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THE  
WORKS OF THOMAS MANTON, D.D.

VOL. XXI.

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OF  
THOMAS MANTON, D.D.

VOLUME XXI.

CONTAINING

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# CONTENTS.

## SERMONS ON SEVERAL TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE—

PAGE.

### SERMONS UPON 1 JOHN iii.—*continued*—

Sermon VIII. "And ye know that he was manifested to take away sin, and in him was no sin," .	3
IX. "And ye know that he was manifested," &c.,	12
X. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him," . . . . .	22
XI. "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous," . . . . .	32
XII. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," . . . . .	42
XIII. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," . . . . .	49
XIV. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for this seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God,"	59
XV. "Whosoever is born of God," &c., . . . . .	66
XVI. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother," .	75
XVII. "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that ye should love one another," . . . . .	86
XVIII. "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous," .	97

SERMONS UPON 1 JOHN iii.—*continued.*

	PAGE
Sermon XIX. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you," . . . . .	102
XX. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren : he that loveth not his brother abideth in death," . . . . .	113
XXI. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer ; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," . . . . .	123
XXII. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren," . . . . .	133
XXIII. "But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue ; but in deed and in truth," . . . . .	144
XXIV. "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him," . . . . .	154
XXV. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things," . . . . .	165
XXVI. "And knoweth all things," . . . . .	174
XXVII. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God," . . . . .	184
XXVIII. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight," . . . . .	192
XXIX. "Because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight," . . . . .	201
XXX. "And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son, and love one another as he gave us commandment," . . . . .	210
XXXI. "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him : and hereby know we that he abideth in us, by his Spirit which he hath given to us," . . . . .	219



SERMONS UPON 1 JOHN iii.—*continued.*

PAGE

- Sermon XXXII. "And we know that he abideth in us, by his Spirit which he hath given us," . . . 227

## SERMONS UPON ACTS ii. 37, 38—

- Sermon I. "Now when they heard this, were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" . . . 237
- II. "Now when they heard this," &c., . . . 247
- III. "And they said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" . . . 254
- IV. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost," . . . 262
- V. "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ," . . . 271
- VI. "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," . . . 279
- VII. "And ye shall receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost," . . . 288

## SERMONS UPON 1 PETER i. 23—

- Sermon I. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," . . . 299
- II. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," . . . 308
- III. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," . . . 315
- IV. "By the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," . . . 326

## SERMONS UPON PSALM xix. 13—

- Sermon I. "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgressions," . . . 337
- II. "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins," . . . 346
- III. "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins," . . . 356

	PAGE
SERMONS UPON PSALM xix. 13— <i>continued.</i>	
Sermon IV. "Let them not have dominion over me," .	367
V. "Then shall I be upright," . . .	378
VI. "And innocent from the great transgressions," .	390
SERMONS UPON PSALM cxxxi.—	
Sermon I. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, nor in things too high for me," .	406
II. "Lord, my heart is not haughty," . . .	414
III. "Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, nor in things too high for me," . . .	425
IV. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child," . . .	437
V. "Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever," . . . . .	449
SERMONS UPON EZEKIEL xviii. 23—	
Sermon I. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" . . . . .	463
II. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" . . . . .	471
SERMON UPON JEREMIAH xlv. 5, . . . . .	480

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SERMONS  
ON  
SEVERAL TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE.

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# SERMONS UPON 1 JOHN III.

(CONTINUED.)

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## SERMON VIII.

*And ye know that he was manifested to take away sin, and in him was no sin.*—1 JOHN iii. 5.

THE apostle still pursueth his scope and purpose, which is to persuade christians to take heed of sin, and living in sin. He argueth—

1. From our adoption, and how much that inferreth a likeness to God whose children we are.

2. With respect to the law, or the orders of God's family, not to forfeit the offered privilege.

3. With respect to Christ, he urgeth two things—(1.) The holiness of his design ; (2.) The innocency of his person. Both which dissuade us from living in sin. That which Christ came to destroy, and that which maketh us so unlike Christ, should not be allowed by christians : ' And ye know that he was manifested to take away sin.'

1. In the first argument redemption by Christ is propounded—

[1.] As an evident truth. The sin and misery of the whole world was such, that it groaned for a saviour. Sin was the mortal disease that we were all sick of ; then came the spiritual physician to take it away. The common necessity of mankind showed the misery, and the common light of christianity showed the remedy.

[2.] It is propounded as his great end and scope why he was manifested. Christ is manifested two ways—in the gospel and in the flesh. In the gospel : Titus ii. 11, ' The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men ; ' 1 Peter i. 20, ' But was manifest in these last times for you.' Now the gospel sheweth he came to take away sin : 1 Tim. i. 15, ' This is a true and faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came to take away sin.' But here manifested in the flesh : 1 Tim. iii. 16, ' Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh ; ' and 1 John i. 2, ' The life was manifested, and we have seen it.' Christ, who heretofore lay hid in the bosom of God, now appeared, and was discovered to the world as his only-begotten Son.

2. In the second argument the innocency of Christ is propounded : ' In him was no sin.' This clause may be added—

[1.] To show the value of his sacrifice, having no sin of his own to



expiate : 'For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners ;' who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for their own sins, and then for the people's.

[2.] 'To show the greatness of his love : 'He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

[3.] 'To show that while we live in sin we can have no commerce and communion with him, his nature being so opposite to sin ; for what communion is there between light and darkness, Christ and Belial ?

[4.] 'To set him forth for an example and pattern to us, which is chiefly to be regarded. To imitate Christ we must abstain from sin, be holy as he is holy, and pure as he is pure.

*Doct.* That those who are partakers of Christ should by no means allow themselves in a life or course of sin.

I shall prove it by the two arguments of the text : that we must not continue in sin, because Christ came to take away sin, and had no sin in himself. Christ is here propounded, first, as our ransom ; secondly, as our pattern. In each I shall open the expressions used, and then consider the force of the argument.

I. As a ransom, 'Ye know that he was manifested to take away sin.' There are three things must be opened—(1.) In what sense Christ is said to take away sin ; (2.) By what means he doth accomplish it ; (3.) How is this a binding argument.

First, In what sense Christ is said to take away sin. Sin is considerable either as to the guilt of it, or the power, life, and reign of it.

1. The guilt is taken away when the obligation to punishment is dissolved, and we are freed from wrath to come ; which is one great benefit we have by our Lord Jesus : 1 Thes. i. 10, 'Which delivered us from the wrath to come.' 'This is done by a pardon, which relateth to sin : Eph. i. 7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin.' And by justification, which relateth to the person : Rom. v. 1, 2, 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' By sanctification, when the power and reign of it is broken : 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'But ye are justified, but ye are sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' So that as Christ came to take away the guilt of sin, so also the stain of it. He was manifested to subdue our love and delight in sin, and to turn our hearts towards God. We need a saviour to help us to repentance as well as to pardon. The loss of God's image was a part of our punishment ; and the renovation of our natures is a sure, yea, a principal part of our deliverance by Christ. Now if you ask me, Which of these benefits goeth first ? I answer—He regenerateth us that he may pardon us ; for justified we are not till we believe, and pardoned we are not till we repent, which are acts of the new nature. And the scripture in many places setteth forth this order ; I shall only allege one now : Titus iii. 5-7, 'Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of

regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.'

Secondly, By what means he doth accomplish it. This must be considered both as to impetration and application. As to purchase and impetration, so it relateth to his own merit. As to application to us, and our reception of this double benefit, so it is done by convenient means.

1. As to the impetration, and meritorious purchase, that is done : Christ takes away sin by bearing it in his own person. The word in the text, and those which are commonly used in this matter, signify both to take away and carry away sin : John i. 29, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away,' or beareth away, 'the sins of the world ;' and Isa. liii. 6, 'The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all.' I know there is some difficulty in explaining how sin was laid upon Christ, or what of sin it was that he took upon himself, that he might take it off from us. There are in sin four things—*culpa*, *macula*, *reatus*, and *pœna*. Not the fault, or criminal action, for that is committed by us, and cannot be transferred upon another. Not the stain ; for Christ was holy and undefiled, and that implieth sin inherent. Not the guilt ; for that is such an obligation to punishment as doth arise from the merit of some criminal action done by the party himself. It is true there was an obligation on Christ to suffer, and make satisfaction to his Father's justice ; but this was by a voluntary susception, or an act of gracious condescension, not imposed upon him by constraint, without his consent, or against his will ; none of this was due to him upon his own account. Punishment is a debt which lieth upon us, and is imposed upon us against our will ; but Christ voluntarily submitted to bear the sins of many, Isa. liii. 12 ; and therefore he is said 'to be made sin for us,' 2 Cor. v. 21. Sin there signifieth a punishment of sin, and also a sacrifice for sin, a sin-offering. Sometimes it signifieth a punishment : 'My sin is greater than can be borne ;' that is, the punishment of my sin, Gen. iv. 13 ; and ver. 7, 'Sin lieth at the door ;' that is, punishment is at hand, or a sin-offering, or a sacrifice for sin. So the priests are said to eat the sins of the people, Hosea iv. 8 ; they took care of nothing but to glut themselves with the portion of the sacrifices. So Rom. viii. 3, 'By sin he condemned sin in the flesh ;' and he is said to have 'borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ;' that is, to bear the punishment. And he is said 'to bear our sins in his own body upon the tree,' 1 Peter ii. 24, that is, to die and suffer for them. This is the way and means by which Christ taketh away sin ; and this is done so effectually once for all, that there needeth no repeating of it : Heb. x. 14, 'By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' As to the merit, there is nothing wanting ; no other merit and sacrifice needeth to be offered to God.

2. As to the application, it is usually said that he taketh away the guilt of sin by his blood, and the filth of sin by his Spirit. But this is not so truly and accurately said ; for his blood cleanseth us both from the guilt and stain of sin : 1 John i. 7, 'And the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin ;' and Rev. i. 5, 'Who hath loved us, and



washed us in his blood ;' which relateth to the double washing mentioned, 1 Cor. vi. 11. Both are the fruit of his death, by which he merited both remission and sanctification for us ; and in the phrase of the text, 'he beareth it away.' This double benefit is made the fruit of both. Justification is a fruit of his bearing sin : Isa. liii. 11, 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.' To bear the sin is to bear the punishment, the curse or wrath due to it. Now Christ beareth it so that it is taken from us. So sanctification is a fruit also of his bearing our iniquities : 1 Peter i. 24, 'He bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead unto sin, may be alive unto righteousness.' Christ came to heal our souls, to kill this love unto sin and delight in it. Therefore sanctification is the fruit of his cross as well as justification, and we must not so sever these benefits as that one should be given us by Christ, and the other by the Spirit. No ; both are given us by Christ, but differently applied ; first the pardon of sins by his word and new covenant, which is an act of oblivion, charter, or grant, whereby, upon certain terms, he maketh over this benefit to those who accept of it, 'even to as many as repent and believe in his name.' They are constituted just by the new covenant, which Christ will ratify and confirm by his own sentence at the day of judgment : Acts iii. 19, 'Repent and be baptized, that your sins may be blotted out, when the days of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord.' When our pardon shall be pronounced by the judge's own mouth, then is the solemn condemning and justifying time. But for the present, by the gospel charter, sin is taken away as to the guilt as soon as we repent and believe : Acts x. 43, 'Through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins ;' and Acts xix. 39, 'By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.' Secondly, sanctification is wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ more and more, taking away sin, and weakening the love of it in our hearts ; for the inner man is renewed day by day, and the cleansing and sanctifying work is perfected by degrees : 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Having therefore these precious promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God ;' even until sin be wholly gone ; and this the Spirit effecteth by the duties and ordinances appointed to this very end. But the deadly blow is already given : Rom. vi. 6, 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.'

Thirdly, Now I must come to the force of the argument. If Christ came to take away sin, then we should take care we do not live in sin.

1. This is expressly to contradict and frustrate the designed end of our Redeemer, and so to put him to shame, and to make his coming into the world in vain ; for you seek to cherish that which he came to destroy. He would dissolve, untie, and loose those cords, and you knit them the faster, and so make void his undertaking. That this was the great end and scope of Christ's coming into the world, or being manifested in the flesh, is evident everywhere in scripture : John i. 29, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins



of the world.' All the lambs which were offered to God in sacrifice were to take away sin; and this is the Lamb of God, that is, the true and real substance of all these figures. Now whether the allusion is to the lamb of the daily sacrifice, or the passover lamb, it is all one; the use for which he serveth is to expiate sin and abolish sin, and to bind men to God in a firmer tie of obedience. So Mat. i. 21, 'His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.' Not to ease them of their troubles only, but chiefly to destroy sin, with the mischievous effects of it. Not to save them in their sins, but to save them from their sins: Titus ii. 14, 'He hath redeemed us from all iniquity.' Not only from the curse of the law, but from iniquity: Acts iii. 26, 'God hath raised up his Son Jesus, and sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities.' Not from the Roman yoke, but from sin, which was a worse thralldom and captivity: Rom. xi. 26, 'There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' Well, then, this being Christ's end, to sanctify us and free us from sin, we should not go about to disappoint him, for this is to set ourselves directly against him.

2. This is to slight the price of our redemption; for since with so much cost this work of taking away sin is carried on, for you to be indifferent whether sin be taken away or no is to disvalue and put a slight on the wisdom of God, and the wonderful condescension of his love in Christ, as if so much ado were made about a matter of nothing. This argument is urged by the apostle: 1 Peter i. 18, 19, 'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and blemish.' To enhance the benefit, the greatness of the price is mentioned. Spiritual privileges, such as freedom from sin, should be more regarded by us, because they are so dearly bought. We many times neglect them for trifles, forfeit them for trifles, lose that for gold and silver which cannot be bought for gold and silver. They that slight anything bought by Christ's blood are accounted in scripture to slight the blood of Christ itself; as the apostate who revolteth from Christ for the honours, pleasures, and profits of the world is said to 'trample his blood under foot, and to account it a common thing;' as suppose of a malefactor, or any common sufferer. Our respect to Christ's blood is judged according to the respect we have to the benefits purchased thereby. As, to instance in these two great benefits, the favour of God and the image of God. He that despiseth the favour of God, and doth not make it his business to get it and keep it, but preferreth corruptible things before it, hath no esteem of Christ's merit, and the great cost God hath been at in sending his own Son to take away sin, and recover a lost world into his grace and favour. So whosoever doth not esteem the image of God, which standeth in righteousness and true holiness, doth not esteem the blood of Christ, but hath lessening thoughts of the mystery of his incarnation and passion, as if his blood were shed for trifles.

3. It is in effect to renounce all benefit by Christ; for this way he saveth us, by taking away sin. The scripture everywhere insists upon

redemption from sin as the only way to redemption from the curse. Sin brought in the curse, therefore Christ would go to the bottom and fountain-head, and cure us of sin, that he might take off the curse, and cure us: he doth it not only by the remission of sin, but by sanctifying and healing our natures. You seek but a half cure if you seek pardon only. You neglect and despise the chiefest part of his work; yea, you cannot have pardon unless you be sanctified; and so in effect you have no benefit by Christ at all. For this let me give you these reasons—

[1.] Sin is the great makebate between God and his creatures. The first breach was by sin, and still it continueth the distance: Isa. lix. 2, 'Your iniquities have separated between me and you.' Therefore, till that be taken out of the way, there can be no perfect reconciliation, no communion between God and the creatures; though the sinner may be pardoned on God's terms, yet the purity of God is irreconcilable to sins; and therefore, if you live in sin and continue in sin, there can be no commerce between God and you.

[2.] Sin is the great disease of mankind, which disableth us for the service of our Creator. Therefore the Redeemer came to take away sin, for he considered God's interest as well as ours: Heb. ix. 14, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?' Christ's end was to fit us for God's use, and therefore to sanctify and free us from sin, that we might be in a capacity to love and please God again. This is the great work of the physician of souls.

[3.] The taking away of sin is a greater benefit than impunity, or the taking away of punishment, as sin in some sense is worse than damnation. Those means which have a more immediate connection with the last end are more noble than those which are more remote. The last end in respect to us is the vision and fruition of God, or to see him and be like him. Now the taking away of sin hath a nearer connection than pardon and impunity; they both concur. The sentence of death must be taken off, which maketh us incapable; but holiness is a part and an introduction into the blessed estate; it doth dispositively prepare us for it. On God's part the pleasing and glorifying of God is the last end. Now he is more pleased with us as holy than as pardoned, for his complacency and delight is in the reflection of his image on us; and he is more glorified in our passive reception of his grace, but objectively more glorified in us in our being sanctified and purified, and made like him. Now this is to be minded, partly because men seek to get rid of trouble and temporal affliction, but not of sin. Pharaoh could say, 'Take away this plague;' but the church saith, 'Take away all iniquity,' Hosea xiv. 2. Those who are sensible of the true evil do mainly desire the taking away of sin; that is their chief care and sollicitude how to get rid of it; that is it they complain of in the first place as their chief burden. This is necessary to be showed, partly because some, if they mind spiritual things, they mind only pardon of sin and ease of conscience, not to be freed from the power of sin; as if a man that had broken his leg should only desire to be eased of his smart, but not to have it set again. No; the true penitent is troubled with the stain as well as the guilt. Therefore the promise is suited:



1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' This is a thorough cure.

[4.] There is no taking away guilt and punishment till we be sanctified, till sin itself be taken away. The one part of the cure maketh way for the other. First he doth regenerate that he may pardon. As we were first sinners and then obnoxious to punishment, so first holy and then pardoned, first brought into the kingdom of Christ and made subjects, then enjoy the privileges as subjects: Col. i. 13, 14, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' We are first turned to God: Acts xxvi. 20, 'That they should repent, and turn to God.' We cannot have the one without the other. So you stick at the order, though you know no cause; so that you despise all benefit by Christ if you do not look after the taking away of sin.

[5.] It is a manifest contradiction to our faith to live in sin and to believe that Christ came to take away sin. I gather that from the words 'ye know.' Christians are supposed to know and believe the end of their redemption. If we know it, why do not we deal with him about it? Speculative knowledge and practical are frequently contradictory in the same man. We speak from our convictions, but we live from the innate dispositions and inclinations of our own hearts. Religion doth far more easily tip men's tongues, and run into their heads, than change their hearts. But though their knowledge and practice be contrary, yet thus far we have gained an argument, that their faith condemns their practice; and however we make a shift to match them, the faith of christians and the life of sin are in themselves incompatible. And they that know Christ came to take away sin, and yet live in sin, though they do not show the falsehood of their religion, yet they show their own insincerity in it; though they speak honourably of their Redeemer in words, yet in deeds they dislike him, and deny him, which is not to be charged upon the religion, but themselves, as an art is not disparaged because one that professeth it is a bungler.

[6.] The manner of Christ's taking away sin doth represent the heinousness of it, and is a sufficient warning to the world not to continue in it: 'For if these things were done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?' When we look upon sin through Satan's spectacles, and the cloud of our own passions and carnal affections, we make nothing of it; but in the agonies of Christ, and the sorrows and sufferings of his cross, we see the odiousness of it, that it may become more hateful to us. No less remedy would serve the turn than the agonies, bloodshed, and accursed death of the Son of God, to procure the pardon and destruction of sin. By this sin-offering and ransom for souls we may see what sin is. I showed you before the odiousness of sin, as it is a transgression of the law; that should render it odious to you; but now I bring you to another argument. In Golgotha is the truest spectacle of sin, and how much God hateth it and loveth purity, that it may be seen in its proper colours. We make light of sin, but Christ found it not so light a matter to expiate

it. Do but consider his fears and tears and strong cries when he stood in the place of sinners before God's tribunal, when God 'laid upon him the iniquities of us all.'

[7.] The acceptableness of his sacrifice still further helpeth us against sin: 'He came to take away sin,' and was accepted in what he did. Why? Christ's suffering death for the sin of man was the noblest piece of service, and the highest degree of obedience that ever could be performed to God by man or angels, there being in it so much love to God, pity to man, so much self-denial, so much humility and patience, and such a resignation of himself to God, who appointed him to be the Redeemer of the world. That which was eminent and upmost in it was obedience: Rom. v. 19, 'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous;' Phil. ii. 7, 8, 'He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' God doth not delight in the shedding of blood; you must not draw an ill picture of God in your minds. That which God looked after, and accepted was the eminent obedience of Christ in our nature; so his holy and righteous life, his painful and cursed death, make but one entire piece of obedience. The value of his merit was from the God-head, but the formal reason of his merit was that Christ came to fulfil the will of God, 'by which will we are sanctified,' Heb. x. 9, 10. Now what a notable check is this to sin, and living impenitently in a course of disobedience unto God!

II. As Christ is propounded by way of pattern and example, 'In him was no sin.' I shall first speak a little of the innocency of Christ; secondly, show how he is set forth as a pattern and example of holiness unto us.

1. The scripture sets forth the Lord Jesus as an eminently holy and innocent person, that he had no sin, and did no sin. He had no sin, being by his miraculous conception exempted from the contagion of original sin: Luke i. 35, 'The Holy Ghost shall overshadow thee, and that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' Thus was our Redeemer fitted to be completely lovely in the eyes of God, and to be a pattern of holiness to all his followers. Not only free from actual sin, but as having a perfect holy nature in him; to show that we should not only prevent the outward act, but be free from the lust; and not only lop the branches of sin, but destroy the root by a thorough change of heart. Evil practices in us do not flow from a present temptation, but an evil nature; therefore we should get the divine nature. It is true it cannot be said of us that we have no sin, but yet the carnal nature should not be predominant in us; we should have another spirit. Secondly, He did no sin: 2 Peter ii. 22, 'He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.' Christ did not in the least offend either God or man; as guilty of no transgression, so of no defect in his obedience or conformity to the law of God. It is true he was accused of sin, but who could convince him of sin? John viii. 46, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' Though his name was buried under many calumnies and reproaches, yet none of his malicious



adversaries could ever make it good that he was guilty of one sin. It is true he was tempted to sin, and the most venomous of Satan's fiery darts were shot at him, as you may see, Mat. iv. ; but though he was tempted in all other points like us, yet sin is excepted, Heb. iv. 15. He was spotless and free from sin, there was nothing in him to befriend a temptation, John xiv. 30. This, Christians, is our glorious Lord and chief; he had no sin, nor did no sin. When shall it be said so of us? We wait the time, but it will be so at length; ere Christ hath done with us it must be so.

2. That he is set forth as a pattern and example of holiness in our nature. Christ, that did open heaven by his merit, would also teach us the way thither, and teach us as a good teacher should, not only by his doctrine, but by his example. In moral things his example is to be imitated by us; these reasons enforce it—

[1.] The scriptures do everywhere call for this imitation and suitable walking: Phil. ii. 5, 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Jesus;' Mat. xi. 29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.' So 1 Peter ii. 21, 'He hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps;' 1 John ii. 6, 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought also himself to walk even as he walked.' I have brought these places to show how binding the example of Christ is.

[2.] That the Spirit is sent and given us to change us into his likeness: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even by the same Spirit of the Lord.' We can no more follow his example than obey his doctrine without the same spirit. Here one part helpeth another; in living as he did, we come to be like him.

[3.] What advantage we have by this example. First, all example hath an alluring power and great force in moving; but this is an example of examples, not of equals or ordinary superiors, but of our glorious head and chief. Now this example should be more cogent. First, Because it is a perfect and unerring pattern. Christ's life is religion exemplified, a visible commentary on God's will and word: 2 Cor. xi. 1, 'Be ye followers of me, as I am also of Christ.' Here you cannot err if you follow Christ's submission in his imitable examples and actions. Secondly, It is an engaging pattern. Submission to any duty should make it lovely unto us: 'The disciple is not above his lord, nor the servant above his master;' John xiii. 14, 'If I then, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet.' Shall we decline to follow such a leader? Thirdly, It is an effectual pattern. Christ's steps drop sweetness; he hath left a blessing behind in all the way that he hath trodden before us, and sanctified it to us that we may follow it with comfort. Fourthly, It is a very encouraging pattern, for he sympathiseth with us in all our difficulties, having entended his own heart by experience: Heb. ii. 18, 'For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted;' Heb. iv. 15, 'For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' He knoweth the weaknesses and reluctances of nature in our hardest duties, and will surely pity and pardon our infirmities, and cover them with his own perfect righteousness.

[4.] Christ's example, and unsinning obedience to God, is a notable check to sin, and all the temptations, occasions, and inducements which lead to it. Nothing should be of such value with a christian as to hire him to commit wilful sin. Christ obeyed at the dearest rates and terms, and repented not of his engagement: John xiii. 1, 'Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.' A christian should have the same mind, and then it will be armour of proof against all temptations: 1 Peter iv. 1, 'Arm yourselves with the same mind, for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.' In one place it is said, 'Let the same mind be in you;' in another, 'Arm yourselves with the same mind.' Temptations will have little force upon you when you resolve to obey God whatever it cost you. The frowns of the world, yea, life itself, will be as nothing. Secondly, Is it the pomp and pleasure and honour of the world wherewith the flesh is gratified? Christ hath put a disgrace upon these things by his own choice. He was mean, poor, a man of sorrows; and shall we look to be maintained in pomp and pleasure? We cannot be poorer than Christ, and taste less of the world than he did. Thirdly, A love to our private interests hinders us from seeking the glory of God: Rom. xv. 3, 'For even Christ pleased not himself;' John xii. 27, 28, 'For this cause came I to this hour: Father, glorify thy name.' Every christian should be thus affected; let Christ dispose of him and his interests as it seemeth good to him.

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## SERMON IX.

*And ye know that he was manifested to take away sin, and in him was no sin.*—1 JOHN iii. 5.

FROM these words I have observed this doctrine, that those who are partakers of Christ should by no means allow themselves in a life or course of sin.

The uses now follow.

First, It bindeth our duty upon us.

Secondly, It assureth and sealeth our comfort when we are afflicted either with the guilt of sin or the power of sin.

*First*, It bindeth our duty upon us. They that do not break off a life of sin make Christ's coming in vain. But because men's interest will quicken them, therefore consider, Christ must take away sin, or else you must at last bear your own sin. But alas! that is a burden too heavy for us to bear; and miserable are they that have it lying upon their backs. It will not be light when we reckon with God. Sin to a waking conscience is one of the heaviest burdens that ever was felt: Ps. xxxviii. 4, 'Mine iniquities are gone over my head, they are a burden too heavy for me.' You will find the little finger of sin heavier than the loins of any other sorrow. What a weight and pressure will it be to the soul! If you do but taste of this cup, it filleth



you with trembling. If a spark of God's wrath light on the conscience, how terribly doth it scorch? You may know it in part by what Christ suffered. His soul was heavy unto death. If his soul were heavy to death, if he felt such strange agonies, sweat drops of blood, lost the actual sensible comforts of his Godhead, when he bore the burden of sin, oh, what shall every one of us do if we were to bear our own burden? You may also know it by the complaints of the saints, when the finger of God hath but touched them: Ps. xl. 12, 'Mine iniquities take hold on me, therefore mine heart fainteth.' So Job complaineth, chap. vi. 4, 'For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit;' the arrows of the Almighty, though shot out of Satan's bow; he permitted those venomous arrows to be shot at him. Yea, if ye will know what it is to bear sin, ask not only a tender conscience, but a troubled conscience. What disquiets of soul do wicked men feel when God sets sin home upon the conscience, and they are awakened! How uneasy have their hearts sat within them! Cain crieth out, 'My sin is greater than can be borne,' Gen. iv. 13; 'And a wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. xxviii. 13. What large offers do men make to get rid of their burden! 'Thousands of rams, rivers of oil, their first-born for the sin of their souls,' Micah vi. 7, 8. Lastly, what it is to live and die in sin, the other world will show us. Christ useth no other expression to set forth the misery of the unbelieving Jews but this, that 'ye shall die in your sins,' John viii. 21, 24. The threatenings of the word show their case is miserable enough. They fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. x. 31; and the worm that feedeth on them shall never die, and the fire wherein they are scorched is never quenched, Mark ix. 44. Miserable, unquestionless, is the state of them who bear their own burden and transgression. Now is it not better we should yield up ourselves to Christ, that he should take it away, and do the work of a Redeemer; and that we should not by our carelessness, negligence, and other sins, provoke the Lord to withhold his healing grace? Oh, let us be sensible of our burden. Will Christ ease a man of his burden which he feeleth not? A senseless sleepy soul hath no work for him to do. He inviteth the weary and heavy-laden, Mat. xi. 28. Being sensible of our burden, let us implore his favour; he is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him than a father is to give a hungry child bread, Luke xi. 13. Let us wait for his approaches in the diligent use of the means. Our duty is to lie at the pool for cure till the waters be stirred, John v. His Spirit bloweth when and where he listeth, John iii. 8; let us attend and obey his sanctifying motions, for we make ourselves incapable of this help by grieving the Spirit, Eph. iv. 30. When we become so easy to the requests of sin and so deaf to his motions, he ceaseth to give us warning.

Again, let us consider his example. Will you be so unlike Christ? 'In him was no sin,' and you are all overspread with sin. He learned obedience by the things he suffered, Heb. v. 8, 9. He came to be the leader to everlasting happiness of an obeying people; his stamp and character should be upon all his followers. He is Christ, you are christians; and you should not be polluted members of his body. How will you look him in the face at the last day if you are so unlike

him? 1 John iv. 17, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is so are we in the world;' if we be holy as he, spotless as he. Of polluted sinners he will say, Are these my people? How will you then be ashamed? But it will give us a bold confidence when we have written after his copy. We shall never be like him in glory unless we be first like him in holiness. Christ will own his image. Boldness is opposite to fear and shame; we shall neither be afraid nor ashamed at the day of judgment, if we bear his image upon us.

*Secondly*, It assureth and sealeth our comfort when we are afflicted either with the guilt or power of sin. To this end I shall discuss this argument more at large, and show you—

1. How sin is taken away—(1.) By justification; (2.) By sanctification.

2. What grounds we have to expect that Christ will do this for us.

3. What we must do that this effect may be accomplished in us.

First, How sin is taken away; but first we must determine what sin is. It is usually said there are in sin four things—*culpa*, *reatus*, *pœna*, *macula*, the blot or stain. The three first belong to sin as it respects the law; the last, as it respects the rectitude of human nature in innocency. The three first do more concern justification, the last sanctification.

[1.] Sin may be considered with respect to the law; for so the nature of it will best be found out; for we are told in the verse before the text, that 'sin is a transgression of the law.' In the law there is the precept and the sanction. The precept sheweth what obedience is due from us to God; the sanction or threatening what punishment is due to us in a state of disobedience. Accordingly, in sin, with respect to the precept, there is *culpa*, the fault, or criminal action; with respect to the sanction or threatening, there are two things considerable—sentence and execution. As the commination importeth a sentence and respecteth a sentence, so there is guilt: 'Because sentence is not speedily executed,' Eccles. viii. 11. The sentence is passed in the threatenings of the law, but execution is deferred. But with respect to execution it is called *pœna*, punishment.

[2.] Sin may be considered with respect to that rectitude of our heart and mind which God gave us at first to enable and incline us to keep his law; and so cometh in *macula*, the stain or blot, as it defaced God's image in our hearts: Rom. iii. 23, 'We have all sinned, and are come short of the glory of God;' meaning thereby his glorious image, which was lost and forfeited by the fall of Adam; and actually, because in the day of God's patience, as he continueth other forfeited mercies to us, so some relics of his image in that knowledge and conscience that is left. Therefore when we rebel against the light, and live in a course of heinous sin, we lose more and more of that goodness of human nature that is yet left, and bear the character of such as are given up to vile affections, Rom. i. 26; and Eph. iv. 19, 'And being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work uncleanness with greediness.' God leaveth them to their own lusts without restraint, withholdeth the good Spirit that was wont to counsel and warn them. *Macula*, then, the blot or stain, is the inclination to



sin again; as a brand that hath been once in the fire, is more apt to take fire again. This is the fruit of sin, and we pray God to free us from it yet more and more, by giving us more of his Spirit. It is the heaviest judgment that can befall us, to be given over to our own heart's counsels, Ps. li. 11; and David prayeth, after heinous sin, that God would not take his Holy Spirit from him.

But let us now consider how sin is taken away: therein what is to be done by Christ, and what is to be done by us, that this effect may be accomplished in us.

And first, as to what is to be done by Christ, and there how sin is taken away, both as to justification and sanctification.

1. With respect to justification; so that *culpa*, *reatus*, *pœna*, the fault or criminal action, cannot be said to be taken away, but only it is passed by as it is the foundation of our guilt, as it is a natural action; such a fact we did, or such a duty we omitted to do. As it is a faulty action, contrary to the law of God, Christ taketh it not away, for that were to disannul the law, or the obliging force and authority of it, as it is a rule of perpetual equity. The sins we have committed are sins still; therefore Christ came not to make the law less holy, or a fault to be no fault.

Let us come to the second thing, *reatus*, the guilt of sin. There is *reatus culpæ*, the guilt of sin; and *reatus pœnæ*, the guilt of punishment. *Reatus culpæ*, is the applying the law to the fact, and both to the person that hath committed it. Suppose that such a fact is a sin, because such a law forbiddeth it, and that I am guilty of such a transgression against the law of God; sure it is that this is not taken away; my faulty act is an offence, and I am an offender. We cannot be reputed never culpable, to have omitted any duty, or committed any sin; for the new covenant is not set up to make us innocent, but pardonable upon certain terms; and we come to God as to our offended governor, pleading not as innocent, but as sinners, desiring that, in the behalf of Christ, our sins may be forgiven to us. Then there is *reatus pœnæ*, which resulteth from the sanction of the law, binding us over to suffer such penalties as the law hath determined. Now this may be understood, *quoad meritum*, *vel quoad eventum*; according to the merit of the action, what the action in itself deserveth, which is condemnation to punishment. This Christ hath not taken away, and never intended to take away; for every sinful action is *in se et merito operis damnable* in itself, and by the desert of the work damnable; it doth deserve damnation; but *quoad eventum*, as to the event and effect: 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ,' Rom. viii. 1. By the law of grace there is a discharge from the sentence of the law, and so from an obligation to punishment. This will be made clear and plain to you by considering what is required of us in suing out our pardon. We must confess the sin: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess and forsake our sins, he is just and righteous to forgive us our sins.' We must confess the guilt and desert of sin by God's righteous law: 1 Cor. xi. 31, 'For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.' There must be a self-accusing and self-judging. In self-accusing we confess *reatum culpæ*; in self-judging we confess *reatum pœnæ*; without either of which there would not be that humiliation and

brokenness of heart which the scripture calleth for, and is necessary for us in our entrance into the gospel covenant, and in our whole dealing with God about pardon. Or else these acts must be performed very perfunctorily, and not in reality and truth, if there be not a ground in the nature of the thing; for if the guilt of the fault were utterly dissolved, how can I heartily accuse myself of such and such sins before the Lord? or if the guilt of punishment were so far dissolved that my actions did not in their own nature, and by the righteous law of the Lord, deserve such condemnation and punishment, how could I broken-heartedly confess myself as deserving the greatest evil which his law hath threatened? Well, then, pardon is not a vacating the action, or making a thing not done which is done, or a denial of the fault as if it were no fault, nor an annulling of the desert of punishment, but a remission of the punishment itself due to us by the law of nature. This is that, then, which the law of grace or new covenant doth; every penitent believer is actually and really pardoned and discharged from the penalty, which the law of nature maketh his due debt: Mat. vi. 12, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' Our debt is the obligation actually to suffer the full punishment of the law.

Now we will consider the third thing in sin, that is *pœna*, the punishment, and that is either temporal or eternal.

[1.] To begin with the last, eternal punishment. We are discharged from that as soon as we have an interest in Christ; for then our state is altered, and God doth pardon all our past sins, and make us heirs of eternal life: Gal. iii. 13, 'Christ hath delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' The curse of the law may be taken actively or passively. Actively, it is nothing else but the sentence of the law, or of God the judge, condemning the transgressors of the law, and pronouncing them accursed: 'For cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. iii. 10; which curse must not fall to the ground, but be taken off by some valuable compensation, that the honour of God's government may be secured, and that is done by Christ in being made a curse for us. Passively, it signifieth all those punishments which are, or have been, or shall be, or may be inflicted on the transgressors of the law; but chiefly the final curse, which is called 'Wrath to come,' from which Christ hath delivered us, 2 Thes. i. 10; which consists in two things, *pœna damni* and *pœna sensus*; the loss of God's eternal and blessed presence, and of the vision and fruition of him in glory: Mat. xxv. 41, 'Depart from me, ye cursed.' They are banished from the presence of the Lord, and cast into utter torment. The pain, when we fall immediately into the hands of an angry offended God: Heb. x. 31, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' Now sin is remitted to all them that take sanctuary at the Lord's grace. We deserve it, but he hath actually discharged us from it by his new covenant; such is his mercy and grace to us in Christ.

[2.] For the temporal punishment: while we have sin in us, and are making out our claim, and our sanctification is imperfect, God hath reserved a liberty for his corrective discipline, and to punish and chastise his children as it shall seem meet to his wisdom and justice:



Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33, 'Then will I visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.' Now the temporal punishments are of two sorts—

(1.) Such afflictive evils as belong to his external government. It is hard to reckon up all of them to you, but the consummate evil is death, and the intermediate evils are of different kinds. It is said in one place, Deut. xxv. 20, 'All the curses which are written in this book shall light upon him;' but in another, Deut. xxviii. 61, 'Every curse which is not written in this book will the Lord bring upon thee,' whether written or not written, committed to record in the word, or dispensed in his providence. God hath reserved this liberty to himself, to correct his sinning children in what way he pleaseth. To reduce it in short; all good is from God, and all evil is from sin; and in pursuance of his eternal love, and to keep them from damnation, he will sometimes chastise them sorely: 1 Cor. xi. 32, 'For when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world;' and Jer. v. 25, 'Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good things from you;' Micah i. 5, 'For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel.' So Amos iii. 2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.' A rod dipped in guilt may smart sorely upon the backs of God's people. God's displeasure is felt in their chastisements and judgments. Surely their author is God, their cause is sin, their end is repentance. We are in danger to despise the calamities which befall us and our families if we do not own this truth. It is true it turneth to good, but still it is a natural evil. If we were without sin, he would give us the good without the evil; you greatly mistake if you think there is no displeasure of God in all this.

(2.) There are certain afflictions which belong to his internal government, as when God manifesteth his displeasure to the party sinning by withdrawing his Spirit, the evil which David was so much afraid of: Ps. li. 10–12, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.' He desireth that God would not withdraw his grace, and the influence and comfort of his Holy Spirit, which he had so justly forfeited by his heinous sin. This is the sorest judgment on this side hell, to be deprived of inward communion with God. It is not a total separation from his favour and presence, but yet it is a degree of it; when God is strange to us, and suspendeth all the acts of his complacential love, leaving us dull and senseless, having no heart or life to anything that is spiritually good. And if we repent not, God may go further, and deliver us up to brutish lusts. The evils are greater or less, according to the rate of our sins or neglects of grace. These penal withdrawals of the Spirit should therefore be observed; for God sheweth much of his pleasure or displeasure by giving or withholding the Spirit. His blessing and favour is showed this way: Prov. i. 23, 'Turn at my reproof, and I will pour out my Spirit to you.' But when God is refused, or neglected,

or highly provoked, he then departs : Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12, 'Israel would none of me ; so I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts.' This is more than all the calamities in the world.

2. In a way of sanctification. So Christ taketh away sin by giving us his Spirit, whereby the stains of our nature are cleansed. We are renewed in righteousness and holiness, according to his image : Eph. iv. 24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness ;' 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'We beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into his image and likeness.'

Now concerning this way of taking away sin, let me observe four things—

[1.] That the Spirit is given us as the fruit of Christ's merit and sacrifice : Titus iii. 5, 6, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his merey he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ;' Gal. iii. 14, 'That the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles, through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.' He was the rock that was smitten by the rod of Moses : 1 Cor. x. 4, 'And they did all drink of the same spiritual drink ; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.' If Christ were the rock, the water that flowed from the rock was the Spirit : John iv. 14, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give, shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life ;' John vii. 38, 39, 'He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.' Well, then, upon the account of Christ's merit and sacrifice, God doth by the Spirit create a clean heart within us, and a right spirit, that we may live in obedience to his holy will.

[2.] That the gift of the Spirit is a kind of executive pardon, or a receiving the atonement ; for this grace was forfeited by sin, as man brought death spiritual upon himself, as well as temporal and eternal, and we made the stain of sin to consist in the loss of the Spirit, or an inclination to sin again ; therefore by sanctification, or the gift of the Spirit, is our pardon executed upon us or applied to us. As the withdrawing or withholding the Spirit is a great part of our punishment, so the gift of the Spirit is the great and first act of God's pardoning mercy, and a means to qualify us for the other parts of God's pardon ; for before men are converted, they are unpardoned : 'Turn you from all your transgressions, and iniquity shall not be your ruin,' Ezek. xviii. 30 ; and Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' Therefore till there be a turning from the life of sin to God by faith in Christ, there is no actual justification nor forgiveness.

[3.] That when repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is begun in us by the Spirit, there is promised a further degree of the Spirit to be given to us to dwell in us : Acts ii. 38, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the re-



mission of sins ; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ; ' Prov. i. 23, ' Turn ye at my reproof : behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you : ' Eph. i. 13, ' After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise ; ' and that for a durable use, to be in us a Spirit of sanctification and adoption. First, To be a Spirit of sanctification : 2 Thes. ii. 13, ' God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification and belief of the truth. ' As he converted us to God, so he is a ' Spirit of regeneration ; ' but as he doth further sanctify and cleanse us, and fit us for God, and make us amiable in his sight, so he is called a ' Spirit of sanctification, ' properly so taken. It is by the Spirit dwelling in us that we mortify and subdue sin, Rom. viii. 13. It is by the Spirit we exert and put forth all acts of holiness : Gal. v. 25, ' If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit ; ' and perform all duties to God in the Spirit. In short, the grace of the Spirit is given us to subdue the power of sin, and strengthen us against temptations, and that we may perfect holiness in the fear of God. Secondly, A Spirit of adoption : Gal. iv. 6, ' Because ye are sons, he hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. ' The same Spirit that maketh us holy possesseth us with a filial love of God, and a dependence on him ; so that childlike love, with a pleasing obedience and dependence, are the great effects and tokens of his dwelling in us as a Spirit of adoption.

[4.] This Spirit doth by degrees fit us for our everlasting estate : 2 Cor. v. 5, ' He that formeth us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit ; ' and therefore he must not be obstructed in his work, while he is preparing the heirs of promise aforehand unto glory, lest we lose not only the comfort of our future hopes, but be set back in the spiritual life, and so grieve the Holy Spirit of promise, who is both our sanctifier and comforter. Thus we have seen what Christ doth to take away sin ; he freeth us from the everlasting miseries of the damned in hell, and will surely free us from the miseries of this life, if we be obedient, and hearken to his counsel. But in the midst of weaknesses our title to impunity and life eternal remaineth unreversed, though it be often obscured by our sin and folly.

Secondly, What must we do that sin may be thus taken away ? For I observe, first, that those things which God worketh in us, and bestoweth upon us by his grace, he also requireth of us by his command : Ezek. xxxvi. 26, ' A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit I will put into you. ' Yet Ezek. xviii. 31, ' Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit ; ' and in many other places. Sometimes he promiseth to turn us, sometimes he commandeth us to turn to him ; sometimes he biddeth us to put away sin, sometimes he promiseth to take it away from us ; in the one showing what is our duty, in the other where is our help ; the one inferreth regeneration, which is the work of the Spirit, the other, repentance, which is our duty. Again, the death of Christ must be considered either as it respecteth God or us. As it respecteth God, it is a price paid to provoked justice to purchase grace for us : Isa. liii. 5, ' He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. ' As it respects us, it layeth an obligation upon

us to do what is proper to us: 1 Peter i. 22, 'Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.'

What then are we to do?—(1.) As to our entrance into christianity; (2.) As to our recovery out of our falls.

1. As to our entrance into the grace of the gospel, there is required repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, Acts xx. 21.

[1.] Repentance towards God, which consists in a serious purpose and willingness to let sin go, and a fixed resolution to love, serve, and please God, bewailing and bemoaning ourselves to God with grief and shame: Jer. xxxi. 18, 'I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.'

[2.] Faith, or an acceptance of Christ as the only physician of our souls, who alone can cure and change our hearts; therefore, depending upon the universal offer of his grace, we are resolved to use the means which he hath appointed, that this cure may be wrought in us, Rom. vii. 24, 25.

2. For our recovery out of particular falls, something is to be done with respect to those four things which are in sin.

[1.] As to the fault; be sure the fault be not continued, which is when the criminal acts are repeated. Relapses are very dangerous. A bone often broken in the same place is with the more difficulty set again. God's children are in danger of this before the breach be well made up, or the orifice of the wound well closed; as Lot doubleth his incest, and Sampson goeth again and again to Delilah, Judges xvi. 2, 4. But wicked men sin frequently, as that king who would venture fifty after fifty; nothing will stop them in the way of their sins.

[2.] The guilt continueth till serious and solemn repentance, and suing out our pardon in the name of Christ: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess and forsake our sins, he is just and faithful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Though a man should forbear the act, and never commit it more, yet unless retracted by serious remorse, and humbling ourselves before God, it avails not. This self-accusing is necessary, that we may know how much we are indebted to grace. Look into thy bill, what owest thou? Luke vii. 47, 'She wept much, because she loved much; and she loved much, because much was forgiven her.' She had a greater measure of love to God and Christ. This self-judging is that which makes us the more earnest for pardon, Luke xviii. 13, and grief and shame in both, to strengthen us against relapses, that we may forsake the sins we confess: Prov. xxviii. 13, 'He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy.' Slight acknowledgments do not mortify sin.

[3.] The blot or evil inclination to sin again. The evil influence of sin continueth till we mortify the root of it; it is not enough to mortify the sin, but we must pull out the core of the distemper before all will be well. Jonah repented of forsaking his call; yet, not mortifying the root, it brake forth again. He stood upon his credit, Jonah iv. 1, 2. Christ trieth Peter: John xxi. 15, 'Lovest thou me more than these?' He had boasted before, 'Though all men forsake thee, I will never forsake thee,' Mat. xxvi. 33. Though Peter had wept bitterly for the fact, yet Christ would try if the cause were removed. Peter is grown



more modest now than to make any comparisons. We must use means to get the sinning disposition checked.

[4.] As to *pœna*, we must deprecate the eternal punishment as deserved by us, through the merit of our actions, still 'looking to Jesus, who hath delivered us from wrath to come.' But as to temporal evils which God may inflict upon us partly for the increase of our repentance, when we smart under the fruits of sin; for the evil of punishment doth much help us to judge of the evil of sin: Jer. ii. 19, 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, that his fear is not in thee.' Partly to make us a warning to others, that they do not displease God as we have done: 2 Sam. xii. 14, 'Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme; the child also that is born unto thee, shall surely die.' For these reasons, I say, God may punish us in our persons, or in our families and relations; wherefore we should humbly deprecate the judgment: Ps. vi. 12, 'Lord, correct me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure.' That we may stop the judgment, and get it mitigated; or, if it come, we may patiently bear it with humble submission to the will of God: Micah vii. 9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.' Not mourning as without hope, yet humbling ourselves, and putting our mouths in the dust.

Secondly, Now what grounds have we that Christ will do this for us?

1. Christ's office and undertaking, which he cannot possibly neglect; for this end was he manifested, and sent by the Father, to take away sin: Acts v. 31, 'God hath exalted him to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance and remission of sin.' Will he come in vain, and miss of his ends, or fail a serious soul that expecteth and waiteth for the benefit of his office? The generality of the christian world prize his memory but neglect his offices; but now, those that depend on his name, and seek the fruits of his office, will he frustrate their expectations?

2. Consider how able he is to make good his offices, the merit of his humiliation, and the power of his exaltation. First, The merit of his humiliation: 1 Peter i. 18, 19, 'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversations received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' What a price hath he given for sanctifying and healing grace! which should not only heighten our esteem of the privilege, but increase our confidence. So Isa. liii. 5, 'But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.' Such is the perfection and merit of his sacrifice, that we may depend upon it; he will not lose the fruit of his obedience and suffering. Secondly, The power of his exaltation: 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.' Christ having paid our ransom, is gone to heaven, and hath full

power to free us from sin, even all those that heartily consent to his terms.

3. He is willing to do this for you. Why else did he purchase it at so dear a rate? Why doth he offer it so freely in the promises of the gospel, and in that covenant which was made, stated, and sworn unto? Heb. vi. 17, 18. Why else has he been so kind to all that are now in glory? There is none in heaven by the first covenant; all that are there come thither as justified and sanctified by Jesus Christ, and in the way of his pardoning grace. Surely he will not be strange to them that bemoan themselves. Consider his merciful nature, his appearing in our flesh, that we might have this confidence: Heb. ii. 17, 'Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.' Well, then, Christ is willing if we are willing; there you will find it sticketh. He came to take away sin, but we will not give way to his Spirit; we are neither sensible of our burden, nor earnest for a cure, at least a sound cure. We seek ease and comfort more than the removing of the distemper.

## SERMON X.

*Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*—1 JOHN iii. 6.

HERE is a double argument against an evil and sinful life, which is drawn from our union and communion with Christ by faith, or our knowledge of him. It is delivered in a copulate axiom, where there is a comparison of contraries. These two contrary parties are set forth in two propositions, the one asserting the property and disposition of the true believer, the other refuting the claim of the pretender. In the one an argument from union with Christ, the other from the knowledge of him.

*1st Proposition*, 'Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not;' where we have the subject and the predicate.

1. The subject, 'Abideth in him;' that is, he who is united to Christ by a true and lively faith, and perseveres in this union, abideth in him. In effect, whosoever is a true christian, for they are often expressed by this character: 1 John ii. 6, 'He that abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.' This is the great duty pressed upon us: 1 John ii. 27, 28, 'But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie; and even as he hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and may not be ashamed before him at his coming;' and John xv. 4-7, 'Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine,



no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, and ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' The phrase implieth intimacy and constancy.

[1.] Intimacy, or the near and close conjunction between Christ and a believer by faith.

[2.] Constancy, or an adherence to him, and dependence upon him on our part; for the union is not like to break on Christ's side; it is we that are pressed to abide in him, and that first because some are in Christ only by visible profession, and Christ will not cast them off if they do not fall off. Secondly, Because the elect must consider the danger of apostasy: 'Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.'

2. The predicate, 'Sinneth not;' that is, according to the sense of our apostle, liveth not in a course of known sin, for otherwise there is no man that sinneth not, 1 Kings viii. 46; and again, Eccles. vii. 20, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.' Therefore the meaning of the apostle is, that for the main he endeavoureth after purity and holiness, and alloweth himself in no sin.

*2d Proposition.* There the order is inverted; for the predicate in the former proposition is the subject here: 'Whosoever sinneth,' that is, in the sense aforesaid, whosoever doth so give himself over to sin as not to endeavour purity and holiness, either deliberately and designedly doeth evil, or doth negligently oppose evil, leaveth the boat to the stream.

Then the predicate, 'Hath not seen him, nor known him;' that is, was never acquainted with Christ.

But yet, because the expressions are emphatical, I shall sift them a little more narrowly.

1. These expressions are used because all that are Christ's are bound to know him, and to be acquainted with him: John x. 11, 'I know my sheep, and am known of mine.' The knowledge is mutual; as he knoweth us, and taketh care of us, so we know him, and take care of his precepts.

2. That where sight and knowledge are effectual, it is a mighty check to sin: 3 John 11, 'He that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.' Seeing and knowing are put for a lively faith: John xvii. 3, 'And this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent;' John vi. 40, 'He that seeth the Son and believeth on him hath eternal life.' So that the meaning is, he hath not a true and lively faith.

3. The expressions are fitly used to disprove the Gnostics, a sort of knowing people, who falsely did pretend a higher knowledge of Christ without newness of life; yea, though they wallowed in all manner of filthiness; therefore called Borborites; and one of their dogmas or opinions was, that a jewel in the dirt is a jewel still. Therefore their knowledge or science, falsely so called, is often disproved in the writings of this apostle: 1 John ii. 4, 'He that saith, I know him, and

keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.'

4. The case in hand or under debate was about seeing Christ and being like him; but none shall see him hereafter but those that now in some sort see him and know him; for faith is the introduction to the beatifical vision. If we do not see him now, and know him now, we shall neither see him nor know him hereafter; but he that liveth an evil and sinful life hath not seen him, neither known him; and therefore such cannot expect to see him as he is, and be like him.

5. There is plainly in the words a negative gradation, where the greatest is denied first, as is frequent in scripture; as Ps. cxxi. 4, 'Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep;' and Heb. xiii. 5, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' A man may leave the company of another whom he doth not forsake. So here, he hath neither seen Christ nor known him. Sight implieth clearness and certainty; and so the meaning is, that he is so far from seeing Christ, that he hath not known him. The points observable are two—

First, That whosoever is ingrafted into Christ by a true and lively faith, and hath union and communion with him, ought not nor cannot allow himself in any known sin.

Secondly, That no sight and knowledge of Christ is saving and effectual but what checketh sin and prevents living in a course of sin.

For the first point, that whosoever is ingrafted into Christ by a true and lively faith, and hath union and communion with him, ought not nor cannot allow himself in any known sin.

Here I shall examine—(1.) What is union and communion with Christ; (2.) This is to be considered as begun and as continued; (3.) Why this union with Christ is inconsistent with a sinful life.

I. For the first, certainly there is a near and close union between Christ and christians. To be in a thing is more than to be with it, by it, or about it, or to belong to it. Now we do not only belong to Christ, but are in him, John xvii. 26, and 2 Cor. v. 17, 'Whosoever is in Christ is a new creature.' What this union is, is a mystery, and hard to explain. When the apostle had told us that 'we are members of his body,' he addeth, Eph. v. 32, 'But this is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and his church.' The near conjunction between Christ and his people is one of the secrets in religion not slightly to be passed over, nor yet very curiously to be pryed into. The conjunction is real, but the way of it is spiritual and heavenly. Many things in religion are known by their effects rather than their nature. The thing is plain, but the manner hidden; and it is our business to seek after the blessed effects of it rather than accurately to study the nature of it. Yet it is profitable to see how it is brought about. Take it thus, confederation maketh way for union, union for fruition, and fruition for communion, and communion for familiarity between Christ and us or God and us by Christ.

1. Confederation is the foundation of all on our part; for entering into covenant with God is the ground of our union with him, or by Christ with him; for then God is our God, and we are his people, Jer. xxiv.

7. Abraham is called the friend of God with respect to the covenant, James ii. 23; and we have the right of sons by receiving Christ: John



i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God ;' or accepting him as their Lord and Saviour. When the self-condemning sinner doth consent to the terms of the gospel, and heartily accept Christ to be to him what God hath appointed him to be and do for poor sinners, he hath full allowance to call God Father, and is possessed of all the privileges which belong to his children.

2. Upon this followeth union with Christ, which, what it is, cometh now to be discussed. This certainly is not a mere relation to Christ. Union indeed giveth us a title to Christ and Christ a title to us : Cant. ii. 16, 'I am my beloved's, and he is mine.' But yet there is somewhat more than a relation ; for Christ is not only ours and we his, but he is in us and we in him. God is ours, and we are his, and God is in us, and we in God. It is represented not only by relative unions, but such as are real. Relative, as marriage ; where man and wife by the marriage covenant are one flesh ; Eph. v. 31, 32. But by the head and members, who make one body, not with respect to a political, but natural body : 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.' By vine and branches, who make but one tree : John xv. 5, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' Again, it is compared to the food and substance that is nourished by it : John vi. 56, 'He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.' As the meat is turned into the eater's substance, so they and Christ become one ; and on feeding on Christ by faith, there followeth a mutual inhabitation. We dwell in him by constant dependence, and he abideth in us by constant influence and the quickening virtue of his Spirit. Nay, once more, it is compared with the mystery of the Trinity, and the union that is between the divine persons : John xvii. 21-23, 'That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee ; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one : I in them, and thou in me ; that they may be perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.' Which, though it cannot be understood to the full, yet at least it is more than a bare relation. The mystical union implieth somewhat more than a bare title. Yea, it is not only a notion of scripture, but a thing effected and wrought in us by the Spirit : 'By one Spirit we are baptized into one body,' 1 Cor. xii. 13. Now the Spirit's works are real. What he doth, doth not infer a bare title and relation only ; there is a presence of Christ in our hearts, and a vivifical influence caused by it.

3. Union maketh way for fruition and communion ; for we being in Christ, receive all manner of blessings through him and from him : 1 Cor. i. 30, 'But of him ye are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption ;' that is, we receive all manner of benefits by virtue of our union with him. Certainly this union is not a dry notion ; the comfort flowing thence is very real. More especially these benefits may be reduced to two—the favour of God, and the life of God. First, The favour of God ; being reconciled to him by Christ, all our sins are pardoned :

Eph. i. 14, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins.' So far that we are exempted from condemnation : Rom. viii. 1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' And our persons are accepted : Eph. i. 6, 'He hath accepted us in the Beloved.' And we are put under the hopes of eternal life : Col. i. 27, 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' Oh, what a mercy is this, that we that could not think of God without horror, nor hear him named without trembling, nor pray to him with any comfort and confidence, have now by Christ pardon and absolution, and free access with assurance of welcome and audience, whenever we stand in need of him ; and not only so, but may hopefully expect a child's portion in heaven, 'To be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Secondly, The life of God, which is begun in regeneration, and continued by the influence of his Spirit dwelling and working in our hearts, till it be perfected in the life of glory : 1 John v. 12, 'He that hath the Son hath life.' Another kind of life than he had before ; a living in God and to God, which is the noblest kind of living and being under the sun : Gal. ii. 20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God ;' and Christ is called our life, Col. iii. 4. Christ is the root and fountain of it, the living head in whom all the members live, and from whom they receive strength and influence : John xiv. 19, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' We live by virtue of his life.

4. Communion and fruition maketh way for familiarity, for real intercourses of love between Christ and the soul. He dwelleth and walketh with us, and we with him ; he directeth, counselleth, and quickeneth us, and we live in a holy subjection and obedience to the motions and inspirations of his grace : Ps. xxvii. 8, 'Thou saidst, Seek ye my face : my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' He speaketh to believers by the excitations of his grace, and the infusion of spiritual comforts ; and they to him in holy thoughts, prayers, and addresses unto his majesty. There is a constant interchange of donatives and duties, graces and services, prayers and blessings. More especially this familiarity and converse is either in solemn ordinances and duties of religion, or in a constant course of holiness. First, In solemn duties of religion. Prayer is called an access to God, Eph. iii. 12 ; a spiritual acquaintance with him, Job xxii. 21. By constant commerce men settle into an acquaintance with one another. Secondly, In a constant course of holiness : 1 John i. 7, 'If we walk in the light as he is in the light, then have we fellowship one with another.' Conformity is the ground of communion. When we love what God loveth, and hate what he hateth, then he is with us, maintaining, directing, supporting us in all our ways ; and we are with him, fearing, loving, pleasing, and serving him, and glorifying his name.

II. This union and communion is not only as it is begun, but continued. All union must have some bonds and ties by which it is effected ; so this mystical spiritual union. The primary bands are those which begin the union, the secondary bands are those which continue it. The primary bands are the Spirit and faith, the secondary are the constant inhabitation and influence of the same Spirit with faith and other graces.



1. Primary. God maketh his first entry into us by his Spirit, for it is the Spirit which planteth us into the mystical body of Christ: 1 Cor. xii. 13, 'For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.' For by the quickening virtue of this Spirit is faith wrought in us, and then the soul embraceth and receiveth Christ, and the nuptial knot is tied. Christ, as the most worthy, and as having the quickening and life-making power, beginneth with and taketh hold of us, that we may take hold of him: Phil. iii. 12, 'That I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ.' The Spirit is the bond on Christ's part, and faith the principal bond on ours. And if you ask me what act it is? I answer—A broken-hearted and thankful acceptance of Christ, as God offereth him to us; that is the closing act on our part; then Christ and we join hands, when we resolve to cleave to him, and receive him as our Lord and Saviour, John i. 12.

2. For the continuance of this union, or our abiding in him, the Spirit is still necessary: 1 John iv. 13, 'Hereby we know that God dwelleth in us, and we dwell in God, by the Spirit that he hath given us.' So is faith: Eph. iii. 17, 'That he may dwell in your hearts by faith.' Faith is the means whereby Christ dwelleth in us by the Spirit, and it is also the means of our dwelling in him, and our adherence to him, and dependence upon him. We do not use Christ at a pinch, or as a pen to write with, and lay it down when we have done, but as the branches use the vine, and the members the head which they live by, and from which when they are separated, they dry and wither. The heart must be habituated to a constant dependence on Christ. Well, then, the communion between Christ and his members is mutual, they being in him by faith and a steady dependence, and he in them by his Spirit as the root of their spiritual being; but then all other graces concur, and have their use and influence, as chiefly love, which causeth a delightful adhesion to him: Deut. x. 20, 'Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God, and to him shalt thou cleave.' We cleave to him by love, as we live in him by faith. As Jonathan's soul clave to David, or was knit to the soul of David, 1 Sam. xviii. 3, or Jacob's life was said to be bound up with the lad's life, because of his tender love to him, Gen. xlv. 30, so a believer's soul cleaveth to Christ; love cannot endure a separation: Rom. viii. 35, 'What shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?' When we will not suffer ourselves, either by the allurements or terrors of the world, or solicitations of the flesh, or temptations of the devil, to be withdrawn from the profession of his name, or zeal for his truth, or the observance of his precepts, then are we said to abide in him. Well, then, love is necessary, only there is a difference between faith and love. Faith is the primary bond, and love the secondary; for the union is begun by faith, but continued by love. The first thing that tieth the nuptial knot is faith, or choosing and receiving Christ, and that which continueth it is conjugal loyalty and fidelity, or cleaving to Christ by love. Once more, the moral union of hearts is by love, the mystical by faith. Christ must dwell in us as the head and fountain of our life, but by love we embrace him as our friend whom we most dearly love and esteem. Lastly, by faith he dwelleth in us effectively, by his influence maintaining

our life, and supplying us with all things necessary to godliness. By love he dwelleth in us objectively, by such a union as is between the object and the faculty. A star is in the eye that seeth it though it be ten thousands of miles distant; and what you think of is in your minds, and what you desire is in your hearts. A scholar's mind is in his books when he is absent from them, and a wicked man's mind is in his sin when he is not practising it, Col. i. 21; and we usually say, the mind is not where it liveth, but where it loveth. When you fear God, your mind is with him; when you love God, your heart is with him. This is an objective union, but by faith there is a union of concretion and coalition. Christ is the stock, we the graft; we are said to be planted into him, Rom. vi. 5, he being to us the fountain and principle of a spiritual life, or the root of vivifical influence.

III. Why they ought not nor cannot allow themselves in known sins.

1. They ought not, because a great obligation lieth upon them above others. The apostle telleth us: 1 John ii. 6, 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought to walk as he walked.' Zanchy observeth it is not only *utile*, profitable to walk as he walked, but *debitum*, a necessary and express duty; they ought to walk. Why is it their duty more than others? First, Lest they displease Christ, and forfeit the sense of his love, who hath done so much for them as to reconcile them unto God, and hath taken them into his mystical body that he may give them his Holy Spirit. And after all this, shall we break his laws and grieve his Spirit? This is to abide in Christ against Christ, with Judas to kiss him and betray him. He is best pleased when we obey his laws rather than fondly esteem his name and memory: 1 John v. 3, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments;' John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;' John xv. 10, 'If you keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love.' His is a love of bounty, ours a love of duty. This is the course that is best pleasing to him, and the ready way to continue the sense of his love to you. Secondly, Lest they dishonour Christ. What! when you are taken into the cabinet of Christ's mystical body, will you yet sin when you are one with God and Christ? 'Let them be one with us,' John xvii. 21. You sin in God; and though you are planted into the good vine, yet bring forth the clusters of Sodom and grapes of Gomorrah. What! sin in Christ? He was holy and you profane, he was humble and you proud, he was meek and you contentious, charitable and you malicious; he did ever please God, and you do nothing but displease him. Christ came to make you saints, and you live like beasts for sensuality, yea, like devils for envy and hatred. Is this the fruit of your being in Christ and living in Christ? You entitle him to your disorders, and pollute his name thereby.

2. They cannot; union with Christ is inconsistent with a life of sin. The apostle saith, 'he sinneth not,' making it not only the duty, but the property of those that abide in Christ. It must needs be so, because otherwise the communion is but pretended. And it is on our parts interrupted and broken off.

[1.] It is but pretended: 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought to



walk as he walked.' Otherwise you do but say it, it is not a reality. I prove it thus: Because where there is union and communion with Christ, there his Spirit is given to us, and they that have the Spirit of Christ will be like him; the Spirit worketh uniformly in head and members. Therefore if the same Spirit and life be in us that was in Christ, there must needs be a suitableness. If the spirit of the living creature be in the wheels, the wheels must move as the living creature moveth. Surely if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are not united to him, Rom. viii. 9. If we have, we shall be such in the world as he was, have the same mind that he had, and walk as he walked. It was an old cheat of the heathens to pretend to secrecy with their gods when they would promote any design they had in hand. Many talk much of communion with God and Christ, but where are the fruits? So that unless we will delude ourselves with a bare notion and empty pretence, we must endeavour to find that it is in sincerity.

[2.] It is on our part interrupted and broken off; we do what in us lieth to provoke Christ to withdraw, for the condition of this communion is holiness: 1 John i. 6, 7, 'If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, then we have fellowship one with another;' John xiv. 23, 'If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' Conformity maketh way for communion, and likeness is the ground of love. Therefore, if we sin, if we walk contrary to God, we do not abide in him; for there is a contradiction, that we should abide in him, and yet break off from him as we do by wilful sin.

*Use 1.* Information; to teach us how to check sin by the remembrance of union and communion with Christ: 1 Cor. vi. 15, 'Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.' The apostle is reasoning against fornication, and one main argument is taken from our union with Christ. The bodies of the faithful are a part of his mystical body, and therefore must be used with reverence, and possessed in sanctification and honour; not given to a harlot, but reserved for Christ. He proveth the argument on both parts, that he that is joined to a harlot maketh himself one with a harlot, and he that is joined to Christ becometh one with Christ. 'He that is joined to a harlot is one body;' *i.e.*, that conjunction is carnal and bodily: 'But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;' *i.e.*, this conjunction is holy and spiritual. And does not the argument hold good in other cases? Thus in gluttony and intemperance, they join us to something that is different from Christ, and debase the body which Christ hath made the temple of his Spirit. Nay, though the sin be not so gross, the argument is good still. Do we dwell in Christ, and make Christ's mystical body a shelter and sanctuary for sinners, and this great mystery of union with Christ only a cover for a carnal heart and life? Surely every one that is in Christ hath greater obligations than others, being taken into such a nearness to God; and has greater helps, having received of his fulness, John i. 16. They have grace from him, as the branches have sap from the root.

