowd of worldly business and succession of cares. This says you mind earthly things, your spirit is sunk into the earth and swallowed up of this world. This world has more of your hearts than the other world.

[4.] Neglect of secret prayer evidences your coldness of zeal, and little regard to God. Some pray not alone because they pray with others; at least they easily dispense with the neglect of secret prayer, if they have prayed otherwise. Does not this show that you



are afraid that God should have too much, and that you would put him off with as little as may be. O! it argues little zeal for his service and concern for his glory, who gives liberally and is ready to forgive. O, Sirs! how do you dispense with this neglect? How do you satisfy the challenges of your own mind when the command is so clear and plain?

[5.] Neglect of secret prayer makes you lose all the benefit of it, all the closet enjoyment of God; for how can you expect the benefit without the duty? The sweets of religion go always along with the power and the exercise of it. Who can expect to find the pleasantness of wisdom's ways, if they do not walk in these ways of wisdom?

[6.] Neglect of secret prayer makes people to forfeit the blessing of public ordinances; for you set religion at odds with itself, and make one part clash with another. You neglect secret prayer perhaps to make room for public, and so build one duty to the ruin of another; but by this means you frustrate your own prayers, and spoil the duty you perform. God punishes secret neglects by withholding public blessings.

[7.] Neglect of secret prayer issues in a languishing and declining state of soul. I believe there are few or none of the Lord's people but may tell it, to their sad experience, that upon the neglect of secret prayer for any time, they have found the frame of their soul out of order, sin prevalent, grace languishing. I believe this is the true cause of many people's sad complaints of the barrenness of their soul and unprofitableness under the means of grace. They wither and pine away in their iniquity, under the absence of divine influences, and under the marks of divine displeasure upon this account.

[8.] Neglect of secret prayer issues in gross atheism, and terminates in the height of wickedness. Casting off all fear of God and restraining prayer before God are joined together (Job. xv. 4). And when people thus cast off the fear of God, God casts off the care of them, and gives them up to themselves, to wander in their own counsel; when they leave God, God leaves them, and woe to you when I depart from you, saith the Lord. May these things have some weight with you; may the Lord bear them home upon you so as you may give yourselves to this heavenly and spiritual exercise, wherein the power of religion does for the most part exert itself. What I have said on this head shall be a standing record against those who omit secret prayer.

3. I come now to enter upon the third kind of prayer, and that is family prayer. All your objections against family prayer would soon vanish if the Lord would effectually convince your consciences of the duty itself, and therefore the principal work is to fasten the obligation under which you stand to the performance thereof upon your heart, and O, may the Lord himself do it effectually! Ministers have a double work to work among people through the Lord's assistance, two things of the greatest importance; the one is to drive people to duty in point of mean, and the other is to drive them from duty in point of righteousness. If people wholly neglect these duties, it is a sure evidence that they are in the way of ruin and destruction; and on the other hand, if they perform these duties, and in the meantime make them their Christ, their righteousness, it is as certain an evidence of damnation, for if our righteousness be by works, then Christ is dead in vain. However, because duties of this nature are the means wherein the Lord uses to communicate his saving blessing, and the neglect thereof puts people out of the way wherein Christ's righteousness and eternal life uses to be conveyed, and seeing also that it is an undoubted mark of a Christless soul to be entirely negligent of them and make no conscience thereof, therefore we must in the name of the Lord set home these duties in their clearest light, that you may not pretend ignorance. Family prayer, then, may be established and grounded upon these four things, which I may defy any rational soul to shun the evidence of. Though I confess it is more than moral suasion that will oblige people to discharge the duty in earnest, yet if the Lord would bless these four arguments, they may prevail with some; namely, (1.) Natural reason. (2.) Scripture warrant. (3.) The advantage of family prayer. (4.) The danger of neglecting it.

(1.) Natural reason, or natural religion, may teach this, though we should use no scripture argument; for,

[1.] Families are distinct societies by God's own institution. When God brought Eve to Adam, and blessed them, he made the first family of the earth; and for some of the first ages of the world the church of God was confined to families. Now it cannot but be strange and unnatural that there should be any society of men of divine institution, not obliged to acknowledge God and call upon him. Is not God to be worshipped by all societies of men as well

as single persons? Is there not a proper homage due to God, the Lord of the world, from every order and society of men of his appointment and institution, and are we not obliged to own him in every capacity and relation of life?

[2.] As families were the first society of men, and so bound to worship God as such, as well as churches and collections of saints, so families have a near relation to, and an extensive influence upon every other society, and hence family worship is still the more reasonable. All other societies of men are made out of this original and fundamental one. Churches and kingdoms consist of many families, and such as the families are, such will a church, kingdom, and other greater societies be; and the neglect of family religion is the principal reason of national corruption and degeneracy.

[3.] All this is so plain to natural light that the heathens had their household gods as well as their national and city gods. Alas! shall poor dim-sighted heathens think it highly rational to have dunghill gods in their houses, and shall not men professing the true religion of the true God own their own omnipresent God, by setting up an altar to him in their houses?

[4.] Families have special occasions peculiar to themselves. Are there not family sins besides private and personal, and public sins—vain delights, angry passions, rash words? Are there not many family mercies, as health, peace, liberty, plenty, the increase of family relations, the prosperity and success of family affairs. recovery from sickness, and the like? Are there not many family wants and afflictions? Some visited with sickness, or with worldly losses? Do not all stand in need of daily supplies of life, and recruits of mercy? The stateliest habitations are not exempted from the calamity of fire, nor the richest from the violence of thieves, nor the most religious from manifold accidents of life. Now should they not pray together that sin together, and join in solemn humiliation and confession of sin who join together in the daily commission of it? Should they not make common acknowledgments to God, their common benefactor and friend, and offer united prayers and thanks? Should not family sins, family wants, family afflictions, family mercies, make people to set about family prayer to their God, that the secret of the Lord may be upon their tabernacle, and that they may dwell safely from the fear of evil? “All people will walk every one in the name of his God, and shall not we walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever?” (Micah iv. 5.)



[5.] And upon the whole, does not the light of nature instruct us in this matter that there is a God, a supreme Being, and that he is to be feared, loved, and worshipped, and that not only singly but socially, in families as well as alone, or in greater assemblies? Does not natural religion teach every rational soul who has the charge of a family to take care of the souls under his charge? (Lam. iv. 3.) Shall even the sea-monsters draw out their breast, and give suck to their young ones, and shall Christians be so cruel to the souls of theirs, as to neglect this household duty? Thus, I say, natural reason may instruct us in this kind of worship; but,

(2.) Consider scripture warrant and authority, and here we may notice scripture command, scripture type, scripture prophecy, scripture assertions.

[1.] Scripture command. We are commanded in our text to continue instant in prayer; we are to observe the season of prayer, whether in closet, or church, or family. "I will that men pray everywhere" (1 Tim. ii. 8)—if everywhere, in all places, then sure in their houses and families. "In every place shall incense be offered to my name and a pure offering" (Mal. i. 11). Are not families here included? Surely they are. But farther to clear this command to family prayer, see Col. iv. 1, 2: there the apostle directs himself to masters of families, and calls them to continue in prayer, and to watch in the same with thanksgiving. This they are to do in the exercise of their proper trust towards their children and servants, who are expressly mentioned at the same time. And hence another apostle proposes the duty of husbands towards their wives from this very consideration, "that their prayers be not hindered" (1 Pet. iii. 7). In a word, we are commanded to pray everywhere, and so in families; and commanded to pray with all prayer, and so with this kind of prayer; but,

[2.] If the precept seems not so direct, then notice scripture types—the institution of the daily sacrifice under the law amounts to a clear proof (Num. xxviii. 2, 4). Besides the solemn worship at set times, the Jews were required to worship God morning and evening, and to take every man a lamb for a house (Exod. xii. 3, 4.) Every man a lamb for an household or family.

[3.] If scripture types, be not sufficient, let us proceed to scripture promises and prophecies to this purpose; it is promised or prophesied of the New Testament church, that every family shall be a temple wherein God will be worshipped (Zech. xii. 12). The land

shall mourn, every family apart, or, as it is in the Hebrew, *families' families*. They shall shut up themselves apart for devotion. "At that time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people" (Jer. xxxi. 1). I will be the God of their families, what is that to say?—It is a gospel promise, and implies worship, for relation to God infers adoration of him—"He is thy Lord, worship thou him;" and again, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God." If he be their God, he must be the object of their worship; and so if the God of their families, the God of their family worship.

[4.] If scripture promise and prophecy be not enough, then let us proceed to scripture example. The example of Christ, the Head of the church, of whom all the family in heaven and earth are named, is strictly binding upon us. Christ is called the Master of his house, and his disciples are called his household: "If they call the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matt. x. 25). And that he prayed with them is expressly told us: "And it came to pass as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him" (Luke xi. 18). He was alone from the crowd who followed him, but prayed in private with his family (See also Luke xi. 1). Thus you see Christ used to pray with his family. But farther, the examples of good men in scripture are remarkable. The example of Abraham, to whom God gave this honourable testimony: "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. xviii. 19). See the example of Jacob, (Gen. xxxv. 2, 3.) You hear also of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." You have the example of Job, "Thus did Job continually" (Job i. 5); or, as it is in the margin of some of your Bibles, *All the day, all the days of his life*. You have the example of Cornelius; he "feared God with all his house" (Acts x. ii.), he prayed to God with his family, and in the 30th verse, he prayed in his house.

[5.] If scripture example be not enough, let us look next to scripture assertions. I shall name but two scripture assertions, which make this duty evident. One is, Psalm lxviii. 6, "God setteth the solitary in families:" which shows that the providence of God calls for family worship. Why does God put people in this relation of husband, or wife, or servants, or children, in a family? has he not made all things for himself? if families are societies of

divine institution, do they not need the divine benediction? Men without family worship do cross God's design in appointing this sweet domestical constitution and relation. Another remarkable assertion is, that Christian families are churches, Rom. xvi. 5, "Greet the church that is in their house;" and Philem. 2, "The church that is in thy house;" and again, 1 Cor. xvi. 19, "The church that is in their house." All our houses and families then should be churches. Now a house where there is no altar for God's worship is not a church or a house of God, but a synagogue of Satan. We cannot call a family a church unless it be a godly family; and it is so called from the analogy and resemblance it bears to a church, from the worship of God maintained therein. Without God's worship in your house, you are not a church, and so not members of Christ, but like heathen, for churches are societies devoted to God, and employed for God. Now there are three things necessary to the well-being of a church—doctrine, discipline, and worship; these are necessary to the well-being of a house and family, viz.,

Family *doctrine*, which people are to make conscience of by reading the Scriptures. O, sirs, English Bibles are not now so scarce as when a good man gave a load of hay for a leaf of the Bible; it is better to be without bread than without Bibles. Family doctrine is also to be maintained by catechising your children and servants, as long as they need this kind of milk.

Family *discipline* is necessary. Reason teaches us, "that every man should bear rule in his own house" (Esther i. 22). And the head of a family is to rule in the fear of God, countenancing every thing that is good and praiseworthy in your children and servants, and discouraging every thing that is evil in them; and thus endeavour to improve your authority in putting iniquity far away from your tabernacle.

Family *worship* is necessary to make a house a church. Every master of a family is to be a prophet, a king, and a priest in his own house. As a prophet, he is to make conscience of family doctrine and instruction; as a king, he is to make conscience of family discipline, and employ his authority for God; and as a priest, he is to make conscience of family worship, in offering up spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise. O may all your families thus be churches,—every family a house of God, a house of prayer! Consider, if your families be little churches, then God will come and



dwell with you in them ; for he has said concerning the Church, " This is my rest, here will I dwell." If you make your houses little churches, you will make them little sanctuaries " (Ezek. xi. 16). If you have not a church in your house, Satan will have a seat there. It is commonly said, " Where God has a church, the devil has a chapel ; " but it may be more truly said in this case, Where God has not a church, the devil will have a chapel ; for if the devil find your house empty of good, empty of godliness, he will take to himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they shall enter in and dwell there. And for you that are a solitary people, who dwell alone by yourselves, that are not set in families, O endeavour to have a church in your chamber, a church in your closet. When every man repaired the wall of Jerusalem over against his own house, we read of one that repaired over against his chamber (Neh. iii. 30). Pray, and read, and catechise yourselves. Well, sirs, you that have families, endeavour, as you have heard, to make them churches, to dedicate them to God. Thus family worship and prayer is established from Scripture warrant and authority, while you consider Scripture precepts, Scripture types, Scripture prophecies and promises, Scripture examples, and Scripture positions.

(3.) An argument for family prayer may be drawn from the advantage of it and the blessing that attends it.

[1.] Family prayer brings down blessing and prosperity, not as though God were tied to religious families, but God usually visits them with his salvation. Scripture and example testify this : " He will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron, he will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great " (Psal. cxv. 12, 13). And again, " The voice of salvation and rejoicing is in the tabernacles of the righteous." Prayer sanctifies family enjoyments and family afflictions, it is the best guard to our comforts and support to our times.

[2.] Family prayer is the best way to promote family piety ; it has a natural tendency to spread the savour of God through families, to beget the fear of God in their souls, and to cherish holy desires after God and Christ. Would you see your children and servants prosper in the way of God ? Would you have your children God's children, and your servants God's servants, and faithful to their trust every way ? Would you have your whole family a household of faith ? Then endeavour to keep up the constant worship of God therein.

[3.] Family prayer would promote religion in the world and propagate it everywhere. If all larger and greater societies were collected out of religious praying families, O how would it improve the church and the whole world ! If ever we see a national reformation, it must first begin in private families.

[4.] Family prayer has sometimes been signally owned of God, by remarkable protection and appearances in its favour. Many have found sweet communion with God in family worship, some have received the first impression of grace in family prayer. I read of a worthy person in England, a lady of honour, who received the first saving impressions, and dated the time of her conversion to God, from her attendance on family prayer in the house of a pious non-conformist minister. And it is a very well known and remarkable history that Polanus relates of an earthquake, wherein a mountain was violently hurried beyond other mountains, overturning a whole village of ninety houses and families, except the half of one house, where the father of a family, with his wife and children, were prostrate on their knees praying ; so true has that been which Solomon says, " The wicked are overthrown and are not, but the house of the righteous shall stand " (Prov. xii. 7). As God blessed the house of Obed-edom for entertaining the ark, so does he bless the family that worships him in spirit and in truth.

(4.) Arguments for family prayer may be drawn from the danger of neglecting it.

[1.] You daily contract guilt by this neglect. Are you not plainly wanting in duty to God ? Will any man venture to say, after all that has been adduced for proof, that it is not a duty, and that he is not obliged ? If your judgments are convinced, then neglect must be a sin. If your conscience approve the thing, then you neglect acknowledged duty ; and all the while you live in the neglect, you continue to sin ; and the longer you continue to sin, the greater is your guilt, every day's neglect runs you deeper in God's arrears, and with this aggravation, that it is known wilful sin against the light and conviction of your own mind, and without any reason, apology, or excuse.

[2.] The danger appears in that you have a charge upon your hand which you must give account of. God makes masters as truly watchmen as ministers, and if they fail, God will require their blood at their hand. O what an uncomfortable review will you have at last who have still neglected this necessary duty ! Will

not so palpable a guilt fly in your faces and stop your mouth? How will you part with your prayerless family when you come to a deathbed?—to part with those whom you never prayed with, will make a sad meeting again before God your Judge. What account will you be able to give before his tribunal above?

[3.] Neglect of family prayer is an evidence you have no love to your family. I believe you would not have your love called in question; but do you love your family, your wife, your children, your servant, and yet not pray with them? That must be a strange love that is without prayer—a sensual, carnal, unhallowed love. If you loved them, you would be concerned for their spiritual welfare, and earnest with God for a blessing.

[4.] While you neglect family prayer, you are wanting to yourself and your own interest. Prayer to God in your family might make you have a pleasant and peaceable life of it, whereas now perhaps you are tormented with jarring and division in your family. What makes contention, strife, and animosity between one member of a family and another,—between husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant? Indeed it is owing either to a total neglect or a careless performance of this duty of prayer. Much fervent prayer would tend to make your whole family dutiful both to God and man. How can you expect to thrive or live happily, if you do not pray for your family's conversion, nor beg daily blessings, with them and for them. If any of your family prove holy and religious, no thanks to your care, it is owing to the rich and sovereign grace of God; but you have not the honour of its being the answer of your prayers.

[5.] While you neglect family prayer, there is no distinction between you and the most profane people in the world. It is the character of the wicked that they call not upon God, and what mark of distinction is there between your family and those of the loosest and worst of men? When the master of a family neglects family prayer, then the members of the family will readily neglect secret prayer; and so there comes to be no prayer at all in his family, and thus there is no visible distinction between you and the rankest atheist.

[6.] The danger appears in this, that you expose yourself and your family to that curse of God, which is threatened against prayerless families: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name"



(Jer. x. 25). It is a dreadful prediction. Here is wrath threatened, and it is not ordinary wrath, but "fury;" anger boiling up to the highest degree of revenge. Here, again, is the measure of it—"Pour out thy fury"—importing plenty and abundance of terrible wrath, flood-gates of indignation opened and poured out. Oh, what would come of Dunfermline, if this fury were as universal as the neglect of prayer is! Yea, it imports not only that it is great but irresistible wrath; it is like a descent from above, that can no more be stopped and avoided than a shower of rain from the clouds. There is no stopping these cataracts of heaven, no quenching the fire of his wrath against irreligious families, when the Lord renders his anger with fury, and his rebukes with flames of fire. But further, what is all this for? what means the heat of this great anger? Is it for idolatry, murder, drunkenness, blasphemy, or some heinous crime? No; it is for sins of omission, not knowing God, and not calling upon God. Oh! miserable are the families, then, that call not upon God.

Oh but, you'll say, we see prayerless families prosper and flourish and live bravely, and have all things at command; yea, they prosper, some of them, more than others, neither is the rod of God upon them. I answer, the Psalmist himself was indeed puzzled with an objection of this nature, till he went to God's sanctuary and understood their end, and God's end in this; but know, sirs, that God's forbearance is no acquittance; a reprieve is no pardon; their foot shall slide in due time, says the Spirit of God. God bears long with some sinners for wise ends, till the vessels of wrath be fitted for destruction. God will be in some men's debt till another world, they shall have their good things here and their torments hereafter. Again, remember that this curse upon prayerless families is oftentimes invisible and secret. God curses all their blessings, the creature is not sanctified to them, for every creature of God is sanctified by the word and prayer; and therefore prayerless people have no blessing or outward comfort sanctified to them, and yet the saddest invisible curse is upon their soul. A blinded mind, a hardened heart, a seared conscience, are the fruits of God's heaviest fury; it is Pharaoh's plague, and next door to hell. Read Deut. xxix. 19, 20, and Jer. xxiii. 19, 20. Though they do not consider it now, yet in the latter days they shall consider it perfectly; they shall at last know it to their cost.

Thus I have laid open the duty of family prayer to you: and

I challenge the most refined enemy and opposer of this duty, if he dare, after all, say in his heart, to the satisfaction of his own conscience, that it is not his duty. I hope none that hear me can plead ignorance; and therefore, if you wilfully live in the neglect of this known duty, your own blood and the blood of your family are upon your head, and both these shall be required at your hand. Oh pray that God may make you able and willing for the discharge of this relative duty; and if after all you will not speak a word to God for your poor languishing, gasping family, though it should keep them out of hell, I leave you to that terrible justice which will shortly plead with you at another rate than we poor ministers can do, and will take vengeance on you for your wilful neglect and disobedience to the calls of God.

Oh be not loath to begin a new custom in your family, if it be a good custom. It may be you have been convinced that you ought to worship God in your families, and that it is a good thing to do it, but you have put it off to some more convenient season. Will you now at last take occasion from this day's work to defer no longer? The present season is without doubt the most convenient season. Let this be the day of your laying the foundation of the Lord's temple in your house (Haggai ii. 18), and then you may come to have it said as follows—"From this day will I bless you." The Lord enable you then *to begin, and continue instant in prayer.*

## SERMON VII.

### ON PUBLIC PRAYER—THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

"Continuing instant in prayer."—ROMANS xii. 12.

KNOWLEDGE and practice is the sum of religion; and as all the knowledge of a Christian is comprehended in that one word, JESUS, which the great apostle aimed at nothing more than the knowledge of, ("I am determined," says he, "to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified,") so all that the Christian's practice concerns may be comprehended in this one act, prayer. The whole life of a Christian is a continued prayer. Prayer is like the Alpha and Omega of the Christian's life. Whenever he enters upon the

new life of godliness, then with Saul, "Behold he prays;" when he is going out of time and stepping into eternity, "Behold he prays," saying, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." Prayer begins, carries on, and completes his life. The apostle's counsel is, "Pray without ceasing;" and again, "Pray in every thing;"—eat and pray,—drink and pray,—lie down and pray,—rise and pray,—work and pray,—read and pray,—sing and pray,—in every thing, by prayer, make your request known unto God. As if prayer was the whole duty of man; which our text also clears, while we are called therein to continue "instant in prayer."

4. The fourth kind of prayer is public prayer. This kind of prayer is more generally owned and practised than the former; and, therefore, though it be one of the most noble exercises of prayer, yet it will not need to be so much urged. However, as I have confirmed the former kinds of prayer still by a fourfold argument, so shall I do in this; and what I advance at present may tend to confirm the duty of Christian fellowship, members of several families meeting together for prayer, as well as this duty of more solemn, more public, and congregational prayer. Consider, then, (1.) That the practice of all ages confirms it. (2.) The honour that thereby redounds to God. (3.) The advantage of it to men. (4.) The power and prevalency of this kind of prayer.

(1.) The practice of all ages; for [1.] The light of nature led the very heathen to public acknowledgment of the gods they owned. It is said of the heathen mariners, "They cried every man to his god" (Jonah i. 5). The ancient heathen erected stately temples to the honour of their deities, where prayer was still a part of their public homage.

[2.] This was an eminent part of the Jewish worship (Neh. viii. 6). The priest offered up the prayers of the congregation, and their sacrifices were always attended with prayer (Luke i. 10).

[3.] We find frequent exhortation to public prayer in Scripture: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together (Psal. xxxiv. 3); "I will declare thy name among my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Psal. xxii. 22).

[4.] The Christian assemblies always prayed. When they met together this was their exercise, and our Lord promised his presence with them in the smallest number: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," yea, "if two agree on earth as touching any thing that they



shall ask, it shall be done for them" (Matt. xviii. 19, 20); which is spoken in distinction from the temple worship. The apostles not only joined in the worship of the synagogue, but had distinct meetings among themselves for prayer. Thus immediately upon our Lord's ascension, they returned to Jerusalem and went into an upper room (Acts i. 12—14), and there they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. The apostle spends a whole chapter to regulate a single circumstance of public prayer, viz., that it be in a known tongue (1 Cor. xiv.)

[4.] Our Lord chose to make his first appearance, after his resurrection, to his disciples when they were assembled together for public worship (John xx. 19); and the Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles in a miraculous manner, when they were all with one accord in one place. Many a sweet visit has the Lord made to his people when they were met together for prayer.

(2.) Another argument may be drawn from its being highly honourable to God. Honour is an outward expression of an inward reverence, and must be done before others. Secret devotion is not strictly honour but service, because it is confined to a closet; but public prayer is an open acknowledgment and solemn homage done to God. An address of many to God at once, is a public testimony to the divine perfections. When we speak together of the glorious honour of his majesty, and publically acknowledge him by our prayers and praises, a sense of his greatness and glory is preserved in the world, and propagated from age to age. It is observable to this purpose, that the holy angels are represented standing round about the throne of God, and falling before the throne on their face, and worshipping God, saying, "Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever (Rev. vii. 11, 12). The public addresses of many together is the highest honour the best creatures are capable of giving him, either here on earth or above in heaven.

(3.) Consider the advantage of public prayer to ourselves. The breath of public prayer uses to kindle a flame of holy ardour in the breasts of people, to awaken the attention and enliven the affections. Public prayer uses to unite the powers, and influence the exercises of the soul, and to be a guard to our thoughts and an incentive to our desires. Besides, as you heard, public prayer has a promise of spiritual presence, "Lo, I am with you;" "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob"

"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary:"—it is the habitation of his house and the place where his honour dwelleth: his power and glory uses to be seen in his sanctuary.

(4.) Consider the power and prevalence of public prayer, whether less public in Christian meetings upon set occasions, or more public in Christian congregations and churches. Public prayers are not only honourable and pleasant to God, but they are prevalent with him. The kingdom of heaven never suffers more violence, that when it is surrounded and besieged by many suppliants at once. When Peter was in prison, prayer was made without ceasing by the Church for him; and behold the chains fell off his hand, and the iron gate that led into the city opened of its own accord, and so God delivered him, as you see, Acts xii. Hence it is that Paul earnestly begs the joint prayers of others, and seems to expect great success thereby (Rom. xv. 30; 2 Cor. i. 11). Also the apostle James directs this as an excellent mean of relief to the sick, to send for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him. But I insist no further upon a point which, I hope, I need not here stand to confirm. Thus I have laid it before you and cleared the several kinds of prayer—ejaculatory, secret, family, and public prayer; and may the Lord help you all to continue instant in each of these kinds of prayer.

IV. The Fourth general head proposed was to speak of the necessity of prayer. And now, having proved the necessity and obligation that lies upon us to every kind of prayer in particular, I have so far anticipated myself, that I shall need to say the less on the necessity of prayer in general, and therefore I shall not be large on this.

\*The very light of nature might instruct us in the necessity of prayer; and if arguments drawn from natural philosophy and the common sense of mankind were not becoming a minister of the gospel, the apostles would never have quoted heathens in holy Scripture. We find Paul citing Epictetus, a heathen poet, "In him we live, move, and have our being, as certain of your own poets have said. For we are also his offspring" (Acts xvii. 28.) We find him also citing Menander, an ancient comedian, from whom he borrows that noted expression—"Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33.) Now, I say, that the light of nature, besides that of Scripture, testifies,

1. That there is a God, the first cause of all being. If there

be any barbarous people in the world that have no notion of a God, it is merely for want of thought, but not for want of evidence.

2. The light of nature tells us that we are creatures capable of knowing and serving Him, whose offspring we are. If we consider the make of our soul, we shall find ourselves capable of discovering the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. i. 20.) If we consider the frame of our body, the very heathen will tell us, "*Os homini sublime dedit*" (He gave an erect countenance to man.) We have eyes to lift up, hands to spread, knees to bow. We have tears to shed, voices to raise, whereby to worship God. Can we believe the glorious Architect of nature would give us powers and faculties so adapted for his worship, and yet not expect to be adored by us? Who will persuade the world, that the eye was not made for sight, but that the use of it was afterwards found out by man's sagacity? So, who will question the end of God's giving natural powers and capacities for worshipping him, and yet deny our obligation to do it?

3. The light of nature tells us that we are dependent creatures, and that we have life, health, wealth, liberty, and whatever else belongs to the inventory of our temporal enjoyments, all given us of God, and only during pleasure. Should we not glorify him in whose hand our breath is? Socrates and Plato can advise people to look to God in every common affair. Yea,

4. The light of nature makes us know that we are sinners; indeed it is the work of the Spirit to convince of sin effectually, but natural conscience does also accuse (Rom. ii. 14, 15.) Every man's heart would smite him for his gross miscarriages, though there were no revelation; and under these rebukes of a man's own mind he would find no ease without applying to God for pardon. This is the occasion of all those heathen sacrifices, with which history is everywhere filled.

Thus, I say, the necessity of prayer might be cleared from the very light of nature; but if we argue from revelation, then, sirs, we have all the evidence we can desire. Now, besides the command of God, and many other arguments I have formerly spoken to, I shall here evince the necessity of prayer from these following topics, in so many words. 1. From the nature of God. 2. From the mediation of Christ. 3. From the intercession of the Spirit. 4. From the direction of the word. 5. From the nature of the new creature. 6. From the practice of the cloud of witnesses. 7. From the effects of prayer. 8. From the employment of heaven.



1. From the nature of God. Reason could teach the heathen that, "If God be a spirit, he is to be worshipped with a holy heart" ("Si Deus est animus, sit pura mente colendus"); and so our Lord Jesus teaches us: "God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 24.) Do not all the glorious perfections of the divine nature challenge the most profound respect and adoration from his creatures? Should not the Hearer of prayer, be the object of prayer? Should not the omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, the power, wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness of God, engage our adoration of him?

2. The necessity of prayer is clear from the mediation of Christ, through whom our prayers are accepted. Our sin had cut off the communication between heaven and earth; but Christ has become the propitiation; he has suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; and therefore we are to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. If Christ has died to purchase our access to God, and ever lives to make intercession for us, and has told us that whatever we ask in his name we shall receive; does not an indispensable obligation result from hence, to make use of this mediation of his according to the declared appointment and design of it?

3. The necessity of prayer is clear from the intercession of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 26.) If God has promised his Holy Spirit to help our infirmities, to teach us what to pray for, and how to pray, surely he expects that we should pray. If a prince furnish a subject for an embassy, provides him equipage, orders him guard and conveyance, and gives him instruction how to manage, is not this a sufficient signification of the prince's will, though no command should be formally issued out?

4. The necessity of prayer is clear from the direction of the word of God. Our Saviour particularly has directed all his disciples how to pray, both alone, in secret, and with others, as I have already showed. And all I have to say now, is only this, that if direction how to perform the business, does not plainly suppose that the business should be done; if God's giving us direction how to pray, be not an argument to convince any man that we should pray, then it seems there is no need for that which we call reason in the world, and there is need of some new method of conviction.

5. The necessity of prayer is clear from the nature and tendency of the new creature. You know, if any man be in Christ, he is a

new creature. Now, when one is born again and made a new creature, then there is a spiritual change wrought; for that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Now, every renewed person has a natural inclination to apply himself to God. As a new-born babe's first breath is crying, so the new-born soul's first breath is prayer; and a man may as well live without breath, as a believer without prayer; therefore, it is the description of a hypocrite that he will not always call upon God (Job. xxvii. 10); whereas a David, a man after God's own heart, will call upon God as long as he lives (Psal. cxvi. 2.)

6. The necessity of prayer is clear from the practice of all the cloud of witnesses that have gone to heaven, as you heard on all the particular kinds of prayer. The generation of the righteous have always been the generation that seeks God's face (Psal. xxiv. 6.) Time would fail here to mention Moses and Aaron among the priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name (Psal. xcix. 6)—who called upon the Lord, and he answered them. It were a great work to mention all those heroes who, through faith and prayer, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, &c. (Heb. xi. 33.)

7. The necessity of prayer is clear from the notable effects and consequences of prayer. But because this will come more properly to be discussed on the next head anent the excellency of prayer, therefore all I say at present is, that if prayer has very excellent effects, then it is a strong argument to show the necessity of prayer; for no man can question that to be a duty which has such a tendency to promote his own temporal, spiritual, and eternal welfare.

8. Lastly, the employment of heaven shows the necessity of prayer now; for if this be the eternal employment of heaven, we should not be strangers to it. I do not say that in the other and better world, there will be any proper petitions, but you know that one of the parts of prayer is thanksgiving and praise, which is the work of heaven; and which should make up a great part of our prayers now. Should we not then be learning the language of Canaan before we go there, as many profane wretches learn the language of Tophet before they go thither. They go to hell cursing, and swearing, and damning themselves and others all the way; and should not we much more, if we be for heaven, go praying and praising all the way. We shall be fully happy, when we shall be

still praising him ; and is it not necessary that we be employed about these duties that have a tendency towards this complete happiness ?

Thus, I have briefly shown the necessity of prayer, besides what I formerly advanced in confirming the several kinds thereof : and I close this head only with this one advertisement, that if I had been all this while upon a speculative subject, I could have wished for no more than to leave you convinced in your minds of the truth of what I asserted ; but having been upon a practical subject, and adducing arguments to prove the duty, therefore all that has been said is to no purpose, unless you be so convinced of the duty of prayer, as through grace to set about the constant practice of it. It is not only a truth that I have been confirming, but a duty, and therefore it requires not only that you be convinced of it as a truth, but that you practise it as a duty. If, after all that has been said you are not yet convinced that prayer is your duty, then I am bold to say that it is not because arguments want light to discover the duty, but because you want sight to discern it ; your ignorance and enmity will not suffer you to receive the truth ; and if, on the other hand, you be convinced that prayer and the several kinds of it is duty, insomuch that your conscience cannot get the evidence shunned, then I hope you will practise accordingly as the Lord enables you ; and if you do not, but live in the neglect of what you see to be plainly duty, then I take instruments in the hand of your conscience, that God will be just in damning you for your neglect. The more fully you are convinced of the duty, the greater is your sin in neglecting it ; and the greater your sin is, the more aggravated is your guilt ; and the more aggravated that your guilt is, the more dreadful will your hell and torment be to all eternity ; for he that knoweth his master's will and doth it not, shall be beaten with double stripes. A double burden of wrath is prepared for your back, a double hell ; one hell for neglecting your duty, and another for crossing your light. Consider this, all ye that forget God, that forget prayer in secret, or in your families, lest he tear you in pieces, when none can deliver. May the Lord himself convince all that are out of the way, and may he send his Spirit for this end ; for when the Spirit is come, he will convince the world of sin, especially of unbelief, for it is only unbelief that makes people neglect prayer. "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed ?" says the apostle : where there is no faith, there is no prayer ; where



there is a false faith, there is false prayer; and where there is true faith, there is true prayer. O! seek to believe in the Son of God, and then you will call on him.—Thus much shall suffice for the fourth head anent the necessity of prayer, or the necessity of *continuing instant in prayer*.

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## SERMON VIII.

### THE EXCELLENCY AND EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

“Continuing instant in prayer.”—ROMANS xii. 12.

I REMEMBER that a certain writer called prayer *columba animæ*, that is, the soul's dove. And indeed prayer is like a speedy flying dove, which every righteous Noah sends forth out of the ark of his body, that it may return with an olive branch of peace. A believing prayer never returns empty; and therefore, they have the best of it, who are *continuing instant in prayer*.

V. The Fifth thing proposed was to speak of the excellency of prayer; and here it were enough to show you that it is a duty every way suited to advance the glory of God and the happiness of men.

1st, It is suited to advance the glory of God, Psalm l. 15. “Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” And in that same psalm, verse last “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me”—praise is one part of prayer, whoso offereth this, glorifieth me. Prayer is a giving him the glory due to his name. Hereby we glorify his being, for by prayer we own him to be the original Being, the Fountain of all beings. Hereby we glorify his sovereignty, when we pretend to nothing without his leave. We glorify his absolute power and independency, since we pray to him and none other. Hereby we glorify his infinite goodness, that though he has been pouring out bounties on his creatures for so many ages, yet he is still rich unto all that call upon him. Hereby we glorify his omnipresence and omniscience, believing that he seeth in secret, and that he knows our hearts, and pleading with him about affairs that none in the world are privy to. Hereby we glorify his all-sufficiency to satisfy all creatures, with-

out any diminution to himself. Hereby we glorify his wisdom, while we are submissive to his will, and resigned to his disposal. In a word, hereby we glorify his truth and faithfulness, in our improving the promises which he has made to this duty of prayer, that when we seek him truly, he will be found. Now a duty that tends so much to glorify God cannot but be a very excellent duty. But,

2dly, It is a duty also suited to advance the happiness of men. It is a duty sometimes put for the whole of religion, as comprehensive of all; hence it is said in the Old Testament: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered (Joel ii. 32), and repeated in the New Testament: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x. 13). It is a duty every way suited to every state of man. It is a duty suitable to a state of innocence, such a natural duty that it would have been the duty of Adam, though he had never fallen. It is suitable to a state of dependence to acknowledge the God of our being, the mercies of our maintenance and preservation. It is suitable to a state of indigence to ask for the supply of our wants; it is suitable to a state of misery, to implore the mercy which only can relieve us; it is suitable to a state of sin, to confess our iniquities, and beg the pardon of our offended Lord. It is suitable to a state of grace, to glorify the freedom of that goodness which pitied us. And it will be suitable to a state of glory, to offer up that noble part of prayer, thanksgiving and praise to him that loved us, and washed us in his blood. Now so far as a thing is suitable, is it not so far excellent?

These two considerations were enough to demonstrate the excellency of prayer; but yet, that I may be more particular, I shall set before you the excellency of prayer,—1. From the nature; 2 From the efficacy thereof.

1. The excellency of prayer will appear from the nature of it, while you consider these following particulars.

(1.) Prayer is an immediate address to God, a direct application of ourselves to him. How surprising would it be to see a mean person making his way in the presence of a great army, before general, officers, and captains, who make a lane for his passage, and fix their eyes upon him, with so much the more wonder, that they behold the king himself preparing to receive him with affability and grace in his countenance, as he approaches to the imperial tent. So it is with those that pray to God; what a great and excellent

thing is it for thee, who are but a mean person, a man or woman, in the presence of angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, and all the rest of the heavenly host around them, to be admitted to approach with confidence to speak with the King of these powers; and to come with boldness to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace. Hence prayer is called a lifting up the soul to God, a speaking with God,—“Now I have taken upon me to speak to the Lord, who am but dust and ashes” (Gen. xviii 27). They have a gross notion of prayer who think it consists only in a heap of begging petitions; nay, it is even a conversing with God,—a talking with him face to face. We have access by one Spirit unto the Father; and when we are with him, then truly our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son. This honour have all the saints, even to draw nigh to God, and to have God drawing nigh to them (James iv. 8.)

(2.) Prayer is the highest exercise of our souls and all their powers. As the soul employs itself here about the best object that faith, love, hope, or desire can fix upon, so in this duty of prayer all the faculties of the soul are highly exercised. The understanding views the glorious attributes and perfections of the great Jehovah; the will embraces him as the chief good,—“The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him;” the affections follow hard after him,—“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;” the judgment, like the balance of the mind, weighs the worth and value of this privilege, saying, “Happy are the people whose God is the Lord;”—the memory is employed about the sins that are to be confessed, the wants to be supplied, the mercies to be acknowledged, and the promises to be pleaded. All the faculties of the soul thus acting together towards God, is that which the scriptures call an uniting the heart to call upon him, and a seeking the Lord with our whole heart. This noble exercise of the soul in prayer does certainly show forth the excellency of this duty.

(3.) Prayer is a duty that runs through all the other duties of religion, as well as runs through all the affairs of life. We are not to read without prayer, nor to hear without prayer, nor to receive the sacrament without prayer; we may say of prayer as the apostle says of charity or love, it never fails.

(4.) Prayer is the means appointed by God for obtaining all our blessings. As it is the honour and excellency of the duty of



hearing, that the apostle says, "Faith cometh by hearing,"—as it is the honour and excellency of the duty of reading, that our Lord says, that in searching the scriptures is found eternal life, because they testify of him who is the way, the truth, and the life,—so it is the honour and excellency of the duty of prayer that such a promise is made to it—"Ask, and ye shall receive," &c. "Yet for this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.)

2. This leads me to that which was next proposed in showing the excellency of prayer, namely, to demonstrate it from the efficacy of prayer. Here the excellency of prayer will evidently appear, if we consider the efficacy thereof in these three respects, (1.) With respect to God. (2.) With respect to ourselves. (3.) With respect to others.

(1.) The efficacy of prayer with respect to God. What we delight in has a mighty influence upon us; now the efficacy of prayer upon God is understood when he calls it his delight, "the prayer of the upright is his delight;" but more particularly the efficacy of prayer with respect to God appears in these particulars.

[1.] In its prevailing for mercies even when God seemed unwilling to bestow them. Great blessings have been bestowed by means of prayer: Amalek defeated, Joshua's victory, Samson's water when ready to die for thirst, Elijah's rain from heaven at one time and fire from heaven at another time, Hezekiah's recovery, Solomon's wisdom, Hannah's child, Daniel's angel, Cornelius's vision, Peter's deliverance out of prison, and many other such like things. These are facts that speak aloud the efficacy of prayer. Yea, sometimes it is represented as extorting a favour from God. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, give him no rest, till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth (Isa. lxii. 6, 7). Thus the woman of Canaan did undauntedly pursue her point in spite of all the opposition she met with from our Lord, when he seemed to refuse her absolutely, and she gained her suit. And to this end Christ speaks a parable, that men ought always to pray and not to faint.

[2.] Its efficacy with respect to God appears in preventing judgment that has been threatened. Hence it is represented as a standing in the gap, as Moses did when by his prayer he kept out the threatened destruction from entering in upon Israel, as you see at large, Numbers xiv. from the 11th to the 21st verse, and Exodus

xxxii. 10. God gave Abraham an opportunity of interceding even for Sodom and Gomorrah, and yielded on from one step to another as long as Abraham prayed, till Abraham himself thought it unreasonable to insist any longer. And there are two things very remarkable here; on the one hand, it is remarkable that God never left off granting and yielding till Abraham left off praying, and if he had gone on, who knows but Sodom might have been spared? Again, it is remarkable, on the other hand, that when the Lord's people are either ashamed or afraid to pray any more for the safety of any person or place, it is a sad mark that God has a mind to destroy them, as he did Sodom. When the Spirit of prayer is poured out, it is a sign that God has a mind to answer, but when that Spirit is restrained, it is a wrathful sign. Prayer reversed the sentence that was gone out against Nineveh. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed" was a dreadful alarm; but when the pronouncing of that sentence obtained its end, and set them upon fasting and prayer, then God repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them, and did it not (Jonah iii. 10).

[3.] Prayer's efficacy with respect to God appears in removing judgment that has been actually inflicted. "Our fathers trusted in thee, they cried to thee, and were delivered" (Psal. xxii. 5). "They looked unto God and were lightened—this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psal. xxxiv. 5.) "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found." "As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me." Moses's prayer removed the plagues from Pharaoh, though the plague of Pharaoh's hard heart called for them again, and then they returned, upon Moses's prayer. When the reasons of divine government do not permit the removal of public judgment and calamity from a people, yet by prayer we may come to get our own souls for a prey (Ezek. xiv. 13, 14.) "When the land sinneth against me,"—though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it,—the first of whom was preserved when a whole world was lost, the second by prayer recovered the king's dream by revelation, and the third by prayer for his three friends prevented the judgment that was coming on them—yet though these three men, or three such like men, were in it, "they should deliver but their own souls." From which it is remarkable, that if there was any possibility for saving some people, it is prayer must do it; and also it is remarkable, that even when prayer can-

not prevail for others, it loses not its efficacy for ourselves : which leads me,

(2.) To speak of the efficacy of prayer with respect to ourselves. "Seek the Lord, all ye meek of the earth ; it may be ye shall be hid" (Zeph. ii 3). The efficacy of prayer towards ourselves appears, if you consider,

[1.] That the praying Christian is still the most thriving Christian. Prayer is such a mighty instrument of religion that it always improves the person who exercises himself through grace thereto. We have sometimes beheld with wonder some persons of the meanest consideration in other respects, who have been the brightest ornaments of their profession, and excellent patterns of Christianity in all the beauties of holiness, because they were men much given to prayer.

[2.] The praying Christian is the best supported Christian. Prayer is an employment that affords the most kindly relief unto any grief or sorrow. Whatever the affliction be, there is an efficacy in prayer either to remove it from us, or to reconcile us to it, or support us under it ; either to carry us through it, or do us good by it ; and hence the Lord's people under trials, if they have got their hearts poured out in prayer, they have found their spirit eased, and gone away from prayer, like Hannah, with their countenance no more sad, and have been made with the apostle to rejoice in tribulation ; which made that excellent man, Mr. Dod, to say, that he only was miserable on this side hell, who was afflicted and could not pray.

[3.] The praying Christian is the armed Christian ; he is armed against the assaults and temptations of the wicked one. Our Lord calls us to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation ; and hence the watchful and praying person is in arms, and when temptation comes, even the messenger of Satan to buffet him, then he is ready to fight, as Paul, who for this thing besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him ; and therefore the duty of prayer is recommended as a great part of the Christian armour. "Put on the whole armour of God" (Eph. vi. 18) ; and to the other parts of armour which he there enumerates, he adds this, "praying always ;" and this part of armour is mentioned last, as that which buckles all the rest, and without which we cannot use the other pieces of this armour of God. The shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of salvation, will not answer their offensive or defensive de-



sign, unless we pray with all prayer and supplication. And as prayer arms the Christian, so it disarms the adversary, breaks the violence of the onset, baffles his wiles. If the devil attacks a person that is praying alone, then he attacks him under the immediate view of God; and what can more animate the believer to fight, than to consider that he is under the eye of him who is to judge of and reward the conflict? and hence it is a certain maxim, that prayer will either make us leave off sinning, or sinning will make us leave off praying. If sin prevail, it will destroy prayer or reduce it to a dead formality; but if prayer prevail, it will destroy sin, and conquer the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is upon our knees that we wrestle with principalities and powers.

[4.] The praying Christian is the happy Christian, even as to the worldly part of it, for prayer sanctifies all his temporal enjoyments, for "every creature of God is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. iv. 5). It brings a blessing upon every thing we enjoy, our food, health, dwelling, accommodations, relations, and families; it adds to the sweetness and delight of them all, and gives a thousand unspeakable felicities which prayerless persons and families know nothing of, whose table proves a snare and a trap, though never so well spread, and whose basket and store, whose flocks and herds, and fields, and outgoing and incoming are all cursed. The praying soul has all the comforts of life, with God's loving-kindness which is better than life; and so all his common mercies taste of heaven, and retain a savour of the God that gave them. Thus you see the excellency of prayer in its efficacy with respect to ourselves. I come,

(3.) To speak of its efficacy with respect to others, whether enemies of God or friends.

[1.] The efficacy of prayer with respect to the enemies of God is evident both in bringing evil upon them, and removing it from them. Elijah's prayer brought three years and a half drought upon the land, and removed it again. Elisha's prayer struck a whole army of the king of Assyria blind (2 Kings vi. 17, 18.) Moses's prayer brought plagues upon Egypt, and removed them again. When Jereboam's hand withered, as he stretched it forth against the man of God (1 Kings xiii. 6) the man of God besought the Lord, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before. Indeed the history of the Bible in many places, and the history of providence in all ages, confirms this. It was

this that made the Queen of Scotts to say that she feared John Knox's prayers more than an army of 20,000 men; and hence it was that Simon Magus, for as graceless a man as he was, yet begged the prayers of the apostles whom he imposed upon (Acts viii. 24.)

[2.] The efficacy of prayer with respect to the friends of God, our friends and brethren. The apostle bid us pray one for another. God may hear another's prayer for you, when he will not hear your own (1 John v. 16.) One may have more interest with God than other ten. Oh! it is a great blessing to have praying friends that may be accepted for you. Job's friends found it so; read Job xlii. 7—9. You see how Paul prays for the Philippians, Phil. i. 3, 4; and having made mention of his bonds, see what advantage he expects from their prayer, verse 19. "This shall turn to my salvation through your prayer."