*Use 2.* Are we true members of Christ's mystical body? 'Whoso-

ever abideth in him sinneth not.' Let us pause on this a little. Do not we sin daily? But unavoidable failings do not forfeit or break off our union and communion with him. What then?

1. There are many sins which are utterly inconsistent with true godliness; and if a child of God should fall into them in some rare, unusual case, he cannot know himself a child of God. Surely to live in them doth clearly decide the matter. As, for instance, consider these scriptures: 1 Cor. vi. 9, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God;' Gal. v. 19-21, 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of these things I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God;' Eph. v. 6, 'Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.' These acts are so contrary to grace, that no debate needeth be about them; either they are not consistent with sincerity, or the knowledge of it.

2. They live not in any sin against knowledge and conscience; for indulgently and deliberately to run into any sin cloudeth the knowledge of our sincerity, for that argueth the reign of sin, and that is dangerous, Rom. vi. 14; and therefore we need watchfulness, Eph. v. 15, and much prayer, Ps. cxix. 133.

3. When a child of God falleth through infirmity, he presently rallieth, and recovereth himself again: Jer. viii. 4, 'Shall they fall, and not arise?' Surely to lie in the dirt argueth obstinacy.

4. They do not make a trade or course of sinning and repenting; for relapses against conscience are so grievous to a sincere heart, and repentance, if it be serious, doth so wound sin, that it cannot easily recover life and strength: Ps. li. 6, 'In the hidden part shalt thou make me to know wisdom.'

5. It neither concerneth the duty nor peace of the children of God to omit the due care of their hearts and lives when they come near a state of death, and thereby render their condition questionable, lest they seem to come short, Heb. iv. 1; and Heb. xii. 13, 'Make straight steps to your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.' Anything that would turn us out of the course of our obedience to God should be striven against and watched against till we prevail. It will be a doubt, if not a wound and maim, to our sincerity: therefore, if we be not known by avoiding sin, let us be known by striving against it, and prevailing in some measure.

*Use 3.* Is direction. If he that abideth in Christ sinneth not, then let us abide in Christ, seek after union and communion with him, because there is our security. First, If we abide with Christ, he will abide with us. There is no danger of breaking on his part, therefore we are so often called upon to abide in him, John xvii. Secondly, Apart from him we can do nothing, John xv. 5. Thirdly, In him



you may bring forth fruit, John xv. 8. Fourthly, In abiding in him we have much joy and comfort: John xv. 10, 11, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abode in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and your joy might be full.' The Lord's supper was appointed to represent and seal this union: 1 Cor. x. 16, it is called, 'The cup of blessing,' &c. There we come to eat his flesh and drink his blood, and to be joined to the Lord so as to become one spirit. Since Christ calleth the bread his body and the wine his blood, these outward things are signs to put you in remembrance, and seals to put you in possession of Christ, whose flesh you eat and blood you drink, that you may live by him; not with your mouth, that were to think carnally of heavenly mysteries; as Nicodemus, when told of being born again, thought that a man must enter the second time into his mother's womb; or as the Capernaïtes said, John vi. 59, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' No; the eating and drinking must be answerable to the hungering and thirsting; now that is not carnal, but spiritual. We must solemnly receive Christ into our heart, that he may dwell there. Oh, then, own Christ as your Lord, devote yourselves to him: 2 Chron. xxx. 8, 'Yield yourselves to the Lord.' Heartily, sincerely resolve to be Christ's, and he will be yours.

*2d Point.* That no sight and knowledge of Christ is saving and effectual but what checketh sin and hindereth the life of it.

There is a twofold knowledge—speculative and practical.

1. Knowledge speculative, which is nothing else but a naked map and model of divine truths. The Jew had his form of knowledge in the law, Rom. ii. 20. So the speculative christian has a form of godliness, 2 Tim. iii. 5, a scheme and delineation of gospel truths. There are different degrees of this.

[1.] A memorative knowledge, such as children have when the field of memory is planted with the seed of christian doctrine. Children are taught to speak of divine mysteries by rote, such as God, Christ, heaven, hell, sin, righteousness; as the philosopher observed of young men, that they learned the mathematics with all their hearts and minds, but moral things they only said them over, rather rehearsed and said after another, than believed them. Children answer you the words of the catechism, but they heed not what they say, nor understand not whereof they affirm; but it is good that children should learn divine things, and after be further instructed in the nature and certainty of them, Luke i. 5.

[2.] Another degree above this is opinionative knowledge, when they do not only charge their memories, but exercise a kind of conscience and judgment about these things, so as to be orthodox and right in opinion, and to bustle and contend about that way of religion wherein they have been educated, or that which suiteth best with their fancies and interests; yet wisdom entereth not upon the heart, Prov. ii. 10. This maketh men hot disputers, but cold practisers of godliness; they have a religion to talk of, but not to live by; they may know much of religion in the notion, and it may be more accurately than the serious christian. As a vintner's cellar may be better stored with wines than a nobleman's, but he hath them for sale and not for use, so these

may form their notions into better order than the serious godly man. These are useful in the church, as a dead post may support a living tree, or as negroes and slaves dig in the mines to bring up gold to others. But alas! with all their learning they may be thrust into hell: 'They received not the love of the truth, whereby they might be saved.'

[3.] There is a higher degree of speculative knowledge beyond this, and that is, when men have some kind of touch upon their hearts, but it is too slender and insufficient to break their lusts or to stand out against temptations.

*Use.* Well, then, let us seek after this saving knowledge, to see and know Christ as we ought to know and see him, with a renewing, transforming knowledge: Eph. iii. 10, 'And that ye put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.' It is but hearsay knowledge. Think every notion lost that doth not invite your minds to the saving knowledge of Christ, and secure your practice against error and temptations; therefore beg the Spirit; he teacheth us to know things so as to have them impressed upon our hearts: Eph. iv. 21, 22, 'If so be ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.'

## SERMON XI.

*Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.—1 JOHN iii. 7.*

THE apostle had hitherto reasoned against the committing of sin; he now persuadeth them to the contrary, the practice of holiness. As there is a positive part in religion as well as a privative, so a bare abstinence from sin is not enough, but we must also exercise ourselves unto godliness, or walk in newness of life: 'Little children, let no man deceive you,' &c.

In the whole verse observe these things—

1. A caution against error.

2. A description of a righteous man. First, He is described by his own practice; secondly, By his conformity to Christ: 'Even as he is righteous.'

Let me open these branches.

1. The caution against error, 'Little children, let no man deceive you;' this is premised, because such mistakes are suited to the corrupt heart of man: we may be deceived ourselves, or suffer ourselves to be deceived by others.

[1.] That we may not deceive ourselves; frequent warnings are given against this deceit: 1 Cor. vi. 9, 'Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor



drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God ;' 1 Cor. xv. 33, 'Be not deceived ; evil communication corrupts good manners : awake to righteousness and sin not.' So Gal. vi. 7, 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked ; for what a man soweth, that shall he reap.' Once more, Eph. v. 6, 'Let no man deceive you with vain words ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.'

[2.] Not deceived by others. There were false teachers in the apostle's days, that said a man might be righteous and yet live in sin. Simon Magus taught that bare profession of faith, without a strict life, was enough to salvation, which poison was also sucked up by others, the Basilides and the Gnostics.

2. The description of a righteous man ; he is described—(1.) By his ordinary practice ; (2.) By his conformity to Christ.

First, By his ordinary practice : 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous.' In which proposition there is—

1. The subject, 'He that doeth righteousness.' This needeth to be explained, because many boasted that they were righteous who yet did not live righteously.

Here I shall inquire—(1.) What is righteousness ; (2.) What it is to do righteousness.

[1.] What is righteousness ? Righteousness is sometimes taken strictly for that grace which inclineth us to perform our duty to man, with all the acts and duties thereunto belonging. So Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness ;' where righteousness referreth to man, holiness to God : Luke i. 75, 'In holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life ;' where there is the same reference. So 1 Tim. vi. 11, 'Follow after righteousness, godliness.' Which words comprise the duties of the first and second table. Sometimes more largely for all newness of life, or all those holy actions which are required of a christian. So Mat. iii. 15, 'It behoveth me to fulfil all righteousness ;' that is, whatsoever is required by the law or commanded by God. In this large sense it is taken here.

[2.] What it is to do righteousness. It is to love righteousness, or to carry on a constant tenor of all holy and righteous actions ; for to do righteousness is opposed to committing sin ; therefore it supposeth us to lead a godly and righteous life, or that we exercise ourselves unto and be fruitful in all good works.

2. For the predicate, 'Is righteous.' Here we must inquire in what notion the term 'righteousness' is used ; for a man may be said to be righteous in a twofold respect—either with respect to sanctification or justification. In the first sense it is taken morally for an upright disposition of heart and mind ; in the second sense, legally and judicially, for a state of acceptation, or the ground of a plea before the tribunal of God.

[1.] The righteousness of sanctification, 'He is righteous ;' that is, a holy and upright man : 1 Peter iii. 12, 'The eyes of the Lord are towards the righteous ;' 1 Peter iv. 18, 'If the righteous be scarcely saved ;' 2 Peter ii. 7, 8, 'He delivered righteous Lot ;' and again, 'that righteous man vexed his righteous soul.'

[2.] Righteousness is taken for a forensical or court righteousness, as it belongeth to justification: Rom. v. 19, 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous;' that is, deemed as such, counted as such, rewarded as such. Now the question is, which of these senses is to be chosen here. For the first, the case is clear, that a holy and upright man is known by his holy and righteous ways and actions, or he sheweth the truth of his regeneration by his godly life, 1 John ii. 29. In the close of the former chapter, which is the beginning of this whole discourse, the apostle said, 'If ye know that he is righteous; every man that doeth righteousness is born of him.' But for the second sense, as the term 'righteous' respecteth justification, I cannot see why it should be excluded; for the sanctified are also justified; and what a respect and subordination there is of the moral righteousness to the judicial, we shall see by and by. Certainly these are deemed by God, accepted by God, rewarded by God as righteous. Mark but these two scriptures, Luke i. 6, where it is said of Zachary and Elizabeth, that 'they were both righteous before God, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless.' Mark, that they having their conversations without blame, they were righteous, and righteous before God. So Acts x. 35, 'He that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.' There the righteousness is one ground of acceptation with God.

Secondly, By his conformity to Christ, 'As he was righteous.' He was righteous in his nature and practice, for he obeyed God perfectly, and ever did the things that pleased God: Heb. i. 9, 'Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; and therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' Christ's doing righteousness is said to be righteous. Now when christians do so, they resemble Christ, and are like him, though not equal with him; so are the children of God, who are adopted into his family, which is the thing the context laboureth to prove.

*Doct.* That he, and he only, who doeth righteousness, is the christian righteous man, and as such is accepted by God.

I shall prove it by the two former acceptations of righteousness.

I. In the way of sanctification, he, and he only, is the upright gospel christian that doeth righteousness.

1. Because this is the great end wherefore God changeth his heart, and infuseth grace into him; not barely that he may have it, but use it, and live by it; it is a talent, the choicest talent wherewith the sons of men are intrusted: Gal. v. 25, 'If ye live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit.' Surely where there is life there must be actions suitable; and if there be a spiritual life, there must be a spiritual walking: this gift is not given in vain. When Christ speaketh of giving the Spirit, John iv. 14, he saith, that 'the water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up into everlasting life;' and John vii. 38, 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' The Spirit is given in order to action. A christian is not to keep his graces to himself, to fold up his talent in a napkin; this water is a living spring, always springing up; this conduit is so filled that it must burst or flow forth; and the grace that is in his heart is always



to be in act and exercise. The apostle telleth us, Rom. vi. 4, that we are raised up with Christ by the mighty power of God, that we should walk in newness of life; not to lie idle and still, but to walk, and to walk as becometh those who have a new and holy nature.

2. Grace is of such an operative and vigorous nature, that where it is really planted and rooted, it cannot be idle in the soul, but will be breaking out into action; as sin is not a sluggish idle quality, but always working and warring: 'Sin wrought in me all manner of concupiscence,' saith the apostle; 'And I see a law in my members, warring against a law in my mind,' Rom. vii. 23. The habit of sin, though it be not *peccatum actuale*, yet it is *actuosum*. So grace puts forth suitable operations: 2 Peter i. 8, 'If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall not be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Where graces are in any good degree of life and strength, there a christian cannot be lazy, but his conversation will be fruitful. Grace will not let a man alone; he shall have no rest and quiet within himself unless he both busy and employ himself for God. Faith will show itself in an open and free profession of Christ, both in word and deed: 2 Cor. iv. 12, 'We having the same spirit of faith, believe, and therefore speak.' A spirit of faith cannot be suppressed, neither can the work of faith, 1 Thes. i. 3. Hope is a lively hope, 1 Peter i. 3; and love hath a constraining force and efficacy, 2 Cor. v. 14. Men cannot hide their love, no more than fire can be hidden. Graces suffer a kind of imperfection till they produce their consummate act: 1 John ii. 5, 'But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.' Well, then, a christian is not to be valued by dead and useless habits, but operative graces. In vain do men persuade themselves that they have righteousness buried and sown in their hearts, when unrighteousness wholly possesseth their hands, minds, eyes, and floweth forth into their actions.

3. We have no way to distinguish ourselves from hypocrites but by performing actions which become real converts. When John suspected the scribes and pharisees, on their submitting to his baptism, he presseth them to evidence their sincerity by a suitable conversation: Mat. iii. 8, 'Bring forth fruits meet for repentance;' and the apostle persuadeth the gentiles to repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance, Acts xxvi. 20. Call them works, or call them fruits, they must be such acts as become the change wrought in us. The new heart is known by newness of conversation, and a change of heart by a change of life. Repentance is an inward thing, but the fruits appear outwardly in our actions; the sap is not seen, but the apples appear. Our dedication is known by our use, our choice by our course, and our resolution by our practice. Acts discover the habits, and what we do constantly, frequently, easily, sheweth the temper of the heart. It is true God chiefly requireth truth in the inward parts, without which all external holiness is but a mere show, and loathsome to him; yet none should flatter themselves with that holiness which they imagine to have within, unless the fruits of it appear without, and they labour to manifest it in their daily carriage and course of life. If a candle in a lanthorn be lighted, it will not be confined there, but shine forth; so if there be grace in the heart, it must show itself by all holy con-

versation and godliness. We judge of others by their external works, for the tree is known by its fruits, and we judge of ourselves by internal and external works together. If there be a principle of grace within, there will be a love of God, and a hatred of evil, and a delight in holiness, and a deep sense of the world to come; and all this be discovered in a holy and heavenly conversation without. Then this completeth the evidence, and breedeth in us the testimony of a good conscience: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world;' Heb. xiii. 18, 'For we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.' If a man would make a judgment of his own estate, he must take a view of his obedience and daily carriage towards God. If there be a course of close walking, and the main endeavour be to please him, we may take comfort in it, and it will make up an evidence in the court of conscience.

4. It is for the honour of God that those which live by him should live to him, and, when he hath formed a holy and righteous people for himself, they should glorify him by doing righteousness. We are as new creatures, to bring forth fruit unto God: John xv. 8, 'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit;' Ps. xi. 7, 'For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright;' 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, 'Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.' By internal grace we approve ourselves unto God, by external holiness we glorify him in the world. With respect to God's approbation we must be righteous; with respect to God's honour we must do righteousness, that so we may bring him into request in the world. He is concerned much in our answerable or unanswerable walking.

II. He that doeth righteousness is righteous with the righteousness of justification. This seemeth the harder and more difficult task, but to a considering and unbiassed mind all is easy, and to him that will be determined in his opinions by the word of God or the gospel of our Lord. Therefore, for more distinctness' sake, I shall show you—(1.) What is the righteousness of justification; (2.) What respect the holy life hath to it.

First, What is the righteousness of justification? It may be interpreted either with respect to the precept or sanction of the law.

1. With respect to the precept of the law, and so the legal righteousness is opposite to *reatus culpæ*, to the fault; and so, if it were possible, we may say that he that fulfilleth the law is righteous; that is, he is not faulty; but alas! we are all sinners. But, however, suppose it for method's sake, as the apostle doth; so it is said, Rom. ii. 13, 'Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.' That is a truth if it is rightly understood; but then the law may be fulfilled either in the sense of the covenant of works or in the sense of the covenant of grace.

[1.] In the sense of the covenant of works. A man that exactly fulfilleth the law in every point and tittle, without the least alteration and swerving, is righteous; but this is impossible to the fallen crea-



ture: 'Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight,' Rom. iii. 20; and Gal. iii. 21, 22, 'If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.' But—

[2.] With respect to the law of grace. May not the precept be said to be obeyed, not perfectly, but sincerely? And if so, what hindereth but he that doeth righteousness is righteous? that is, evangelically justified and accepted by God, as one that hath kept the law of grace. I know no incongruity in this; yea, I see an absolute scriptural certainty in this doctrine, if the world would receive it, and determine their opinions by the simplicity of the gospel, rather than by the dictates of any faction which the late janglings of too many in Christendom have produced. Indeed, I know no other way how to reconcile the two apostles Paul and James. Paul saith, 'We are justified by faith, without the works of the law;' and James, that 'we are justified by works, and not by faith only.' Justification hath respect to some accusation. Now, as there is a twofold law, there is a twofold accusation, and so by consequence a twofold justification—by the law of works and the law of grace. As we are accused as breakers of the law of works, that is, as sinners, obnoxious to the wrath of God, they plead Christ's satisfaction as our righteousness apprehended and applied by faith, not by works of our own; but as we are accused as breakers of the law of grace, that is, as rejecters or neglecters at least of Christ and his renewing and reconciling grace, we are approved, accepted as righteous, by producing our faith and new obedience, for thereby we prove it to be a false charge; and though we cannot plead as innocent, yet we may plead as sincere; and so it is said, Mat. xii. 37, 'By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned;' and James ii. 12, 'So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.' But I have interposed my judgment too soon, before I have further cleared up matters: all that I desire now is this, that this notion may be marked. Righteousness consists in keeping the law, for the law of grace may be kept, and some plea must be made thence, or we are undone for ever.

2. Righteousness may be interpreted with respect to the sanction, which is twofold—the threatening and the promise.

[1.] With respect to the threatening, and so righteousness is opposite to the *reatus pœnæ*, the guilt or obligation to punishment; and so a man is said to be righteous when he is freed from the external punishment threatened by God, and due to him as a breaker of the law. To this end observe that place, Rom. i. 16–18, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.' Mark, there are two revelations which are opposed to each other; there is the law covenant, in which the wrath of God is revealed, and the gospel covenant, in which the righteousness of God is revealed, or the way to escape that wrath. In the law, the wrath of God is revealed and denounced against those that have broken it; and broken it we have in every table by our ungodliness and unrighteousness, yea, in every



point and tittle; yet the law of grace or of faith hath appointed us a remedy in Christ how we may be righteous, and freed from this wrath and vengeance by him, by the righteousness of God, or of Christ revealed by faith. And more particularly in the commination and threatening two things are considerable—the sentence and execution.

(1.) As the commination importeth a sentence or respects a sentence, so we are justified or made righteous when we are not liable to condemnation: Rom. v. 18, 'As by the offence of one judgment came upon all to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all to the justification of life.' Now who are made partakers of this privilege? Surely the penitent believer; that is his first qualification: John v. 24, 'He that believeth in Christ shall not come into condemnation.' And new obedience is also considered: Rom. viii. 1, 'There is no condemnation to them' who live a holy and godly life, 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' So that it may be said, he that doeth righteousness is righteous, hath an interest in Christ, is not subject to condemnation.

(2.) As the commination respects execution, so to be justified or made righteous is not to be liable to punishment, or not to be punished; so the apostle saith, Rom. v. 9, 'Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.' The penalty is remitted and taken off. Thus is the godly upright man justified also, for in the last judgment it is said, Mat. xxv. 46, 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.' And the righteous there are such as do righteousness, or are fruitful in good works; these are not punished, but rewarded.

[2.] We come now to the other part of the sanction or the promise; and so our judicial and legal righteousness, with respect to it, is nothing but our right to the reward, gift, or benefit, founded not in any merit of our own, but only in the free gift of Christ; partly in the merit of another, the free gift of God, and the merit of Jesus Christ. So they are said to be justified and made righteous who have a title to eternal life: Rom. v. 18, 'By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all to the justification of life;' Titus iii. 7, 'Being justified by his grace, we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.' Now who have a right but they that do righteousness, and therefore are righteous in the justifying sense? Rev. xxii. 14, 'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.' The same right that believers have to their adoption, John i. 12. Well, then, the privilege of them that do righteousness is not inconsiderable, or a matter of small moment; our whole welfare and happiness dependeth on it, our freedom from the curse and title to glory. It is such a righteousness as exempts them from the present condemnation; and at length, when others are doomed to everlasting destruction, they shall be accepted to eternal life.

Secondly, What respect hath holiness to this being righteous?

1. All will grant it to be a predication of the adjunct concerning the subject, or a sign concerning the signation of the thing signed. It is if any man work righteousness, it is a sign and evidence that he is righteous, that he is one of those who are justified and accepted of God; and so they think the justified man is described by his insepar-

able property, the practice of holiness, or doing righteousness. I refuse not this, for this includeth all the justified, and excludeth all the workers of iniquity; and this well followed will engage us more to the fear of God and working of righteousness than we usually mind and regard; for would you know that you are exempted from condemnation, and appointed unto life by Christ? You can never be clear in it till your faith be warranted by your holiness. It is said in one place, that 'God hath no pleasure in the workers of iniquity,' Ps. lv. 5, and in another, Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loveth the righteous.' These are those he approveth, accepteth, delighteth in, and, finally, whom he will take home to himself.

2. But there is more than a sign; it is a condition of our right and interest in Christ's righteousness, and the consequent benefits thereof. Our qualification is a part of our plea that we are sound believers. To understand this, let me tell you that the righteousness of the new covenant is either supreme and chief, and that is the righteousness of Christ, or secondary and subordinate, the righteousness of faith and obedience. As to the first, a right faith; as to the second, a continued obedience is required.

[1.] The supreme principal righteousness, by virtue of which we are reconciled to God, is Christ's obedience unto death: Rom. v. 19, 'By the obedience of one many shall be made righteous.' This is our great righteousness, by which the wrath of God is appeased, his justice satisfied, by the merit of which all the blessings of the new covenant are secured to us.

[2.] The subordinate righteousness, or the condition by which we get an interest in and right to this supreme righteousness, is faith and new obedience; but for a distinct use, as to our first entrance into the covenant of God, faith is required: Rom. iv. 3, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.' As to our continuance in this blessed privilege, new obedience is required; for it is said, 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous.' Thereby his interest in Christ is confirmed and continued. Our first and supreme righteousness consisteth in the pardon of all our sins for Christ's sake: Rom. iii. 23, 'Justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ;' and we are 'accepted in the Beloved,' Eph. i. 6, and by him have a right to impunity and glory, 1 Thes. i. 9, 10. Our second and subordinate righteousness is in having the true conditions of pardon and life. In the first sense, Christ's righteousness is the only ground of our acceptance with God. Faith, repentance, and new obedience is not the least part of it. But in the second, believing, repenting, obeying, is our righteousness in their several respective ways, namely, that the righteousness of Christ may be ours, and continue ours.

Use 1. Is the caution of the text, 'Let no man deceive you;' nor do you deceive yourselves in point of sin or righteousness.

First, Sin. As we are prone to commit sin, so we are apt to seduce our hearts by many pretences to continue in sin. The usual deceits are these three: that sin is no sin; that they shall escape well enough though they sin; or that their sins are but petty slips or human infirmities.

1. Though they live vainly and loosely, yet they think they do not



sin. To convince these, we must bring them to consider their rule, their end, their pattern. Their rule is the law or word of God. What! live in a state of vanity under this strict rule? and have you no sins to repent of and reform? Surely men are strangers to the law of God, otherwise they would have more knowledge of sin. David having admired first the beauty of the sun, the light of the visible world, then the purity and perfection of the law, which is the light of the intellectual world, concludeth all with this prayer or meditation, Ps. xix. 12, 'Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret sins.' But slight and careless people, that the ell may be no longer than the cloth, make a short exposition of the law, that they may have a large opinion of their own righteousness, and so live a carnal life, without check or restraint. So to consider their great end, as a christian should do nothing inconsistent with it, so not impertinent to it; for so far we are out of the way. Consider your words and actions, what do they? Alas! we fill up our lives with actions that are a mere diversion from our great end; this will make them serious, for a man's end should be known all the way. Then for his pattern, 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.' Is this life you lead like the life of Christ? If we do not consider our pattern, no wonder we are vain and light. The efficacy cometh from beholding, 2 Cor. iii. 18, or 'looking unto Jesus,' Heb. xii. 2.

2. That they shall escape the judgment though they live in sin. Though it be as plain as the sunshine at noon-day, that they that live in gross sins are in a state of damnation, yet men are apt to delude their own souls, thinking they may be saved, notwithstanding their profane life, with a little general profession of Christ, and a formal invocation of his name, though their lives tend to hell. Oh, no! 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity,' 2 Tim. ii. 19. The causes of this presumption are non-attendance to or non-application of scripture threatenings: 'No man saith, What have I done?' Jer. viii. 6. Their abuse of God's patience, and transforming him into an idol of their own fancy: Ps. l. 21, 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself.' No; he is a holy and jealous God. Do not say he will not be so strict and severe. It is an abuse of God's mercy to say his patience suffereth all things, and his mercy will be no let to his judgment: Ps. lxxviii. 19-21, 'But our God is a God of salvation, yea, our God is a God of salvation. But he will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of all them that go on in their iniquities.' Christ came to save sinners from their sins, but not in their sins, Mat. i. 21. So they abuse the doctrine of justification. Oh, Christ is their justification. Ay! but you must mind the subordinate righteousness by which the supreme righteousness is imputed to you; and where Christ is made unto us righteousness, he is also made to you sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30. They believe in him, but true faith is not consistent with an evil and sinful life, for it purifieth the heart, Acts xv. 9. These are some of the spiders' webs whereby they trust, those sorry fig-leaves wherewith they hope to cover themselves, that their nakedness do not appear, those sandy foundations which they build upon, the untempered mortar which they daub with.



3. That their sins are but petty slips, and small sins, mere human infirmities ; that no man can be perfect ; that the purest saints have fallen into as great faults. But those are not infirmities which you indulge and allow, and study not to prevent and mortify, or retract not with grief and shame ; besides, infirmities continued in prove iniquities, which by their frequent lapses are rather strengthened than weakened in you.

Secondly, Let no man deceive you in point of righteousness, 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous.'

1. Not he that heareth and talketh of it only doth show himself righteous ; not strict opinions with licentious practices ; not a bare approbation, not approving without doing : Luke xi. 27, 28, 'Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and do it.'

2. It is not only an intention of mind and purpose. No ; we must actually perform the will of God : 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous ;' Acts xxvi. 20, 'That they should repent and turn to God, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.' Repentance is a change of mind, but there must be works meet.

3. Not barely good desires. Many please themselves with this, that a desire of living holily sufficeth. No ; the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing. It is not he that desireth to be righteous, but doeth righteousness ; sluggish desires are easily controlled. Where is the effect, the pressing towards the mark ? Phil. iii. 14. If it were strongly, seriously desired, we would address ourselves to this work, and in some good measure prevail. The building went on when the people had a mind to the work, Neh. iv. 6.

4. It is not doing a good action now and then, but throughout our whole course ; we must fear God, and work righteousness : Ps. cvi. 3, 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times ;' and if he falleth, he returneth by a speedy repentance.

Use 2. Is to persuade us to look after this righteousness, which is the drift of the text. To this end consider—

1. We shall shortly appear before the tribunal of God, where every man's qualification shall be judged, whether he be righteous or unrighteous. How soon it may come about we cannot tell ; this day surpriseth the most part of the world, and taketh them unprovided. The word *found* is often used with respect to this day : 2 Cor. v. 3, 'If so be we shall not be found naked.' 2 Peter iii. 14, 'And found of him in peace ;' Phil. iii. 9, 'And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness.'

2. For God's judgment ; nothing but God's righteousness will serve the turn. The law which condemneth us is the law of God ; the wrath and punishment which we fear is the wrath of God ; the glory which we expect is the glory of God ; the presence into which we come is the presence of God ; and therefore the righteousness upon which our confidence standeth must be the righteousness of God. Rom. iii. 22, 'Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe.' That which God hath appointed, and God will accept.

3. The righteousness of God is principally the death, merit, and satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ ; for it is said, 2 Cor. v. 21, 'He was

made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

4. None have the benefit of this righteousness of Christ but those that believe in him; for the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, Rom. i. 17. Now this faith is nothing else but a broken-hearted and thankful acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

5. None have this faith but those that depend upon him as a Saviour, and give up themselves with a hearty consent of subjection to be guided, ruled, and ordered by him as their Lord. For dependence: Eph. i. 13, 'In whom ye trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' Subjection: Col. ii. 6, 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.'

6. None give up themselves to him as their Lord but those who make it their scope and work to please, glorify and enjoy him: 2 Cor. v. 9, 'Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' None but those that purify themselves as he is pure, and are righteous as he is righteous.

## SERMON XII.

*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*—1 JOHN iii. 8.

HERE is a new argument against living in sin, backed and confirmed with two reasons. The argument is, that they who live in sin are of the devil; it is confirmed with two reasons, the one taken from the disposition of Satan, the other from the design of Christ. The one proveth the thing asserted, the other sheweth the detestableness of it. The thing is proved, that he that liveth in sin belongeth to the devil, 'For the devil sinneth from the beginning.' The other sheweth how unbecoming it is for them that profess themselves christians to have the gospel in their mouths and the devil in their hearts. In short, the one reason sheweth our danger, the other our remedy and help; our danger, 'The devil sinneth from the beginning.' It is his work to promote sin; he doth not only sin himself, but instigateth others to sin. Our remedy for this purpose, 'The Son of God was manifested,' &c.

There is a double argument couched in it. You make yourselves an opposite party to Christ, and so build again what he came to destroy; or at least you do not improve the help and remedy offered. Let me open these things more particularly.

1. The argument itself, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil.' The argument is, that they who live in sin are so far from being the children of God, that they are the children of the devil; for so must that 'of the devil' be interpreted; for it is presently added in the 10th verse, 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of



the devil ;' and John viii. 44, 'Ye are of your father the devil.' Likeness inferreth relation ; as he that first inventeth, teacheth, or perfecteth any art, is called the father of it or them that use it. So Gen. iv. 20, 21, 'Jabal was the father of them that dwell in tents, and Jubal the father of such as handle the harp and the organ.' So Satan was the inventor of sin, and the beginner of sin and rebellion against God, and therefore the father of sinners.

2. It is confirmed with reasons.

[1.] That sin entitleth us to Satan, and sheweth our cognation and kindred to him, and confederacy with him : 'For the devil sinneth from the beginning.' The devil is the eldest and greatest sinner, who presently sinned upon the creation, and ever since is the grand architect of wickedness, the author and promoter of sin among men. 'He sinneth' noteth a continued act ; he never ceaseth to sin. He was created good, but kept not his first estate, fell betimes ; and having given himself over to sinning, abideth and proceedeth therein : John viii. 44, 'He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth ;' Jude 6, 'The angels kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation.'

[2.] That to belong to the devil misbecometh christians, and should be a detestable thing among christians : 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' Where observe—

(1.) The way the Son of God took to obviate this mischief, 'For this cause the Son of God was manifested.'

(2.) His end and design therein, 'That he might destroy the works of the devil.'

(1.) The way the Son of God took ; he was manifested in our flesh : 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory ;' which compriseth all the acts of his mediation performed in our nature. God had foretold in the first gospel that ever was preached that 'the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head,' Gen. iii. 15 ; that in our nature, which was so soon foiled by Satan, one should come who would conquer and vanquish him, and introduce a love and care of holiness. The manifestation of the Son of God in the work of redemption doth apparently cross and counterwork Satan's design, which was first to dishonour God by a false representation, as if he were envious of man's happiness. Now in the mystery of our redemption God is wonderfully magnified, and represented as amiable to man : 'For herein God commendeth his love to us,' Rom. v. 8 ; that the Son of man appeared for our relief, and died for our sins ; partly to advance the nature of man, which in innocency stood so near God. Now that the human nature, so depressed and abased by the malicious suggestions of the devil, should be elevated and advanced, and set so far above the angelical nature, and admitted to dwell with God in a personal union above all principalities and powers, Eph. i. 20, 21, surely this should be such an everlasting obligation upon us to adhere to God and renounce Satan, that his counsels and suggestions should no more have place with us. This is the way he took.



(2.) The end and design, for this purpose, 'That he might destroy the works of the devil.' Where we have an act and an object.

(1st.) The act, to destroy. The word signifieth also to dissolve and loosen. To dissolve; many things are destroyed when they are not dissolved; as suppose a building, when the parts are taken asunder or severed one from another. So he came to dissolve that frame of wickedness and rebellion against God which Satan had introduced into the world. So it is said, 'Christ came to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin,' Dan. ix. 24; and in time will do it. Or else to loosen or untie; to loosen a chain or untie a knot; and so it implieth that sins are so many chains, and cords, and snares, wherein we are bound and entangled: Lam. i. 14, 'The yoke of my transgression is bound by his hand; they are wreathed and come up upon my neck;' and the wicked are said to be held with the cords of their own sins, Prov. v. 22. Christ came to loosen this yoke, to untie these cords.

(2d.) The object, 'The works of the devil;' whereby is meant sins which are called his lusts. The devil is the author of sin, the promoter of sin, and hath a great power over us by reason of sin. Sin is his work; he doth not only sin himself, but instigates others to sin; and this Christ came to destroy by the merit of his purchase and the virtue of his Spirit. The points which I shall handle are two—

*Doct. 1.* That while men live in a sinful course, they are children of Satan, and not of God.

*Doct. 2.* The design of Christ's coming into the world was to destroy sin, which Satan had brought into the world.

The first point, that while men live in sin, or in a sinful course, they are children of Satan, and not of God. For this first point take these considerations—

1. That God and the devil are so opposite, that a man cannot be the child of God and of the devil too. Since the first breach made with God, by Adam's defection and apostasy, there are two parties and two seeds—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15. God and Satan divide the world. There is no neutral and middle estate; a man must be one of these, but he cannot be both at the same time. Those that continue in the apostasy from God are of Satan's party; and till their estate be altered and changed, they ought so to be reckoned. The great work of Christ, by the powerful means of grace he hath instituted and blessed, is 'to turn men from Satan to God,' Acts xxvi. 18; to take them out of one kingdom to another, 'from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God;' Col. i. 13, 'Who hath rescued us out of the power of darkness, and put us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' We must quit the one before we can be received into the other; we cannot be of both at the same time. Now by nature the whole world of mankind lieth in wickedness, and the devils are said to be rulers of the darkness of this world, Eph. vi. 12; that is, those that live in the darkness of sin, ignorance, and superstition, the devil exerciseth a tyranny over them, and so they continue till their estate and hearts be changed.

2. Our being children to either is not to be determined by profession only, but practice; for many who are by profession among God's people may yet be limbs of Satan and children of the devil; as Christ

telleth the Jews, who were the only visible people God had for that time in the world, John viii. 44, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and his lusts will ye do;' and again, speaking of the tares that grew among the wheat, Mat. xv. 38, 'The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one.' Mark, the field is the world, that is, the state of the church in this world; the good seed signifies the good christians, but the tares the wicked that are remaining intermingled among them, and are only left to be distinguished by the reapers, who are the angels, at the last day; so that all that live in a state of sin, and are unrenewed by the Holy Ghost, and not converted to God, are the children of the devil, though they grow among the corn. Now what a detestable thing is it that any of us should be Christ's in profession and the devil's in practice and conversation? For us to have any commerce with the devil, and belong to the devil, after we are visibly brought into the kingdom of God, should be abhorred by all good christians. We detest witches that come into an express and explicit covenant with Satan; but we are in an implicit covenant with him, of his league and confederacy, if we cherish his lusts, follow his counsels and suggestions. Others renounce their baptism, but you forget your baptism, which implieth a solemn vow against the devil, the world, and the flesh. And therefore carnal christians are said to 'forget that they were purged from their old sins,' 2 Peter i. 9; that is, washed in God's laver, wherein they were dedicated to God, and renounced the devil and his works and lusts.

3. They that do evil, or live in a course of evil doing, are Satan's children for two reasons—

[1.] Because they resemble and imitate him; for he is our father whom we imitate. Now they imitate Satan in his rebellion against God. A man is said to be of the devil, *non natura sed imitatione*. His substance is not by traduction from Satan, but he is said to be of the devil by his corruption. By nature he is of God, but by sin he is of Satan; not as a man, but as a wicked man, he imitateth the devil, and beareth his image, and is like Satan in malignity. So Elymas the sorcerer: Acts xiii. 10, 'O thou child of the devil, thou full of all craft and subtilty, thou enemy of all righteousness! wilt thou not cease to pervert the ways of the Lord?' Some are apparently so as he was, while they resemble him in a cruel destructive nature, and a special enmity to Christ, and his interest, and truth, and kingdom in the world, and seek to maintain the interest of sin and wickedness. This is one special sort of sin which is proper to Satan; but all that cherish sin in themselves and others are Satan's children, though they do not go to the height of enmity against Christ; because they take after the devil as children do after their parents. Look, as we are denominated children of God by imitation and resemblance of him, Eph. v. 1, 'Be ye followers of God as dear children,' so *pari ratione*, by like reason, the devil's children, if we follow him in our obstinate rebellion against God.

[2.] Because all unregenerate men are governed by him, so that there is subjection as well as imitation; they are acted and guided by his suggestions; he hath a great hand and power over them; and



therefore carnal men are said to walk after the prince of the power of the air, who worketh in the children of disobedience. He governeth and influenceth them, not every one in the same way, yet somewhat in a like manner. As the Holy Spirit governeth the faithful, their hearts are his shop and workhouse, so the hearts of the wicked are the devil's workhouse, where he frameth instruments of rebellion against God. The devil, who hath lost his seat, hath built himself a throne in the hearts of wicked men, and lords it over them as his slaves. He blindeth them, and they suffer themselves to be blinded: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'Whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded.' He enticeth them, and they consent, and therefore they are said to be taken captive by him at his will and pleasure, 2 Tim. ii. 26. Surely then Satan hath great power over the unconverted, for, making use of the corruption which is in them by nature, he leadeth them up and down by his motions and suggestions, and they obey him without resistance; and if the Lord be not merciful to them, they live, and lie, and die in their sins, and are cast forth with the devil and his angels into everlasting torments, Mat. xxv. 41, that they may abide with him for ever.

*Use 1.* Exhortation to those that yet wallow in their sins. Oh, come out of this woful estate, if you would be accounted children of God, and not of the devil! But this exhortation is like to be lost, because none will own their misery, and acknowledge that they do as yet remain in Satan's snares. Therefore let us convince men a little, and persuade them at the same time. I shall convince them by these questions, intermingled with the exhortation.

*Quest. 1.* Do not you please yourselves too much in an unholy course of life, and a sinful state? The sinful state is the state opposite to Christ; the devil's work is to cherish sin, and Christ's work is to destroy sin. Now judge under whose influence and government do you live? Under Satan's or Christ's? Are you cherishing or destroying sin? If you live under Christ's blessed government, you will use all his healing methods for the cure of your distempered souls, till you find a manifest abatement of corruption, or inclination to present things; for Satan is the god of this world, and you are never satisfied till the heavenly mind prevail in you. But if you be under Satan's government, you are wholly bent to the world and the things of the world, and are entangled in one of those usual snares of sensuality, worldliness, or pride: 1 John ii. 16, 'For all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world.'

1. Sensuality. The carnal mind and life is flat enmity to God, and sheweth that we are influenced by the evil spirit, as the heavenly mind and life is the property of those that are guided by the Spirit of God; therefore all those that live in 'gluttony, and excess of wine, revellings, banquetings,' 1 Peter iv. 3, and spend their time in vanity, wantonness, and filthiness, and needless sports, are guided by the unclean spirit, not the Holy Spirit; they are 'sensual, not having the Spirit.' By these vanities the mind is debased and polluted, and made unfit for God and the work of holiness: 2 Tim. ii. 22, 'Flee youthful lusts; follow after righteousness.' The devil is busy with young men, pressing them to inordinate sense-pleasing; then he knoweth that



holiness will be of little account with them: a gross carnal spirit gratifieth the devil's turn. Tertullian telleth us a story, how that the devil had possessed a christian, and being asked why, he pleads that he found him at a play, took him upon his own ground, and so possessed him.

2. Worldliness, or love of riches: 1 Tim. vi. 9, 'They that will be rich fall into temptation and the snare of the devil.' The devil would draw us downward, as God upward. God propoundeth the rich hopes of the other world to deaden us to the riches and glory of this world; but Satan is the god of this world; here is his empire, and here are his baits and allurements. Now a drossy, unsanctified, miserable soul, that loveth the world, savoureth the world, wholly inclineth itself to the world, is held fast by Satan in the snare.

3. Pride. This is Satan's proper image: 1 Tim. vi. 3, 'Lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' This pride lifts up the mind against God and above men; when men delight and place their happiness in greatness and worldly glory, have an envy to those above them, disdain those below them, contend with equals out of a lofty conceit of themselves, affect honour and reputation, rather than carry themselves humbly.

*Quest. 2.* How do you carry yourselves as to the change of masters? That we were all once under the power of Satan is evident by what is said before. But how did we get out of it, or how do we stand affected towards our recovery?

1. As to the offers of grace; if the god of this world do so blind our minds or harden our hearts that we despise the offered remedy: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'Lest the light should shine unto them.' Impenitency and contempt of the grace of the gospel is Satan's great chain; he is loath to let a soul go; and therefore, Mat. xiii. 19, 'The wicked one cometh and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.' When they begin to be serious, he possesseth them with prejudices and false conceits against religion, and inveigleth and enticeth them by the pleasing baits of worldly glory and the delights of the flesh, and puts all anxious thoughts out of their minds about their everlasting condition, and discourageth them by the proposal of troubles, dislikes, and disgraces; and when he is foiled by one weapon, he betaketh himself to another, that he may hold the poor captive soul in fetters and bonds, and they may never think of leaving their sins, but these thoughts may die away in their hearts; and thus every soul that is recovered to Christ is fetched out of the very paw and mouth of the lion. The heart of a sinner is his garrison and castle, which is so blinded with prejudice and passion, and carnal interests and worldly allurements, that till Christ come and besiege it, partly with terrors and fears, and partly with the offers of mercy and ready help, yea, the powerful efficacy of his grace, the poor sinner will not yield. Now how is the strong man outed? Luke xi. 21. Have you been sensible of your captivity, and have you yielded to the means of your recovery? Are you willing the cords of sin and vanity shall be loosened? and do you give up yourselves to be ruled by your Redeemer, and take upon you his blessed yoke? Mat. xi. 29.

2. As to more close and pressing convictions, which is a nearer

approach than the former. When Christ presseth hard upon men's hearts, and would have entrance, many find a plain conflict within themselves. Christ haleth the soul one way, and the devil another, so that a man is as it were torn to pieces. They would repent and reform, but then they are off again; the enemy of souls will not let them go; pleasures, profits, pleasant company, and carnal acquaintance, are all brought out to persuade him that he should sit down and be quiet in his sins. But Christ calleth again, Why wilt thou die, sinner? Now it is good to observe our carriage in these convictions. While you keep thus, you are 'double-minded, and unstable in all your ways,' James i. 8. Oh, let not Christ be kept out of his right any longer; shall Satan be more powerful in drawing your hearts to vain delights than Christ is in working them to God and heaven? Can he maintain you, and make good your quarrel against the Almighty, and bear you out in rebellion against God? He is already fallen under his displeasure: will you believe a murderer and a liar from the beginning, rather than all the threatenings and promises of Christ? What is Satan's end but to destroy and devour, 1 Peter v. 8, and Christ's but to save? Luke xix. 10, 'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' Are eternal life and death such trifles that they should move you no more? You are now but as the lamb caught by the wolf and lion; you are not yet killed by him. How much are you beholden to God for restraining the malicious so far; especially for the offer of help by Christ, and will you refuse it? I will add but this one motive, and that is the deference<sup>1</sup> which Satan hath over the unconverted in common and the obdurate. All natural men that are under the reign of sin are under the power of the devil. But those that are judicially hardened, he hath a peculiar power over them; for these God hath forsaken, and delivered them up into Satan's hands; these are given over to believe a lie, 2 Thes. ii. 9-12. Who are they but the contemners of the gospel, and wilful refusers of his grace?

*Quest.* 3. Do we behave ourselves as those that had a sense of their covenant vow and engagement when they entered into the service of Christ and have put on the armour of light? Are we in a continual war and fight with Satan? Certainly where there is a conscience of our baptismal vow, there sin cannot quietly reign. Now they that make conscience of their baptismal vow are such as do watch, and pray, and strive that they enter not into temptation: Mat. xxvi. 41, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' The godly are in a great part flesh, although renewed, and so easily ensnared. When the devil came to tempt Christ, he had nothing to work upon: John xiv. 30, 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.' But the best of God's children have too much of corruption in them, therefore they must watch, and pray, and strive, and use all Christ's means for their safety. You must not basely yield to temptations, nor lazily sit down, or foolishly imagine the field is won, or the fight is ended, as long as you are in the body. How far soever you have gone, how much soever you have done and suffered, yet there remaineth more danger; the devil is yet alive, and hath a spite at you, and would sift you as

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'difference of the power'!—Ed.



wheat, Luke xxii. 33. He knoweth that creatures are mutable, and those that miscarry not in one condition yet may in another: 'Ephraim is a cake not turned,' Hosea vii. 8, and he himself is subtle and full of wiles and methods. Now shall we carelessly wink, or put our foot in the snare? Christ warneth us frequently to take heed. There is no sleeping in the midst of so great danger. There is a remnant of his seed within you, which will betray you to him if you be not wary. Many that have begun in the spirit have ended in the flesh. Perseverance only must put on the crown. Therefore beware of the wounds of wilful sins; these give Satan a great advantage against us: Ps. xix. 13, 'Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.' By committing any deliberate act of known sin, you are in that so far an imitator of Satan. Well, then, since the renewed are yet but in the way, and not at the end of the journey, they are not wholly exempted from the power and malice of the tempter: 'Therefore be sober and watchful, for your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour,' 1 Peter v. 8. He speaketh to the converted. Though Satan prevaieth not over a renewed man so far as to rule in him, yet he leaveth not to assault him, if it were but to vex him. The capital enemy of man's salvation watcheth all advantages against them; though the door of a believer's heart be shut, yet he is searching and trying if he can spy but the narrowest passage, or the least opportunity whereby he may again re-enter his old possession, or exercise his former tyranny, or recover his interest in the heart; therefore we are warned, Eph. iv. 27, 'not to give place to the devil.' We do so by our pride, passion, vanity, or worldliness; but by hearkening to him we do but give up our throat to the murderer, who would fain draw us to some acts of gross sin, whereby to dishonour God: 2 Sam. xii. 14, 'Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme.' And destroy our peace: Ps. xxxii. 3, 4, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.' And fearful havoc is made in the soul: Ps. li. 10-12, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.'

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### SERMON XIII.

*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*—1 JOHN iii. 8.

I HAVE often spoken of what Christ doth for the appeasing of God; I shall now speak of what he doth for the vanquishing of Satan.

In the words consider—(1.) The way the Son of God took to do us good; (2.) His end and design therein.



1. The way the Son of God took to do us good, 'He was manifested;' thereby is meant his coming in the flesh, 1 Tim. iii. 16, together with all the acts of his mediation performed in our nature. God had foretold that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, Gen. iii. 15; in our nature would Christ foil and conquer Satan.

2. The end and the design; for this cause, 'That he might destroy the works of the devil.' Wherein observe—

[1.] An act; to destroy. The word signifieth also to dissolve or untie, to loosen a chain or untie a knot, and so implieth that sins are so many chains, cords, and snares, wherein we are bound. We are ensnared and entangled in a course of sin till Christ untied the knot: Hosea iv. 17, 'Ephraim is joined to idols.' So joined that he cannot be divided from them; congregate with his idols. And we are bound over to punishment: Lam. i. 14, 'The yoke of transgressions is bound by his hands, they are wreathed and come upon my neck;' and the wicked are said to be holden with the cords of his sins, Prov. v. 22.

[2.] The object, 'The works of the devil,' whereby is meant sin. The former part of the verse cleareth that, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil;' and sins are called his lusts, John viii. 44. The devil is the author of sin, and suggests sin, and hath a power over us by reason of sin. Sin is his work; he doth not only sin himself, but instigate others to sin.

*Doct.* The design of Christ's coming into the world was to unravel the devil's work, or to destroy the kingdom of sin and Satan.

I observe here—

1. Two opposite powers and agents—the devil and the Son of God. The devil sought the misery and destruction of mankind, but Christ sought our salvation. Satan is the great disturber of the creation, and Christ is the repairer of it. This malicious cruel spirit ruined mankind at first, and therefore he is called a liar and a murderer from the beginning, John viii. 44; and Christ, as early promised and prefigured, is said to be 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' Rev. xiii. 8. We were at first ruined by hearkening to his counsels and suggestions, as we are now saved by faith in Christ. By his lies he deceived our first parents, and induced them to sin, and so we are made liable to death; and so by Christ's truth we are led into the way of salvation. All persons were corrupted and out of frame by the fall of man, through the suggestion of Satan, and are set in joint again by Jesus Christ. The devil is still 'a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour,' 1 Peter v. 8; and Christ is the lion of the tribe of Judah, in whom is our safety and preservation, Rev. v. 5. The devil is wholly employed to oppose the work of man's salvation and to bring us into sin and misery, and Christ is employed to preserve the elect, and keep them in his own hand. The devil is an accuser of the brethren, Rev. xii. 10, and Christ is an advocate: 1 John ii. 1, 'We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' In short, we must set the one against the other, the captain of our salvation against the author of our destruction.

2. Let us consider the advantage that we have by the one above the

other, and you will find that Christ is much more able to save than Satan to destroy.

[1.] The devil is a creature, but Christ the sovereign Lord, who hath power over him and all creatures. The devil's tempting is by leave. He was fain to beg leave to tempt Job, chap. i. 12; to winnow Peter, Luke xxii. 31, 'Satan hath desired to winnow and sift you as wheat.' Nay, he could not enter into the herd of swine without a new patent or pass from Christ, Mat. viii. 31. This cruel spirit is held in the chains of an irresistible providence. When we are in Satan's hands, it is a great satisfaction to remember that Satan is in God's hands.

[2.] The devil is a rebel and a usurper for the most part, but Christ is our appointed remedy: John iii. 16, 'He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;' Rom. iii. 25, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.'

[3.] The devil hath no power upon the heart, cannot work any change upon the will, or create new principles and habits which before were not, as God doth, Jer. xxxi. 33. God can put his law into our inward parts, and write it on our hearts. He can only propound alluring baits and objects to the outward senses or inward fancy, but God worketh immediately upon the heart; therefore by the power of Christ the godly may overcome the wicked one. The Lord puts an enmity in our hearts against Satan and his ways and counsels: Gen. iii. 15, 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' It is put by way of efficacy on the one side, and allowed on the other by way of permissive intention. God maketh use of our will and affections in this opposition. Enmity is the voluntary and strong motion of the mind of man against that which he hateth.

[4.] The devil only maketh use of the root of sin which is in us by nature, and prevaileth by his assiduous diligence, multiplying temptations without intermission. But yet we have more for us than against us, if we consider that Christ hath power enough to deal with Satan; he is overmatched and overmastered by Christ, the stronger than he, Luke xi. 22. Merit enough to counterbalance the evil of nature. There is much more in the grace of the Redeemer: Rom. v. 17, 'For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus.' Then for his assiduity, Christ hath love enough to attend and mind the affairs of his people. It is true Satan is always blowing the bellows, inflaming our corruptions, suggesting wicked temptations; but doth not Christ still make intercession for us? Is not his Spirit as watchful in our hearts to maintain his interest there? So that if we believe that Christ hath power enough, merit enough, love enough, surely the case is clear; the Son of God will have the better in all in whom he is pleased to work.

3. That all mankind by nature lieth in wickedness, and sin and Satan worketh in them at his pleasure, and therefore Satan is called the prince and god of this world: Eph. vi. 12, 'Rulers of the darkness of this world.' He is the prince and ruler of those that live in sin, darkness, ignorance of God, and superstition, and exerciseth a tyranny



over them. So he is called the god of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4, because of his great prevalency here: 'The prince of the power of the air, that worketh in the children of disobedience,' Eph. ii. 2. All men in their unrenewed estate are very slaves to Satan, to his motions and suggestions, whom they resemble in their sin and wickedness, he taking them captive at his will and pleasure, 2 Tim. ii. 26. They are at war with God, from the covenant of whose friendship they are fallen, but at peace with Satan.

4. Satan hath a twofold power over the fallen creature—legal and usurped.

[1.] He hath a power over them by a kind of legal right, a power flowing from the sentence of condemnation pronounced by the law against sinners; therefore it is said he had the power of death: Heb. ii. 14, 'That he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.' The devil by his temptations having drawn men to sin, and so made them liable to death, they fall into his hands and come into his power, so that he hath a dominion over them, reigneth in them, blindeth them, perverteth them, stingeth them to death, and so by sin more and more they are made obnoxious to the curse and vengeance of God's broken law. As the jailor and executioner hath the power of the gallows, so hath the devil the power of death. The devil hath no right, as a lord, to judge and condemn us, but as an executioner of God's curse; so God may put the poor captive sinner into his hand, which is one reason why we should the more earnestly beg the pardon of sins, and be thankful for the mercy of a Redeemer. Now this power being by the appointment of God, it must some way or other be evacuated and disannulled: Isa. xlix. 24, 'Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered?' Sinners are Satan's lawful prize, but Christ came and turned the devil out of office: 'By death he hath destroyed him that had the power of death.' He made Satan's office idle and useless; when God was reconciled, his power was at an end. Therefore upon his blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, which was against us, we presently hear of the disannulling of Satan's power, Col. i. 14, 15. When the judge and the law are satisfied, the jailor and executioner hath no more to do.

[2.] He hath a power by tyrannical usurpation, in regard of which he is called the prince of this world: John xii. 31, 'Now is the prince of this world condemned.' God made him an executioner, and we made him a prince and a god, obeying his sinful motions and counsels, and being led by him up and down, and driven on furiously in a way of sin. So Christ, as true king and head, both of men and angels, putteth down Satan as a usurper, and breaketh the yoke of his oppression, rescueth the elect by strong hand: Col. i. 13, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of Satan, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' Satan had housed and possessed souls as his lawful goods: Luke xi. 21, 'When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace;' Mat. xii. 29, 'How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house?' Not part with the possession of one soul till he be mastered; therefore the usurper and disturber of mankind is destroyed.



5. There is a twofold work of the devil—one without us, and the other within us.

[1.] The work of the devil without us is a false religion, or those idolatrous and superstitious rites by which the world hath been deceived, and by which Satan's kingdom hath been upheld. Now Satan's kingdom is cast down by the doctrine of the gospel, accompanied by Christ's powerful Spirit: Luke x. 18, 'I beheld Satan fall from heaven like lightning.' When the gospel was first preached, the devil was dethroned, and fell from his great unlimited power in the world; as lightning flasheth and vanisheth, and cometh to nothing, and never recollects itself again: John xii. 31, 'Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.' The apostles went abroad to bait the devil, and hunt him out of his territories, and they did it with great effect. And therefore it is made one argument by which the Spirit doth convince us of the truth of the gospel: John xvi. 11, 'He shall convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.' The casting out of Satan from the bodies of those who were possessed by him, the silencing his oracles, the suppressing his superstitions, and destroying the kingdom of wickedness and darkness, was an apparent evidence of the truth of the gospel, as was striking blind Elymas, a famous sorcerer, Acts xiii. So the punishment of his servants and votaries, dissolving the force of his enchantments: 'They that used curious arts burnt their books,' Acts xix. 15. The devil's kingdom went to wreck in all the parts of it; the old religion everywhere was overturned, no more the same rites, the same temples, the same gods that they and their predecessors had so long worshipped; and God, as worshipped in Christ, cometh up in the room. Though the world were captivated, under Satan, rooted in former superstitions, yet Christ prevailed, and got ground by the rod of his strength, even the word of his kingdom. Before that, Satan everywhere had his temples wherein he was worshipped, his oracles resorted to with great reverence, till the Hebrew child silenced him. He ate of the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings, yea, often the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to him. Yet all his strongholds were now demolished, the idols broken whom they and their fathers had worshipped and prayed unto in their distresses and adversities, and blessed in their prosperities. Now all of a sudden are these temples thrown down, these images broken, these altars polluted and set at nought, and the people turned from these vanities unto the living God; and still he is undeceiving the world; he came to dissolve the works of the devil, and in every age something is done in that kind. The unwary and corrupt world doth put Christ upon acting mainly the demolishing and destructive part hitherto. When gentile worship was put down, then antichristianity got up in a mystery, and fortifieth itself by the numerous combined interests of the carnal: 'But the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to pull down strongholds,' 2 Cor. x. 4. But in time, by the power of the word and the course of God's providence, and the patience of his servants and the efficacy of his Spirit, this whole mystery of iniquity will be finished and come to nothing.

[2.] There is the work of the devil within us; this is destroyed also.

But here again we must distinguish between the purchase and the application.

(1.) The purchase was made when Christ died ; for, Heb. ii. 14, ' By death he destroyed him that had the power of death ;' and Col. ii. 15, ' He spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them on his cross.' Christ's death is Satan's overthrow ; then was the deadly blow given to his power and kingdom. When the Jews and Roman soldiers were spoiling him and parting his garments, then was he spoiling principalities and powers ; in that very hour, which was the power of darkness, was Christ making a show of Satan openly, and leading captivity captive. When they were insulting over the Son of God, then was he triumphing over all the devils in hell, and overcame them by suffering himself visibly to be overcome by them. Well, then, here is the ground of our faith, the death of Christ, which we remember in the sacrament ; this was the price given for our ransom, and the means of disannulling all the power which Satan had in us before.

(2.) The application is begun in our conversion, and afterwards carried on by degrees. All those who are converted and receive the gospel are said to be turned from Satan to God, Acts xxvi. 18. Then are they, from the children of the devil, made the children of God, and adopted into his family, and delivered from the dominion of sin into the glorious liberties that belong to God's children. And therefore those to whom God giveth repentance are said, 2 Tim. ii. 26, to be recovered out of the snare of the devil, by whom they were taken captive formerly at his will and pleasure. Before they were his slaves and drudges, drove on furiously, were at the beck of every lust ; but then they recover themselves, as made free by Christ.

6. There is in sin, which is the work of the devil, three things—(1.) The guilt of it ; (2.) The power of it ; (3.) The being of it. All these Christ came to dissolve, but by several means and at several times.

[1.] The guilt of it ; that is done away by justification. Guilt is an obligation to punishment. Now this is one effect of Satan's malice, to involve us in the same ruin and condemnation into which he hath plunged himself ; he is held in chains of darkness, 2 Peter ii. 4 ; by which is meant, not only the powerful restraints of providence, but the horror of his own despairing fears. If the restraints of providence had only been intended, it had been enough to have said they are held in chains ; but these are chains of darkness, and therefore it implieth not only God's irresistible power restraining them, but his terrible justice tormenting them ; so that, go where they will, they carry their own hell about with them, in the constant feeling of the wrath of the Almighty, and the dreadful expectation of more wrath. This is the case of the devils ; and do not they seek to bring us into the same condition ? Yes, certainly they do ; what mean else Satan's 'fiery darts?' Eph. vi. 16, by which is meant, not only raging lusts, but tormenting fears. And certainly, as the devil hath the power of death, so he keepeth men under the fear of it and the consequents of it all their days, Heb. ii. 14, 15. He bringeth his slaves and poor deluded souls into sin, that he may bring them into terror, and oppress them by their own guilty fears. He maketh use of conscience to stir them up, but he joineth with them



horrors of conscience, and increaseth their violence. The devil is first a tempter, that he may be afterwards an accuser and a tormentor. He is called our 'adversary,' 1 Peter v. 8. The word signifieth an adversary or enemy at law. He pleadeth law and equity of his side, and by law would carry the cause against all that come of Adam, for they are all law-breakers; and if Christ had not freed us from the curse of the law, what would you answer? Again, when he is termed an accuser, Rev. xii., it doth not signify a whisperer or slanderer out of malice, but a pleader as an attorney or accuser by law. There is none upon earth but yieldeth matter enough to fill up his accusations; he needeth not come with slanders. Now wicked men, who are his slaves, are either stupified or terrified by him, or both. If they be stupified, they are more terrified afterwards; at best they are always at the beck and mercy of a cruel master, who can soon revive their hidden fears; and if they be not under actual horrors, they dare not be serious, nor call themselves to an account, nor entertain any sober thoughts of death, and judgment, and wrath to come. Yea, Satan hath a great hand in the troubles of conscience which befall God's children; they have many a sad hour of darkness when God lets loose the tempter upon them, and many heavy damps of spirit doth the accuser bring upon them now. Well, then, this is a part of the works of the devil, those fears of death and damnation which dog sin at the heels. These Christ came to dissolve, and by death to deliver us from the fear of death: 'He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. v. 21. A believer may triumph over his accuser, and draw water out of the wells of salvation with joy: Rom. viii. 33, 34, 'Who shall lay anything 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, who is even at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us.' By his death he hath satisfied God's justice, and at his resurrection he had his discharge. By his intercession he pleadeth it in court. Who shall condemn? Our advocate is more powerful in court than our accuser; he doth not only sue out our pardon by entreaty, but by merit: Dan. ix. 24, 'He shall make an end of sins, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness.' This is to destroy the works of the devil indeed. He shall stay the imputation of sin, working the reconciliation of sinful man to God, establishing an unchangeable rule of our justification by the Lord our righteousness. Surely all accusation is fruitless when we have such an advocate as he is. We are sinners; but if he will spread the skirt of his righteousness over us, 'and appear before God for us' Heb. ix. 24, why should we fear?

[2.] The dominion and power of sin. The devil keepeth peaceable possession in the soul as long as sin reigneth: Eph. ii. 2, 'He worketh in the children of disobedience.' Their hearts are his shop and work-house, where he formeth weapons and instruments of rebellion against God. The devil, who hath lost his seat in heaven, hath built himself a throne in the heart of every wicked man, and lords it over them as over his slaves; and if they had eyes to see, this is a heavier bondage than if they were laden with irons, and cast into the deepest dungeon that ever was digged. Convinced men are sensible of it, but they know



not how to help themselves. Converted men are in part freed; the dominion of sin is broken in them, though its life be prolonged for a season. But because it is a nice case how to distinguish between the remaining of sin and the reigning of it, and the life from the dominion, and every degree of this hated enemy is a burden, therefore they pray earnestly, Ps. cxix. 133, 'Order my steps in thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.' Watch and strive: Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin reign therefore in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey the lusts thereof.' Comfort themselves with their justification, in the imperfection of their sanctification: Rom. vi. 14, 'For sin shall not have dominion over us; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' But the great encouragement of all is Christ's undertaking; 'He came to destroy the works of the devil.' And surely his end will not be frustrated: Rom. vi. 11, 'Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.' Therefore you may see it a-dying, and Christ destroyeth the power of sin by degrees, putting an enmity in your hearts against it: Gen. iii. 15, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' Sin dieth as our love dieth to it; they grow every day more free from it, as heretofore from righteousness. The devil seeks to increase sin, but Christ to destroy it. When he hath once rescued the prey out of Satan's hands, he will maintain his interest against all the powers of darkness: Eph. vi. 10, 11, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; for we fight not against flesh and blood.' The war is not only against visible enemies, nor against internal passions and lusts, but against spiritual wickednesses. Yet the divine grace is sufficient; we have God's Spirit against the evil spirit: 1 John iv. 4, 'Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.'

[3.] The being of sin shall at length be destroyed; for the final victory is sure and near, for Christ will perfect the conquest which he hath begun: Rom. xvi. 20, 'The God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly.' At death sin is totally disannulled, and then sin shall gasp its last, and the physician of souls will then perfect the cure. The Papists say, as Bellarmine, that either we must be perfect before death, or in purgatory after death. I answer—As we are sinners in the first moment of our birth, so after death no more sinners; no, not in the last moment of expiration. Christ taketh time to finish his work. No sinner doth enter into the state of bliss. Death doth remove us from this sinful flesh, and admits the soul into the sight of God, which is in that instant perfected; as remove the veil, and light breaketh in all of a sudden.

*Object.* 1. How doth Christ destroy the works of the devil, since the kingdom of sin and Satan yet remaineth in so great a part of the world?

*Object.* 2. How doth Christ destroy the works of the devil, since many of Christ's own people are sorely assaulted, shaken, and many times foiled by the devil?

(1.) For the general case. In time Christ doth destroy them, all the opposite reigns or kingdoms, the kingdom of sin, Satan, and death. Christians have no enemy to their happiness but such as shall be conquered by Christ; sooner or later he will overcome them all. Yet, for

the present, this destruction is not so universal but that sin and Satan do still continue. There is not a total destruction of these things, but an absolute subjection to the mediatorial kingdom; they are so far destroyed as they cannot hinder the salvation of the elect; they are destroyed so far that they shall not hinder the demonstration of his mercy to them; but as they are subservient to the demonstration of his justice, error is so far continued. In reprobate and damned souls, the spot of sin remaineth in its perfect dye, the dominion of sin continueth in its absolute power. Guilt is an obligation to eternal pain; but all this in a subjection to his throne. Some continue slaves to Satan, and evermore remain so, and we are not altogether gotten free from Satan's power. God hath a ministry for the devil in the world. Absolute subjection to Christ is at the day of judgment; the infernal spirits shall then bow the knee to Christ, as things in heaven and on earth, and things under the earth: Phil. ii. 10, compared with Rom. xiv. 10, 11, and Isa. xlv. 23, 'Unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.' The saints shall then judge angels, 2 Cor. vi. 2. God hath a ministry for Satan to punish careless souls, to hinder the word, inject ill thoughts, lay snares, raise persecution, sow tares, accuse and trouble the faithful, vex their bodies as he did Job; so Paul had a messenger of Satan, some racking pain in his body, the stone or gout, or the like.