Now this efficacy of prayer for our friends or enemies reaches to any distance of place or time. First, the efficacy of prayer will reach a person as far as America as easily in the next room, because the God that hears prayer is everywhere. It can reach those whom none but God can reach. Jacob's prayer did, at a distance, mollify the heart, disarm the rage, and overcome the resentment of his angry brother Esau. The prayers put up at Rome could reach Paul at Jerusalem, and therefore he so earnestly desires them, Rom. xv. at the close. Again, their efficacy reaches any distance of time; the prayers of this generation may come down upon the next, as the prayers of the former have come down upon us. Many children now flourish in the favours which parents' prayers have obtained. Some of us here are perhaps more obliged to our fathers' prayers than ever we were to our own. The Israelites in Canaan enjoyed the fruits of their fathers' prayers in Egypt, when their cry came up to the Lord.

In a word, prayer is never wholly without some good effect, when it is rightly performed. It is true, many come no speed; they ask and receive not, because they ask amiss; but this does not detract from the excellency of prayer. It does not lessen the excellency of anything, that when it is spoiled or ill-managed, it is good for nothing. If prayer produce not excellent effects, it is owing to our mismanagement. Remember, Sirs, that praying any way you please, is far from being the excellent thing I have been speaking of. No: on the contrary, every formal, careless, faithless prayer is abomination to the Lord; but such prayer as I formerly described,

namely, prayer to God in Christ by the Spirit, will never be without some good effect.

Thus I have illustrated the excellency of prayer, and to close this head we may say of it, as it is said of the city of God, Glorious things are spoken of thee, O excellent duty of prayer! It has wrought wonders in all ages. Many excellent things has prayer done. It has opened and shut heaven, it has stopped and unstopped the bottles of the clouds, it has overturned the power of nature, disabled the flames of fire, divided the floods of water, stopped the motion of the celestial bodies, making the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon; yea, to return ten degrees backward. By prayer the blind have been enlightened, the dead quickened, devils dispersed, and, in a manner, God himself conquered. Hence Calvin cries out, *O, omnipotentissima vis orationis!* O, the almightiness of the power of prayer." But, on the other hand, innumerable are the common and ordinary effects of prayer, and the advantages we may warrantably expect in the regular discharge of this duty. Hereby what we have is sanctified, what we want is supplied; hereby our fears are scattered, our sorrows are alleviated, our minds quieted, and our hearts fixed; hereby grace is increased, faith advanced, love inflamed, hope enlivened, and patience perfected; hereby sin is subdued, corruption mortified, temptation dispelled, and snares avoided. It is as true now as ever it was, that "the fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." The apostle does not tell us how much it prevails; because it prevails so much that it is hard to tell how far the efficacy of it goes; and because he would have you and me to search and find out how far the efficacy of it goes, upon our trial and experience.

This much for the fifth thing proposed, namely the excellency of prayer. And now the sixth general head remains yet to be spoken to, namely, the application, but I cannot at this time enter upon it. Only, O! let what you have heard drive you to your knees in secret and in your families. Do pagans and papists make use of their knees in addressing their idols, and will you not bow your knee to the true Jehovah? The Christian soldier fights best upon his knees, whether against the devil, the world, or the flesh; as it is reported of a king of Sweden, that he found out a device for three ranks of soldiers to discharge at once, the first standing upright, the second bowing, and the third kneeling. Indeed the best defensive or offensive posture of the Christian soldier is on his knees



to send off the shot of prayer, that hereby he may wound Satan, kill sin, and conquer Heaven by violence. Wo to them who will not make use of this noble privilege of prayer, which is a dignity as well as a duty. Alas, that so much excellency as you see there is in prayer, will not protect it from the contempt of the profane, nor recommend it to the practice of the professor.

Is there any atheist here who disowns the being of God? Then, I must say, you have a good excuse for neglecting prayer; for, if that were true, then there is no object to pray to, no heaven to win, no hell to shun; only if you be of this judgment, you are the monsters of mankind that give the lie, not only to religion, but to common sense, and reason, and conscience, and every thing without you, within you, and round about you. In this case, I must leave you to your reprobate minds, till a higher hand beat an alarm upon your seared consciences.

But I suppose the most part that are here profess that they own the being of God, and they would take it ill to be called atheists; but profess what you will, if you neglect prayer in secret and in your families, I am bold to pronounce you atheists, yea, worse than professed atheists; for an open atheist will own, that if there be a God, then he should be worshipped and is worth the seeking after; only he hopes there is none, and therefore he restrains prayer before him. But you profess the belief of a supreme Deity, and yet you affront his perfections, and condemn his authority, by denying him homage, as if your God was not worth his room either in your closet or family. Oh, how dare you for your soul slight this duty of prayer? If you own a God, is he a God who has neither mercy to crown you, nor justice to crush you eternally? Is he a God that has neither eyes to see you, nor ears to hear you? Is he a God that has neither a will to save you, nor a power to damn you? If you think so, then are you not worse than an atheist, for thus you think worse of him than if he was no God. But if you believe and think truly that he is clothed with these perfections, then why do you not pray? Answer it if you can, man, woman; may not common sense and reason confound you, though there were no Bible on the field? Let prayerless persons and families, then, consider upon what ground they stand; for sure I am such ungodly souls shall not stand in judgment (Psal. i. 5), and to this terrible judgment of the great day must I refer you, if nothing will move you to this duty. O! that the Spirit of God himself would convince you of

the neglect, and move you to the performance of this duty in earnest! If you be graceless, should you not pray for grace? If you be gracious, should you not pray for more grace? O! if we could say of every soul here as was said of Paul at his conversion—"Behold he prayeth!"—then we might hope to say next of our prayer-hearing God, and of our kind and loving Lord: Behold he comes skipping over the mountains and leaping over the hills; for he cannot keep himself long from importunate prayers, he will satisfy the longing soul; and those cannot be refused who *continue instant in prayer*.

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## SERMON IX.

### REPLY TO OBJECTIONS AGAINST PRAYER GENERALLY.

"Continuing instant in prayer."—ROMANS xii. 12.

MANY people have a very gross apprehension of the duty of prayer, as if it were no more but some verbal compliment, whereby we are to put off God every day. But there is not an acceptable prayer that a child of God offers up to him, but it necessarily pre-supposes unfeigned faith; for he that comes to God must believe his being, that he is; and his bounty, that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him. Prayer does not lie in natural desire but spiritual. The desire of nature in prayer is like sparks which fly out of the chimney and then vanish, but the desire of grace in prayer is like pillars of smoke which mount up to the highest heaven. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?" As if he should say, What peerless paragon is this which sends up such spiritual sacrifices, such sweet incense kindled by the fire of God's own Spirit laid upon a meritorious altar, ascending and flaming up like the rollings and agglomerations of smoke to the Lord himself, and more welcome and grateful than all the costly evaporations of myrrh and frankincense? Christ, the blessed Bridegroom of his spouse the Church, is, as it were, refreshed with the odoriferous smell of those graces which she exercises in her prayers and sacrifices. The Author of grace becomes its admirer, stands amazed at the sweetness of her prayers,

and therefore no wonder that he calls his church "to continue instant in prayer."

VI. The Sixth head was the application, and here I shall only make three uses, namely, 1st, For information ; 2dly, For lamentation ; and, 3dly, For exhortation : and these three comprehend all that seem necessary to be drawn by way of inference from this doctrine.

1st, For *information*. Passing many other things which this doctrine might inform us of, I shall only mention one, and enlarge upon it, namely, that hence we may see how vain and foolish all the objections are which may be raised in the breasts of men and women against this excellent duty of prayer. For if it be thus the indispensable duty of every man and woman to be constant and instant in prayer,—if every kind of prayer be so well founded upon reason and revelation as you have heard,—and if the necessity and excellency of prayer be such as you have heard, then surely no relevant objection can be made against it. Whatever cavils and difficulties people may make a shift to raise and form in their own mind, it is to be feared that enmity against God and his way is really at the root of it. The depravity of nature is the greatest objection against this duty. Were not prayer a holy divine exercise, a work truly of God, tending to the good of souls, Satan and our corrupt heart would never so much hinder and oppose it. However, that I may, through grace, set the doctrine of the gospel against all those supposed difficulties that people muster up against this duty, I shall now endeavour to discover the vanity of all the objections made against it by exposing and answering some of the most material. And here I might answer objections that might be made against all the four kinds of prayer, or the objections against each of them. But seeing, as I told you formerly, it was secret and family prayer that I chiefly proposed to set home upon people, and therefore, when I spoke to the kinds of prayer, I chiefly insisted upon the confirming of these two, I intend to answer various objections against prayer in general, and I shall then confine myself to the answering of some objections that may be made, first against secret prayer, and next against family prayer. You may thus come to be further confirmed in that which I here make the use of information, to wit, that all objections against prayer are vain and groundless.

I shall not here take notice of their pleas who argue from the



disbelief of God's being and providence, for this duty of prayer does necessarily pre-suppose our belief and acknowledgment thereof, and without supposing these things, we take away the object, the foundation, and reason of the duty. As for those wretched creatures who are so far degenerated as to deny these things, we must leave them to God's righteous judgment. Death, judgment, and eternity, will be an effectual confutation of their atheism, infidelity, and blasphemy. Besides, these vile notions do as much militate against all the parts of real religion as against this particular branch of it, and therefore do not fall so directly under our present consideration.

I come, then, 1. To answer some direct objections that may be made against prayer in general.

The *first* objection against every kind of prayer is drawn from this consideration, O say what need is there for prayer as an act of homage to God, who is self-sufficient; he needs not the prayers and praises of his creatures.

ANSW. (1.) This objection only fits the mouth of a professed deist, who makes a jest and banter of divine revelation. The scriptures assure us that God looks upon himself as honoured and glorified by praise and prayer; so that, if we regard that sacred Bible, there can be no regard shown to that objection.

(2.) The design of this duty is not to make any addition to God's essential glory, happiness, and sufficiency. His glory would be very imperfect, if it depended on the homage of his creatures; for he is far exalted above all blessing and praise: our goodness extendeth not unto him. But,

(3.) He may be wronged in his just right. Is it not injustice not to give every man his due, and is it not unjust to keep back God's due? As we are to give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, so should we not give to God the things that are God's? Does not God charge the Jewish nation with robbery, for withholding the offerings which were his positive institutions (Mal. iii. 8), and will he hold them guiltless who deny him his natural and unalienable right? And though God cannot be hurt by our omission, yet that is owing to the infinite perfection of his nature, and not to the tendency of our sin; so that the negligent sinner is criminal. And where shall we receive help and ability to discharge any other duty but at the throne of grace?

2dly, It is objected, God's knowledge is infinite, and what

need we make our requests known to him by prayer, as if he needed information? he knows what is best for us, and why should we direct him? and his goodness is so immense, that he needs not our moving representation to incline him. It is impossible he should be more kind than he is by nature.

I answer (1.) That the design of prayer is not to inform God, or make him more compassionate than he is in his own nature; but it is necessary that we be sensible of our own condition—that we be sensible of our sins, our wants, our mercies; for, notwithstanding God's knowledge and goodness, yet if we be ignorant of and unaffected with our own case, it may be unbecoming the perfection of his nature, and the honour of his government, to help us. In human government, a prince may know the need that a criminal stands in of pardon, and his goodness may incline to vouchsafe it; but then the extending of this goodness is free, and he will confer the pardon in a consistency with the honour of his government, and in such a way as may not expose his favours to scorn and contempt. That man who thinks it needless to seek pardon and receive it on his bended knees, justly deserves to go without it.

(2.) Though God be good, yet he appoints the way in which he will bestow his favours, and we are bound to comply with that.

Objection third. Is it not enough for us to have a heart full of good desires? and what need to offer them up to God in a stated solemn way, since we are always under his eye and cognizance?

ANSW. (1.) If these desires were truly spiritual and fervent, they could not always be confined within our breasts, but sometimes unavoidably break forth; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

(2.) They that plead these desires as an excuse for the neglect of stated solemn prayer, I fear they deal hypocritically with God and man. If they would examine the workings of their own souls, they would find themselves greater strangers to these desires than they would be thought to be.

(3.) Till these desires be offered up to God, they are not properly prayer; for prayer does not simply consist in desires, but in offering up our desires to God, which must sometimes be performed in such a manner that our fellow-creatures being witnesses, God may be glorified by the world.

Objection fourth. It is a bold and daring thing, and great presumption, for poor polluted creatures to speak to the majesty of

heaven and earth—the God that is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

ANSW. (1.) This objection would be weighty, if we had no divine revelation. Reason itself will tell us that mere prayer can be no satisfaction to divine justice, nor a valuable consideration for the mercies we want, and the reason that tells us that prayer is a duty, tells us also that the God we pray to is a just and holy One. But,

(2.) They who live under the gospel dispensation may know wherewith they should come before the Lord, and bow themselves before the most high God, seeing he has set forth Christ as a propitiation for sin, whereby he declares his righteousness for the forgiveness of sins, that he may be just and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. Though God be the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity, yet to this man will he look, even to him that is poor and contrite, and trembleth at his word. We have a better name than our own to come in, a better strength than our own to depend on, a better righteousness than our own to plead before God in prayer. Christ is one with whom the Father is well pleased, whom he heareth always, and in whom we may be heard and accepted. It were indeed unbecoming the holiness and majesty of God to accept of our persons or prayers out of this way, which God has consecrated.

(3.) It were boldness and presumption for us indeed to come unto God's presence unbidden and without any warrant, or to expect that our prayer should have a meritorious influence for procuring the blessings we pray for; or if we should think that our prayers have value and dignity enough to procure their own acceptance. But what presumption is it to accept a gracious invitation, to obey a divine command, to come at God's call, provided we entirely build our hope of audience upon the promise, mercy, and truth of God in Christ.

Objection fifth. Is there not danger in pressing duties upon people lest they make them their righteousness, or make a Christ of their prayers? Has not Christ by his atoning sacrifice merited enough, and we are to depend upon that for all we want; and is it not the office of Christ to intercede for us, to represent our wants and necessities, and to plead for mercy on our behalf? Would you have us to take Christ's work out of his hand?

ANSW. (1.) The design of Christ's mediation and intercession is not to supersede prayer, or to cast it out of doors, but rather to



encourage it and make way for its audience and acceptance ; for as our advocate in heaven he offers up the prayers of the saints (Rev. viii. 3), and his mediation is urged by the Spirit of God as an encouragement to prayer. " Seeing we have a great high priest, Jesus the Son of God, passed into the heavens, let us come boldly to the throne of grace " (Heb. iv. 14, 16).

(2.) If people make a Christ of their prayers, I mean, if they place a righteousness in them, and think thereby to satisfy and atone for their sins, they have neither part nor portion in Christ ; for in his blood and merit only have we righteousness and justification ; but yet those who take away the necessity of prayer for fear of making a Christ of it, instead of magnifying do diminish his office as Intercessor, and do likewise render the Spirit's intercession in saints on earth wholly superfluous. They certainly do most honour the Son and the Spirit, who offer up their humble prayers to God in dependence upon the Spirit of Christ for their assistance, and the merit of Christ for their acceptance.

Objection sixth. It would seem that this duty is vain and unprofitable, and that, whether we pray for temporal or spiritual blessings ; for, on the one hand, it is vain to pray for temporal mercies, such as the removal of sickness, restoration of health, success in business, fruitful seasons and the like, for God has settled the course of nature, and the order and connection between natural causes and their effects. Can we be so foolish as to expect that God will break the order of nature, and miraculously suspend the influences of natural causes in favour of us ? And, on the other hand, it seems vain to pray for spiritual mercies—God has determined from all eternity what he will bestow upon us—and his decrees are unalterable, prayer will never change God's counsel.

To the former part of the objection, with reference to temporal mercies, I answer (1.) We own that God ordinarily works in and by natural means, and to neglect them would be a tempting of him ; but we need the direction of Heaven in the choice of suitable and proper means. True wisdom of every sort comes from God ; the common skill of the husbandman, by which he deals differently with different sorts of ground, is attributed to God as his gift. But,

(2.) It is not in the power of mere natural means to exert their virtue without a divine concurrence. When proper means are used, the success depends upon God's blessing ; and without that our

bread will not nourish us, our clothes will not warm us, neither our physic do us any good. The apostle tells us that every thing is sanctified by prayer, and the healing of diseases, as well as the forgiving of sin, is ascribed to God as his act. In a word, God still continues governor of the world, and all creatures have a necessary dependence on him. He is the Lord of life and death—he kills and makes alive—he makes it rain upon one city and not on another—and therefore there is room enough to deprecate these temporal judgments, and supplicate these temporal mercies, which are, in part, the effects of natural causes ; for all causes and effects depend upon him.

(3.) The preventing or removing of temporal affliction, as well as the granting or withholding of temporal mercies, is not the great thing which we are to pray about as to temporals. Nay, we need to have all dispensations sanctified to us—we need grace to acquiesce in all the determinations of divine providence—these are greater blessings in themselves than temporal ones, and are only to be obtained by prayer, as the mean ; and this holy acquiescence in the divine disposal is only to be had from above.

As to the other part of the objection, it is alleged, that it is vain to pray for spiritual mercies, seeing God's counsels are immutable—he is of one mind, and who can turn him?—he will do all that he has determined from eternity, and accomplish his own purpose, whether we pray or not. If praying persons receive more spiritual mercies than prayerless ones, or than they themselves would have received if they had not prayed, how are God's counsels unchangeable? Now, this requires a very close answer, as being one of the devil's great engines to drive people from their duty.

ANSW. (1.) That it is a certain truth that God's nature and purposes are immutable ; reason as well as Scripture obliges us to own it. It is inconsistent with the nature of a perfect being to suppose it changeable ; if there be a change in God, it must be either to the better or the worse : if to the worse, then he ceases to be a Being every way perfect, or as perfect as he was before the change ; if to the better, this necessarily supposes a foregoing imperfection. If all God's eternal counsels be most holy, just, and good, there can be no reason for a change ; and to suppose that any thing should fall out in time which God did not foresee from eternity, is to deny the infinity of his knowledge, which were really to un-  
 • ~~deify~~ <sup>deify</sup> or ungod this blessed Being ; for the notion of an imperfect God is an ab-

surdity and contradiction. Whatever, therefore, we meet with, we must adhere to this as a first principle, that God is unchangeable.

(2.) It is as certain that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and that God never said to the seed of Jacob, seek me in vain. To say it is in vain to serve God, and that there is no profit in praying to him, is to give the lie to the express declarations of Scripture, and to the experience of real saints in all ages; and therefore, those two things, the unchangeableness of God, and the efficacy of prayer, are and must be consistent whether we can clear up this matter or not. Indeed to reconcile the certainty of the divine pre-science and the contingency of human affairs is a great deep; and it seems as great a deep of difficulty to reconcile the immutability of God's purpose with the efficacy of man's prayer. We ought, therefore, to be humble and modest in this matter, knowing the infinite distance that there is between God and us. It should not seem strange to us that things relative to God's nature and perfections are too high and big to be grasped by our dark and narrow minds. We may cry out with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

(3.) It is certain that immutability is not God's only perfection; his immutable purposes are always consistent with his moral perfections of wisdom, holiness, and goodness; all the purposes and volitions of his will are under the conduct of his infinite and unerring wisdom, for he works all things after the counsel of his own will (Eph. i. 11). We have injurious thoughts of God, if we think he has taken up any purposes inconsistent with his wisdom and holiness; and hence it follows that he never purposed to bestow his mercy but by the means of prayer. "For these things," saith he, "will I be inquired of." This is verified by daily experience. God ordinarily communicates his blessings in answer to serious, humble, and fervent prayer, and not without it. This, therefore, must always have been his purpose and design; for what he does in time, he decreed to do from eternity; so that the efficacy of prayer is so far from arguing any change in God's counsels, that the unchangeableness of his counsel does in part secure the efficacy of prayer; and therefore,

(4.) No person, in the neglect of this duty, has any just reason to conclude, that God has any purpose of bestowing any spiritual



blessing or saving mercy upon him, for God's purposes take in the means as well as the end. If he has purposed to give you pardon, grace, and glory, he has purposed that you should pray for them. You might as reasonably expect pardon without faith and repentance, or glory without grace, as that he should give you any of these without prayer. How absurd is it to object God's eternal purpose as a reason against this duty, when humble, fervent, and importunate prayer is one of the first and most encouraging notices we can have that there are any gracious purposes in the heart of God concerning us ! But possibly some may reply, that if God has any purpose of mercy towards them, he will make them to pray one time or other. Really those people argue like persons judicially hardened and finally abandoned by him. What do you mean by God's making you to pray ? If you neglect prayer, notwithstanding all his calls, commands, invitations, and encouragements, motives, and promises, do you think God will take any other way to make you pray ? If these ordinary means whereby God uses to make people pray, if these be neglected in expectation of some other extraordinary thing, you are in the utmost danger imaginable of dying in your sins, and of perishing for ever. If you continue prayerless, neglecting the means whereby God determines his people to pray, and you expect that God will make you pray, you talk absurdities and contradictions, and speak like a reprobate whom God has purposed to destroy, and your wilful neglect and enmity will rise in judgment against you.

(5.) Secret things belong to God, his revealed will is the rule of your duty, and the standard of your hope ; and if you stand close to his revealed will, you have nothing to fear from his secret purpose. Set your heart upon the work he calls you to by his revealed will, and you shall never find him by a secret purpose inconsistent with himself, never have reason to charge him with unfaithfulness. You are not to wander in the dark labyrinth of God's decrees, when you have a clear road of duty set before you. God was never yet found worse than his word. Success is promised to prayer as a mean appointed of God for obtaining what we need, and God has always made the promise good to this day. Why then will you vex yourselves with unwarrantable doubts about God's decrees, or ask whether he has decreed to give or withhold such a mercy ? You are beyond your sphere, man, and will find no place to rest, as long as you wander in this wilderness, and if

nothing will satisfy your curiosity till you be acquainted with God's secrets, then take the right course, do not begin at the uppermost end of the ladder at first. You may know the decree by the effect of it upon your heart; and if your heart be drawn out after God in ardent supplication, then there is an initial accomplishment of God's gracious decree towards you. If you meet with strength for doing your duty, then you may prophesy the event and success, for God never decreed to cross his promise. There is no decree to warrant the neglect of means, nor to bind up God's hand from fulfilling the desire of them that call upon him in truth; nay, the decree is accomplished in the way of praying and asking. I will read to you a noble scripture for this purpose (Psal. ii. 6) "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." What was this kingdom? It was even the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for a possession, which he had decreed to give unto Christ; verse 7th, "I will declare the decree."—Now you would think that God's known decree might give a discharge from the duty of prayer unto Christ, who was his beloved Son.—Nay, but thus it behoved the decree to be accomplished, ver. 8th, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." But, says the carnal heart, he would have given him these things whether he had asked and interceded or not, since he decreed to give them. I answer, the mean and the end, the asking and the granting, were so connected in the decree, that the one could not go without the other. Is it not strange, then, to hear some persons talk of God's decrees, who yet never mind their duty, and to bring a reason from the secret purpose of the Most High, for them to be idle and neglect the means of salvation? Will you try this desperate conclusion with reference to outward trifles in a world, before you put your soul and eternal happiness upon such a venture? Will you go and tell the world that God has decreed to give you seed time and harvest while the world stands, and therefore you need not till nor sow your ground? Try thus if God has decreed the end without the means. Would not all the world mock you, and despise you as a fool? and yet, alas, upon this very ground you have become careless and negligent in matters of eternal moment! O, lamentable enmity at God and godliness, that vents itself in such dreadful sophistry for deceiving and ruining immortal souls!