(2.) As to the second case, I answer—To try and exercise the godly, Job i. 12. The godly are sometimes foiled, and yield to his temptations, yet not taken captive by him at his will and pleasure. He may prevail in some cases on them, as he did on David: 1 Chron. xxi. 1, 'And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number the people.' All watchfulness should be used: 1 Cor. vii. 5, 'That Satan tempt you not for your incontinency;' 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3, 'For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty.' They may be drawn, in some rare case, to some particular sin: 2 Sam. xi. 4, 'And David sent messengers, and took her, and came in unto her, and lay with her;' whereby God may be dishonoured: 2 Sam. xii. 14, 'By this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme;' or to mar their own peace: Ps. xxxii. 3, 4, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.' He may assault them for their exercise, yet not touch them with a deadly wound: 1 John v. 18, 'He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not;' so as to overcome and destroy their salvation: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' This opposition is an evidence when we feel it, or groan under it, otherwise they would be at peace: Luke xi. 21, 'When the strong man keeps the house, his goods are in peace;' as when wind and tide go together, there is calm. When they feel it: Rom. vii. 9, 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died;' and groan under it: ver. 24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me



from the body of this death ? ' Rev. xii. 12, ' For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows he hath but a short time.' Dying beasts bite shrewdly.

*Use 1.* Let us not cherish sin. It doth not become christians to cherish what Christ came to disannul, to build again what he came to destroy, to tie those cords and knots the faster which he came to unloose. As much as in you lieth, you seek to dissolve the work of Christ, and put your Redeemer to shame.

2. Our condemnation is just and clear if we do not cast out sin, having so much help. Will you by your voluntary consent give Satan an advantage ?

3. It is our comfort to feel the effects of Christ's dominion, in subduing the work of Satan within us, when the Lord Jesus taketh the throne in our hearts, and doth deliver us from the slavery of corruption : John viii. 32, ' And the truth shall make you free.'

*Use 2.* If you find anything of the works of the devil in you, run to Christ, though your souls are entangled.

1. Make your moan to him : Rom. vii. 24, ' O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ' Wherefore is Christ a Saviour but for sinners ; wherefore a Redeemer but for captives ? Will Christ be a Saviour, and save none ; a Redeemer, and redeem none ?

2. Let us depend upon the fulness of his merit. The reason why the converted find so little effect of Christ's purchase is because they make so little use of their interest in him. Let us conquer during the conflict by faith. We have burdensome corruptions that exercise us, grieve the Spirit, wrong Christ, but they shall be overcome at last. We have heard, and read, and prayed, yet still they remain ; but Christ's undertaking cannot be frustrated ; our pride and passion shall not always last.

3. Let us give up ourselves to be ruled by him, willing to be the Lord's servants : Mat. xi. 29, ' Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and you shall find rest to your souls.'

4. Let the beginning of the work assure you of the perfection of it ; he that hath begun to pardon our sins will at length pronounce our full absolution.

5. Let us apply all this to the sacrament ; here we renew our vow, not to cherish sin, lest we cross our Redeemer's undertaking ; here we express our confidence of the fruits of his death, according to the word. We thankfully commemorate his grace, by which Satan is and will be more and more vanquished : we see him falling. We admire Christ's condescension, that he will give us to eat of his own meat, and drink of his own cup, 2 Sam. xii. 3. We look upon this table as spread for us in the sight of our enemies : Ps. xxiii. 5, ' Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies ; ' maugre their malice. We are well provided for in Christ, though they grieve to see the riches of his bounty to us and care for us. A royal feast and banquet it is, which our enemies may snarl at, but cannot impeach and hinder ; and we take it as a pledge of our everlasting triumph, which we are shortly entering upon.



## SERMON XIV.

*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*—1 JOHN iii. 9.

THIS verse is a perfect antithesis, or standeth in direct opposition to the former. There he reasoneth against a sinful life, because the committing of sin argueth conformity to the devil, who is the great architect of all wickedness, and sinners are of his confederacy and party. Now he reasoneth, on the contrary part, that non-committing of sin argueth conformity with God: 'He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning;' that was his argument there; but here he argueth from the principle of all grace and goodness, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,' &c.

In the words there is an assertion, with its reasons annexed—

1. The assertion attributeth two things to the regenerate person—(1.) That he doth not sin; (2.) That he cannot sin.

2. The reasons are annexed to both—(1.) Because his seed remaineth in him; (2.) Because he is born of God.

The words need a clear discussion, that they may not be abused by erroneous persons on the one side, to establish the impeccability and perfection of the saints; on the other side, by persons of a weak and tender conscience, who are apt to conclude against their own regeneration because of their daily failings; nor by a third party, who, because of these infirmities, and on the presumption of grace received, are apt to intermit their care and diligence, as if the new nature would preserve them, and bear them out against all possibility of declining from God and the ways of holiness.

Therefore I shall—(1.) Acquaint you with, or lay down, some preliminary considerations; (2.) Acquaint you with the different thoughts of sundry interpreters; (3.) Assert the true sense of the words; (4.) Vindicate them from abuses.

First, The preliminary propositions.

1. That there is not a man upon earth that sinneth not, believers and persons regenerate as well as others: Eccles. vii. 20, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not;' and James iii. 2, 'In many things we offend all.' Of us, even the holiest and most regenerate commit many acts of sin.

2. That notwithstanding this, there is a difference between the carnal and the regenerate: ver. 10, 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.' Otherwise the godly and ungodly would be confounded, and there would be no difference between the wicked and the sincere. Certain there is a people that do not sin as others, and, in a good and commodious sense, cannot sin: Deut. xxxii. 9, 'Their spot is not the spot of his children.'

Secondly, I shall show the different thoughts of men about this place. Ambrose interpreteth it of the state of glory, where there is no more sin; but it agreeth not with this place; for the apostle speaketh of the state of the regenerate in this life, and would lay down a sign by which the children of God may be distinguished from the children of the

devil, ver. 10. It is true our perfect state in heaven is spoken of, ver. 2; but the apostle is off from that argument, and inferreth thence our holiness: ver. 3, 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as Christ is pure.' Others, as Austin in his book of nature and grace, chap. xiv., supposeth the apostle speaketh *de jure*, what should be of right, and not *de facto*; not what is, but what should be, viz., that he that is born of God should not sin. But this will not suit with the apostle's scope, which is to lay down a mark of difference, and the unregenerate are under an obligation not to sin. Neither will it consist with the reason here alleged, 'His seed remaineth in him.' If the *jus* were considered, this argument would do better, because sin is forbidden by the law, from whence right and wrong is determined; but the apostle argueth from the remaining principle of grace, which is proper to the regenerate. Some understand it, as Bernard, of God's non-imputation of sin; he sinneth, but it is not reckoned for sin. But though this would agree with the former part, 'committeth not sin,' yet it would not with the latter, 'cannot sin;' for God may impute sin, though he will not. And it establisheth evil doctrine; for the evil acts of the regenerate are sins in God's account, and damnable in themselves, *merito operis*, and so should be reckoned by us. Others say that it is very absurd, very unbecoming; so 'cannot' is taken for a moral cannot, not a natural cannot, which noteth a monstrous incongruity, not an utter impossibility: Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' So Acts i. 20, 'We cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen.' The heart, as thus constituted, cannot be brought to it: 1 Cor. x. 21, 'We cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; we cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils.' That it is very absurd and unbecoming: Gen. xxix. 8, 'We cannot roll away the stone till all the flocks be gathered together.' It is not the law and custom and fashion among us.

Thirdly, To state the true sense of these words—(1.) I must open the assertion; (2.) Give the reasons; (3.) Show the cogency of them.

1. The assertion.

[1.] 'He doth not commit sin.' It is not to be understood, committeth no act of sin at all, but he walketh not ordinarily and customarily in any course of known sin; he doth not sin as wicked men or as the unregenerate are wont to sin. So Job appealeth to God, chap. x. 7, 'Thou knowest that I am not wicked.' He durst not avouch it to God that he was not a sinner, but that he was not a wicked sinner: Ps. xviii. 21, 'I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God,' saith David; and we read of ungodly deeds ungodlily committed, Jude 15. Where lieth the difference? The habitual inclination is to please God, yea, that is the drift, scope, and business of their lives; and therefore they do not cherish any evil habit and disposition of soul, nor easily fall into acts of wilful sin.

(1.) Certainly he doth not fall into any course of inordinate living in the world. There is a way of sinning which the scripture speaketh of, when men walk after the flesh, or after their own lusts: Rom. viii. 1, 'Who walk not after the flesh;' 2 Peter iii. 3, 'Walking after their own lusts;' and 'living after the flesh,' Rom. viii. 13.



(2). As to particular sinful acts there is a difference ; there are three sorts of sins—

(1st.) Some that are bare simple infirmities, which a man cannot avoid, though he would ; as the first motions and risings of corruption, imperfections of duty, want of some degrees of love, reverence, and delight in God when we are employed in his immediate service, vain thoughts. These are sins ; though not to be avoided by the ordinary aids of grace vouchsafed to God's people, yet they are forbidden in the law of God. God's law is not imperfect, though our natures be so. These came in by the fall. Adam in innocency knew no such things ; therefore they are to be bewailed by us ; but these are pardoned on a general repentance, as we address ourselves to God every day, and renew the exercise of faith and repentance : John xiii. 10, ' He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit ; and ye are clean, but not all.' They do not change our state, nor vacate our right to the promises.

(2dly.) There are comparative sins of infirmity, which are infirmities of a middle sort ; not bare weaknesses and frailties incident to our imperfect state, but such as we might forbear if we kept a strict watch over our own hearts, and improved the grace and strength offered and received ; as vain, idle, passionate speeches, censurings, whisperings, discontent, rash anger, and the like. Now a child of God, through suddenness and unadvisedness, may break out into some lesser escapes in this kind, but to allow ourselves in them would not stand with sincerity. It is treason to coin a penny as well as a pound-piece ; therefore these comparative infirmities should be prevented by our utmost diligence, though they do not amount to gross enormities (such as drunkenness, gluttony, adultery, hatred of the brethren, false-witnessings). Though a christian cannot wholly subdue them, yet we must not suffer these to be unresisted and unrepented of, and in some measure we must overcome them. Anger will stir when we are provoked, but by the ordinary assistance of God's grace we should keep it from running out into furious words and actions, or cursing and swearing or reviling. An envious thought may arise against our brother because he is preferred before us ; but we should hate it, and labour to keep it under, chide ourselves for it ; do not let our envy break out into malignant detraction from their worth, blemishing their gifts and graces. A child of God will feel the ticklings of pride, but he will not suffer it to break out into boasting language. So for distrust and discontent ; it is some conquest to dash Babylon's brats against the stones. We read of Achan, Joshua vii. 21, ' That he saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels ; then he coveted them, and then he took them.' A child of God doth ordinarily stop at the first and second pass. There may be an inordinate desire of what we see ; our senses may betray our souls ; but though they covet, they do not steal ; they are not drawn to lying, or deceit, or unjust dealing to get it. Some motions of revenge they may have, but they do not break out into mischievous and vindictive acts. So for sensuality ; there may be inordinate motions, and fleshly desires, or urging inclinations ; but they are checked, and stopped from breaking out into drunkenness, gluttony, uncleanness, lasciviousness, in



speeches or actions, or making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. In short, there may be sluggishness; we may be affected with the ease of the flesh, but we will not suffer it to withdraw us from God, or grossly to neglect the duties of our general and particular calling.

(3dly.) There are great enormities, or gross and scandalous sins; now in this a christian doth not ordinarily sin. In some rare case, by the suddenness or violence of some great temptation, they may be overtaken or overborne, but they therein act quite contrary to their habitual resolutions and ordinary practice; and when they commit them, they do not lie dead in sin, though shrewdly bruised, diseased, and dis-tempered: these do not commit them with an habitual hatred and contempt of God, though they proceed from a less love. They have an habitual love and fear of God; as Peter, that denied Christ out of fear, yet telleth him, 'Lord, thou knowest I love thee,' John xxi. 18. But this love is obstructed for the time, and by this violent shock grace is so hindered that it cannot obtain its effect; they do not consider what unkindness it is to commit such sins. So their faith, though it faileth not, as it did in Peter, is obstructed, so that they cannot for the present counterbalance the pleasures of sin with the danger of it; or if they do consider these things, it is but coldly and carelessly. In short, they may fail in the degree of affection to God, but they do not change God for sin; there are dislikes and checks which arise from the new nature, yet they are not strong enough for the present to defeat the temptation, and though they be for a time foiled, yet they cannot rest or persist in sin: Jer. viii. 4, 'Shall they fall, and not arise?' A fountain muddied soon worketh itself clean again; the needle in the compass may be jogged and discomposed, but it turneth to the pole again. There is a sudden recovery; as a candle sucketh light as soon as it is blown out more easily than a dead wick. Their hearts may smite them, as David's did for numbering the people, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. They bewail their sins: Mat. xxvi. 75, 'Peter went out, and wept bitterly.' They run to their advocate: 1 John ii. 1, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' Sue out their pardon: 2 Sam. xxiv. 10, 'I have sinned greatly in that I have done; now I beseech thee take away the iniquity of thy servant.' They relapse not, unless it be before the wound be well closed and healed. Thus they do not sin.

[2.] They cannot sin. In a regenerate man there is an aversion of heart and mind from it. He doth not simply abstain from sinning, but he cannot commit sin; he hath a strong, potent inclination and disposition, which carrieth him another way; his soul is averse from it. A child of God is never in a right posture till he doth look upon sin not only as contrary to his duty, but his nature; it is an unnatural production, as if a sheep, instead of a lamb, should bring forth a serpent: 'A thorn cannot bring forth grapes, nor will a thistle produce figs.' And on the contrary, hips and haws do not grow upon vines, but every tree bringeth forth fruit suitable to its own nature; so one that hath a new nature showeth itself by eschewing of sin and by pursuing the death of sin. It is as natural to the new nature to hate sin, as to love God: Ps. cxvii. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord hate evil.' There is in it an

irreconcilable hatred and enmity against sin. There is a twofold hatred—*odium abominationis et odium inimicitie*, the hatred of offence, whereby we turn away from what we apprehend to be repugnant and prejudicial to us; so is sin repugnant and contrary to the renewed will. It is agreeable and suitable to the unregenerate as draff to the appetite of a swine, and grass and hay to a bullock and horse; but to a renewed man, as meat that we loathe and have an antipathy against. Now there is in all these that are born of God this kind of hatred and antipathy against sin; it is an offence to them. Then there is *odium inimicitie*, a hatred of enmity and hostility, which is a seeking the destruction of what we hate; we pursue it to the death. Thus the regenerate hate sin; they mortify and subdue it, and have no satisfaction in themselves till it be destroyed: *non cessat in lesione peccati, sed in exterminio*: Rom. vii. 24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Now the heart of a renewed man being thus constituted, they cannot sin as others do; they are settled in such a love to God and hatred of sin, they cannot be at the beck and command of every lust, as they were before. Velleius Paterculus saith of Cato Minor, that he had gotten such a just frame and constitution of soul, that he could not but do justly. So the renewed are so set and framed, there is such a new life and a holy nature planted in them by God, that they cannot sin, that is, live and lie in sin, whatever out of infirmity they may fall into.

2. For the reasons, they are two, 'Because they are born of God;' and 'The seed of God remaineth in them.'

[1.] The general reason, from their change of state.

(1.) What is it to be born of God? It is to have a new life and nature wrought in us. To be made by God is one thing, to be born of God is another. All things are made by God, but all things are not said to be born of him; that is a term proper to the new creature. In every perfect generation, that which is born receiveth from him that begets it life and likeness. Likeness is not enough to constitute a birth. An exquisite limner may draw an exact picture of himself, yet the picture is not said to be begotten or born of him, for there is no life. And life alone is not enough; for putrid creatures, as frogs, toads, worms, animated and quickened by the heat of the sun, are not said to be born of it, because there is no likeness. When a man begets a man in his own image and likeness, then he is said to be born. To apply it to the case in hand: When we who were dead in trespasses and sins are framed anew to the life and likeness of God, we are said to be born of him. Life there is: Eph. ii. 1, 'And you who were dead in trespasses and sins hath he quickened.' Likeness, or a nature in some sort resembling God: 2 Peter i. 4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature;' Eph. iv. 24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness, and true holiness.' Now surely such a nature inclineth us to obey God and love him.

(2.) How this hindereth that we do not and cannot sin.

(1st.) Because this change wrought in us by the wonderful operation of God's Spirit puts a new bent and bias upon us: John iii. 6,



‘That which is born of flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.’ We are changed from evil to good, from obeying the flesh to obeying the Spirit, and inclined to live and walk after the Spirit. Therefore, this being the scope of the new nature, to live in a strict obedience to God, the reign of sin is broken, and the acts of it will be much prevented. Surely the dominion is taken away by the grace of regeneration, and the acts of it cannot be as frequent as before.

(2d.) He is interested in the care and protection of God. Whosoever is born of God is in covenant with him : Rom. vi. 14, ‘For sin shall not have dominion over you ; for you are not under the law, but under grace ;’ and adopted into his family, under his fatherly care, and God is concerned in his preservation : 1 Peter i. 5, ‘Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation ;’ and John x. 28, ‘And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.’ Christ therefore will not desert them so far as that they should be brought back again into the power and bondage of the wicked one, or that they should so fall into sin as to persist in it. Therefore consider a regenerate person in himself, and he may sin himself out of the favour of God, and all the hopes he hath by Christ ; but as he is in the hands of God, and under his care, his heart is so governed and inclined by him, that he cannot totally and finally fall from the grace and life of the Spirit, nor easily fall into heinous acts of sin, though some infirmities remain still.

[2.] The second reason, ‘Because the seed of God remaineth in him.’

(1.) What is meant by this seed of God? Some say the word : 1 Peter i. 23, ‘Born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible ;’ Mat. xiii. 19, ‘The good seed is the word of God.’ Not improperly, because the word sown in our hearts and rooted by faith is the great let and check to sin : Ps. cxix. 9, ‘Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way ? by taking heed thereto according to thy word ;’ and ver. 11, ‘Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee ;’ ver. 104, ‘Through thy precepts I get understanding : therefore I hate every false way ;’ 1 John ii. 24, ‘Let that therefore abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning : if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you shall continue in the Son and in the Father.’ Others say this seed is the Spirit : John iii. 5, 6, ‘Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit, is spirit.’ Certainly the word of God, if it be this seed, is to be considered not in the letter, but in the Spirit ; for the word separated from the Spirit can do nothing to the regenerating of a sinner. The Spirit is the principal efficient, the word is the instrument. But I think by this seed of God is understood the effect of both, the principle of grace infused, or that vital grace which is communicated to us in regeneration, called living in the Spirit, Gal. v. 25.

(2.) How doth it keep us from sinning, so that he who is born of God doth not sin, and cannot sin ?

I answer—This seed of God may be considered either as to its



tendency and efficacy, or permanency and predominancy ; all which infer the thing in hand.

(1st.) Its tendency. This impression left upon the heart doth cause it to bend and tend towards God, that we may serve, please, glorify, and enjoy him. As it came from God, so it doth incline us to God ; for the tendency is according to the principle, therefore called a living to God, Gal. ii. 19. It doth continually draw back from sin, and urgeth and inclineth to holiness ; and therefore, when a man is about to sin, he cannot carry it on so freely, because of the rebukes and dislikes of the new nature, there being a fixed, settled frame and bent of heart towards God ; therefore the heart by consequence must needs be set against sin, which is irreconcilable with the motions and tendency of the new nature.

(2dly.) Its efficacy. The seed of God is an actuous, vigorous thing. The word *seed* imports it ; for the spirit of the plant is in it. If it be not a dead seed, we see how it will work through the hard and dry clods to produce its plant and flower ; so is this vital principle operative ; it will not easily suffer us to do an act contrary to it ; and it being a divine seed called Spirit, it is a principle of great strength and power. The apostle calleth it the lusting of the Spirit against the flesh, Gal. v. 17. Now if grace have any energy and life in it, it is directly contrary and incompatible with the committing of any sin. There is a seed and principle in him, which enlighten and enliven, and quicken him to serve and please God, and therefore he is held back from sin.

(3dly.) As to its permanency, a seed that remaineth ; which may be understood both of its own defixion and radication in the heart of man. It is not a light touch, but a thorough change, such an impression of God as becometh a habit and holy nature in us, and is the constant principle of holy, spiritual operations ; and also in regard of God's continuance of it, for it is one of the gifts of which the Lord repenteth not, Rom. xi. 29. It is so planted in the heart by God that it is not lightly inclined, but thoroughly set to holiness ; the good and honest heart, which, having received the word, keepeth it, Luke viii. 15 ; a heart sound in God's statutes, Ps. cxix. 80. Now where the heart is thoroughly changed, soundly set, they do generally live according to the operation of this seed and principle of grace, and is so governed and inclined by it, that he doth constantly do the will of God, and war, and watch, and strive against sin.

(4thly.) This seed is considered according to its prevalency and predominancy. To its prevalency, it hath the mastery in the soul ; for though there be a double principle in a christian, you must not forget the back bias of corruption, which still remaineth with us, and is importunate to be pleased ; but yet you must carry it so that you may plainly show it is not superior in the soul, and keep watching and striving, that as little of it may be discerned as may be, that your conversations be not cast into a carnal mould, and fashioned according to the former lusts of your ignorance, 1 Peter i. 14, that sin may be mortified and beaten down more and more. The apostle supposeth the best is most powerful, so that a christian showeth himself spirit rather than flesh. The apostle describeth him here according to the

operation of the better part. The old man in them is crucified, not wholly dead indeed, but dying, and greatly weakened.

Fourthly, I shall vindicate the words from abuse.

Men think, if they be regenerate, the seed of grace will preserve them without any care of their own. Herein they are mistaken, and that for two reasons—

1. Because there is an active warring principle still left in us; our lusts are but in part subdued, and our love to them is so soon kindled, that if we intermit our watching and striving, the gates of the senses are always open to let in such objects as take part with the flesh; therefore we must be beating down sin: 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27, 'I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.' What is said of the new nature is not to make us idle.

2. Because grace doth not work necessarily, as fire burneth, but voluntarily; it must be excited and stirred up, both by the Spirit of God, who giveth us to will and to do, Phil. ii. 13, and by ourselves: 2 Tim. i. 6, 'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee.' We must be still blowing up this holy fire, and keep it burning, as the priests did the fire of the altar. The bent of the new nature must be kept up with much watching, striving, praying, and the use of all holy means, and the vigour of it maintained.

## SERMON XV.

*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.—*  
1 JOHN iii. 9.

USE 1. Is exhortation, to press you that you are born of God, or profess yourselves to be so, to avoid sin.

1. You should look upon sin not only as contrary to your duty, but your nature; for the argument here is not taken from the law of God, but from the temper and disposition of a renewed man. The argument from the law is strong and binding, for no child of God should wittingly and willingly break his law. It is urged: 1 John iii. 4, 'Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is a transgression of the law.' Every deliberate wilful sin is an act of disloyalty and rebellion against God, like Absalom's treason against his father. You should not sin because of the law; but here the argument is more pressing and close. 'You cannot sin,' if you be what you profess to be, because God hath given you another nature. Now for you not only to offer violence to the law, but to offer violence to your nature, to go against the very constitution and frame of your own hearts, as it is renewed by God, will aggravate the guilt of the action.

2. The argument is not taken from objective, but subjective grace.



The law forbiddeth sin, and grace offereth help and remedy against it. What the law condemneth, grace teacheth us to avoid. Now grace is twofold—objective in the gospel, subjective in the heart of a believer. As, for instance, when some are said to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, Jude 4, is God's grace capable to be turned into lust or sin? It is objective, not subjective grace, which is there meant, the doctrine of grace, not the internal grace of the Holy Spirit, which resideth in the heart of a believer. Now objective grace yieldeth a notable argument against sin: Titus ii. 11, 12, 'For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' How teacheth? Not as a man that would teach one that is ignorant; but as a man would persuade and quicken one that is backward. It is more by way of persuasion than instruction, as the doctrine of grace containeth many powerful arguments against sin; and it is a shame that we do not improve them to better purpose. But here the apostle reasoneth not from objective, but subjective grace; not from the doctrine propounded to us, but the seed which remaineth in us. Now this doth not only persuade but incline us to avoid sin, and yieldeth us help and strength against it.

3. This subjective grace is a vital principle, not a lighter disposition, but a settled and fixed frame of heart towards God and heavenly things, and therefore called life, and a new nature, and a divine nature. Now if there be such a principle, such a genius, such a new nature put into us, certainly upon the account thereof we cannot sin, as those do who have not such a principle; for *principiata respondent suis principiis*; the constant effects declare what is the principle, or principles are known by their proper actions, as fire by burning, and the rational soul by discourse and speech. So 'if we live in the Spirit, we must walk in the Spirit,' Gal. v. 25, and if we have a new heart, we must show it by newness of life, Rom. vi. 4. You cannot force men from their principles; you may put them out of the way a little, but they return to it again. You see it plainly verified as to the principle of corruption. Reason with men, persuade them, show them their danger, you may rouse them up a little, yet, till God change their hearts, they still return to their former courses: Jer. xiii. 23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' When men are habituated to evil, no means will work it out of them, or work them to any good. Nature will return, though you seem never so much to check it, and beat it back. Proportionably, if grace be as a new nature, you will find it work after this sort. Therefore it is utterly inconsistent with making sin our trade, custom, and delight. We have felt the tyranny of sin, but when we are renewed and changed, we should also feel the sacred power and influence of grace.

4. This vital principle containeth in it an everlasting enmity and repugnancy to sin, as sin also doth to it: Gal. v. 17, 'The Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, for these two are contrary;' so contrary as never to be reconciled, no more than fire and water, light and darkness. Now a man that hath such a contrary principle to sin in his own bosom cannot give way to it



without great reluctancies and dislikes, and checks from the new nature. I observe this for two reasons—

[1.] Partly to show that that doth somewhat abate the operations of the opposite principle; the flesh cannot carry it so freely, you cannot do what you would in the satisfaction of your lusts, because of this repugnancy and dislike, Gal. v. 17. Therefore, if you sin freely, you have not the new nature in you, for where it is it will make resistance. It is not wholly dead nor asleep; if not strong enough wholly to defeat the temptation, yet certainly to break the force of it, that it doth not fall upon us with all its weight: Rom. vii. 15–17, ‘For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent to the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.’ There is a contrary principle indeed, which retaineth some life and vigour; yet surely in the regenerate it is much abated; there is not such a reconcilableness to sin as there was before. Grace serveth us for some use, giveth some strength, or else why is this gracious gift bestowed upon us?

[2.] And partly to show that these checks and dislikes do aggravate the sins which we commit. We make it an excuse; I strive against them, but do not overcome them, and so the striving is an aggravation of the sin. Carnal men have their reluctancies, which aggravate their sins; as Pilate against the crucifying of Christ, but yielded to it at length against his own conscience, for his interest’s sake, to preserve the good-will of the people and his credit in his government; he would fain have washed his hands of it after he yielded to it. Balaam resisted a while, but yielded at length to the ways of unrighteousness. The conscience of most men will bear back and hold off for a time, because it apprehendeth sin to be offensive to God and destructive to the soul, but the pleasure and profit of sin prevaieth at length. Now if these reluctancies of bare natural conscience may aggravate the rebellion, and make it the greater crime for a man to venture upon that which is evil, against the checks of his own conscience, so much more doth this reason concern the people of God. He that will break through, not only when there is a rule or law in the way, but his natural disposition or the bent of a gracious heart in the way, in the general, he doth not only the sinful act, but overcometh that which hindereth the doing of it; he hath somewhat in his bosom to the contrary. Look, as it argued Christ’s love to lay down his life notwithstanding the innocent reluctancies of his human nature, Mat. xxvi. 39, these words, ‘Father, let this cup pass,’ did not argue his unwillingness, but willingness; ‘Nevertheless, Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt;’ we should not have understood the greatness of his love nor the dreadfulness of his sufferings if the human nature had not showed its just abhorrency against them; so it argueth the great heinousness of sin to break through notwithstanding these reluctancies, not only of enlightened conscience, but the renewed heart. If unrenewed men’s sins are aggravated by the dislikes of conscience, which pleads God’s right and our duty, so much more will renewed men’s sins be aggravated by the rebukes of the new nature, which not only show our duty, or excite us to our duty, but give us help and strength to perform it, and are so notable a check to sin.

5. There is not only an express contrariety to sin, but a predominancy above it. He that is born of God hath indeed two principles of operations in him, but the one hath the mastery over the other, and is superior in the soul, else he could not be said to be born of God: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' The best principle is the most powerful; so that a christian sheweth himself to be spirit rather than flesh, and that Jesus hath a greater interest in him than Adam. The apostle here describeth him according to the operations of the better part; he doth not sin, he cannot sin; the old man in him is crucified, not dead indeed, but dying and greatly weakened; the new man is superior, and governeth our hearts and actions. The heart of a regenerate man is like a kingdom divided, but grace is in the throne, and the flesh is the rebel, which much disturbeth and weakeneth its sovereignty and empire, and by striving seeketh to draw the will to itself, that it may be sovereign and chief; but in those who are born of God, they cannot be, else there would be no distinction between nature and grace; for a man is denominated from what is predominant in him, and hath chief power over his heart. If it be the flesh, he is carnal; if it be the Spirit, he is a new creature, or born of God. Many convictions, and good meanings and wishes, may proceed from common grace, and be found in those that shall never be saved, because they do not prevail over the contrary motions and inclinations. But God's children have not only a spirit contrary to the flesh and the world, but prevailing over the flesh and the world: 1 Cor. ii. 12, 'Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God.' Men are denominated from that which beareth rule in them. If sin reigneth, or grace reigneth, that is his master to which a man yieldeth himself, Rom. vi. 10, by which he is ordinarily led and governed, and which disposeth of his time, and strength, and mind, and heart, and life, and love; so that though corruption remaineth in the faithful, yet it is a rebel, and the government is in the hands of grace. All the acts of sin are disowned acts, and we may say with Paul, 'It is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me.' They proceed from us against the bent and habit of our wills, and settled course of life; and therefore you see how it concerneth us to carry it so that as little of the flesh may be discovered as may be, that our conversations be not cast into a carnal mould, or fashioned 'according to the former lusts of your ignorance,' 1 Peter i. 14. That sin be more mortified, and not gratified. The flesh is importunate to be pleased, but our pretences to God and regeneration cannot be justified if we should please it, and turn head against the better part.

6. This vital, contrary, predominant principle against sin is the fruit of a new birth; and if it be so, there appeareth a shoal of arguments to draw us off from sin, and to press us to avoid sin. I will content myself with two—

[1.] The way by which regeneration is brought about, which is by a deep sight and sense of sin, and the dreadful consequences of it. And surely those that have been acquainted with the pangs of the new birth, will not easily venture upon sin again, as the burnt child dreadeth the fire, or those that have been bitten by playing with a snappish cur will not easily expose their fingers to such danger. You remember what



sin cost you formerly when you were first reconciled to God, what terror of heart, what tremblings of soul, and how long it was ere you could settle in a holy peace and serenity of mind. Surely we should sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto us. Will you drink again of those bitter waters, and renew the cause of your anguish and sorrow, or taste again of the cold cup of trembling, which filled you with such astonishment and fear? A convicted sinner is filled with his own ways, Prov. i. 31. He hath enough of sin when God sets it home upon his heart. Then he seeth what an evil and bitter thing it is to make bold with God; Jer. ii. 19, at what a dear rate he bought the pleasures and contentments of the flesh: and wilt thou again run this hazard? The Israelites were jealous of setting up a new altar: Josh. xxii. 17, 18, 'Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day (although there were a plague in the congregation of the Lord), but we must turn away again from following the Lord?' Alas! we cannot forget the old scorplings of conscience, and shall we venture once more?

[2.] The effect of it, which is a settled constitution of heart, acted and discovered either in a way of faith, or hope, and love, and so the seed of God goeth under divers names: 1 Cor. xiii. 13, 'And now abideth faith, hope, charity;' 1 Thes. i. 3, 'Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope;' Jude 20, 21, 'But ye beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Now all those graces which constitute and make up the new creature give us powerful arguments and inducements against sin. Therefore, if we are born of God, we are highly concerned not to sin against him.

(1.) Faith maketh use of the whole christian doctrine to purify the heart, Acts xv. 9, or cleanse it from sin; especially that of redemption by Christ: 1 John iii. 5, 8, 'And he was manifested to take away sin.' For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' And the eternal recompenses: when sin sets the bait before you, faith sets heaven and hell before you; heaven to sweeten the ways of God, and make them more easy to us, that we may be constant in them: Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' Hell to deter and frighten you from sin. When the flesh showeth you the bait, faith showeth you the hook; and so take all together, the beginning and the end, you will have little stomach to sin. When you consider how many are suffering for those sins which you are now tempted to commit, dare you venture? What! upon the everlasting burnings, into which every one is cast, whosoever maketh a lie, or giveth way to his lusts, and filthy excess?

(2.) Love, which is the weight that inclineth and poiseth us to God, and so by consequence to hate sin: Ps. xvii. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord hate evil.' Which is the great overruling principle which levelleth our actions to his glory, and directeth them according to his will: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that



he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.' Sin is not only impertinent, but inconsistent with our great end.

(3.) Hope, which looketh and waiteth that we may see God, and be like him : 1 John iii. 3, 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, as Christ is pure.' What! look for these things, and live so contrary to them? If this be the effect of the new birth, surely it concerneth us to mortify and avoid sin.

7. This birth draweth to it God's assistance; for whosoever is born of God is taken into God's family and under God's protection: 'For all things are of him, and through him, and to him;' as in a way of nature, so in a way of grace, Rom. xi. 35. They have their preservation from him from whom they received their being; the new creature is through him as well as from him; and no dam can be so tender of the young brood in the nest as God is of the new creature, which is of his own production. He cherisheth that grace which he hath infused: Phil. i. 6, 'Being confident of this, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ.' The same power doth carry on the work of grace which did begin it in us. Paul was confident of this very thing, of their perseverance in grace on this account. Now herein lieth the stability of the saints, not in the strength of their own resolutions; for our steps are apt to slip after the firmest engagements to God: Ps. lxxiii. 2, 'But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped;' for fixedness of gracious habits is not from themselves, for we are to 'strengthen the things that remain, and are ready to die,' Rev. iii. 2; but from the power of God, which by promise is engaged for their preservation against all opposition. Now this doth secure God's children so far, that those who are born of God cannot degenerate so as to fall into total impenitency; and it does also condemn our laziness if we do not make use of the grace offered to keep ourselves from sin, and do not make use of the means provided, that we may be fortified against it. There is a waxing and waning grace, and ebbings and flowings in corruption; but God's covenant and paternal love admits of no abatement: our antipathy to sin may abate, but not Christ's compassion to the saints. He hath instituted, not only outward means to confirm us, but still supplieth internal grace to nourish our faith, hope, and love, that they may be lively and strong against sin.

8. If we sin fully, the seed of God that remaineth in us, though it be not utterly extinct, yet it is sore battered and bruised, and there is such havoc made in the soul, that it is hard to know whether we have any grace in us, yea or no. We are as if we had none; if there be any, it is best seen first in our sudden recovery; for the time we are as if we had none. Therefore David speaketh as if the work were to begin anew, and his recovery were a kind of second conversion: Ps. li. 10, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' The grace of the Holy Spirit is so obstructed, and the flood-gate of natural pollution so opened, that it is a kind of creation, or second conversion, to restore the principle of grace to its vigour and power, as if all were to begin again. Indeed it was not so, for he presently added, 'Cast me not away from thy holy presence, and take not thy

Spirit from me.' He had some interest in God still, somewhat of the Spirit left which he did not lose ; though he had sadly fallen from his wonted purity and sincerity, yet he owneth some presence of the Spirit still, and desireth that God would not take it from him, as having never more need of it than at this time. Secondly, If we cannot lie in sin, but by our falls we do much more resolve and strengthen ourselves against sin for the time to come, running to our advocate, and seriously making our peace with God, 1 John ii. 1, and resolve to be more watchful and cautious for the time to come : Ps. li. 6, 'In the inward parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom ;' and Ps. lxxxv. 8, 'Let them not return to folly ;' that is, commit such foolish and inconsiderate acts again ; if it be thus with us, it argueth that the root remaineth, and hath life in it, though the branches be shrewdly rifled and withered ; if they work themselves clean again, as a living spring that purifies itself ; but where sin is made light of, and not truly repented of when committed, there it is not so.

9. That this avoiding of sin is here brought as the most sensible, visible note and character, to distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil : 'He that sinneth is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning : and he that is born of God sinneth not. In this the children of God, and the children of the devil are manifest.' To walk in a sinful course is plainly to entitle ourselves to the devil, who is the eldest sinner, as being the first of the kind ; the most constant sinner, for he sinneth from the beginning, never ceaseth, is never weary of sin ; and the most industrious and painful sinner, for he compasses the earth to and fro to draw men into a rebellion against God ; and therefore he is the father of all those that live in a trade and course of sin. But, on the contrary, he that sinneth not is born of God. God is holy, and the great work of his Spirit is to renew us in holiness and cleanse us from sin ; therefore by committing or avoiding sin we may soon see, yea, the world may see, to whom we belong. And surely it doth not become the children of God to border too near upon the wicked. There should be a broad difference between them and the children of the devil, or else they dishonour their Father, because they come too near the carnal life ; therefore when the two seeds are thus intermingled or blended together, it is a nice and difficult case to distinguish them ; so that either it must be determined against you, that you are not a child of God, or at least you perplex the case, and make it doubtful ; you are too like the ungodly, and Satan hath too much interest in you. Holiness is God's image ; doth it not grieve you that you are so little like him ? By his graces he keepeth possession of you ; if these have not their effect upon you, you dishonour him by professing such a nearness to him, and can so little distinguish yourselves from his enemies. Surely the more nearly you are related to Christ, the more tender you should be of offending and dishonouring him. If Christ hath done his part to difference you from all the rest of the world, and you will not declare the difference, and make it manifest, you harden the world, and they will think that to distinguish between the seeds is factious singularity, not regular zeal ; they hold up their ways with greater pretence, as justified by you, when you are covetous, envious, wrathful, giving to tippling or vain company.



10. The evidence of this character, and as it concerneth the satisfaction of our consciences, is made to consist in two things—(1.) That he that is born of God doth not sin; (2.) Cannot sin; and both expressions contain great arguments in them.

[1.] That he doth not sin. It is not to be understood that he doth not sin at all, for the contrary is verified by sad and lamentable experience; nor yet it doth not limit and set out the bounds so exactly and plainly as that it may be stated in the word. If the scripture had set down how much sin is consistent with grace, we should then have gone as far as we could, and would not so strictly stand upon our guard as now we are obliged to do after such a warning and intimation. That the new creature doth not, cannot sin; the very intent of these expressions is to make us afraid universally of all sin; for the infirmities of the saints may be distinguished from the presumptions of the wicked, otherwise we could have no certainty of our sincerity, and the scripture would not distinguish between the spots of God's children and the spots of the perverse, Deut. xxxii. 5. Surely as the priests of the law had direction to distinguish between the leprosy that had malignity in it, and made the people utterly unclean, and the leprosy that did not fret the flesh, and made them only unclean for the present, so the ministers of the gospel have direction to distinguish between weaknesses and wilful failings. Yet there is great difficulty in the case; partly because some sins, which in their nature are infirmities, may prove iniquities in the committer; as suppose vain thoughts, idle words, distractions in prayer, if a man abandoneth himself to them, the case is altered; and partly because the same sin may be an infirmity in one man which is not in another, who hath more knowledge and helps of grace; and partly because that may be an infirmity at one time which is not at another, as it cometh backed with temptations, which make such a sudden and forcible impression upon the will that there is no time of deliberation, but its consent is precipitated, whereas at other times the sin may be withstood and resisted; and partly because that which was an infirmity at first may afterwards commence into iniquity, as when a man hath sinned away his spiritual strength, broken the power of his will, lulled his conscience asleep by some foregoing sin; partly because it is hard to determine how long sensual passions may keep the soul from sober consideration. Therefore our best way is to keep up a constant care and solicitous desire to please God in all things, at least to keep the soul from settling in a trade and course of vanity and sin.

[2.] The other part of the note, 'That he cannot sin;' that is, the constitution of his soul, or the settled purpose and habitual bent of his heart, is more against sin than for it; and then it will follow that his constant course or the scope and tenor of his life is accordingly; for where sin is more hated than loved, and men are sincerely willing to avoid it, they will be watchful against it, groan under the burden of it, seek to prevent and weaken it by all holy means, as I shall show in the next verse. But here a notable argument ariseth. If we should plead, You can avoid sin, at least more sin than you do, if you were sincerely willing, we should plead strongly, and leave you wholly under blame for your transgressions. It is a certain truth that a man hath power



to do more good than he doth, and avoid more evil than he doth avoid. But the Spirit of God puts the argument into other words, of a higher import and signification, 'You cannot sin;' as if the business were not whether you could avoid sin, but whether you can commit it, being thus constituted, and having these advantages of grace which you have. You complain, I cannot renounce this bewitching lust, whereas the debate lieth here, how you can live in it, and lie under the power of it; which should rouse up christians out of their laziness and cowardly fears.

*Use 2. Directions in this case.*

1. The general mortification must go before the particular. The general mortification is when the first thorough change is wrought in us, and 'We put off the body of the sins of the flesh,' Col. ii. 11; for then the heart is fixed against sin. But the particular mortification is when some particular lust or sin is more struck at. Now the one must go before the other, because else all that we do is but like stopping a hole in a ruinous fabric, that is ready to drop upon our heads, or to make much ado about a cut finger when we have a mortal disease upon us. Besides, particular mortification dependeth on the general, as our avoiding sin doth on our being born of God: Col. iii. 9, 'Put off all these, anger, wrath, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouths, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds.' Seeing you have put off all corruption, allow yourselves in no one sin. Alas! to set against a particular sin before you set against the whole body of sin, it is but to put a new patch upon a torn garment, and so to make the rent the worse; or to lop off a branch or two while the root and trunk remaineth in full life and vigour, and so it sprouteth the more for cutting. Therefore look first after the general work, that you are born again; when sin is stabbed at the heart, the particular branches and limbs die by degrees.

2. Consider where the new nature is in most danger, there is *vitium sæculi*, *vitium gentis*, and *vitium personæ*.

[1.] The fault of the age and nation, where sin being the more common, it is the less odious. Sins are in reputation where usually practised, and the inundation and torrent of examples carry men away strangely: Gal. ii. 13, 'Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation.' Though a good man could easily condemn the practice of the rude multitude, and be as Noah, upright in a corrupt age and time, Gen. vi. 9. But when those that we honour and esteem for godliness, have adopted such an error or such a sin into their practice, the error and sin is authorised, and we run into it one after another, as sheep do out of the pasture by the gap or breach in the hedge made by others that have gone before them. Oh, take heed of this; be followers of none no further than they are of Christ.

[2.] The fault of the person. We must labour most to mortify our particular sin: Ps. xviii. 23, 'I was upright before thee, and kept myself from mine iniquity.' Some that we may call ours, by temper, evil custom, course of employment. Now these should be the more mortified for their own sake, and for the sake of others; for the master-lusts, like great diseases, seldom go alone. Sometimes it is worldliness, or an inordinate love of riches, which gaineth such interest in the hearts

of many, that they set light by Christ and his precious benefits, and thoughts of God and heaven grow unwelcome and displeasing to them, rather desire wealth than God's favour, do not lay up treasures in heaven, but value an estate by the possession rather than the use. Some men's distemper is a sensual disposition ; their hearts are carried after all the alluring vanities of the world, and are basely surprised by the baits of the flesh, cannot deny themselves, or govern their fancies and appetites. Others' distemper is pride, when they mind high things, know little of that poverty of spirit recommended in the gospel, and is reconcilable with a mean condition ; they can hardly live with any but those that will honour and please them. Now the darling sin may be known by the frequency of its assaults, its power over other sins, thoughts that haunt us in duty ; and every wise man knoweth where his temptations lie most.

3. Remember the lesser acts of sin make way for greater, as the lesser sticks set the great ones on fire. As in anger ; give way to the distempers of it, and from folly it groweth to downright madness, Eccles. x. 13. So for envy, if it break out into detraction, it will make us malignant, and undermine those whom we envy, and mischievous malice is the final product. So for pride and self-esteem, let it break out into boasting, and it will breed contention, Prov. xiii. 10. Let the love of the world make us immoderate in the pursuit of it, then God is neglected, charity omitted, and it will in time draw us to unjust gain. So for sensuality ; pamper the flesh with all the delights it craveth, and in time men will be scandalous in their apparel, meat, or drink. Let lust break out into wantonness, and wantonness will produce downright uncleanness ; lusts will beget acts, and these acts multiply into deeds of a more foul and heinous nature. Therefore stop betimes ; when you run down-hill there is little hope of staying yourselves.

4. Renew the inclination of the new nature by the means appointed thereunto, especially the Lord's supper, which is the food of the new nature, wherein we remember Christ crucified, and we remember him, that the end of his death may be accomplished, which is, that, 'we may die unto sin, and live unto righteousness,' 1. Peter ii. 24. He purchased the grace whereby this might be accomplished, and wherein we renew our covenant with God, for the strengthening our baptismal vow. Baptism is an avowed death to sin, and here we renew it again.

## SERMON XVI.

*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil : whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.—1 JOHN iii. 10.*

IN these words you have the conclusion of the whole discourse, together with a transition to another. The former discourse was about abstain-



ing from sin, the subsequent and following discourse about love of the brethren. Both exceedingly become the children of God; the one sheweth their respect to their Father, the other to those in the same relation with themselves.

In this verse observe—

1. The preface, which asserts that this is the true note and character by which the two seeds are distinguished, 'In this the children of God are manifest,' &c.

2. This note of difference is referred to two heads—purity and charity.

3. They are propounded negatively, 'Doeth not righteousness, neither he that loveth not his brother.' But the affirmative is understood, that whosoever doeth righteousness and loveth his brother is of God, namely, he that liveth to God, and doth what God requireth and approveth.

*Doct. 1.* That there is, and should be, a broad and manifest difference between the children of God and the children of the devil.

*Doct. 2.* That charity and purity are true notes of God's children.

The first doctrine may bear two senses—that this difference is manifest to others, or to themselves.

1. To others. I exclude not what the apostle mentioneth, Gal. v. 19, 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest.' Look, as the lewd lives of some do plainly speak out their corrupt estate to the conscience of any discerning man; as Ps. xxxvi. 1, 'The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, There is no fear of God before his eyes.' Either they do not believe there is a God, or they do not really and in good earnest care for him. Now if the wickedness of the wicked doth discover itself to an attentive beholder, so, on the contrary, grace should not be concealed, but break out into the conversation: 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, 'Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of his calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him.' God is more glorified, the world more edified, and we ourselves more comforted, the more explicitly we show ourselves to be christians. The wicked man is known by his fruits: Mat. vii. 20, 'Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.' And the good man by his fruits: Ps. i. 3, 'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf doth not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.' But on the one side, all graceless and unconverted men do so plainly manifest themselves; and on the other, too many good christians do not so easily interpret themselves in their actions, or 'declare plainly' (in the apostle's phrase) 'that they seek a country,' Heb. xi. 14, that is, heaven.

2. This being manifest is meant of being manifest to ourselves, in the sense of our consciences; for conscience is a nearer discernor of our actions than the observation of other men can be. It is hard to think that the soul should be a stranger to its own operations: 1 Cor. ii. 11, 'There is a spirit in man which knoweth the things of a man.' There is a privy spy in our own bosoms, which is conscious to all that we do, and can reflect upon it, and judge of it whether it be good or evil; it knoweth when we understand, or will, or purpose, and resolve, or do



anything ; much more is it conscious, if not to single acts, yet to our conversation and constant course, and that for a fourfold reason—

[1.] Because acts of grace are the most serious and important actions of our lives. Many ordinary acts may escape us, they being not of such moment, for want of advertency ; but surely he that acteth for eternity will mind what he doeth. This is the great business that we attend upon, and with the greatest solicitude and diligence : Phil. ii. 12, ‘ Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.’

[2.] All acts of grace are put forth with difficulty, and with some strife and wrestling ; for there is a continual opposition of the flesh : Gal. v. 17, ‘ The flesh lusteth against the Spirit.’ Now things difficult, and carried on with much opposition, must needs leave a notice and impression of themselves upon the soul.

[3.] There is a special delight that accompanieth acts of grace, because of the excellency of the objects they are conversant about, and the excellency of the power they are assisted withal, and the excellency and nobleness of the faculties they are acted by, and the excellent ends and uses they are designed unto. There is a pleasantness in the paths of wisdom : Prov. iii. 17, ‘ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.’ Now the experience of this pleasure, and grief, and trouble for the contrary doth make the acts of grace more notorious to the soul.

[4.] A serious, constant, uniform course of obedience will evidence itself ; for though conscience be unobservant of particular actions, yet the course and drift and tenor of our lives cannot be hidden from it. A man in a journey doth not count his steps, but he doth observe his way ; so here methinks a christian should not be ignorant of his mark, drift and scope, course, and constant business. Am I going to heaven or to hell ? Phil. ii. 12. Am I pleasing God or men ? 2 Cor. i. 12 ; 2 Cor. v. 9, ‘ Whether present or absent, I desire to be accepted of the Lord.’ What is my labour, my ambition, my daily work and business ?

Two reasons.

(1.) Because they are governed and influenced by different powers, God and the devil. The children of God are guided by his Holy Spirit : Rom. viii. 14, ‘ As many as are the children of God are led by the Spirit of God.’ The children of the devil by the evil spirit : Eph. ii. 2, ‘ They walk after the prince of the power of the air, that worketh in the children of disobedience.’ Now are God and the devil so agreed as that the votaries and followers of each cannot be distinguished ? The children of God are led by the Spirit of God ; that is, they obey his sanctifying motions, either by way of restraint, or invitation and excitement. By way of restraint : Rom. iii. 13, ‘ If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.’ Or invitation and excitement : Gal. v. 25, ‘ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.’ On the contrary, the unregenerate follow the motions and suggestions of the devil, whom they resemble in their sin and wickedness. He doth by their outward senses tempt them to sin, and the tempted sinner soon yieldeth ; and he by pleasure, profit, and credit withdraweth them from God, and hardeneth them ; and they are so addicted to sin and vanity, that they cannot refrain it. Satan hath too great a power on the godly,

but he doth not so efficaciously work in them as on the carnal. Therefore between these two sorts of people there should be a manifest and broad difference.

(2.) They have a different principle, the seed of God and corrupt nature: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.' Now both correspond with their principles. It is true the principles are mixed in the regenerate, but the better part is predominant; and therefore the acts, for the most part, suit with it, and so there is a broad difference between them and those who are only influenced by the flesh.

3. They have a different rule; the one walk according to the law of God, wherein he hath declared his will, the other according to the course of this world. According to the law of God: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the whole Israel of God.' The other according to the course of this world: Eph. ii. 2, 'Walking after the prince of the power of the air, which worketh in the children of disobedience.' According to the fashion and example of unrenewed men, or the general and corrupt custom and example of those with whom we live; and they conform themselves to it more than to the will of God. Now the fashions of the vain world and the strict law of the holy God are so different, that he that walketh according to the one must needs distinguish himself from the other; there being a distinct rule, there must needs be a different course; the one doeth righteousness, the other committeth sin.

4. There is a different end and scope; the one studieth to please God, the other to please themselves. The one studieth to please God: Col. i. 10, 'That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;' 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'I exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more;' 2 Cor. v. 9, 'For we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' The other to gratify their carnal desires: Rom. xiii. 14, 'And make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' The one seek their own things, Phil. ii. 21. They spend their time in the flesh, 'to the lusts of men, not the will of God,' 1 Peter iv. 2. Now there being such a different scope, the practice must be different also.

5. There is a different event and issue; all the world emptieth itself into heaven or hell. Now heaven and hell are much unlike, and vastly distant, and so are those that are travelling to either place: Phil. iii. 19, 20, 'For many walk, of whom I have told you, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' If the end be different, the way must be so also.

*Use 1.* Is to reprove them that profess themselves to be the people of God, but do not distinguish themselves from the children of the devil; they are so like one another that there is no manifest difference to be seen. A christian never liveth up to the majesty of his profession



till he be the world's wonder and the world's reproof : 1 Peter iv. 4, 'They think it strange that you run not with them into the same excess of riot.' It is no strange matter to please the flesh, but it is strange to row against the stream of flesh and blood. It is no wonder to see men carnal, proud, covetous, sensual ; the wonder is to see men dead to all these things, to be humble, meek, sober, modest. It is no wonder to see men walk as men, but it is a wonder to see men walk as born of God. It is no wonder to see men court the world, but to live in a contempt of the world, and to see men ready to part with what they see and love for a God and glory which they never saw, this is the wonder. Yet such a mystery and wonder should a christian be that liveth up to his principles. Secondly, The world's reproof ; as Noah : Heb. xi. 7, 'By preparing an ark to save himself and his household, condemned the world ;' that is, judged them for their laziness and disrespect of God's warning and impenitency, for that they repented not when God gave them time to repent. God hath told the world of the danger of sin, and showed them the way of salvation. By our diligence and seriousness in his ways, and in the use of the means prescribed to save our souls, we must condemn the world for their sloth and negligence ; otherwise, if we do not condemn the world, we justify the world, as Israel justified Sodom, Ezek. xvi. 51 ; namely, that they are not so culpable in slighting God and the offers of salvation by Christ.

*Use 2.* Is information. It informeth us of two important truths ; the one concerneth the ministry, the other all christians.

1. If there be such a manifest difference between the children of God and the children of the devil, then ministers must carefully make the distinction, and convince the one sort and comfort the other : Jer. xv. 19, 'If thou shalt take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth ;' that is, thou by thy teaching put a difference between the godly and the wicked, by confirming and comforting the one, and soundly convincing and reproving the other ; as if I myself had spoken it. The contrary is charged on a corrupt ministry : Ezek. xiii. 22, '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 ways, by promising him life.' This is to turn the ordinances of Christ to the service of the devil, and to gratify his children ; as usually those that are indulgent to the wicked are severe against the godly, and traduce them with wrong imputations ; as the naughty steward 'did eat and drink with the drunken, and smite his fellow-servants,' Mat. xxiv. 49 ; uphold the wicked in their carnal life ; but the serious are sure to meet with a buffet from them, and smart for it.

2. The other concerneth all christians, and that is, to show us the lawfulness, yea, the necessity, of trying our estate, and taking comfort in our estate, from marks and signs of grace, taken from our works or conversations. Many think this is to lead them off from Christ to themselves, but vainly ; for this is the method the Holy Ghost directeth us unto.

[1.] What comfort can we take in the promises if we must not look at those evidences in ourselves which may prove our interest in them ?



All privileges have their conditions annexed, and our right is suspended till the condition be performed, and our comfort till we know that it belongs to us. For instance, God hath said, John i. 12, 'To whomsoever have received him, even to as many as believed in his name, God hath given this power, that they should become the sons of God.' Now how will you know that you have this power but by knowing that you are a true believer? and how will you know that but by marks and signs of faith? If you say, No man can know that he is a true believer, you make the promise vain; for what good will it do any man that adoption is promised to believers, if we cannot know whether we be believers, yea or no? If it may be known, we must look after the qualification, which must evidence it to be our privilege. Will you apply the promise to all, or some, or none? If to none, then it is in vain; if to all, then you deceive the most; for though some be of God; the whole world lieth in wickedness, and the most are the children of the devil. If to some, what is the reason of the restraint? How will you know who they are, but by being believers, or doing righteousness, and loving our brother?

[2.] It informeth us that if conscience be a judge and witness within us, in order to our joy and comfort, then we must judge by what we are, or what we have done, or how we have lived; for conscience can take notice of no other things. Now it is certain that conscience hath a great hand and stroke in our comfort, assurance, and peace: Acts xxiv. 16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men;' 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world;' 1 John iii. 20, 21, 'If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' Much dependeth on its verdict and testimony.

[3.] We shall be judged according to these things by God, and therefore we should judge ourselves by them; for we cannot judge by a righter way than God will judge, whether our estate be good or bad. Now this is the way of God's procedure: Rev. xx. 12, 'All of us shall be judged according to our works.'

[4.] If the Lord hath propounded this way as a likely course to produce solid consolation, surely man should not murmur against it, and gratify the cavils of the loose professor. But even so it is: Gal. vi. 4, 'Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.' Many rejoice in this, that others are worse than they; but they should try their own work and carriage by the rule, for otherwise they do but rejoice in the sins of others. No; prove so as you may approve your own work, that is, your own state and actions.

*Use 3.* It is an awakening to God's people, who after long profession are no more clear in their own qualification. You should so unquestionably carry it for God, that others should know you; at least you should know your own selves: 'Examine yourselves, prove yourselves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' It is a shame to live so long, and not to know what is in us. But you will say, If the case be so evident, why then do so

many good people want assurance, and live in doubtfulness of their sincerity? I answer—

1. There need two witnesses: Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;' Rom. ix. 1, 'I say the truth in Christ, and lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' Why? Because the heart of man is so deceitful, Jer. xvii. 9, and the operations of it so various, dark, and confused, that we dare not trust our private judgment: 1 Cor. iv. 4, 'For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not thereby justified.'

2. That so few know their spiritual condition is through their own default, for otherwise the Spirit is ready to witness, if we are ready to receive his testimony. There is a fourfold fault—

[1.] They do not exercise grace to the life in the mortifying of sin or perfecting of holiness, and therefore the remainders of sin are active and troublesome, and grace is weak and small, and doth little discover itself in any costly and self-denying acts, and so are not accompanied with that delight and sweetness by which they should be noted and observed. Surely great things are more liable to sense and feeling than little; a staff is sooner found than a needle, and they that cross the inclinations of corrupt nature can sooner discern a divine spirit and power working in them than others that only cull out the safe, cheap, and easy part of religion; as valour is more seen in an open field than by lurking in a garrison.

[2.] It may be they do not examine their state or heed soul-affairs, that they may get their uprightness interpreted: 1 Cor. xi. 28, 'But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup;' 2 Cor. xiii. 4, 'Examine yourselves, prove yourselves; know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye are reprobates?' Now if men do not reflect upon themselves, no wonder they be ignorant of their own estate.

[3.] Sometimes, out of a faulty modesty and humility, they deny what is wrought in them and by them. A child of God should own his graces as well as corruptions. Hezekiah said, 2 Kings xx. 3, 'O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and done that which is good in thy sight.' We should not so far look to what we should be as not to observe what we are and have already been; for the day of small things must not be despised, Zech. iv. 10. The spouse owneth grace in the midst of infirmities: Cant. v. 2, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh;' and he in the Gospel, Mark ix. 24, 'Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief.' We are sensible of a disease more than health. We come short of what we should have, but is there nothing of God in our souls? We should not only observe our sins and infirmities, but also take notice of the good things that are found in us. Christ taxeth this over-humility in Peter: John xiii. 8, 'Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.'

[4.] The general cause is laziness: 2 Peter i. 10, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' Heb. vi. 11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end;' 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace.' So far as



we neglect our duty, the sense of our interest may abate. Foolish presumption costs a man nothing, but solid assurance cometh with diligence; and the more grace is exercised in acts of communion with God, the more it is known by us: Job xxii. 21, 'Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace.' In difficulties and afflictions: Heb. xii. 11, 'No chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' In all the duties of holiness: John xiv. 21, 23, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him. If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' In duties towards God: Heb. xi. 4, 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.' In duties towards men: 1 John iii. 19, 'And hereby we know we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.'

*Doct. 2.* That purity and charity are true notes of God's children.

These are characters laid down here, as manifest evidences whereby our estate may be determined.

First, Purity. See how it is described in the text, 'He that doeth not righteousness is not of God.' Where observe—

1. That not only sins of commission, but omission, may render our estate questionable. He had said before, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil;' now he altereth his manner of speaking, 'He that doeth not righteousness is not of God,' and so by consequence of the devil, though he should not offend by doing harm or doing unrighteousness. To do righteousness is to do that which righteousness calleth for and requireth at our hands, when time and occasion is offered; and he that doth not so is not of God; and therefore not only commission of sin, but neglect of a christian life, involveth us in this blemish of being children of the devil: Mat. iii. 10, 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.' Not only the poisonous, but the barren tree. And it is made the character of the wicked: Ps. xxxvi. 3, 'He hath left off to be wise, and to do good.' To cast off or neglect the ways of wisdom and holiness is an argument of wickedness, though no other apparent evil should be charged upon us. The unprofitable servant is cast into everlasting fire, Mat. xxv. 30; not he that embezzled his talent, but folded it in a napkin. Many think, if they do nobody any harm, God will accept them; but what good do you do? That child is counted undutiful not only that doth not wrong and beat his father, but he that doth not give him due reverence. Therefore it should humble us that we do no more good, that we so much neglect God, that we do no more edify our neighbour, or take care for the saving of our souls. We think omissions no sins, or light sins, but God doth not think so. Surely omissions are sins; there is in them the nature of the first sin, as considered in Adam or us; there was an aversion from God, and a conversion to the creature. In us there is *carentia originalis justitiæ*, first a want of that grace that should incline us to God, and then followeth all the corruption and pollution of nature; the daughter is like the mother. In actual sin there is a cessation of acts of love to God, then inordinate acts of self-love: Titus ii. 12,



‘Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.’ Secondly, From the nature of the law. A sin of omission is contrary to the precept, as well as a sin of commission. To the prohibition: ‘Cease to do evil, learn to do well,’ Isa. i. 16. There we must use the bridle, here the spur. Thirdly, Our mercies are not only privative, but positive; deliverance from hell, and eternal life, John iii. 16. God is both a sun and a shield, Ps. lxxxiv. 11; Gen. xv. 1, ‘I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.’ As our mercies, so our obedience. Sinning is a direct way to hell, as doing righteousness is to heaven. Fourthly, Christ came that we might live unto righteousness, as well as die unto sin, 1 Peter ii. 24; to promote vivification as well as mortification; that we might know the power of his resurrection as well as be planted into the likeness of his death; that the good principle might be cherished and induced into act, as well as the bad principle curbed and restrained. Fifthly, Because we cannot else improve our talents, but God’s best gifts would lie idle upon our hands if we did not exercise ourselves unto godliness. Every relation puts new duties upon us; so doth every new gift and talent. To be sure our relation to God calleth for more duty at our hands than we are wont to perform; and the general wickedness that is charged upon mankind is, that they do not seek after God, Ps. xiv. 2; and Ps. x. 3, 4, ‘The wicked through the pride of his heart will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts.’ But besides this, consider our relations to one another, as magistrates, subjects, ministers, christians, parents and children, masters and servants; consider this, and you will find that the greatest part of the sins of the world lieth in sins of omission. When we look into our bill, to see what we owe to God, according to the advice of the unjust steward, instead of a hundred, to put down fifty, we leave out all our omissions. We do not worship an idol, but we forget the true God days without number, Jer. ii. 32. We do not take away that which is another’s, but do not give our own; they do not swear, but do they honour and glorify the name of God in their conversations?

2. But let us explain the nature of this doing righteousness. It is to fear God, and walk in all his ways: Acts x. 35, ‘He that feareth God and worketh righteousness.’ Or he is said to do righteousness who, being justified and sanctified by the Spirit, doth give up himself to God to do his will, and maketh it the business of his life to grow more complete therein. Renewing is in it: Eph. ii. 10, ‘Ye are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works.’ Dedication is in it: Rom. vi. 13, ‘But yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.’ The will of God is your rule: Rom. xii. 2, ‘That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable will of God.’ After dedication, our work and business should be to ‘live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,’ Titus ii. 12. This is the righteousness which should so be carried on from an everlasting principle by a divine rule to eternal ends. Well, then, they do but arrogate a place and a name among God’s people that do not live holily.

Secondly, The next mark is charity; this is not mentioned at random, nor merely to bring on another discourse, but with good advice.

1. The general note of God's children is holiness, and the particular note is love of the brethren. It is a great branch of righteousness, take it largely for holiness, or more strictly for our duty to our neighbour. So alms is often called righteousness in scripture; for doing good is one special act of our duty, and so a branch of righteousness: Ps. cxii. 9, 'He hath given to the poor, and his righteousness endureth for ever;' Isa. lviii. 7, 8, 'If thou give thy bread to the hungry, then shall thy righteousness go before thee.'

2. It explaineth the former note; for righteousness and love to the brethren are joined together, and so it sheweth that he doth righteousness whose works are good, and come from a good spirit, from love to God, which is the soul of all duties; for he that loveth his brother for God's sake loveth God: Gal. v. 14, 'All the law is fulfilled in this one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' How all the law? Namely, as second-table duties arise out of the first, and are done for God's sake.

3. He is speaking of being born of God, and the seed of God. We resemble God in nothing so much as love: 1 John iv. 8, 16, 'He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' And we resemble the devil mostly by malice. It is the devil's work to do all the hurt he can to the bodies and souls of men, 'for the devil is a murderer from the beginning,' John viii. 44. Devouring malice is the true image of Satan, the devilish nature in us. When Jesus Christ came to discover the amiableness of the divine nature to us, it is said, Acts x. 38, 'He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.' Christ did nothing by way of malice and revenge; he used not the power that he had to make men blind or lame, or to kill any; no, not his worst enemies, when he could easily have done it, and justly might have done it. No; he went up and down giving sight to the blind, and limbs to the lame, health to the sick, and life to the dead. Therefore those that are God's children, and are born of God, and have the seed of God abiding in them, should be as zealous in doing good to all as Satan's servants are in hurting.

4. Much of christianity consists in love and doing good. Love is made to be the fulfilling of the law, Rom. xiii. 8, the end of the gospel institution: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'Now the end of the commandment is charity.' The great lesson which God teacheth us: 'Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another,' 1 Thes. iv. 9. The grand characteristic of Christ's disciples, by which they are notified to themselves and others: John xiii. 35, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' With what eyes do men read the gospel that can overlook all these things, and live in malice, envy, and hatred?

5. The parties to be loved are called brethren, and elsewhere neighbours, Mat. xxii. 39. By common nature every neighbour is a brother; but saints have the pre-eminence in this love, but not the confinement: 'Do good to all, especially to the household of faith,' Gal. vi. 8; 2 Peter i. 7, 'And add to brotherly-kindness, love.' Enemies are not excepted: Mat. v. 44, 45, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good



to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.' God must be loved in all his creatures; his natural image in all men, his spiritual image in his saints. Well, then, if you would be accounted children of your Father which is in heaven, love to all in their several capacities must be your very nature, and the doing them all the good that you can must be the very business of your lives.

*Use.* Look after these evidences, and see they be more and more found in you.

1. Nothing quiets the mind but a persuasion that God loveth us as his children, and that he will give us eternal life. Get this persuasion once, that God is your Father and you are his children, and then all the controversy between God and us is at an end. The reason is clear: He that taketh God for a judge only can never be fully satisfied in his condition, nor live in peace; there is no safety but in God's family, and no holy security but in being his children. The great business of the Spirit of God is to clear this to us: Rom. viii. 15, 'But you have received the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father.' So Gal. iv. 6, 'Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;' Eph i. 13, 14, 'Whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.' The great business of our Redeemer was to purchase this blessing for us: Gal. iv. 5, 'To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;' John viii. 36, 'If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed.' The great privilege which we have by baptism as a sign: Gal. iii. 26, 27, 'For ye are all children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' By faith as to the reality: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' The church of the new testament, as to her outward estate, is an estate of sonship and adoption; and the truly godly have the real effect of it; they have the dignity, the privileges or the rights which belong to the children of God.