Objection seventh. Is not this preciseness? It were an in-

tolerable fatigue to be continuing instant in prayer, in secret prayer, family prayer, and all the rest of these kinds of prayer; we are averse from such a burden. Say what you will, it is vain to persuade us to it, and we hope to be saved as well as the best of you. God is merciful.

I answer, (1.) That now flesh and blood and carnal reason speak out and vent the natural malignity of the wicked heart. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." O, that any of God's creatures should spit such venom against its Maker! This enmity is at the bottom of all your objections; if the tongue speaks not thus, the heart does; for it is mad against every holy duty, and if it cannot be mad with reason, it will be mad without reason and against scripture. It is easier to bring arguments to convince the judgment, than to draw the will and affection to a compliance. But,

(2.) Oh, poor soul, are you resolved thus to confer with flesh and blood? Will you plead for Baal, and yield to carnal reason, and so take the devil's part? Will you ask the devil's advice, whether you should go to God or not? Will you not serve God without the devil's leave? Will you balk any divine command to gratify a lazy humour, a base lust, and a deceitful devil? If you have nothing within you that takes part with God's revealed will, you are not of God; nay, you are of your father the devil, his work you will do, and his wages you shall have, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "Ye set at nought all my counsel, therefore will I laugh at your calamity."

(3.) If you had a principle of grace within you, it would make the duties of religion easy and pleasant, for there is a likeness between holy hearts and holy duties. Acts of nature, such as to eat, drink, sleep, are no burden to, but rather delightful to, persons in a right temper of body: so acts of grace and duties of religion, such as prayer is, are no burden, but rather delightful to persons in a right temper of soul; I mean to believers so far as regenerate. Nay, these things are their element; therefore, if prayer be so irksome to you, you have reason to fear that you are yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. And this leads me to

Objection eighth. I apprehend, say you, that I am an unconverted person, and you know that it is only the prayer of the upright that is his delight, and of the righteous that availeth much,



but the prayer of the wicked is abomination to the Lord, and they that are in the flesh cannot please God ; and why should we do that which is a high provocation to God ?

I answer (1.) These expressions only denote the misery of the sinner's present condition, but not his freedom from an obligation to pray ; for this is a duty bound upon him, both by natural and supernatural bonds. The meaning then of these scriptures is, that while the wicked man continues in his natural state, neither his person nor his performances are acceptable to God. They are out of Christ, in whom alone God is well pleased ; and till they be in him, God can never be pleased with their persons or duties. But,

(2.) Is this intimated to them to discourage them from praying ? Is it their duty to lie in that miserable state and never seek union to Christ ? Nay, it is rather to drive them to pray for out-gate from this misery, and for union to the Son of God, in whom their prayer may come to be acceptable to God. Who more vile than Simon Magus, in the gall of bitterness, and yet the apostle calls him to pray to God, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him ; which says that prayer is a mean required even of the wicked in order to their obtaining grace ; and hence, after God had promised a new heart and new spirit, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, he adds, verse 37, "For this will I be inquired of."

(3.) There is a difference between one sinner and another. Some sinners are secure and presumptuous ; others are convinced and awakened, and under a mighty concern about salvation. Some pretend to pray, and yet secretly resolve to continue in sin, and look upon their verbal confessions and petitions as a kind of atonement for, and payment of, their former debts, and are thence encouraged to return afresh to the commission of them ; or they make use of prayer as a cloak or cover for their secret wickedness, that they may go on in it without any suspicion from others, as our Saviour tells us of the Pharisees, that for a pretence made long prayers. Such prayers as these cannot but be an abomination to the Lord. We do not bid the thief pray that he may prosper in his theft, or the wicked man pray that he may indulge himself in wickedness, for this is not properly praying, but a mocking of God's holy majesty. They ask, and have not, because they ask amiss, that they may consume it on their lusts. But there is a great difference between these wicked prayers, which are the breathings of depraved nature, and such prayers as are the effects of the Spirit's

influences, though in a common degree. As far as they are influenced by the divine Spirit, so far are they pleasing to God. I'll tell you three ways wherein God may be said to be pleased with the duties and endeavours even of men not yet translated from death to life, though looking with nature's eye, with weeping and supplication towards God, and being a little anointed with the common operations of the Spirit; I say in these three respects he may be said to be pleased with them, namely, positively, comparatively, and relatively. [1.] *Positively*, because as to the matter and substance, these duties are good and agreeable to the rule, though as to the manner and way of performance, they are defective; and thus God was not displeased with the humiliation of a wicked Ahab. [2.] *Comparatively*. Certainly God is better pleased with such approaches to him, than with a turning from him; such endeavours are more agreeable to the will of God than the omission of them. [3.] *Relatively*, as means which God has appointed to be a way of conveying grace, and which is so far acceptable, as God usually makes them reach the end; thus faith cometh by hearing, and why not by praying? Cornelius was praying, and behold a messenger from heaven was sent to him, to show him what he should do (Acts x. 30). Saul was praying, and behold Ananias was sent to him to open his eyes (Acts ix. 11). (We shall not inquire whether Cornelius and Saul were then converted or not), but behold here an extraordinary blessing upon the use of ordinary means. Though God be not tied to means, nor yet can be obliged by our best endeavours, yet he has bound us to the means. "Seek the Lord while he is to be found, and call on him while he is near;" and out of his own way we cannot expect to meet with him.

In a word, the state of every unconverted sinner is very deplorable, a state not to be rested in, for till a sanctifying change pass upon them, they are under the unhappy necessity of sinning more or less in whatever they do. The ploughing of the wicked is sin. They need, therefore, to pray and wrestle as they can to win out of this state, and sure the performance of this duty will lay them under less guilt than the total neglect of it will bring them under. Who dare say that it is not the duty of the wicked to pray to God, to pray for faith, to pray for an interest in Christ? I am sure it can never be your duty to go on in the way to hell and damnation. O! thou whose trade has been to destroy yourself in departing from God, O! all ye who are strangers to this heavenly

employment of speaking to your Maker, I have a glad message to you to-day. Whatever have been your past sins, or whatever be your present fears, yet look up to him by prayer whom you have so often provoked, and there may be hope in Israel concerning you. Do not argue yourselves out of your duty. Is it not your duty to go and bemoan your condition before the Lord? Is not grace lovely and desirable, and is not Christ worth the seeking after? Have you not the command of God for your warrant? Are there not many sad threatenings against prayerless persons and families? Is not prayer a converting ordinance, and not only the means, but the first fruit of conversion? Have you not many encouragements to set you to work? May not the least probability of success be a cord to draw you near to God? Are not his bowels open, and his arms stretched forth, to embrace you in ordinances? Have you not his call and invitation, his counsels and expostulations, yea, his solemn protestation, that he delighteth not in the death of sinners? If the King of glory invites traitors to come and seek his pardon, what should discourage you? Has God appointed this ordinance of prayer in vain?

But, alas, if I be a wicked man, how can I lay hold on a promise for audience and success, for I have no right to any promise while I am in a natural state?

ANSW. (1.) Though a wicked man can lay claim to no qualified or conditional promise, because he wants the condition which the promise supposes in him to whom the promise is made, yet there are absolute promises which he is to plead in prayer. By conditional promises I mean the promises that are made to grace; thus there are promises made to the grace of faith, to the grace of love, to the grace of humility; now an unconverted man cannot plead the promises that are made to graces, because as yet he wants true grace. But then, by the absolute promises, I mean the promises that are made of grace. There is a promise of grace, a promise of the new heart, a promise of faith; God has promised to quicken the dead, to write his laws upon our hearts, and the like. Now who knows that he is not under the absolute promise? Who dare say, you are not the man, or the woman, to whom the promise of grace is made, and in whom the promise shall be accomplished, especially if thou art panting after the Lord, and wrestling at the throne by prayer?

(2.) The promises, for the most part, are conceived in such



general terms, without any qualification, that you may not question or dispute about your interest in them, and to show that there is room enough left for you to come and write down your name. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

(3.) God's call and command has a promise in it. God does not compliment with you, when he calls you to come to him. Nay, if you come, you shall be welcome, for "him that cometh he will in nowise cast out."

(4.) All the promises are yea and amen in Christ, and this blessed Lord and Saviour is offered to you in this everlasting gospel; and therefore if you doubt your right to the promise as a foundation of prayer, let your prayer be a coming to Christ, and then you have all the promises in him; and indeed, sirs, this is all that I desire to drive at in the whole of this subject, that you may come to Christ by prayer. When I call you to pray, I call you to seek Jesus of Nazareth in this duty of prayer. I call you to seek him who came to seek and save you. Many, when they pray, seek themselves; they seek their own applause, they seek their credit, they seek to have a name; they seek only to ease their natural conscience; they seek to establish a righteousness of their own; but wo to you if you never have a better errand in prayer, for it is to seek Christ that I call you to pray. Seek his person, seek his righteousness, seek his Spirit, seek his grace, seek his love, seek his heart. And, indeed, if Christ were not to be found in this duty, I should never have insisted so long upon it. O! is there none here that see their need of Christ, that they may seek him in secret and family prayer? Do we not all need his merit to justify us, his Spirit to sanctify us, his blood to wash us? We need him to procure daily pardon for us, and to convey daily supplies of grace to us. We need him when we are in bondage, to relieve us; when we are dead, to quicken us; when we are in the dark, to enlighten us; when we are in doubts, to resolve us; when we are in fears, to encourage us; when we are fallen, to raise us; when we are straitened, to enlarge us; when we are sad, to comfort us; when we are tempted, to succour us; when we are weak, to strengthen us; when we are wandering, to restore us. None but Christ can do all this, and a thousand times more than all this; therefore, O seek him in prayer, cast away all your objections as Bartimeus did his garments when Christ called him. Do not dispute away the market-day, nor let the golden opportunity slip, as you would not weep and wail for

ever, for losing such an occasion, and as you would not grieve the Spirit of Christ by your enmity and unbelief. O that there were a seeking and searching after the Lord among us; and a running to him as Jerome did, an ancient father, who said, "If my father," says he, "were weeping on his knees before me, and my mother hanging about my neck behind me, my brother, sister, and kinsfolk wailing on every side of me to retain me in a sinful course, I would run over my father, I would fling my mother to the ground, and trample all my kindred under my feet, that I might run to Christ." O, that there were such a seeking of Christ over the belly of all objections and impediments! O lay aside the weight and earth that easily beset you, and turn to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the knees of your heart, and say, I am not worthy to be called thy son, and when he sees you yet afar off, he may meet you, and fall on your neck, and kiss you. Thus he hath dealt with such prodigals, and will he not also thus welcome you? There is none in earth or in hell that can say, they took this course, and constantly pursued it, and yet were rejected of God. None ever met with a repulse, who *continued instant in prayer*.

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## SERMON X.

### OBJECTIONS TO SECRET AND FAMILY PRAYER CONSIDERED.

"Continuing instant in prayer."—ROMANS xii. 12.

THE well of salvation is deep, and we have nothing to draw, but it is the mercy of all God's hidden ones, that he who opens the fountain, and invites us to drink, gives us also a vessel to hold, and a hand to draw. The promises are the vessel which holds out to us these living waters, faith is the hand by which we draw water out of these wells of salvation, and both are his free gift. Prayer, which is one of the buckets whereby we draw water out of these wells, this also comes from above, from the Father of lights, when he pours out the Spirit of prayer and supplication. Thus, though we have nothing to offer God but what is his own, yet he calls for our offering; though we have nothing wherewith to draw, yet he calls for our bucket, that he may fill it. It is therefore out of rich

mercy to us, as well as homage to him, that he requires us to continue instant in prayer.

Having answered objections against prayer in general, I come now to answer some objections that may be made against the several kinds of prayer; and because it was especially secret and family prayer that I aimed at in choosing this subject, I shall confine myself to the answering of objections that may be made against these two kinds of prayer.

Against secret and closet prayer these, or the like objections, may be made.

OBJECT. first. We pray in our families, and is not that enough, what need all this ado?

ANSWER, (1.) If you pray in your family, it is well; but family prayer is one thing, and closet prayer another, and God never made one duty to supersede another. You must not justle out one work because you perform another. There are equal commands for all, equal necessity for all; neglect it at your peril.

[2.] If you be a child of God, you will have secret errands to your Father that it is not fit your family should know of, and therefore God appoints closet prayer as consulting the credit of his people, that they might not discover their spiritual nakedness to any but to that God who knows and will keep their secret. And I must say you know little of religion, or of your own wants, if you have nothing to say to God, which you would not have others to hear.

OBJECT. second. I am busy about my calling, and cannot get time for closet prayer.

I ANSWER, (1.) Have you any greater business than the concern of eternity and of your immortal soul? Will you not let your calling stand a little, rather than that your soul be damned. Cursed is that calling that eats out religion.

(2.) Consider, if you be wise, you may follow both callings, both your general and spiritual callings. You are flat atheists, if you think prayer will hinder your work, whereas the success of your temporal work depends upon it. Have you time to eat, and drink, and sleep, and no time to pray? People complain they want time, but they waste time. Have you time for needless visits, trifling conversation with your fellows, and yet no time to seek God? This objection carries its own confutation in the bosom of it. Wo to such as make this all their excuse. Will this be sufficient before God's bar? Have you time for your own work and no time for



God's work, time to serve yourself and no time to serve God? Yea, you have time enough to give to the devil, but no time to give to Christ.

OBJECT. third. "I am but a servant, and must obey my master; I am toiled from morn to even, and therefore cannot have time for secret prayer."

ANSWER, (1.) Though you be a servant to do men's work, yet you are not a slave to their lusts. Remember you have a Master in heaven, and no mortal creature can discharge you from the service of God. If your master allows you no time, he shall answer for that sin; but in the mean time, whatever you do for your master, let not God's work stand by, for your master will never be able to stand between you and the flaming wrath of God.

(2.) Many lay the blame on masters, when the fault is in themselves,—Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent, so people have learned from their first parents to blame one another for their sins. But let me tell you, there is not a servant among you all so strictly watched, but might spare some time from your master for your God, and yet do your master no wrong; only choose such time as may not clash with your master's business, though you should steal it from your sleep, and meat, and recreations. And here let me bespeak the indulgence of masters towards poor and pious servants. O hinder them not from any good work, but rather encourage them in it; the more that they serve God, the better will they serve you.

OBJECT. fourth. I have no closet to pray in, no convenient room for secret prayer.

ANSWER, (1.) A good heart will find out room, whether without or within doors, and find a Bethel in any place. If he cannot get it under the roof, he will with Isaac walk out to the fields and pray. Every bird of paradise will take its flight to some wood or arbour, some private retirement under heaven.

(2.) This is an excuse that few here need to make. The most part of you have convenient houses and rooms in your house, and many of you have byres and barns to retire to. If you had affectionate hearts, you would not want convenient room, were it in the open air at a dyke side. If you have a mind to sin, you do not want a secret place for that, and if you had as good a heart to pray, you would not want a place for it.

OBJECT. fifth. I know some good Christians that never use secret prayer.

I ANSWER, (1.) It may be you know them, but that they are good Christians is rashly said. If they neglect secret prayer, do not you follow their example, contrary both to scripture precept, and precedent.

(2.) Will you have peace in following any man's example, but in so far as they follow Christ? Now I appeal to all that read the New Testament if this was not Christ's practice; so that if you follow them you forsake Christ, and then what will become of you?

OBJECT. sixth. I find not my heart affected, or prepared, and is it not a tempting of God to go when the Spirit does not move?

I ANSWER, (1.) The Spirit's motion is not your rule, but the word of God; the Spirit is our helper, but the word is our standard, so that it is a dangerous mistake to think you may not go to duty but when the Spirit moves.

(2.) When you neglect this duty, you are out of the way of the Spirit, for he ordinarily moves when souls are about their duty; therefore lay yourself in his way. Holy performances are the walk of the Spirit, and the air where he breathes, and you cannot expect the Spirit in the neglect of plain duty. Do you think to be warm, if you run from the fire? If you have not an appetite to pray, you must pray for an appetite. Try this way, and see if God be not better than you expect.

OBJECT. seventh. I meet with temptation when I go to secret prayer. Satan assaults me, I am timorous and afraid to be alone, or in the dark.

ANSWER, (1.) It is a sign the duty is good, when so bad a spirit opposes it; but must Satan be gratified rather than God glorified? Nay, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

(2.) Think not to be more exempted than Christ, who was assaulted by the devil in the wilderness. When Joshua prayed, Satan stood at his right hand to resist him, but the issue was good; God rebuked him. Let not Satan take thee from thy duty; consider that prayer will cast out the devil, for it is the Christian armour. If you flee from duty, Satan has gained the day, and will make a sport of you. But though all the devils in hell should roar upon you, yet if you run to God in prayer there is no fear; by your God you may run through a troop of devils.

OBJECT. eighth. O, but I get no good by secret prayer, my heart remains still as dead, and hard, and cold as ever.

ANSWER, (1.) Can you not say it is good for you to draw nigh

to God? then it seems you never drew nigh to God in a right manner; therefore try how the matter stands, mourn over your mismanagement, and pray that it may be amended.

(2.) Try it again, for then shall you reap if you faint not, therefore be not weary in well-doing. If you pray in deed and in truth, you will find something now and then that will put more gladness within you than the worldling can have in his corn, wine, and oil.

But I proceed to answer objections against family prayer.

OBJECT. first. There are some wicked members of my family, whom I cannot join with in prayer, wicked children or servants, for whose sake God may justly reject us.

ANSWER, (1.) Christ was heard in his prayer, though Judas was present. What think you of poor ministers' prayers in mixed congregations. The presence of unworthy persons does not preclude the acceptance of true prayer.

(2.) Prayer is God's institution to make bad people good; some have been wrought upon by the prayers of others. God heard Stephen for Paul. One said of a good man, Mr Bruce, that he knocked down the Holy Ghost upon us all. Deny them not this mean of conversion.

OBJECT. second. This practice fills the country with formalists and hypocrites, who pretend to pray in their family, and have nothing but a mere outward form of worship.

ANSWER, (1.) A form of godliness is not simply condemned, but forms alone, wanting the power of godliness. A form of godliness is better than none at all. Though men may have the form of godliness without the power of it, yet they cannot have the power of godliness without the form.

(2.) We press people not to the form or outward profession only, far less to the mask and appearance of religion without reality, but we would have people, through grace, labouring after the power of religion, which always vents itself outwardly.

OBJECT. third. Praying in our families morning and evening is a stinting of the Spirit and limiting God to our time.

ANSWER, (1.) Christ and his apostles had their set times of prayer. Judas knew our Lord's hour and place, and the apostles had their hour of prayer (Acts iii. 1).

(2.) The wind of the Spirit blows when and where he lists, and men are bound to wait at the posts of wisdom's door, and in the common road of a blessing.



OBJECT. fourth. Family prayer is but a new invention, and is more ado than necessary ; I pray in secret, and what need for more ?

ANSWER, (1.) I have showed you that in scripture times it was always used among the Lord's people, and also in the purest primitive times. Godly persons in all ages have used it.

(2.) Can you be too often with God ? Did you ever hear any person on a death-bed complain that he had served God too much, and was too religious ? Must you not be holy in all manner of conversation ? Again, for your praying in secret or public, and not in your family, remember that it is no true religion which men cannot carry out of the church with them, or out of the closet with them, to their family.

OBJECT. fifth. They that pray in their families are no better than others ; they can lie and cheat, and be proud and passionate, and untender in their walk, as well as we.

ANSWER, (1.) Take heed that you be not playing the devil's game, to be a false accuser of the godly ; for this sect is everywhere spoken against ; it is ordinary for piety to be branded with hypocrisy.

(2.) Suppose it be true that you say, does their religion teach them so ? Whether is this the fault of their praying, or the fault of their not praying as they should ? Is it because they are too religious ? Nay, say you, they are hypocrites. Well, if they be hypocrites who are so devout, what will become of you who are so far short of these hypocrites ? If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall you appear, who neglect God in your family ?

OBJECT. sixth. None of my neighbours use it, and why should I be singular ?

ANSWER, (1.) Would you rather follow a multitude to hell, than follow a few to heaven ? Will you be damned for company's sake ?

(2.) If you have not a greater, I am sure you have a better company to travel with, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, ministers, and martyrs ; they have all travelled this road. " For this shall every one that is godly pray to thee." I think you should rather choose the company of the excellent, whom God will own when he makes up his jewels, than those atheists that say it is vain to serve God, whom God will cast into the fiery furnace of his wrath.

OBJECT. seventh. But I know some good professors that argue against the duty of family worship.

ANSWER, (1.) That is no part of their goodness; they are under the power of delusion.

(2.) Some professors may seem good that are not so, they may have a name to live and yet be dead. It is lamentable that there is scarce any truth so sacred, or any duty so spiritual, but it has been contradicted in these licentious days. Imitate those latitudinarians at your peril.

OBJECT. eighth. There are some in the family that would mock me, if I would attempt family prayer, and make a jest of it.

ANSWER, (1.) If you be master of your own family, be ashamed that you have lost your power in it, and resume your authority. Whose cause do you manage, God's or the devil's? If the cause be God's, then in his name and strength own it, and he will stand by you.

(2.) Many of God's children have had profane wretches in their families. Abraham had a persecuting Ishmael, Isaac a profane Esau. Will omission of your duty work better upon any profane member of your family than performance of it?

OBJECT. ninth. I want the gift of utterance, I am bashful and modest, and want words to pray before others, I will bewray my ignorance.

ANSWER, (1.) Cursed is that modesty that is ashamed of duties; have you not reason to fear that Christ will be ashamed of you? but if you would shame yourself and do your best, God would provide for your credit, and gifts would increase.

(2.) If you cannot pray, will you tell God that you cannot do it? Entreat him to help you by his Holy Spirit, which he has promised to them that ask. I have formerly told you the subject-matter of prayer, and also the parts of it. Confession—Petition—Thanksgiving. Have you no sins to confess, no mercies to seek, no favours to bless God for? O make not such sorry shifts for your neglect of known duty.

OBJECT. tenth. It is a wearisome task to pray with our family both morning and evening.

ANSWER, (1.) It is a sign of a carnal heart, to say of duty, What a weariness is it! Indeed you need to seek a new heart, for if your heart be not changed, you would weary of heaven itself.

(2.) It is a black mark of God's rejecting you, if you rather pick quarrels with God's commands than obey them. Are you resolved thus to bid farewell to God, farewell to Christ, farewell to

heaven? You will rather welcome the service of the devil, and so welcome hell and damnation. O, consider the matter in time.

OBJECT. eleventh. I have been a long time a house-keeper, these twenty, thirty, forty years or so, and I have never used family prayer, and I am loath to bring in a new custom, and condemn my former practice.

ANSWER, (1.) Custom in sin hardens your heart, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Will this be a good excuse to God? Will the chief say to the judge, My lord, I have been accustomed to stealing all my days, so that I could not leave it. O, say not, I will go to hell, because I have travelled that road all my days; I am loath to change.

(2.) Converting grace can turn an old stream into a new channel. You need to pray, and pray again, for renovation of heart and way, that God would give you a new heart and a new spirit, that you may walk in his statutes. It is a good proverb, "Better late thrive than never." Wo to you for ever and ever, if you die with your old heart and your old way.