2. Purity of life and charity, which are here asserted to be the two sure signs of a child of God, are to be understood evangelically. If so, then they that lead impious and uncharitable lives are no children of God, however they flatter themselves in the goodness of their estate. The exclusive mark is more easy than the inclusive, because of the many failings of God's children, who have a deep reverence for God's holiness and the exactness of his law, therefore they are not so clear. What shall be said to them? They must labour to make their qualification more explicit, and remember it is to be interpreted evangelically, that is, if they be sincere. The first covenant required unsinning obedience, the second alloweth of uprightness and sincerity; the old covenant bringeth all things to the balance, the new to the touchstone. If the best of us were put into the balance of the sanctuary, we should be found wanting, and then who can be saved? Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'He is a sun and a shield, and will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' The upright are the Lord's

delight, Prov. xi. 20. These may take comfort in God, as God delighteth in them, both in affliction and prosperity: Ps. cxii. 9, 'To the upright there ariseth light in darkness,' not only after, but in life: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is my rejoicing, the testimony of my conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.' In death: 2 Kings xx. 3, 'Remember, O Lord, that I have walked before thee with a perfect heart, and done that which is good in thy sight.'

3. No sincerity is to be discerned but by our constant walk and course: 'He is a sun and a shield to them that walk uprightly;' and 'I have walked before thee with a perfect heart.' Here the upright are described by their conversations; newness of life is the perpetual testimony of our adoption. A man may force himself for an act or two; Saul in a raptural fit may be among the prophets; therefore we are to judge by our scope and walk. A child of God may be under a strange appearance in some simple acts; so the wicked have their good moods; an aguish man hath his well days: Ps. cvi. 3, 'But blessed are they that keep judgment, and do righteousness at all times.'

## SERMON XVII.

*For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*—1 JOHN iii. 11.

In these words we have a reason of the last clause in the former verse, why he that loveth not his brother is not of God. This is his argument: He that keepeth not God's commandments is not of God; he that loveth not his brother keepeth not God's commandments. The major is evident in itself, the minor is proved in the text, 'For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning,' &c.

In the words we have—

1. A duty, 'That we should love one another.'

2. The authority by which it is recommended to us, 'This is the message that ye have heard from the beginning.' Where—

[1.] It is a message or command, 'This is the message.'

[2.] An ancient doctrine or command, 'Which ye have heard from the beginning.'

1. The duty recommended to us, which is mutual love, 'That we should love one another;' that is, that we should love all men, but chiefly that christians should love christians.

2. The authority by which this command is enforced.

[1.] It is the declaration and message, or the commandment. Everything we read in the word of God, or hear from the word of God, is a special message sent from God: Acts xiii. 20, 'To you is the word of this salvation sent;' not brought, but sent. I allude to that of Judges iii. 20, 'I have a message from God to thee, and he arose off his seat.' Every message from God bespeaketh its own respect and reverence.



[2.] 'From the beginning:' The same phrase is used 1 John ii. 7, 'I write no new commandment unto you, but the old commandment which ye have heard from the beginning.' This is to be understood either—

(1.) From the beginning of their conversion, since ye were called to the knowledge of God. Love is one of the first lessons of christianity; for, Gal. v. 6, 'Faith worketh by love;' and Eph. i. 15, 'After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints;' expressing thereby their christianity. Ever since they became christians they were possessed with the necessity of this duty.

(2.) From the beginning of the gospel state, or ever since the faith of Christ was published and preached in the world. This is the doctrine so often and so earnestly inculcated by Christ when he was here upon earth: John xiii. 34, 35, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; that as I have loved you, so ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another;' and John xv. 12, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.' And this is often inculcated by our apostle, as one that lay in Christ's bosom, and had a true sense of his Master's doctrine, and did partake largely of his spirit.

(3.) From the beginning of the Mosaical administration, even under the law, this was a duty pressed: Lev. xix. 18, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; I am the Lord.' And the neighbour was not only the Jewish neighbour, or one that lived within the pale and line of the Jewish communion, as appeareth by the language of the commandment: Mat. xx. 16, 17, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house;' which prohibitions imply the gentile as well as the Jewish neighbour. All men, considered as men in respect of nature and creation, are our brethren; so an Edomite is reckoned a brother, Deut. xxiii. 7. So in respect of commerce and occasion of intercourse they are our neighbours; to them must we perform all acts of love and mercy, as their necessities do require.

(4.) From the beginning of the world, ever since Adam; for it was not only enforced by Christ's and Moses' law, but implanted and engrafted on man's heart or the law of nature. It is a matter of natural equity to love our neighbour, to do or not to do to others as we would have done or not done to ourselves, Mat. vii. 12. The gentiles were bound to this by the law of nature. Well, then, you see love to one another was always in great esteem with God; therefore every one that is born of God should make great conscience of it. If the gentiles, by the law of nature, were bound to love others as themselves, and the Jews by the law of Moses, much more are christians under an obligation by the express command of Christ to love one another.

*Doct.* One great duty which God hath recommended to our obedience is to love one another.

Here I shall show you—

1. What is this love to one another.

2. How God hath recommended it to our obedience.

I. What is this love to one another? There are two branches of it: 2 Peter i. 7, 'And to brotherly kindness, charity.'

First, There is contained in it brotherly kindness, a grace wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, inclining us to love all those without exception as brethren who are made partakers of like precious faith with us. In which description note—

1. The author of this grace, and that is the Holy Spirit renewing the heart: 1 Peter i. 22, 'Seeing ye have purified your hearts through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.' Naturally there is in us pride, self-love, wrath, strife, which dispose us only to please ourselves and love ourselves, without any regard to others; and besides, till our souls be purified and sanctified, we shall never love purity and holiness in others, but the upright will be an abomination to us: Prov. xxix. 27, 'He that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.' They are unsuitable to them, and they are objects reviving guilt. Whatever good nature men have yet in their natural condition, they are enemies to the godly. Naturally we hate God because he is a holy God, and we hate his law because it is a holy law, and we hate his children because they are a holy people; but when the soul is purified, its love and inclinations and aversions are altered, both as to persons and things. We love God for his holiness, Ps. ciii. 1; we love his law because it is pure, Ps. cxix. 140; and we love his people because they are holy: Ps. xv. 4, 'In whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.' The new creature loveth what God loveth, and hateth what God hateth.

2. There is a propension or inclination in the new nature to this love, with all the acts and fruits of it, though no outward respects invite us thereunto: 1 Thes. iv. 9, 'Concerning brotherly love, ye need not that any should write unto you, for ye are taught of God to love one another.' Instruction and persuasion doth not put us upon it so much as inclination, and the tendency of the new nature: 1 John iv. 7, 'Every one that loveth is born of God;' and 1 John v. 1, 'He that loveth him that begat, loveth also those that are begotten by him.' Those that have the new nature in any degree of strength and prevalency are inclined and disposed by it to love others, who are partakers of the same nature; so that it is a duty kindly and natural to the regenerate, flowing from an inward propension and inclination, and needeth not much outward excitement. All the saints have a new heart of one and the same making and nature, and propound unto themselves one and the same end and scope, and so their hearts are suited to one another, and take pleasure in one another.

3. The acts and fruits of this love are these—

[1.] An esteem of them, and complacency in them, as having more of God in them than other men. They are said to be partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4. We love God's natural image in all men; we love his spiritual image in the saints; and therefore the bond is stronger than the bond of common love: Ps. xvi. 3, 'My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight;' Prov. xii. 26, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' therefore a greater object of love; as Austin said of himself and his friend Alypius, that their friendship grew more entire when they both became acquainted with Christ, and



were cemented together with the blood of Christ. *Eodem sanguine Christi glutinati.*

[2.] By an affectionate desire of their good and spiritual happiness. The philosopher telleth us to love any is to wish well to them, to desire them all the good we can; and we cannot desire a greater good to others than spiritual good, than the best good; not to wish them health and strength of body, and greatness and worldly accommodations, but grace, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and light, life, and eternal happiness: Col. i. 9, 'We cease not to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding;' Phil. i. 8, 'God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.' God knoweth the secret motions and inclinations of our inward affections. Now, when we can appeal to God for the fervency, sincerity, and spirituality of our love, and have in some measure as hearty a good-will to them as Christ had to souls when he died for them, then we have this Christ-like love which is called brotherly kindness.

[3.] As occasion serveth, we must really promote their good to the uttermost of our power; for it is a cold love that will not be at any pains and charges, or hazard any interests, for the sake of those whom we love; that contenteth itself with wishes, yea, though they be formed into prayers. No; we must not say only, Be warmed, be clothed, but really do them good, and seek their welfare as we would our own. In short, we must sympathise with them in every condition: Rom. xii. 15, 'Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep;' 1 Cor. xii. 20, we should have the same care one for another. Want of feeling is a self-excommunication, a casting ourselves out of the body. Nay, there must be not only sympathy and compassion, but real succour: Gal. vi. 10, 'Do good to all, but especially to the household of faith;' Rom. xii. 13, 'Distributing to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality;' Heb. vi. 10, 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.' We must do them all possible service, as the exigencies of their circumstances and occasions do require, assisting them with our favour, countenance, labour, estates; yea, and, as we shall see afterwards, by hazarding and laying down life itself.

[4.] By conversing with them, and delighting in their fellowship, for our mutual comfort and edification. Love is a uniting thing; it draweth to communion; as the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, 1 Sam. xviii. 15; and the apostle biddeth christians to be knit together in love, Col. ii. 2. Brotherly love is such an affection as knits the hearts of the professors of the same faith to one another, as if they had but one heart and one soul in common amongst them: Acts iv. 32, 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.' And therefore it is called the bond of perfection, Col. iii. 14. The saints are bound together in a holy society, and preserved by it; and without it, as a besom unbound, they fall all to pieces.

[5.] In passing by failings and infirmities: 1 Peter iv. 8, 'And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.' Love will prevent and pass by many mutual wrongs, which otherwise would disturb the comfortable society

of the Lord's people ; therefore brotherly love is not come to its due height, growth, and fervency when it is easily interrupted by every offence. We cannot expect to converse with any in this life but some failings and wrongs it is like will be often reiterated, both against God and one another ; therefore, unless we have learned to pardon failings, we have not learned the true art of loving one another ; we must pardon the person for the wrong done to us, and we must intercede with God for the pardon of the wrong done to him. Love must cover these, not upbraiding the party with them, and concealing it from the wicked as much as may be, lest religion be disgraced.

[6.] The impartiality of this love ; we must love those without exception who are godly, whether rich or poor, prosperous or afflicted.

(1.) Whether rich or poor ; for we must not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ in respect of persons, James ii. 1. No ; if it be sincere, it must be love to all the saints, Eph. i. 15, to the meanest as well as the greatest, otherwise we despise the church of God, 1 Cor. xi. 20. Meanness doth not take away christian relations. There are many differences in worldly respects between one of God's children and another, and in spiritual gifts some are weak and some are strong ; yet we must love all, for all are brethren ; all are children of one Father, all owned by Christ ; co-heirs not only with the richest and strongest christians, but with Christ himself ; therefore we should love them without respect of persons, yea, love them when no respect of our own doth invite us thereunto ; for love is not to be measured by our profit, but by a desire to profit others.

(2.) We should love them in adversity as well as in prosperity. Some seem to love good people when the times favour them, and they suffer no loss by owning them. No ; you must own them in their troubles also and persecutions : Heb. x. 33, 'Partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became companions of them who were so used.' Some suffered as the parties persecuted, others as their companions, who were not at first in the original process. So Moses left all the pleasures of the court, and his friendships there, to join with God's despised people : Heb. xi. 25, 'Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' Alas ! there are many painted butterflies and summer-friends to the gospel, who are gone when the sunshine of prosperity is gone. Brethren then do almost forget that they are brethren, if not altogether, and stand aloof, and are loath to own the afflicted.

(3.) We should love them all, whether we be obliged or disobliged ; for in brotherly kindness we are not to mind our own things, but the image of God and the glory of God, and the good and benefit of others : Phil. ii. 4, 'Look not every one upon his own things, but every man also upon the things of others.' Whether we are invited to this love by benefits or courtesies done to us, or discouraged by neglects, we are to consider our duty to people as they stand related to God, otherwise we know one another after the flesh, when we value men by personal respects to us rather than by what of God we find in them : 'If you love them that love you, do not even the publicans the same ?' Mat.



v. 46. What singular thing do we? We are monsters of ingratitude if we should do otherwise.

(4.) The objects of this love are those that are partakers of like precious faith with us, or, in one word, the brethren, or our fellow-christians. Our brethren in a natural sense are all mankind, as it is said, Acts xvii. 16, 'He hath made all nations of one blood.' There is a communion of the same nature. But in a christian sense, all the faithful are brethren in Christ, because of the communion of the same faith. Of these, some are only professors of the faith, who, in opposition to infidels, are called brethren: 1 Cor. v. 11, 12, 'If any called a brother be a fornicator, or a drunkard, or a railer, or covetous, or an idolater, with such an one eat not.' Others are really regenerate, or give hopeful evidences thereof; these are born of the same seed, adopted by the same Father, brought up in the same family, partakers of the same Spirit, estated in the same inheritance, of the same brotherhood the apostle maketh mention, 1 Peter ii. 17. Now though they should not be such as we take them to be by their profession, yet our love is acceptable to God, because we love them upon this supposition, that they are brethren.

(5.) The reduplication or qualification of this object. These brethren must be loved as brethren with such a love, and upon that account, as Christ distinguisheth between giving to a disciple and giving to him in the name of a disciple, Mat. x. 42; as one that belongeth to Christ, stamped with the image of God, and sealed with his Spirit. If it be for some external respect, though the love be real in its kind, yet we have our own ends in it; as many may show respect to the people of God to get advantage by them. Self-love is great in every one of us, and therefore in sincerity to love the brethren is a very difficult thing; most have their ends in it, and make a market of their religion. Then it is brotherly kindness when we love them out of a respect to their holiness, or because of the image of God in them. A saint is to be loved as a saint, and a disciple as a disciple, *eo nomine*, not because learned, potent, opulent, but as a child of God; if so, *a quatenus ad omne*, then we will love all in whom we see anything of Christ. Love will cover something that is unlovely in them, because partakers of the same grace, and look for salvation by the same Christ. Surely we will love them whether they be of our party or no; but (*sicut se habet simpliciter ad simpliciter, ita magis ad magis*) the more godly, the more we will love them. Many love godliness in a low degree, while mingled with imperfections,—the impurity is a part of the reason of the love,—whilst a very strict man is hated. Well, then, this is brotherly love. By this brief view of it we see it is very rare to be found amongst christians. Self-love and the love of the world have almost destroyed it; and where it is, it is not so fervent and effectual as it should be. In most persons, though professed christians, we either find no love, or if any be, a very cold one, such as will run no hazards for and with those whom we love.

I come now to speak of the other branch, charity, or love to all men, for it must not confine itself to fellow-christians only, but be diffused to all men, though they be not heirs of the same grace of life. In short—

1. This love is either *amor justitiæ*, which consists in justice and righteousness. We are not to wrong them or defraud them of their due, but so deal with them as we would be dealt with ourselves; for this is one sort and kind of love: to love my neighbour as myself, and do as I would be done by, are equivalent expressions: Rom. xiii. 7, 8, 'Render to every one their due; owe no man anything, but to love one another.' Again, there is *amor compassionis*, we must not hide ourselves from our own flesh, Isa. lviii. 7; we must be affected with their misery, both by reason of sin and affliction, relieve their wants, seek their conversion, and promote it by ourselves and others by all ways and means possible. This we owe to barbarians and wicked ones, of what nation soever; though we hate their ways, we must pity their persons.

2. From this love enemies and persecutors are not excepted: Mat. v. 44, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.' For this is to be like God, who is kind to the unthankful and the evil: Luke vi. 35, 'But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil.'

3. The fruits of this love are not only seen in bestowing temporal benefits, but to the uttermost of our power (because they are capable of eternal blessedness) making it our unfeigned desire and prayer to God, that they may be saved: Rom. x. 1, 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved.' And our earnest endeavours should be to procure their spiritual good: James v. 19, 20, 'Brethren, if any one of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.'

Secondly, The reasons.

1. Why we should love all men. The reasons that may induce us are—

[1.] Equality, the actual equality of all men by nature, who were all made by the same God, and all made of one blood. Diversity of rank doth not take away identity of nature: Mal. ii. 10, 'Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?' So Job xxxi. 13–15, 'If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me: what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb, make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?' So Neh. v. 5, 'Our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, and their children as our children.' Why is more due to you than them? And the possible equality of all men, as to their condition and state of life: Heb. xiii. 3, 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves in the body.' Before we go out of the body there may be strange changes in the world, and God may make us as low as others.

[2.] We are to imitate God, as children do their father, Mat. v. 45. Now God loveth all his creatures, and hateth none; the more we imi-



tate God, the more we know we are children of our Father which is in heaven.

[3.] God hath so cast the world, that sometimes we need the help or others, as they need ours, that, by mutual necessities and a combination of interests, the world may be upheld. As in the body natural, no member can say to any, I have no need of thee; so also hath God disposed it in the great frame of mankind, that we may have a mutual care of one another, 1 Cor. xii. 25. As he requireth from every man a respect to the world of mankind, so he hath turned all the respects of the world of mankind upon one man. We would be glad to be loved of all the men in the world, if we could bring it to pass; and surely we may the better expect it if we have this love to all the world.

2. Why we are to love strangers: Heb. xiii. 2, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for hereby some have entertained angels unawares.' By 'strangers' he meaneth those that are far from home, in another place and country, where they have few friends, and are not well known, especially when exiled for the gospel. We find this in Abraham's and Lot's instances, who were kind to the angels, and had their recompense. Abraham's barren wife had a promise of bearing a son to him. Lot had benefit also, being saved from the flames that destroyed Sodom. Surely such a work of mercy shall not go unrewarded.

3. Why enemies? Partly because there is more reason to love them than hate them, because there are some relics of God's image in them; and God hath forgiven us greater wrongs: Eph. iv. 32, 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' We commit a sin against God, or else, upon the apprehension of the injury done us by man, we are deeper in danger than our enemy; we daily trespass against God more than they can trespass against us. God forgiveth talents, we cannot forgive pence; God forgiveth a hundred thousand, we cannot one hundred, Mat. xviii. We look that God should forgive us, and we will not forgive others. In short, though it be more comfortable to love a friend, it is more honourable to love an enemy: Prov. xix. 11, 'It is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression.'

II. How God hath recommended it to our obedience.

1. It is a precept and a commanded duty, and not bare counsel and advice only. There is a great deal of difference between allowing and commanding; where a thing is allowed, *licet*, it may be done; but where a thing is commanded, *oportet*, it must be done, a necessity is laid upon us; and therefore none must look upon love as an indifferent thing, which we may practise or forbear at our own pleasure. No; it is a debt or duty by virtue of Christ's express command, a duty to Christ, a debt that we owe to God more than to our neighbour; we owe love to them as our fellow-creatures, but chiefly upon the injunction of our Creator.

2. It is a special command which Christ hath adopted into his new law. Christ calleth it his new commandment: John xiii. 34, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.' How new, since it was as old as the moral law or the law of nature? Because it was so solemnly renewed by him; and commended to their care. Laws, when new, are more regarded and obeyed. Christ would ratify it afresh,

that the law of love might never be out of date, but be looked upon as a statute in force and newly enacted, and fresh in the remembrance of his people. Or a new commandment, because pressed upon a new ground and pattern : before it was 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' now it is, 'As I have loved you.' The great love of Christ discovered in the gospel must leave a suitable impression on us. He came from heaven not only to represent the holy and amiable nature of God, but to propound us a pattern of love and charity. Once more, the scripture is impatient of being denied when it calleth for love to the brethren ; therefore it applieth itself to our dispositions either way. Some prize old things, others new ; therefore it telleth us, 1 John ii. 7, 8, 'I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning.' Again, 'A new commandment write I unto you ;' 2 John 5, 'Not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which ye had from the beginning, that ye love one another.' It is old and not old, new and not new ; thus it plieth us on all hands, that we may look upon ourselves as deeply concerned. Some novelty is suspected, therefore he telleth them of an old commandment ; it is the same which was commanded in the law, yet solemnly reinforced in the gospel. There are some commands which are new and not old, such are the sacraments of the new testament ; some are old and not new, as the ceremonies of the law now antiquated ; some both old and new, as the precepts of the moral law, and in particular this command of love, which, though it were enjoined before, yet it is revived by Christ, and renewed and recommended by him to his disciples as a chief and singular duty.

3. It is his dying charge : John xv. 12, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another.' He appropriateth it, and challengeth it as his commandment, which, though given by God before, yet he would make his own by an express charge : If my authority be of any force with you, do not entertain it with a careless indifferency, as a thing which you may neglect without any great inconvenience. The season is to be observed when those things were spoken by Christ, when he was departing from his disciples, and preparing them for his departure. Speeches of dying men are received with much reverence, especially the charge of dying friends. The brethren of Joseph, fearing he should remember old injuries, came to him with this plea, Gen. l. 16, 'Thy father did command us before he died, saying.' Let us fulfil the will of the dead. Our Lord commanded us when he died, saying, 'Love one another.' Christ foresaw how his disciples would quarrel in their Master's absence, how his work would thereby be interrupted, and their own peace ; how his religion would be exposed to reproach and obloquy by the contention of his followers ; therefore he left this charge, 'See that ye love one another.'

4. It is a comprehensive command ; for to love one another implieth all those things which concern our duty to our neighbour : John xv. 17, 'These things I command you, that ye love one another.' These things, and yet but one thing pressed, and that is to love each other. But love containeth many duties in the bosom of it : Gal. v. 14, 'All the law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' How is that to be understood ? There are other precepts



besides this ; there are respects of love due to God, and there is justice due to our neighbour, as well as love. But love God, and we love our neighbour for God's sake ; and the acts of justice which we perform to them are the fruits and products of love, and must flow from love ; yea, the acts of charity, how pompous and plausible soever they be, yet if love be not at the bottom, they are not right : 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3, ' Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' So that all the law is fulfilled in this one word. Therefore love is called the fulfilling of the law, Rom. xiii. 8.

5. It is a duty that fitteth us to partake of the blessing which God hath commanded for his people when united : Ps. cxxxiii. 1-3, ' Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity : It is like the precious ointment upon Aaron's head, that ran down upon the beard, that went down to the skirt of his garment ; as the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descendeth upon the mountains of Zion ; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.' This holy concord is a blessing both pleasant and profitable. God delighteth to pour out his graces on such a society : Mat xviii. 19, ' I say unto you, If two of you shall agree on earth touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.' God will not hear one sort of his children against another ; it is like ' the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirt of his garment.' There the pleasantness is described by the fragrancy of the holy ointment wherewith Aaron and his sons were anointed ; it is often called the oil of gladness, because it cheered the spirits of the chief priests, and all that were present in the temple. The profit of it, ver. 3, ' As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion ; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.' It is as the dew which moistens the earth, which was a great blessing in those hot countries, and caused the fields to laugh with fatness ; he mentioned Mount Hermon and Mount Zion. Hermon was a fat and fruitful place ; it is usually put among the fair and pleasant pastures. There is the blessing ; they have most communion with God who have most communion with one another, and all this is in order to eternal life.

6. This is a duty that doth most discover the temper of our religion, which is wholly made up of love. It is a God of love that we serve, and they have no acquaintance with him that love not their brethren : 1 John iv. 7, 8, ' Let us love one another, for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God ; for God is love.' Again, 1 John iv. 16, ' God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' Redemption by Christ, which is the great mystery of the christian religion, the most conspicuous end was the demonstration of

God's love: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' So 1 John iii. 16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us.' What is this mystery of redemption but a wonder of love? It was love stepped in, and recovered us out of that destruction and ruin wherein we had involved ourselves. What was the Son of God but love incarnate, love coming down from heaven to earth, to die for a sinful world? Now why was all this made known unto us? Only to talk of, or comfort ourselves withal? No; that we might imitate it, that the true stamp and impression of our religion may be upon our hearts: Eph. v. 2, 'Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us;' 1 John iv. 11, 'If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.' He that seeth the true face of redemption, and understandeth the gospel and the grace of Christ, will easily be induced to see the reasonableness of such a duty. And what is the work of the Holy Ghost but to shed abroad this love in our hearts? Rom. v. 5; the intent of the ordinances, but to represent this love and seal up this love? So that we do express the true genius of our religion by love.

*Use.* The use is to show us the excellency, and amiableness, and beautifulness of the christian religion in both these regards, as it requireth brotherly kindness and charity. Brotherly kindness or communion of saints: some things are pleasant and not profitable, as vain delights; some things are profitable and not pleasant, as afflictions and the sorrows of repentance; some things neither profitable nor pleasant, as hatred, variance, strife; some things pleasant and profitable, as the concord of God's people. Man is a sociable creature, and religion doth mightily befriend human societies; for besides that brotherly kindness, that it requireth to be exercised among christians themselves, it requireth also love to all men, not only forbidding injustice to the names and persons of others, but uncharitableness, and those oppressions and injuries wherewith the world aboundeth. These things would be banished if men would be but true to this religion, and love their neighbour as themselves. It commands universal love and kindness among men, a readiness to forgive our greatest enemies. How easily would men be induced to pardon wrongs! how patiently would they bear a modest dissent, where in this state of frailty all men cannot force their judgments to be of another mould and size! How far would men be from doing hurt to one another, hurt no man, speak evil of no man! Yea, how beneficial and helpful would men be to one another, seeking others' good as their own, affected with one another's welfare as their own, and rejoicing in it! Oh, that the world would consider how much of christianity consists in love and doing good! Without that there is nothing so fierce, so bad, so cruel, which you may not be drawn to think, say, or do against your brother. The world is prejudiced against religion as an ill-natured thing, but there is no ground for such a prejudice, when we consider the christian religion requireth nothing but what is most fit for God to command, and most reasonable for man to obey.



## SERMON XVIII.

*Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*—1 JOHN iii. 12.

THE apostle having urged the precept of brotherly love, now speaketh of the contrary, which is hatred to the power of godliness, and of this by way of instance and example. This instance is fitly chosen—

1. As being a most eminent example, or an early discovery of the malignity of corrupt nature. Therefore Tertullian calleth Cain the patriarch of unbelievers. Enmity to religion began betimes, and the world keepeth its old wont, then, and now, and ever. Those that will live godly in Christ Jesus must expect troubles, 2 Tim. iii. 12.

2. As best to represent the tragical effects of envy and hatred. When once brotherly love faileth, there is nothing so bad and cruel which you may not be drawn to do against your brethren; for corrupt nature is cruelly bent against all that stand in the way of our esteem and desires. When once a brother is represented as an enemy, if it be in the power of our hands, what will we think unlawful to be acted against him? If malice be curbed and restrained, we seek to draw those in with us who have power to serve our private quarrels and revenges; and hatred given way to will not be slaked without blood and ruin.

3. It sheweth that devouring malice is the true devilish nature: 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one.' It was one of Ecolampadius' observations in a sermon to the children of Basil, that the ordinary pictures of God and Satan were in good books for the instruction of children either in the nature of God or Satan. The truest representation that can be made of God to children should be to teach them what truth is, what mercy is, what love is, what goodness is, for this is God; and the best picture that can be taken of Satan would be the true characters of malice, falsehood, envy, and hatred. God is love, God is mercy, God is goodness; but falsehood, envy, and hatred, and cruelty are natural to the old serpent: 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.'

In the words observe—(1.) Cain's fact; (2.) The reason of it.

1. His fact, 'He slew his brother.'

2. The reason. In this latter, one reason is expressed, viz., contrariety of practice; *acerbissima sunt odia ex diversitate morum*. The other implied envy at God's favour to him, for envy soon runneth into malice.

First reason. Abel is seldom spoken of in scripture, but he is honoured with the title of righteous: Mat. xxiii. 33, 'From the blood of righteous Abel.' So Heb. xi. 4, 'By which he obtained witness that he was righteous.'

Second reason. Envy at God's favour: Gen. iv. 4, 'God had respect to Abel and his offering.' It must be known by some visible token, for thereupon Cain's countenance fell, and in his wrath and envy he slew his brother. Some say, as Claudius Marius, that the smoke of

Cain's sacrifice went downward to the earth, and Abel's upward to heaven; others say other things, but without any clear warrant. Probably the sign was fire coming down from heaven, and consuming Abel's sacrifice to ashes. The apostle telleth us, 'God testified of his gifts,' Heb. xi. 4. Theodosius saith, Surely this was the sign of God's favourable acceptation afterwards: Ps. xx. 3, 'The Lord accept thy burnt-offerings;' in the margin it is, 'turn to ashes.' So Lev. ix. 24, 'At Aaron's sacrifice there came a fire out from the Lord, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the fat.' So in Elijah's contest with Baal's priests: 1 Kings xviii. 38, 'Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.' So in Gideon's sacrifice: Judges vi. 21, 'And there rose up a fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh.' So Manoah's sacrifice: Judges xiii. 20, 'The flame went up towards heaven, and the angel ascended in the flame.' So 1 Chron. xxi. 26, 'The Lord answered David by fire from heaven on the burnt-offering.'

*Doct.* That there is such a sin as antipathy against the power of godliness, or a hatred of others because of their strictness in the service of God, and diligence in heavenly things.

1. I shall give you instances of this in the word of God.
2. Some discoveries of this malignity.
3. The reasons of it.

I. Instances of it from scripture. The world's hatred is disguised under other pretences. Now what doth the word of God say? The word of God doth tell us doctrinally that it is so, and giveth instances and examples of it.

1. Doctrinally that it is so: let us take notice of that place which describeth the first rise of it: Gen. iii. 15, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' There is a natural enmity between the two seeds, as there is between a wolf and a lamb.

2. By way of instance and example, to see how this spirit of enmity hath been working, and how the men of God have had bitter experience of it. Thus Abel was slain by Cain; Isaac was scoffed at by Ishmael; and Jacob was driven out of his father's house by his brother Esau.

II. Discoveries that this hatred that is commenced against the people of God ariseth from an antipathy to godliness, though wicked men will not own it to be such. But to remove cavils, let us see how it appeareth that this hatred is the effect of their abhorrence of that which is good and holy.

1. This is some discovery of it, because the servants of God have been hated most, and troubled by the worst of men.

2. Because the best men, who have the least alloy of corruption, and are most eminent for strict and exemplary conversations, are most hated and maligned.

3. Because when religion is accompanied with other things, that a man would think should assuage malice and allay the heat and rage of men against them, yet it escapeth not. Thus godly meek men, that are guilty of nothing but worshipping God in sincerity, and desiring to go to heaven with all their hearts, are most persecuted in this world.



4. It appeareth by their inventing of lies and ridiculous crimes to palliate their hatred; as against the primitive christians, their worshipping an ass's head, their drinking the blood of a child in their meetings.

5. Because if a man be strict, mortified, sober of life and behaviour, the world is apt to judge him one of such a hated party; as if any named the name of God with reverence, they suspected them for heretics if they said, 'If the Lord will.'

6. The consciences of wicked men are a thousand witnesses.

7. It appeareth by the joy that wicked men take when they have anything offered to justify their opposition, as the scandal of any that profess the ways of God.

III. Having given the instances of the world's hatred, I come to the reasons.

1. The difference and estrangement in course of life is a provoking thing; therefore men that live in any sinful course are loath that any should part company with them.

2. This is not all; it is not only a difference, but a difference about religion; and usually hatreds that arise from difference in religion are very deadly.

3. It is not only difference about religion, but between the true religion and the false.

But why is there such a spite and enmity at the sincere and serious profession of the true religion? I answer—

[1.] The devil's instigation is one cause; he hath great rage against the saints.

[2.] On man's part there seemeth to be a double reason—pride and envy.

(1.) Pride, which is impatient of reproof.

(2.) Envy at God's favour bestowed on them.<sup>1</sup>

Use 1. Is to press us to avoid this sin and snare of death, especially in these times of dissension. Whatever party and sort of christians you stick unto, be not drawn to hatred against the power of godliness. We are told that in the latter times men shall be despisers of those who are good, 2 Tim. iii. 3, not-lovers, or haters, as the word signifieth. It is a more common sin than we are aware of. Indeed this spirit of enmity and malignity walketh under a disguise, seeketh other pretences wherewith to mask itself. But the children of God should beware of it, lest the sheep act the wolves' part, and cry up a confederacy with the wicked world in their spite against others of God's children. Now that we may avoid this snare, I will represent—(1.) The commonness of the sin; (2.) The heinousness of it; (3.) Some remedies against it.

First, The commonness of the sin.

It appeareth by this, that the scripture everywhere divides all the world into two ranks—the godly and the ungodly, the converted and unconverted, the unsanctified and sanctified, the carnal and spiritual, the earthly-minded and the heavenly-minded, the children of God and the children of the devil; and Christ will at last divide all the world into sheep and goats. Thus standeth the case, not only between the

<sup>1</sup> See this subject largely handled in the author's sermons on the 17th of John, in Volume X. of this edition.—ED.

church and the world, but within the church, between the serious and profane, the real and nominal christians; though they have the same bible, creed, and baptism, yet they hate one another, malign one another. It must needs be so, for otherwise these things are said in vain, for the scriptures are not written to infidels. Therefore it concerneth us to look to ourselves, our own soundness and sincerity with Christ. If we engage in the differences and espouse quarrels before we are gained to Christ, take heed the quarrel be not rather against the life and practice of religion than a pure zeal for the truth; and that we do not reproach those for heretics and schismatics that are more diligent and serious in God's service than ourselves; for the zeal of the carnal is always to be suspected. First plant the fear of God, and then men will best own the cause of God. Certainly it is usual for the formal to hate the serious, and the christian in the letter to despise him who is so in the spirit. An outward, superficial, apocryphal, bastard holiness filleth us with this hatred. Cain had his sacrifice as well as Abel, but Abel goeth thoroughly to work, and was accepted, which Cain doth not, and therefore hateth and killeth him: Isa. lxvi. 5, 'Your brethren that hate you, and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let God be glorified.' Men that are brethren, that profess the same religion, yet being loose and false in it, may hate others that are strict and true; as it is said in the Revelations, they pushed with the horns of the lamb. Therefore it concerneth us to consider—

1. What is our state, what is the ground of our quarrel, what are the ends and motives in all contests that we have with others.

2. If the cause of the quarrel be never so good and just, yet it may be carried on with too great heat and animosity against godly brethren; bitter zeal argueth some breach made upon brotherly love: James iii. 14, 'If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.' Those that have this bitter contention, or feverish kind of zeal, have seldom a true zeal for God, but a partiality to their own interests, if not a hatred against their brethren. It is a spirit of carnal envy against the credit and reputation of others, a kitchen, not a celestial fire; and though it be not downright mischievous hatred, yet it is a great unkindness, as Job was too deeply censured by his godly friends.

3. There may be a secret rising of heart and envy against the purity and strictness of others, even by some of those who are right for the main themselves. It should promote holy emulation and imitation; so the apostle saith, 'Your zeal hath provoked many,' 1 Cor. ix. 2, and Heb. x. 24, 'Let us provoke one another to love and good works.' But many times it draweth envy, and then natural malignity beginneth to work. You had need to suppress it betimes, for lusts stirred will grow more tumultuous. One eminently godly man may reprove the conscience of another by his life; they cannot look upon it without some shame and check: it should stir in us only a holy emulation, not a carnal envy.

4. In opposing those that are godly, you had need be tender, that you go upon sure grounds, and that your opposition proceedeth not to mischievous violence: Mat. xviii. 6, 'He that offendeth one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone



were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.' As was said concerning Paul, 'Take heed what you do, for this man is a Roman.' Men that know the danger will not easily kick against the pricks, at least do not join with the opposite: 'Eat and drink with the drunken, and beat your fellow-servants,' Mat. xxiv. 49; and cry up a confederacy with wicked men to promote your private differences with more advantage; there may be much of the hatred of godliness in it. The devil will be a defender of the truth and church with a bloody and killing zeal, so the soundest and holiest members be destroyed; those go in the way of Cain, Jude 11, if slaughters and massacres will do, and so think they serve God by murdering his servants, John xvi. 2.

5. If you be glad when you find any blemish to eclipse the lustre and glory of their innocency, this argueth a secret hatred to them as godly: 'Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth,' 1 Cor. xiii. 6; and Phil. iii. 18, 'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ.' They were not real christians, but enemies to the cross of Christ. You are glad at the miscarriages of some, and those few are cast upon all.

Secondly, The heinousness and greatness of the sin.

1. A malicious opposing of those that are good, and do belong to God, under that consideration, bordereth near to the great transgression, which is a malicious desertion or opposition of the truth after sufficient conviction; it is not it, but it cometh near to it in the height of it.

2. Religion is a commendation of kindness on the one side, so it is an aggravation of malice on the other: Mat. x. 40, 'Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, he shall not lose his reward.' Therefore to hate men for their godliness is a provoking sin.

3. It is a mark of a child of the devil, the express image of Satan. Thereby our Saviour convinced the Jews to be of their father the devil, because they hated him that came from God, John viii. 40. You express Satan's image to the life when this is the ground of hatred.

4. When you have no other quarrel against them but their goodness, that which should be the cause of the greatest love is the cause of the greatest hatred; and so God himself is despised when his image is despised and the devil's had in reverence and honour.

5. This sin is the greater because of the many blessings we enjoy by them; they are the honour and blessing of a country. Elijah, that was counted the troubler of Israel, yet is by the prophet called the chariots and horsemen of Israel, 2 Kings ii. 12, that is, the defence of the country. When such are gone, it is the worse for any people: Gen. xix. 22, 'I cannot do anything till thou art gone thither;' Acts xxvii. 24, 'And I have given thee the lives of all that sail with thee in the ship.'

Thirdly, The means to avoid it.

1. Keep up the love of all men. He is not godly that loveth not all men with the love common to christianity, and those that fear God with a special love; the one is the preservative from dashing against the other. Free the mind from malice, and you will free it from

hatred to the power of godliness, for malice blindeth men that they cannot see the good in those they hate. You are at the greatest distance from this sin when you take heed of the hatred of any man. We should love all with the love of good-will, though our delight should be in the excellent ones of the earth. Live in enmity and malice with none, though you take just offence at their sins. Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day, 2 Peter ii. 8, yet he lived peaceably in Sodom. They are an abomination for caution to ourselves, but not with a mischievous hatred.

2. Take heed of an uncharitable appropriating of Christ; this is the readiest way to confine your love, and hate all the world besides; but love the gifts and graces of God in any party and sort of men, for God's interest lieth not in one party; do not therefore impale the common salvation, 'theirs and ours,' 1 Cor. i. 2. If God hath received him, though weak, we should own him. The devil hath a great hand over those that enclose all religion within the lines of their communion, either because their party is the best, or greatest, or uppermost, or chief in the house, city, or kingdom; they are all the church. Alas! often it is so, but God will not reckon his children by the opinion of an angry brother.

3. Do not think evil of any without constraining evidence, for 'charity thinketh no evil,' 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 6. Charity doth not force and wrest things by a strained interpretation. For our caution, if they be as bad as malice can imagine, and you certainly know any fault by them, take warning to avoid it; and consider what need there is of watchfulness, when they that set their faces heavenward do so fall and stumble in their way thither; and see what need you and others have to be better. This is to improve the failings of others, not to censure them.

4. Cherish those that invite you to love, as messengers from the God of love: 'For this is the message we have from the beginning.' But those censurers, backbiters, and slanderers, that make the worst of other men's actions, look upon as Satan's messengers inviting you to hate your brother, as if they said, I pray hate such a one; for he that speaketh evil of another without a just cause and call doth but entice you to hatred and mischief, at least to abate your love; for to persuade you another is bad is to persuade you to hate him.

## SERMON XIX.

*Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*—1 JOHN iii. 13.

In these words you have an application of the instance of Cain—(1.) For the support of present believers; (2.) As a new motive to brotherly love.

1. For the support of present believers. The world is of the same spirit that Cain was; he envied his brother and slew him, to presignify



to the world what the corrupt nature of man would prove, and how opposite the carnal and wicked would be to the sanctified; what the holy seed, who are accepted of God, must look for in the world, and patiently endure for the hope of an everlasting blessedness with God. The world was of the same spirit that Cain was; and if we be upright, the same causes of hatred do continue still.

2. As a new motive to brotherly love. The children of God should love one another the more fervently, because they are all exposed to the hatred of the world. The same connection you may observe, John xv. 17, 18, 'These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hate you, you know it hated me before it hated you.' The world's hatred to believers is a strong argument to persuade them to love one another. You are sure to meet with hatred from them, and therefore you must be more careful to maintain mutual love between one another. Usually when love decayeth, God doth enkindle and blow it up by the storms of persecution. Eusebius said that before the tenth persecution the church was rent and torn by intestine broils, pastors against pastors, and people against people. Ease and pride beget wantonness, and that maketh way for contention. We warp like green timber in the sunshine, and rend from one another; the dog is let loose that the sheep may run together. Nazianzen was wont to call the enemies of the church the common reconcilers: it is well when it proveth so. To this end is this spoken.

*Doct.* That there is no cause of perplexing wonder at the world's hatred.

For distinctness we will put it in two propositions.

1. That the world hateth God's children.
2. That when we feel the effects of it, we should not marvel at this hatred.

For the first point, we shall handle four things, and show you—(1.) What the world is; (2.) What God's children are; (3.) The hatred of the one to the other; (4.) The reasons of it.

First, What the world is. By the world is meant all carnal and unregenerate men, they may be delivered to us under a fourfold character: It is a foolish world, a sensual world, a lazy world, and a furious world.

1. A foolish world: Titus iii. 3, 'We were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived.' They are all blinded with the delusions of the flesh, and very hard to be convinced of their mistakes and errors: 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that lacketh grace is blind, and cannot see afar off.' They are ignorant, and wander in darkness, and yet will not be convinced of their ignorance. Herein spiritual blindness differeth from bodily. If a man be blind as to the eyes of his body, he would be glad of a meet guide: Acts xv. 4, Elymas, when struck blind, would have somebody to lead him by the hand. But it is not so with them that are spiritually blind; they count it a torment if any would direct them and guide them into the right way; they are angry with those that would stop them in the way to hell: Prov. xiv. 1, 'A fool rageth, and is confident.' They are never more ragingly confident than when most deceived and most blind. Therefore in the world folly carrieth it, and wise men are discouraged, and tempted often to

leave the foolish world to itself, as likely to do no good upon them, but only to bring hatred upon themselves.

2. It is a sensual world, where the beast rideth the man, and reason and conscience are enslaved to sense and appetite: Titus iii. 3, 'Serving divers lusts and pleasures.' Wantonness and pride, and sports and vanity, and living in excess in meat, drink, and apparel, is the business of their lives, and their whole time is spent in making 'provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof,' Rom. xiii. 14. If you tell them of a soul to save and lose, you are an enemy to their designed course of life, and they think you infringe their liberty, and have a plot upon them, to make them mopish and melancholy. To invite this sensual world by counsel or example to a holy, self-denying life, is as if you were about to snatch away the prey from a ravening wolf, or the carrion from a hungry dog, and they are ready to turn again and rend you; and therefore a godly man maketh himself to such either a scorn or a prey; you cross their lusts, and check their very natures and inclinations; they think strange you are not affected as they are, and whilst you invite them to godliness, you do but tempt their reproach: 1 Peter iv. 4, 5, 'They think it strange that you run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: who shall give an account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead.'

3. It is a lazy world, that will not be put out of their pace in religion, which is so slow and easy that it will not displease the flesh. Man in his degeneracy yet retaineth a conscience, and therefore though he serveth his lusts, yet must have some religion to please his conscience and palliate his lusts, but as little as may be serveth the turn. Conscience is like the stomach, which must be filled; therefore if it be not able to digest solid nourishment, it sucketh nothing but wind, and filleth itself with wind. The conscience must have a religion, but a dull, cold, and dead-hearted form serveth the turn; the life and power which the faithful subjects of God seek after, and recommend to the world, is too searching, and not for their turn. Mat. ix. 17, Christ compareth these duties to new wine, full of spirit and life; and pharisaical fastings and hypocritical devotions to taplash, alluding to their skin-bottles. There is a spirit in holy serious duties, which old bottles cannot bear without breaking; and therefore if you cross and put them out of their dead way, they cannot bear it.

4. It is a malignant or a furious world: Titus iii. 3, 'Living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another;' who have an implacable hatred to godliness; because of their malice they will hate, and because of their multitude and power they often can trouble us: 'The whole world lieth in wickedness,' 1 John v. 19. Some are more venomous, and have an inbred radicated envy to all that goodness which themselves want; but all dislike goodness and serious thoughts. Some are more gross in the outbreking of their malice and sensuality, but all have a spice of this malignity, because of the perfect difference and contrary course of life between them and the people of God. In short, they mind earthly things, while the other mind heavenly, Phil. iii. 19, and so are enemies to Christ, and his interest and people: 'They are of the world, and speak of the world, and the world heareth them,' 1 John iv. 5. They serve the god of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4;



and surely he hath rage enough against the sanctified ; and they have their portion in this world, Ps. xvii. 14, all that which they prize and value. These are one of the parties which are here described, the world.

Secondly, What God's children are and should be? A wise, holy, and self-denying company, whose work and scope it is to please, and glorify, and enjoy God.

1. They are such as place all their hopes and happiness in a life to come ; there is their treasure, Mat. vi. 20, and there are their hearts and affections, Col. iii. 1, 2. They dare not choose perishing things for their portion, but look mainly to things unseen and eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

2. They make it their business to get thither : Phil. ii. 12, ' Work out your salvation with fear and trembling ;' and Phil. iii. 20, ' But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour.' Their life and love, time and strength, minds and hearts, are wholly taken up about these things.

3. They use this world only in order to the next : Heb. xi. 13, ' And were persuaded of them,' viz., the promises, ' and embraced them, confessing they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.' And condemn all the wealth and glory of the world in comparison of God and their own salvation, and meddle sparingly with the delights of the flesh, lest their hearts be perverted or diverted from better things : 1 Peter ii. 11, ' As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.'

4. They are willing to take others along with them to heaven, partly out of pity, as having been once of the world themselves, as opposite to God and godliness and godly people, and unmindful of heavenly things, as others are, till the Lord Jesus delivered them out of that cursed estate : Gal. i. 4, ' Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.' Therefore moved with the more pity and compassion towards others, who are left in these chains of darkness and sensuality : Titus iii. 2, 3, ' Showing meekness to all men ; for we ourselves were sometimes disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts.' And partly because grace is diffusive, and will seek to propagate itself, as fire turneth all about it into fire : 1 John i. 3, ' That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us ; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus.' Mules and creatures of a bastard production do not propagate after their kind. A good man would be saving all he can ; he that believeth heaven and hell cannot think with patience of the perishing of souls for which Christ died, but endeavours to save them. Now these are the children of God, or such as these they should be ; and it will be hard for a holy man to pass through his whole life without his portion of the world's hatred. Certainly few that are truly wise, good, and heavenly can escape it. Two things in this kind of conversation are distasted—

[1.] It is convincing, and has the force of a reproof on those that will not submit to this way of living : Heb. xi. 7, ' Noah condemned the world.' When you convince and condemn the foolish, furious world, it will show itself an opposite world.

[2.] It is provoking: 2 Cor. ix. 2, 'Your zeal had provoked very many.' The holy, heavenly, charitable life hath an excellency in it; it provoketh to imitation, or it provoketh to envy, or heart-rising indignation and opposition; and therefore because the good have no mind to imitate the bad, the bad will emulate or hate the good. They convince the carnal, provoke the lazy; therefore they hate them, and do not imitate and follow them; but where God blesseth the example of heavenly, mortified, and self-denying christians, to the conversion of others, it hath a provoking efficacy in it. Holy conversation worketh as the word worketh; some are pricked at the heart, some are cut at heart: Acts ii. 37, with Acts vii. 54, they that were pricked at heart were converted and healed; they that were cut at heart gnashed upon Stephen with their teeth.

Thirdly, The implacable hatred of the carnal to the sanctified sheweth itself many ways, but they may be referred to these two—violence and calumny or reproach. So our Saviour hath sorted them: Mat. v. 10, 11, 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name's sake.' There is a twofold effect of hatred—persecution and slander; the greater or lesser sort of persecution, when they pursue their persons with violence, casting them out of the church, yea, out of the world: John xvi. 2, 'They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that he that killeth you thinketh that he doeth God good service.' But sometimes men's hands are restrained from blood, but their hearts boil with malice; therefore they seek to make religion odious, and cast out the names of the people of God as evil, by scorning and reviling them, and taking all occasions to slander them and misrepresent them, and that either with princes, by insinuating to them that they who are seriously godly are enemies to their interests, and such an odious sort of men as are unfit to live in their dominions. As Haman said of the Jews, 'There is a certain people whose laws are divers from all people, neither keep they the king's laws, and therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them to live.' Alas! were we conscious to all the insinuations which are whispered and buzzed into the ears of the kings and princes of the earth, we should wonder more at God's providence and our protection. Sometimes they take all occasions to slander them to the populary; as those envious Jews, Acts xvii. 6, 'These have turned the world upside down, and are come hither also.' It may be they may be troublesome to a corrupt world, as a physician is with his medicines to a body filled with ill humours. If they trouble the world, it is for their health, for their peace, for the saving of their souls. Again, they revile and scorn them upon ordinary private occasions; as David was the song of the abjects and hypocritical mockers in feasts, Ps. xxxv. 15, 16. They expose them to the contempt of base people, and their names are torn and rent in pieces in every jovial and festival meeting; and when they are warming themselves with wine and good cheer, one dish brought to the table is John Baptist's head in a charger, some godly, christian, and grave minister; and usually scoffs and jests at godliness are the most relishing sauces of all their banquets. The dinner



never goeth well off unless they scoff and rail at some that fear God.

Fourthly, The reasons ; and they are—

1. Ignorance ; which is twofold—simple and plain ignorance, or the ignorance of prejudicate malice.

[1.] Simple and plain ignorance : 1 John iii. 1, 2, 'The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.' They know not our birth and breeding, our hopes and expectations, and are not acquainted with the nature and worth of spiritual things, and so it is but the scorn of a fool that valueth a carnal life above a spiritual.

[2.] Prejudicate malice. When men will not search into the principles, practices, and reasons of the godly life, they are willingly ignorant ; they will not hear any arguments and reasons, because they have a mind to condemn and hate ; and so will not understand the thing they judge of : Jude 10, 'Speak evil of the things they know not.' Justin Martyr's complaint was, that the christians were condemned unheard, without any just inquiry into their principles and practices. A nearer view would undeceive them, as Peter Martyr's similitude, related by Celius Secundus Curio in the life of Galiacius, expresseth it, that if they were not blinded by malice, they might see a beauty in the ways of God, and the reasons and motives by which his children are governed. One John Francis Caserta, a nobleman, was earnest with his cousin to hear Peter Martyr preach. One day with much entreaty he was drawn to hear him, not so much with a desire to learn and profit, as out of curiosity. Peter Martyr was then opening the first epistle to the Corinthians, and showing how much the judgment of the natural understanding is mistaken in things spiritual. Among other things, he used this similitude : If a man riding in an open country should afar off see men and women dancing together, and should not hear their music according to which they dance and tread out their measures, he would think them to be a company of fairies and madmen, appearing in such various motions and antic postures ; but if he came nearer, and heard the musical notes, according to which they exactly dance, he would find that to be art which before he thought madness. The same happeneth to them who at first see a change of life, company, fashions in their former conversations ; he thinketh they are brain-sick and foolish ; but when he cometh more intimately to weigh the thing, and what an exact harmony there is between such a life and conversation and the motions of God's Holy Spirit and the directions of his word, he findeth that to be the highest reason which before he judged madness and folly. This similitude struck this gallant to the heart.

2. Envy, because of the different course of life, and the privileges attending it, comfort, blessing, success. So Pilate knew that the priests delivered Jesus for envy, Mat. xxvii. 18. Avarice sold him, but envy delivered him. What envy it was is expressed in another evangelist : 'You see how we prevail nothing ; if we let him alone, all the world will go after him,' John xi. 47, 48. They saw God's presence and power was with him, and that stirred up their envy. Their worldly interest was their great idol, and they looked upon the success of Christ's kingdom as contrary to it. So Acts xvii. 5, 'The

malignant Jews, moved with envy,' stirred up all that trouble against Paul.

3. Christ is the head of one party, and Satan of the other. Christ hath introduced truth and holiness, and the devil is the principle and architect of all wickedness and cruelty and hatred; therefore since he worketh in the children of disobedience, and they are taken captive by him at his will and pleasure, is not the hand of Satan in all this?

*Object.* But how can it stand with the goodness and righteousness of God's providence that such a numerous and potent party as the multitude of ungodly should live in enmity with his people, and that his faithful servants should be continually exercised with their hatred and molestation, and sometimes to the utter loss and ruin of all their worldly interests? I answer—

[1.] It is for the glory of his providence that he ruleth in the midst of his enemies, Ps. cx. 2, and upholdeth his church not only against opposition, but by opposition. His church is really the bush that is burned but not consumed; he can keep them from the evil of the world, though he doth not take them out of the world, John xvii. 15.

[2.] That self-denying obedience is most acceptable to God. A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing. Though we be deep sufferers in this world, and our demand in arrear unpaid till another world, yet it is fit we should be tried: James i. 12, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life.' It suiteth with God's conduct now, when he is trying, not rewarding the children of men.

[3.] He that soundly believeth the promises of God will not stick much at suffering by the hatred of the world; he doth but lose a feather to win a crown: Mat. v. 11, 'Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.'

[4.] This kind of government is necessary to prevent that scurf and dross which is apt to overgrow the church and particular believers, the scurf of hypocrites creeping into the visible societies of the faithful. When profession is cheap, many will take it up though their hearts be not with God, Mat. xiii. 21; and the scurf and dross of vanity and corruption growing into the lives of the saints, as filth on standing waters. Tribulation is God's fan and physic: Mat. iii. 11, 'Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor;' Isa. xxix. 9, 'By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged out.'

*Doct. 2.* We have no reason to wonder at it, if it prove our lot to meet with the world's hatred.

This is dissuaded in two places, and there is a different word used in both, as here in the text, and 1 Peter iv. 12, 'Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial.' We wonder at what is great and grievous, terrible and strange, at what is rare, new, and unusual, not thought of before.

First, I will inquire how we are apt to wonder, or to count it grievous and strange—(1.) Out of security; (2.) Impatience of the cross.

1. Out of our security. The children of God are loath to forecast trials, and therefore, if we have any rest from troubles, we think it will be perpetual: Ps. xxx. 6, 'I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved.' As if this breathing-time and short truce were a sure peace,



that will never be interrupted. If we can put a carnal pillow under our heads, we lie down and sleep, and dream of much worldly ease, as if all bitterness were past, and so are very apt and subject to security, usually when trials are nearest. Christ finds his disciples asleep just as the high priest's officers were coming to attack him, Mat. xxvi. 40, and Jonah was asleep in the ship when about to be thrown into the sea, Jonah i. 5.

2. Impatience of the cross. We consult with present sense; ease is pleasing to flesh and blood. We say rest is good, and are loath to have our ears grated with the remembrance of the cross, though Christ biddeth us take it up daily, Luke ix. 36, in the preparation of our minds, and reconciling and making it familiar to our thoughts before it cometh; therefore we remove those things out of our thoughts, and so marvel and are amazed when they come upon us.

Secondly, Why is marvelling forbidden? what great harm is there in that? (1.) That we may not be surprised; (2.) Perplexed or offended when the trial befalleth us.

1. We must not marvel or be amazed, as men are when they meet with some new and strange thing, but be affected as with a matter we looked for before, and accordingly have prepared for it. Sorrows foreseen leave not so sad and forcible an impression upon the spirit: Job iii. 15, 'The evil which I feared is come upon me.' When we expect evils, they hurt the less; but when it cometh unlooked for, it is the more burdensome. That child saith his lesson best that hath often conned it over.

2. Perplexed or offended; for this marvelling is forbidden in order to offence; when we see nothing befalling us but what we have heard of beforehand, and were warned of long beforehand, we are not so apt to stagger at the cross, and shrink under it: John xvi. 1, 'These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be offended.' We pretend to believe the scriptures when we read them, yet complain when they are fulfilled. Never any one afflicted as I am, scorned and hated as I am; and all because we promised to ourselves a more quiet estate than the world's hatred or the tenor of God's dispensations will permit.

Thirdly, What reasons there are to take off our marvel.

1. Our troubles, by which the world's hatred is manifested, are decreed by God; the fulfilling of God's eternal counsel and decrees should be no marvel to us: Rom. viii. 29, 'He hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son;' first in affliction, then in glory: 1 Thes. iii. 3, 'That no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.' There is nothing strange in it, but what God hath determined to come upon us.

2. We should not marvel at that which we are frequently forewarned of: these things are foretold in scripture: 'You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake,' Mark xiii. 13; John xv. 19, 'Because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you;' John xvi. 33, 'In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;' Acts xiv. 22, 'That we through much tribulation should enter into the kingdom of heaven;' 2 Tim. iii. 12, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.'

3. Because it was fulfilled in our head : John xv. 18, 'The world hated me before it hated you.' If the world hated Christ, no wonder if it hate us ; if Jesus Christ, who never committed sin, who came into the world with a design of love, to do mankind the greatest good, was hated so far as to be put to a shameful death. Jesus Christ was the greatest enemy to sin that ever was born ; he hath endured the contradiction of sinners before us. Therefore if we are heirs to his sufferings, and that enmity which began with him, and it light upon us for his sake, should we marvel and strain at it? Nothing should seem grievous to a believer which he hath once tasted. If Christ drank of the bitter cup himself, he will have the more sympathy towards us when we pledge him in it. In short, it is a valuable preferment, the fellowship of his sufferings, and conformity to his death.

4. That which ever from the beginning of the world hath been the lot of good and holy men should not be marvelled at : Mat. v. 12, 'So persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' The best have undergone these troubles, and surely we are not better than our fathers, 1 Kings xix. 4.

5. That which is necessary to mortify the old man, and break the force of our pride and carnal affections, to try our patience, to reclaim us from our wanderings, to awaken in us a more earnest pursuit of things to come, to keep us from surfeiting of ease and prosperity, and to cut off the fuel and provisions of our lusts, should not be marvelled at ; but this discipline is necessary for all those things : 1 Peter i. 6, 'If need be ye are in heaviness for a season, through manifold temptations.' The scriptures abundantly show this everywhere. Therefore let us not marvel if we meet with trouble and opposition from men for Christ's sake ; it hath ever been so, and will be so, and shall we be surprised and perplexed at it? If men use to be startled or surprised, it is at something that is strange. The wonder is rather of the other side, if there be any remission of this enmity, considering the disposition of the world.

*Use 1.* Is to persuade us to venture upon the profession of christianity with this resolution, to bear patiently the frowns and hatred of the world. Christ telleth us the worst at first, Mat. xvi. 24, and is therein contrary to Satan, who sheweth us the bait but hideth the hook ; but Christ telleth us that, when God seeth fit, we must be willing to encounter temptations and the displeasures of the world ; whether they come or no, we must arm ourselves with a mind to endure them. God never intended Isaac should be sacrificed, yet he will have Abraham lay the knife to his throat. To think of going to heaven, and yet dream of a life of ease and peace, free from all manner of troubles and afflictions for conscience' sake, it is all one as if a soldier going to the war should promise himself continual peace with the enemy, or a mariner going a long voyage should imagine a perpetual calm. Therefore you must reckon upon the scorns of the world, the distaste of carnal friends, the oppositions of the froward part of mankind, and be 'shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,' Eph. vi. 15. Have a resolved mind to go through thick and thin, and to follow Christ in all conditions.

*Use 2.* Fortify your minds against the world's hatred by such con-



siderations as may best support you. Though you be hated of the world, it is enough that you are beloved of God and accepted by God ; that is a christian's greatest ambition, 2 Cor. v. 9, greatest joy, Ps. iv. 6, 7. When God smileth, it is no matter who frowneth.

2. God will take your case in hand, and then whatever you lose by the hatred and wrath of man shall be compensated to you and made up to you by the love of God : 2 Thes. i. 6, 7, 'Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you ; and to you that are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels.'

3. That faith and love to God tried is better, and will yield more comfort, than bare faith and love without trial : 1 Peter i. 7, 'Knowing that the trial of your faith is much more precious than gold that perisheth, that your faith may be found to praise, glory, and honour, at Christ's appearing.' It is the self-denying obedience that yieldeth most comfort ; when graces are proved so as to be approved, then they have the clearest evidence in our conscience.

4. The way to live happily is to obey the will of God rather than to obey the lusts of men ; for by pleasing of God, though you seem to endanger your interests, you do best establish them : Prov. xvi. 7, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.'

*Use 3.* If this hatred be restrained, be the more thankful to God and men.

1. To God. Certainly a good day should be well improved ; Acts ix. 31, when the church had rest, they walked in the fear of God and comforts of the Holy Ghost. When we are not called to passive obedience and sufferings, our active obedience should be the more cheerfully performed. The primitive christians suffered more willingly for Christ than we speak for him ; they dreaded the fire less than we do a frown or scorn. Surely when we are exempted from outward troubles and sufferings, our peace and comfort will cost us more in getting ; and therefore we should be more in service, and zeal, and diligence. If we cannot deny the ease of the flesh for the labours of the gospel, how shall we deny the interests of the flesh for the sufferings of the gospel, and lay all at Christ's feet ?

2. To men. Let us make all thankful returns to the magistrates we live under, by prayers for them, and exemplary obedience. The apostle telleth us that the magistrate is 'the minister of God to thee for good,' Rom. xiii. 4. God by them reacheth out this good to thee, of peace and quiet in the profession and practice of godliness ; therefore all manner of prayer is due for them : 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 'I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men ; for kings, and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.' Were it not for the ordinance of magistracy, what a shambles and slaughter-house would the world be ! Now when God inclineth their hearts to give peace and rest to his people, the favour is to be acknowledged by such ways as become christianity, by hearty prayers to God for them, and eminent obedience to them.

*Use 4.* Is information. Some practical corollaries I will thence deduce.

1. What little need we have to be troubled, if we meet with the hatred of the world in doing our duty. Surely it is better to suffer injuries than to do them, better be an Abel than a Cain; there is glory and comfort in sufferings, but shame in sin. It is a discouragement to us ministers that a man cannot promote any public good, but he is like to be a sacrifice to public hatred, but he must displease men; nay, not only the carnal part of the world, but even the weaker sort of the people of God, who, because of remaining darkness, many times put good for evil, and evil for good: 'If I yet pleased men, were I the servant of Christ?' Gal. i. 10. Displease them you must to their profit, though it be to your own hurt.

2. What need the children of God have to walk circumspectly. We live in the midst of those that hate us, and malice and hatred is quick-sighted, and will soon spy out our failings: Ps. xxvii. 11, 'Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies;' in the margin it is, 'those which observe me.' Enemies are observers: Jer. xx. 10, 'They watch for my halting;' if they could find him tripping in anything, to defame him. Among friends we are more careless, but before enemies we look to every step. If you falter in your duty a little, their mouths will be opened against you: Neh. v. 9, 'Ought we not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?' Col. iv. 5, 'Walk in wisdom towards them that are without.'

3. If it be no wonder that the world hateth the brethren, and you were sometimes of this world, you must show forth the reality of the change which God hath wrought in you by love. The characteristic of the world is hatred, but the people of God, love; this is the very constitution of their souls, and this love is first to the saints, and then to all men: John xiii. 35, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.' In regeneration there is not only an impression of the purity and holiness of the divine nature, but the goodness and amiableness of it in real inclinations of doing good, and seeking the welfare of others to our power.

4. If the world hate God's children, see that this hatred be not deserved by any fault of yours, as pride, indiscreet zeal, unnecessary intermeddling, or any injurious dealing: 1 Peter iv. 15, 16, 'Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or a busybody in other men's matters. But if any suffer as a christian, let him not be ashamed; but glorify God in this behalf.' See that it be for truth and holiness. It is a sad thing to be a martyr to passion, pride, vain-glory, self-interest, private conceits and opinions; this hardeneth the world, and will be cause of shame to yourselves. The world will justify themselves, and say it is not for their religion, but their pride and peevish singularity; and besides, you will lose that true comfort which otherwise you might have in your sufferings for Christ.

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## SERMON XX.

*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren : he that loveth not his brother abideth in death.—*  
1 JOHN iii. 14.

FOR the connection of this verse with the former, this may be given as a reason why we should not be troubled with the world's hatred, because, as that opposite world to Christ and his kingdom are known by their hatred, and, however divided in interests, yet are united by their enmity to God's people, so are we known and distinguished by our love. Our love to those whom they hate may expose us to great sufferings, and therefore they judge us miserable; but if by our love, though it be to the loss of life itself for owning them, and the cause for which they suffer, we may come to clear up our right to eternal happiness, we have no reason to be discouraged. In short, if the world will be known by their hatred to the brethren, let us resolve to be known by our love to them, whatever indignities and scorns we suffer for their sakes: 'We know we have passed from death to life,' &c.

In the text there is a comparison of opposites—(1.) The happiness of those that love the brethren; (2.) The misery of those that love them not.

1. In the former clause there is—(1.) The privilege; (2.) The qualification; (3.) The conclusion thence inferred.

[1.] The privilege is a translation 'from death to life;' that is, from a state of spiritual and eternal death into a state of grace, peace, and happiness; for it is explained, ver. 15, so as to have eternal life abiding in us. By our unfeigned love to the brethren we know that we are regenerate christians, and have all the privileges which belong to such; for we have passed from the death of sin to a life of grace, from wrath and condemnation to a life of glory. The *terminus a quo*, from which we turn, is death; the *terminus ad quem*, to which we turn, is life. The motion between both, 'we have passed,' or we are already in a state of life.

[2.] The qualification, sign, and token of it, 'love to the brethren;' it is not mentioned as the cause of the thing, but as the mark whereby we know it.

[3.] The certainty of the connection or conclusion drawn from thence, 'we know.' He doth not say we think, or hope well, but we know; it is not a conjectural, but a certain knowledge.

2. The misery of those that have not this qualification. Where—

[1.] The expression of their defect is to be noted, 'He that loveth not;' not he that hateth, though he be not apparently one of the opposite world: 'Marvel not if the world hateth you;' but 'He that loveth not.' It is not enough if a man be not found among the persecuting world, and keeps himself from hatred and malice, if he doth not own the people of God when persecuted by others, when scorned and persecuted by others.

[2.] His danger, 'He abideth in death;' that is, remaineth in a carnal state, and so obnoxious to eternal death and damnation; he is not

regenerate, and shall die in his sins. As it is said in the case of believing, so it is true in the case of loving: John viii. 24, 'He that believeth not that I am he, shall die in his sins.' To go to the grave before we get rid of sin, to die impenitent and unreconciled to God, is the greatest misery that can befall us.