OBJECT. twelfth. I have used family prayer formerly, but got no good by it, and so gave it over; and if I begin again, I doubt I will not hold out.

ANSWER, (1.) Whose fault was that? Was it God's fault or yours? The blame must not be laid on the duty, but on the person. Thousands have got good by it, and would not lay it aside for all the world, and if your heart had been right, you would have held on your way; if your hands had been clean, you would have been stronger and stronger.

(2.) Who persuaded you to leave off family prayer? You did run well, who hindered you? Was it God, or his minister? No, it was the devil and a wicked heart; and is it not your folly, having begun in the Spirit, to end in the flesh? O, what iniquity have you found in God? O, come, and try your old acquaintance, turn to your first husband, engage the strength of God, and you shall hold on. Say not you are ignorant, and know not how to manage it. Let not either your pride of heart that you cannot pray so well as others, nor your laziness keep you back. God stands not upon gifts; if you have not precious liquor, offer him your empty bottle, lie down and say at least with the publican, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner;" or, to us sinners. If it be not wilfulness but weakness, God will indulge you much. Thus, I have answered



briefly about thirty objections that may be raised against prayer in general, and against secret and family prayer. O, may the Lord answer all your objections effectually, and teach you to *continue instant in prayer*.

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## SERMON XI.

### LAMENTATION OVER PRAYERLESS PERSONS AND FAMILIES.

“Continuing instant in prayer.”—ROMANS xii. 12.

IT was Augustin’s usual wish, that when Christ came he might find him *aut predicantem, aut precantem*, that is, either preaching or praying. Indeed it were to be wished that we were all found praying whenever Christ comes to us. When he comes to us in his word, may he find us praying; when he comes to us in his ordinances, may he find us praying; when he comes to us in his providence, may he find us praying; when he comes to us in his rod, may he find us praying; when he comes to us at death, may he find us praying. Truly the Lord seems to be coming to this congregation in a terrible way; he has done much in the way of judgment of late, and he is like to do more. Sure we need to be found praying. If the word will not set you a praying, God sends his rod. If the rod of sickness among people will not do, the Lord may say, I will send the rod of death among them, I will send death among the people, death among the elders, death among the ministers; this he is like to do. Death among the sheep, death among the shepherds. What is the language of all this? “Because I will do this, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel” (Amos iv. 12). Because I will do this, prepare to meet thy God, O Dunfermline. How should we prepare to meet him in his judgments, say you? I answer, O let us all be found praying, and *continuing instant in prayer*.

I have spoken doctrinally on this text, and applied it by way of information. I now proceed to improve it,

2dly, For Lamentation over prayerless persons. O, may not this doctrine lie heavy upon many persons and families in this congregation! For the neglect of prayer, we fear the vengeance of

God is hanging over their haads. Wo's us, that there are so few gracious praying persons and families among us ! Religion runs at a low ebb, and serious devotion is banished from the most part of people. Now here, because it was secret and family prayer, as I told you before, that I principally levelled at, therefore I would,

1. Take up a lamentation over prayerless persons that neglect secret prayer.
2. Over prayerless families that neglect the worship of God in their houses.

1. May we not lament over the neglect of secret prayer both among the wicked and the godly ?

(1.) Among the wicked, who understand nothing of this duty : they know nothing of what it is to wrestle with God in secret. "The wicked," says David, "through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God ; God is not in all his thoughts." He cannot pray aright anywhere, much less in secret. Instead of secret piety, secret wickedness is found among them. The apostle says, "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret" (Eph. v. 12). Their conscience can tell them sad stories of secret sins, which none but the God of heaven and themselves know of. Yea, because they see not God, they think God sees not them. O the secret wickedness that wicked men have to reckon for in the day of accounts ! but where are the secret prayers ? alas, how rarely, or how formally, do they wait on God alone ! The wicked man may be as devout as the best in temple worship ; but follow him to his closet, he cannot afford God an hour in the week ; no, this kind of religion gains him no credit with man. They think it below them to sigh out their hearts to God in a corner ; they will not be so much beholden to the great God for any mercy, like the proud atheists (Jer. ii. 31), who say, "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." But let such atheists know, that they shall die like men, and be damned like devils. The Lord be merciful to those poor prayerless sinners that are strangers to the necessity and benefit of closet prayer, and think and say that it is more ado than needs ; but let them prepare to make this most desperate assertion at the bar of God's justice with flames about their ears, when God will answer their cavils against plain duty after another manner than his ministers can now do.

(2.) Among the godly there may be too, too many that are greatly negligent of this duty of secret prayer ; at least they may pass it over slightly and carelessly. Good souls may be guilty of

frequent omissions and intermissions; and that you may lament over your neglects this way, I would propose these following questions, or awakening interrogatories.

[1.] Are you not very unlike Christ, who was found so often at secret prayer? Do you not find him, sometimes in the day, sometimes in the night, sometimes in the garden, sometimes in the mountain, taking all opportunities of praying to his Father? As he was a man of sorrows, so he was a man of prayers, and should we not learn of him? Does not Christianity consist in a conformity to him? Did Christ wrestle for us, and should not we wrestle with God for ourselves?

[2.] Are you not herein very unlike the saints of God? The seed of Jacob are all wrestlers with God, as Jacob was. God has no children still-born; they all cried, Abba, Father. It is recorded of the apostle James, that his knees were as hard as camels' feet with praying. Clouds of witnesses have always mounted up to heaven in prayer like a cloud of incense, fired by the Holy Ghost. Why should you be unlike your brethren? have we not all one Spirit as well as one Father, and is not this Spirit a Spirit of grace and supplications?

[3.] Are you not herein unlike yourself at former times? when God at first wrought upon your heart, believer, did you not run to him in a corner? Have you forgotten such a closet, such a chamber, such a barn, such a wood, such a hill, such a field, where you sometimes walked and meditated, sighing, sorrowing, weeping, bleeding, and breathing after God, when you fell prostrate and wept before the Lord, till you had no more power to weep. Were there not some sweet embraces then between God and you? Have you forgotten these blessed days? Your God has not. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness" (Jer. ii. 2). O believer, do you not mind the day when you would rather have been with God in a private room than upon a prince's throne? Were you not at this work every day, and many times a day? How comes it to pass that there is such a change? Is your God changed? Have you found any fault in him, or is not the fault in yourself? What is become of your ancient spirit of prayer? Why do you not inquire for those good old ways of communion with God?

[4.] Do you not deprive yourselves of many sweet refreshments by your neglect of secret prayer? Have you not had experience of refreshing incomes in secret duty; how many pleasant



morsels have you eaten alone? Ask those who exercise themselves in secret duty; they will tell you it is the sweetest time they spend, their gains infinitely countervail all their pains; yea, cannot your own experience attest it?

[5.] Does not your neglect expose you to many sad temptations? When you have gone abroad without secret prayer, has not Satan many times obtained his design upon you, by casting you down from your excellency into some gross iniquity? Have you not found your peace broken, sin prevailing, troubles abounding, upon the neglect of prayer? When you have gone out in a morning without a good breakfast with God, have you not been apt to gather wind and vanity, to the prejudice of your soul's health? If you engage not God to go with you, what security have you for that day? If God leaves you, the devil will do with you what he pleases, and hamper you in a thousand snares and sins.

[6.] Does not your neglect of secret prayer argue little love to God or delight in his company? When persons have a dear affection for each other, they love to be together. O lament before the Lord, that you have left your first love.

[7.] Do not these omissions declare you to be ungrateful to the grace of God? Is this all the thanks you give to God for the free admission he grants you to come to his throne, present your petitions, and ask what you will? O may not God take it ill that you are so loath to be happy, and that you will go twice as far to gratify a friend, rather than go alone to your closet to please God, and profit your own soul. O be ashamed of it?

[8.] Do you not by this neglect resist the motion of the Holy Ghost? Is it nothing to neglect communion with God the Father, and misimprove the intercession of God the Son, but you must also slight the motion of the Holy Ghost when he inclines you to duty? O consider what you do, have you this heavenly wind at your command? If you will not embrace the Spirit's call, perhaps he will not be present at your call.

[9.] If you can only pray in company, what will you do when your company is gone? The company of the saints is always desirable, but external communion is not always attainable. It is strange to hear some people express themselves to this purpose: If such and such Christian friends or godly relations be taken away, they know not how to live. Why, what is the matter; are they in the place of God? Is your spiritual life maintained by the leaden

pipes, or by the living springs that stream through them? Though such an one be gone, yet is God gone? Is prayer gone? May not providence come to thrust you out of the company of the godly, or to thrust them away from you? What will you do then, if you cannot have fellowship with the Father and the Son, alone in prayer?

[10.] What if the Lord should call you away, and find you under the neglect of this known duty? What confusion would surround you, if death should arrest you in such a state! Would you not bereave yourself of that consolation in an hour of death, which other saints may have? These omissions may make even a child of God to die in a dark night of confusion.

O Sirs, may we not here lament over not only the neglect, but the careless performance of this duty? O how dead, and hard, and dull! How unbelieving and distracted are your hearts in secret! There is a curse on such as do the work of the Lord negligently, that have a male in their flock and offer to the Lord a corrupt thing (Mal. i. 14.) O it is a fearful thing to get a curse upon our knees, when we come for a blessing. Satan jogs our hand when we are to write a letter to heaven in our prayer, so that we can scarce make sense of what we present to God. Our thoughts are unfixed, ranging abroad like a spaniel dog to a thousand objects, so that sometimes we have lost ourselves, and know not where we are. O lament over this evil, and apply yourselves to secret devotion. Alas, shall it be said of a devout philosopher, that in so many years he spoke more with the gods than with men: and shall Christians always speak with men, and seldom or never speak with God, even the true God, with whom we may speak freely, without being interrupted, as a German Martyr insinuated once when he was examined before his judges anent some articles of religion? When he was about to answer boldly and expressly to every point, they interrupted him, and bid him say, in a word, either yes or no. Then, says he, if you will not suffer me to answer for myself in things of such importance, send me back to prison again, among my frogs and toads, which will not interrupt me, while I talk with my Lord and my God. O but God makes us freely welcome to pour out our soul to him in secret; he will neither stop your mouth, nor stop his ear; nay, his ears are open to our cry. You cannot ask such great things as he is ready to give, and O lament that you will not ask and receive. O go to secret prayer, and ask, and ask again; let no dis-

couragement beat you off. The woman of Canaan takes the bullets that Christ shot at her, and with an humble boldness of faith sends them back again in prayer, which indeed reached his heart, and prevailed with God for mercy. But then,

2. May we not lament also over prayerless families—neglect of house devotion as well as closet? I must here seriously lament the want of family religion. And I the rather incline to give you another warning on this head, that my reverend colleague, who seems now to be on his way to eternity, was also prosecuting this subject particularly, and having asked him last night if he was willing that I should inculcate upon you the same doctrine that he was preaching, he insinuated his desire that I might do so; and therefore I shall bring in this matter as the Lord enables, and inculcate the same upon you in an use of lamentation over the neglect of family devotion; and I desire you may give ear to it, as if you heard both my dying colleague and me speaking to you in the name of God.\*

O Sirs, how unlike are many here to that resolution of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And here, there are four things that may afford matter of lamentation, that whereas it is required that in every praying house where spiritual sacrifices are offered to God, there be, (1.) A priest. (2.) An altar. (3.) A sacrifice. (4.) A supreme Object to be adored. Yet many here have houses where there is no priest,—no altar,—no sacrifice,—the sacrifice of devils instead of God.

(1.) Is it not lamentable that there are many houses and families without a priest in them, I mean no gospel priest devoted to God, anointed with the Spirit, to offer sacrifice of prayer. In a word, my meaning is, that there are many governors of families that have no religion at all. All believers are spiritual priests, a holy priesthood to offer up to God holy sacrifices. But are there

In this, and a few other passages, Mr. Erskine alludes to the illness and death of his respected colleague, the Rev. THOMAS BUCHANAN, and to the interviews he had with him during his affliction. Mr. Buchanan was seized with palsy in summer, 1714, and never fully recovered from its effects. He had a new and violent attack in the following spring, and died on the 10th April, 1715, in the fifth year of his ministry at Dunfermline, to which he had been translated from Tulliallan. Mr. Erskine, who was always careful to improve the dispensations of Providence, did not neglect to address appropriate exhortations to his hearers on the mournful occasion of his colleague's affliction and death, and very naturally urged them to give earnest heed to those weighty instructions on the duty of prayer, which, under these affecting circumstances, their two pastors had concurred in delivering. See *Life and Dairy of the Rev. Ralph Erskine*, pp. 95—98.—Ed.



not many masters of families here, who are poor, carnal, ignorant, sottish creatures, incapable of speaking a word to God for their families? You can call your family early up in the morning, and keep them late up at night about their work; but not a word of God all the day long, not a chapter read, not a psalm sung, not a prayer put up in the family, from day to day. O graceless family! may I address the master or mistress of such a family, in these two or three interrogatories.

[1.] Will you tell me how durst you set up house, or take the charge of a family on you, that are no better furnished for it, that cannot say a word to God for them? No, not if your wife, or child, or servant, were a-dying, and their souls ready to be damned, thou hast not a word to speak to God with your families either for the recovery of their bodies or the salvation of their souls.

[2.] Do you not condemn yourselves that can teach your children a trade to get a livelihood by, and live handsomely in this world, and not one word for another world? You can reprove them for offending you, and never for offending God. You expect that they ask of you what they need, and yet you will not ask of God anything either for them or yourself.

[3.] Does not all the world condemn you? Do not the heathens condemn you, for they had their *Penates*, their household gods? shall not their blind superstition condemn your irreligion? These poor idolaters will rise up in judgment against you. How will you answer for your charge? Will not the blood of your children or servants be required at your hand? how will they curse you in hell! O, wo is us, may they say, had we lived in praying families, we might have been converted and saved. We never heard a word of God, except blaspheming his name. How will this grind your ears, and grieve your hearts another day!

(2.) It is ground of lamentation that as there are many houses without a priest, so many houses and families without an altar; that is to say, not so much as a form of godliness, or a show of religion. May I expostulate with these woful wretches.

[1.] O, do you not resemble the brute beasts, while you own God no more than a dog or a swine? Does not God call the dullest creatures to condemn your irreligious practice and profanity? you know not God so much as the ox knoweth his owner, or the ass his master's crib (Isaiah i. 3.)

[2.] How can you expect a blessing upon your mercies? nay,

they are accursed to you ; and if God give commission, they will rise up in rebellion against you. You are cursed in your basket, and in your store.

[3.] You hinder God's interest in the world, and do what you can to propagate irreligion to future generations. Your offspring will plead the practice of their ancestors,—“ My father and mother never prayed in their family, nor will I.” Thus, with Jeroboam, you may make Israel to sin many generations after you. • O ! you little think how far your sin may spread.

[4.] Do you not often read your sin in your punishment ? When you are defective in your duty, your children abound in iniquity. You pray not for them, and God rejects them, and leaves them to notorious villany. This is too, too evident, in common experience.

(3.) It is ground of lamentation that as there are many houses without priest, without altar, so some may possibly have a priest and an altar, but want a sacrifice ; they have the fire and the wood, but want the lamb for a burnt-offering. They have the outward form, but want the marrow and mystery of true godliness. They pay God a daily compliment, and that is all, they never knew what it was to take Jesus Christ in their arms, or to pray to God in Christ by the Spirit. To you I would say,

[1.] As to *principle*,—if there be not a principle of grace within, you are but a lifeless machine, like a parrot that speaks articulately without sense and feeling. Our prayer must not go out of feigned lips. You have a very remarkable word (2 Sam. vii. 27) “ Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.” Remember it, you must find your prayer in your heart before you utter it with your lips, and then you must not say a prayer, as many do who mock God, but pray a prayer. Some fall down on their knees, and patter over a few words in a heartless manner, when their minds are roving to a thousand trifles, and this is their devotion they brag of and God must be pleased with ; whereas it is a poor, heartless, lifeless, spiritless, faithless form, without power, and which God will reject. This lip labour is but lost labour.

[2.] As to the *manner*,—if you sleepily and sluggishly perform your family duty, you expose yourself to the curse of doing the work of the Lord negligently. Many people spend all the day at their work, all the evening at idle chat, and then before they go to bed rush down upon their knees between sleeping and waking. O !

will God be put off with the world's leavings? Does not he that gave thee all thy time deserve the best of thy time? Tell me, do you not invert God's command, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added?" Do you not seek the things of the world, and let the kingdom of God be the last? O, will God be thus mocked!

[3.] As to *time*,—if you come to acknowledge God only by fits and starts, in a good mood, do you think that God will be thus served? Are there not many here that are never pious but in pangs, never serious but in sickness, never devout but in a time of distress, never pray but in perplexity? as is said of the carnal Jews, "When he slew them, then they sought him." They poured out a prayer when his chastening hand was upon them, and never else. O, poor soul! should you not come to the throne of grace, that you may find grace to help in time of need? and where is the day, where is the place, what is the state wherein you have not need of God? Do not your daily sins need daily pardon, your daily wants need daily supplies! May you not die this day, this night! Some will not pray in their family, but a little on Sabbath night. O, may not God send you to hell on a week day! Yea, to read a chapter and sing a psalm on Sabbath evening is all the religion that some have. The Lord pity you! wo to you that draw your breath in gospel air, and have made no better improvement thereof.

[4.] As to the *end*,—if you fail in the end you propose in family duty you will be rejected; and, alas, thousands propose wrong ends to themselves. Some keep up family duty, because it was the custom of their ancestors, and it would be a kind of disparagement to degenerate. Some pray in their families only to gratify a religious wife or a pious servant. Some to make a show and ostentation of their gifts, others to stop the mouth of a clamorous conscience. Some, as the Pharisees, to be seen of men; yea, some perhaps as the cloak of their villany; but a few pray with a single eye to the glory of God, and the good of their own souls, and the souls of others. A bad end mars the action, and a good end makes the action. Thus, there may be an altar where there is no sacrifice.

(4.) It is matter of lamentation that as there are some families without priest, without altar, without sacrifice of a right kind; so there are some that have something of all these, and yet have another altar and sacrifice inconsistent with these. They swear by the Lord, and they swear by Malcham. They set up the devil's



altar beside God's altar, as the Samaritans of old (2 Kings xvii. 33, 34); it is said in one verse they feared the Lord, and in the next verse they feared not the Lord. Why so? The answer is put between them; "they served their own gods"—they had a mongrel religion, were devout in worship, but profligate in practice. Many people part all the religion they have between God and the devil; they are indeed one thing on their knees, another thing on their feet. They confess sin one hour, and commit it the next. They pray like atheists, and practice like devils. They have been serious in their devotion in the morning, and therefore they are latitudinarian through the day, and hope God will not take notice of their infirmity; as the man that one tells us of who frequented taverns, ale-houses, and whore-houses all the day, yet would not go out without prayer in the morning. This is gross atheism; for,

[1.] It is the making of God the patron of your iniquity. As if the holy God approved and encouraged those vices, so they bribe him with a few formal duties; but what says God: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes."

[2.] It is a dishonouring of God, and taking his name in vain, so long as you say one thing and do the quite contrary. You discredit your profession, you harden wicked men against God's ways, and make them conclude that either God is as bad as you or approves you, or else he would be avenged on you. O sirs, he will not hold you guiltless that take his name in vain.

[3.] How can you expect acceptance, who thus regard iniquity in your heart? I think, when you read that astounding text, Psal. l. 16, your conscience should fly in your faces, as it did in Origen's: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." O tremble at such a sharp reproof.

[4.] You tempt your children and servants to be atheists, while you act so contrary to your prayers and professions. Just as scandalous ministers, that speak well but live ill. People are ready to say, if this man believed himself what he says, he would act otherwise. Will he direct us this way to heaven, and walk the clean contrary way? Surely he thinks it but a fancy, or else he would embrace it himself. Indeed by this means you very much gratify Satan; he will give you leave to say well, and pray well, provid-

ing you will not do as you say, or perform as you pray. Yea, by this means you fortify yourself against conviction, and go blindly to hell; for you will not be brought to believe that your state is bad, while you think you can pray so well and are so religious in your family. You falsely imagine that you have an interest in Christ; but, alas! it is not the sprinkling of a little holy water in your houses that will remove the curse of God that lies on your family, contracted by your wickedness (Hab. ii. 9, 11; Zech. v. 3, 4). This I say not to discourage any from family prayer, but that specious hypocrites and formalists may be alarmed to reform their prayer.

The next Use is of Exhortation; but at present I sum up this use with these two words.

(1.) A word to such inferiors as live in praying families. Young persons, particularly, look to your state. It is not living among godly persons that will make you godly, nor complying with praying gestures that will denominate you to be a saint. You may do as your parents or governors would have you for carnal ends, as young Joash did right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiadah: but his heart was not right; he proved naught, and so may you. If you want a principle of grace in your heart, you will either gaze about you, or think of other things, or fall asleep, which is the common practice of young persons, and others too, when their parents or masters are at prayer. But, O! what a high contempt is this of the great God! What dreadful and damnable hypocrisy!

(2.) There are also graceless souls in praying families. Alas! how many walk unsuitably to the family devotion they are witness to! They will swear, lie, be wanton, unclean, tippling, drunken. O what a reproach do you cast upon the instruments of your education! Wo be to you that must be snatched out of praying families, and cast among devils! You had better been born among Turks and Pagans; your condemnation will be aggravated; your consciences will fly in your faces. O how many good instructions have I slighted—how many convictions have I stifled—how many good motions have I resisted—how many good examples have I contradicted; and now I must mourn without hope for ever! Consider this, all ye that forget God, and that forget to *continue instant in prayer*.

## SERMON XII.

## MOTIVES TO SECRET AND FAMILY PRAYER.

“ Continuing instant in prayer.”—ROMANS xii. 12.

HEARING of the word is a necessary duty ; but if prayer be neglected, hearing will be to little advantage. If manure be poured down in heaps upon the field it does no good ; it must be spread abroad before it make fruitful ground : so the word must be spread on our hearts by prayer and meditation, otherwise it will never make our souls healthful and fruitful. We must pray over it for the showers of divine grace to water it and work it into our hearts. Indeed our trifling hearts will make any excuse to shift from this duty. People would rather hear an hour than pray a quarter. It is hard work to nature ; the Spirit must travel in it, and a man must travel through other duties with it. In vain will you continue instant in hearing, or continue instant in reading, or continue instant in any other duty, if you do not continue instant in praying. Having spoken to an use of Information, and an use of Lamentation, I come now,

3dly, To the Use of Exhortation and Direction. The grand exhortation is, that you continue instant in prayer—in all those kinds of prayer that I have demonstrated, particularly in secret and family prayer. Now, in pursuing this exhortation, I would, 1. Offer some motives to press you to it. 2. Mention some means to direct you in it. 3. Resolve some cases of conscience to clear you in it, and then conclude the whole.

1. I would offer some motives. Indeed I have already cleared every kind of prayer, from precept, from example, from the advantage of performing it, and from the danger of neglecting it. I have also spoken of the necessity and the excellency of prayer ; and if these things were considred, there needs no more motives ; there is as much said as will leave the neglecters of prayer, in secret and in their families, eternally inexcusable. I would press this duty, however, a little farther ; and that the rather, that while your late minister, and my colleague, was yet living, I asked him if he were willing that I should inculcate



upon you the doctrine which he had been preaching, and which also lay in my way, and he intimated his desire that I might do so; and therefore, I beseech all that hear me to give ear and receive the word of exhortation, which I would press home upon you by these four motives or considerations:—(1.) Consider the misery you come under who neglect secret and family prayer. (2.) Consider the gain you obtain who are diligent therein. (3.) Consider the madness and unreasonableness of slighting this call to prayer. (4.) Consider for whose sake you are called thereto.

(1.) Then, I say, consider the misery you come under who neglect prayer. This will appear if you ponder these particulars, which, in the name and bowels of the Lord Jesus, I desire you to notice.

[1.] You are guilty of the highest contempt of the great God. You fly in the face of his authority by flat disobedience to his holy law. Is it not injurious and unnatural to the Author of your being never to own him? Is it not a bold defiance of the Governor of the world, to sin against him every day, and never ask his pardon, or to do it negligently and superficially? Do you not live upon his daily goodness? Every breath you draw, every morsel you eat, every blessing you enjoy, is an instance of his goodness, and a monitor of your duty. Is it not a rude neglect to pass by a superior, suppose a prince or a benefactor, without any expression of reverence or acknowledgment of duty? Will you deal so unworthily with the supreme Lord of the world? O wherefore do the wicked contemn God, and treat him worse than you would do a petty prince on earth? (See Mal. i. 8).

[2.] This neglect of yours is a certain sign of unregeneracy, and that you are wicked. It is frequently made the character of a wicked man. "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts" (Psal. x. 4). There need no greater proof that you are in a state of unrenewed nature, and were never savingly changed, than this, that you neglect prayer, and restrain prayer before God. It is impossible there can be any principle of grace or spark of divine life, where there is a habitual neglect of prayer; for all the children of God cry, Abba, Father. There was never such a thing in all the world as a prayerless good man; for it is a contradiction. Show me a man that never prays, and I dare venture on the credit of God's word to say, that though he be civil and honest in his dealings with

respect to men, yet with respect to religion, and in God's account, he is a wicked and ungodly sinner. Now, tell me, O man, woman, can you be easy in such a state, in which you will certainly perish? Would you be willing to live and die in your unregeneracy, and run the risk of eternal vengeance?

[3.] You cannot expect any blessing from God, and are beholden to others for your preservation. Where the promise runs in the most absolute form, God says, "Nevertheless for this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel;" and if God has promised no mercy without being sought, no man can pretend to expect any more than God has promised. And if God gave prayerless persons any outward enjoyments, as it is more than he has promised or they have warrant to expect; so though he gave them, he gives not his blessing with them, and so they prove a snare to them, even the instrument of sin, and the fuel of lust, and so the occasion of their greater ruin. Yea, prayerless persons are beholden to others for their preservation. Though sinners revile praying Christians, and treat them with scorn and ridicule, yet it is owing to the prayers of those whom you despise that you are cut off hell and are spared on earth. If there were none but prayerless sinners left upon earth, the wrath of God would not be kept off for a moment, because there would be none to stand in the gap, and hold it out. It is said of the days of tribulation, that for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

[4.] The boldest sinners on earth will be forced to pray. The most profane and daring rebel will be fain to pray at last, and be an humble and earnest suitor for mercy in a time of deep distress, especially in an hour of death, and under the prospect of eternity. Then they will pray who never prayed before. A storm at sea will fright a hardened sinner to his knees, and make him call upon God whom he never thought of before, and never named but in curses and oaths. You shall rarely see a wicked man under imminent danger and on a dying bed, that does not cry out and roar in the agony of his soul, saying, "Lord, forgive my sins; Lord, deliver me from hell and from the power of the devil; fit me to die, prepare me for heaven." Yea, how commonly do you find, at such a time, that they will earnestly beg the prayers of others? There are few or none that we see on death-beds that do not beg the help of our prayers. They send for ministers and praying Christians, and entreat the prayers of those in sickness whom they despised in health. Thus Pharaoh, when under the plagues, desired Moses to entreat

the Lord for him; Ahab sent for Micaiah in his strait, though he hated him in his prosperity (1 Kings xxii. 8). Simon Magus desired Peter to pray for him. "O," say they, "if you have any interest in heaven,—any power with God,—any pity to a poor miserable creature,—O pray for me, and never forget me at the throne of grace." Or, if there should be any so hardened against the pressure of trouble and the terrors of death, that they will neither pray nor desire others to pray, yet, nevertheless, they will certainly pray hereafter. If death do not awaken them, judgment will; the stoutest heart will tremble at the bar of God, and cry for God's pity at that day, saying, with the foolish virgins, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But,

[5.] God will despise the prayers of the wicked at last, and reckon with them for their neglects. Half that earnestness which sinners will then use in vain, would tend now to their advantage. A gracious God would incline his ear, and his heart would relent; but hereafter all importunity will be in vain. God will not be moved by any agonies of soul, by any circumstances of distress. He is represented not only as refusing their requests, but insulting their miseries, and rejecting them with scorn: "Because I have called and ye refused, I will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh" (Prov. i. 26). Then every abused mercy will cry for vengeance; yea, the kind Redeemer will become an enemy, and pronounce their condemnation. How just and equitable will it be for him to say, "You refused the offers of my mercy, and wore out the day of grace. How often would I have gathered you, and ye would not; and do you now plead your profession and hope to extort my regard? No, I utterly disown you, and disclaim all your pretensions." This is the last and sad farewell: "Depart from me, I know you not."

[6.] How sad will the hopeless prayers of the damned in hell be! Now sinners may pray in hope and expect a favourable hearing; but when the sentence is past, and the eternal state determined, they will pray and cry in vain, for the dispensation of mercy and kingdom of grace is at an end. Behold an emblem of it in Luke xvi. 24. There "the rich man lifted up his eyes in torments," saying, "Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue." A very moving and modest request; but it is denied. When he could not prevail for himself, he renews his prayer for his father's



house, ver. 27th. Well, is this prayer answered? No; it is denied also. He again urges and presses the request, ver. 30th. But is he heard now? No, no; he is finally denied. He could not by the greatest importunity prevail for the least favour either to himself or any other. If you pray not now, sirs, while there is hope, you will pray in vain hereafter, when you are doomed to everlasting distance from Christ—to groan eternally under the most intolerable wrath, and roll about in agonies of despair, saying, “O that I had spent every breath of my life in prayer to God, rather than now to breathe in fire and brimstone for ever! O that I had never stirred from my knees till I obtained a blessing; but now all possibility of mercy is gone, nothing remains to all eternity but exquisite misery and utter despair.” This, then, is the first motive to prayer that I would have you to consider, even the misery they come under who neglect prayer, whether in secret or in their families; or who pray as if they prayed not,—in such a careless manner as if they had not to do with God and eternity. O is it not every neglect of prayer a sin? and does not every sin bring on a weight of guilt? Have you not constant reason and occasion for prayer? Do you consider the loss and damage you sustain, and the misery your neglect brings you under? But,

(2.) Another motive may be drawn from the consideration of the gain that accrues to them who are diligent in prayer; which will appear in these particulars:

[1.] By prayer you maintain a constant commerce with Heaven. Prayer ascends like the cloud of incense before the throne of God, and then blessings descend like a kindly dew from the heavens. None keep so high company, or converse so honourably, as praying Christians. Their conversation is in heaven, and every day, like Moses, they go up to the mountain.

[2.] By prayer you will be supported and preserved under the weight of every burden of life; and no difficulty, no enemy, will ever be able to prevail to your utter discouragement. Why, by prayer you secure God always upon your side, and engage the divine omnipotence. You are in alliance with Heaven, and draw down new recruits and supplies of strength from thence. “The Lord is nigh to them that call upon him in truth.” Prayer will be the muniment and defence of your family: “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Psal. xci. 1). If any be safe, it is the godly pray-

ing family. Lot's family must be delivered from Sodom's flames. "The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, as well as upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke, by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night" (Isa. iv. 5). He will be a wall of fire round about them; yea, God himself will be the glory in the midst of them—in the midst of such praying persons and families.

[3.] Secret and family prayer is the best ornament, as well as muniment, to your houses. No stately room nor splendid furniture will set off your house so well as the worship of God. This is what renders a beggar's cottage more stately and honourable than a prince's palace, if it be without prayer. "Righteousness exalteth a nation," yea, exalteth a family; "but sin is a reproach to any people." O it is a pleasant thing to see all the members of a family, both separately and jointly, worshipping the great Jehovah every day and praising him. This is an emblem of heaven.

[4.] This is the way and means to bring spiritual and eternal salvation to yourselves and your families. Surely it was a great word that our blessed Lord spoke to Zaccheus when he said, "This day is salvation come to thy house" (Luke xix. 9). 'Tis very remarkable that the conversion of one man brings salvation to the whole family. Christ says not to Zaccheus, salvation is come to thee only; nay, salvation is come to this house of thine. O, if governors of families were with Zaccheus climbing up the sycamore-tree by prayer for a view of Christ, this would be the way to bring salvation to their house. O, sirs, would you not have your children and servants safe? This is God's appointed way to bring it about.

[5.] The effects of prayer will remain when you are gone, and many others may fare the better for them. Your surviving children, your surrounding neighbours, the countries and the places where you dwell, may find the benefit of your prayers. The blessings of praying Christians descend upon others, and their posterity after them, when they themselves are praising God in heaven. Others may reap in joy what they sow in tears. Thus God drove out the inhabitants of Canaan, and gave it to the seed of Abraham his friend, and would not rend away the kingdom from Solomon, for David his father's sake (2 Chron. xx. 7).

[6.] Prayer itself will quickly cease, and nothing remain but praise. I mean that part of prayer which consists in confession of sin, if not petition for mercy, will cease, because all guilt and want

and danger will cease. Nothing but constant celebration of divine praise. For above they will be possessed of the divine glory and secure of the divine favour; there will not be the discord of a single sigh throughout the blessed world, but one united flame of divine love, and one harmonious shout of everlasting praise. Hold on praying in faith for a little; believe, and then all that is difficult and unpleasant now, will be quite removed for ever, and nothing will remain to all eternity, but the two noblest things in both worlds, perfect love and joyful praise.

(3.) Another motive by which I would press you to this duty is the consideration of the madness and unreasonableness of slighting this call to prayer. That it is foolish and unreasonable will appear, if you will pose yourselves with these few interrogatories which I would have all who neglect secret and family prayer to answer.

[1.] Suppose a grave and pious minister, or Christian friend, should lodge with you, would you not for shame reach him a Bible and desire him to go to prayer with you, lest he should suspect you to be prayerless at other times? And, alas! will not God's authority and presence have the like awe upon your spirit?

[2.] Suppose your friends and relations would quite disown you and disclaim you unless you pray in secret and in your family, would you not make a shift to do something that way rather than be accounted unworthy of human society? And, alas! would that prevail with you, and yet will God's threatening to disclaim and disown you, and debar you from his blessed society, have no weight with you?

[3.] If your landlord should turn you out of your house, and your father should desert you, if you set not up the worship of God in your family, would not that have some weight with you to engage you? And yet, alas! is it nothing to you that God your heavenly Father, the great landlord of the universe, threatens to cast you out of heaven and reject you for ever? should not that much more move you to your duty?

[4.] Suppose a law were imposed upon you to pay five shillings every time you neglect prayer in secret and in your family, would you be content to forfeit that sum as often as you go prayerless to bed? Would you not rather fear that it would beggar you? And, alas! will not greater losses deter you from this omission, while, by the neglect of prayer you are in danger of losing your soul, losing God,



losing Christ, losing heaven, losing an eternal portion, by virtue of the laws and statutes of God, that stand in full force against you?

[5.] Suppose a king or nobleman should promise you five pounds every time that you call your family together to worship God, would you not strain hard to procure that money? And, alas! will not a greater profit from the Almighty God prevail with you to perform this exercise, while he promises a crown of life to them that seek him? Truly your hearts shall live that seek the Lord.

[6.] Suppose a brand were set upon your forehead, like a Cain, and a mark of reproach visible to all the world, and this name given you, *A graceless and prayerless man*, would not this shame you out of your wretched neglect? But behold a worse mark of God's wrath is set upon your forehead—"The wicked calleth not upon God."

[7.] Suppose the next time you go prayerless to bed, your loveliest child and darling should be snatched away suddenly by death, as it was in Egypt, where the first-born of Pharaoh and others died, and there was a great cry, would not this move you to your duty? And, alas! doth it not move you that a greater evil befalls you? Your precious souls are endangered by your neglect.

[8.] Suppose the plague or pestilence were within your house, seizing one after another of your family, would you not spend some time in prayer for yourself and family? And behold, a worse plague is upon you, the plague of sin, and will you not pray?

[9.] Suppose that upon every omission of family prayer you were to lose a limb, a hand, or any other member of your body, till all be gone and you be dismembered, would not this force you to this duty? And yet your immortal souls are in hazard, which are ten thousand times more valuable than any member of your body; yea, than your whole body; yet you are ready to lose them by your neglect of prayer.

[10.] Suppose a gallows were set up at your door, and you must be hanged next time you go out without praying in your family, would you venture to be hanged rather than perform this duty? Do you not love your lives better than to do so? But O, eternal death is far more dreadful, and this you are liable to by your neglect. Shall not sinners be damned for their omission of good as well as for the commission of evil? "Yea, the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." In a word,

would temporal riches and advantages draw you, temporal death and dangers drive you in some measure to the performance of this duty, and yet shall the eternal God, by all the motives of eternal moment and consequence, not at all prevail with you? Does not all this say, it is the height of madness and unreasonableness to slight this call to prayer in secret and in your families? O the perfection of folly and insatiation!

(4.) Another motive is drawn from this consideration, viz., for whose sake it is that you are called to this duty of secret and family prayer.

[1.] We call you, then, to secret and family prayer for God's sake, who made you for himself, who daily preserves you, and can plentifully reward your obedience and revenge your disobedience.

[2.] We call you to it for Christ's sake, who laid down his life for you, that he might purchase you for himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

[3] We call you for the Holy Ghost's sake, who is moving you to the duty, striving with you to incline you, and will help your infirmities, unless you grieve him and quench his motions.

[4.] I call you to this duty for the church's sake. For Zion's sake do not hold your peace, till the Lord return to his tabernacle, and make our Zion a peaceful habitation of holiness.

[5.] We call upon you for the nation's sake, which is almost drowned in atheism and sensuality, and consequently lies exposed to the wrath and furious displeasure of the Most High.

[6.] We call you for your neighbour's sake, who may follow your example, if you pray to God in your family, and who are so ready to follow you to hell, if you neglect your duty.

[7.] I call you to this work for your children and servants' sake, who need your prayers for their conversion, pardon, and reconciliation with God.

[8.] I call you to this duty for your own sake, even for the sake of your own poor souls, that are under much guilt, liable to the wrath of God, and have much work and burden upon your hands, and a great account to make unto God.

Surely, if you have any sense of these things upon your heart, any one of them may induce you to be instant and constant in calling upon God in secret, and in your families. And now, indeed, sirs, I must entertain a very bad opinion of you, if after all that has been said, you do not henceforth set up an altar for God in your

closets and families. I have no more to subjoin by way of motive, and perhaps I shall never say so much again at a time of this subject, as I have done since I entered upon this text. However, as much has been said as shall stand in witness and record against prayerless persons and families among you. Though you should let all that I have said fall to the ground, it will rise up in judgment against you. Although I be a poor creature like yourselves, yet it is in the name of the Lord I have been calling you, from the word of the Lord, to this duty; and therefore you will reject and despise it at your peril.

So much shall suffice for the first thing proposed in the pursuit of this use of exhortation, viz., motives.

I promised, in the next place, to point out some means to direct you in this necessary work of prayer. But this, and the other thing proposed, must be reserved till another opportunity. O sirs, take home with you what you have heard, and let it sink into your minds and hearts, and let all these motives whereby you are pressed to this duty, be so many motives to you to seek interest in, and to close with, the Lord Jesus Christ. The law is our schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ; so let all these motives be as a schoolmaster to let you see the absolute need of Christ, without whom you will never be in condition to pray aright, either in secret or in your families. Without the Spirit of Christ you can have no assistance, and without the merit of Christ no acceptance; therefore come and embrace Jesus Christ, and grip to him for righteousness and strength. Be persuaded of your own inability, and bring him along with you to your closets and families. I allude to that scripture, 2 Sam. iii. 13, "And he said, Well, I will make a league with thee; but one thing I require of thee, that is, thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face." So the matter stands here, sirs. God is content to have a league with you, to enter into covenant with you, a covenant of peace and reconciliation, upon your coming to him by closet and family prayer; but one thing does he require of you, and that is, you shall not see his face except you first bring Jesus, his eternal Son, along with you, when you come to see his face. As Joseph said to his brethren, "You shall not see my face except you bring your younger brother Benjamin with you;" so says God, you shall not see my face except you bring your elder brother Jesus with you. God the Father of mercies will melt towards you upon



the sight of his Son's blood and merit; therefore, O seek to win Christ, and then you win God's heart, and may ask what you please, were it to the half of his kingdom, yea, to the whole of his kingdom. And till you be assured of your interest in Christ, go to God daily by prayer, and seek of him an interest in his Son; beg of him that unspeakable gift. God will take it well that you come to him on such an errand, and importune his throne for the blessing. Be restless till you get hold of him, and be not like the graceless, profane, God-provoking generation who mock at religion, and will not trouble God with their prayers,—like that blasphemous atheist, who, being brought to an extremity fell a praying, and told God he was no common beggar, that he had never troubled him before with prayer, and if he would hear him at that time, he would never trouble him again. Let such atheists go on till their doom be past; but, poor soul, take you the counsel of the only wise God, who calls you to *continue instant in prayer*.

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## SERMON XIII.

### DIRECTIONS REGARDING PRAYER.

“Continuing instant in prayer.”—ROMANS xii. 12.

PRAYER is as great a mystery to the natural unrenewed man as any other part of our holy religion. Every true Christian is a priest (Rev. i. 6), and has an altar, but alas, we may say with Isaac, “Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?” We have nothing to offer unless the Lord provide a lamb and instruct us how to offer it up. It is thought an easy thing to pray. Indeed, lip labour is an easy work, and whitening the outside of the sepulchre; but it is not easy to give life to the loathsome carcase, since this is the work of God, and requires the arm of Jehovah. O that people were stirred up to cry to heaven, that the arm of the Lord might be revealed, that by the help of this arm of power they may answer the call here given to continuing instant in prayer!

I formerly entered on the exhortation, and have spoken to the first thing proposed thereupon, viz., the motives to this duty, which,

with the rest that I previously advanced on this subject, might have engaged all the prayerless people of this congregation to set about this work both in their closets and families, but though none be determined thereby, yet what I have said from the word of God shall not fall to the ground, without accomplishing God's design. My labour shall not be lost; for if it do not prevail upon your hearts and practice, yet it shall be a standing testimony against a prayerless generation among us.

2. The second thing proposed on the exhortation, was to offer means to direct you in this great duty of prayer; for it is not every key that will open the doors of heaven, nor every knock that will obtain an entrance. I am, therefore, to give you directions as the Lord enables; and before I go on, I do solemnly, in the name of God, require your promise to set about the same in the strength of Christ, and if you do according to the following directions, I dare venture to promise you success in the Lord's name, and if you do not, all that I have said, and am to say, shall witness against you. Now the directions I am to give you are of three sorts:

(1.) ANTECEDENT, such as go before the duty.

(2.) CONCOMITANT, such as must accompany the duty.

(3.) SUBSEQUENT, such as must follow after the performance thereof.

(1.) Then for the ANTECEDENT, or things that must go before prayer, in order to our preparation for it. Some things that further the duty must be performed, and some things that will hinder it avoided.

1st. Some things that will further the duty must be seen to. Let me tell you some things that will further this duty; namely, 1. A good state. 2. A lively frame. 3. Meditation.

1. A good state. This is the most essential thing of all in order to prayer; for if one be not in a state of grace, a justified regenerated person, wherewith shall he come before the Lord? He that presents his supplication to a court with confidence of success, must be a favourite. Others must pray, and may speed through the mercy of God in Christ; but the believing favourite *shall* speed. The precept is to all, but the promise is only to the believer, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry." Strangers may wail, and it is a venture whether we relieve them or not; but if our children cry, being in distress, we hasten to their help. He that can by faith cry, Abba, Father, may

with confidence expect that God will deal with him as a son. Union to Christ is necessary in order to our acceptance in prayer; for we are accepted in the Beloved. The prayers of an unbelieving natural man are like Jehoshaphat's ships, that were made to go to Tarshish for gold, but were broken by the way; they come short of that merchandise which is better than silver, and that gain which is better than pure gold, for which they pretended to launch forth. But the prayers of the believer are like Solomon's navy, which was sent forth to Ophir; the ships went through their voyage, and brought from thence four hundred and twenty talents of gold. Unsearchable are the riches which the vessel of a believing prayer is freighted with. Therefore, in order to your praying acceptably, consider your state, man, woman, whether you that go to knock at heaven's gate be a friend or an enemy: and I'll give you two or three reasons for it.

(1.) Because your prayers cannot justify your person, they cannot merit anything at God's hand, nor procure a pardon; seeing we are only accepted in the person, in the righteousness, of Christ.

(2.) God does not so much value our prayers, as the fountain from whence they flow, and the end at which they aim. Now, till your hearts be renewed and changed, you cannot act from a principle of love; your motives must be carnal, and your end self-interest.

(3.) Because none can pray acceptably but by the Spirit. Now, it is only the justified person, the believer, that has the Spirit of Christ.

(4.) None can pray acceptably without an interest in the merit and intercession of Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen; therefore till you be united to him, there is no access to the throne, no acceptable sacrifice. Nay, says a great divine, God is as well-pleased with the barking of a dog as with the prayers of a Christless person. Indeed, an unbeliever may plead God's sovereign mercy, and may be heard, but the believer can plead God's plighted promise, and must be heard. Therefore, when you go to pray, consider who thou art that calls. Art thou the rebel supplicating God for pardon, and yet coming to him with the weapons of rebellion in your hand, can you thus expect acceptance? O then, cast away your sins, and cast out your idols; our Lord Jesus marries none but widows who are divorced from all other husbands, and he opens his heart to none but his betrothed spouse.

The first thing then that I recommend is to see to your state.



See that your heads and hearts be stored, your heads with sound knowledge, and your hearts with saving grace; without both of these you will not be fit for this undertaking. Without saving knowledge you will have no skill, and without saving grace you will have no will to work. Saving knowledge of God, the object of worship, to whom your prayers must be directed: of Christ, the Mediator, in whom only you can have access, and knowledge of the Spirit, by whom you must be helped in the discharge thereof; otherwise, ye worship ye know not what, and ye care not how. Without the true knowledge of God, you worship an unknown God, and without saving grace your praying will be but lip labour, and so lost labour; your piety will be but hypocrisy.

But you will say, How shall I get this principle of saving grace, that I may be in a good state? I answer, you must be convinced that you have it not by nature, that you cannot work it in yourself; faith is the gift of God. You must study and plead the covenant of grace, wherein God promises to put his law in your inward part, to teach you to know him, and to circumcise your heart to love him; and by studying and pleading these and the like free and precious promises, you may come to be a partaker of the divine nature, that you may serve God in a new and due manner.