*Doct.* That a sure note of our passing from death to life is our love to the brethren.

I shall—(1.) Open what it is to pass from death to life; (2.) What love of the brethren is here understood; (3.) Consider it as a sure note and evidence.

First, What it is to pass from death to life. This I shall show in several propositions.

1. Man before the fall did enjoy a spiritual life and communion with God, being his creature, and fitted for commerce with him; but upon his defection lost it. The common notion that we have of death is a privation of life: we once had life by virtue of our conjunction with God, but we lost it by our defection from him. The natural life consists in a conjunction of the soul with the body, and the natural death is a separation of the soul from the body; the spiritual life consists in the union of the soul with God, and the spiritual death is a separation and estrangement from him: Eph. iv. 18, 'Alienated from the life of God.' So that man by nature is wholly destitute of the life of God. We did once partake of the life of God, but have now lost it. It was threatened, Gen. ii. 17, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;' and executed, Rom. v. 12, 'Whereas by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so that death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Spiritual death is one thing there included.

2. In this state of separation from God, man is impotent to every good work, and liable to eternal death and condemnation.

[1.] Impotent to every good and saving work: Eph. ii. 1, 'We were sometimes dead in trespasses and sins.' We are all deprived of original righteousness, or any principle of grace which might incline us to God. The life of God consisted in his image impressed on man or bestowed on man, that by Adam's fall was lost to us all from our very conception and birth: Eccles. vii. 29, 'God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.' It must needs be so, for redemption, reconciliation, and salvation do all imply it. Redemption implieth a man in thralldom; and reconciliation an enemy, a man fallen and lapsed into the displeasure of God; and salvation the saving of that which is lost: so that we were all sinners by nature, or else we needed no redeemer, nor reconciler, nor saviour. If our salvation be now by a redeemer, it implieth a recovery and restoration; and sinful, miserable mankind is the object of it. Infants from their very conception and birth cannot be excused nor exempted, for all that are saved by a redeemer were once lost, and need a recovery; we all need to be reconciled and sanctified. The necessity of a redeemer proveth the guilt, and of a sanctifier the corruption of mankind. Actual sin will easily be granted, but the earliness and commonness of evil inclinations do as sensibly prove original sin, even before actual sin had time to breed evil habits in us. It is true, that the longer men live in their



unregenerate state, the more they are estranged from God, and contract a further impotency by their ignorance and hardness of heart; but at first, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh,' John iii. 6; and their operations can rise no higher than a fleshly inclination moveth them, and therefore carnal men are dead while they live: Luke xv. 24, 'This my son was dead, but is alive; was lost, but is found.'

[2.] Man is obnoxious to eternal death and condemnation by reason of sin, and if he continue so, will certainly for ever perish: Eph. ii. 3, 'And were by nature children of wrath, even as others;' and John iii. 36, 'Whosoever believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him;' and therefore he can expect nothing but everlasting death and destruction. This is the condition of man by nature. Now every man would desire to be freed from death, and to be made a partaker of eternal life.

3. The Lord Jesus, out of his wonderful mercy, came to restore life to mankind thus dead and lost; he died that we might live, therefore called the prince or giver of life, Acts iii. 15, because this was the great benefit which he procured for us. And this life which we have by Christ answereth to the death which we incurred by Adam. Instead of death spiritual, he hath procured for us the life of grace, and also the life of glory, to take off death eternal merited by sin, that the sentence of death might be reversed by justification, and the penitent and believing sinner put into a living condition by sanctification, and finally admitted to glory. All this is purchased by Christ: 1 John iv. 9, 'God sent his Son into the world, that we might live through him;' live spiritually, live eternally. All this is inferred in the covenant of Christ, to those that will submit to his healing dispensations: John v. 24, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but hath passed from death to life.' All this is applied by Christ to those that really submit to his covenant; but in a different manner they all pass from death to life. First, Partly as their hearts are changed, which is sometimes called a quickening of the dead, a new begetting, a new creating. Sometimes it is called a quickening, a making men that were dead alive: Eph. ii. 5, 'Yet now hath he quickened us together with Christ.' Therefore when they are converted or regenerated, they are said to be alive from the dead, Rom. vi. 13. It is also called a new begetting, or a new birth, without which none can enter into heaven: John iii. 5, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Making us new creatures: Eph. iv. 24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' 2 Cor. v. 17, 'He that is in Christ is a new creature: old things are passed away, and all things are become new.' From all which it followeth, that conversion is a bringing us into a new state of life. Life is a power to move itself in its own place. This new power and new life is therefore a great privilege. Secondly, Partly as their states are changed, and so sometimes the privative part is expressed, 'shall not come into condemnation,' John v. 24, and Rom. viii. 1. The sentence of eternal death is taken off. But that is not all, but they have a covenant right unto eternal life: Rom. v. 18, 'The free gift came upon all men, to the justification of life.' But this is done in a different manner,

the one by his Spirit, the other by his new covenant gift. The one by his Spirit: 2 Peter i. 3, 'By his divine power hath given us all things necessary to life and godliness.' Therefore Christ is said to be our life, Gal. ii. 20. The other by his free donation, or grant, or deed of gift. In the covenant he granteth us to be heirs of eternal life, pardoning our sins, and removing out of the way what may hinder the enjoyment of it. Sanctification is wrought in us; justification is God's act towards the sanctified: 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'But ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God.' Justified in the name of Christ according to his terms, and what way Christ is made known in the new covenant.

4. From the whole, it may be well said of those who are interested, that they are passed from death to life; for the life of grace is begun in them, as they have new principles and powers infused, or gracious qualities planted in the soul: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' And these continually acted and excited by the influence of the Holy Spirit, who watcheth over the new creature. And as they have a right to glory: Titus iii. 5-7, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he hath shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.' And as they are accompanied with peace of conscience, and joy unspeakable and glorious, surely these are in a happy condition; and we should give all diligence to see that it be our condition, that they who were dead in trespasses and sins, born heirs of God's curse, should have a new life communicated to them, and heavenly qualities planted in them, whereby the soul in some measure is made like God and Christ; and whereas before they were without any true and well-grounded hope of a better life, whatever foolish and groundless presumptions they might entertain, they should now have this threefold happiness. First, They should be dispositively fitted for eternal life: 2 Cor. v. 5, 'For he that hath wrought us to this self-same thing is God;' and Rom. ix. 23, 'Prepared unto glory;' Col. i. 12, 'Hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Secondly, Have an unquestionable and indefeasible right, by the grant and promise of God: John v. 24, 'He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.' Thirdly, Have the earnest, first-fruits, or begun possession of eternal glory: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit.' Partly in the graces and partly in the comforts of the Holy Spirit. The graces in the new birth: Titus iii. 5, 'According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' The immortal seed, 1 Peter i. 23. Saving knowledge, John xvii. 3. There is an eternal principle in them, which carrieth them to eternal ends. The life is begun which shall be perfected in heaven, and is still working towards its final



perfection. As to comforts, in peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, by which we have a foretaste : Rom. xv. 13, 'The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing ;' 1 Peter i. 8, 'In whom believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious.' Surely of all privileges this is the principal and the choicest, which can be given us on this side heaven, and should be most rejoiced in and endeavoured after.

Secondly, What love of the brethren is here to be understood ; for I have observed that many will retreat to this evidence, as if this single and alone would witness their gracious estate, when they are grossly defective in other things. In my dealings with the consciences of men, I have observed several of the fallacies and cheats which men have put upon themselves ; sometimes in the object of this love, 'brethren.' If they have a love to their own sect and party, though they hate all the world besides, and are unconscionable in their dealings, and loose and uncircumspect in their walkings, yet still they have satisfied their consciences with this, that they love the brethren ; and this must bolster them up, and support their confidence, notwithstanding all their other enormities. Sometimes I have observed it to be in the affection itself ; they call that love to the brethren which is not. We may do many things which materially are acts of love to the brethren, but flow from false principles, as good nature, vainglory, gallantry. Some are of a soft and quiet temper, not difficult to any, but of a fair, loving carriage and behaviour ; and shall their natural easiness be taken for this high and special grace of love to the brethren ? Some will seem to do great and worthy things, but it is out of greatness of spirit and vainglory, without true charity and love to the brethren, without that love which the apostle mentions, 1 Cor. xiii. 3, 'If I give all my goods to the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing.' This love is something more than giving, something more than venturing our interests ; for charity, or christian love, containeth in it a sincere respect to God's glory, and a hearty desire of promoting the kingdom of Christ, and a holy complacency in those who are our companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, and shall be our everlasting companions in heavenly glory, together with a public good-will and compassion to the souls of men. Some I have found will go lower, and maintain their comfort at a meaner rate ; they are not those that hate the brethren, and procure their molestation and trouble, but it may be frequent their meetings, applaud their persons, can now and then plead for them, and censure and speak against those that hate them : and here is their evidence ; how defective soever they are in other parts of christianity, they think they love the brethren. But not to insist further, I am verily persuaded that if this one evidence were well thought of and understood, it were of as hard interpretation as any of the rest. Therefore let us see what this love of the brethren is, that will be such a sure note unto us.

1. It must be a real love, not pretended only, or showed in bare words ; for so it is explained, ver. 18, 'My little children, let us not love in word, or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.' Verbal compliments may make up a love and friendship in the world, but christian love is a knitting of souls, or a communication of interests, as our mutual

necessities do require: Rom. xii. 10, 'Be kindly affectioned one to another, in brotherly love.' If there be not a hearty real christian affection, what will words do? Alas! will you build your eternal state on such a weak foundation, or all your comfort and hope on so slight an evidence? A cold complimentary love is soon worn off.

2. It must be a self-denying love, for it is hated brethren who are here spoken of as the objects: 'Marvel not if the world hate you;' and then, 'We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' If we can love them then when the world hateth them; yea, if we can love them so as to lay down our lives for them when the glory of God and the public good calleth for it: ver. 16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he hath laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' In what cases I shall show you afterwards. Now such a regular and fervent love will make an evidence. It is self-denying graces that have a voice in the conscience; when we so love the brethren that we are at some cost about them, taking pains to instruct the ignorant, comforting the afflicted, exhorting the obstinate, confirming the weak, relieving the necessitous, owning the persecuted, this sheweth God's love hath made some impression upon us. The acts about which we shall be questioned at the day of judgment are self-denying acts. Have you visited, have you clothed, do you own the servants of God when the times frown upon them? Lip-labour and tongue-service is a cheap thing, and a religion that costs nothing is worth nothing. When we apparently deny ourselves, and value God's interest and his people's interest above our own, then our sincerity is most manifest. A cheap course of serving God or loving the brethren will bring you none or little comfort; and therefore, when you tell me you love the brethren, and do nothing for them, you may as well tell me that you have satisfied your creditors by shaking your purse, as if the noise of money would pay your debts.

3. A sincere love flowing from communion of nature, and because of the new nature, and because of the image of God in them whom ye love. Love is a fruit of the new nature, and none can sincerely love his brother with a supernatural sincerity but he that is renewed by the Spirit: 1 Peter i. 22, 'Seeing ye have purified your hearts in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.' To love one because he is holy, and because he is sanctified, because he hath the same spirit, that is to love one another with a pure heart. We may love godly men for other respects than godliness, but we must love them as having a nature suited to this love.

4. It must not be understood as separated from other qualifications which prepare us for everlasting life; we cannot make out our sincerity by one evidence alone, no, not faith itself: James ii. 14, 'Can faith save him?' that being alone, ver. 17. Still it will stick in our consciences: James ii. 10, 'He that keepeth the whole law, and yet offends in one point, is guilty of all.' It is a law maxim if interpreted of absolute perfection or unsinning obedience, but it is a gospel maxim if understood of allowed failings. Therefore, when you read such scriptures as 'Hereby we know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren,' and 'He that calleth upon the name'



of the Lord shall be saved,' they must be understood *positis omnibus ad hoc requisitis*, if other things hold good. Certainly for this place you shall see 1 John v. 2, 'By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.' He proveth the love of God by the love of the brethren, and the love of the brethren by the love of God. There is a mighty conjunction between these two things, loving the brethren and loving God; and therefore, if we would know if we love our brother sincerely, yea or no, we cannot better judge of it than by examining and knowing whether we love God; and truly our love to God is not a fellow-like familiarity, but a dutiful subjection: 'If we love God we will keep his commandments.' So that, in the trial of our estate, we must take in all that is necessary for the decision of the case. I observe this, because, next to the grace of the gospel, men are apt to abuse this evidence. Some look to none at all, others pitch all upon this one. But you see plainly it must be interpreted so as that you love God first, and then the brethren for God's sake; and the intent of these evidences is to show we must not in any point be lacking.

Thirdly, Let me consider it as laid down as a sure note and evidence of our passing from death to life; and there we shall consider—(1.) Why so much is ascribed to love of the brethren; (2.) What sort of evidence this is.

1. Why is so much ascribed to the love of the brethren, that the decision of our spiritual estate is often put upon this issue, whether we love the brethren, yea or no?

*Ans.* For several reasons.

[1.] Because it is the immediate effect of the new nature: 1 John iv. 7, 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God;' and 1 John v. 1, '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.' Love to God and his people is the proper effect of the spiritual life; that same new nature which inclineth us to love God inclineth us to love the brethren.

[2.] This suiteth most with the great love which God discovereth in the gospel. The gospel is wholly employed in setting forth the love of God; we see his power more eminently in the creation of the world: Rom. i. 20, 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.' His wisdom in the law: Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep them, for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations.' And his love in the gospel: Rom. v. 8, 'Herein God commended his love.' He doth indeed discover all in all, but eminently one in each. Now the new creature, being of a gospel production, hath the print and stamp thereof left upon it, for the thing sealed must be according to the seal: love is his very nature.

[3.] Because God would not leave the trial of our condition upon an imaginary case, and remote from daily experience. We pretend to love God, and to have a zeal for God, and would venture all our interests for God, because in the bountiful part God hath no need of us, and we are not likely to be put upon the expressing of love to him

in that kind. In the dutiful part of obedience we are daily put upon a trial. Now in the bountiful part God hath made our brethren his proxies, and devolveth that love and gratitude due to himself upon his servants. Hence is that reasoning, 1 John iv. 20, 'He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' Men's pretences of love to God are more in imagination than in real proof and performance; here we have occasion often given us to express and testify our love by real effects; we see our brethren daily, we know their necessities, have opportunities of sensible demonstrations of our love. Now these kind acts of love to our brethren, as they do most verify and justify our love, so they are most apparent and visible to our own feeling and experience.

[4.] Because naturally a man delights in that company which is most like himself, otherwise he is more straitened and restrained, cannot so freely let out his soul; therefore if the constitution of a man's heart be altered, he will show it in his complacency and displacency. As in things so in persons; there is a kind of grief and trouble at the non-conversion of the wicked: Ps. xv. 4, 'In whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth those that fear the Lord.' He hath a dislike of wickedness, let it be in whomsoever it will, but payeth a hearty honour, affection, and respect to every good and godly man; his joy and delight is to the saints, and to the excellent of the earth, Ps. xvi. 3. 'Lot's righteous soul was vexed by seeing and hearing the unlawful deeds of the Sodomites,' 2 Peter ii. 8. A good man is never so well as in the company of those that fear God; and so ill at ease as when conversing with the wicked; therefore it is a sensible evidence.

[5.] In obedience to God, as this is his great and new commandment: 1 John iii. 23, 'Love one another, as he gave us commandment.' God's love is a love of bounty, ours a love of duty.

[6.] Christ delights to draw his people into a society, therefore he requireth love, and maketh love the great evidence: Col. iii. 14, 'And above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfection;' an affection whereby we desire communion one with another, and communication of good one to another: Acts ii. 42, 'And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship;' and ver. 45, 'They parted with their possessions to every man as he had need.' Therefore this is the evidence of Christ's disciples.

[7.] Christ's heart is much set upon the good of this society, which is preserved by love, but destroyed by hatred and division. Our Lord Christ foresaw what grievous wolves would enter into the flock, to scatter them, and to destroy them, and how much they would be weakened by their own divisions; therefore he would not only make it his command, but his mark; it is his charge, it is the means appointed to receive the blessing, Ps. cxxxiii. 3, and it is the sign, as if Christ would not take them for friends, but enemies, that divide his people, that do not by all means and ways seek to unite them, and cause them to love one another.

[8.] It is a great part of our recovery to be delivered from the private, envious, selfish spirit by which we mind our own things and seek our own things: James iv. 5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us



lusteth to envy;' Titus iii. 3, 'We were hateful and hating one another.' Now since it is so, surely we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.

2. What sort of evidence this is. It is both inclusive and exclusive. There are some marks which are exclusive but not inclusive; that is, if we have them not, we are not the children of God; but if we have them, we cannot say we are. As, for instance, 'He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.' It excludeth the profane; yet all that barely hear the word cannot thence conclude that they are of God, for many hear and practise not. Therefore James saith, chap. i. 22, 'Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.' Again some are inclusive, but not exclusive; as that, Rom. ix. 1, 3, 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh.' Or any degree of heroic grace; you are included within the number of God's children if you find these things in you, but not excluded if you find them not. These are marks to be aimed at, but not to try by; otherwise that would be matter of doubting which is only matter of humiliation. But some are both inclusive and exclusive; witness the text. The first proposition sheweth it is inclusive, 'We know we have passed from death unto life.' A christian's estate may be known, not by a conjectural, but a certain knowledge, not we guess, but know; and the way of knowing it is by the evidences of grace, or finding something in us which accompanieth salvation. Our sanctification is more evident to us than justification, as being felt; and among the fruits and effects of sanctification, love to the brethren is one sensible evidence from whence we may conclude safely and certainly, 'That we have passed from death unto life.' But, on the other side, it is exclusive also: 'If any man love not his brother, he abideth in death;' is yet in a state of sin and misery; for this is such a property of the new nature that it cannot be severed from it.

*Use.* Keep this evidence clear, then, that you may take comfort in your condition. It is for our greater comfort, not only to be safe, but to know that we are safe. Some have salvation belonging to them, but they know it not; as Jacob said of Bethel, 'God was in this place, and I knew it not,' Gen. xxviii. 16; so God is in them, life is in them, and they know it not. Would it not be comfortable to you if you could certainly know that indeed you have passed from death to life? I know not what your minds are busied about; but this should be your great care, to get out of the cursed condition you were in by nature, and to know you are gotten out, and shall not come into condemnation. Here is one evidence will most help to clear it to you: If you love the brethren, you have passed from death to life; if you love not, you abide in death. Therefore let not this mark be obscure to you, lest your spiritual condition be dark and obscure to you; and therefore you must excel in brotherly love, and exercise it in a self-denying way. (1.) Love the brethren notwithstanding their infirmities; (2.) Love the brethren notwithstanding personal injuries; (3.) Love the brethren notwithstanding particular differences of judgment between

us and them ; (4.) Love them notwithstanding the disgraces and troubles that befall them.

1. Love the brethren notwithstanding their infirmities ; the best of God's servants have their blots and failings, but love must cover them : 1 Peter iv. 8, ' Above all, have fervent charity among yourselves ; for charity covereth a multitude of sins.' You must not expect such a society of God's people to converse with, in whom you shall not discern any failings, either against God or one another ; therefore unless you pass by a multitude of those, it is in vain to think of loving the brethren. Our love to the brethren must answer to God's love to us : ' We must forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us,' Eph. iv. 32 ; ' Now the free gift is of many offences unto justification,' Rom. v. 16. Therefore if we cast off a brother for some few infirmities, it is a sign that the love of God, manifested in the gospel, hath not made a due impression upon us. Shall God pardon so many sins to us and all his people, and shall we be so severe upon every espied failing as to question their spiritual estate, and cast them out of our hearts ?

2. Love them notwithstanding some personal injuries done to ourselves. When God forgiveth us talents, shall not we forgive pence to our brother ? Mat. xviii. 24, ' And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents ;' ver. 28, ' But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence, and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me what thou owest.' A talent was a hundred and eighty-seven pounds, and sevenpence halfpenny the Roman penny ; ten thousand pounds for a hundred. They cannot deal so disingenuously with us as we do with God. If God will forgive us a thousand injuries, shall not we forgive one ? We are poor dust and ashes ; shall we stand upon our anger, as if it might be justified against our brother, rather than God's anger against us ?

3. Love them notwithstanding particular differences of judgment between us and them ; though they are not of our society, if they will not carry themselves brotherly, we should love them as brethren as long as they have anything of Christ in them. The perverse and harsh dealings of others do not dissolve our obligation to them, as to superiors, parents, and masters ; we are to be obedient, not only to the gentle, but to the froward. So to equals, though they disclaim all fellowship with us, yet we should carry it towards them as christians ; a difference of opinion should not breed an alienation of mind. The apostle's rule is, Phil. iii. 16, 17, ' Nevertheless, whereto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing ;' Rom. xiv. 5-7, ' One man esteemeth one day above another ; another man esteemeth every day alike : let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth a day, regardeth it unto the Lord ; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it : he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks ; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.' We should never differ from any without constraining evidence.

4. Love them notwithstanding the disgraces and troubles that befall



them; the primitive christians owned one another going to the fires, though thereby they incurred present danger to themselves, and were made companions of them that were so used, Heb. x. 33.

## SERMON XXI.

*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*—1 JOHN iii. 15.

THE apostle had said, 'He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.' Now he goeth on to another degree, 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer.' It is less not to love than to hate; he that loveth not wisheth neither good nor evil to his brother; he that hateth intendeth mischief. Selfishness and want of love will in time produce great mischiefs, as it tendeth to ambition and covetousness, and thence to cruelty against all that stand in the way of their desires; but hatred doth soon commence mischief. Therefore surely if he that loveth not his brother 'abideth in death,' then he that hateth his brother 'hath not eternal life abiding in him;' the subject more, the predicate less. Again, this clause is added lest any should say, I do not slay my brother, as Cain did, yet he may be a murderer before God; he hath killed his brother in his heart, though not with his hand; he desireth his death, or doth not take it very grievously if he die: 'Whosoever hateth his brother,' &c.

In the words there are three things—(1.) A sin, 'Hating our brother;' (2.) The heinousness of that sin, 'Is a murderer;' (3.) The perniciousness and danger of it, 'Hath not eternal life abiding in him.'

*Doct. 1.* That hatred of our brother is in God's account murder.

I shall show you—

1. What is hatred of our brother.  
2. How it is murder, and so how he that hateth his brother is a murderer.

I. What is the hatred of our brother? This needeth to be stated. That we may find out the sin so branded, let us except what is to be excepted.

1. There is an absolute hatred and a comparative. The absolute hatred is when I wish evil to another; the comparative hatred is when I neglect or show less love to another for some greater good. So Jacob is said to hate Leah, Gen. xxix. 30, 31. Hatred there imports a lesser degree of love. So in the law of the hated wife: Deut. xxi. 15, 16, 'If a man hath two wives, one beloved, and another hated.' It is not meant of one that was not loved at all, but of one that was not loved so much as the other. So in the case in hand: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man hate not father and mother, brothers and sisters, he cannot be my disciple;' that is, doth not prefer Christ before them. Surely this hatred of our brother is not here meant, for this is piety, and not

cruelty. The best objects are worthy of our best love, and our respect to the inferior relations must not be a snare to us.

2. There is a hatred of the sins and evil courses wherein our brother walketh, and not of his person; as we must not love the sin for the person's sake, so we must not hate the person for the sin's sake. We may cross his sin, but we must wish well to the person. It is hatred to the person to let him alone in his sin: Lev. xix. 17, 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke him, and not suffer sin upon him.' We cannot but hate what we see evil in him; this is not a mischievous, but a holy and perfect hatred. When we reprove the person, seek to oppose and disappoint him in his way of living in sin, this may be the greatest love we can express to him; and whenever his conscience is awakened, he will thank us for it.

3. There is *odium abominationis* and *odium inimicitie*, the hatred of abomination and the hatred of enmity; the one is opposite to the love of good-will, the other to the love of complacency: Prov. xxix. 27, 'The righteous is an abomination to the wicked, and the wicked is an abomination to the righteous.' The righteous man hateth not the wicked with the hatred of enmity, so as to seek his destruction, but with the hatred of abomination or offence, so as not to delight in him while wicked. In opposition to the love of complacency, we may hate our sinful neighbour, as we must hate and abhor ourselves much more; but, in opposition to the love of benevolence, we must neither hate our enemy, nor our neighbour, nor ourselves; so we are to love ourselves without desiring mischief to them. So David: Ps. xxi. 5, 'I hate the congregation of evil-doers, and will not sit with the wicked.' Surely we cannot delight in them as suitable to us, nor frequent their company, unless it be in order to their cure. God, that distinguished the seeds, Gen. iii. 15, never intended to make men of contrary dispositions to holiness to be our bosom friends and the objects of our delight. Therefore this hatred is not intended neither. Only we must take heed lest our abomination of them for their evil practices do not degenerate into a destructive enmity to them. We have a nature contrary to theirs, but we must not have a heart set to do them evil.

*Object.* But what will you say of Paul's wish, Gal. v. 12, 'I would they were even cut off that trouble you?' I answer—

[1.] He speaketh of prime seducers, and wisheth they were cut off from the church by the sentence of excommunication; and incorrigible and obstinate offenders are cut off from the body and society of the faithful 'for the destruction of the flesh, that their spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord,' 1 Cor. v. 5, 6, and the church be not infected by the contagion of their sin. So the words signify in the ancient use of it.

[2.] That malicious and obstinate perverters of the faithful come under another consideration, of which I shall now speak. We must distinguish of those who are enemies, not only to us, but to God himself, and that not out of ignorance, but malice, implacable enemies; we may desire their destruction, but with great caution, and using much lenity and forbearance ere we make use of this liberty: so David: Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22, 'Do not I hate them that hate thee? and am I not grieved with them that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred, and count them mine enemies.' This is but zeal in God's



cause, to pray for their destruction in any undertaking against God. But then we must be sure we are not inspired with a false zeal, and that this fire be enkindled from a coal taken from the altar, not from any private hearth and kitchen; and that it be against the irreconcilable enemies of Christ's interest in the world, and that it be not animated with private revenge. Surely all this must be excepted out of this heavy charge.

II. Let us state the sin here mentioned. (1.) Consider the object, 'Our brother;' (2.) The affection or passion forbidden, 'Hatred.'

First, For the object, 'Our brother,' which may be taken—

1. In a general sense, for any of mankind, for by right of nature they are our brethren. They are called our own flesh, Isa. lviii. 7, and we all come of one blood and stock: Acts xvii. 26, 'He hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth.' And we are all made by one God: Mal. ii. 10, 'Hath not one God created us? and have we not all one Father?' Now we are not to hate any in our hearts, but by all ways and means to seek their good and welfare. We must love in them that which is of God, though we hate in them that which is of the devil.

2. In a special and limited sense, our brother is our fellow-citizen, whether in reality or profession only. With respect to them, love is called brotherly kindness, in opposition to that common love which is due to all men, 2 Peter i. 7; and the nearer the bonds are, the greater is the sin if we hate them; as when united with us in the same common profession of purer christianity, or give greater hopes of their sincerity therein, or of the same profession, society, and local communion, as to the worship of God, or related to us in bonds of nature as well as religion, as Esau hated Jacob, Gen. xxvii. 41. The rule is, 1 Peter ii. 17, 'Honour all men, love the brotherhood.' There is some respect due to all men, much more should christian society recommend them to our affection. All men partake of some excellency from God, and carry some resemblance of his image, and the best know more to loathe in themselves than they can do in the worst; yet there is a respect due to the persons of other christians above that which we give to men as men.

Once more, the persons hated come under a fourfold consideration—

[1.] If you consider them as those that have done us an ill turn; thus we read, 2 Sam. xiii. 22, that 'Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar;' and therefore plotted to kill him. Now this doth not excuse us, because we are not to avenge ourselves, and become evil to others because they have been so to us; this were to imitate them in their wickedness, and it is contrary to that lenity and meekness which should be in christians, who are to love those that hate them, Mat. v. 44; and if love did prevail, much mischief would be prevented: Prov. x. 12, 'Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all sins.' Where hatred is allowed, every offence will be grievous; there is nothing but an interchange of mutual injuries, till one or the other be ruined or destroyed. But if men would mind the duties of christian love, lenity, and forbearance; many and great offences would be either excused or pardoned. This is not pusillanimity, but true

greatness of spirit, the real glory of a man ; and indeed it can be no disgrace to obey God.

[2.] When we hate one that loveth us, and hath been kind to us. To hate an enemy is unchristian, but to hate a friend is inhuman ; and yet such monsters doth corrupt nature afford, who reward evil for good, and hate others without a cause, yea, when much cause to the contrary : Ps. xxxv. 12, 'They rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul.' Usually those who are over-obliged make this unkind return, injuries for benefits, and seek the life of those who, under God, have been the means of supporting and preserving theirs. Now this is a grievous unnatural evil, and their malice admitteth no terms of truce, much less of hearty reconciliation : Ps. cxx. 6, 7, 'My soul hath too long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace ; but when I speak, they are for war.' Still prosecute their revengeful courses, and will not be appeased by any tenders of reconciliation.

[3.] When men are haters of those that are good, and love the evil, hate the holy and the harmless, and esteem only the profane and dissolute : 2 Tim. iii. 3, 'Despisers of those that are good ;' and Ps. xxxviii. 20, 'They are mine adversaries, because I follow the thing that good is ;' Mat. xxiv. 9, 'Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.' They have no quarrel against them but their doing that which is good. Alas ! what have the righteous done ? for which good work do they lay such a load on them ? But the better any man is, the less they can abide him ; and this is a heinous evil, to hate a christian the more, the more of christianity there is in him. It is enmity to the image of God shining forth in his people, and they cannot endure this serious good conversation of theirs, because it is an upbraiding of their own slowness and licentiousness.

[4.] When we hate them not only that are good, but with all pity and compassion seek to do us good : Gal. iv. 16, 'Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth ?' John vii. 7, 'The world hateth me, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil ;' 1 Kings xxii. 8, 'I hate him, because he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.' Yet he told him still the mind of God, and that for his profit. Now this is the hatred that usually befalls not private christians only, but those that are employed in a more eminent ministry and service ; often instruments of public good are made objects of public hatred, and have no other recompense from an unthankful world but scorn and violence.

Secondly, The passion forbidden is hatred, 'Whosoever hateth his brother.'

1. Not to love him is a great crime ; that is the notion in the former verse ; and indeed it is hard to keep without hatred, if we do not love. The softest sort of carnal men do not love God's children ; but the venomous part of the world hate them, and seek their destruction. Not to will good to them is damnable in itself, much more when we will evil to them : 2 Tim. iii. 3, 'Despisers of those that are good,' not lovers ; these are in a fair way to hate when their lusts are crossed.

2. There is another degree, and that is, rash and unadvised anger : 'Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause,' Mat. v. 22 ; and that is within the prohibition, 'Thou shalt not kill,' as more anon.



Now if anger be murder, hatred is worse than anger, for this is anger inordinate or inveterate. They were wont to distinguish of a threefold anger : sharp anger, soon raised and soon calmed ; a more bitter anger, hardly, and not without some respite, appeased ; and anger not allayed without some requital and retaliation of wrongs ; this is a great step towards hatred.

3. There is another affection and disposition of heart which is very natural to us, and yet is beneath malice and hatred, and that is envy, often joined with murder : Rom. i. 29, 'Full of envy, murders;' Gal. v. 29, 'Envyings, murders.' This is discontentedness at another man's good and prosperous estate, or the gifts wherein they equal or excel us, and sheweth itself in rejoicing at their evils. There is a selfish desire in man to have all good things enclosed unto ourselves : James iv. 5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' We would shine alone, seek to jostle others out of the way ; this is bad, and hath a near affinity with murder, and therefore should be mortified by every good christian.

4. The passion here spoken of is hatred, which is a desire of hurt or evil to others, such a desire as wisheth evil to them, especially their destruction and ruin, that the object should not be : Ps. xxxv. 12, 'They rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul.' Nothing less will content them that hate us ; as Esau, that 'hated Jacob, and said, I will slay him when the days of mourning for my father are come,' Gen. xxvii. 41, so that hatred or anger kept too long will be concocted and soured into revenge.

Thirdly, How is it murder ?

1. From the strictness of God's law. Man's law can only take notice of the overt act, but God's law of the thoughts, imaginations, purposes, and intents of the heart. It is said, Rom. vii. 14, 'The law is spiritual;' and Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of God is perfect, converting the soul.' It reacheth to the acts of the inward man, and forbids every evil motion of the heart. God is able to judge of their hearts ; and every degree of this sin is forbidden and condemned by his law : 1 Sam. xvi. 7, 'Man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' And therefore it is not the hurting of our neighbour, but the hating of our neighbour, which his law condemneth. It doth not only concern the hands, and the outward actions, but the will and the thoughts.

2. From the intention of the party. The purpose or desire of doing a thing is counted in the law as done, either good or bad. As to good, Abraham's offering Isaac : Heb. xi. 11, 'By faith Abraham offered up Isaac.' He did it only in purpose and vow. Bad : Mat. v. 28, 'He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her in his heart.' So here, the intention of the heart to harm others, though the hands be tied and kept from execution, yet as much as in him lieth he hath murdered his neighbour. If he abstain from killing, he will rejoice that the death of that man happeneth some other way. Well, then, the hating is, by interpretation, the killing of them, because such is the intention of the heart, did not some outward restraint curb it, if their destruction be a pleasing thought to us.

3. God judgeth not only by the intention of the party, but the intent

of the sin. There is *finis operis*, and *finis operantis*, the intendment of the sinner, and the intent of the sin, what it may bring us unto if it be allowed. It may be a man that hateth his brother doth not intend for the present his utter destruction; but if he shall cherish this evil disposition of soul, where shall he stop? Now, that God judgeth by the intent of the sin, as well as the actual intention of the sinner, I shall make evident unto you by these instances. By Baruch's reproof: Jer. xlv. 5, 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.' Baruch's sin was tergiversation, he had appeared confidently at first in delivering the roll to the king, which was written by God's command; but when the king burnt it, and gave order to apprehend Jeremiah and Baruch, but God hid them, afterwards God bids them write another roll, and Baruch begins to be discouraged, it was too hot service for him to meddle with; upon which God telleth him, 'Seekest thou great things for thyself?' When God was about to pluck up all things, alas! what did the good man seek for himself, but only that he might have his life for a prey? Baruch only sought his safety and the preservation of his life, which was in danger by reason of his zeal and activity for God; and God calleth this a seeking great things for himself. The meaning is, that disposition of heart which prompted him to seek ease and security for himself in troublesome times would prompt him also to seek great things in the world; for it argued a spirit wedded to its own worldly felicity, and that preferred the favour of kings before the favour of God. Every man thus affected seeketh his own things; at first he aimeth only at things which are within his grasp and reach, but then still he enlargeth himself, and would have more, and when that is obtained, he would have more, and fain be built a storey higher in the honour and greatness of the world. Thus doth God interpret the disposition of his heart, in seeking to save his life, by not displeasing the king. Another instance is Elisha's reproof to Gehazi: 2 Kings v. 26, 'Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants?' Why this rebuke? what is the sense of it? He asked no such matter of Naaman, he asked but a talent of silver and two changes of raiment, 2 Kings v. 23. But the same covetousness and self-seeking would carry him further. The prophet dealeth upon the full end of the sin. He was weary of being the prophet's man, and must set up for himself; he must then enlarge himself into a family, and purchase heritages, and be a great man in Israel. The beginnings of sin are modest, and the issues not known or thought of by the sinner himself. Now apply this to the matter in hand; a man that beginneth to have an aversion of heart to another, he doth not love him; in time he cometh to hate him, and there thinketh to rest; but offences grow, and then he seeketh his destruction. Now God considereth the tendency of the sin, whatever be the actual intention of the sinner.

4. I need but one consideration more to make the demonstration full, and what is that? It is that the usual effects of hatred are blood and mischief; thence come the factions, and quarrels, and persecutions, and contentions in the world. Once entertain hatred, and there is nothing so bad, and mischievous, and cruel, which you may not be drawn to think, and say, and do against your brethren. To think: jealousy is



the fruit of hatred, everything is suspected where the party is not loved; yea, odious crimes are supposed and imagined of them, and they think they do God good service if they kill them, John xvi. 2. They do only destroy you as so many vermin, which are the trouble of the country. So for saying: Luke vi. 22, 'Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for my name's sake.' Do, by persecution: John v. 19, 20, 'Because I have chosen you out of the world, the world shall hate you, and persecute you, as they persecuted me.' And treachery: Mat. xxiv. 10, 'And many shall be offended in me, and betray one another, and hate one another.' These are the mischievous effects of hatred. Well, then, may it be accounted murder, and he that hateth is a manslayer or murderer.

*Use 1. Is information—*

1. It sheweth us the reason why divines refer all sins and virtues to the commandments, wherein the grossest sin of the kind is forbidden in the name of all the rest. You think we strain when we make anger to be murder or the like; but we have countenance from scripture, and we have the example of our Lord Jesus. I will only instance in a pertinent case: Mat. v. 20, 21, 'Ye have heard it hath been said of them of old, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.' A place somewhat difficult, but I shall make no long business to explain it. Christ doth not enlarge the commandment of God given by Moses, but interpret it, and vindicate from the glosses of the pharisees; for they were their masters in the schools who lived before Christ. They thought the law was not broken but by actual manslaughter or murder; for Christ doth not reason against the letter of the law, 'Thou shalt not kill,' but against their gloss, 'Whosoever shall kill.' And the following words express three degrees of sin and three degrees of punishment, alluding to their ways of punishing. The three degrees of sin are rash anger, anger vented by contumelious speeches: 'Raca,' a vain man; 'Thou fool,' a wicked man. Their punishments were either of the three-and-twenty men who judged of manslaughters, or of the Sanhedrim, who judged of more heinous crimes; or of burning alive, which was their highest punishment; and in the expression he alludeth to the valley of Hinnom, where children were scorched to death. Now the wrathful man is subject to punishment in another world, as the manslayer is here by the judgment, which is beheading with the sword. Anger breaking out into opprobrious speeches by the Sanhedrim, where ordinary punishment was by stoning; 'Thou fool,' more violent railings and revilings, with burning as of the children in the valley Hinnom. So that all these things, which tend to murder, are murder in the sight of God, and must expect his punishment. A great caution to us, in these contentious times, to take heed how we involve ourselves in the wrath of God.

2. That it is good to refer sin to the most odious of its kind, and to interpret the law of God in its most comprehensive sense. Carnal

men are but slight interpreters of God's law; that the ell may be no longer than the cloth, they make a short exposition of the law, that they may cherish a large opinion of their own righteousness; but in the word of God we are directed otherwise. Covetousness is idolatry, as it diverts our trust in God, Col. iii. 5. Sensuality is setting up another god, as it diverteth our love from him: Phil. iii. 19, 'Whose god is their belly.' Neglect of communion with God is atheism, Ps. x. 3; and worldliness is adultery, James iv. 4; and here hatred of the brethren is murder. And there is a double profit by it—it serveth for an evangelical use and a moral use.

[1.] It serveth for an evangelical use, to quicken us to seek after justification by way of faith and repentance; for though we have not been guilty of gross immoralities, we are not murderers, adulterers, yet we cannot trust in our own righteousness. We are in danger of the judgment or the council for rash anger, hatred, malice, revenge, seeking or wishing mischief to others. There is no relief to be looked for in God's strict justice from the smallness of our sins; our hope standeth only in the fulness of Christ's ransom, and the largeness of his grace in the new covenant, which alloweth room for repentance. Thus the severe exaction of the law doth drive us to Christ.

[2.] The second use is moral, to make us hate sin. Oh, how carefully should we abstain from all indulgence to the beginnings of it! In mortifying sin, let us not weigh things in man's balance, but in God's, and not consider what is hateful to the world, but how things will appear before God's tribunal. There are sins *majoris infamie* and *majoris reatus*. Some sins procure their own shame in the world, but others argue a greater aversion of heart, and enmity to God and his people. Many of sin's martyrs, that are publicly executed for the warning of others, are less hateful to God than others whom he hangeth up in chains of darkness as the instances of the slavery of sin, being wholly addicted to pleasures, profits, and honours.

3. It teacheth us that sin originally cometh from the heart and inner man; for hatred is murder, that is, the seed of it; and what would it produce were it not for the restraints of providence? Mat. xviii. 19. How watchful should we be over our hearts! Prov. iv. 23, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life;' and over the first risings of sin there, that we may not give place to the devil, Eph. iv. 27. Judas had never betrayed his Lord if he had crushed covetousness in the egg; many had never dipped their hands in blood, if they had smothered their envy and hatred as soon as it began to arise in them. It is wiser to keep from the first degrees, for by yielding to them we run into further degrees of sin. How humble should we be! Oh, what monsters lurk in the heart of man! Jer. xvii. 4, 'Wash thy heart from wickedness.' We would not think so if the word or experience did not discover it. What a foul stomach have they that vomit up nothing but knives, and daggers, and instruments of destruction!

*Use 2.* Is to press us to beware of this sin, the hatred of our brother.

1. It is such a sin as is brought for one instance of the corruption and degeneration of human nature, Titus iii. 3. We are all hateful to God,



and yet we hate one another, that one man is as a wolf to another, seeking to devour or undermine one another.

2. It is not such a sin as shall have its pardon of course, with our ordinary failings and frailties. No; it is represented as one of the heinous transgressions of the law, 'murder;' such sins as are quite contrary to the evangelical state: they have 'not eternal life abiding in them;' that is, life spiritual, which is eternal life begun: Gal. v. 21, 'They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God;' and Eph. v. 6, 'Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.' Those that impenitently live in them shall be eternally damned; where they are harboured, they leave an incapacity upon us of entering into the kingdom of God till solemnly and expressly repented of.

3. It is a sin that is contrary to the evangelical temper, as well as to the evangelical state; it is contrary to that meekness, patience, and forgiving one another, peaceableness, love, which is so frequently and expressly required of christians; for christianity is an art of loving God and his people: 1 Cor. xvi. 14, 'Let all your things be done with charity;' 1 Peter iv. 8, 'Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves.' Love is the chief duty we owe both to God and our neighbour. Next to our love to our Lord Jesus Christ, love to his people ought to be studied above other things; therefore certainly they should keep free of malice and hatred one of another.

4. When you live in hatred one to another, you cannot offer any acceptable sacrifice to God. When Christ had discoursed concerning rash anger and opprobrious speeches to our brother, he saith, Mat. v. 23, 24, 'If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift;' and in his prayer, Mat. vi. 12, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' Otherwise we cannot pray to the God of love with any confidence: 1 Tim. ii. 8, 'I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.' It spoileth our access to God, 1 Peter iii. 7.

5. Till you get rid of this distemper a man is strangely blinded and perverted in the course of his walking, all christian practice obstructed: 1 John ii. 11, 'But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes;' that is, he is more easily involved in sin and error, and mistaketh his way, or hath not a heart to walk in it. He wanted his true measures, love to God and his people, both which make him wise in spiritual things.

Second point. Now I come to the perniciousness and danger of this sin, 'No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.' I shall clear it by these considerations—

1. That it is a blessed thing to have eternal life abiding in us before we enter into the possession of it. This will appear sufficiently by explaining the terms, what it is to have eternal life, and then what it is to have it abiding in us.

[1.] What is it to have eternal life? It is to have a right to it by a new covenant grant: 1 John v. 12, 'He that hath the Son hath life,

and he that hath not the Son hath not life.' He hath a stated right, and well secured, as firm as God's covenant can make it; a right pleadable before the tribunal of God: 1 John v. 24, 'He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, and shall not come into condemnation.'

[2.] To have it, is firmly to believe it, and hope and look for it: Heb. xi. 1, 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Faith giveth to its object presence and evidence. As it is substance, so it is equal to present subsistence; as it is an evidence, so it is equal to visibility; it is present to our view and sight in point of truth, to our affections in point of worth.

[3.] To have it abiding in us is to have it begun in the spiritual life. The spiritual life is an introduction to this life of glory. There is an eternal principle in our hearts; therefore grace is called an immortal or incorruptible seed, 1 Peter i. 23. There is an eternal principle put into them, to carry them to eternal ends. The life is begun, and is still working towards its final perfection. Nothing is perfected in heaven but what is begun here upon earth. It is an earnest to show how sure, 2 Cor. i. 22, the first-fruits, to show how good, Rom. viii. 23. The comforts of the Spirit are some foretastes of the sweetness which is in heaven. It is also a disposition; it doth qualify and prepare us for glory: Col. i. 12, 'Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;' and Rom. ix. 23, 'Prepared unto glory.' As their natures are more and more renewed and purified, and more dispositively fitted.

2. This is the privilege of the true believer, and none else; for it is expressly said, John iii. 36, '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.'

3. None is a true believer but he that loveth God above all, and his people for God's sake; for true faith worketh by love, Gal. v. 6, and the great commands of the gospel are faith in Christ, and love to one another: 1 John iii. 23, 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave commandment.'

4. Therefore those that live in the allowed hatred of their brethren are cut off from all those privileges; they have not a right to God's covenant, for they are not sound believers; they have no true faith and hope concerning the world to come, for then they would prepare more for it; for our certain and desirous expectation of the promised glory is seen in our seriousness, diligence, and watchfulness against sin. They have not the beginnings of heaven in their souls, because they have not the divine nature, which is love; yea, they cherish that which destroyeth the power and forfeits the comforts of the spiritual life, hatred, which is the satanical nature, and utterly contrary and inconsistent with the divine and heavenly life.

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## SERMON XXII.

*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.—*  
1 JOHN iii. 16.

THE apostle having instanced in the lowest act of love, not hating our brother, and destroying the life of another, as Cain did; now he cometh to instance in the highest act of love, laying down our own lives for the brethren. Lest by the former discourse he should seem to beat down the price of love too low in the world, he seeketh here to advance it again. A christian should be so far from destroying the life of another, that he should venture his own, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God,' &c.

In the words observe two things—(1.) An instance of God's love; (2.) The inference of duty drawn from thence.

*First*, The instance of God's love, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.'

1. The phrase of laying down of life imports his death was not forced, but he yielded to it by a voluntary submission; so it is explained, John x. 17, 18, 'I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and have power to take it again.'

2. For us; not only for our good, but in our place and room: John x. 15, 'I lay down my life for my sheep.'

3. Hereby perceive we the love of God. Here is love testified by some notable effect and fruit. Love lieth hidden in the breast of those that love, but it is visibly known and seen by the effects. We perceive it was a true, real, effectual love; not a well-wishing only, or a kind affection arising in the heart, and there resting, but a love breaking out into action, and evidencing itself by some act becoming such a love.

*Doct.* That Christ laying down his life for us was a pregnant proof and great demonstration of his love to us.

To evidence this I shall prove these things—

*First*, That love was the bosom-cause, spring, and rise of all that Christ did for us, and that which did set on work the whole business of our recovery to God. This is often noted in the scripture, whether you consider the act of God or Christ: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.' So Christ: Gal. ii. 20, 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me;' Eph. v. 25, 'He loved the church, and gave himself for it;' Rev. i. 5, 'He hath loved us, and washed us in his blood from our sins.' Love is the inward moving cause, and our misery is the outward occasion which moved him to do so. The nature of love is *velle amati bonum*, to desire the good of the party loved. That this was the first rise is evident, because we can give reasons of other things, but we can give no reason of his love. Why did he employ so much wisdom and goodness and power, and make such a deal of do to save a company of poor forlorn creatures? He loved us. But why did he love us? Because he loved us. It was not necessity

of nature, as fire burneth because it can do no otherwise. It was the error of a great philosopher to say, that the first cause did work out of mere necessity, and that what he doth he must needs do. No; God is a free agent; he might have left us remediless, and in everlasting misery; but out of his self-inclination, and according to his own heart, he hath done us good, though he might have chosen whether he would or no. It was *opus liberi consilii*, but God would restore us, and that in the best way.

Secondly, It was God's end to carry on the way of our salvation in such a manner as might commend his love to sinners: Rom. v. 8, 'But God commended his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' There was power discovered in the creation, when God made us like himself out of the dust of the ground; but love in our redemption, when he made himself like us. He revealeth his glorious majesty in the highest heavens; in hell his fearful justice; his wise and powerful providence throughout the whole world; his gracious love and mercy to his church and people. All things in God are infinite, but the effects of his love are more wonderful than any of his attributes; there he hath gone to the uttermost. He hath no better thing to give us than himself, his Christ and his Spirit. He never showed so much of his wisdom but he can show more; but how can he show more of his love to us than he hath shown? He hath not another Christ to die for us, nor a better saviour to bestow upon us, nor a better salvation to offer to us.

Thirdly, That the course which God took doth fully suit with his end, which was a full and clear demonstration of his love, as will appear by these circumstances—

1. The person who was to work out our deliverance was the eternal Son of God. We need no other proof than this very text we have in hand, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.' He that is God did this for us; Jesus Christ, 'who is God over all,' Rom. ix. 5. Now that God, who is the absolute Lord of all things, and can do with us what he pleaseth; God, that oweth nothing to any man, that was so much offended with man; God, that stood in no need of us, as having infinite happiness and contentment within himself, that he should show so much love as to come and die for us, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God.' When we consider what Christ is, we shall most admire what he hath done for us. For creatures to be kind to one another is not so great a matter, for every one hath need of another. The world is upheld by a combination of interests, as the stones in an arch; the head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee; the prince standeth in need of the peasant, as well as the peasant of the prince. But God standeth in no need of us: 'He is not worshipped with men's hands, as if he needed anything,' Acts xvii. 25. We need his blessing, but he doth not need our service to support his being and dignity or increase his happiness. When Christ was in the state of humiliation, he was subject to wants as we are; as when they loosed the foal whereon he was to ride up to Jerusalem, they were to answer, Mat. xxi. 3, 'The Lord hath need of him.' But it was otherwise with Christ as God, which we now speak of. As God, he needed not the being of man or angel; or else why did he not



make the world and things therein sooner, that he might be sooner happy? Again, as man, he was to be in subjection: 'For being made of a woman, he was made under the law,' Gal. iv. 4; and as mediator he had a commandment: John x. 18, 'This commandment I received of my Father.' But as the second person in the trinity, he is one God with the Father, as undivided in nature and essence; so of the same liberty, authority, and power: Phil. ii. 6, 'He thought it no robbery to be equal with God.' The angels were cast out of heaven for robbery, for usurping divine honour; but Christ was not thrust down for robbery and usurpation, but came down out of love and voluntary condescension to die for us. Sometimes Christ's death is made an act of obedience, sometimes an act of love: Rom. v. 19, 'By the obedience of one many shall be made righteous.' So Phil. ii. 8, 'He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.' With respect to his Father's command, it was an high act of obedience, the like of which cannot be done by man or angel, carried on with such humility, patience, self-denial, resignation of himself to God, charity and pity toward us. But considering the dignity of his person, all was purely an act of love; and the more love because, coming in our nature, he put himself under a necessity of obedience, and doing what conduced to our salvation; so he loved me and gave himself for me.

2. Our necessity and condition, when he came to show this love to us. We were the cursed offspring of sinful Adam, in a lost and lapsed estate, and so altogether hopeless, unless some means were used for our recovery. Kindness to them that are ready to perish doth most affect us. Surely we should love Christ as men fetched up from the gates of hell, for we had lost the image of God, Rom. iii. 23; sold ourselves to Satan, Isa. lii. 3; sentenced to death and eternal condemnation by God's righteous law, John iii. 18; ready for execution, Eph. ii. 3, John iii. 36; nothing but the slender thread of a frail life between us and it. Then did Christ step in by a wonderful act of love to rescue and recover us, not staying till we relented and cried for mercy. We were neither sensible of our misery nor mindful of our remedy, but lay dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1. Thus when we had cast away the mercies of our creation, and were wallowing in our blood and filthiness, Ezek. xvi., then the Son of God came to die for us, Rom. v. 7, 8. Surely it was love, mere love, when we stood guilty before the tribunal of God's justice, that he should take the chastisement of our peace upon him: Isa. liii. 5, 'And with his stripes we are healed.'

3. The astonishing way in which our deliverance was brought about; by the incarnation, shame, agonies, blood, and death of the Son of God; this was the highest act of self-denial on Christ's part, considering him only as to the nature he had assumed: John xv. 13, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.' If his people need his death, he will give proof to them by his death of his love to them, and will act to the highest laws of friendship; we learn more of God's love by this instance than anything else.

4. The notions by which the death of Christ is set forth to us. There are two solemn ones—a ransom and a sacrifice.

[1.] A ransom: Mat. xx. 28, 'And to give his life as a ransom for many;' 1 Tim. ii. 6, 'Who gave himself a ransom for all.' This was an ancient notion: Job xxxiii. 24, 'Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom;' that is, a price and recompense given in our stead. A ransom is a price given to one that hath power of life and death, to save the life of one capitally guilty, or by law bound to suffer death, or some other evil and punishment. This was our case. God was the supreme judge, before whose tribunal man standeth guilty, and liable to death; but Christ interposed that we might be spared, and the Father is content with his death as a sufficient ransom.

[2.] The other notion is that of a mediatorial sacrifice: Isa. liii. 10, 'When he shall make his soul an offering for sin;' Eph. v. 2, 'As Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour.' He undertook the expiation of our sins and the propitiating of God. God's provoked justice would not end the controversy it had against us till it was appeased by a proper sacrifice of propitiation. Now herein was love: 1 John iv. 10, 'Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' The sins and guilty fears of mankind show the need of such a remedy. We are naturally sensible that the punishment of death is deserved and due to us by the law of God: Rom. i. 32, 'Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.' And also the necessity of a sin-offering. This Christ hath made, 'that our consciences, being purged from dead works, might serve the living God,' Heb. ix. 14.

Fourthly, The consequent benefits.

1. Relative privileges, pardon, justification and adoption. Pardon: Eph. i. 7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' To have sin pardoned, which is the great make-bate, which is the worm that eateth out the heart of all our comforts, the venom that embittereth all our crosses; surely this is the great effect of God's love to us. Justification: Rom. v. 1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' To be at present upon good terms with God, freed from fears of hell and the wrath of God, which is so deservedly terrible to all serious persons: Rom. v. 9, 'Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.' Oh, how should we love the Lord Jesus, who hath procured such privileges for us. So for adoption, to be taken into God's family: Gal. iv. 5, 'When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Assured of welcome and audience in all our needs, as children are when they come to their father, to wait for present provision, and hereafter for a child's portion.

2. Positive inherent graces, to have our natures sanctified, healed, and freed from the stains of sin; all which is done by virtue of the death of Christ: Eph. v. 26, 'He gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it;' Titus ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;' and so fitted for the service of God:



Rev. i. 5, 6, 'Who hath loved us, and washed us in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God.' Surely to have a nature divine and heavenly, to be made like God, serviceable to God, is a mercy not easily valued according to its worth. Nay, further, to be fortified against the enemies of our salvation. The devil: Col. ii. 15, 'And having spoiled principalities and powers, he hath made a show of them openly, triumphing over them.' The world: Gal. i. 4, 'He gave himself that he might redeem us from this present evil world.' The flesh: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof;' Rom. vi. 6, 'Knowing that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed;' 1 Peter ii. 24, 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness.' They are distempered and diseased souls that are not affected with these kind of mercies, and value worldly greatness before them; as swine take pleasure in the mire, and ravenous beasts feed on dung and carrion. Surely these greater mercies, which tend to the perfecting and ennobling our natures, should endear Christ to us.

3. Eternal blessedness and glory; this is also the fruit of his laying down his life for us; for it is said, 1 Thes. v. 10, 'He died for us, that whether we sleep or wake, we should live together with him;' and again, Heb. ix. 15, 'He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressors that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.' That is the consummate benefit, when we shall be brought nigh to the throne of God, and shall be companions of the holy angels, and for ever behold our glorified Redeemer, and our nature united to the Godhead; and for our persons, we shall have the nearest intuition and fruition of God that we are capable of, and live in the fullest love to him and delight in him, and the soul shall for ever dwell in a glorified body, which shall not be a prison, but a temple to it; and be no more troubled with infirmities, necessities, and diseases, but for ever be at rest with the Lord, and glorify his name to all eternity. Thus we see what love God hath showed us in Christ, or Christ hath showed to us in dying for us.

Fifthly, That love doth shine forth more in our redemption by Christ than in any other way whereby God hath discovered himself to the creature. That we have a good God is otherwise manifested, and there is nothing comes from him but shows forth something of his goodness: Ps. cxix. 68, 'Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.' He discovered love in our creation, when he gave us a reasonable nature, and made us a little lower than the angels; but he showeth more love in our restoration, when he giveth us a divine nature, and advanceth our nature in the person of Christ far above principalities and powers. He might have made us toads and serpents; he might have left us devils. He showeth love to us in his preservation and daily providence, that he maintaineth us at his own expense, though we do him so little service, yea, do so often offend him; but he shows more in pardoning our sins, and adopting us into his family, and giving us eternal life. A word made us, and his providential word keepeth us: 'For he upholdeth all things by the word of his power,' and 'Man

liveth not by bread alone ;' but we could not be redeemed without the death of the Son of God : 1 John iv. 10, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' Therefore here is the true glass wherein to see God. Surely we had never known so much of the love of God had it not been for this great instance : 1 John iv. 9, 'In this was the love of God manifested towards us, because he sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.' What was Jesus Christ but love incarnate, love born of a virgin, love hanging on a cross, love laid in the grave, love made sin, love made a curse for us ? It was love that accomplished all the wonders of our redemption.

*Use 1.* This glorious demonstration of God's love should fill us with admiring thoughts and praise. We owe all to love. Christ : John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' The covenant : Jer. xxxii. 40, 41, 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and will not turn away from them, to do them good : yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.' The blessings of the covenant ; conversion : Eph. ii. 4, 5, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins and trespasses, he quickened us.' Pardon : Hosea xiv. 4, 'I will heal their backslidings, and will love them freely.' Hopes of glory : 2 Thes. ii. 16, 'He hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.' Our final glorification : 1 John iii. 1, 'Behold what manner of love is this !' Pardon, grace, glory, all cometh of love. Nothing should be more frequent in our hearts and mouths than the love of God. It is the study of the saints to admire this : Eph. iii. 18, 'That we may comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.' To get more large and lively thoughts of it. This will most be when we have some interest in these things : 1 John iii. 1, 'Behold what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God !' And you find the fruits of it in your own souls : Rom. v. 5, 'But hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.' Feel the virtue of his death in heart and conscience, then glory in it : Gal. vi. 14, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ;' 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself.' When it appeaseth your guilty fears, and freeth you from the tyranny of worldly lusts, the saving effects of this love, a deep and intimate feeling giveth us the true sense of those things, more than a pertinent and exact discourse.

2. This glorious demonstration of God's love to us should beget love in us to God again : 1 John iv. 19, 'We love him because he hath loved us first.' Shall Jesus Christ love me, and make a plaster of his blood for my poor wounded soul, and shall I not love him again ? The cold wall will reverberate and beat back again the heat of the sun : 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, if one died for all, then are all dead ; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.' Our hearts should



be drawn in to him, and love and thankfulness should be the life of all obedience; for all christian religion in effect is but love. Love is the spring and rise of all that Christ did for us; so it should be the rise and spring of all that we do for Christ, that we may act and suffer for him as willingly and readily as he did for us. We can hardly take comfort in any dispensation of God unless there be love in it; neither will God accept any duty of ours unless there be love in it. Oh, let love beget love!

3. Let us be content with this manifestation of the love of God; we have the fruits of his death, though God straiten us in outward things. We cannot say God doth or doth not love us, though he giveth or withholdeth a worldly portion: Eccles. ix. 1, 'None can know love or hatred by these things.' Sometimes God's enemies have a large supply, when his people are kept short and bare: Ps. xvii. 14, 'From men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose bellies thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.' But if he giveth us the saving effects of Christ's death, it is a certain demonstration of his love, though he doth not gratify us with worldly increase. Let us look after the distinguishing effects of his love, and the favour he beareth to his people.

*Secondly*, I come to the duty hence inferred, 'We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'

*Doct.* Christians ought to be ready to lay down their lives for the brethren.

This is the use we are directed to make of God's laying down his life for us, not only that we may love him again, and be reconciled to him, but to teach us how to love one another.

Note three things from hence—

First, That our love of the brethren is inferred out of Christ's love to us. Christ's love to us hath a double respect to it—(1.) It hath the force of a cause; (2.) The use of a pattern and example.

1. The force of a cause. Out of gratitude to Christ we should love those that are Christ's, those that are his people, and bear his name and image; because he hath loved us, we should love one another: 1 John iv. 11, 'If God so loved us, we should love one another,' for this reason.

2. It hath the use of a pattern and example; we must not only love others because he hath loved us, but we must love others as he hath loved us: John xv. 12, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you;' and John xiii. 34, 'This is my new commandment which I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' This is the pattern propounded to our imitation.

*Secondly*, That in our love to the brethren, as we must imitate Christ in other things, so in laying down our lives for their good. Our love should be free as his was, sincere as his was, fruitful as his, constant as his love, superlative as his: Eph. v. 2, 'Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us.' But chiefly in his dying, to reduce men to God. Christ was willing to endure all extremity to expiate our sins and bring about our salvation. Christ's love fainted not: John xiii. 1,

'Christ having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end.' Therefore we should venture our lives in such a noble design to bring men to the christian faith. Christ's precious blood was more valuable than all the world, therefore we should not stick at any thing.

Thirdly, It is not left arbitrary and free to us to do or not to do, but we must or ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. So it is in the text, 'We ought also.' Christ must be obeyed whatever our inclinations be. It is such a necessary duty, that we are nothing without it: 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3, 'Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gifts of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I had all faith, and I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' We have not the true spirit of christianity till this be accomplished in us.

But in what cases is a man to die for another?

I answer—This case of conscience must be decided by distinguishing—(1.) The persons; (2.) The cause; (3.) The manner; (4.) The call.

First, As to the persons for whom we must lay down our lives.

1. They may be considered as aliens or infidels, or as fellow-christians. Principally the latter are intended, for they are more properly our brethren, and this duty belongeth to brotherly love, as it is distinguished from charity. But yet the others are not wholly to be excluded, because we die or venture our lives for infidels that they may become brethren; as Christ died for us when we were enemies that we might be made friends. And therefore, though base and brutish, and opposite to us for the present, yet there should be an earnest desire of their spiritual good; and it is most like the example of Christ to run all hazards for the conversion of the world, as well as the confirmation of the faithful: Phil. ii. 17, 'Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.' His blood poured out as a drink-offering, with allusion to the sacrifices of the law.

2. They may be considered as a single person or as a multitude. Now for a community, there is no question but I should venture my single life to save them. It is a constant rule that all private things must give way to public, for God's glory is more promoted and concerned in a public good than in a private; therefore a public good is better and more considerable in itself than any man's particular temporal happiness. God's glory must be preferred before the creature's profit. Heathens have chosen to die for the public good, or for their country's, though it may be suspected fame had a great influence on it. Thus Curtius went into a gulf to save his country. Yea, the creatures act against their particular nature to preserve the universe. Lawrence ran the hazard of a gridiron rather than betray the faithful. But now the question is, whether is one single person bound to die for another? Yes, if more eminently useful, as you shall see by and by; and that is not hard, because he is as much bound to die for me as I for him; the strong to confirm the faith of the weak, and the weak to



preserve the strong, that they may do more good. So where a great obligation is ; as to our natural parents : we have received our lives from them. A private christian suffering for Christ should be owned, since a man cannot without it perform necessary duties in owning Christ's members : Mat. xxv. 43, 'I was in prison, and ye visited me not ;' 2 Tim. iv. 16, 'All men forsook me ; I pray God it be not laid to their charge.' Though it may involve them in great trouble to own God's servants and supply their necessities, as in Queen Mary's days.

3. Others may be considered as to their capacities of promoting the glory of God, as the magistrate, or the father of the country : 2 Sam. xviii. 3, 'Thou art better than ten thousand of us ;' 2 Sam. xxi. 16, 17, 'O quench not the light of Israel,' when David was in danger ; or eminent ministers, such as may save many souls. Paul telleth us, Rom. xvi. 4, 'Who have for my life laid down their own necks, unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the gentiles ;' Phil. ii. 30, 'For the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding life, to supply your lack of service towards me.' Persons public must be preferred before private ; and among private those that excel and may be more useful, whose lives may more conduce to the glory of God. We must love a better and a more serviceable man, who hath more of God's Spirit in him, above ourselves, and an equal person equal with ourselves. Well, then, a subject is bound to preserve the life of the magistrate, as the hand will lift up itself to save the head. Nay, in some cases, though it be a private friend ; for though my life and his be of an equal value, yet my duty to him and his life overswayeth, especially if the case be but hazardous, as to rescue him from an assassin.

Secondly, The cause for which we exercise this great charity to others ; it is for their good. Now good is either temporal or eternal ; for their eternal good chiefly we are to do this. Paul, if he might promote the glory of God, 'could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh,' Rom. ix. 3 ; if to free others from eternal death ; so did Christ die for us. Suppose temporal good, to free them from temporal evil, to clear the community ; or for useful persons, or persons for whom I stand bound :

1. Certainly we ought to help one another's spiritual good by the loss of our temporal, and venture life, liberty, and estate for the propagation of the gospel. An instance we have in Paul's glorious excess of charity. Moses : Exod. xxxii. 'Blot me out of thy book, if thou wilt forgive their sins.' But the Lord Jesus Christ above all : 2 Cor. viii. 9, 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.' A public spiritual good is more valuable than any temporal good, a necessary act of our love to God.

2. Temporal good, to save the life of public, useful, eminent persons, if their lives be more serviceable than ours.

Thirdly, The manner of exposing life to apparent hazard or to certain death ; partly because in some cases we may venture our lives, though not actually lay them down, as we may expose ourselves to uncertain danger to hinder others' certain danger, as when a man is assaulted by thieves and ruffians, to prevent murder. I must contribute

my help to the wronged party, though I endanger my own life: Esther iv. 16, 'If I perish, I perish.' There are two grounds of that resolution—a public good preferred before a private. The case was only hazardous, though likely; for she would go with a courageous mind. And partly because he that ventureth puts his life in his hand, is accepted with God, though he doth not actually lay down his life; for it is so interpreted, because he runneth a course of danger.

Fourthly, The call. We must not precipitate and cast ourselves needlessly on such trials. God willeth no man to be foolishly and rashly prodigal of his own life and health, yet when clearly called, none of this must be stood upon. In two cases we seem to be called. First, When we cannot without sin escape such a trial. It overtaketh us in our station wherein God hath set us, otherwise we must preserve our lives for the glory of God and the good of others. Secondly, When God findeth us out in our sin, and others are like to suffer for our sake. 2 Sam. xxiv. 12, when David had displeased God in numbering the people, God, by the prophet Gad, offereth him three things: 'Choose one of them, that I may do it unto thee;' and Jonah i. 12, 'And he said, Take me up and cast me into the sea, for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.'

*Object.* It is true, I must love my neighbour as myself; but by this it seemeth I must love him above myself.

*Ans.* 1. I love myself when I only hazard temporal life to obtain eternal. It is not a hard law for them to keep that have an eternal life assured to them for the loss of a temporal one: John xi. 25, 'He that believeth on me shall live though he die.'

*Ans.* 2. Natural love is to be subservient to our spiritual love. Natural love, which is put into a man for self-preservation, no question will be stronger to itself than another; and indeed we are to prefer, and first preserve and provide for, ourselves; our neighbour is only regarded as a second self. But this is to be directed and mastered by our spiritual love. As reason taught the heathens to prefer their countries before their life, so grace teacheth christians to prefer God's honour, Christ's kingdom, gospel church, neighbour's spiritual good, before our own life and liberty; and we ought to lay down our lives for others, when the glory of God, edification of the church, and spiritual necessity of others requireth it. Our lives must not be dearer to us than Christ's was to him.

*Use* 1. If we are to lay down our lives for the brethren, then we should sincerely perform all lesser offices of love to them. See the next verse, 'But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need.' If you cannot part with superfluities, can you part with life for their sake? 2 Sam. xxiv. 17. If you will not hazard a frown or a check for them, how can you suffer death for them? If not put yourselves to the trouble of a visit, how will you travel all the world, and put yourselves to all manner of hazards to convert souls?

2. How much self-lovers and self-seekers are to be condemned. If I must not only love my neighbour as myself, but love him as Christ loved me, surely they have a temper most unsuitable to christianity that only mind their own things, and please their own wills and desires, without seeking the welfare of others. Whether they be in a



public or private capacity, they care not how it goes with the church and people of God, so their particular interests may flourish. This is against nature and grace. By nature man is a sociable creature, that cannot live by himself, therefore should not live to himself; and grace hath cast us into the mystical body, there is a great aggregated self, and that is the society to which we do belong; and that is the reason why we are so often said to be members of one another, Rom. xii. 5. It is but self still, the same mystical body; and we should care one for another as for ourselves, especially the public state of Christ's church. If it be ill with them and the church too, church-sorrow swalloweth up their private grief: 1 Sam. iv. 22, 'The glory is departed, for the ark of God is taken.' She doth not bewail the death of her husband, the death of a father and brother, so much as the ark's being taken, and the glory departed from Israel. If it go well with them and the church too, it doubleth the contentment: Ps. cxxviii. 5, 'Thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.' But if things go cross and ill with the church when it goeth well with them, the state of the church is a wound to their hearts: Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6, 'They prefer Zion above their chief joy.' If it go well with the church when ill with them, it is a comfort; as Paul in prison rejoiced in the progress of the gospel, Phil. i. 15-18.

3. That christian love is a more necessary and excellent grace than usually we take it to be. First, More necessary, for Christ died to set a pattern to our love; as to teach us to love God, so with what fervour and affection to love one another. Of all duties and graces that respect our neighbour, this is most necessary; it is indeed all the sum of the law: Rom. xiii. 8, 'He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.' The fountain of all: 1 Cor. xvi. 24, 'My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.' Without it, though we have the greatest gifts, do the most pompous acts, it is nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3. Yea, it is the great means of making believers useful to one another. Secondly, The excellency; here is the highest pattern, viz., Christ. We cannot come up to his height and measure, yet some resemblance there must be between his love to souls and our love to the brethren. Thirdly, The highest act of his self-denial is instanced in his laying down his life, which Christ telleth us is the greatest act of friendship among men, scarce ever found, John xv. 13. Now we take love for a slight thing as practised among us; but as it is taught in scripture, the law of charity is very strict, that we should forget our own highest interests for the profit of others; and few christians there are that have the due impressions of Christ's death upon them.

4. How much all that profess christianity should be above the fears of death, and in readiness to lay down their lives when God in his providence calleth them to it. Love to God calleth for it, Luke xiv. 26. Yea, love to man calleth for it: Acts xxi. 13, 'I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem.' This is no hard law, if we consider our obligation from the death of Christ, and our encouragement from the hope of eternal reward. Heathens died for their country out of natural gallantry and greatness of mind; they knew they could not have lived long, therefore chose this way. But christianity only teaches the true grounds of contemning life and all temporal interests.

## SERMON XXIII.

*But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*—1 JOHN iii. 17, 18.

IN the former verse he hath urged the example of Christ, which is both a reason and a pattern of our love to our brethren, 'We must love others because he loved us, and we must love others as he loved us.' The pattern is urged not only for the duty itself, but the degree of it. We must imitate Christ in that eminent act of self-denial, his laying down his life for us. Surely that love is best which is most like Christ's. Now Christ spared not his life, nor anything to do us good; so should our love express itself in the highest instances of love. Well, then, if we are bound to the greater, we are much more bound to the lesser; if to lay down our lives for those that are in danger, much more to give our goods to them. Surely those are not to be accounted lovers of the brethren that will not part with a little of their substance on these occasions, and are guilty of gross hypocrisy if they should pretend either to the love of God or our neighbour, 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need,' &c.

In the words there is—

1. An argument implied, *a majori ad minus*; and there is expressly contained in it—(1.) A supposition of a duty neglected; (2.) A censure or charge of a heinous crime imputed to such; the 'love of God doth not dwell' in them.

2. An exhortation to sincerity.

First, In the argument we have three things—

[1.] The ability of the party to exercise charity, 'Whoso hath this world's good.'

[2.] The necessity of the party upon whom it is exercised, 'And seeth his brother have need.'

[3.] The neglect itself, 'Shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him.'

(1.) The ability of the party, 'Whoso hath this world's good;' the meaning is, wherewith to support this worldly life; as the woman is said to cast in all her living, Mark xii. 44; and in other places *bios* is put for the support of life. Those that have but from hand to mouth are bound to distribute to them that need, Eph. iv. 28; but much more the rich, that have not only to sustain and support this life, but to spare for others. What we have we are to give; out of a little, a little; out of more, more: Luke xii. 33, 'Sell what you have.' So Luke xi. 41, Give alms of such things as you have, and all things shall be clean to you.' So Luke viii. 3, 'They ministered to him of their substance.' So much of this world's goods as every man hath, so far his bounty must extend.

(2.) The next thing supposed is others' necessity. By our own estate God giveth us matter to exercise charity; by others' necessity he giveth us occasion: his providence furnisheth us, and straiteneth them;



if they need bread to sustain life, or raiment to clothe the body; and those that need be brethren, the Lord calleth upon us for some supply.

(3.) The act omitted, 'Shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him.' Here the next inward cause is mentioned, and that is, 'bowels of compassion from him;' but the effect also is intended. If he doth not assist him in his needs, his heart must be first opened; there must be a willing and ready mind, and then his hand opened; there must be a liberal and bountiful relief. 'Bowels,' no duty in this kind is accepted with God but what is joined with bowels of compassion and sympathy. What we translate, Luke i. 78, 'Through the tender mercy of our God,' is in the margin, 'Bowels of mercy.' So 2 Cor. vii. 15, 'His inward affection is more abundant towards you.' It is bowels. So Col. iii. 12, 'Put on bowels of mercy.' It noteth an inward sense and sympathy with the misery of others; such an intense motion of the heart, that the very bowels are moved by it; so that it is, if he shut up his bowels, if he show himself hard-hearted and merciless, is not moved with any pity of another's wants. The meaning is fully expressed by Moses, Deut. xv. 7, 'Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother.'

2dly. The censure and charge pronounced on us, 'Whosoever they be;' where mark—

(1.) The form of proposal; it is by way of question or appeal to common reason. Can any man be so absurd as to imagine that this man can have the love of God in him?

(2.) The heinousness of the crime or matter charged, 'The love of God dwelleth not in him;' that is, is not rooted in his heart, and so he must go for a hypocrite; though not grossly dissembling christianity, yet guilty of partial obedience. Mark, it is not said, How dwelleth the love of the brethren in him? but 'How dwelleth the love of God in him?' Though they pretend to love God, yet indeed they neither love the brethren nor God.

Secondly, The exhortation to sincerity, 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.' In this exhortation there is—

1. The compellation, 'My little children,' pressing love; he sheweth love and tenderness towards them.

2. The matter of the exhortation, to sincerity of love, expressed—

First, Negatively, 'Not in word and in tongue.' To show love in word and tongue is not simply forbidden, but respectively; not simply, for good words are useful in two cases—

[1.] To comfort the miserable, they have their use.

[2.] To maintain their innocency. Some cannot afford their brother a good word, either of him or to him. Others, their hands are withered, have not a heart to help him. But comparatively or respectively the meaning is, when it is in word and tongue only; and real and actual doing good is neglected or excluded when we rest in good words.

Secondly, Positively, 'But in deed and in truth;' that is, so as the uprightness of our hearts may be manifested by real deeds, or doing good, when the needs of others require it. To love in 'deed and in truth,' is to love sincerely: 1 Peter i. 22. 'Seeing ye have purified

your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren.' Which must be understood of ends and effects.

1. Ends, spoken of Mat. vi. 1, 2, 'Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, to be seen of men.' All they did was hypocrisy, 'to be seen of men.'

2. Effects, when words are dissembled: Prov. xxiii. 7, 'Eat and drink, saith he, but his heart is not with thee.' When not seconded and verified with suitable acts, 'Be warmed and clothed;' as here many foolishly and causelessly boasted they loved the brethren, but they would do nothing for them. They boasted of love with their mouths, but would not show it by the effects.

*Doct.* That want of bowels of compassion, or denying relief to the needy and indigent, is the note of a man that loveth not God.

I shall make good the point by these considerations—

1. That it is the will of God that there should be a difference among men, that some should be rich, others poor, some high, some low: Deut. xv. 11, 'For the poor shall never cease out of the land: Therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to the poor and needy in the land.' Though God is able abundantly to supply all men's wants, yet he hath by his providence so appointed and ordered men's outward condition in the world, that all should not be rich and wealthy, but some poor and of mean estate; as here in the text, one brother is supposed to have this world's goods, and the other to have want and need. So also Mark xiv. 7, 'Ye have the poor with you always, and whosoever ye will ye may do good to them.' God's wisdom doth appear most in the different degrees and estates of men. As it is with respect to the world, for the beauty and service of the universe, that there should be in the world hills and valleys, so in the world of mankind there are superiors and inferiors, masters and servants, rich and poor, nobles and craftsmen. First, It is for the good of human society, the more firmly to tie men together. The poor need support, succour, and relief from the rich, and the rich need the labours and industry of the poor. Different degrees fit men for different callings, for service and command; some things would be wanting to the good of mankind, if all were poor or all rich. Therefore God's way is not parity and levelling, but diversity of ranks and degrees. Secondly, Besides the necessities of man, God doth it with respect to his own government, in order to the world to come; for the trial of men's obedience is better made thereby.

[1.] The trial of the rich.

(1.) Their thankfulness to God. God might have laid them low as well as others. If they abuse their high estate to pride and oppression, they tax the wisdom of the great governor of the world, and are unthankful to him: Prov. xxii. 2, 'The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them both;' that is, God is the moderator and disposer of each man's estate. One by God is largely furnished with temporal good things, whether they come to him by right of inheritance, or free gift, or honest labour, it is all from God; the other



is kept bare, and under pressing necessities, either by the calamities of the times, or defect of means, or miscarriage of instruments, or by some sudden blast and disappointment of God's providence. Now these meet together in the same world, in the same kingdom, and the same town or city, and they have often business to do one with another, and have need one of another. If the rich carry it imperiously to the poor, or the poor enviously to the rich, they pervert God's government, do not observe the duties which God expecteth from them in their several conditions of life. Well, then, it is but in poor perishing riches that we differ one from another, and we must all stand before our judge to give an account how we have behaved ourselves in either state: Prov. xvii. 5, 'Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his maker.' He that despiseth the poor carrieth himself haughtily, contemptuously, he forgetteth who maketh him to differ, and who it is that casteth the world into this order, lifting you up and keeping down others; he might have laid you low as well as others, you might have been born of mean parents as well as rich.

(2.) To try their sympathy and humanity. Poverty and other miseries will not be wanting among the children of men, that the rich may have occasion to exercise their charity, and love, and compassion to their poor brethren; as the great veins are filled with blood to supply the lesser. And indeed human nature hath nothing better nor greater than a heart and power to help the miserable: Acts xx. 35, as our Lord said, 'It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive.' Where did our Lord say so? Christ in all his sayings hath often commended giving, but never receiving. But it is blessed because it comes nearer to the nature of God, who giveth to all, but receiveth of none; it cometh nearer to the goodness of God to have a heart to give, and the happiness of God to have a power to give. Now thus will God try the duty of the rich and opulent.

[2.] For the poor, they are upon their trial too, for the trial of their patience, humility, self-denial, dependence upon God. In the meanest station we may do service to Christ. In a concert of voices it is no matter what part a man sings, provided he sings well, treble, mean, or bass. God appointeth to every man his condition; if he carry it well, he is accepted with God. Grace puts both upon the same level: James i. 9, 10, 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low.' The poor man is not to be sad and dejected if God hath put him into a low condition; but to be well pleased with it, as it giveth him advantages of submission to and trust in God more explicit; and living by faith, which in a more plentiful condition is obscure and hard to be found. Thus God hath called him to a glorious estate of grace, though mean and low in the world; and he who hath riches and honour, and all commodities in this life, is to rejoice that he hath a humble heart, doth not lift up himself above others, being mindful of the changeableness of the things of this world; so that grace cureth the inordinacies of either condition: 'Poor in spirit,' Mat. v. 3; reconcilable to a low estate.

2. That when others' necessities are presented to us, it is a call from God to exercise our love and charity towards them. If he seeth his brother hath need. *Affirmativa non ligant ad semper*; positive duties

have their proper season, and in their season they bind: 'As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men,' Gal. vi. 10. Now one season is when God layeth the object before us, and their case is brought to us by sight or hearing: Isa. lviii. 7, 'When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.' We are to search out the hungry and needy; but more especially when God presenteth them to us, we must not turn away the face, as refusing to see or own or to take notice of him: Job xxxi. 19, 'If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering;' ready to starve for want of meat, or perish for want of clothing. When God layeth them in our view, or bringeth the notice of them to our hearing, surely then their necessity calleth for our charity, and it is hardness of heart and mercilessness not to be affected with it. The contrary is represented in the rich man, when the poor man lay at his gate, Luke xvi. 20; though he fared deliciously every day, yet the crumbs of the table were not given him. Therefore consider we live in a time of wants, and distresses are multiplied, war, fire, decay of trade; many feel the sad effects of it. If you be not ready to relieve and help them to your power, how will you answer it to God in the day of your accounts? It is made a heavy charge, Job xxii. 7, 'Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.' Eliphaz falsely accused Job of unmercifulness and sinful parsimony; but when God doth justly accuse of these things, what shall we answer? God doth try us by daily objects of charity and compassion. If we do not help them, we omit a duty in its season; when we meet with convenient objects, this grace must be exercised.

3. This ought the more to move us, if the necessitous be our christian brethren, for it is in the text, 'seeth his brother hath need.' We ought to do good to all sorts who are real objects of our charity. The necessitous in general should be more welcome to us than the rich who may requite us; for then we make a market of our kindness and courtesy, if kind only to the opulent and the wealthy. No; our sweetest influences should fall on the lower grounds. The fashion of the world is to be obsequious to a degree of servitude, to the mighty, the noble, the rich; as all waters run into the sea, where there is enough already. We must do good to all that need, but chiefly to the brethren our fellow-christians: Rom. xii. 13, 'Distributing to the necessities of the saints.' There are *pauperes diaboli*, the devil's poor, those that have wasted their estates by luxury and prodigality; and *pauperes mundi*, the world's poor, those that are reduced to poverty by the accidents of the present life; and *pauperes Christi*, such as fear God, who are in a straitened condition. The rule is, Gal. vi. 10, 'Do good to all, especially to the household of faith.' To all the wicked, our enemies not excepted, in their necessities. But then the members of God's family and household are in an especial manner obliged to love one another, and to be beneficial to one another under their necessities and straits, into which God doth often suffer those of his family to fall for their good, if they profess the same faith with us, and do evidence the reality of the same faith by a holy life and conversation; for this is a closer relation than to be fellow-citizens of the world, fellow-servants, or brethren in the family.



4. That we should show bowels of compassion and tenderness towards others in their distress, for in the text it is, 'If he shut up his bowels of compassion from him.' There must be an inward affection and disposition accompanying and going along with the outward act of beneficence, and whatsoever is done must be done cordially and compassionately, that the heart may ever accompany the gift: Ps. xxxvii. 21, 'The righteous sheweth mercy and giveth.' To be spectators of the miseries of others, and not to be affected with them, argueth a marble heart and iron sinews: Isa. lviii. 10, 'If thou draw out thy heart to the hungry.' It must be done freely, liberally, and compassionately: Eph. iv. 32, 'Be kind to one another, tender-hearted.' Tender-heartedness, that is, commiseration, must go along with our kindness, as really pitying their misery as if it were our own.

5. Though charity begin in the heart, it must not cease there. God requireth the heart, but not for the heart, that it may terminate there. But with respect to these acts of mercy wherewith God is delighted, three things are required—(1.) Love and pity on their wants; that must be in the heart; (2.) Kind expressions on the tongue; (3.) Then bountiful acts for their relief. So that there are these three things, the motion of the heart, the expression by the words, and effectual performance. Without the last all else is but counterfeit. The root of charity is a proneness or good-will to help others, but that lieth underground and out of sight. Unless it appear in visible fruits, we cannot tell whether we have it, yea or no. Suppose it appear in good words, they are but as leaves, and we count that a barren tree that bringeth forth nothing but leaves. Not in word and tongue only, but the fruit abounding to our account is the work itself. Therefore though God expecteth bowels, yet bowels must put us upon some further act, but that act is not words. God will not be paid with words instead of things; but God expecteth that we should freely impart what we have and can do for our neighbours' good, as well as wish well and speak well to them. Love must show itself forth, and that not in speech only but in deed; otherwise we only seek to cover a false heart.

6. To withhold and deny this relief argueth a defect and want, not only of love to our neighbour, but to God, 'How dwelleth the love of God in him?'

[1.] Because the love of God and his children are inseparable, they are necessary branches of the same law: Mat. xxii. 38, 39, 'This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' 1 John v. 1, '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.' Therefore we cannot love God if we do not love our brother. The same law that requireth the one requireth the other; the same grace that inclineth to the one inclineth to the other; the same reason that enforceth the one enforces the other. God for his own sake, and his children for God's sake, because somewhat of the divine nature and excellency of God is in them; they are 'the excellent of the earth,' Ps. xvi. 3. A deep sense of God's love to us begets love in us to God again; therefore we love God, and everything that belongeth to God.

[2.] It must needs be so, for love to God doth formally contain or naturally produce this love to our brethren.

(1.) It doth formally contain it; for our love to God is not a fond affection or fellow-like familiarity, but is seen in our profession of real respect; which is manifested in imitation, obedience and esteem.

(1st.) Imitation; for love doth imply such a value and esteem of God, that we count it our happiness to be like him, and the truest respect and affection which we can have to him is to write after his copy, and to study to resemble our Father. Surely they cannot be said to love God who do not imitate him, are not merciful as their heavenly Father is merciful, Luke vi. 36. Now God openeth his hand, and satisfieth the wants and desires of the needy and indigent. Do we love God, and count this a perfection in God? Surely then the impression of it should be on our hearts. I would not have you pass over this lightly, that the truest love of God lieth in imitation of him. If the great demonstration of God's love to us be to make us like himself, surely then the more like him the more we love him, 1 John iii. 2; for our love answereth his love to us, as the impression doth the stamp or seal. Or if the greatest aim of the creature and the highest expression of our love to God be conformity to him now, so it is when love is most perfect; it doth most delight itself in likeness to God: Ps. xvii. 15, 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.'

(2d.) Obedience to him, for his love is a love of bounty, ours is a love of duty: 1 John v. 3, 'This is love, that we keep his commandments;' John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' Surely he doth not love God that doth not obey him, and acteth so contrary to his commands, which call everywhere for charity and mercy to the bodies and souls of men, which is so pleasing to God: Heb. xiii. 16, 'But to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'

(3d.) Love is seen in an esteem or transcendental respect of God, a respect to God above all other things. Now he that shutteth up his bowels from his brother in necessity doth not love God above all, for there is something he valueth above him, and is loath to part with for his sake, and that is this world's goods: 1 John ii. 19, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' Now it is gross love of the world not to part with this world's goods when God calleth for them. Whosoever loves God valueth God's favour above all other things, and counts himself happy enough in the enjoyment of God, whatever he loseth for it or parts with for it: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'Who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance. Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time when their corn and wine increased;' Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.' He that will not, at God's instance and command, part with these things, the poor inconsiderable trifles of this world, he preferreth the world before the enjoyment of God and the favour of God.

(2.) It doth naturally produce it, partly by looking to what is past,



and partly to what is to come. The one is gratitude, the other is trust.

(1st.) Thankfulness for what is past; he hath done so much for us, that we should be willing to part with anything for his sake. Therefore when the apostle would have them prove the sincerity of their love, 2 Cor. viii. 9, he argueth, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that when he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty you may be rich.' If we have a grateful sense of his wonderful mercy, we will be ready to make some return of affection to God. But you will say, How is charity to the poor any return of love to God? *Ans.* What you do at his instance and command, you do to God and for God's sake. Now God commandeth this, and he hath devolved our respects to him on the poor and indigent. God taketh it as done to himself if done to them: Mat. xxv. 40, 45, 'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.' And the apostle teacheth us that we show love to his name when we minister to the saints, Heb. vi. 10. He taketh it as an expression of kindness and thankfulness to himself, which is given to his servants.

(2d.) Trust. Love looketh to what is to come. Surely he that loveth God trusts him, for the graces are connected. Now none trust God that count their estates safer in their own hands than God's, that will venture nothing on his promises: Prov. xix. 17, 'He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him back again.' God will be our paymaster: Eccles. xi. 1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, and after many days thou shalt receive it;' Ps. xxxvii. 26, 'He is merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed.' God will return it to us or ours, in this life or the next. We have a friendly confidence and good opinion of God; we dare take his word, being persuaded that he is able and willing to requite us; but they that shut up their bowels show they have little value for God's word, and do suspect his goodness and truth, which is not consistent with love. You will adventure nothing in his hands, and then can you say you love him?

*Use 1.* Information.

1. That if we would get readiness of mind to help and relieve others in their necessities, we should increase our love to God; for the shutting up of our bowels is made not so much a defect or want of love to our neighbour, as want of love to God. If you did love God more, you would love the poorest of God's children, and the meanest of your brethren for his sake; and love will easily persuade you to do them good. If there were less of the love of the world, and more of the love of God, then it were no great matter to part with this world's goods for another's benefit and relief. We have lessening thoughts of God, and too high thoughts of the world, when we shut up our bowels from the necessities of our poor brethren.

2. That we should not reckon our love to God by deceitful evidences, not by bare outward profession of the true religion: James i. 27, 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' All other religion hath an evil that is in it, a spot of the

world on it ; but Christ's religion is purity and charity, not by gifts and utterance : 2 Cor. viii. 7, ' Therefore as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.' Again, you must not only mind acts of piety, but charity : Mat. ix. 13, ' Go learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' To sacrifice is to serve God, but to show mercy is to be like God. Now conformity to God is more than any particular act of external obedience to him ; as mercy is preferred before sacrifice, so before the external observation of the sabbath. Yea, mercy not only to the souls, but bodies of men ; yea, not to men only, but to beasts, as to help a beast out of the pit : Mat. xii. 11, 12, ' What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out ? How much then is a man better than a sheep ? wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-day.' It is more than gospel externals of worship, as hearing the word and prayer, comparing external acts with external acts : Luke xiii. 26, ' We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and have been taught in our streets ; but he shall say unto you, I know you not.' More excellent than gifts of the gospel ; the gifts of tongues and healing were glorious things : 1 Cor. xii. 28-31, ' After that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all prophets ? are all workers ? have all the gifts of healing ? do all speak with tongues ? do all interpret ? But covet earnestly the best gifts ; but I show you a more excellent way.' I cannot say it is above the graces of the gospel, faith, and hope, and love to God, yet these are but pretended without it : 1 John iv. 20, ' If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar ; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?' 1 Tim. v. 8, ' If any man provide not for his own, especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith.'

3. It showeth us the compassionate nature of God, since he so strictly enforceth compassion in others. We know God's nature by his laws as well as his works. Now when he that placed so much weight on this, that he will not own any love in them to himself without it, surely our God will not shut up his bowels in our destitute and low condition. It is one of his names, 2 Cor. vii. 6, ' God that comforteth those that are cast down.'

*Use 2.* Is to exhort us—

1. To show compassion to those in necessity.

2. To show it not in word or tongue only, but in real kindness.

1. To persuade you to mercifulness and charity. A cheap profession of the name of Christ will do you no good ; that which costs nothing is worth nothing. To quicken you—

[1.] Without it you cannot show your thankfulness to God. Alms is your thank-offering : Heb. xiii. 16, ' But to do good and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' God showeth his love to us in the great sin-offering, we to God in this thank-offering.

[2.] Consider the many promises made to it : Mat. v. 7, ' Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Compassion to others giveth us hope and confidence of the Lord's mercy to us, which is a



great encouragement; for we stand in need of the daily mercy of God: Prov. xxi. 18, 'Whoso stoppeth his ear at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, and shall not be heard;' if not by men, not by God.

[3.] Consider what mercy Christ hath showed to you. Christ's kindness should enkindle the bowels of compassion in us; he showed compassion to you at the dearest rates, and loved us unto death; and will you not be at some expense in your love to the brethren?

[4.] How comfortable it is for the present: Prov. xi. 17, 'The merciful man doeth good to his own soul; he also refresheth the souls of others.' See the verse next the text, 'And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.' This will yield you a great deal of comfort, as any other fruit of faith or act of piety.

[5.] This will make your reckoning more comfortable hereafter: Luke xi. 41, 'Give alms of such things as you have, and behold all things shall be clean;' Mat. xxv. 35-40, 'For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' These will be the inquiries at the day of judgment; acts of self-denying obedience must justify and evidence our qualification when it cometh to be judged.

2. To press you to real kindness. To quicken you consider—

[1.] God's love towards christians is a hearty real love; he not only loved us, but gave us the proof in the fruits and effects of it: Rom. v. 8, 'Herein God commended his love, in that, when we were sinners, Christ died for us.'

[2.] At the last day we shall be judged, not for our words only, but by our works: Rev. xx. 12, 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' These will be the questions at the last day, Have you visited? have you fed? have you clothed?

[3.] Lip-love will neither do thee good, nor thy brother good. Not thee good; in no other grace and duty are words taken for performance, so not in this. Not in the general: many say they have a love to the brethren, but when it cometh to the trial wherein it is evidenced, there is no such thing. There is a great deal of tongue-kindness abroad; men seem to be all made up of love; they boast they love the brethren, but never demonstrate it by any real effect; like the carbuncle, which at a distance seemeth to be all afire, but come to touch it, and it is key-cold. In this particular expression of love, mouth-mercy, or giving good words to him that needeth, The Lord help you, without

actual relief, is nothing worth; so doth not thy brother any good: James ii. 15, 16, 'If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and be you filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?'

[4.] To dissemble in anything maketh our sincerity in the main questionable; the man that contents himself with words in charity will content himself with a cold dead assent in point of faith, and a cold profession instead of thorough obedience; with the talk of virtue and godliness when he hath it not. A fruitless love and a cold assent that produce no obedience are near akin, and both are little worth. Many would not dissemble with God, but do they love men, not in word or tongue only, but in deed and in truth?

### SERMON XXIV.

*And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*—1 JOHN iii. 19.

THE words contain a motive to quicken us to love the brethren, not in word or tongue only, but in deed and in truth. The motive is taken from the fruit and benefit, which is—(1.) Propounded; (2.) Amplified.

First, Propounded, 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth.' To be of the truth hath a double notion in scripture.

1. To profess the true religion: John xviii. 37, 'Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice;' that is, owneth the true religion; he rightly understands and believes the truth of the gospel.

2. To be sincere and true in that religion, and to live accordingly. There are some christians that are only so in show and semblance, or count themselves christians, but are not; but these are truly born of God, and such as they profess themselves to be, 'disciples indeed,' John viii. 31; sincere, and not hypocrites.

Secondly, Amplified, 'And shall assure our hearts before him.' Where—

1. The effect and fruit of knowing that we are of the truth; we 'shall assure our hearts.'

2. The strength of this confidence, 'Before him.'

1. For the effect itself, 'persuade our hearts;' so the margin and other translations. By confidence in God we shall quiet and still our consciences; so that the notion here is, we shall have our hearts secure and confident. A soul conscious of sin raiseth doubts and fears, that when our qualification is evident, we are perfect as to the conscience, Heb. ix. 9. The word is so taken elsewhere: Mat. xxviii. 14, 'We will persuade him, and secure you;' that is, pacify the governor, and keep you from punishment. So here it signifieth to render our hearts peaceable and quiet.

2. The strength of this confidence, 'Before him.' We are said to be before him three ways—



[1.] In our ordinary conversation: Gen. xvii. 1, 'Walk before me, and be thou upright.' In this sense it signifieth our walking before him in a holy peace and security, by being good and doing good; for this is the evidence whereby we assure ourselves that we are the true children of God: Mat. v. 45, 'That ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven.'

[2.] When we come before him in prayer and other holy duties: ver. 21, 22, 'We have confidence towards God, and whatsoever we ask in his name shall be given us.' Which signifieth a confidence in our prayer to him.

[3.] We come before him at the day of judgment; when we stand before his tribunal, our hope will not leave us ashamed. We are not afraid of being convinced of any hypocrisy, or not observing or breaking the conditions of the new covenant: 1 John ii. 28, 'That we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him;' 1 John iv. 17, 'That we may have boldness in the day of judgment.' So that hereby appeareth the strength of that confidence which we have by the exercise of a holy charity, or love to God and his people; and though the thoughts of the just and holy God stirreth up all our fears, yet we may walk comfortably with him, and draw nigh to him in holy duties with more cheerfulness, and finally appear before him with boldness in the day of our accounts.

*Doct.* That graces really and soundly exercised breed in us assurance of our good condition before God.

The point will be made good by these considerations.

1. That none are in a good condition but those who are adopted and taken into God's family, and made heirs of eternal life and happiness. Our minds cannot be quieted by anything but a persuasion that God loveth us as his children; this is the whole business of the context: ver. 1, 2, and 9, 10, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Whosoever is born of God sinneth not, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that hateth his brother.' Get that persuasion, and all the controversy between God and us is at an end. And the reason is clear; he that taketh God for a judge can never be soundly satisfied and live in peace; but he that taketh God for a Father needeth not fear to come into his presence. There is no safety but in God's family, and no security there but by being God's children. The great business of the Spirit with our consciences is to clear up this to us: Rom. viii. 15, 26, 'For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Likewise 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;' Gal. iv. 6, 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;' Eph. i. 13, 14, 'In whom ye

also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation : in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.' The great business of our Redeemer was to purchase this privilege for us : Gal. iv. 5, 'To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons ;' John viii. 36, 'If the Son therefore shall make you free, then are you free indeed.' The great privilege we have by baptism as a sign, by faith as giving us the reality : Gal. iii. 26, 27, 'For ye are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.' The church of the new testament, as to her outward estate, is an estate of sonship or adoption, and the truly godly have the real effect of it ; they have the dignity, privilege and right which does belong to the children of God : John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.'

2. We must cherish no confidence of our adoption but what will hold good before God ; for it is said, we must assure our hearts before him. The law which we have broken, and which condemneth us, is the law of God ; the wrath and punishment which we fear and have deserved is the wrath of God ; that which is the true proper matter of our joy, peace, and comfort is the favour of God ; and the family into which we are admitted is the family of God, and the presence into which we come is the presence of God, and the glory which we expect is the glory of God ; the punishment which we must undergo, and must determine our final estate, is the judgment of God. He is the supreme judge, at whose sentence we must stand or fall ; therefore to him we must approve ourselves, and before him must be able to defend our claim, and maintain our confidence. It is easy to make good our plea before men, but not so before God. Take all the senses before explicated. We are before him in our ordinary conversation. Sincere though imperfect sanctification is a righteousness that will hold out before God, and will be graciously accepted by him : Luke i. 74, 75, 'That we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' A christian should cheerfully serve God in a faithful discharge of all duties towards God and towards men, as remembering that he is always in his sight, as the witness, judge, and observer of all his actions ; therefore we must still 'labour that, whether present or absent, we approve ourselves to him, and be accepted of him,' 2 Cor. v. 9. This will be matter of comfort to us : 2 Cor. i. 12, 'But our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversations in the world.' And partly in your prayers. Our legal fears are revived by the presence of God. Cain had his guilty fears ; so shall we unless we be sincere ; so the righteous are as bold as a lion : 1 John iii. 21, 'If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' When our hearts do not condemn us of any insincere walking, then we have confidence ; otherwise we are shy of the presence of God, as David when he had sinned hung off from the throne of grace : Ps. xxxii. 3, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old.' And Adam



when he had sinned ran to the bushes. They that walk crookedly crack and break their own confidence, and cannot look God in the face with any comfort; whereas others can come to him as children to their father. And partly as it importeth our appearance before him in the day of our accounts. The sincere have a confidence that will hold out then, as appeareth by their constant and steady cheerfulness, when they most mind his judgment: 'The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrite,' Isa. xxxiii. 14. Pinching weather maketh the unsound feel their aches and bruises, so a time of eminent judgments is grievous to them; but it is otherwise with the upright, who are emboldened by a good conscience, and a sense of their own integrity: Ps. cxii. 4, 'Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness.' Not only after, but in darkness; they have great comfort in their greatest perplexities; yea, when God summoneth them into his immediate presence: 2 Kings xx. 3, 'Lord, thou knowest that I have walked before thee with a true and perfect heart.' Hezekiah was then arrested with the sentence of death. A christian can look death in the face with cheerfulness, and comfortably review his past life, when hypocrites vomit up their own shame. Yet the sincere, though conscious to themselves of many infirmities, have made it their business to honour and please God.

3. Before God no confidence will hold good but what is founded in the double righteousness of justification and sanctification; they are inseparable, and go together in the dispensation of the new covenant: 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;' 1 Cor. i. 30, 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.' Both are necessary, and have an influence upon our comfort and peace, and confidence towards God. The necessity of them appeareth with respect to both covenants. The first covenant, the confidence which we would cherish is checked and choked by this objection, Thou art a sinner, and God will not respect sinners. We answer it from the righteousness of justification; Christ died to reconcile sinners to God. Or thus, Thou art not a sincere disciple of Christ; to this we oppose the testimony of our conscience, 'The Holy Ghost bearing witness therewith concerning our sincerity.' The first is the primary righteousness, and necessary for the appeasing of God's wrath; the other is secondary and subordinate, for the clearing up of our right and claim. The righteousness of Christ or of justification procureth the blessings of the new covenant for us; the other assureth them to us. The first is the ground of our favourable acceptance with God, the second is the secondary condition and evidence of it. The ground and foundation of our favourable acceptance with God is Christ's merit, mediation, and righteousness, apprehended by faith; but the evidence is our sincere walking, otherwise no certainty. In short, there having been a breach between us and God, our atonement must be made. So 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself,' 2 Cor. v. 19. There was the foundation laid for our acceptance with God; as in ver. 21, 'He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of

God in him.' Now it is not enough that the atonement be made, but the atonement must be received; that breedeth solid peace, Rom. v. 11; and it is conveyed and applied by the Spirit on God's part, by faith on ours, Rom. v. 1; then the atonement is received. There need also sure signs to persuade the conscience of the reality of the application, and to make our right more full and certain, and that we are in favour with God, which cannot be otherwise than by the sincerity of our love to God and men, Gal. v. 6. Clear that once, and you may persuade and assure your hearts before him. To conclude, both the righteousness of justification and sanctification is a righteousness before him. Of justification there is no doubt but it is a righteousness before him, there is no appearing before God without it: Phil. iii. 9, 'And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith;' Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' It is true also in its use and office, of the righteousness of sanctification. If it be sincere, though imperfect, it is a righteousness that will hold out before God, and will be graciously accepted by him: Luke i. 6, 'They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments blameless.' Though our guilty fears are mainly allayed by the application of the blood of Jesus Christ, as the ground and meritorious cause of our acceptance with God, and the only plea that we have against the charge produced from the first covenant, yet the righteousness of sanctification is at least an evidence, and confirmeth our justification by faith, and strengtheneth our plea according to the second covenant.

4. The righteousness of sanctification, which will stand before God, consisteth in our sincerity: 'If we be of the truth, we may assure our hearts before him;' so it is in the text, 'We are of the truth, and assure our hearts before him.' What is it to be of the truth? The truth is the gospel, called 'the word of truth,' Eph. i. 13, John xvii. 17. He is of the truth that understandeth and believeth this doctrine, called knowing the truth and acknowledging the truth, often spoken of in the scripture, 2 John 1, 2, 2 Tim. ii. 25; and feeleth the force and efficacy of it in his own heart: James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us, of the word of truth;' John viii. 32, 'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' And then expresseth the fruits of it in the course of his life, called 'walking in the truth,' 2 John 4, and 3 John 3, 4, 'I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth which is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth;' namely, as they follow the right way, and are true disciples of Christ. Well, then, sincerity of obedience is our grand evidence and qualification. The first covenant required innocency or unsinning obedience, the second uprightness or sincere obedience: Gen. xvii. 1, 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect;' Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' The covenant which granteth and alloweth pardon of sins alloweth also sincerity as our qualification. The old covenant bringeth all things to the balance, the new to the touchstone;



there our graces were weighed, here tried. Now if the best of us were put into the balance of the sanctuary, we should be found wanting as to matter or manner and principle or aim, and then who could be saved? But now all the blessings of God's family are entitled to the upright: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'God is a sun and a shield, and grace and glory will he give; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' This scripture containeth an epitome or abridgment of the covenant of grace; the good things there are expressed metaphorically and literally. Metaphorically he is a sun and a shield; blessings privative and positive; a sun, the fountain of all good; a shield to keep off all evil or danger; provision and protection. The one term is more verified in this life, the other in the world to come. Literally all spiritual good things come under the name of grace, eternal good things under the name of glory; no temporal good thing will he withhold: Ps. xxxiv. 9, 'There is no want to them that fear him.' But here who are the qualified parties? The sincere, who are the Lord's delight; the sincere in faith, the sincere in love, the sincere in obedience; those who are what they seem to be, and profess to be; these are the capable subjects of grace and glory, to whom God will be a sun and a shield, and to whom God will deny no good thing.

5. It is no easy matter to make out our sincerity, or to establish a solid peace and comfort in the soul. This I gather from the word 'assure,' or 'shall persuade.' There needeth much arguing and debating the matter in the court of conscience, and we need sure signs to persuade us; the conscience of sin is not easily laid aside. Shyness and stupidity may quiet us for a while, but a solid and durable joy needeth a good evidence and warrant. When we have no sense of sin and danger on our hearts, it is easy to leap into a false peace, but an awakened and sensible sinner is not so easily nor so soon established; for the upright are prone to self-accusings, for their rule is exact, and grace and love would fain do more for God; and grace in the best is but weak and small, and the remainders of sin so great, active, and troublesome, and the operations of man's soul so various, confused, and dark, and they see so many mistakes, and the children of the devil so often entitle themselves to God, John viii. 44. And frequent afflictions do also very often awaken in them a sense of sin, and all the reasonings of their minds will not still and quiet their consciences, so that the Lord is forced to come in by powerful and authoritative acts of grace, and in an imperial and Godlike manner to silence those doubts, and secure and settle a sense of his love upon our hearts: Ps. xlii. 7, 8, 'Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.' Ordinarily we have a good measure of grace before we can discern the truth of it. A working faith, a laborious and fervent love, and a lively hope cannot lie idle.

6. Though it be difficult to make out our sincerity, yet graces really, constantly, and self-denyingly exercised, will or may evidence it to us, or that the heart is sound in God's statutes, Ps. cxix. 80. Surely where grace is deeply rooted, and hath a predominant influence over our actions, so as it can countermand contrary desires and inclinations,

there the heart is sound and upright with God. Now where this is found, which the context speaketh of, it makes us to assure our hearts before him.

[1.] A real exercise of grace. Compare this with the verse before the text, 'Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.' A man may talk well from his convictions, nay, from a mere disciplinary knowledge; but to do well needs a living principle of grace. The scripture still setteth forth graces by their lively operation, for a dead and sleepy habit is worth nothing; it speaketh of the working faith as carrying away the prize of justification, Gal. v. 6. As honouring Christ: 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, 'Wherefore we pray also for you, that God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified.' The laborious love is that which God will regard and reward: Heb. vi. 10, 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work of faith and labour of love.' So the lively hope is the fruit of regeneration: 1 Peter i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' That which sets us a-doing: Acts. xxiv. 16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men;' and Acts xxvi. 7, 8, 'Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.' Grace otherwise cannot appear in the view of conscience: causes are known by their effects; apples appear when the sap is not seen. It is the operative and active graces that will discover themselves. A man may think well or speak well, but that grace which governeth the conversation sheweth itself to have a deep rooting in the heart.

[2.] It must be constantly exercised. A man may force himself into an act or two; Saul in a fit may be among the prophets. A man is judged of by his course and walk. A child of God may be under a strange appearance for one act or two; you can no more judge of them by those acts than you can of a bunch of grapes by two or three rotten ones, or of the glory of a street by the sink or kennels. So, on the other side, men may take on religion at set times, as men in an ague have their well days; the fit of lust and sin is not always upon them. A man is judged *perpetua factorum serie*, but God's works are best seen together, Gen. i. 31. Surely that breedeth peace of conscience and assurance of salvation: Ps. cvi. 3, 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.' When a man's conversation is all of a piece, his course is to please God at all times, not by fits and starts, and in good moods only. This is the mark of the context, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; but his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' An act of sin is as monstrous in him as for a hen to produce the egg of a crow. In an unsound heart there are very uneven and transient motions; their lives speak contradictions. Saul at one time puts all the witches to death, at another time he himself hath recourse to one, namely, the witch of Endor. Jehu was zealous against Ahab's idolatry, against Baal, but not against Jereboam's idolatry, the calves in Dan and Bethel.



[3.] Self-denyingly acted. Good words are not dear, 'Be warmed, be clothed.' The apostle speaketh of laying down our life for the brethren, of opening our hands and bowels for refreshing the hungry and clothing the naked. So proportionably when we take pains to instruct the ignorant, exhort the obstinate, confirm the weak, comfort the afflicted. Love of the brethren is the mark in hand, and produced here as the fruit of a sincere faith; for this sheweth a hearty receiving of God's love, when it hath made some impression upon us, when we love the brethren sincerely and heartily, and can deny ourselves for God. Do you think that religion lieth only in hearing a few sermons, in a few drowsy prayers, in singing psalms, or reading a chapter, or some cursory devotions? These are the means, but where is the fruit? No; it lieth in self-denying obedience. These are the acts about which we shall be questioned at the day of judgment, Mat. xxv. Have you visited? have you clothed? do you own the servants of God when the times frown upon them? do you relieve them and comfort them in their distresses? 'Hereby we know we are of the truth.' Lip-labour and tongue-service is a cheap thing; and that religion is worth nothing which costs nothing: 2 Sam. xxiv. 24, 'And the king said unto Araunah, Nay, but I will surely buy it of thee at a price; neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.' When we deny ourselves, and apparently value God's interest above our own, then our sincerity is most evidenced. And every one of us is to consider what interest God calleth him to deny upon the hopes of glory, and whatever it costeth us to be faithful to God. A cheap course of serving God bringeth you none or little comfort. And certainly a man cannot be thorough in religion, but he will be put upon many occasions of denying his ease, profit, honour, and acting contrary to his natural inclination or worldly interests. Those that only regard the safe, cheap, and easy part, do not set up Christ's religion, but their own: Mat. xvi. 24, 'Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' Without this it is but a christianity of our own making.

1. That graces thus really, constantly, and self-denyingly exercised leave their notice and impression upon the conscience. The context speaketh of the value of the testimony of conscience. Certainly a man should or may know the acts of grace which he putteth forth. It is hard to think that a soul should be a stranger to its own operations: 1 Cor. ii. 11, 'There is a spirit in man that knoweth the things of a man;' a privy spy in our bosoms, which is conscious to all that we do, and can reflect upon it, and judge whether it be good or evil; it knoweth what we understand, or will, or purpose, or resolve, or do, much more when we do thus uniformly and self-denyingly act for God; and that upon a fourfold reason—

[1.] Because the acts of grace are the more serious and important actions of our lives. Many acts may escape us for want of advertency, they not being of such moment; but when a man is to settle his eternal interest upon a sure bottom and foundation, and to establish his soul in the comfort and hope of the gospel, he would go advisedly to work, and consider upon what grounds and in what manner this work is carried

on. He is serious in his faith: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.' Diligence in his attendance upon this business: Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.' A man that acteth for eternity should mind what he doth.

[2.] All acts of grace are put forth with difficulty, and with some strife and wrestling. In the work of faith a humble sinner hath much ado to bring his soul to a resolution, and to venture all in Christ's hand, and to settle itself in the belief of God's power, and mercy, and word, and promises made to us in Christ; to live upon the hopes of an unknown and unseen world. For if it were an easy thing, such a power were not needful, as is spoken of, Eph. i. 19, 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power.' We should not find such a necessity of complaining of unbelief, Mark ix. 24, of calling upon God to increase our faith. It would not so often fail as it doth upon every temptation, Luke xxii. 32. And what is said of faith is true proportionably of all other graces. Self-love and carnal prepossessions hinder the love of God. Like a choice flower among weeds, so is love to the brethren, 'Master, spare thyself.' Now things difficult, and planted with much opposition, must needs leave a notice and an impression of themselves upon the soul.

[3.] There is a special delight that accompanieth acts of grace, because of the excellency of the objects they are conversant about; and the excellency of the power they are assisted withal; and the excellency and nobleness of the faculties they are acted by. Can a man be seriously dealing with God about pardon of sin, and eternal life, and not find sweetness in his work? Heb. vi. 4, 5, 'Who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.' Take a view of the promised hope, and not be affected with it? Heb. iii. 6 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of our hope firm to the end.' There is a peace and joy in believing, Rom. xv. 13, excited in us by some impression of the comforting Spirit. Three words are used to express that delightful sense which the soul hath in the exercise or review of good actions—comfort, peace, joy. Comfort, the nature of which is, that it doth not altogether remove the evil, but so alleviates it and assuages it that we are able to bear it. The trouble that ariseth from the sense of sin and the fear of God's justice is not altogether removed and taken away; yet so mitigated and allayed, that we are enabled to wait upon God: 2 Cor. i. 4, 'Who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God;' and to go about our duties with some alacrity. Peace implieth comfort, but withal a more full degree of it; for peace doth so calm and settle the consciences of God's children, that they are assaulted either with none, or very little fears. We call that peace in a nation when they are not troubled with foreign war, or intestine tumults, or confusions, for some long space of time: Phil. iv. 7, 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts



and minds, through Jesus Christ.' The next notion is joy : as peace exceeds consolation, so doth joy exceed peace, and begets a more notable sense of itself in the soul. In peace all things are quiet, but joy addeth a notable pleasure and delight of mind. In peace the soul is in such a condition as the body when nothing paineth it ; but in joy the senses are recreated by something pleasing to them : so the soul is feasted with spiritual suavities : 1 Peter i. 8, '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.' Now all these make the work of grace more notorious to the soul.

[4.] This serious, constant, uniform, self-denying course of obedience will evidence itself ; for though conscience be unobservant of particular actions, yet the course, drift, and tenor of our lives cannot be hidden from it : he that in a journey doth not count his steps, yet observeth his way ; when a man mindeth the business of going to heaven, Phil. iii. 20 ; of approving himself to God : 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience ;' 2 Cor. v. 9 'Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.'

*Object.* Why then do so many good people want assurance ?

*Ans* 1. There need two witnesses, because the heart of man is so deceitful, and the operations thereof are so various, dark, and confused : Jer. xvii. 9, 'The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and who can know it ?' There needeth a double testimony, as in the mouth of two or three witnesses everything is established. Now these two witnesses are our consciences and God's Holy Spirit : Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God ;' Rom. ix. 1, 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' The testimony of the Spirit with our own heart, soul, and conscience, they both concur to establish the same conclusion in the same act of witnessing ; for it is jointly ascribed to the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. The Spirit of God doth not bear any such witness apart from the spirit of man ; or when this doth not witness also, it doth fortify and strengthen the witness of a man's own spirit. The heart, soul, and conscience of a man doth testify to him that he desireth and endeavoureth every day to serve, please, honour, and glorify God. Hereby the Spirit assureth him that he is a child of God. Conscience will not give this witness, unless we do indeed labour to be complete in all the will of God. And the Spirit witnesseth with conscience, to give vigour and certainty to this testimony, 'My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' As when the waters of a land-flood mingle themselves with a river, they make one and the same stream, but then it is more rapid and violent ; so this conjunction of testimonies maketh in effect one testimony, but such as more powerfully beareth down our fears, and doubts, and jealousies. A christian is thoroughly settled as to his gracious estate, and his confidence is made more firm and strong.

2. So few know their spiritual condition through their own default ; for otherwise the Spirit is ready to witness, if we be ready to receive his testimony. What is the fault of christians ? A fourfold fault—

[1.] Either they do not exercise grace to the life, in the mortifying

of sin, or the perfecting of holiness; and therefore the remainders of sin are active and troublesome, and grace is weak and small, and doth little discover itself in any costly and self-denying acts, that they want the sweetness whereby they should be noted and observed. Surely great things are more liable to sense and feeling than little: a staff is sooner found than a needle. And they that row against the stream of flesh and blood, and cross the inclinations of nature, can sooner discern a divine spirit and a power working in them than others, who have not so perfect a conquest over the carnal nature; as the valour of a soldier that boldly encountereth his enemy in the face of dangers and oppositions, than one that fighteth not indeed, but lieth hid in the throng.

[2.] Or they do not examine their state, and heed their soul affairs as they ought. 'Know thyself' is a lesson worthy to be often practised. The scripture biddeth us examine ourselves, 1 Cor. xi. 28, and 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.' But few return upon their hearts, and look inward. The soul hath its experience, or a thing that may be called sense, as well as the body, but most regard it not. There is light, peace, joy, or trouble and doubtfulness, which we might easily find out if men would reflect upon themselves.

[3.] Or if they examine their state, they do it in a wrong way; as sometimes they make those to be marks to try by, which are only marks to aim at; and so by consequence that is often made matter of doubting, which should only be matter of humiliation; or else they look so much to what they should be, as not to observe what they have already, or may forget what is behind to quicken their diligence, Phil. iii. 13. But we must not forget, in judging our condition, to own the grace we have, for we must not 'despise the day of small things,' Zech. iv. 10. The spouse owneth grace in the midst of infirmities: Cant. v. 2, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh.' We come short of what we should have, but have we anything of God in our souls? We observe our diseases more than our healths; so doth a gracious heart his sins and infirmities, but not the good things found in him.

[4.] In the general, laziness is the cause: 2 Peter i. 10, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' Heb. vi. 11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end;' 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.' The comforts of the Spirit never drop into the lazy soul. When you have it, so far as you neglect your duty, so far the sense may abate. God in wisdom withdraweth his comforts to awaken and quicken his children to their duty.

Use 1. To inform us, that the grounds of a well-tempered assurance are clear and positive: 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.' Foolish presumption costs nothing; like mushrooms, it groweth up in a night, or as Jonah's gourd; we did not labour for it; it cometh upon them they know not how or why. The less such men exercise themselves to godliness, the more confident; but exercise would discover their unsoundness; a peace that groweth upon us we know not how, and is better kept by negligence than diligence, is not right: 'Hereby we know, and this is my rejoicing, the



testimony of my conscience.' Premature persuasions are very rife; how comest thou by it so soon, my son?

2. That to languish after comforts, and neglect duty, is a foolish course; many bestow their time in foolish complaints, better be hard at work; complaining will not bring it to you so soon as active diligence. Oh, that we were sure of heaven and happiness! Oh, that we knew what shall become of us to all eternity! Lazy wishes will do no good, up and be doing; it will not come by a cold velleity, a slight prayer, a customary sigh, or a faint and lazy pursuit, but by an indefatigable diligence, and unwearied watchfulness.

3. It informeth us that not only trying of grace, but exercising of grace, is necessary to our comfort and peace. Many are taken up in trying and inquiring whether they have saving grace or no, whilst they neglect the exercise of grace in a self-denying way. I would not discourage self-reflection. Oh, that we could gain the world more to this! but this I must say, that doing good to the household of faith, and to all as we find occasion, is a more evident and explicit way; and that in general it is a more excellent spirit to consider what we must be, to lie under the conscience of that, than to consider what we are and what we have been. Working will discover it sooner than bare trying, duty rather than comfort.

4. That the popish doctrine is false, that asserts that it is impossible to have the certainty of salvation: 'Hereby we know we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.'

*Use 2.* To exhort us, if we would live in a holy security and peace, let us not only be good, but do good; let us not only love God, but his people, not only 'in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth,' &c.

## SERMON XXV.

*For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.*—1 JOHN iii. 20.

THE apostle had spoken in the former verse of assuring our hearts before him; now we cannot assure our hearts before God, against all fears of his wrath, or persuade ourselves that we are his children, if we be conscious to ourselves of any insincerity, or unworthy dealing in point of love to God or men; much dependeth upon the testimony and verdict of conscience, either as to our condemnation or absolution and acquitment. He beginneth with the condemning conscience in the text, and then sheweth the privilege of an absolving conscience, ver. 21. 'The voice of conscience is the voice of God; if our hearts condemn or acquit, so will God for the most part. We are now upon the condemning act of conscience; if our hearts condemn us, God will much more. By the heart is meant conscience; as 1 Sam. xxiv. 5, 'David's heart smote him,' that is, his conscience; so Job when he would not quit his claim of being an upright man, chap xxvii. 6, saith,

‘My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.’ The heart hath a reproaching, a condemning power, and judgeth against a man when he is not right with God. In short, heart-smittings and heart-reproachings are nothing else but checks of conscience. ‘If our hearts condemn us,’ &c.

In the words take notice of a comparison between the judgment of God and the judgment of conscience; they agree and disagree in many things.

1. They agree in that both are privy to all our actions: there is a secret spy within us, that observeth all that we speak, or think, or do: ‘The spirit of a man within him knoweth the things of a man,’ 1 Cor. ii. 11. So doth God know all things: Heb. iv. 12, ‘For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.’ And where the matter requireth it, they both condemn; conscience condemneth the sinner, or the partial obedience of hypocrites; so doth God, he ratifieth the sentence.

2. They disagree or differ in two things—(1.) Greatness; (2.) Knowledge.

[1.] Greatness. ‘God is greater than our hearts.’ The same expression is used, Job xxxiii. 12, ‘God is greater than man;’ it is a reason of submission to God’s providence. God judgeth more exactly of things than we do; his authority is greater. God is the supreme judge, conscience is but his deputy. God’s sentence is decisive, whence there is no appeal: 1 Cor. iv. 4, ‘For I know nothing by myself, yet I am not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.’ The cause must be reviewed and judged in a higher court. Greater in point of purity and holiness; we have but a drop of indignation against sin, God an ocean. His displacency against sin is greater: Hab. i. 13, ‘He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;’ Isa. iii. 8, ‘Their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory.’ Greater in point of power; conscience leaveth an impression suitable to the evidence it giveth: Prov. xviii. 13, ‘The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?’ But it is a dreadful thing to be condemned of God, who hath such power to execute his sentence: Heb. x. 31, ‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’

[2.] In point of knowledge. Conscience in many things is blind, partial, inattentive, insensible, but none of these things can be imagined in God, he knoweth all things. Therefore since the business is to be transacted before him, and not before man, we had need look to it, that we may assure our hearts before him.

(1.) He seeth more clearly; he not only knoweth all things that we can know of ourselves, but knoweth more things against us than our hearts know, and so God cannot be deceived: Ps. xix. 12, ‘Who can understand his errors? Lord cleanse thou me from secret sins.’ No man knoweth a man so well as his conscience, but the conscience doth not so well know him as God knoweth him; his knowledge is infinite, and pierceth to our very thoughts and the secret motions of the heart.

(2.) He heareth more exactly. There is a partiality in our knowledge,



we overlook the evil, being blinded by self-love, but the Lord weigheth the spirits, Prov. xvi. 2, puts them into the balance of the sanctuary, and considereth all the circumstances.

(3.) He judgeth more impartially; we mistake sins for graces, and so bring in a false verdict: Luke xvi. 15, 'Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed amongst men is an abomination in the sight of God.' We are deceived with a false show; we take a brier for a rose, yea, many times a toad for a lark; but God cannot be thus deceived, but judgeth according to the nature of things.

*Doct.* That a man's unsound estate is much discovered to himself, or determined by the judgment of his own conscience.

If our heart condemn us; that is, our conscience; and every man by his own heart and conscience is generally acquitted or condemned.

Here I shall demonstrate to you—

1. That there is such a faculty as conscience, whose office it is to judge of our estate.

2. The value of this judgment, that it ought to be well weighed, when our hearts condemn us of insincere dealings in point of duty towards God or man.

I. The nature and office of conscience; certainly there is such a faculty as conscience. Science is one thing, and conscience is another: science is a knowledge of other things, conscience is the knowledge of ourselves: Conscience is the knowledge of a man's state and ways; to know what we are to do, and what we have done, that is conscience. It is the judgment of a man concerning himself with respect to reward and punishment. God, that is our Lord, is also our proper judge; but it pleaseth him to erect a tribunal within a man in his own bosom, and to make him his own judge: conscience is a judge, yet but a deputy-judge accountable to God. This much conduceth—(1.) To the glory of God; (2.) To the safety of man.

1. To the glory of God, and that in two regards, as an evidence of his being, and a vindication of the righteousness of his judicial proceedings.

[1.] As an evidence of his being, for his law is the ground of all conscience, and it is before his tribunal that it doth accuse and acquit us, and his sentence that we wait for or dread, and stand in fear of. Why should we scruple this or that, if there be not a God, by whose will good and evil are distinguished? To whom doth it accuse us but to God? Why is conscience sometimes afraid, sometimes comforted, if there were no God to mind things here below? We find conscience appalleth the stoutest sinners, after the commitment of some offences, though they be secret, and beyond the cognisance and vengeance of man: Ps. liii. 5 'They feared where no fear was;' that is, no outward cause of fear, where none sought to hurt them; accusing themselves where none else could accuse them; as Joseph's brethren, Gen. xlii. 21; or where none had power to reach them; as many worldly potentates feel the stings of conscience as well as others. Felix trembled who was the judge, when Paul the prisoner preached to him, Acts xxiv. 25. What is the reason of this, but that they know there is a supreme judge and avenger?

[2.] To vindicate the righteousness of his judicial proceedings. Self-accusers and self-condemners have no reason to quarrel with God, and impeach his justice. Man hath principles and sentiments graven upon his heart, which justify all God's dealings with him: Luke xix. 22, 'Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked and slothful servant;' Ps. li. 4, 'That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.' Surely self-condemners, Titus iii. 11, are without excuse, Rom. i. 20, and have no reason to murmur at God's proceedings with them. Hence there are frequent appeals to conscience in scripture: Isa. v. 3, 4, 'Judge between me and my vineyard, what could have been done more to my vineyard which I have not done?' So that by conscience man is better induced to give a testimony to God concerning his judicial proceedings, and the righteousness of all his dealings with men.

2. The safety and benefit of man, that he may have an oracle in his own bosom to direct him to his duty, and to warn him of his danger. In scripture we shall find two offices of conscience, to direct and censure, to judge by order of law and right; *de jure*, what we ought to do, and *de facto*, what you have done, or what you are: and if it fail in the one part, it is a blind and erring conscience; and if it fail in the other, it is a dead and sleepy conscience. You shall see conscience is spoken of in scripture both ways. As instructing us in our duty: Ps. xvi. 7, 'My reins instruct me in the night season;' that is, showed him his duty, and how he was concerned in the law of God, or the rule which he had given to his creatures. And as it sheweth us what to do, so it reflecteth upon what we have done: if evil, it smiteth us for it, as David's heart smote him for numbering the people, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. If good, it cheereth us with it: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.' It smiteth us as it exciteth fear of punishment; it cheereth us as it stirreth up hope of reward: and hereby we do very much understand how God standeth affected towards us. In short, conscience, as to the censuring part, judgeth either of act or state; particular acts whether good or evil; so it doth accuse or excuse by turns, Rom. ii. 15. As to our state, if it be good: Heb. xiii. 18, 'We trust we have a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly.' The drift and course was for God, and the performance of their duty to him. Bad or evil: Rom. i. 32, 'They that do such things, count themselves worthy of death;' that is, not only as deserving it, but as liable to it. Now it is for our benefit, that we should have such a faculty to direct, and mind us of our duty, which we are too apt to forget. So also to censure our acts, that we may be humbled for them if they be evil, or continue them if they be good. Our estate, that we may enjoy the comfort of it, before we enjoy the full reward of it, if it be good; or may remedy it, and break off our sinful course if it be evil, while we are capable of a remedy.

II. The value of this judgment, and how much it should be regarded by us.

1. In respect of ourselves, because it is so intimate to us. Conscience is God's spy in our bosoms, and man's overseer; it being so well acquainted with us, it can give a better judgment of us than anything else can. The judgment of the world, either by way of applause or



censure, is not so much to be regarded by us. The apostle calleth it the spirit of a man within him, 1 Cor. ii. 11. Though our life be never so fair that no man can condemn us, and our words and deeds do not betray us, yet if our hearts condemn us of secret hypocrisy, and want of love to God, God will much more, who knoweth more of us than we do of ourselves. Besides, this judge cannot be suspected of rigour, partiality, and ill-will; for what is dearer to ourselves than ourselves? and therefore, if our own hearts condemn us, what shall be said for us?

2. Its relation to God; it is God's deputy-judge, and in the place of God to us; called 'the candle of the Lord,' Prov. xx. 27. And therefore if it convince us, and accuse us, and condemn us, especially when we profess and pretend to sincerity; have we not cause to suspect ourselves? for it is God's vicegerent, and sitteth in the throne of God; and we may know much of his mind by the voice and report of conscience. Next to the judgment and sentence of God, a man should reverence the judgment and sentence of his own heart. Doth conscience acquit or condemn? so usually doth God: conscience doth all with respect to God, and in the name of God. The inferior court is not to be slighted, the sentence there is given out in God's name, and by virtue of God's authority. To slight the officer or subordinate magistrate in the duty of his place is to slight the supreme power: Judges iii. 20, 'And Ehud said unto him, I have a message from God unto thee; and he arose off his seat.'

3. The rule it goeth by, which is the revealed will of God, either by the light of nature or the light of scripture; his will revealed in his law, or in the gospel: according to the dispensation men are under, so have they a conscience, this makes us a light to ourselves: Prov. vi. 22, 'When thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, when thou wakest it shall talk with thee;' that is, the law of God will direct thee upon all occasions. Conscience worketh by virtue of that light which God hath put into us. Now to slight conscience, is to rebel against the light of nature, Rom. ii. 14, 15, and the light of scripture, Heb. viii. 10. Conscience will tell you what you are loath to hear, yet hear it; it will be heard once, better hear it now, while you may correct your errors; it doth but repeat over the law of God to you.

But now some objections may arise.

*Object.* 1. May we not be deceived in our judgment concerning ourselves?

*Ans.* 1. Not ordinarily; in condemnation man is over-prone to love himself, and therefore unless compelled by the manifest force and evidence of the truth, he would not condemn himself, especially when affecting the show and reputation of sincerity. Surely, if there were ground for it, he would not let go his integrity (it is true, some melancholy mournful souls may write bitter things against themselves, and mistake in spiritual things), as Prov. xvi. 2, 'All the ways of a man are right in his own eyes;' Rev. iii. 17, 18, 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou

mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.' There is a false presumption of our good estate. Now then, when our hearts reproach us, and condemn us for want of love to and neglect of God, and unmindfulness of heavenly things, it concerneth us to weigh the matter. We can better trust it condemning than acquitting: 1 Cor. iv. 4, 'If I know nothing by myself, I am not thereby justified, but every one's judgment is of the Lord.'

2. The apostle speaketh of what is rightly done, and according to rule. Look, as in acquitting we must distinguish between a dead sleepy conscience, and a tender waking conscience, so in condemning, between the judgment when under a heat, and passion, and distemper, and the judgment of conscience in our calm and sedate moods. Surely if it then condemn us, or give us no good assurance before God, we have need to look to ourselves. A stupid conscience, and on the other side a stormy conscience, are not capable of passing a right judgment.

3. It is all one as to our peace, if our hearts judge us wrongfully, either as to acts or state. Acts: Rom. xiv. 22, 23, 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' A man may do an action lawful, and yet his heart may accuse or condemn him in it, as if it were unlawful. It is a damning sin to act against conscience though it err. So as to state; he cannot think God acquitteth him whose heart condemneth him, for he cannot believe against his conscience. There is indeed a self-condemning as to merit, which entitleth to mercy; but a self-condemning as to our actual state must needs breed trouble and grief of heart, though it be upon false grounds.

*Object.* 2. But what relief is there for one whose heart condemneth him? Must he sit down, and despair, and die? I answer—

1. In some cases there is an appeal from court to court. In what court doth conscience condemn you? In the court of the law? You ought to subscribe to the condemnation as just, and to own the desert of sin; and if God should bring it upon you, he is righteous: Neh. iii. 33, 'Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.' But there is a liberty of appeal from court to court. You may take sanctuary at the Lord's grace, and humbly claim the benefit of the new covenant: Ps. cxxx. 3, 4, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Deprecate the first court, and beg the favour of the second.

2. In other cases there is an appeal from judge to judge. Suppose conscience condemn you in the gospel court, that you are not sound believers, the case must not be lightly passed over, but you must examine whether there be a sincere bent of heart in you, yea or no, appeal to the higher judge; as when others question your sincerity: 'My witness is in heaven,' saith Job, chap. xvi. 19. So when your own hearts question it, doth conscience write bitter things against you? See if the judgment of conscience be the judgment of God. It is a judge, but not a supreme judge; it may err in acquitting, as when from a judge it



becometh an advocate, excusing the partialities of our obedience ; so in condemning, when from a judge it becometh an accuser, and exaggerateth incident failings beyond measure. Go to the higher judge, whose act is authoritative and powerful : Job xxxii. 23, ' If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness.' Who can interpret your righteousness to you but his Spirit, when you cannot see it yourselves, and may sometimes speak peace in the sentence of the word, when not in the feeling of conscience, and the lively impressions of his comforting Spirit ?