2. A lively frame is another thing requisite to further this duty of prayer. By this frame I mean the stirring up of grace and the exercise thereof; and, indeed, if grace be not implanted, it cannot be exercised; it is as natural for the new creature to breathe after God, as it is natural for fire to burn. Where there is no fire, there can be no flame; where there is no grace, there can be no exercise thereof. Therefore, having got grace, according to the former direction, endeavour to stir it up that it may burn. The language of grace in prayer is pleasing to God. Cato, being asked why he learned the Greek language in his old age, answered; "I hear," says he, "that the gods speak Greek, and I would willingly speak to them in their own language." Now, all the words of God are words of grace. It is said of Christ, "Grace is poured into his lips;" therefore they that would not speak to God and pray to him in an unknown tongue, a language which he does not understand, their language must be accented with the exercise of grace. If people take some grace along with them to prayer, they may expect more. When Jacob's sons went down to Egypt to fetch corn, they carried some along with them to supply them by the way; so when

the child of God goes to Christ by prayer for spiritual food, he must endeavour to carry some along with him to strengthen him in the duty, and he shall find more; and for this end labour to keep your heart in a praying frame, in the intervals of duty.

3. Meditation is another thing that will further this duty of prayer. David first mused, and then he spake with his tongue. Meditation is like the charging of a piece, and prayer is like the discharging of it. What should we meditate of? There are some things with respect to yourself, and some things with respect to God, that you are to meditate of.

(1.) With respect to yourself, meditate on your sins, your wants, your mercies. I told you of three parts of prayer—confession, petition, thanksgiving; now meditation gives each of these the work they have to do. Meditation on sin helps to confession, meditation on wants helps to petition, and meditation on mercies helps to thanksgiving. David meditates on these three; he meditates on his sins—“My sin is ever before me;” he meditates on his wants, “Lord,” says he, “I am poor and needy;” and he meditates on his mercies—“Lord,” says he, “thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes.”

[1.] Then meditate on your sins, your personal and relative sins, your secret and public sins, your heart and life sins. Accent them with their aggravations by considering what light, what love, what motions of God’s Spirit, what convictions of your own spirit they were committed against. If you will kill these foxes that spoil the vines, these lusts that hinder the regenerate part from thriving, meditation must hunt them out of their lurking holes and take them. Think what infinite majesty, purity, and mercy in God you have sinned against, and especially on the blood of the blessed Jesus, that was shed by your lusts.

[2.] Meditate on your wants. What want you, man, in order to your praying? He that forgets his errand upon which he comes, must expect to be sent back no better than he came. Think what pardoning mercy you want; what purifying mercy you want; what strengthening mercy you want; what light, what liberty, grace, or comfort, and support you want. Think what sin has got the better of you, that you may beg pardon of it and power against it; what new providence has befallen you, what new work is laid upon you, that you may beseech God to give the suitable grace and power you need. Sense of absolute necessity will make you urgent and instant.

[3.] Meditate on your mercies. For example, meditate on the many passages of kind providence towards you from your birth to this moment. How many journeys you have been preserved in; how many dangers you have been saved from; how many distresses you have been supported under (Psal. xl. 5).

Meditate on the *nature* of his mercies, how freely they were bestowed, when you deserved judgment instead of mercy. As when a man turns his back upon the sun, even then the sun refreshes him with its beams; so when you have turned your back upon God, and departed from him, yet even then he has followed you with mercies.

Meditate on the *fulness* of your mercies; many bodily mercies, —while many want health, strength, liberty, food, raiment, sleep, yea, and members of their body, you perhaps have all these. Especially the fulness of your spiritual mercies—O what mercies are these!—the gospel of salvation, sabbaths, sermons, sacraments, seasons of grace. And much more yet, if you be a believer, have you reason to meditate on these distinguishing mercies, the image of God, the blood of Christ, eternal salvation through him. Indeed, your whole life is a bundle of blessings, and the thought of these may stir up to bless the Giver. If you should bless men when they curse you, much more should you bless God when he blesses you.

(2.) With respect to God, to whom you are to pray, meditate, [1.] On his Majesty, the great and terrible God, the infinite, immense, incomprehensible Jehovah. As God rises in your thoughts, self will fall. [2.] Meditate on his mercy and goodness as a bountiful Giver. Abraham asked but one son, God gave him seed like the stars. Indeed, he gives like a king, he gives like a God, he delights both to be sought and found.

The direction, then, which I am giving you, and which I desire to take to myself, is to meditate before you pray. Meditate beforehand what you are to carry to God in prayer. Indeed, when people are called to pray either in private or public, on a sudden emergency, they may humbly depend upon the Lord for assistance; and in a case of this nature, let ejaculatory prayer lead you to solemn prayer. Before you enter upon the duty, let your heart make its address to God in some short request, as that, Psal. lxxx. 18, "Lord, quicken me to call upon thy name." Lord, let thy good Spirit help my infirmity; Lord, let thy grace be sufficient for me. But, for ordinary, people should take a little time to com-



pose and adjust their thoughts to the spiritual business respecting which they are to pray. We should premeditate, and in our hearts regulate and methodize the things we would make the subject of our requests.

I know no divine in the church of Scotland but concurs with me in this matter; and therefore we cannot but think it an uncivil treatment for adversaries to charge us before the world as men that are for venting the most rash and incoherent thoughts to God by extempore and sudden effusions, and then excusing our weakness and absurdity with the pretence of praying by the Spirit. If we do so, we are guilty of a great fault; but if not, they shall answer for their calumny, who charge us falsely. Thus I have laid before you some things that will further this duty of prayer, which must be used.

2dly, Some things that hinder this duty of prayer must be avoided; and,

(1.) In general, all sin makes prayer disregarded of God. "If I regard iniquity in my heart," says David, "the Lord will not hear me." The child that asks forgiveness of his oaths, must not ask it of his father with curses in his mouth. He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayers are abomination to God (Prov. xxviii. 9). As the fish called *Remora*, though it be but little, yet will stop a great ship in its full career, so the smallest sin loved and covered will hinder the acceptance of prayer, though it be never so instant. Israel cried to God, but in vain, till they had put away their strange gods; then his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel (Judg. x. 10, 17). He that is most innocent in his life shall have most confidence and success in prayer (see 1 John iii. 20, 22). A consciousness of indulged iniquity will be an invincible bar to your communion with God.

(2.) As all sin in general must be laid aside, so there are some sins in particular, which must be guarded against, as,

[1.] Wrath. "I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath" (1 Tim. ii. 8). He that begs peace must not do it with war in his heart, either against God or man. How can you think that God will forgive your many millions, when you do not forgive your neighbours one mite? How can you pray, Lord, forgive us our sins, if you do not forgive them that sin against you? The very heathen, when they offered sacrifice, threw the gall of the beast away; and will you offer to God the gall of malice, revenge, wrath, and bitterness?

[2.] Wordly thoughts must also be laid aside. If we would say, "Our Father who art in heaven," our affections must not be upon the earth. If you leave any worldly business waiting for your attendance when you go to prayer, the thought of it will attend you, and make you cut your duty short, and run away before your hearts be warmed. The heathen left their shoes at the temple door, to show that all earthly occasions and affections must be left before we go to God. Endeavour to get your hearts rid of the world. Resolve before you pray to watch your hearts narrowly, that the vermin of worldly thoughts may not hinder you in prayer.

[3.] Self is another thing that should be laid aside. Self makes a man seek more after the ornament of prayer than the grace of prayer, and study expression more than affection. Hence some have found to their sad experience, that when they have got some high conceptions of God accompanied with some significant expressions, pride and self immediately make the man reflect on what he said, and this quenches the holy flame of zeal and love, and obstructs his enjoyment of God in the duty. When we pray, we should look beyond our prayers. It is one thing to have communion with an ordinance, and another thing to have communion with God in an ordinance; for people may sometimes be more taken up with their own expressions, or with their own affections in duty, than with the object of worship they should be intent upon. But whatever interposes between God and the soul to divert the thoughts from God is an idol. Ezek. xiv. 3, "These men have set up their idols in their heart"—the Septuagint reads it, *Εθευτο τα διανοηματα επι τας καρδιαις αυτων*, they have put their thoughts upon their hearts;" that is, they have committed idolatry with their own imaginations. People may be taken up about their own frame, their own affection, their own expressions more than God, in their worshipping of him. Their thoughts may be more upon the subject than the object of prayer. It is to be feared that many are guilty of a spiritual fine-spun idolatry—heterogeneous thoughts in duty which mar our communion with God. So much of antecedent direction in order to our preparing for this duty of prayer. I come now to,

(2.) CONCOMITANT things that must accompany the duty, or rules for our direction in prayer. And here it were necessary to give direction, 1st, As to the matter. 2dly, As to the manner. The one has respect to the gift, the other to the grace of prayer; the one answers that case, we know not how to pray.

1st. Then as to the matter of prayer—that you may be helped what to say. The Holy Ghost says, “Take with you words (Hos. xiv. 2). And therefore, in answer to this divine precept, we are to know what to say in prayer. I told you in the doctrinal part already the subject-matter of prayer, and for helping you further, I shall give you shortly these following directions.

(1.) Attend upon a powerful ministry. You know faith comes by hearing—yea, we receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith (Gal. iii. 2). And how shall you pray without the assistance of the Spirit? “How shall they call on him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?” You see, then, the fruit of preaching will appear in prayer as well as in practice.

(2.) In order to get matter for prayer, search the scriptures. This is both the rule and the matter of prayer. If you be mighty in the scriptures, you will be mighty in prayer. Study scripture precepts, and turn them to prayers. Study scripture promises, and turn them to arguments and pleas. Study scripture threatenings, and them to deprecations. If you daily study, read, and meditate the scriptures, you will find pat expressions flowing into your mind in prayer, which will prove pertinent matter on all occasions. In scripture God speaks to you, and thereby teaches you what you should speak to him. Speak his own words back again to him. There are also many excellent prayers recorded in the Bible, which all afford matter to us, especially the Lord’s prayer, whereof I gave you a paraphrase in the doctrinal part. Learn to understand and improve these prayers.

[3.] Study some method in your prayers, especially before others; otherwise your prayer will be confused, tumultary, and full of vain repetitions. Though the method of prayers must be left much to people’s own liberty, according to the occasions with which they are visited, yet a method may be very helpful as to the matter of prayer. I shall only give you this general rule with respect to method, and it is this, that things of the same nature and kind should be put together in all the parts of prayer. Let generals be mentioned by themselves and particulars by themselves; prayer for the Church, for the public, be made by itself; confession of sin be mentioned by itself; petition for blessings be mentioned by itself; thanksgiving for mercies be mentioned by itself, and not confusedly jumbled together. The neglect of this rule makes some serious



people wander here and there in their praying in company with others. Some perhaps may pray for the Church ; immediately they pray anent their own particular, and then straight they return to pray anent the public again. Now, this kind of method I speak of, would both teach people how to regulate their thoughts in prayer, when they are delivered in their proper order, and also guard this duty and ordinance from contempt.

(4.) It is better you should make use of some suitable well-composed forms than wholly neglect this duty in private or in your family. I say it is far better to do this than neglect it altogether, or perform it to the scorn and ridicule of those that join with you. The child that cannot go may have a prop to help it, says Dr. Preston ; but we should not always be children, says he. I do not plead against forms as absolutely unlawful ; for in some cases they are certainly proper to those who are under invincible weakness this way. But yet I am bold to say, that there is no greater hindrance to the gift of prayer [abstracting from the grace of it] than men's confining themselves wholly to the use of books ; yea, it is not only unscriptural, but unreasonable, and exceedingly injurious. It is true, if a man have no kind of gift that way, he cannot do it injury by using a form. If a minister had no gift of preaching indeed, he had better take all his sermons out of a book than babble to the people. But supposing God had given him a gift, then it would be injurious to his gift of preaching if he did not exercise his talent, but borrow all out of books, without stirring up his own gift. So it is evident, in this case, that a man's confining himself to a set form is injurious to the gift of prayer. Gifts and graces are both increased by exercise, but lost by not improving them.

(5.) In order to your obtaining the gift of prayer or matter for it, endeavour to converse much with God and with the godly. Converse much with God alone. Closet prayer zealously performed will help you to family prayer, and embolden you before others ; yea, your company, with whom you pray, will take notice of you that you have been with Jesus. Indeed, sirs, we find that it is best with us both in family and public devotion, when we can meet with God in secret. One act of religion draws on another ; by reading we learn to read ; by writing we learn to write ; and by praying you will learn to pray.

Converse also with the godly, and frequent Christian society. As the wicked exasperate one another, so God's children will pro-

voke one another to love and good works. And as the example, so the expressions of others in prayer may be helpful to you.

(6.) Beg the Holy Spirit of God (Luke xi. 13). The Spirit of God enlightens us in our ignorance, assists us in our weakness, quickens us in our deadness, comforts us in our sadness, composes us in our distraction; yea, and directs us in our expressions: "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. viii. 26). Let none imagine that this is an enthusiastic fancy or a melancholy dream. They that have any solid knowledge of religion know that the assistance of the Spirit in prayer is the greatest reality in the world; and they who make a jest of it do but declare their ignorance of God and godliness.

In a word, if you would win to matter in prayer, consider your wants; make a catalogue of your mercies; and study your sins. Think of the nature of sin, the aggravations thereof, the sad effects thereof, both in this and the other world. If sin were your burden, it would squeeze out sighs, and groans, and tears, and prayers. If you knew your own sores, either of soul or body, it would give you matter enough for prayer, "Every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house" (2 Chron. vi. 29). There you see that self-knowledge will help to prayer. If a poor beggar could do no more but show his sores, that is a powerful oratory. Consult the book of conscience, sirs, and you will find it easy to draw up a large bill of indictment against yourselves. Really, sirs, I think it hardly credible that any rational person should neglect prayer in secret or their family merely for want of matter. Can you be so critical in your observation of others, and yet such utter strangers to yourselves? Will you answer me this one question in calm blood—How can any person whose nature is laden with the guilt of innumerable sins want matter of confession in prayer? How can creatures who need so much pardon, who are under so many wants, and exposed to so many dangers, want matter of petition? How can people who receive so many undeserved favours and mercies, want matter of thanksgiving? It is truly confounding to our apprehension if people, after all, are at a loss for matter. But,

2dly, Having given you directions as to the matter, I come to give some directions as to the manner of prayer. And indeed the gift of prayer is to little purpose without the grace of prayer, as the

body is but a dead carcase without the soul. The Spirit of grace and supplication is of so great importance here, that though a person did never so much excel in the gift, yet without the grace of prayer, he will but trifle and play the mimic, though he should speak like an angel; and therefore, in order to your praying in a right and acceptable manner (though I need say no more than I advanced upon the nature of prayer in the doctrinal part, namely, of its being a constant and instant addressing of ourselves to God in Christ by the Spirit, which is the only right manner of prayer), yet I give you, in so many words, these four directions.

1. Set yourself in the presence of the great Jehovah. It is true you are always in his presence; but you have not always the actual thought of this, nor such a firm belief of it, as you ought. Endeavour, therefore, when you address yourself to God, to work this truth upon your own mind: "I am now before the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth, the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity." O what holy awe should possess your soul before this great, this terrible, this holy God!

2. Call in the divine assistance. Under a sense of your own utter insufficiency, spread the sails of your soul for a gale of heaven, saying, "Awake, O north wind, come, thou south, blow upon my garden." O for some fire from heaven to burn up my sacrifice, or else it will be like a lump of flesh, and be no true holocaust of pure incense before the Lord.

3. Study the qualities and properties of right prayer. It is a praying reverently; God is to be served with reverence and godly fear. It is a praying in faith, in faith of acceptance through the merit of Christ, in faith of assistance by the Spirit of Christ, in faith of his ability and willingness to save you, relying upon his covenant and promise. Again, it is a praying with the heart unfeignedly. As Jacob said to his mother, "If I dissemble, my father will find me out, and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing" (Gen. xxvii. 12). So say I to you, If you be a deceiver and dissembler, God will find you out, and you will meet with a curse instead of a blessing. It is a praying with hope and expectation, founded on the mercy of God through Christ. It is a praying with delight and satisfaction, for he meeteth him who rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; and it is a praying with meekness and humility, like a poor beggar at a prince's door for alms. God loves to walk in low valleys; "thou hast heard the desire of the humble."



It is a praying in the Spirit, a praying in the Holy Ghost, who intercedes within the believer. And it is a praying in the name of your Advocate in heaven, improving his intercession and pleading for his sake, as Daniel, "Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary for the Lord's sake" (Dan. ix. 17). If these spiritual qualities accompany your prayer, then it shall be a sweet savour unto God.

4. Endeavour to have your hearts suitably disposed to the several parts of prayer. For example, with reference to the preface of your prayer, or first address, endeavour to have a sense of God's infinite perfection, a sense of your own meanness, vileness, and unworthiness. With reference to confession, endeavour that this may be performed with shame, and sorrow, and self-abhorrence. With reference to petition, endeavour to pray with a deep sense of the worth of the mercies you pray for, and with fervency and holy importunity, yea, with a humble peremptoriness, "I will not let thee go till thou bless me." Again, with reference to thanksgiving for blessings temporal and spiritual, let this be done with admiration of God and delight in him, with exulting joy and ardent love,—with a "what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" And last of all, with reference to the conclusion of your prayer, endeavour to conclude with a firm belief that the Lord is both able and willing to grant you exceeding abundantly above all that you are able to ask or think.—Thus I have given you directions according to the word, but the Lord himself must give you the grace to improve them. I have laid before you some direction before prayer, and also direction how to manage in prayer, both as to the matter and manner thereof; and now I come to close with,

(3.) SUBSEQUENT rules for your direction after prayer. And,

[1.] After prayer, endeavour to recollect the workings of your heart in prayer, that wherein you have found favour of God, you may have comfort and joy, and wherein you have come short, you may bear a humble impression of your defects. It were to great advantage, if you would always make a short memorandum of the peculiar acting of your soul, and impressions that were made upon your heart in prayer; may have done it to their great advantage. If the Lord has withdrawn himself and left you in hardness, deadness, and distraction, then you are to mourn for it, inquire into the cause of it, see what guilt lies upon your conscience which separates between God and you, and then, if possible, even go to God again in secret, lament your case, and endeavour to part friends with God

that you may meet friends the next time you go to him. On the other hand, if you find that God has opened your heart, melted and humbled your soul, and revealed himself to you, then record that for the time to come, despise not the day of small things, slight not the least appearance of God, and praise him for his grace.

[2.] Communicate your experience to those on whom you have hope of working and doing good. If some people knew what good you got in prayer, believe it would tend to their advantage, when they see this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him; and indeed they that have found Christ in prayer would have all others to find him. O! says the believer, especially in his retirement, when he gets an armsful of heavenly enjoyments, O! that others did but feel and enjoy what I have the sweet experience of. Would to God my husband, my wife, such a friend or neighbour, did experience this sweetness that is in the Lord's way. Though I eat these sweet morsels alone, yet fain would I have others to partake with me. They that have found Christ in this duty will be glad to communicate the knowledge of him to others; thus Andrew came to Simon, and Philip to Nathanael, and they were both overjoyed, and cried out, "We have found the Messiah, we have found him." "Come, hear, all ye that fear God," says David, "and I will declare what he has done for my soul." O, sirs, endeavour, in the intervals of prayer, to familiarize holy discourse with your families. Put your family to their duty; tell your wife, and children, and servants, when you have a convenient opportunity, tell them of the preciousness of the soul, the necessity of grace, the excellence of Christ, the shortness of time, the great concern of eternity, the near approach of death and judgment. For if you take your leave of God at the morning or evening sacrifice, and never endeavour to speak a word more of God or his way to a member of your family, really they will not believe that you are in earnest about religion, and they will think it but a trifle whether they join with you in worship or not.

[3.] After prayer, watch and wait for an answer. When a man has delivered his petition to his prince, he will wait sometimes years together, all the time longing for an answer. It is an unmannerly mocking of God, like Pilate, to ask a question, and then expect no answer. Be denied to your own unworthy prayers and righteousness, but expect an answer by virtue of the worthy righteousness and mediation of Jesus. Wait for an answer in his way.

If the requests you put up to God in prayer be of infinite concern, if your heaven, your eternal happiness, be involved in them, with what holy impatience and yet humble submission should you desire an answer. He that ventures nothing in a ship but some paper or pens, or something that is of very little worth, really he takes little thought what becomes of the vessel; if it sink or swim, it is all one to him; but the merchant that ventures all he is worth, is impatient to hear of it. Many an anxious thought has he about it. O! what if this ship should miscarry, what will become of me and my family! hardly eat or drink with comfort, or sleep with quiet, till he hears it is safe. Thus the wicked man, that is worth nothing, ventures nothing in his prayers, and therefore, whether they miscarry or not, he is not much concerned. When he prayed for pardon and grace, he was not sensible of the worth thereof; he prized his worldly stock at a far higher rate. But the godly man hazards all that he is worth, both in this and the other world, in his prayers; he knows that all his happiness is involved in the pardon of his sin, in the righteousness of Christ, in the renovation of his nature. O! says he, all that I am worth is aboard of this vessel, my precious soul, my eternal interest. O! if it should miscarry, what would become of me? I am undone for ever. There is excellent freight here, my life, my hope, my heaven, my all are in this vessel; what would I do if the archpirate Satan should seize her; if she should split on the rock of my presumption, or sink in the quicksand of my infidelity! Therefore, when he has prayed, he prays and prays again, waits for an answer, looks and longs for a return. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same" (Col. iv. 2). Anglers, though they have fished many hours and caught nothing, do not therefore break their line and give over their work, but rather they draw out the hook, and look upon the bait, which, it may be, was fallen off, or some way wrong, and they mend it, and then throw it in again. So when you have been earnest in prayer, and yet receive no answer, reflect on your prayers, consider what may be amiss about them, pray that the faults may be mended, and fall to work again, continuing instant in prayer, and thus you may come speed. Only labour to have skill to discern the answer of prayer. It is a great answer of prayer when the heart is quieted and enabled to leave the matter on the Lord. God has his own way of answering prayer, and we are ready to mistake it. We look perhaps for an answer of prayer at the fore-door, and it comes in at the back-door,



and so while we are expecting, the friend we look for is in the house ; the mercy we desired is received, only it comes in a way that we thought not of, and therefore we are ready to overlook it. Take heed, therefore, of limiting God to your way, or confining him to your time.

[4.] Lastly, live answerably to your prayers. Working is necessary after watching. They that pray much and practice nothing, they do not trust God, but rather tempt him. If you pray for daily bread, be diligent in your calling too, and you may expect it. Religion without a calling is enthusiasm, and a calling without religion is heathenism ; join them together in due time and way, and they will be mutually helpers to one another. Let prayer be accompanied with practice. Up and be doing, and the Lord shall be with you. If you pray against sin, then avoid the occasions of sin. If you pray against drunkenness, avoid drinking company. What, man, woman, will you pray to God that you may not be burnt, and yet run into the fire? Really then you mock God, but you mock yourself more. If you pray for holiness, then hear, and read, and meditate, and use the means, and then expect a good issue from God. We are called to lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens. As we are to lift up our hearts in praying, so we are to lift up our hands in practising (see Jer. vii. 9, 11, &c.) What a shame is it that people should do morally what Moses did literally, even come down from the mount of prayer, and break the tables of God's law as soon as they are off the place. The Lord help you to follow these rules with respect to your *continuing instant in prayer*.

## SERMON XIV.

### CASES OF CONSCIENCE RELATIVE TO PRAYER CONSIDERED.

“ Continuing instant in prayer.”—ROMANS xii. 12.

3. THE third thing proposed in the prosecution of the exhortation was to answer some Cases of Conscience for clearing you in this matter.