3. Suppose the worst ; there is a passing from state to state : John v. 24, ' He shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.' You are in a state of condemnation now, but get out of it as fast as you can : Mat. iii. 7, ' Flee from wrath to come ;' and carry yourselves accordingly, till your condition be altered ; the door of grace is always open : Heb. vi. 18, ' Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.'

4. If the heart do neither condemn nor acquit, make your qualification more explicit, and take the same course a condemned man would do, sue out your pardon more earnestly : Rom. viii. 33, ' Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth.' Many times an old litigious title may cost as much in clearing as the purchase of a new ; therefore mind the way of fleeing from wrath to come, and be more serious in it.

*Use 1.* Is information. To show the bad condition of wicked men, who have within themselves an accusing conscience, and above themselves a condemning judge ; so that a man that doeth evil can never have a sound peace and quiet within himself, nor have any quietness. Their disease is the benumbing lethargy of a stupid conscience, they do not always feel the stings of conscience, but are always subject to it. Death reviveth them, it may surprise them in an instant. All their pleasures are but ' stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret,' Prov. ix. 17, poor delights taken by stealth when they get conscience asleep, as servants that feast themselves in a corner when they can get out of their master's sight. They are not open and avowed delights. Why ? Because their hearts condemn them, and God is ready to ratify and execute the sentence ; everything puts them in a fright : Job xv. 21, ' A dreadful sound is in his ears ; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.' Surely wicked and impenitent men have no sound peace ; they dare not look inward or upward with any comfort.

2. How far they are from the temper of religion that live even a moment without all conscience or against conscience. A good man looketh to his heart, whether it condemneth or acquitteth ; but some live without all conscience, do all things rashly and inconsiderately, never considering whether they be pleasing or displeasing to God, whether they tend to the honour or dishonour of God ; live at haphazard ; if they do good, it is by accident ; perform the duties of christianity so far as the interest of the flesh will give them leave, yea, so far as the flesh itself will command them to do well, or forbid sin, that it may not disgrace them in the world, or bring some inconveniency upon them. These consult not with conscience in their actions, but are guided by their lusts and sudden passions : others live against conscience, omitting

duties when conscience loudly calleth for it: James iv. 17, 'Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' They will find it with a witness one day; committing evil against the apparent checks of conscience, these kick against the pricks; these do not only break the law of God, but offer violence to their own consciences, and in effect resist the Holy Ghost, who exciteth them to good, Acts vii. 51, and so are under a great crime.

*Use 2.* Carry it so that conscience may not condemn you; the sentence may be, and usually is, ratified by God. To enforce it, consider these things—

1. Conscience is the best friend and the worst enemy; partly for its comfort; it is 'a continual feast,' Prov. xv. 15; 'our rejoicing,' 2 Cor. i. 12. No bird sings so sweetly as the bird in the bosom. Partly for its nearness; it is always with us in health and sickness, in life and death. Husbands and wives, who are most together, yet, because they live by a distinct life, they are often apart, and at length death cometh and looseth the band and knot; but a good conscience is a sweet companion, that always remaineth with us. So it is the worst enemy, partly for its nearness, for a man to be at odds with himself, to fall out with his own heart. It is a domestic tribunal which we cannot suppress or get rid of. Let any be your enemy rather than your own conscience. Job could bear the reproaches of others, but his own 'heart should not reproach him all his days,' Job xxvii. 6. Partly because of the grievousness of the wound: Prov. xviii. 14, 'The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?' It is no less than the fear of the wrath of the eternal God. Judas found no relief from his new friends when his conscience awakened upon him, Mat. xxvii. 3-5. In short, a man cannot run away from his conscience, no more than he can run away from himself. Therefore what folly is it to please others and offend his own conscience, or to please his lusts and wrong his conscience, and for the satisfaction of a vain appetite to incur such horror and trouble! The satisfying of a lust is a poor vanishing pleasure, but the keeping a good conscience breedeth a solid joy, which will stick by thee to the last. When thou comest to die, it will be a support to thee: Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'Lord, thou knowest that I have walked before thee with a perfect heart.' When thou must leave riches, and honours, and pleasures, which are the baits of thy lust, this will stick by thee: 1 John ii. 17, 'The world passeth away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.'

2. It is either the beginning of heaven or hell; a good conscience is the beginning of heaven, and peace and joy in believing is a foretaste of that fulness of joy and pleasure which you shall have when you come into God's immediate presence. The glorified spirits carry a good conscience with them to heaven: 'Their works follow them,' Rev. xiv. 13; and an awakened conscience is a hell upon earth. The damned carry these stings and convictions into hell along with them: Mark ix. 44, 'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.' Oh, think of this, the joys of the Spirit are the antepast of glory, called often an 'earnest:' 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit.' Horrors of conscience are the suburbs of hell.



Therefore be sure to keep all quiet within, and do not give conscience occasion to condemn you.

3. It is easily offended, but not easily appeased. As the eye is offended with the least dust and mote, which soon gets in, but is hardly to be gotten out again, so you may violate conscience, but to appease it costs a great deal of trouble; therefore there needs much tenderness and watchfulness, that you make it your daily work, Acts xxiv. 16, 'To have always a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men.' By the commission of deliberate and wilful sins you may raise a tempest that will not be soon laid again. David felt broken bones after his foul fall, Ps. li. Joseph's brethren could not put it out of their minds but that he would avenge the old quarrel, Gen. i. When the mists of passion are over, guilt maketh your heart sit uneasy within you. Therefore do not go like an ox to the slaughter.

4. If conscience speaketh not, it writeth; for it is not only a witness, but a register, and a book of record: Jer. xvii. 1, 'The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond.' We know not what conscience writeth, being occupied and taken up with carnal vanities, but we shall know hereafter when the books are open, Rev. xx. 12. Conscience keepeth a diary, and sets down everything. This book, though it be in the sinner's keeping, cannot be razed and blotted out. Well, then, a sleepy conscience will not always sleep; if we suffer it not to awaken here, it will awaken in hell; for the present it sleepeth in many, in regard of motion, check, or smiting, but not in regard of notice and observation.

5. If conscience speak not to you, we must speak to it. Call yourselves to an account for the expense of your time and employment. The course of your life is a sure evidence of your everlasting estate: Ps. lxxvii. 6, 'I communed with my heart, and made a diligent search.' How do matters stand between God and you? take some time to parley with yourselves. *Quotidie apud me causam dico*, could a heathen say—I still implead myself before myself; and if a heathen did so, should not christians much more?

6. If the stings of an evil conscience are not always felt, yet they are soon revived and forced upon us by serious thoughts of death and judgment to come. This fire that smothereth in our bosoms is soon blown up into a flame. By the word sometimes: Acts xxiv. 25, 'Felix trembled.' Belshazzar's edge was taken off in the midst of his carousings, Dan. v. 5, 6. By some great troubles; in a tempest, that which is at bottom cometh at top: Isa. lix. 12, 'For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them.' Or by death: 1 Cor. xv. 56, 'The sting of death is sin.' In the confines of eternity men are wiser, and near things do most affect us, and the baits of the flesh have lost their allurements. Things overlooked before are then seriously considered, and the deluded sinner forced to see what he would not take notice of before.

7. Sound peace will never be had by smothering checks of conscience, but making a holy use of them. To smother them breedeth hardness of heart, but to improve them is the way to a holy peace. What is the way to improve them? I shall instance in two ways—

[1.] When the particular conscience condemneth, we must look to it that the general conscience may acquit us. The particular conscience referreth to acts, the general to conversation. As to particular acts, he whose heart doth not condemn him of sin. But how is it as to the drift and course of our lives? 2 Cor. i. 12, 'But our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversations in the world.'

[2.] When the legal conscience condemneth us, we must seek our peace in the evangelical conscience. Now the evangelical conscience reflecteth on what Christ hath done for us, and wrought in us. Christ hath shed his blood for sinners: Heb. ix. 14, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?' and Heb. xii. 24, 'And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.' But that is not all, there is something also wrought in us, and is 'the answer of a good conscience towards God,' 1 Peter iii. 21.

## SERMON XXVI.

*And knoweth all things.*—1 JOHN iii. 20.

DOCT. That God exactly and perfectly knoweth all things that are in the world, and is more especially privy to the hearts and ways of men.

Of this the context speaketh. God hath a greater and more certain knowledge of what we do than our own consciences.

Let me inquire here into—(1.) The properties of God's knowledge; (2.) The reasons; (3.) How this doctrine is entertained by men; (4.) What use we should make of it ourselves.

First, What God's knowledge is. Exactly to state it is above the reach of man; this knowledge is too wonderful for us, Ps. cxxxix. 6, far above our capacity to understand the nature of it. But for our profit, somewhat of it is revealed to us in the scripture; therefore I shall give you the properties of it.

1. For the object to which it is extended, it is universal; the text saith 'all things' are known by him. But especially it relateth to man, all things in man.

Let us a little consider the modifications of this object.

[1.] Things good and evil: Prov. xv. 3, 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.' For good things there is no doubt, for he is the author of them; for evil things, God is not the author of them, but the judge and punisher, and therefore knoweth them also. Take another distinction of the object; things great and small. It was the corrupt theology of the gentiles, *Dii magna curant, parva negligunt*. One of the wisest heathens compareth him to the



Persian monarchs, who minded the great affairs of the provinces, but left other things to the satraps or vicegerents. But we are taught better divinity in the scriptures, that small things are put under the providence of God as well as great; that a sparrow (though two of them are sold for a farthing) falleth not to the ground without our heavenly Father, Mat. x. 30. It was no dishonour to God to make them, nor is it so to preserve them and look after them. Again, God knoweth not only things necessary, but contingent; things necessary, or such as depend upon the stated courses of nature, as the succession of winter and summer, day and night, the revolutions of the heavens; he hath appointed to them a law and a decree beyond which they cannot pass, Ps. cxlviii. 7. But also things contingent, as depend upon the will of man, or the casual fortuitous motion of the creature. Christ could foretell they should meet a man in the city, and bids them to follow him, and keep the passover in his house, Luke xxii. 10. And he told Nathanael what he said, and where, John i. 48. And often told the Jews and his disciples what they thought: Mat. ix. 4, 'Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why think ye evil in your hearts?' He knew what Paul did in such a city, such a street, such a house, at such a time, Acts ix. 11. In short, nothing more casual than a lot: Prov. xvi. 33, 'The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing of it is of the Lord;' he knows how the lot will fall. Once more, he knows things past, present, and to come. Past; no oblivion can fall upon God; a thousand years are to him as one day, Ps. xc. 4. We forget many of our actions, but God forgets them not. All things present are known to him, for he sustaineth and guideth them in their motions, and they subsist no longer than he pleaseth: 2 Chron. xvi. 9, 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth.' The sun is an emblem and representation of his knowledge: Ps. xix. 6, 'There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.' If the sun were an eye, it would see all things it shineth upon; only the sun cannot pierce through dark and thick bodies. But God is over all, and through all, and in all, the great eye of the world. Man's knowledge is limited and confined to a few things, that fall within the cognisance of the time and place wherein he liveth; but God seeth and knoweth all things. Things to come, which are wholly out of the reach of man's discovery: Jer. i. 5, 'Before thou wert framed in the womb, I knew thee.' God's foresight is more clear than our sight, and the substance of things does not give us a better knowledge of them than God's prescience doth to him: Isa. xli. 23, 'Show the things to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.' He challengeth all the world to be able to foretell future contingencies. Once more, God knoweth all things that shall be, and might have been. All things that shall be: Acts xv. 18, 'All his works are known to God from the beginning of the world.' Past, present, and to come, make no difference in the understanding of God; for from the mount of eternity he hath a prospect of all things, as if they were now in being. That place is brought to prove that God did not begin then to take to himself a people from among the gentiles, but had from all eternity determined to do so. God, that doth all things in time, knew all these things before all time, otherwise his knowledge were neither eternal nor infinite. Things are because

he willeth them, and he willeth them from all eternity. God also knoweth all things that might have been. He knew that Abimelech would have defiled himself and Sarah, if he had not withheld him, Gen. xx. 6; that the men of Keilah would have betrayed David into the hands of Saul, if he had stayed among them, 1 Sam. xxiii. 12. There is many a man kept bare and low, God knoweth what he would do if he had power in his hands. Many die young; God knoweth, if they had lived forty or fifty years, it would have been worse for them, they might have dishonoured God more, grieved their relations more, or been exposed to temptations, which he saw not fit to let loose upon them. Thus for the universality of God's knowledge, he knoweth all all things.

[2.] The particularity of God's knowledge. His knowledge is not only universal, but particular; he knoweth every individual thing and person. Our persons are known to him by head and poll: 2 Tim. ii. 18, 'The Lord knoweth those that are his;' and 'the good shepherd calleth his own sheep by name,' John x. 3. There is not a single man liveth in the world, but God taketh notice of him; he doth certainly know that there is such a creature as thou art, such a man or woman in the world. His decree passed on thee; he knew thee in the mass and lump of mankind, and took notice of thee by name when his creating power passed on thee; for he knoweth all that he hath made; and he is to judge thee, and will set thy life in order before thee, Ps. l. 21. And therefore certainly knoweth thee, or else he were not an omniscient judge. There could be no process against thee if the Lord were ignorant of thy person; and his actual providence about thee implieth it. Thou canst not uphold thyself one moment without him, and therefore he is as verily with thee as thou art with thyself. Suppose that God had never a creature to look to in all the world but thee, wouldst thou not believe then that he doth know thee and regard thee? Why not now? Is there any weakness in God? is his mind distracted with variety of objects, that he would not regard thy person, heart, word, and ways? is he not sufficient for thee, and as really present with thee as if he had no other creature else?

(2.) As our persons, so our ways: Ps. i. 6, 'The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.' Doth not God distinguish between his obedient and rebellious subjects, and know who they are, and how many are of the one sort and the other? To deny this were to strike at the root of all piety and obedience. If he hath not a particular inspection of human affairs, and did not know the good and evil, what need we take care whether we be good or evil?

(3.) As of our way and scope in general, so of every step; he knoweth all the particularities of our lives: Job xxxi. 4, 'Doth not he see all my ways, and count all my steps?' By our way is meant our general conversation, and by our steps our particular actions. God seeth us in all postures, when we laugh, and when we weep, when we are proud, and when we are angry, toying and praying, when in company or alone, when buying or selling, and when worshipping and hearing: Ps. cxxxix. 2, 'Thou knowest my up-rising and down-lying;' how ye go to bed at night, and rise in the morning. And he knoweth not only



thy actions, but thy heart. It is a mighty awe upon us that he knoweth our words and actions : Ps. cxxxix. 4, 'Lo, there is not a word in my mouth, but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.' God knoweth it, whether it be savoury and gracious or vain and idle. But this is not all; he knoweth our hearts and our very thoughts: Prov. xv. 11, 'Hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much more the hearts of the children of men?' He setteth forth the knowledge of God by those things which are most unknown to us, the state of the dead and the hearts of men. He knoweth all those that are in the state of the dead, though unknown or forgotten by the most of men; what is become of the bodies and souls of men; the damned spirits in hell, he keepeth an exact account of all the prisoners; the bodies in the grave, he knoweth what is become of their dust, and how to restore to every one his own flesh and his own body; and what are the thoughts and hearts of men now alive. The thoughts of the heart are most hidden from man till they be revealed by word, or action. Who can know our thoughts? what more swift and sudden, what more various and more hidden than a thought? and this he knoweth not by guess and interpretation, by running up our actions into their proper thought and principle wherein they are founded, but by immediate inspection, and knoweth them before they are manifested by the event, or any overt act of word or deed; what consultations and deliberations we are about before we conclude anything; with what hopes, and aims, and consciences we are carried on; in whose name we act, and with what principles and ends: which is of double use to us, partly to breed a holy fear, and partly a hope in us. An awe, how should we compose our minds and passions, and the very thoughts of our hearts! God seeth all, how should we use our words and order our behaviour! We do all in his sight, and speak all in his hearing: he finds out<sup>1</sup> the thought, word, and deed that is not done in his presence or conceived in his presence, and then allow yourselves to be vain and frivolous if you can. And partly to breed a hope in us. God knoweth what is hatched in hell, or Rome, or elsewhere against us; and therefore let us do our duty, and rest in the wisdom of God for protection.

3. God's knowledge is most exact and accurate; it is good to see how it is expressed to us in scripture: Heb. iv. 13, 'All things are naked and open before him;' cut down by the chine-bone. When a beast is dissected and opened, every part is seen, the soundness or unsoundness of it presently appears. Heathen soothsayers were wont to look to the inwards of the beasts, and to observe the colour, shape, and all the defects or perfections of the sacrifice: the prophet alludeth to it when he saith, Ezek xxi. 21, 'He looked into the liver.' Thus are all things said to be laid open before God. Sometimes by searching: 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 'He searcheth the heart, and trieth the imaginations of the sons of men.' Sometimes it is search as with candles, Zeph. i. 12, as one for what is hid or lost. Luke xv. 8, when the woman had lost her groat, 'She lighteth the candle, sweepeth the house, seeketh diligently till she findeth it.' We think our sins will never be heard of more, but he findeth them out, and they find us out: Num. xxxii. 23, 'Your iniquities shall find you out.' Sometimes by keeping reckoning: Job xxxi. 4, 'Doth not he count all my steps?'

God hath a book where all is put to account : Mal. iii. 18, 'A book of remembrance was written before him ; and Ps. xvi. 3, 'Thou tellest all my wanderings ; put thou my tears in thy bottle, are they not in thy book ?' Words, thoughts, actions, all upon record. What neglects of grace, omission of duties, violating principles of conscience, God counteth them all : Jer. xiv. 16, 'Thou numberest my steps, and watchest over my sin.' Sometimes by weighing and pondering : Prov. xvi. 2, 'But the Lord weigheth the spirits ;' Prov. xv. 21, 'All my ways are before him, and he pondereth my goings.' Whether full weight or too light, he knoweth the number, the proportion, the weight of every one of thy sins ; the person who, the place where, the time when committed ; what means, warnings, methods of grace, helps to the contrary, these are brought into the reckoning. Thus by many metaphors does the scripture set out the exact and certain knowledge that God hath of persons, and circumstances, and all their actions ; nothing can escape God, and he cannot be deceived, because he goeth on sound evidence.

4. It is an infinite, perfect, distinct manner of knowing things : Ps. cxlvii. 5, 'His understanding is infinite : Of his understanding there is no search ;' Isa. xl. 28 ; it is beyond the reach of man's shallow capacity to conceive of it. I add this, because it is hard for us to understand how God should at once know all things that are done by so many several men, in so many several parts of the world, and hearken to all their prayers. Lucian scoffed at the heathen gods, as if they were forced to run hither and thither, to hear the prayers made in the eastern and western parts of the world, and the disorders that fell out in Greece while the gods were banqueting in Ethiopia. An infinite understanding can see all things at once, for he understandeth all things in a way different from man ; not successively, and by discourse one after another. A man cannot read a book in a moment, but must go from line to line, and page to page ; but God knoweth all things in an instant, and that by one act of understanding, as if a man could read a book through by once looking on it. His knowledge is not confounded with multiplicity of objects ; as God had a prospect of the whole creation at once, Gen. i. 31, 'He saw all that he had made.' It is all one to him to know all things, and know but one thing. When two or three speak together, we are not able to take in their sense and meaning, our senses and understandings are finite. Now when many speak to God at the same time, it is but as if one spake ; an infinite eye seeth all, and an infinite ear heareth all, and that clearly and distinctly, without confusion.

II. The reasons which the scripture giveth for the belief of this knowledge.

1. The immensity and greatness of God ; God is in all, and above all, and beyond all, nowhere included, and nowhere excluded. And so his omnipresence doth establish the belief of his omniscience : Jer. xxiii. 23, 24, 'Am I a God at hand, and not afar off ? Do not I fill heaven and earth ? can any hide himself in secret places, that I should not see him ?' God is everywhere, not only with respect to his powerful and efficacious providence, but with respect to his essential presence. God is there wherever you are. Now if he be with us, surely he knoweth us. He is present with all the world, and therefore he doth regard and



observe all the world: you may take liberty to sin when God is gone or absent from you, and you can get behind his back; but that can never be, and therefore we must do all things as in his presence.

2. From creation. God hath made our hearts, given us the power to affect, think, purpose, and do, and therefore knoweth what is in us: Ps. xciv. 9, 10, 'He that planted the ear, shall not he hear? he that formed the eye, shall not he see?' God knoweth how the creature will act, for he gave it power to act. Surely he that made man knoweth what is in man; his knowledge is answerable to his power. He that made the heart of man observeth what they do, what counsels they have in hand. This argument is again used, Ps. cxxxix. 13, 'Thou hast possessed my reins; for thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.' He that made our heart, knoweth our words, works, thoughts, and all. Once more: Ps. xxxiii. 13-15, 'The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike, he considereth all their works.' He that formed their souls as well as their bodies is able to judge particularly the operations of their hearts. Every wise agent knoweth what he doeth, and to what end he maketh anything, and how it may be used or employed. The same argument is urged by the prophet Isaiah, chap. xxix. 16, 'Shall the thing formed say of him that formed it, He hath no understanding?' This is brought to confute them that say, Who seeth us, who knoweth us? or thought they could hide their counsels, so as God should not see them. Alas! all lieth open to God's eye, as the fashion of the pot of clay doth to the potter: God cannot be ignorant of anything that is in his own work. You cannot imagine he knoweth not what you think and do; when he made you, if he had so much wisdom to give you the power, he knoweth the act.

3. From God's government. There is a twofold government of God, and both infer the truth in hand—

[1.] Powerful, and by his effectual providence, as he governeth all creatures.

[2.] Moral, by his laws, as he governeth the reasonable creature.

[1.] The government of his effectual providence, which is necessary to all our actions: 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being,' Acts xvii. 28. All things move as he moveth them in their natural agency. The creature can do nothing without him, and actually doth nothing but by him: his wisdom guideth, his will intendeth and commandeth, his power moveth and disposeth all. He is more intimately present with us than we are with ourselves, governing and sustaining all things: 'His hand leadeth us, and his right hand doth still uphold us,' Ps. cxxxix. 10. We cannot do anything, go anywhere, without his gracious supportation. Now doth God support a creature whom he knoweth not, and in any action which he understandeth not? Christ knew that virtue passed from him when the multitude thronged him, Luke viii. 45, 46. In the great throng of creatures God knoweth who is sustained by him, and to whom the influence of his providence reacheth. Now then, since he is as verily with thee in every place as thou art there thyself, is he present with thee, and regardless of thee, of thy thoughts and words and ways? It cannot be.

[2.] His moral government. All persons and causes of men are to be judged by him, and therefore are most eminently and fully discovered to him. Surely he that is to be judged of God must be clearly known to him, both as to his actions and thoughts; how else can he judge righteously either now or hereafter? Job xxxiv. 21, 23, 'His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. Therefore he will not lay upon man more than is right, that he should enter into judgment with God;' that is, will not excessively and unjustly afflict man: Ps. xciv. 10, 'He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?'

III. How this truth is entertained by men.

1. Some atheistically deny it: Job xxii. 13, 14, 'And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the thick cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.' Atheists have carnal and gross thoughts of God, as if he were confined within the heavens, and had no sense and care of what was done below, or had other business to mind than to look after the sons of men: Ps. lxxiii. 11, 'How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?' Many that dare not simply deny a deity, yet deny a providence: they measure God by themselves, their own shallow conceptions; whereas God is infinitely exalted above what we can comprehend.

2. Some question it, if they do not deny it: Isa. xxix. 15, 'Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?' Ezek. viii. 12, 'They say, Who seeth us? the Lord hath forsaken the earth.'

3. Some forget it: he is not far from us, but we are often far from him; they acknowledge this truth in the general, but they forget it in particular, in the course of their conversations: Ps. xxxvi. 4, 'The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before their eyes.' What could he do worse, if no God to take notice of him? Profaneness is practical atheism; they do not deny, but forget; or they deny not in words, but in works. We should often revive this thought, God knoweth, and taketh notice of what we do: Ps. cxix. 168, 'I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies; for all my ways are before thee.'

4. Some slight it through impudence and obduration in sin: Zeph. i. 12, 'The Lord will do neither good nor evil.' They acknowledge there is a God, and that he is omniscient, holy, and just, yet dare sin against him: Ps. x. 17, 'He hath said in his heart, The Lord will not require it.'

5. Most carry themselves as too unmindful of it, as appeareth by these evidences.

[1.] In the general; men would be other manner of persons, in all holy conversation and godliness, if they did always set God before them. The all-seeing eye of a holy God would make them more circumspect and watchful. But because men live without God in the world, therefore are their conversations so full of vanity and sin: Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect.'

[2.] More particularly; men would make more conscience of their



thoughts, if they did remember that God knoweth their thoughts afar off, Ps. cxxxix. 2. Would they indulge themselves in such a liberty of lustful, covetous, envious, malicious, and unbelieving thoughts, and feed their minds with these things, if they did well consider that God knoweth all things?

[3.] The disproportion of our respects to God's eye and man's: they can fancy a matter in the dark, and not be troubled about it. We are usually more awed with the presence of a man than with the presence of God. You will do that which God knoweth, which you would not do when man knoweth it. He knoweth your fraud, your uncleanness, your licentiousness: Jer. ii. 26, 'The thief is ashamed when he is found.' Job xxiv. 17, 'If a man know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.' If a man know anything amiss by them, they are full of anguish and shame. Why should not conscience be awakened more by thoughts of God's knowledge? It would trouble us to have a window into our hearts; is not all open and naked to God's eye? In short, how watchful are we not to incur the penalty of man's law! but offences against God are lightly passed over.

[4.] The best have not such a sound and serious belief of this truth, nor do not improve it as they ought to do, as appears partly because we are more troubled with this or that branch of corruption which breaks out to our disgrace, than about the body of death, or indwelling sin, which is the cause of all; the root should be more grievous to us than the branches. Partly by this; in company, what lofty expressions and flowing eloquence will men enlarge themselves in prayer! but how slight and overly in closet duties, if not too commonly neglectful of them! What is this but in effect to say that our Father doth not see in secret? Partly, also, what will you say if we are troubled more with brokenness of expression than unbrokenness of heart? the one layeth us open to shame and disgrace with men, the other is more offensive and displeasing to God.

#### IV. What use shall we make of it?

1. Terror to the wicked. God seeth them here and hereafter, and will call them to an account; there is no escaping his sight here, nor shifting his tribunal hereafter. Adam, by running to the bushes, did not hide himself from the Lord, neither did he hide the Lord from himself. God seeth, and God seeth as a judge: Jer. xxxii. 19, 'Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to his doings.' God is not a bare spectator of what is done in the world, but a judge, an avenger of what is evil: and his solemn judgment at the last day will most discover his omniscience, 'When the hidden things of darkness are made manifest, and the counsels of the heart are brought to light,' 1 Cor. iv. 5. In that, as you cannot evade his knowledge, you cannot escape his power.

#### 2. Comfort to the godly.

[1.] God knoweth their persons: Exod. xxxiii. 12, 'I know thee by name:' he taketh special notice of them. All things are under a providence, but they are under a special providence; a father cannot forget how many children he hath, though in a large and numerous family he cannot presently reckon up all his servants.

[2.] God knoweth their conditions, wants, and necessities: Mat. vi. 32, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that you need these things;' Exod. iii. 7, 'I have seen the afflictions of my people, and known their sorrows.' God is so well acquainted with our wants, that he cannot forget us nor neglect us.

[3.] Our prayers are heard, not lost in the darkness of secrecy: Mat. vi. 6, 'Thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.' He that knoweth thy heart, will give thee the desire of thy heart.

[4.] Thy duties are rewarded, and rightly understood. First, Certainly rewarded: 2 Chron. xvi. 9, 'For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose hearts are perfect with him;' Heb. vi. 10, 'God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love.' Secondly, Rightly understood. Men may be ignorant of what we do, but God is not; as Potiphar was ignorant of Joseph's faithfulness; he put him in prison for his integrity, Gen. xxxiv. 19, 20; the butler forgot him, Gen. xl. 43. Some will not own it, but God knoweth: 1 Cor. iv. 3, 'But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment.'

*Use.* Is to awaken all to a greater mindfulness of this truth.

First, Let it be believed, and the faith of it more settled in your hearts. Besides creation and providence, and God's immensity or omnipresence and government, the arguments mentioned before, there are evidences of it—

1. In the human nature of Christ; he discovered himself God while he was in the flesh, and this perfection of his Godhead did shine forth through the human nature, that he knew men's hearts, and their inward thoughts. He turneth out the very inside of their minds in the story of his life often: John ii. 25, 'He knew what was in man.'

2. By the light of the prophetic spirit: 2 Kings v. 26, 'Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?' As if he had said, I saw him light out of his chariot, and what he gave thee, and where thou laidst it. God had bestowed upon him an extraordinary spirit, whereby he could discern things done in his absence. So another prophet, Ahijah, when Jeroboam's wife thought to have put a cheat upon him, his eyes being dim by reason of age: 1 Kings xiv. 6, 'Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, why feignest thou thyself to be another?'

3. The gift of discerning spirits bestowed on the apostles, 1 Cor. xii. 10, whether church-gifts, or sincerity of men's hearts, in order to discipline: Acts v. 9, 'How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?' that is, the prophetic spirit.

4. Another instance is God's finding us out in our secret sins by his word, searching the heart: Heb. iv. 12, 'The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart;' 1 Cor. xiv. 25, 'And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest.' By his Spirit enforcing the sense of our secret sins upon us: Job xiii. 26, 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.' Old sins, long since forgotten, come into fresh



remembrance, and we know not how to get rid of the horrors of them. By his providence: Num. xxxii. 23, 'Behold, ye have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out;' Gen. xlii. 21, 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear him: therefore is this distress come upon us.' The man was rough and untractable to them, as they had been to their brother: afflictions open the eyes, they are God's rack.

Secondly, Remember it often in your whole conversation; you are always before God, therefore serve him 'in holiness and righteousness all the days of thy life,' Luke i. 75; Prov. xv. 21, 'The ways of a man are before the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.' He weigheth every circumstance of thy life. If this were better thought of, there would be less disorder in the world. Heathens gave this advice, that in the presence of a Cato, or severe reprove, there needs no fiction or supposition in the case; and a greater than Cato is here. God is really present everywhere, but we do not think of it. He seeth, and 'is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.' We should inure ourselves to these thoughts.

Thirdly, We must actually revive this thought in solemn duties, when we come to act the part of angels, and to behold the face of our heavenly Father. In every duty God knoweth the frame of our hearts and affections; and wilt thou be cold and careless in the sight of God? There God immediately is the party with whom we have to do, in hearing and praying: Heb. iv. 13, 'Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are open and naked unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;' Acts x. 33, 'Now therefore we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' He knoweth what thoughts and affections are stirring in your hearts; God is everywhere with us, but we are not always and everywhere with God.

Fourthly, In a time of temptation. When sin assaults with the advantage of secrecy, and other inviting circumstances to commit it, Gen. xxxix. 9, say, 'How shall I do this wickedness, and sin against God?' We must check it by this consideration, God seeth, God knoweth: Esther vii. 8, 'Will he force the queen before me in the house?' Shall we break God's laws before his face?

Fifthly, To make you faithful in your stations. God invests us with them, that we may improve them for his glory. Magistrates: 2 Chron. xix. 1, 'The Lord is with you in the judgment;' Ps. xcii. 1, 'God standeth in the congregation of the mighty.' Diodorus Siculus telleth us of some heathens who had some empty chairs of state advanced above their tribunals as for their gods, to show they were present, and had an inspection over all acts of judicature: Ezek. v. 8, 'If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.' Ministers: 2 Cor. ii. 17, 'But as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ;' 1 Thes. ii. 4, 'Even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God,' who trieth our hearts. Masters of families are to walk in their houses with a perfect heart: Ps. ci. 2, 'I will behave myself

wisely in a perfect way ; I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.' Though shut up in their families from the observation of others, yet God seeth them ; therefore behave yourselves wisely and prudently there. Servants : Col. iii. 22, 23, 'Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God ; and whatever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.'

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## SERMON XXVII.

*Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.—1 JOHN iii. 21.*

HERE is the effect of a good conscience. In the words we have—(1.) A condition supposed, 'If our hearts condemn us not ;' (2.) A privilege asserted, 'Then have we confidence towards God.'

First, The condition supposed. There are three functions and offices of conscience : there is, first, a knowledge, remembrance, or keeping up of principles, according to which our state and actions must be interpreted ; secondly, a sense of our actions, or what is done, or left undone, in conformity or contrariety to those principles ; thirdly, a judging or applying to ourselves those rules which concern our fact or state. As to the first act and office, conscience hath the force of a law and rule, informing us of good or evil. With respect to the second act, it is a witness, testifying what we have been or done. With respect to the last act, it is a judge, to condemn or acquit as the matter shall require. As, for instance, in that copulate axiom which you have, Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' Take the first part ; he that 'liveth after the flesh shall die,' meaning the second death ; there conscience interposeth as a law or rule. But I 'live after the flesh ;' there conscience interposeth as a witness : therefore I shall die the second death ; there it condemneth as a judge. Take the second clause, and you will have an instance of conscience not condemning or acquitting : 'They that by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body shall live ;' but I mortify the deeds of the body, therefore I shall live. Now if conscience goeth upon a right principle, and beareth true evidence, the sentence and judgment remaineth firm, or in full force, be it by way of condemnation or absolution. As in the first reasoning, the conclusion must needs breed sorrow, trouble, and dejection of heart, which must not be put off till God put it away ; that is, till we break off our fleshly course of living, and obtain our pardon and peace by Jesus Christ. In the second reasoning the sentence of absolution is a ground of comfort, and giveth boldness in our approaches to God. Once more, conscience may condemn us two ways—in part or in whole ; according to the strictness of the first covenant, requiring unsinning obedience ; on the equitable terms of the second, accepting



our sincere obedience. Our hearts may accuse us of imperfection, but not of insincerity and hypocrisy, or partial dealing with God. In this latter sense is the text taken.

Secondly, The privilege, 'Then have we confidence towards God.'

1. What is this confidence?

[1.] It is sometimes put for boldness, or not fearing any danger or evil from one: 1 John ii. 28, 'That when he shall appear we may have boldness, and not be ashamed at his coming.' And so the sense will be, You need not fear any danger from him; for God will not be wanting to them that walk sincerely before him. So it is said the 'righteous are bold as a lion,' Prov. xxviii. 1. So Phil. i. 20, 'According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that, with all boldness, as always, so now, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death.' That he should boldly avow the truth, as fearless of any danger; living and dying, he should glorify Christ. A christian feareth nothing that is established upon sound terms: Ps. xxiii. 4, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.' They are not discouraged and disquieted, as others, with the apprehensions of danger; as not from men, so not from God, to whom they look chiefly. Fear and dread of God's displeasure followeth the consciousness of sin, but expectation and hope of reward and good countenance from God is the natural result of righteousness and holiness. This is the first notion of the word 'confidence,' and not to be excluded here.

[2.] It signifieth liberty in prayer, a telling God all our mind, and so it signifieth praying freely to God, and asking of him whatever we stand in need of; a freedom to speak our hearts and open our minds to God in all necessities: Eph. iii. 12, 'In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, through the faith of him;' and Heb. iv. 16, 'Let us come boldly to the throne of grace.' We may present ourselves and our requests before him with confidence. Only let me note, that this confidence noteth liberty of heart rather than liberty of speech; not a flowing of words so much as a holy confidence of audience and acceptance whenever we draw nigh unto him.

2. In what sense we may be said to have it. It may be understood *de facto* or *de jure*. It is not meant of the first only, for two reasons—(1.) Because otherwise it were not an argument of the value of the testimony of conscience if we have confidence towards God, and he doth not allow it or approve it; for though he doth not say, If our hearts condemn us not, God will not condemn us, as in the former verse, 'God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things;' yet it must be understood, or else the apostle's reasoning were impertinent. (2.) Because *de facto* all that are sincere have not this confidence; they have a right to it, though they enjoy it not; for there needeth another witness: Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.'

*Doct.* That a good conscience is one means to open an effectual door to us for free and full communion with God.

I shall prove two things to you—

1. That it is a great privilege to have free and full communion with God in his worship.

2. That a good conscience hath a great influence on this.

I. For the first, that free and full communion with God in his worship, expressed here by boldness, or 'confidence towards God,' is a great privilege. This will appear if you consider—

1. Man's forfeiture by sin; God's image, favour, and fellowship lost all at once. All sweet commerce between us and God was cut off, as is evident by the story of the fall, where you will find man first a fugitive, and then an exile. First he ran away from God, and then God banished him out of his presence, Gen. iii. 8. When God came walking in the garden in the cool of the day, Adam and his wife hid themselves, as being afraid of the presence of the Lord; they shuffled out of the way, and ran among the trees of the garden; and afterwards we read again, ver. 23, 24, that God sent him forth, and drove him out of his presence, and set a guard of cherubims, and a flaming sword turning every way upon paradise, which was a figure of his wrath. As it was thus with Adam, so it was with all his posterity; sin is the wall of partition between us and God: Isa. lix. 2, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.'

2. The estrangement of the heart that grows upon this forfeiture, as appeareth by that legal bondage and those guilty fears which are natural to us. Sinners fear God, and fly from him: 'I was afraid, and hid myself,' saith Adam, Gen. iii. 10; and all his posterity have the same disposition: Isa. xxxiii. 14, 'Who among us can dwell with devouring burnings?' Yea, it appeareth by the bashfulness and in-confidence that befalleth the children of God by reason of sin. The fears of a guilty child make him shun his father's presence, as David kept silence when he had sinned, Ps. xxxii. 3. Strangeness and distance groweth between God and us while sin lieth on the conscience.

3. The majesty of God, and the state which he kept during the old testament dispensation. In the whole frame of that worship, God would show them how unworthy sinners were to approach and draw nigh to him and his holy things. When they were married to him in the covenant on Mount Sinai, there was a rail between him and the people, and they were not to go up into the holy mount, or touch the border of it, under penalty of being put to death, Exod. xix. 12, 13. In their passage to Canaan, the common Israelite was not to come near the ark lest he died, Num. i. 53, but the Levites were to interpose between God and them. The Levites also were not to be too bold; some of them were chosen out to touch the staves of the altar, and perform other ministries, but not to see the holy things when covered, lest they died, Num. xix. 20. Sinful man must not come too near the great God. The priests were to minister at the altar of burnt-offerings, but not without solemn washings, Exod. xxx. 20. The high priest (Lev. xvi. 2, 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark, that he die not') was not to be too familiar with God; and if any of these orders were broken, judgments were executed, and they were struck dead in the place. The people were sensible of these restraints: Num. xvii. 17, 18, 'And the children of Israel said unto Moses, Behold, we die, we perish, we



all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die: shall we be consumed with dying? Some were killed with the sword, the earth swallowed up others, some died with pestilence, and all for making too bold with God in his holy things.

4. The many failings which the best are conscious of. When we consider the exact inspection of God, and the many infirmities of the best christians, it is a wonder they can have any confidence towards God, when our own conscience condemneth us of many things; but the Lord layeth not them to our charge where the heart is sincere for the main; and he could observe many more things against us than our consciences do, yet such is his mercy and fatherly love, that he will pardon and reverse all these failings, and will delight in our converse with him: Prov. xv. 8, 'The prayer of the upright is his delight.' God looketh more to their good than their ill; though he knoweth more by them than all the world, or they themselves do, yet if our hearts do not reprove us of partial dealings, we may plead, 2 Kings xx. 3, 'I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.'

5. The thing itself is very valuable. This confidence towards God, what is there in it?

[1.] A readiness to converse with God and come into his presence; whereas otherwise the heart is shy of him, and hangeth off from him; as Israel, when they had sinned in the matter of the calf, they durst not come near the sanctuary, but worshipped every man afar off at his tent-door, Exod. xxxiii. 8, as looking what success Moses' mediation would have with the Lord about reconciling him to his people, when he was angry and ready to depart. Now when we can cheerfully come into God's presence, and converse with him, we have boldness to enter into the holiest, Heb. x. 9; we have leave to come, and a heart to come: to have both is a very great privilege. Liberty of access, with assurance of welcome and audience, surely is a great favour and privilege; the soul cannot keep away from God.

[2.] A free familiarity. When we come, we unbosom ourselves to him as a man would unto his friend, and tell God all our mind, acquaint him with all our griefs, sorrows, fears, hopes, desires, temptations, conflicts; tell him plainly how it is with our souls. This is that free spirit David begs for, and had lost some degree of it by his sin, Ps. li. 12, and is set forth by Ps. cxix. 26, 'I declared my ways, and thou heardest me.' We keep back nothing from him: Ps. lxii. 8, 'Trust in him at all times, pour out your hearts before him.' We lay down our burden at his feet; we deal openly and plainly with him.

[3.] A childlike trust, that he will pity and help us, that our persons and duties are accepted with him; for much of the disposition of children lieth in owning him as a Father. The spirit of adoption was given us to this end and purpose: Rom. viii. 15, 'But we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;' and Gal. iv. 16, 'He hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' Oh, what a mercy is this, to come to him, not as our judge, but as our Father, not with a spirit of fear, but love! It is not a tribunal of justice we stand before, but a throne of grace.

Surely to have a merciful reconciled Father to go to, and make our moan for relief in all our distresses and wants, is a very comfortable privilege, that we cannot sufficiently value. Whosoever scorneth and slights him, a christian knoweth where he may be welcome: 'My friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears to God,' Job xvi. 20. Though slighted elsewhere, he will not be refused there. Surely God will deal kindly with his children; his fatherly love will not suffer him neglect them, or any of their concernments.

[4.] The rich treasure that we have an interest in and free access unto. God's all-sufficiency is our storehouse; he hath grace enough to pardon our sins, to pity and relieve our miseries, to heal our natures, supply our necessities, to help us in our straits, and finally to save us with an everlasting salvation. This confidence implieth a dependence on God's all-sufficiency, Gen. xvii. 1. Cast all your care upon him, 1 Peter v. 7. Earthly parents, their affections and power are limited. Now to come to such a God every day, and to know that as often as we come we are welcome to him, in and through Christ, our persons and prayers are pleasing to him, and that he will give us all the things we ask of him according to his will, what a mercy is this!

II. What influence hath a good conscience upon it?

1. The door of access to God is opened by Christ. It was first opened by the merit of his passion, and is still kept open by his intercession; therefore it is said, Heb. iv. 15, 16, 'For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in a time of need;' Heb. x. 19, 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' Our peace and atonement was made with God by Christ's passion, represented and pleaded by his intercession.

2. It supposeth our justification by faith, for otherwise we are not entered into the evangelical state: Rom v. 1, 2, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith.' Till we are accepted in the Beloved, we have a charge lying against us: Acts xiii. 38, 39, 'Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.' This is a ground of rejoicing: Rom. viii. 33, 34, 'Who then shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?'

3. Our justification is evident to us when conscience witnesseth on good grounds that we do not allow ourselves in the omission of any known duty, nor in the commission of any known sin: Heb. x. 22, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.' When we are justified and sanctified, and our consciences, which were unquiet by reason of sin, are purged and purified, then we may cheerfully come to God for all things. Particularly—(1.) To remove terror; (2.) To establish boldness and confidence.



[1.] To remove terror. There are two things obstruct our soul's access to God—our own guiltiness and God's terror.

(1.) Our own guiltiness, that straitens the heart, and stoppeth the mouth, and breedeth bondage in us. All the world naturally is become guilty before God, Rom. iii. 19; but they who are renewed and pardoned, they come out of this guilty and wretched estate, and by little and little are settled and established as to their consciences, as their pardon and sanctification is made more evident to them by a holy conversation: Rom. vi. 14, 'For sin shall have no dominion over you.' Where sin reigneth not, they come to understand their estate by grace, and so vanquish their legal fears. Where worldly and fleshly lusts bear sway, a man is under the law, not under grace. The law is alive or dead according to the state a man is in, either of sin or holiness. He that liveth in a state of sin still carrieth his sting and wound about him, and is always under doubts and fears, or hath the matter and ground of them. Certainly they have not the true courage and boldness of the saints. Not only their flesh and spirit is at war in their hearts, but law and grace. As the Spirit prevaieth against the flesh, so doth grace prevail against our law-fears: 'For they that are led by the Spirit, are not under the law,' Gal. v. 18; that is, not under its condemning power. So Rom. viii. 14, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' If we live in obedience to the motions of the sanctifying Spirit, he doth as a Spirit of adoption overcome our legal fears.

(2.) God's terror. God is our friend and Father in Christ; not a terrible judge, but a reconciled Father; and his throne is not a judgment-seat, but a mercy-seat. He is terrible to those that lie in their sins; they look upon him as a malefactor doth upon his judge, a rigid lawgiver or severe avenger; as a condemning God, not as a pardoning God. But not so to those that are adopted and taken into his family; he maketh the renewed and sanctified his children, and is pleased to own them as a Father: 'That we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us to the adoption of children,' Eph. i. 4-6. Surely when God is our Father, the chief cause of all our fear and trouble is gone. We have no cause to fear the flames of hell, or sting of death, and the terror of the judgment, any further than to make ready for the day of judgment. Surely then we can not only draw nigh to God, and behold his face with comfort and confidence now, and rejoice in his presence with us in the ordinances, but also look and long for his appearance, when he shall come in his glory: 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing;' Rev. xxii. 20, 'He who testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly, Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus.'

[2.] To establish boldness and confidence; for—

(1.) There is an everlasting merit to depend upon, and that is the blood of Christ, quieting the conscience: Heb. ix. 14, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge our consciences from dead works

to serve the living God?' Heb. xii. 24, 'And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.' We are admitted for Christ's sake, and have only his righteousness to plead against the first covenant.

(2.) Here is a blessed covenant, wherein God hath showed his willingness to accept us, and hath given us his warrant for the discharge of the sincere and upright: Rom. viii. 1, 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Therefore, if our consciences do not charge us with a doubling with God, what should disquiet our minds?

(3.) There is a sure claim, and that is sincerity, when our hearts condemn us not, nor reproach us for any voluntary wilful neglect of or disobedience to the laws of Christ, or living in any wilful and allowed sin; yea, rather acquit us, assure us of such sincerity to God and Christ, that we can appeal to his all-seeing eye: John xxi. 17, 'And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' Now surely all this will breed boldness, and be matter of joy and confidence to us: 2 Cor i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.'

*Object.* Will not this strengthen the security of the wicked, to leave all upon the judgment of conscience? Jer. xvii. 9, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' Many men's consciences do not condemn them; they absolve themselves with great confidence, which is not to be imputed to the strength of their faith, but the hardness of their hearts.

*Ans. 1.* Wicked men are never perfect as appertaining to the conscience; they have not a true sound peace; it is but a truce, as appeareth because it is so soon disturbed by the seriousness of their own thoughts, their troubles, the agonies of death. A dead stupid conscience they have, but not the rejoicing of faith and liberty towards God. It is not the lively sense of God's love; their hearts reproach them, though they regard it not.

*Ans. 2.* It doth suppose that conscience doth its office rightly, and that all things concur which are necessary to a good conscience. As—

[1.] Some competent knowledge of the gospel, the privileges and duties thereof. Carnal men are bold through ignorance. Now, 'without knowledge the heart is not good,' Prov. xix. 2; as in outward courts, through ignorance of law or false evidence, wrong sentence may be given. Therefore the apostle supposeth them to be persons whose hearts and consciences are in some measure enlightened in the things of God, and are still inquiring what is his holy, good, and acceptable will.

[2.] One that hath heartily consented to the new covenant so understood: 1 Peter iii. 21, 'Baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.' When they answer to the Lord's offers and demands in the gospel, thankfully accepting the offered benefits, faithfully resolving, by the strength of the Lord's grace, to perform the required duties, this is the covenant made with God in baptism.



[3.] Those that set their hearts to fulfil their covenant-vow : ver. 22, 'Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in his sight.' Now those, if their hearts do not condemn them of doubling, and dealing insincerely with God, they have liberty and confidence : Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, as upon the whole Israel of God.' On the contrary : Ps. lxvi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' In short, then, those that allow no sin, complain of it, fight against it, and study to please God in all things, and abound therein more and more ; those are declared to be sincere that seek to be without offence, Phil. i. 10. If men walk crookedly, they break their confidence, and cannot look God in the face with any comfort.

[4.] That the case be well studied and weighed before conscience pronounceth and passeth the doom, for the heart is very deceitful : 1 Cor. xi. 29, 'Let a man examine himself ;' 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 'Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith ; prove yourselves ;' when a man well knowing his duty doth often search and examine himself, his conformity and inconformity thereunto, to see if any of these be wanting. Blind men cannot judge of colours. If no hearty consent to the covenant of grace, founded in the blood of Christ, he hath not taken the course to pacify conscience. If it be not his hearty and daily endeavour to please God, it is impudence, not confidence ; if there be slightness before the matter be debated, and doth undergo a full trial and hearing, it is rashness and presumption, hypocrisy and senseless overweening.

*Use 1.* That liberty in prayer is so great a mercy, that we should not easily sin it away, and make our sincerity questionable ; the heavenly trade is then interrupted, and comfortable commerce between God and us broken off. Before we come into God's glorious presence, he first traineth us up by inviting us into his gracious presence, and the throne of grace is the porch of heaven. God taketh this course, not only to settle our affections, that we may begin that acquaintance here which there shall be perfected and consummated, but to try our confidence. If we cannot come to God in prayer, how shall we come to God in heaven, and in a dying hour cheerfully set sail for eternity, and launch into the other world ? Now whilst we are insincere, serious prayer is irksome ; we can have no delight in God's company, or comfortable thoughts of him ; while we indulge any secret sin, every duty is a penance to us. Therefore do not lose your liberty and openness of heart to God, but preserve the friendship settled in the covenant of grace inviolable and entire.

2. That God's presence, which is the comfort of the faithful, is the burden of the carnal and the guilty. The presence of God is terrible to sinners ; they think they are never better than when farthest off from God and most forget God. The devil and the wicked sympathise : Mat. viii. 29, 'What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God ? art thou come hither to torment us before the time ?' Job xxi. 14, 'They say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' God's presence and company is a burden to them. Now into what a miserable condition hath sin brought men ! It hath

changed their joy and content into the greatest terror. Wicked men can neither fly from God's presence, nor yet well endure it.

*Use 2.* To press christians to keep a good conscience. If you would maintain your liberty and confidence towards God, carry yourselves so that conscience may not condemn you. There are so many blessed fruits accompany it, that we should value it the more. If you have it not, you want liberty in prayer, here mentioned; no hope of glory, no sweetness in the word, no readiness in duty, nor strength to resist sin, nor comfort in distresses and afflictions. But if you have it, you cannot conceive the joy that accompanies it: Rev. ii. 17, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna; and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a name written, which no man knows but he that receives it.' It makes the thoughts of God sweeter, for he is your Father; his mercy, for it is your portion. His justice is not your terror, but support. His wrath you have escaped; as the Israelites looked back on the Red Sea, and saw their enemies drowned and they escaped. His world of creatures are for your use and service; heaven is your Father's palace; Christ is your Redeemer and Saviour; the word is your charter; ordinances and prayer the porch of heaven; the Lord's supper the table God keepeth for his children.

## SERMON XXVIII.

*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.—*  
1 JOHN iii. 22.

IN the context the apostle is speaking of the benefit of a good conscience. It is double—

1. Confidence towards God.

2. Acceptance with God; or, if you will, access to God, and success in prayer. Of confidence to make the prayer we spake in the former verse; acceptance of it, when it is once made, of this in the text, 'And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him,' &c.

In the words there are two things—

1. The privilege of a good conscience, 'Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.'

2. The character and property of a good conscience, 'Because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.'

1. For the privilege; and here note—

[1.] The universality and extent of it, 'Whatsoever we ask.'

[2.] The certainty, 'We receive;' not, we shall receive; we are as certain to receive it as if we had it already.

2. The character, evidence, and property of a good conscience, 'Because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.' This is fit to be added, because he had only



described conscience by its act of absolving or not condemning. Now he sheweth this must be understood of conscience rightly proceeding. It is usually and truly observed that there is a fourfold conscience—

[1.] Quiet and not good: Luke xi. 21, 'When the strong man keepeth the house, all that he possesseth is in peace.' There must needs be a calm when wind and tide goeth together.

[2.] Good and not quiet; as when David thought he was utterly cut off, and cast out of God's sight: Ps. xxii. 31, 'I said in my heart, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.'

[3.] Such as is neither good nor quiet; such was Judas' conscience: Mat. xxvii. 3, 4, 'Judas repented, saying, I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.'

[4.] A conscience both good and quiet: It is good, for 'we keep his commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in his sight.' As it is good, so it is also quiet; for in the former verse he saith, 'It condemneth not.' This good and quiet conscience is set forth by two expressions, one relating to the matter, the other to the aim of our obedience.

(1.) The matter, 'Because we keep his commandments;' meaning both moral and evangelical; faith in Christ, and love to God and man, as he explaineth himself, ver. 23; and this done evangelically, by the Spirit of Christ and love of God: 1 John ii. 5, 'Whoso keepeth his word, in him is the love of God perfected.'

(2.) For the aim, 'And do those things which are pleasing in his sight.' Those things only please God which he hath commanded; as you please a man when you do what is according to his will. Now this is the aim of the sincere heart, to please God in all things; and if we set ourselves to do so, God will not be a stranger to us: John viii. 29, 'He that sent me is with me; for I do always the things that please him.'

There is nothing of difficulty remaineth, but only the connection between the two clauses, which seemeth to be causal, 'Because we keep his commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in his sight.'

*Ans.* It is a condition, not of merit, but order. By obeying him we are qualified to have our prayers heard by him; but yet not for our merit, but his merciful promise to hear us: Dan. ix. 18, 'Not for our righteousness, O Lord, but for thy great mercies.'

*Doct.* Such as make conscience of obedience may obtain of God whatsoever, in reason and righteousness, they ask of him.

I shall handle the point in this method.

1. I shall show you in what large terms God hath invited and encouraged us to prayer.

2. I shall state the case, how we may ask so as to be sure to speed.

3. I shall speak of God's answer, and the success of our prayers.

I. In what large terms God hath invited and encouraged prayer. Here in the text, 'Whatsoever we ask of him we receive.'

1. In some places there are indefinite promises of audience; as Ps. i. 15, 'Call upon me, and I will hear thee.' So Job xxii. 27, 'Thou shalt make thy prayer unto God, and he shall hear thee;' Ps. xxxvii. 14, 'Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall grant thee the desire of

thy heart ;' and Isa. xlv. 19, ' I said not unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me in vain ;' Mat. vii. 7, 8, ' Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you : for every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.' Now though these places do not tell us how much God will grant, or how far he will hear the prayers of his people, yet they show us that it is not labour in vain to seek God ; and we have all the encouragements in the world to come and acquaint him with all our desires, griefs, fears, wants, and requests ; for what cannot God do ? and what will not prayer do with a good God, who is able to do what he pleaseth, and hath promised to do what we desire ?

2. There are promises that have universal particles annexed ; as John xiv. 13, 14, ' Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.' So John xv. 7, ' If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.' So John xv. 16, ' Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he shall give it you.' The same is repeated, John xvi. 23, ' Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' And many more such expressions there are in the word of God. Not that men have a lawless liberty allowed them, to give vent to all their desires, how unjust and unreasonable soever they be, and that God's power shall lackey upon their vain fancies and appetites. No ; these large and universal offers admit of limitations propounded in scripture, which must be regarded, that we may not make promises to ourselves, and set God a task by our self-conceitedness and vain fancies, and think him engaged beyond what he is pleased to bind himself unto. And the use of these universal particles is to encourage us against the straits and diffidence of our own hearts : though we ask things so great for their worth, difficult to compass, and which we are so unworthy to receive, yet none of these things should discourage us, and straiten our expectations, that when we come to God, if our requests be just and equal, he will grant them for Christ's sake.

II. To state the case ; how must we ask, that we may be sure to speed ?

1. The first thing to be observed is the qualification of the person ; for unless you put yourselves into a receiving posture, according to the terms of the promise, you cannot expect to speed. Now none are in a receiving posture but such as are in grace and favour with God, such as are justified and sanctified, and live in obedience to him : Prov. xv. 8, ' The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord ; but the prayer of the upright is his delight ;' John ix. 31, ' God heareth not sinners ; but if any be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth ;' James v. 16, ' The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much ;' Ps. lxvi. 18, ' If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me.' These and many other places show that if we would have our prayers heard and accepted with God, we must be righteous, not live in the open practice of any known sin, nor secretly foster it in our hearts. And therefore though prayer should be made with the greatest earnestness and confidence, yet if the consciences of men reprove them of any looseness and lightness of spirit, that they



have served God by halves, and are off and on with him in their practice, if they be not heard in the evil day, they cannot challenge God for breach of promise, but themselves of neglect of duty ; for if they will not hear God, why should God hear them ? This reason is given, Prov. xx. 9, 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.' Not only his vile practices, but his prayers. Therefore, if you would have God's ear, obey him and hearken to his voice ; and then for the asking you may obtain anything which a good conscience will permit you to ask of him ; and upon other terms you must not deal with God. Keep close to God's will, and he will give you your will. Surely it is a profitable thing to obey God. Do you do that which God requireth of you, and God will do that which you ask of him.

2. The next thing to be regarded is the matter of our prayers and requests, and there we have the limitation : 1 John v. 14, 15, 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.' All the business is, what is the meaning of that, 'According to his will ?'

[1.] With conformity to his revealed will.

[2.] With due submission and reservation of his secret will.

[1.] Surely with conformity to his revealed and commanding will, that we ask nothing that is sinful or unjust ; as if we would seek to entice God to our lure, and to avenge our quarrels ; as Balaam built altars and offered sacrifices to draw God to curse his people ; or when we would have God to bless us in some unlawful undertaking or purpose, or are biassed by envy, revenge, or any corrupt and carnal affection, and to ask things contrary to charity, or that meek spirit that should be in christians. Unlawful desires put into prayer are a double evil, as contrary to God's law, and as presented in prayer. The wills of God's children are limited by his word and will. The Spirit in them maketh intercession according to the will of God, Rom. viii. 27. When we mingle our lusts with our prayers, we make this pure stream muddy, and would put dross into Christ's golden censer, as if he should mediate that our lusts should be fulfilled, and sins accomplished.

[2.] With a due reservation of and submission to his secret and decreeing will. Many things are lawful, yea, commanded, yet we must ask them with submission to the will of God ; that is, we must use the means, and refer the success to God. As, for instance, when parents ask the conversion of their children, and children the lives of their parents ; but God disposeth of the event as it pleaseth him. Again, many things may be good in themselves, but are not good for us ; as Moses desired to enter into the land of Canaan, which God saw not good for him. So thou art sick, and wouldst fain have thy life prolonged, and therefore in the bitterness of thy heart makest thy moan to God, as Hezekiah did ; it may be the Lord will take thee from the evil to come, and translate thee to glory, which is much better for thee ; as David fasted and prayed for the life of the child : 2 Sam. xii. 22, 'Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child

may live?' In this reservation of God's will we have two exceptions—if it be for God's glory and our good.

(1.) God's glory: John xiv. 13, 'Whatever ye ask the Father in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.' Whatever belongeth to our duty we must do; but for the event, how he will be glorified, we must submit it to God.

(2.) For our good. Grace layeth this restraint upon the will of a renewed man, but of this good, God will be judge, and not we. It may be good for us to be afflicted, Ps. cxix. 71. Temporal things being but accessary to our happiness, and belonging to our comfortable condition in the world, but not of absolute necessity to our salvation, should not be peremptorily asked, but in submission and limitation of God's will: Mat. xxvi. 39, 'Yet not my will, but thine be done;' so far as God seeth them good for us. The short is, that in things necessary to salvation, we shall not be refused; in other things, we should not ask of God anything that agreeth not with his will, or is against his glory, or may be hurtful to ourselves. Till we learn to acquiesce in the will of God, and seek the most necessary things of God, we do not pray aright.

3. The next limitation is as to the manner.

[1.] Fervently, and with that life and seriousness which such requests call for: Mat. vii. 7, 'Ask, seek, knock.' Prayer is not answered if the spirit of prayer be wanting, or those lively affections which are necessary to constitute a prayer: James v. 16, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' Afterwards he instanceth in Elias, ver. 17. If a cold prayer meets with a denial, we have no cause to complain. The ardency of holy desires is wanting; we are not in earnest, which is the soul of prayer, though the form and fashion of it be kept up: Dan. ix. 3, 'I set myself to seek the Lord;' Jer. xxix. 12, 13, 'And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts.' When God hath a mind to work, he sets the spirit of prayer a-work.

[2.] Christ hath put faith among the conditions required to prayer: Mat. xxi. 22, 'All things that ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;' or, as it is in Mark xi. 24, 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' There must be a confidence of that power that we would set a-work, and of God's will and goodness to pity and relieve us. As things are tendered to us in the promise, so are we bound to believe and pray for them, and no otherwise; for the word of promise is the measure, ground, and foundation of prayer. And as to the promise of temporal things, it is either personal or common. Personal; so God absolutely promised to some of his servants to give them temporal blessings, so absolutely to be believed and prayed for. So he promised to Abraham to multiply his seed as the sand on the seashore, Gen. xxii. 17; and this promise Abraham was to believe with an absolute faith, whatever difficulties there were to the contrary, Rom. iv. 18–21. God promised David the kingdom, and anointed him by Samuel, but for a long time he was kept in a private and perplexed condition, yet bound to be confident. So God promised Paul the life of all that were with him in the ship, Acts xxvii. 25, therefore in the greatest difficulties he encouraged his com-



panions: 'Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.' But the common promise of the blessings of this life is not absolute, but shall be dispensed to us as it shall be for God's glory and our good, and therefore are not to be absolutely asked nor absolutely expected from God. So the saints express themselves about these things: Joel ii. 14, 'Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat-offering and a drink-offering unto the Lord?' God will hold us in suspense about these things, and try our godliness and submission. But yet though there be uncertainty about particular blessings, we must always pray in faith. It is one thing to believe for certain that God will grant our petition with this condition, if the grant be for his glory and our good, and another thing to believe absolutely that he will not deny the particular thing we ask of him, without such exception and reservation. Of the former, we must be persuaded in all our petitions; of the latter, we cannot be confident; there we can only say, 'Who knoweth but that God may do it for us?' for it is not for us to determine what is most conducing to the glory of God, or profitable for us; all must be left to our heavenly Father, upon whose good pleasure all our happiness dependeth. We must be persuaded of his all-sufficiency, refer it to his goodness, as not to be troubled about it.

[3.] To the manner the end also belongeth, that the prayer be directed to his glory: James iv. 3, 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.'

III. I shall speak of God's answer, and the success of our prayers; and there are several distinctions and considerations.

1. Sometimes God giveth an answer presently, at other times after some competent space of time; as Cornelius at the time of prayer, Acts x. 3, and while the duty is a-doing, an angel was sent to him at the ninth hour to assure him his prayers were heard. The ninth hour was the usual time of prayer: Acts iii. 1, 'Now Peter and John went up to pray at the ninth hour.' So Daniel, chap. ix. 20, 21, 'And while I was speaking and praying and confessing my sin, yea, whilst I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.' The Lord is ready to answer the prayers of his servants in the very instant of praying. So Acts iv. 31, 'While they prayed they were filled with the Holy Ghost.' The cases were singular and extraordinary as to the token and manner of assurance; but as to the substance of the blessing, it is the common practice of God's free grace: Isa. lviii. 10, 'When they call, I will answer; when they pray, I will say, Here am I;' Isa. lxxv. 24, 'While they are speaking, I will hear.' The company that was met to pray while Peter was in prison were heard at the time, Acts xii. 12, 13; God sent Peter to them.

2. Sometimes a good while after. The prayers are upon record in God's book: Mal. iii. 16, 'A book of remembrance was written before him.' This God doth to exercise our faith, to believe what we see not. Nay, God will hear them, though they know not the way how nor time when: Micah vii. 7, 'Therefore I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me.' And to try our

patience; for he saith, 'I will wait for the God of my salvation.' Though he doth not grant as soon as the prayer is made, yet we must believe what we see not, and wait for what we have not. Paul prayed thrice, 2 Cor. xii. 8. God taketh his own time for despatch. Abraham prayed for a child, but many years he goeth childless.

2dly. Consider the several ways how God giveth answer to his people's prayers.

1. Extraordinarily; so in ancient time, as an angel was sent to Cornelius, to Daniel, to Abel by fire, Heb. xi. 4, to Abraham by vision, to Saul by oracle.

2. Ordinarily, and so several ways.

[1.] By granting the mercy prayed for; as to Hannah: 1 Sam. i. 27, 'For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me the petition that I asked of him.' So to David: Ps. xxi. 2, 'Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withheld the requests of his lips.' So often to his people, when they have humbly sought to him, he giveth them the very blessing they ask.

[2.] By giving in spiritual manifestations of his grace to the soul, though he doth not give the particular mercy prayed for; as when upon prayer he reviveth the soul of him that prayeth: Job xxxiii. 26, 'He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him, and he shall see his face with joy;' Ps. cxxxviii. 3, 'In the day when I cried unto thee, thou answeredst me, and didst strengthen me with strength in my soul.' Comfort is an answer; support is an answer: such an answer had Paul, when God told him his 'grace was sufficient for him,' 2 Cor. xii. 9; when the heart is quieted, though we do not know what God will do with our requests. Hannah, when she had prayed, her heart was no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 18.

[3.] Sometimes by way of commutation and exchange. So God doth answer the prayer though he doth not give the mercy prayed for, when he giveth another thing that is as good or better for the party that prayeth; though not in kind, yet the same in weight and value. This commutation may be three ways—

(1.) In regard of the persons. David fasteth and prayeth, and humbleth his soul for his persecutors, Ps. xxxv. 13, but it returned into his own bosom, that is, it was converted to his own benefit. His fasting had no effect upon them, but his charity did not lose its reward. David prayeth for his first child by Bathsheba, but God giveth him Solomon instead thereof, 2 Sam. xii. 15. In that supposition, 'Noah, Daniel, and Job shall save their own souls,' Ezek. xiv. 18. They that wished peace to a house, 'if the house was not worthy, their peace returned to them,' Luke x. 5, 6. They should have the comfort of discharging their duty.

(2.) In regard of the matter. Carnal things are begged, spiritual given; not a pompous kingdom to Israel, but the promise of the Spirit, Acts i. 6, 7. Moses would fain enter into Canaan, but God saith, Deut. iii. 27, 'Let it suffice thee; speak to me no more of this matter;' would fain have a Pisgah sight, and be eased of the trouble of the wars. We would have a speedy riddance of troubles, but God thinketh it not fit; they go off by degrees. Showers that come by drops soak into the earth better than those that come by a tempest or

<sup>1</sup> Qu. omit 'would fain'?—ED.



hurricane. We ask for deliverance from troubles, and God will give courage in troubles: Lam. iii. 55-57, 'I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice; hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. Thou drewest near in the day I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.' His gracious and powerful presence in trouble was enough. Christ himself 'was heard in that he feared,' Heb. v. 7; not saved from that hour, but supported and strengthened in it. Job prayed, sacrificed for his children when they were feasting, Job i. 5. God gave him patience, that he charged not God foolishly when they were destroyed, ver. 20.