*Cause first.* Suppose I be cast into a graceless or prayerless family, how must I do, and what is my duty? I answer,

(1.) Humbly propound some expedients for remedying that evil. If the master of the family do it not, see if any other member of the family will undertake that work, or whether the governors of the family will allow you, who are perhaps a child, or a servant, or an apprentice, the liberty to pray in the family. Why may not a servant, like Joseph, pray in Potiphar's family, if the master give him leave?

(2.) If this will not do, examine the grounds and ends of your coming to that family, consider your call, and if you thrust yourself into it without due consideration, be humbled for your sin, and seek pardon of it.

(3.) Use all lawful means to remove to a more wholesome air. I think God says to you, as he said once to Israel, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, lest ye be consumed in all their sins" (Num. xvi. 26). It is a wonder that the ground does not cleave asunder or some judgment comes not down upon such prayerless families.

(4.) If some necessity detain you in that family, then, as you love your soul, spend more time in secret. Let your soul, like Jeremiah, weep in secret places for their pride. Pray for your own soul, that you may not perish with others; pray for the family, and all the members thereof, that they may be converted into God's ways, and be not discouraged with their scoffs; who knows what the event may prove?

*Case second.* What if the master of the family be loose and careless, possibly comes home in drink, and yet will pray, though out of case for it. Shall I join with such cold and formal prayers? I answer,

(1.) Your acceptance in prayer does not depend upon the state of him that prays or on his zeal, but upon thy acting of faith in Christ. If the person joining be upright in heart before the Lord, he shall be accepted, though the person praying be rejected.

(2.) If you be sure that the person praying does speak nonsense or blasphemy instead of praying, in this case you are to withdraw; go alone and mourn for it. You are bound in conscience to show your dislike of it, lest God be dishonoured, the man hardened, and your own conscience defiled.

(3.) It is your duty humbly and modestly to take a fit season to speak to your master, as Naaman's servants did to him, when they saw him out of his duty, and you know it did good (2 Kings

v. 13). Yea, though he should not take it well at first, yet he may come to think of it afterwards ; who can tell what good a word in season may do ? If you come to a father or master humbly and submissively, not saucily or malapertly, you may win upon them, and though you can say little, yet if you can burst out into tears for their sin, it may prove convincing rhetoric to them. It may prove as gaining as good King Edward's weeping was to Bishop Cranmer and Ridley, denying his sister Mary's liberty for mass, who, upon the king's denying in such a manner, said, that the king had more divinity in his little finger than they had in their whole body. But leaving these and the like circumstances anent prayer, and to come more closely to answer some cases about the duty itself.

*Case third.* How shall I know if I enjoy communion with God, whether in secret or with others ? I answer, that communion with God is twofold, (1.) As to graces. (2.) As to comforts. Now,

(1.) Sometimes believers may feel the joy of God's salvation, and have the smiles of his face, the seals of his Spirit, and the lively springings of joy and ravishing pleasure ; these carry their own evidence along with them, and a person dignified therewith cannot but know that he has communion with God ; but all believers have not these, at least at all times. Therefore,

(2.) The surest way is to inquire after communion with God with respect to the exercise of grace in duty ; and therefore,

[1.] Then has a child of God true fellowship with God, when, by the sweet assistance of the Spirit, his mind is knit to the object of worship ; his understanding is fruitful in spiritual and suitable thoughts ; his will and affections are carried out in strong and panting desires and longings after God. When the heart is thoroughly broken with a sense of sin, dissolves into sorrow, melted with the sweetness of pardoning grace, and led out to plead with ardency for acceptance through Jesus.

[2.] Communion with God may be known not only by the influences of the Spirit poured out upon the soul, but by the acting of the graces of the Spirit in duty, as when holy awe and reverence, and fear of God fills the soul ; when faith gets some view of the glory and excellency of Christ ; when love to him burns in the breast ; when humility empties and annihilates the creature, and makes it nothing, yea, less and worse than nothing in its own eyes. When grace thus is drawn out to exercise, then the person may



know he has communion with God. Prayer is the regal gate, the beautiful gate, by which the Lord enters into the temple of the heart—comforting, quieting, strengthening, quickening, and raising it. The scriptures afford us a cloud of witnesses to prove this. But I appeal to praying saints. I know you have found it thus, and this makes prayer sometimes your paradise of pleasure.

[3.] The soul may know when it has communion with God by the consequences of the duty, as when the Christian is more vile in his own eyes, as Abraham was. When he gives God all the glory and sees and bewails the defects and imperfections of his greatest enlargement. When his soul is left in a better frame, sin made more hateful and Christ more precious to him, and his spirit made more fit to bear crosses, to perform duty. I but hint at these things.

*Cause fourth.* May not a hypocrite, or graceless soul, perform this duty of prayer? What difference is there between a real saint and an unregenerate person in this work? I answer, a carnal man may pray in secret and in his family too as well as a child of God, but with these differences.

(1.) The carnal man may be urged to it by the challenges of an accusing conscience, he, as it were, dogged and driven to it; but a child of God has a gracious principle inclining him to it, from love to God and desire to please him and enjoy him. Indeed, through remainders of corruption there is much unwillingness in the best, so that sometimes a child of God must even force himself to the performance; yet, notwithstanding of this, the Lord has given him a habitual inclination to the work.

(2.) The hypocrite will not pray always, nor always call upon God, he cannot continue instant in prayer, it is but in some pang, or under some pressing conviction or affliction; and when this good mood is over, he takes his leave of God till whipped to him again by the like. But the child of God is in some measure constant and instant in prayer; though he may have sinful omissions and intermissions, yet never a total cessation from duty; grace works his heart Godward, and the soul cannot rest content without him.

(3.) An hypocrite does not make conscience to get his heart up to God in the duty, he is content with the work done, the words said; but a child of God has most ado with his heart, it is the hardest part of the work, he dares not leave that behind, and he has much ado to get it engaged to the duty. The wicked are said to

pour out a prayer sometimes, but the godly, pour out their heart (Psal. xlii. 4.) Thus Hannah poured forth her soul before the Lord (1 Sam. i. 15.) And the Israelites are said to pour out their soul like water before the Lord. God hears no more than the heart speaks; if the heart be dumb, God will certainly be deaf, for God cares not for heartless sacrifices.

(4.) Hypocrites trade with God in prayer upon their own credit, upon the account of the worth of their prayers, righteousness, and services. Wherefore have we fasted, and thou hast not seen? wherefore have we prayed, and thou hast not heard? say they (Isa. lviii. 2, 3.) They speak as if God was obliged to them for their prayer. Thus the proud Pharisee, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, adulterers, unjust, nor even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke xviii. 12.) Thus, I say, the hypocrite trades with God upon his own credit, and the credit of his own prayers, but the believer trades with God upon the credit of his Son Jesus Christ. Upon his credit and account they desire all these things that make for their external, internal, and eternal good. The hypocrite lives upon his prayers and other duties, but the believer lives upon God in prayer and upon Christ in prayer; but not upon his own prayer, as hypocrites do, who upon this account think also that the world will value them for their prayers as well as God. Hence hypocrites pray often to be seen of men, and notice most how others like their prayers, and are affected and taken with them; how their prayers operate upon others, more than how they operate upon their own hearts; whereas the believer observes mostly how he himself is by the Lord's Spirit enlightened, enlivened, humbled, raised, spiritualized, and bettered by prayer.

(5.) The hypocrite prays more to be rid of his chains than to be rid of his sins, whereas the godly man prays more to be rid of his sins than to be rid of his chains. Though bonds did attend Paul in every place, as himself speaks, yet we never heard him crying out, O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from my bonds? but, "O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me" from my sins, "from this body of death?" Hence the gracious soul comes off from prayer usually with a heart more disengaged from sin, more vehemently set against it. How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against the God that has caused his glory to pass before me? but the wicked come off from prayer with hearts more en-

couraged to sin ; they make use of prayers to charm their consciences, that they may sin with more pleasure and less regret.

(6.) The wicked man may keep his round in formal duty, but he gets nothing ; he prays to little profit or purpose, and indeed does not much study to gain spiritual good ; but a child of God is a great gainer ; though not always, yet sometimes he gains communion with God, and communications from God ; but this leads me to

*Case fifth.* May not the unconverted taste the good word of God and the power of the world to come ? May they not be wonderfully enlightened and enlarged in prayer, and taste of the heavenly gift ? (Heb. vi. 4, 5.) How then shall I know the difference between my attainments and the attainments of the hypocrite ? I answer, indeed hypocrites may arrive at such wonderful attainments that we all need to search and try how matters stand between God and us. They may have great enlargements, and taste of heavenly joys and refreshments ; and we need the Interpreter, one among a thousand, to show us the difference between this temporary flash that hypocrites may have, and the pure joy of the Holy Ghost that only believers can have. Only, so far, I think, we may say from the word of God these two things.

(1.) There is a great difference between tasting and feeding. The taste of the hypocrite is superficial, floating in the affection, not reaching the heart. By this taste the streams and actings of the heart may be somewhat illuminated and sweetened ; but the fountain, the heart itself, is never bettered or altered thereby, and nothing of its poison or bitterness removed. The word was received with joy on the stony ground, but that joy was rootless, and soon withered, it did not pierce the ground. But the true believer not only tastes, but eats of the hidden manna, and receives spiritual nourishment to the increase of grace and decrease of corruption within him.

(2.) The joy and refreshment that the hypocrite may have in prayer is selfish at the bottom ; God in Christ is not the object of his joy, or if he has any joy in Christ, it is not joy in him for himself, or because of any beauty or excellency discovered in him. It flowed rather from what he expected from him, such as the possessing of heaven, the escaping of wrath ; such an one would rather have heaven without God, than God without heaven. It is true the believer may have joy in the pardon and salvation that is purchased by Christ, but his joy is especially in Christ himself, when his



glory is discovered to him ; and this is a joy that strangers do not intermeddle with. Hence all the attainments of the hypocrite never bring him the length to deny himself. They may love the service of God because therein they enjoyed something that was pleasant to their taste, but they come not the length to love the exercises of religion, because God was thereby honoured, and thus their joy is not a God-exalting and God-loving joy, but a self-seeking and self-delighting joy. But what if the Lord, to stir up our diligence, that we may not rest upon an attainment, does not clearly reveal in his word the difference between these temporary flashes and that more solid joy which flows from a spiritual principle created in the heart ? It may satisfy you, believer, that in their properties and effects they much differ, since temporary flashes do not purify and change the heart of the hypocrite, or transform him into the image of God. They do not humble him to a just and due self-abhorrence, nor make him to love God for himself, or holiness for itself. He may love the advantage and benefit of holiness, but not the excellency and beauty of holiness. But I proceed to

*Case sixth.* How shall I know if my prayers be answered, and if the mercies I meet with be only the fruits of common providence, or given in love as a gracious return to my prayers ?—This question has two branches.

(1.) Whether God has heard your prayer and accepted your requests ? I speak to the believer, and in answer to this question.

[1.] When the Lord supports the soul under all its disappointments, to wait still about his hand, this is an answer to prayer, “ In the day that I called thou answeredst me, (how was that ?) thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul (Psal. cxxxviii. 3). That was an answer to him, he was not tired but supported in the duty, this was an evidence of the acceptance of his prayer. The Lord sometimes quiets and calms the spirit of the believer in prayer, and makes him, Hannah-like, come away from the king’s presence with a cheerful countenance and a contented heart ; this is a good sign.

[2.] If the Lord, while you are praying, makes the light of his countenance shine upon you, and makes an intimation of his love and of your sonship and adoption, it is a manifest evidence of acceptance, and carries in its bosom a sense of divine acceptance, while the soul is filled with more joy and gladness than the wicked can have when their corn and wine abound.

[3.] It is a sign of acceptance and audience, if, though you do not obtain what you desire, yet the Lord is abasing your heart and humbling you under disappointment; the more you pray, the more you are humbled under your want. God trains up his people with want, that beholding their wants they may be humbled under them, and being humbled, may desire a supply, and then he hears the desire of the humble. By humbling you, he prepares your heart for receiving the mercy you need from him.

[4.] It is a sign of audience when your heart is engaged to wait upon God in the duty of prayer by a restless importunity, so that no disappointment will make you take a wrong shift. 1 Sam. xxviii. from the 6th verse, there you see of Saul, God had forsaken him, would not hear him. Well, says he, get me a witch, I'll go to the devil; there was a sure sign that God had rejected him entirely. But, believer, if you dare not take another shift, nor fly to any by-ways, but continue to follow the Lord by prayer, God has not rejected you; yea, it is a sign he has heard you. "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity," says David, I renounce your way; why? "the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping." So if you renounce and refuse sinful shifts in difficulties and pursue your business before the Lord, it is a sign of acceptance. If you will not let him go till he bless you, it is a sign he will not let you want it; hence,

[5.] It is a sign of audience when the Lord pours out a Spirit of grace and supplication upon you. When fire comes down from heaven, and burns up your sacrifice, it is a sign that it is accepted, when the heart is, as it were, in a red *flame* of zeal for God and love to Christ, when the flame burns your lusts and brightens your graces, and makes you after prayer to study holiness in heart, holiness in speech, and holiness in your conduct. The Lord never gives such a heart to seek, without a purpose to give.

[6.] If you get what you desired, and in that very way, and by those very means, which you pitched upon, as it sometimes falls out, then you need not doubt the success of your prayer.

But this leads me to another branch on this same head, namely, the question, How shall we know that our prayers are heard, when the things we desired are not accomplished?

[1.] If you can trust the Lord, and roll all upon him and his wise choice, there is no fear that he disappoints you; if he gives you not at length what you seek, he will give you perhaps, by commutation or exchange, as good or better.

[2.] If the Lord fill your heart with a silent submission to his will, and a holy contentment and satisfaction in his sovereign disposal and management, as being best for you, and if thus, through faith, you can praise God and glorify him, even though you get not your own choice, resting on his love, care, and fidelity, whatever carnal reason suggests to the contrary, this is an evidence that the Spirit of God has led you to the throne, and has not suffered you to go away empty. If you be not discouraged nor entertain hard thoughts of your Master and his work,—if you love prayer no worse than you did, notwithstanding of the denial you meet with, but rather continue instant in that exercise, not daring to turn away from God in a fit of discontent ;—this is an evidence of the acceptance and success of your prayer, though the particular prayed for was not sensibly granted.

(2.) I come to the second branch of the question, How may we know if the mercy we meet with comes to us in a way of common providence, or as a return of prayer? I answer,

[1.] If you can discern the Lord's hand in a more than ordinary manner, you may be sure he has hearkened to your voice. Has he brought the thing to pass through many difficulties that stood in the way? Has he provided and facilitated the means, and made them conspire and combine in the accomplishment of the mercy for you? Did he prevent you with his loving-kindness in a sudden and surprising manner, so that you were, like the Israelites, as men in a dream? Did he give you above what you could ask or think? Was the mercy accompanied with some remarkable circumstances, however small? For example, the barking of a dog is but a small thing in itself, yet this was a remarkable circumstance of that great deliverance God gave Israel (Exod. xi. 17). Not a dog was to move his tongue, when they went out of Egypt in the night with all their baggage. Do you observe all these things in the mercy you meet with as so many tokens for good, and seals of the Lord's kindness and care, it is a sign it came as a return of prayer.

[2.] The consideration of the time when the mercy came may also help you to know whether it is as a return of prayer. For example, came it when you were most instant and importunate in prayer, as Peter was sent from prison when the church was assembled praying for him? (Acts xii. 12). Or came it in a most fit and acceptable time; in an hour of extremity, as the Jews' deliverance in the days of Queen Esther came, when nothing but des-



truction was determined against them? Came it at the time when your heart was brought to a submission to the Lord, and when you were most weaned from such a temporal mercy, as Isaac was restored to Abraham when he was so far weaned from that beloved object as to be content, at God's command, to offer him up as a sacrifice? You may discern whether your mercies be given in answer to your prayers by their effects upon the heart; as, Is your mercy so far from being fuel to your lusts that it kindles your love to God,—“I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications” (Psal. cxvi. 1); and makes you rejoice in his favour discovered in the mercy more than in the outward mercy itself? Do you prize it as a greater mercy that your prayer is heard, than that the mercy itself has been granted to you? If the receiving of mercies enlarge your heart with thankfulness; are your hearts filled with the high praises of God? Self-love may make a man pray, but it is love to God that makes a man to praise. Thankfulness, of all duties, proceeds most from pure grace; so that if the Spirit of grace does stir you up to praise God for your mercies so that they are worn by thankfulness, it is a sign they were won by prayer.

[3.] If the receiving of the mercy make you careful to pay your vows to the Lord, and to improve what you have received to the honour of the Giver, it is a sign that the mercy is come from God, otherwise it would not thus lead you to him.

[4.] If you look over second causes, and by faith acknowledge his sovereign hand who governs and orders second causes according to his pleasure, it is a sign you have prayed in faith and prevailed, “Not by strength, nor by might,” says faith, “but by the Lord of hosts is this wrought.”

[5.] If the mercy obtained encourage you to continue in prayer, and engage you in all other cases to run to God making you say with the Psalmist, “Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live” (Psal. cxvi. 2). If it quicken your diligence, and strengthen your faith in prayer, it is a token the Lord has answered you.

[6.] If the trouble, and vexation, and snare that otherwise might have accompanied the mercy be removed, so that you enjoy it without sorrow and anxiety, it is an evidence that it is a blessing indeed. “The blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow” (Prov. x. 22). In a word, if with the mercy there comes

some evidence of love, if the Lord smile upon you, and intimate his favour with it, there is no place left for doubting that the mercy is obtained and sanctified by prayer.

Thus I have resolved some cases, and so put a close to all that I proposed. I would only now renew my call in the name of the Lord to you, to continue instant in prayer, especially in secret and in your families. The promises of the covenant are big with blessing, and only want your running to the throne of grace and pleading for its deliverance. O, sirs! have you not matter enough for prayer? Have you no sins to be matter of confession, no wants to be matter of petition, no mercies to be matter of praise? sure I am you have ground enough for prayer, if you look within you, or round about you. O! will you pray for the church of Christ, that the border thereof may be enlarged,—that God in his good pleasure would do good to Zion, and build up the walls of Jerusalem,—that peace may be within the walls, and prosperity within the palaces of our Zion? Will you pray for rulers, that God would teach our senators wisdom; that the judgment may run down as a river, and righteousness as a mighty stream? Pray for the land of your nativity; did Abraham so importunately plead for Sodom, though he was not concerned in their misery, and will you not plead for the kingdom and place of your abode, when you must share in the prosperity and adversity thereof? Pray for the household of faith. Christ the Head prays for all the members of his body, and will you not join him? Hell and earth are enraged against them, and should you not help them as much as you can by your prayers? Pray for your families, and friends, and neighbours, if you would be a blessing to them, and bring a blessing on them. Potiphar's house, yea, and all Egypt, were blessed for Joseph's sake.

And may I here take occasion to call you to pray for poor ministers that labour in word and doctrine. The apostle of the Gentiles begged the prayers of those that heard him. You think ministers should pray for their people; very true, and they must give account for them, and should not this tell you how much need people have to pray for ministers? Prayer has a hand in the sending forth and planting of ministers where there are none. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he may send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. ix. 38.) God has taken away many labourers in the bounds, and you in this congregation have had your share in the stroke; and it is by prayer your loss must be made up, if it be

made up to your soul's advantage. O ! pray for a spiritual steward to break the bread of life among you. As prayer has a hand in the planting of a gospel ministry, so in the success of the ministry. Hence the apostle exhorts the Ephesians to pray that a door of utterance may be opened to them, that they make known the mystery of the gospel, and preach in the power and demonstration of the Spirit. Perhaps you will say, O ! if I were living under a powerful and searching ministry ! But I must tell you, a prayerless people may make a lifeless minister. Possibly you see the minister's infirmities, but when will you wrestle in prayer that the Lord would strengthen and enable him ? If you pray not for him, you weaken his hands. If you pray for him, you may help him to preach ; and if not, you may hinder him. For my own part, I desire to pray for you all, Sirs, and if I had no more ado but to pray for your salvation,—the love I ought to bear to your souls would make me wish for a heart to be still at the throne of grace on your account. But I hope I need not tell you how much my lonely circumstances at present require the help of your prayers. God knows how much I have ado with my own ill heart, and about the work of my own salvation, though I had nothing else to be concerned about ; and the Lord forgive if you be so unmerciful either to your own souls or mine as to neglect prayer for me.

But I return to the conclusion I designed, which is to renew my call to you so set about this duty of secret and family prayer ; and if I can prevail so far with you as to begin this night, and continue in closet and family prayer, it would strengthen my hands in labouring among you. But if this be a slender argument to you, consider, that all the creatures of God call you to this duty ; they all depend naturally upon God for their sustenance. All the rational faculties that God has implanted in your breasts call you to this duty of prayer. All the commands of the Bible call you to pray, that you may be enabled to do his will. All the promises of the gospel call you to pray, that you may reap the blessed accomplishment of them. All the threatenings of the law call you to pray, that you may deprecate the wrath denounced therein. All the providences of God call you to pray, that you may make a right improvement of them. All your wants and necessities call you to pray, that you may get them supplied. All your blessings call you to pray, that you may give the tribute of praise to the Giver. All your sins call you to pray, that you may supplicate divine pardon



and mercy. All the temptations of the devil call you to pray ; the more he tempts you to restrain prayer, the more you need to pray. All your vows and engagements, whether in baptism or otherwise, call you to pray, that you may not be condemned as a perjured rebel. All the relations in which God stands to you call you to pray. If he be a father, where is his honour? If he be a master, where is his fear? All the names of God call you to pray, that you may honour him in all that whereby he makes himself known. All the attributes of God call you to pray, his infinite justice, mercy, patience, omnipotence, omnipresence, eternity, all-sufficiency, are all powerful motives to prayer. All the persons of the Godhead call you to pray, that you may glorify the Father in the Son by the Holy Ghost. All the mercies and compassions of the Father in giving his Son to redeem you call you to pray, that you may not despise his grace. All the blood and bowels of the Son call you to pray, that you may not trample under foot the blood of the everlasting covenant, which was shed to purchase for you this liberty of coming to God through him. All the graces, influences, and motions of the Holy Ghost call you to pray, for he offers to help all your infirmities, and says, Let all your wants and weakness be upon me, I will quicken and strengthen you. All the miseries of this life call you to pray, that you may not be miserable both here and hereafter. All the joys of heaven call you to pray, that you may be possessed of these through eternity. All the torments of hell call you to pray, that you may not be tormented in the fire of God's wrath for ever. It is not I then only, but all these call you to pray ; and I, in the name of the great Jehovah, do by all these things call you to the duty of prayer in secret and in your family, with certification that if the call do not prevail, you shall be put in the same category with heathens and pagans, and cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." Now I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have laid this duty before you. I take every one of you witness against yourselves, and against one another. I take the timber and stones of this house to witness against you. I take all the sermons I have preached on this text to witness against you, if from this day and forward you neglect secret and family prayer, and I take instruments in the hand of your conscience that you cannot pretend ignorance, but that God shall be

just, and I shall be free of your blood, if you perish eternally for not calling upon God. And as sure as that sacred volume is in my hand, you shall not escape his vengeance, if you do not return to him by prayer. O ! for the sake of Jesus, whose blood is crying for mercy to you, let not his blood be shed in vain by your refusing to beg mercy at his door. O ! taste and see that the Lord is good ; and if you follow the directions I have given you, I declare to you, in the name of the faithful and true Witness, that you shall never rue it in time ; yea, to all eternity you shall *continue instant in praising*, if now you *continue instant in praying*.

END OF VOLUME VI.