(3.) In regard of means. We pray such means may not miscarry; God will use other; as Abraham would fain have Ishmael the child of promise, but the Lord intended Isaac: 'Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!' Gen. xvii. 18. God may give us our will in anger, when the thing begged turneth to our hurt. Therefore the way or kind of God's answer must be referred to his own will in all things, for which we are not to pray absolutely. And when we have discharged our duty, and endeavoured to approve our hearts to God, take what answer he will give.

*Use 1.* To show us with what confidence we must pray. You must be persuaded that God will hear you according to your will or need, when you ask things agreeable to his will, and fit for you to receive in your station, and with a due subordination to his glory and the interest of his kingdom; upon other terms you should not ask anything of God. To support you, that you shall have what you ask, there are three things—(1.) God's nature; (2.) Christ's merits; (3.) The promises of the gospel.

1. God's nature. We conceive of God as wise, and powerful, and good: all encourage prayer. God's wisdom and providence: Mat. vi. 8, 'Your Father knoweth what things you have need of before you ask him.' His almighty power: Eph. iii. 20, 'He is able to do beyond what we can ask or think;' Mark xiv. 36, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee.' With these thoughts should we come into God's presence. And lastly, his goodness and love; that must not be left out: John xvi. 27, 'The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God.' Christ's intercession made way for us, but the Father's love prevented that. We have wrong thoughts of God if we do not think of his self-inclination to do good. His readiness to hear and forgive doth encourage poor creatures to come to him. All these things make him a God hearing prayer. And to encourage poor suppliants—

2. There is the merits and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ: Heb. xii. 2, 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is sat down at the right hand of God;' Rom. viii. 3, 'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;' Heb. ix. 24, 'For Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' We have a friend in court, who will join with us in the requests we make to God, whose intercession answereth to the motions of his Spirit in our hearts.

3. There are the gracious promises of the gospel, by which all necessary things are secured to us. And though the dispensation of particular blessings are reserved to God's good pleasure, yet there are certain general promises which concern us for the present, of which we may be confident; as that God will never utterly fail his people: Heb. xiii. 5, 'He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;' that he will dispose of all things for the best to them that love God, Rom. viii. 28; that he will not leave us to insupportable difficulties, 1 Cor. x. 13. This should satisfy us.

*Use 2.* It teacheth us that we should look after the answers of prayer. Certainly a man that is serious and sincere in prayer will be earnest for an answer: Ps. lxxxv. 8, 'I will hear what the Lord will speak.' A gracious heart dareth not take God's name in vain, nor make prayer a vain babbling or empty prattle, but will be listening and hearkening after news from heaven: Ps. v. 3, 'I will pray and look up.' Watch to see what cometh. Foolish boys, that knock at a door in wantonness, will not stay till somebody cometh to open to them; but a man that hath business will knock, and knock again, till he gets his answer. To people that consider not what they do, whose prayers are the sacrifices of fools, they throw away their prayers, and never look after them, what cometh of it? but they that are in earnest, and are persuaded God heareth them, will wait for an answer. We should the rather do this—

1. Because answers of prayer are notable confirmations of faith concerning the truth of God's being and promises: Ps. lxxv. 2, 'Oh, thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come;' Ps. xviii. 30, 'The word of the Lord is a tried word; he is a buckler to all that trust in him;' Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' They see this is the God to be prayed unto, these promises to be trusted in; that this God will not fail those that seek him, and depend upon him. Now we should seek confirmation from experience, as a rebuke and check to that atheism that still remaineth in us.

2. Excitements to love and obedience. Nothing increaseth our love to God as to see he is mindful of us upon all occasions, especially in our deep necessities: Ps. cxvi. 1, 'I will love the Lord, for he hath heard the voice of my supplications.' Every answer of prayer is a special instance of God's love to us, and so it begets love to God again; it is as new fuel to increase the fire.

3. Encouragements to pray again: Ps. cxvi. 2, 'Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.' The throne of grace will not be neglected by them that have found good success there; they see there is mercy and help to be found. As one adventure in point of traffic succeeding well encourageth another, so is the success of duty: Ps. xxxii. 6, 'For this shall every-one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.' From David's ready audience and despatch.

4. God will lose much honour, praise, and thanksgiving, if we do not regard his answers: Ps. l. 15, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me;' Col. iv. 2, 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.' We are to gather matter of praise to God; as the intercourse between heaven and



earth is maintained by vapours and showers, so is commerce between God and us carried on by donatives and duties, by holy prayers and God's gracious answers.

## SERMON XXIX.

*Because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.*—1 JOHN iii. 22.

I COME now to the second thing, the character and property of a good conscience. Here are two expressions, one relating to the matter of our obedience, the other to the end.

1. The matter, 'Because we keep his commandments.'

2. The end and aim, 'And do those things which are pleasing in his sight.'

*Doct.* That those have a gospel good conscience who keep God's commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in his sight.

Here I shall inquire—

1. What it is to keep God's commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

2. How this is a gospel conscience; what could the law require more?

3. How this doth constitute a good and quiet conscience, free us from fears of being rejected, and give us hopes of being accepted with God.

I. What it is. The first expression is to keep the commandments of God. Here we must open two things—

(1.) Commandments; (2.) Keep; the object, and the act.

First, The commandments that must be kept; and they are of several sorts.

1. Moral and evangelical; so it is explained in the next verse, 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.' Love is our primitive holiness, faith belongeth to our recovery. Not only the moral law is the rule of our duty, but the gospel also; faith is commanded: John vi. 29, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' Sin is not our work at all; the affairs of the world are our bywork. Particular duties are subordinate to the great duty of the gospel, not our main work, nor must be gone about. So repentance is commanded: Acts xvii. 30, 'He hath commanded all men everywhere to repent.' At your peril will it be if you refuse this grace. Gospel obedience falleth under a command; it is not an indifferent thing, whether we will accept the remedy, yea or no. Moral duties are evident by natural light. Remedial and gospel duties depend upon a positive institution, though highly reconcilable to natural light.

2. First-table and second-table duties; as faith in Jesus Christ, and

love to one another. We must make conscience of all duties we owe to God and men : Acts xxiv. 16, 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.' There is a first table and a second ; some are very punctual in dealing with men, but neglectful of God. But both tables are owned from heaven, Rom. i. 18. Some will not wrong men of a farthing, but stick not to rob God of all that fear, love, trust, delight, which is due to him. They will not defile their bodies with open uncleanness, but commit it in their hearts ; they condemn the rebellion of Absalom, yet disobey their heavenly Father. No murderers, but strike at the being of God ; are tender of men's good name and reputations, but dishonour and take the name of God in vain. Others are much in worship, but unconscionable in their dealings with men ; will not swear an oath, but are very uncharitable, censuring their brethren without pity and remorse. This is the fashion of the world, to be in with one duty and out with another. The commandments are introduced by this preface, 'God spake all these words,' Exod. xx. 1. He that hath enjoined the one hath enjoined the other ; but as the echo rendereth but part of the speech, so do we in our returns of obedience. God spake all, and we return but a part.

3. Smaller as well as greater duties : Mat. v. 19, 'Whosoever shall break the least of these commandments, and teach men so to do, shall be least in the kingdom of heaven.' God counteth his authority despised, and the commandments and obligatory power of his law to be made void by him that shall either in doctrine or practice count any transgression of his law so light and venial as not to be stood upon, or as if it were a trifle to be so nice and exact as not to make conscience of petty things, such as vain thoughts, light words, or passionate speeches. Deceit of heart is found on both sides. Some are apt to say, 'It is but a little one, and my soul shall live,' as Lot of Zoar. No sin is little that is committed against the great God ; and it argueth the more wickedness to break with God upon every trifling occasion. A little force will make a heavy body move downward, because it is its natural motion. Others are apt to stand much upon lesser things. John xviii. 28, the Jews would not enter into the judgment-hall lest they should be defiled, yet at that very time they sought the life of the Lord of glory. Hypocrites make a great business about small matters, wherein the flesh and self have some special interest, when the weighty common duties are little valued, relished, or insisted on ; by-matters, and the more uncertain points which self hath espoused, are contended for with all zeal and earnestness : Mat. xxiii. 23. They reject the weighty things of the law, such as faith and love ; judgment and mercy are omitted, while they tithe mint, anise, and cummin ; like one that cometh into a shop to buy a pennyworth, and stealeth a pound's worth, or pays a small debt, that he may run deeper into the creditor's books, and so deceive him of a greater sum.

4. Commandments that require public and private duties ; to fail in either consists not with sincerity. In times of trouble many content themselves if their hearts be right : 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Cleanse yourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit.' The libertines in Corinth did so. It is no matter whether they own God publicly, or, if they



will, yet, to gratify their neighbours, go to an idol-feast; as if a wife should prostitute her body, and pretend that she keepeth her heart loyal to her husband. Others make a fair show to the world, but in their family converse are loose and careless. David saith, Ps. ci. 2, 'I will walk in my house with a perfect heart.' If a man be truly holy, he will show it at home as well as abroad, in his family where his constant converse is; yea, in his closet and secret retirements. A christian is alike everywhere, because God is alike everywhere. We strain ourselves to make our best appearance in public, God will be served with our uttermost in private also.

5. There are commands concerning the government both of the inward and outward man. We must make conscience of both, or else our conscience is not a good conscience: Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the sinner forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.' Not only make conscience of our way or our outward actions, but also of our thoughts, and the secret operations of our hearts: James iv. 8, 'Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.' As we should not do evil before men, so not think evil before the holy God; for those things fall under a law as well as the overt acts.

6. There are some commandments we have no great temptation to break, others that lie more cross to our humours and interests; therefore not some or many must be kept, but all. A sanctified judgment must approve all, a sanctified will choose all, as justly good, necessary, and profitable for us; and in our endeavours we must obey all: Rom. vii. 12, 'The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good.' The law in general, and that commandment which had wrought such tragical effects in his heart, it is all good, how contrary soever to our natural or perverse inclinations. If we set up a toleration in our hearts, we are not sincere: Ps. lxvi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me;' that is, if he did cherish it, and secretly foster it. There is something wherein you would be excused by God, and expect favour from him. A man that would keep out the cold in winter shutteth all his doors and windows, yet the wind will creep in, though he doth not leave any open hole for it. We must reserve no sin; some will remain after the best care and caution. Therefore we must not obey God in some things, and break with him in others, 'Nor trust to our own righteousness and commit iniquity,' Ezek. xxxiii. 13. If the bosom sin be not weakened, your whole righteousness is called in question: Ps. xviii. 23, 'I was upright before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity.' There are some sins most incident to us by temper of body, course of life, or carnal interests. Now we should mainly cross that sin which is most pleasing, and dry up that unclean issue that runneth upon us. Thus for the object.

Secondly, The act, 'Keep;' that noteth two things—(1.) The inward respect which we have to God's laws; (2.) The outward action or course of life which results from this.

1. The inward respect which we have to God's laws in our memories, consciences, and affections: Prov. iii. 1, 'Let thine heart keep my commandments.' The heart keepeth them when we keep them in mind so as to understand them; in memory, so as not to neglect them, but have them ready at every turn; in heart and affection, so as to stand

in awe of them: Prov. xiii. 13, 'Whosoever feareth the commandment, shall be rewarded;' Ps. cxix. 161, 'My heart standeth in awe of thy word.' I dare not do anything against it, yea, do delight in it: Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies more than in all riches;' Ps. xl. 8, 'I delight to do thy will, O God; thy law is in my heart.' The great new covenant blessing is to write the law in the heart and mind: Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them upon their hearts.' Not only a simple approbation, but a delight, or a ready inclination to do them. Now if we shall rise up in rebellion against our convictions, and offer violence to inclination and conscience, we grossly break God's law, as in all heinous sins we do: 2 Sam. xii. 9, 'Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?' An inward contempt or disrespect of the commandment maketh the sin more heinous.

2. The outward observance of them: Ps. cxix. 5, 'Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!' It is the business of our lives to live according to this direction: John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them;' where keeping is distinguished from having. The commands of God were not given us to talk of or think on, but to do them: Deut. xii. 32, 'Whatsoever I command you, observe to do it.' Do not gaze on it, think it an excellent thing to do so, but set about the practice.

Secondly, The next notion whereby the good conscience is expressed is this, 'And do those things which are pleasing in his sight.' This implieth many things.

1. That it be our design and scope to approve ourselves to God: 2 Cor. v. 9, 'Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' This is the end that we propound to ourselves, what is your mind principally set upon? The end which you design and endeavour, the pleasing and glorifying of God, and the everlasting fruition of him, or the pleasing of your fleshly minds in the fruition of any inferior things? That is your end which you love most, which pleases you best, and would do most for, and can least want. The people of God are described to be those that 'choose the things which please him, and take hold of his covenant,' Isa. lvi. 4. They do not live at random without an aim, nor do good by chance, but by choice. He that is false at first setting out can never hold out with God.

2. This is not only their choice, but the tenor and course of their lives. Enoch, that walked with God, is said to have this testimony, that he pleased God, Heb. xi. 5, with Gen. v. 24. The Septuagint read it, they are sincere and uniform in their obedience to him. Every day you must reckon with yourselves, Have you complied with your great end? What have I done, or what have I been doing? have I pleased or displeased God?

3. It is not in a few things, but in all: Col. i. 10, 'Walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing;' not in with one duty and out with another, for that is to please ourselves, not to please God; or to please men, not to obey our rule.

4. We must every day be more exact in our walking and care to please God, and that no offence or breach may arise between him



and us : 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'As you have received 'of us how to walk and to please God, so you would abound therein more and more.' You never please God so much but you may please him better, and he expecteth more from you the more you are acquainted with him. One that is newly put to service is raw at first, but afterwards he groweth more handy and fit for his work ; so you must first outgrow your weaknesses if you think to please God, and grow more exact in the spiritual life.

5. If there be anything more pleasing to God than another, your main care must be about those things ; as, for instance, it is mighty pleasing to God that you should seek grace rather than greatness, and direction in your duty rather than worldly honour : 1 Kings iii. 10, the speech 'pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.' Surely it is more pleasing to God that we should pray from the spirit than from the flesh, not seeking great things for ourselves, but that we may have grace to discharge our duties to God. So that in our duty we should mind the substantials of religion rather than rituals : Rom. xiv. 17, 18, 'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ; for he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men.' That in the substantials of religion we should not leave out the duties of the second table, as faithfulness in our relations. The scripture instanceth in the duties of parents and children ; of children's duty to parents : Col. iii. 20, 'For this is well-pleasing unto God.' Duties of liberality and mercy to all men : Heb. xiii. 16, 'For to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' Not only careful of justice, but also of mercy. Now it is a shame that, when christians hear these things are so pleasing to God, they should not set about them. Esau took his bow to seek savoury meat for his father when he desired it.

II. But how is this a gospel conscience ? What could the law require more ?

*Ans.* 1. We consider this with respect to fallen man, who entereth upon this course of new obedience as one delivered and recovered by Christ, and put into a capacity again to obey and please God : Luke i. 74, 75, 'That being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life ;' and Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness.' We suppose him as redeemed by Christ, and renewed by his Holy Spirit. Take either expression ; the first, 'because we keep his commandments.' We receive these commandments out of the hand of a mediator, whose power and right to command is not destructive of our former duty, but accumulative ; the debt of duty ceased not by man's sin, but will remain while there is a relation between the Creator and the creature ; but this is a power superadded to the former, and is more comfortable and beneficial to us, that Christ would set us in joint again, and put us into a capacity of obeying God. It is a blessed thing to take a law of duty out of the hand of a mediator ; for he hath not only obliged us by his great love in dying for us, but provided both for our assistance and acceptance, whilst by the Spirit of Christ we have Christ to help us, and work all

our works for us and in us, and give 'Grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear,' Heb. xii. 28. And the more we use this grace, the more it is increased upon us; but we have also his righteousness, by virtue of which we are accepted with God: Eph. i. 6, 'Who hath accepted us in the Beloved.' God will help us in our duty, and will accept of it as we can perform it. For the second expression, 'And do the things that please him.' God is first *placandus* then *placendus*, first appeased towards us and then pleased with us; appeased by the satisfaction of Christ, which is imputed to none but those that are converted and justified by faith: Rom. v. 8, 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God.' Till we have an interest in the great sin-offering which was offered for the whole congregation of the elect, God will not accept of a thank-offering at our hands, nor be pleased with anything we do in particular duties, while we neglect the general duty of returning to God by Christ: Heb. xi. 6, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' None can please God, then, but those that are regenerated by the Spirit, and reconciled to him by Christ.

2. These duties are done in a gospel-like manner, out of love to God, or a sense of that wonderful grace which is showed us in Christ: 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' They are done as out of thankfulness and that great love which we owe to God; the cord which binds our duty upon us is not terror but love. It is said, 1 John ii. 5, 'Whoso keepeth his commandments, in him verily is the love of God perfected;' that is, hath produced its proper effect. Faith is the means, love is the end, and obedience is the proper fruit and effect of love. Faith is physic, love is health, and the more perfect it is the sounder christians we are. Now the perfection and strength of love is seen in new obedience; so that here is a gospel spirit, and a gospel good conscience, when we study and endeavour to please God.

3. This keeping the commandments and pleasing of God is accepted where there is a cordial and hearty endeavour to do so, though our success in every point be not answerable. It is not unsinning obedience only which the new covenant accepteth, but sincere obedience; by sin we are disabled from an exact keeping of the commandments, but by grace we are accepted, if there be an upright heart unfeignedly bent and heartily endeavouring to please God in all things. Grace doth not perfectly produce its acts, yet it doth produce them, and that in such a degree as hypocrites cannot attain to. It is their constant care to avoid all known sin, and allow themselves in the neglect of no duty; now such are pardoned and accepted with God: Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' And have all manner of blessings bestowed upon them: Prov. xi. 20, 'Such as are upright in their way are his delight;' Ps. xviii. 25, 'With an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright.'

III. The reasons why this doth constitute a good and quiet conscience.

1. Because then our hearts will not disprove our confidence grounded on the new covenant, which accepteth the upright. Certainly the upright are within the compass of the blessing of the covenant. That



is so obvious a truth, that it needeth not much confirmation. When God came to covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. 1, he saith to him, 'I am God all-sufficient; walk thou before me and be thou perfect;' that is, upright and sincere, as the word also signifieth, and is noted in the margin. That was the condition required of him. An absolute perfection human frailty doth not admit, and an impossible condition maketh the covenant void in the making, and so the transaction would be to no purpose. So elsewhere all the blessings of the covenant are entailed upon the upright: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Once more, eternal happiness shall be their portion: Ps. cxl. 13, 'The upright shall dwell in thy presence.' Besides all the testimonies of God's love granted to the believer, he shall have everlasting fellowship with God in the world to come. David asketh the question, Ps. xv. 1, 2, 'Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart;' that is, if I should take the boldness to interrogate thee, who art the Lord of heaven and earth, who shall be rewarded with eternal bliss hereafter? the answer certainly will be this, He that walketh uprightly, he, and none but he, that goeth on in a course of uniform and steady obedience, that doeth all things sincerely and in the sight of God; he it is that shall be accepted and admitted, not out of any worthiness in himself, but from God's love and promise to dwell everlastingly with him.

2. This walking uprightly comprehendeth true faith, and cheerful obedience to God's commandments; that is to be righteous and upright: 'To walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,' Luke i. 6; for a care to avoid all known sin, and make conscience of all known duty, is certainly uprightness. It doth not imply a total exemption from sin, but an allowance of none; they mourn for it, strive against it, and prevail so far that the contrary principle groweth, and doth mostly and generally command and influence their conversations. Grace getteth the upper hand, not for a fit, but habitually; therefore such may with comfort come to God, and have no reason to question their acceptance with him, for they are conscious to themselves of their faithfulness to God, and sincere desire to walk in his ways; their own hearts do not reproach them, and God will not refuse them: Ps. cxix. 6, 'Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.' No cause to be afraid or ashamed to come to him; there is enough to humble, but not to discourage them, for their hearts do acquit them of any allowance of sin or breach of God's law.

3. It is the true trial and proof of our sincere love to Christ, and therefore we may have confidence towards God, and this confidence, 'That what we ask we shall receive of him,' under the cautions and restrictions forementioned. I shall prove this argument by these considerations.

[1.] That true faith in Christ breedeth sincere love to God: Gal. iv. 6, 'Faith worketh by love.' The true office of faith is to persuade the soul of the astonishing wonders of God's love shown in the redemp-

tion by Christ: 'We have known and believed the love that God hath to us,' 1 John iv. 16. And why? Not only that we may gaze on it with amazement, but 'that we may love him again who loved us first,' ver. 19. That this love may make a due impression upon us, and melt us into all love and respect to God, who pitied us in our lost estate, and provided so full and costly a remedy for us. The gospel is an art or science to teach us to love God.

[2.] That the true proof of our love to God is our keeping his commandments, and doing the things which are pleasing in his sight. For God's love is a love of bounty, ours a love of duty, a studying to please God according to his will: 1 John v. 3, 'This is love, to keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous;' John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' That is the love of Christ. It is a lazy love that only talketh of the great things he hath done for us, but doeth nothing for God again, or languisheth in complaints after sensible consolations. No; do your duty; love must be laborious, not idle, and one cannot be better employed than in doing those things which he hath given us in charge.

[3.] Obedience, as it is an evidence of our love to Christ, so it is a means of keeping up the sense and assurance of his love to us: John xv. 10, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, as I kept the Father's commandments, and abode in his love.' It is holy walking is a means that will not delude us, but give us a large share in his heart and love. God delighteth to vouchsafe the testimonies of his love and well-pleasedness with us: John xiv. 15, 'Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.' There is a double-tried friend, actively, passively. Actively, you show yourselves friends to Christ when to the uttermost of your power you set yourselves to do what he hath commanded. Passively, he will show himself a friend to you; ye shall be dealt with as friends; I will reckon you as friends; all the world shall see I love you; I will bountifully reward and gratify you: John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be beloved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him;' ver. 23, 'If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' God delights to manifest himself to such, to own them, to bestow peculiar marks of favour upon them.

[4.] Among other rewards of love and faithful obedience, this is one, the audience and acceptance of their prayer. In his providential government, internal or external, God doth many ways own them, by his gracious presence, counselling, directing, quickening them: John viii. 29, 'And he that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him.' By mollifying the hearts of enemies: Prov. viii. 17, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.' By the comforts of his Spirit, and shedding abroad his love in their hearts that love Christ: Prov. xvi. 7, 'I love them that love me.' By peace of conscience; for the fruit of righteousness is peace. By entertainment of them in all their approaches to God: Isa. lxiv. 5, 'Thou meetest



him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.' God showeth abundance of kindness to them in the course of his providential government, but chiefly in assisting and accepting their prayers; so that 'whatever we ask we receive, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.' All the rest tend to this, and this is often promised in the word, and the contrary threatened to those who pretend love to God, but do not keep his commandments: Ps. xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart;' Prov. x. 24, 'The desire of the righteous shall be granted.'

Use 1. Is information, to show us the necessity of obedience, if we would keep a good conscience and be accepted with God. All the prayers of men that continue in their sins are but like bribes; the gifts of enemies are giftless: Prov. xxi. 27, 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he bringeth it with an evil mind?' However he bringeth it, there is some perverse aim in his worship, that God should prosper him in his sins.

2. That in the christian religion there is true genuine holiness, because it is derived from the highest fountain, the Spirit of Christ; and it is carried on in conformity to the highest rule and pattern, the will of God; and designed to the noblest end, the pleasing, glorifying, and enjoying of God; all this must needs breed peace. So is the gospel good conscience described in the text. First, The highest fountain; for we obey as redeemed and renewed: Titus iii. 5, 6, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' As changed in our natures, and made like God: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;' 2 Peter i. 4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.' Secondly, The highest rule, the will of God or his commandments. He doth not only do what he commandeth, but because he commandeth, *intuitu voluntatis*: 1 Thes. iv. 3, 'For this is the will of God, even your sanctification;' 1 Peter ii. 15, 'For so is the will of God;' 1 Thes. v. 18, 'For this is the will of God concerning you.' We have the best warrant for peace and assurance, the command and will of the most high God. And, thirdly, the highest end, the pleasing God, glorifying and enjoying God: 1 Cor. x. 31, 'Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.'

Use 2. To persuade you to holiness in keeping the commandments and pleasing of God; we have many arguments.

1. From the authority of God: Ps. cxix. 4, 'Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.' It is a course imposed upon us by the sovereign Lawgiver, upon whom you depend every moment; and he will not be baffled and affronted.

2. The equity of the precepts: Rom. vii. 12, 'The commandments are holy, just, and good.' They carry a great evidence and suitableness to the reasonable nature; so that if man were well in his wits, he would choose obedience to these laws rather than liberty.

3. The possibility of keeping these commandments, and of pleasing

God, by the grace purchased by Christ: Heb. xiii. 21, 'Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight.' The rule is the will of God. This will is observed when we do every good work; this done is pleasing unto God.

4. Consider the profitableness of obedience, and how much it conduceth to our good: Deut. xiii. 10, 'To keep the commandments of God and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good.' Our labour is not lost or misspent. A godly course is refreshed by many sweet experiences for the present, and will bring in a full reward for the future: Ps. cxix. 56, 'This I had because I kept thy precepts.'

### SERMON XXX.

*And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.—*  
1 JOHN iii. 23.

THE apostle instanceth what commandments we should observe if we would keep a good conscience. Two are mentioned—faith in Christ, and an unfeigned love to the brethren; both are introduced by a preface suitable to the occasion. Therefore I shall first explain the preface; secondly, the particular duties mentioned.

First, In the preface take notice—

1. Of the unity, agreement, and fair accord between these duties; though two duties are mentioned, yet but one commandment.

2. The excellency of them, 'His commandment.'

1. The unity and agreement between gospel duties. He had said 'commandments' in the former verse; and here are two duties specified, yet these are not 'his commandments,' but 'his commandment,' a change of numbers often used by the sacred writers. The whole gospel is but one commandment: 1. Tim. i. 5, 'The end of the commandment is charity;' that is, of the gospel institution.

2. The excellency; this is the commandment which is signalised by Christ's authority, and expressly charged on us, and to which other duties are reduced. It is such an expression as you have, John vi. 29, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' The context there standeth thus; thousands being fed by a miracle, many followed him for the loaves, therefore Christ telleth them of spiritual bread. He came down from heaven, not to supply hungry stomachs, but to comfort hungry consciences: 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth for ever, which the Son of man shall give you; for him hath the Father sent.' That direction occasioned a question, What shall we do that we may labour or work the works of God? Christ answereth them, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' There is a *meiosis* in the expression; you talk of works, this is the work. As if a man should come to a charitable physician, Sir, I am grievously tormented



with such a disease, what shall I give you for the cure? and his answer should be, This is that you shall give me, to be confident of my skill and fidelity to help you, and use the means which I prescribe for your recovery: 'This is the work of God.' So here; this is the commandment.

Secondly, The particular duties mentioned are faith in Christ and love to the brethren.

1. Faith in Jesus Christ, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. The name of Christ is Christ himself, or Christ considered as revealed in the gospel; then we believe in the name of Jesus Christ when we believe all that is revealed in the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, *i.e.*, assent with an affiance to the doctrine concerning his person, offices, benefits, and the way how we come to attain them according to the covenant of grace. This is to believe in his name, to assent to what is said concerning his person and offices, and to consent to deal with him upon these terms, depending upon him to obtain these benefits in the appointed way. The same expression is used, John iii. 18, 'Because he believeth not in the name of the Son of God.' So Acts x. 43, 'Through his name whosoever believeth on him shall receive the remission of sins.' So John xx. 31, 'These things are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that, believing, ye may have life through his name;' that is, obtain salvation according to the way appointed in the scriptures or the new covenant.

2. For love: 'And love one another, as he gave commandment.' By 'one another,' he meaneth principally that christians should love one another. Christians are bound to love all men, even their enemies, Mat. v. 44. Yet seeing God is to be loved chiefly, and others in subordination to him, as Mat. xxii. 38, 39, it followeth that those ought to have most of our love who love God most, and are most beloved of him, and are made partakers of the divine nature, and resemble God most. But not only the duty, but the manner is here enforced: 'As he hath given us commandment;' and that is, that when the case requireth it, we must lay down our lives for the brethren: John xiii. 34, 'A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another.' There is the substance of the duty, and then it followeth, 'As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' There is the manner again: John xv. 12, 13, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you: greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;' meaning thereby, not only to commend his own love to us, to heighten our gratitude, but also to commend his example to us, and to heighten our charity and love to the brethren.

*Doct.* That faith in Christ and brotherly love are things intimately conjoined, and must always go together.

1. I shall speak of the nature of these two graces or duties apart.

2. Show how intimately they are and must be conjoined; and there speak—(1.) Of the inseparable connection between faith and love; (2.) The order, how the one groweth out of the other, as the effect out of the cause; first faith, then love.

I. I shall speak distinctly of the graces and duties; and there—

First, Of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. A subject necessary to be treated of, because the scripture is so full in assuring pardon and life

to believers, and because christians do so often ask us what that saving faith is by which they may assure their title and interest; and because a mistake in this point is of a dangerous nature. Therefore to open to you the faith by which the just do live cannot be displeasing to you. I shall do it in these considerations or propositions.

1. That faith in Christ and in his word is reckoned distinct from believing in God: John xiv. 1, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' We believe in God as an all-sufficient fountain of grace, and in Christ as an all-sufficient mediator, whom he hath sent to recover the lost world: John xvii. 3, 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' To know God as the only supreme being to be worshipped, obeyed and enjoyed, and the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit as our guide, to bring us home to God, and to procure for us the benefits of pardon and life, which life is to be begun here and perfected in heaven.

2. That Christ executeth the office of mediator as king, priest, and prophet; for he is not only said to be sent, but anointed: Acts x. 38, 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power.' As priests, prophets, and kings were used to be anointed, so was Jesus Christ anointed, thence called both Christ and Messiah, which signifieth anointed: John xx. 31, 'That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;' and Acts ii. 36, 'God hath made that Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ.' Now one of these offices concerneth his mediation with God, the other his mediation with men. His priesthood implieth all that good which he procureth for us by his mediation with the Father. His prophetic and kingly office concerns his mediation with us, to bring us to be partakers, and interested in these things; both must be considered by faith: Heb. iii. 1, 'Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Jesus Christ.' Though his prophetic office be there only mentioned, yet his regal must not be excluded; for all truths are not laid down in one place. Both are mentioned, Isa. lv. 4, 'Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people,' i.e., prophet and king. Now we must not so reflect upon his mediation with God as to overlook his mediation with men; for a mediator is not of one, but must deal with both parties; and therefore Jesus is a saviour, not only as our ransom and surety, but also as our teacher and king. Therefore they deceive you, and understand not the nature of faith, that make it conversant about one office only, as those do that confine it to the death and righteousness of Christ, and pardon of sin, and promise of pardon; as if faith only served to comfort them with the assurance of God's love, and were but a claim and application of privileges: this is to mangle Christ and the gospel, to reflect upon his mediation with God only, and not with man. Or if there be any consideration of his mediation with man, they rend his prophetic office from his kingly, while they look only to the privileges of the covenant, do not receive Christ Jesus as the Lord, that they may be ruled by his authority, and live by his laws. Nay, in his prophetic, they abstract privileges from duties, and promises from precepts, and so do not follow the order prescribed in his word and teaching, but take up a Christ according to their own fancy, and mis-



take a dream for faith. No; the Christ represented to us as an object of faith is a priest who died for us, and representeth his death and merit by his constant intercession, and, as the great prophet of the church, hath taught us the way of life, and as a king hath required obedience at our hands, under the promise of eternal life and the punishment of eternal death, binding us to do all that he hath required, that we may obtain the effect of his promises.

3. That the great business of the Mediator in the discharge of these offices is to recover us to God, which is done both by redemption and salvation. By redemption: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' Salvation: John xiv. 6, 'Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me.' Now this is either begun or perfected; begun by regeneration and reconciliation. By regeneration: Titus iii. 5, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' By reconciliation: 2 Cor. v. 19, 'To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.' And perfected in heaven, which is our complete salvation, or salvation to the uttermost: 1 Tim. i. 15, 16, 'This is a true and faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life.' Then a full and mutual complacence: we delight in God, and God in us; we love him, and God loves us; we love him perfectly, and we have the perfect reception of his love to us, and the benefits flowing thence.

4. That this grace of recovery and restoration is revealed and declared to us in the word; for the gospel word is both the means and the matter of our faith. It is the means: 'For how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?' Rom. x. 17. And Christ prayeth, John xvii. 20, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word.' And it is the matter and object of our faith; for in the text it is said, we believe in the name of the Son of God; that is, all which is revealed concerning him in the scriptures, and the way of salvation and recovery offered by him. Christ is the object of faith, and the covenant of grace is the object of faith, called therefore, 'The word of faith,' Rom. x. 8. Now we make a gospel to ourselves if we pitch upon benefits only or promises only; for the word of faith consists of precepts as well as promises, and requires duties as well as it offers benefits. Therefore, as we expect pardon and life from God, we must perform the duties due from us to God and man.

5. That the acts of faith are three about this word of truth, or Christ revealed therein—assent, consent, trust or dependence.

[1.] Assent to the truth of the christian doctrine, that Jesus is such as the word representeth him to be, the Christ and the Saviour of the world, who came to recover us to God: John vi. 69, 'We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' This is the fundamental principle which supporteth all religion, and

enliveneth all the lesser truths, that they have the greater influence upon our hearts. This begets firm adherence to Christ, whatever temptations we have to the contrary: 1 John v. 5, 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' Many have a human credulity that find no such effects, but not a cordial and hearty assent wrought in them by the Holy Ghost. They take up this opinion upon custom, education, and common inducements, but not as a divine testimony brought to us in the word, and sealed and confirmed to us by the Holy Spirit.

[2.] Consent to God's offer of Christ, that he may be our Lord and Saviour: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe in his name;' Col. ii. 6, 'And as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.' Or to the covenant of grace, called 'A receiving the word,' Acts ii. 41. Accepting the benefits offered us, as our only happiness, resolving on the duties required as our constant work.

[3.] Trust or dependence on Christ, or as putting ourselves into his hands, that we may be recovered and saved from sin and punishment, and brought home to God in perfect happiness and glory: Eph. i. 11, 12, 'In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ;' 2 Tim. i. 12, 'For I know whom I believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'

6. The modification of these acts is this, that this assent, joined with consent, is cordial and hearty: Acts viii. 37, 'If thou believest with all thine heart;' and both accompanied with a fiducial trust. Now this trust is practical, so as, forsaking all other things, we give up ourselves to the conduct of his word and Spirit.

[1.] It produceth mortification and self-denial. This is included in the nature of faith; for faith implieth a carrying off the heart from things visible and temporal to things spiritual, invisible, and eternal; in a recess from the world and worldly things, and an access to God and heaven: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'For we look not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal;' 1 John v. 4, 'Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' We must forsake all other happiness and hopes in confidence of God's promise through Jesus Christ; in vow and resolution, as soon as we believe; actually, when anything in the world is inconsistent with our duty to Christ and fidelity to him: Mat. xiii. 45, 46, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it;' Luke xiv. 33, 'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' You cannot continue constant in the profession of Christ, nor uniformly perform the duties he requireth of you, unless your hearts be weaned from the world. Christ propoundeth the true happiness, to draw us off from the false happiness. Our accepting the one is a kind of quitting the other, or a lessen-



ing of it at least in our esteem, as a thing unworthy to come in competition with Christ or the benefits offered by him, or to obstruct the duty we owe to him.

[2.] A devoting and giving up ourselves to the conduct of his word and Spirit. Certainly all those that believe in the Son of God put themselves into his hands, taking his will for the rule of their lives and actions, and look to be kept by his power unto salvation: 2 Cor. viii. 5, 'And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.' His word is their rule: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule.' His Spirit their guide: Rom. viii. 14, 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God.' His precepts show their duty, and by the strength of his Spirit they perform it; so that faith in the Son of God is such a trusting ourselves in his hands as begets fidelity to him. Faith and faithfulness are nearer akin than so, and we must trust Christ if we mean to be true to him. We have sincerity enough in the promise, and fidelity enough in the thing promised.

Secondly, Love to the brethren is the next thing to be opened: 'That ye love one another, as he gave commandment.'

1. There must be an internal affection. He doth not only press us to do good to one another, but to love one another. A real love there must be, otherwise the most glorious actions are insignificant as to our acceptance with God: 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3. A sincere love there must be to them for God's sake, for the goodness he hath endued them with, and for the service they may do him, or the relation they have to him as creatures or children; not for our own sakes, to barter courtesies with them. A selfish man can faithfully love none but himself, for he loveth all others for himself.

2. The persons; we must 'love one another.' We are to love all things with respect to God, his natural image in all his creatures, and his moral and spiritual image in his children. There is a love to every one without exception to whom there is an opportunity offered of doing them good. When the wounded man was passed by by the priest and Levite, the Samaritan performed the office of a neighbour; and Christ biddeth us go and do likewise, Luke x. 36, 37. But because love to our neighbour supposeth love to God, and floweth from it as a stream from a fountain, therefore chiefly to the children of God: 1 John v. 1, 'Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments;' 1 John iv. 21, 'This commandment we have from him, that he that loveth God, loveth his brother also.' We ought not to live to ourselves only, but for the benefit of one another, especially of our fellow-christians.

3. For the manner of exercising this love, it must be in a self-denying way; it is a Christ-like love, not only as we should love ourselves, but as Christ hath loved us; that is, to seek their benefit with our own loss. In two things Christ showed his self-denial—in washing his disciples' feet, and dying for sinners. By the first he taught us that, if we may be serviceable to one another, we should stoop to the meanest offices, John xiii. 3, 4. Surely this is more binding upon us who are all mutual servants to one another, as being fellow-members

of one body, 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26 ; therefore we ought to employ ourselves in all the duties of love to our neighbour, though never so mean and never so laborious. The apostle speaketh of the labour of love, Heb. vi. 10. Though it be laborious and irksome to the flesh, yet the will and love of God must sweeten it. The apostle saith, Gal. v. 13, 14, 'By love serve one another, for all the law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Love will make us stoop to the meanest duties, to the meanest persons. The other example is in dying for sinners ; so ought we to love the brethren at the dearest rates : 1 John iii. 16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' To prefer their good before our conveniencies and natural desires, especially where their spiritual good and the glory of God is concerned ; but alas ! few know how to prefer God's glory and their neighbour's good before the fulfilling their own fleshly lusts.

4. The fruits of this love are usually seen in giving and forgiving ; giving or parting with our estates for their relief : this I largely pleaded, verse the 17th ; and it is elsewhere pleaded from Christ's example : 2 Cor. viii. 9, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty you might be made rich.' And he telleth them that this he said to prove the sincerity of their love ; if love be hearty, it will discover itself this way. So in forgiving, Eph. iv. 32, 'Forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' God hath forgiven greater miscarriages and disingenuities, Mat. xviii. ; therefore we must forgive with a readiness to do all duties of love and kindness to those that have done the wrong ; yea, none of us are so free from infirmities but that we need forgiveness ourselves, not only from God but men.

II. How these are conjoined, faith in Christ, and love to the brethren. And here, first, Of the connection, secondly, Of the order.

First, The connection. There is another sum and abridgment of the commandments given by Christ : Mat. xxii. 36, 37, 'Master, which is the great commandment in the law ? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' Other things are mentioned by another apostle : Acts xx. 21, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' All have their use, for they speak accommodately to their purpose ; Christ of the sum of the law given by Moses, Paul of the sum of evangelical doctrine or covenant, John with respect to the purpose of his exhortation : he might have reduced the sum of the gospel to one head, faith in Christ ; yet for more distinct explication's sake includeth love also ; and this not without good reason, for these things are often coupled in scripture : Col. i. 4, 'Since we heard of your faith in Jesus Christ, and the love which you have to all the saints.' So Eph. i. 15, 'After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints ;' 2 Thes. i. 3, 'Your faith groweth exceedingly, and your love towards each other aboundeth.' But above all, 2 Tim. i. 3, 'Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.' Now this connection must be always observed.



1. With respect to our own personal safety and the good of the church. Faith relateth more to our personal benefit: justification, Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith;' sanctification, Acts xv. 9, 'Purifying their hearts by faith;' salvation, 1 Peter i. 9, 'Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.' Love to the good of others, that we may have a tender care of the duty, honour, and prosperity of Christ's church. We are to build up ourselves in our most holy faith; and we are also to love and edify the body, which is by love, and that which every joint supplieth, Eph. iv. 16. Surely their welfare should be regarded as your own. Love is called by the apostle, Col. iii. 14, 'The bond of perfection.' Love is the tie and bond which knitteth all the members of the church together, that their several gifts and graces may be employed for the public, whereas otherwise they serve for mutual prejudice. Without love we should, as a besom unbound, fall to pieces; there would be no peace and safety, but only malice and reviling, and that too often mingled with our worship.

2. This connection is necessary, that grace may be found saving and sincere; for faith without love is dead, James ii. 17; and love without faith is no saving grace, but a natural inclination, but a little good nature: so that faith and love are in a manner the rivals of a christian, without which he cannot walk; and if any one be wanting, the other is dead and withered.

Second, For the order, first faith, then love; for faith produceth love, and the cause is before the effect. Faith apprehending the love of God in Christ, inflameth the heart in love to God again; and then we keep his commandments, and love other things for God's sake, Gal. v. 6. When faith hath kindled in our souls love to God, then we love God above all, we shall love God in all, and that most which hath most of God. Surely if you love God as God, it will teach you to love the brethren; the example of God's love in Christ will make some impression upon you, and you will love all that belongeth to God in the world.

*Use 1.* To reprove those that do little regard the planting, growth, or exercise of faith and love; you are not truly subject to God if you decline any of his commandments, much more if you neglect the great commandments of faith and love.

1. By many faith is little minded, believing in Christ is a mystical truth. Moral obedience is evident by natural light; for the law was written on the hearts of men, Rom. ii. 14, as well as in the book of God. Things seen by a double medium are greater. We are not sensible of the evil of unbelief, as we are of immoralities; but now the gospel is confirmed by the Spirit, it is a great sin: John xvi. 9, 'Of sin, because they believe not on me;' and a dangerous sin: Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth not shall be damned;' John iii. 18, 19, 'He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' A double condemnation; we are under condemnation already; the sentence of the law is not reversed till we

believe in Christ, it is ratified in the gospel court if we refuse the remedy. Now Christ is come into the world, sufficiently revealed to be Lord and Saviour by the gospel, confirmed by miracles; therefore, this is a business of greater necessity than is usually minded or thought of.

2. And so love to the brethren is very rare: many are quite strangers to it, the best are very imperfect in it; witness the cruelties and frauds that are practised in the world, and the unmercifulness that christians use one to another upon all occasions. Alas! we that should be plentiful in doing good to one another, can hardly live quietly one by another; we that should pardon injuries, offer them, and instead of turning the other cheek to the smiter, we smite ourselves, as if we did bid defiance to all Christ's laws and counsels. We live as if he commanded us to be treacherous, envious, hurtful, designing others' ruin and destruction, and forbidding us to be tender-hearted, compassionate, ready to help and to do good to one another; as if love were too much recommended to us, and were known better by slandering, reviling, and backbiting, rather than by tenderness of each other's welfare and reputation; as if Christ had said, By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, not because you love, but because ye hate one another.

*Use 2.* To exhort us to be tender of this double commandment.

1. Believing in the name of the Son of God; charge it on yourselves as your work when you are sinning, This is none of my business or work. The work of God is to believe in him whom he hath sent; that we should recover out of sin by Christ, and abandon it more and more, not live in the practice of it. When you are hunting after the world, or indulging carnal pleasures, this is not your work. God and heaven are the great objects faith is conversant about, and Christ is the means to bring me thither; nay, other duties are not the commandment, for without faith all is nothing; for in vain do men busy themselves about particular duties when they neglect the main, Heb. xi. 6. This, if sincere, draweth other things along with it; faith is the first stone in the spiritual building, 2 Peter i. 5, 6; faith is at the bottom of all: he that is to entertain a king will make reckoning of his train. All the privileges depend on this, pardoned, sanctified, Acts xxvi. 18; glorified, John iii. 16; communion with Christ, Eph. iii. 17. All blessings, Mat. xv. 28. God is at liberty to do for us what we desire; otherwise tied up by his own methods and instituted order: Mark vi. 5, 'And he could do no mighty work there because of their unbelief.'

Let it be your constant work, 1 John v. 13. No men believe so much but they may believe more; and the more you grow in faith the more you please God and honour him: Rom. iv. 20, 'Being strong in faith, giving glory to God.' And have more comfort in ourselves: Rom. xv. 13, 'The God of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing.' The more you believe, the more you know you do believe, and the more will God own your faith: John i. 50, 'Believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.' Weakness of faith is punished as well as total unbelief: Num. xx. 12, 'Because ye believed not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye



shall not bring the congregation into the land which I have given them.'

2. For love. We should grow in love as well as faith; he that maketh conscience of the one will make conscience of the other also; both are recommended by the same authority; the one is a necessary effect of the other. Can a man have a due sense of God's love, and not love what belongeth to God?

### SERMON XXXI.

*And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby know we that he abideth in us, by his Spirit which he hath given to us.*—1 JOHN iii. 24.

HERE is the further happiness of those that make conscience of an entire and uniform obedience to God's holy will—(1.) Access to God in prayer; (2.) Success, ver. 22; (3.) Constant communion with God.

In the words, first, we have an excellent privilege, 'And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.'

Secondly, The proof, fruit, and evidence of it, 'And hereby know we that he abideth in us, by his Spirit which he hath given to us.'

1. The privilege, 'Dwelleth in him, and he in him.' Dwelling noteth the continued presence and influence of Christ.

2. The proof hereby: God is where his Spirit is. Mark, he doth not prove the former, our dwelling in God, for that is our duty as well as our privilege, but his dwelling in us, that needeth most to be confirmed: and in proving that he proveth both; for Christ dwelleth in none but those that dwell in him. The first is all we can handle at present.

*Doct.* A near, intimate, and constant conjunction with Christ is the privilege of those who make conscience of keeping the commandments.

First, What is this near, intimate and constant conjunction with Christ? It is expressed here by a mutual inhabitation.

1. Dwelling noteth nearness and intimacy; it is not dwelling by one another, but dwelling in one another: 'You in me, and I in you,' John xiv. 20; which noteth presence and influence. So John vi. 56, 'He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.' As meat is turned into the eater's substance, so they and Christ become one. Christ is present with and in the believer, that is, graciously present; not in substance at all, as man; for 'the heaven of heavens must contain him till the days of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord,' Acts iii. 21. Nor in substance only as God, for so he is everywhere: Jer. xxiii. 24, 'Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.' But by his gracious operation and special influence upon them, whereby he conveyeth life, strength, and glory to them. Life: Gal. ii. 20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the

Son of God ;' 1 John iv. 4, 'Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.' Glory : Col. i. 27, 'Christ is in you, the hope of glory.' The first gift we have from God is Christ ; we partake of him before we partake of his benefits : 1 John v. 12, 'He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.' Therefore we are most strictly united to him as members to the head, whence they receive strength and motion ; so do we receive gracious influence as from our head.

2. It is a constant habitual presence ; for dwelling noteth continuance and perseverance. Christ cometh not for a visit and away, but it noteth his abode and constant residence : he doth not sojourn only for a season, but take up his abode in us : John xiv. 23, 'We will take up our abode with him.' Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, those blessed guests will dwell there. The Spirit may come upon the carnal by a transient motion, move them at times as they have their good moods and fits ; but he doth not act the faithful *per modum actus transientis*, but *per modum habitus permanentis*, by a constant habitual influence or principle of life. God hath put our life into Christ's hands : 'Because he liveth we shall live also,' John xiv. 19. So that we do not use him as an instrument for a turn, which is then laid by till we need it again ; or as a pen to write, or a knife to cut ; but we constantly live in him, as the principle and root of our life, as branches use the root, and members the head, which they live by, and from which when they are severed they die and wither, 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him,' Col. iii. 4. He will convey life to us, begun in grace here and perfected in glory. This life is maintained on his part by a constant influence, on our part by a constant dependence : therefore by dwelling in him and he in us is intended not only intimacy—that is implied in the phrase 'in him'—but constancy, in the word 'abide' or dwell. Being united to Christ, we still cleave to him, and Christ withdraweth not the Spirit from us.

3. It is a mutual presence ; we dwell in Christ, and he in us. This must be heeded and regarded for two reasons—

[1.] Because our abiding in him is the way to have him abide in us, and so the communion is mutual : John xv. 4, 'Abide in me and I in you.' One clause is the exhortation, the other the promise. No man hath any dwelling in Christ, but Christ hath first his dwelling in him ; he first cometh into our hearts, and then giveth us place in his heart also : we must take the course, use the means, whereby he may abide in us.

[2.] Because there is no danger the union will break on Christ's part : if we abide in him, he will not fail to abide in us. His gracious presence is secured by his love and promise ; all the danger is of breaking on our part ; and therefore we must be quickened and exhorted to abide in him : and as by other motives, so by the danger of apostasy, not only that we may evidence the reality of our union with him, but that we may keep the bonds entire and unbroken. So doth our Lord testify, John xv. 6, 'If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men cast them into the fire and they are burned.' Now should we be wiser than Christ, who



minded his own disciples of the danger of apostasy, and the dreadful wrath following upon it, to make them afraid of defection? For this is one means which God useth to contain and keep the elect within the bounds of their duty; and therefore they must not be smoothed up with persuasions of their immutable standing, but be warned of the inseparable connection between apostasy from the known truth and way of godliness, and the dreadful wrath and displeasure of God on supposition they do so. *Suppositiones nihil ponunt in esse.* Such suppositions do not shake the foundation of God, but confirm our constant adherence to him.

4. It is an eximious and excellent privilege; for here it is not pro-pounded by way of exhortation, but motive; not enforced as a duty, but asserted as the reward of a duty, that if we be tender of breaking God's laws, he abideth in us and we in him: and so it is in other places: John xiv. 23, 'If any one keep my commandments, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.' It is our great work to love God, and our great happiness to be beloved of him; therefore the greatest expression of his love is to dwell in us, and fix his residence in our hearts. This Christ promiseth to his disciples, as knowing they will prize it, how contemptibly soever the world thinketh of it; and we should also prize and value this above other favours. Take either part for our dwelling in God, to have a lodging in the heart of God, and then God in us; he will dwell in us in these houses of clay before we come to dwell with him in his palace of glory. It is surely the greatest happiness that can befall man in this world, and accordingly it should be valued.

5. This strict union and conjunction is begun by the Spirit, but continued by faith, love, and obedience. It is begun in us by his Spirit; for Christ maketh his first entry into believers wholly by the Spirit: 1 Cor. vi. 17, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' As in the matrimonial bond, they who are joined together are one flesh, so in this mystical union one spirit; not only to show its spiritual nature, but its author. It is done by the Spirit uniting us to Christ, and by Christ to God: 1 Cor. xii. 13, 'We are by one spirit baptized into one body, and we are made to drink into one spirit.' Our first insition or implantation into Christ is represented by baptism, as our nutrition and growth by the Lord's supper; and there it is said to be done by the Spirit; as bees first build their cells, and then dwell in them. But then it is continued by faith, love, and obedience: Eph. iii. 17, 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.' It is by his dwelling in us by his Spirit that we receive his influence and assistance; and then it is manifest to us by love: 1 John iv. 16, 'We have known and believed the love which God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' When the heart is moulded and framed to love God, upon the apprehension of his great and wonderful love in our redemption, God dwelleth in us and we in God. And John xv. 9, 10, 'As the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you; continue ye in my love: if ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.' If they would maintain the exercise of their love to God, and the sense of his love to them, they should obey him.

And then, for obedience, it is plainly asserted in the text; and again, 1 John i. 7, 'If ye walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.' Surely the more we fulfil his will, the more God delighteth in us, and to communicate his grace to us; our state of sin was a state of enmity to God, but the state of holiness and obedience to him is our state of conjunction and agreement with him, which is perfect when our holiness is perfect.

6. The effect of this strict union, conjunction, and presence is spiritual influence, or the assistance of his Spirit, on Christ's part; on our part, holiness and fruitful obedience. Hence we have his Spirit to guide us: Rom. viii. 14, 'As many as are led by the Spirit.' To quicken us, 'For the Spirit that dwelleth in us is life,' Rom. viii. 10. To strengthen us to perform duties: Eph. iii. 16, 'To be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;' Heb. xiii. 21, 'Working in us what is pleasing in his sight,' and helping us to fulfil his will. For bearing of burdens: Phil. iv. 16, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.' So that they are continually acted, excited, and strengthened by God. On our part the effect is holiness and fruitful obedience; before we made it a means of this conjunction, now we make it the fruit and effect of it, for it is both. It is enforced by two arguments: John xv. 4, 5, 'Abide in me and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can you except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.' Where there are two things asserted—First, That without his dwelling in us, and we in him, we can be no more fruitful than a branch which is broken off from the vine; no communion, no fruitfulness: he cannot do anything acceptable to God; not only *nihil magnum*, no great thing, but *nihil prorsum*, nothing at all. As we cannot do the greatest and most difficult things, so not the least thing, if broken off from Christ. Secondly, That if we still dwell and abide in him, we shall abound in fruit; he is able and willing to supply all our wants, and make us ready for every good work.

7. Though Christ do familiarly communicate himself to all believers, so as to dwell in them by his gracious presence, yet not to all alike, but to some in a larger measure and proportion than to others, as he worketh more or more effectually on them than he doth on others. We all receive of his fulness, John i. 16, but all according to our capacity and degree of receptivity: Eph. iv. 7, 'To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.' All have the same saving graces for substance: 2 Peter i. 1, 'To them that have obtained like precious faith with us.' But for the degree, every one hath his peculiar measures, some are babes, some young men, and some fathers, 1 John ii. 13. Visible professors have common gifts, and there is variety; but all real members have saving gifts in such a measure as Christ judgeth sufficient and most convenient. In the degrees there is much of his sovereignty seen, yea, and also of his justice sometimes, when, being provoked by sin and our unkind dealing, he doth withhold a great measure of that gracious influence which at other times he vouchsafeth more plentifully. There is an influence necessary to the



well-being, and to the being of grace. First, Necessary to the well-being, flourishing, and vigorous acting of grace in the heart. So the spouse complaineth that her beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone, after she had been lazy and negligent, Cant. v. 6 ; yet some influence of his grace still remained, for she opened to him, and he was gone. Secondly, There is an influence which is necessary to the being of grace, and without which grace would utterly die and perish. David telleth us that his feet were almost gone, and his steps had well-nigh slipped, Ps. lxxiii. 2. But what kept him? He telleth us that, ver. 23, 'Nevertheless I am continually with thee ; thou hast holden me by thy right hand.' He was upon the brink of a precipice, ready to cast off or question a main article of faith or point of religion ; but God kept him, and powerfully sustained and supported him from being overcome with that temptation. He doth not forsake us when many times we are ready to forsake him, but by his power doth secretly withhold us and keep us fast to himself. Nay, necessary vital grace may be greatly wounded and weakened, and heinous sins may make such fearful havoc in the soul, and God manifest his displeasure by withdrawing the Spirit in such a degree, that they cannot tell whether they have anything of it or no : Ps. li. 11, 'Cast me not away from thy presence, neither take thy Holy Spirit from me.' They are not utterly cast off from God, nor bereft of saving grace, yet they have lost the sensible communion of the Spirit, both in a way of comfort and grace ; they see this is their desert, and that God is provoked ; and it is terrible to them to be excluded from the actual sense of God's favour, and therefore deprecate this as their saddest loss.

8. The general rule is, that the strictly obedient have a greater degree of his indwelling presence than others have. In scripture sometimes God is said to dwell with the contrite : Isa. lvii. 15, 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.' He dwelleth in the highest heaven, and he dwelleth in the humblest heart ; they most need him ; and he hath work there to do, to comfort them in their serious remorse for sin. Sometimes with the trusting soul : Ps. xci. 1, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' He that dwells in God shall dwell in God ; *i.e.*, he that adhereth to God, and expecteth his safety from God's protection, shall not miss of what he seeketh : God will be with him, as he is always with God. But these are but branches of holiness and obedience ; generally the privilege is restrained to the pure and holy : 'With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure.' He that keepeth himself pure from sin, God will not leave any degree of godliness in him unrewarded ; and this is one of his rewards, to vouchsafe them his gracious presence and influence ; they have not only his sanctifying, but his comforting presence. His sanctifying presence, for as he doth punish sin with sin, so he doth reward grace with grace, with a further increase of what they seek after. His comforting presence : John xv. 11, 'These things have I spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and your joy may be full.' What things were those? concerning abiding in him, in faith and love, and fruitfulness in obedience ; he speaketh of his joy and their joy ; he causeth it, they felt it, or the comfort they had in his bodily

presence, and which should afterward be excited in them by the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, Why it is a privilege proper to them that keep his commandments, for the clause is exclusive of others.

1. Because this is God's instituted order. Now all God's institutions carry a condecency to his nature. God is holy, and requireth holiness, and delights in holiness, and therefore vouchsafeth his intimate presence with them that are holy, as the reward of their fidelity and obedience to him: Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous God loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright.' God's heart is toward the holy and the righteous, they are most amiable in his sight, and he puts most of the marks of his favour upon them, and such marks as they most value and esteem, which is his comfortable and holy presence. The same is true of Christ, for the name and nature of God is in him: 1 John ii. 6, 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought also to walk even as he walked.' If we would have Christ dwell in us, we must imitate him in obedience to God.

2. Communion presupposeth union, and union agreement: Amos iii. 3, 'How can two walk together except they be agreed?' If not walk together, not dwell together, not dwell one in another. What concord and agreement between Christ and Belial, between a holy God and Saviour and the workers of iniquity? There is none, there can be none: 2 Cor. vi. 16, it is enforced out of this, 'I will walk in them, and I will dwell in them;' that excludeth all that is unsuitable.

3. The end and fruit of this union, which is that we may live unto God, and bring forth fruit unto God; that is the end of the spiritual marriage, which is one notion by which this near conjunction is set forth: Rom. vii. 4, 'That ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.' It is the end of the spiritual engrafting; John xv. 1, 2, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman: 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.' This is another notion used; the members receive influence from the head for motion, a free intercourse of blood and spirits, that every part may do its offices. Now if we would keep the commandments, and live unto God, and bring forth fruit unto God, this would not be in vain: Christ hath works to be done by us, as well as comfort to bestow upon us.

4. One part of this privilege would contradict the other; it is a mutual inhabitation spoken of, 'I in him, and he in me.' Now many would have Christ to dwell in them when they are not in him but against him. Our being in him imports duty as well as privilege, that we should be for him, our hearts set upon him and his glory; he is in us by his Spirit, and we are in him by faith and love, both which produce new obedience: Gal. v. 6, 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith, which worketh by love.'

5. Wherever Christ is, he will be as Lord and sovereign; he will rule where he dwelleth, and dwell alone: Col. ii. 6, 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.' He ruleth in us as Lord, therefore



he must be obeyed, his commandments kept. Many times in travelling, when we see a great house we ask who dwelleth here, meaning the master of the family, not the servants, the scullions, but the owner and governor of the house; so where Christ dwelleth he will be chief. We intend it in saying, He dwelleth here. When men cool and decline in their affections to him, when they take in another inmate and indweller, whose interest shall command the interest of Christ, and whom they are more ready to serve and obey, this is to discharge Christ, not to suffer Jesus Christ any longer to dwell in them.

6. This near, intimate, and constant conjunction with Christ doth necessarily beget a likeness to him: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.' And according to our pattern they are created anew; Christ is formed in them, Gal. iv. 19. The stamp of Christ is left upon them. So John i. 16; some expound that 'grace for grace,' for each grace in Christ there is the like and answerable grace in the heart of a believer. As in the wax there is word for word, letter for letter, syllable for syllable, answerable to what was in the seal; or in the body of a child there is limb for limb, part for part, answerable to the parents; so in us and Christ there is patience for patience, humility for humility, obedience for obedience. Now this doth necessarily infer holiness, or keeping the commandments.

Use 1. Is information.

1. That they do in vain boast of communion with God who do not keep his commandments. It was a cheat usually among the heathens to pretend secrecy with their gods, and human nature is the same still: many usurp this high honour of communion with God, but no fruit of it appeareth. Now Christ abhorreth all pretences of communion with him, which do not appear in the effects: 1 John ii. 4, 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.' 'I know him,' is there put for, I enjoy him, or I am in him; for in the next verse it is explained, 'Hereby we know that we are in him.' And the Holy Ghost pronounceth there that 'he is a liar!' A lie is more than a falsehood, it is a falsehood with intention to deceive. The gross hypocrite, that liveth in secret wickedness, that contents himself only with a plausible appearance, intendeth to deceive others, as if he were in Christ when he is not; but the more refined hypocrite, that lives in partial obedience, doth deceive himself. If the communion with Christ were real, it would discover itself, and the fruit of the Spirit would be 'all goodness, righteousness, and truth,' Eph. v. 9. It cannot be otherwise while he abideth in you by his Spirit, and you abide in him by faith and love.

2. That those who have tasted the good of communion with God need often to be exhorted and encouraged to continue in it. I observe this, because many are possessed with this thought, that union with Christ will do its own business; and they expect the fruits of it, but do nothing to keep this union being a real union. *Nomine non cogitante*; they think though man had no thought or apprehension of it, and contributeth nothing in the way of duty to receive the fruits of it, yet it will preserve him and keep him: but this is an abuse, for we are to be in him as well as he in us; and the care of preserving it,

though it lieth mainly on Christ, and the grace cometh from Christ, yet it is our duty, and we need often to be quickened to it, for these reasons—

[1.] Because of dulness, laziness, and backwardness to those duties which maintain this communion. Christ abideth in us by constant influence and quickening virtue; but there are duties required on our part of faith, love, and new obedience. As there is a constant influence on his part, so there must be a constant adherence on ours. We are to ‘cleave to him with full purpose of heart,’ Acts xi. 23. And by constant endeavour seek to please him, and frequently draw nigh to him in holy services, as the scripture everywhere sheweth; but we are idle and apt to neglect our duty.

[2.] Because of our averseness to self-denial, and dependence by reason of that security and selfishness which is very natural to us, especially if we have received anything by way of ability and power to do that which is good. Man is a proud creature, and would fain be sufficient to himself, live of himself, and do all things by himself; though Christ telleth us, ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’ The sense of our impotency and emptiness is troublesome and humbling; therefore we need often to quicken you to be nothing in yourselves, and all in Christ, who still giveth and continueth all that we have or can do for God. This dependence begetteth observance, Phil. ii. 12, 13; 1 Cor. xv. 10, ‘Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.’ We being but inferior agents and instruments under him, though voluntary and obedient instruments, by our own strength, and without the grace of Christ, we are not sufficient to begin or finish any christian duties; it is not we that live, but Christ that liveth in us, and breatheth upon us by fresh and continual inspirations. Peter was confident of the sincerity of his own resolutions, but he was not sensible of his weakness; now this must often be revived upon us, that we may entirely depend upon God.

[3.] We are often hotly assaulted with temptations after our hearts are set for God and heaven. God may permit us to be exercised with sharp trials, and buffeted very sorely; therefore we need quicken you to abide in him. Do not run away from your defence and strength; do not think that Christ will cast you off. Now is the time to show he is in you, Rom. viii. 39.

[4.] We may run into sins which endanger a forfeiture; therefore we need often to be put in remembrance of abiding in Christ, that we may not wrest ourselves out of the arms of mercy.

3. It informeth us how dangerous it is to injure and wrong them that fear God and keep his commandments; they are in Christ, and Christ is in them; he taketh the injuries as done to himself: Acts ix. 4, ‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?’ You do wrong to the Lord Jesus when you hate what of Christ is in them: Isa. xxxvii. 28, ‘But I know thy abode, and thy going out and coming in, and thy rage against me,’ saith God to Sennacherib. Benefits done to us are taken as done to him, Mat. xxv. So injuries, Christ taketh them as done to himself.

*Use 2.* Is to persuade us to keep his commandments. I shall press this—(1.) From the excellency of the privilege; (2.) The necessity of obedience.



1. The excellency of the privilege; this deserveth our choicest endeavours.

[1.] Consider what an obliging act of condescension it is on God's part to dwell in us. Could we have used these expressions if God had not used them before us? 'But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth?' was the wonder of one of the wisest men on earth, 2 Chron. vi. 18. But more to dwell in us and walk in us, 1 Cor. vi. 16; to dwell in the hearts of such poor vile creatures as we are. What base and unclean guests lodge within us naturally; but what a blessed thing is it to have God dwell in us and we in him!

[2.] Consider how much the people of God value his external presence: Exod. xxxiii. 15, 'If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.' But now Christ is not only with us, but in us, 2 Cor. v. 3. It is that which bringeth us nearer to God, and fits us to receive more from him. Temporal blessings, Rom. viii. 32; all spiritual blessings, 1 Cor. i. 30; eternal, John xvii. 23, 24.

2. The necessity of obedience; it is not only profitable for more ample communion, but necessary, the union else is but pretended; it cannot be continued, but is interrupted and broken off. Now when God hath made a difference between you and others, will you seek to unmake it again? He cometh to dwell in you to make you holy.

## SERMON XXXII.

*And we know that he abideth in us, by his Spirit, which he hath given us.—1 JOHN iii. 24.*

DOCT. That God's dwelling and abiding in us is known by the Spirit given to us.

It is not said merely that he abideth in us by his Spirit, but 'Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by his Spirit, which he hath given to us.' Christ is where his Spirit is. It is a sure sign to us that he hath not forsaken us, but still continueth united to us.

Let us inquire—(1.) What is meant by the Spirit given to us; (2.) Why this is a sure evidence; (3.) How this Spirit worketh.

I. What is meant by the Spirit given to us. By the Spirit is meant the person of the Holy Ghost, or some created gift, called the divine nature, or new creature. The word signifieth both. Sometimes it is taken for the Holy Ghost himself: Mat. xxviii. 19, 'Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' Sometimes for the gifts and graces of the Spirit: John iii. 6, 'And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' That divine nature which is begotten or born in us of and by the Spirit is called spirit also, and both given to us: Rom. v. 5, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.' The latter is supposed to be spoken of 1 John iv. 13, 'Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us,

because he hath given us of his spirit ;' bestowed a gracious charitable temper upon us, for that temper which was in Christ is in us also ; for those words follow this clause ; if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Now it mattereth not much whether we interpret it of the one or the other, for we have both the fruit and the tree, the fountain and the stream. The one cannot be without the other, nor the graces without the Spirit, for they are of his production ; nor can the Spirit be said to dwell in any without respect to these graces, for the Spirit dwelleth where he worketh ; and his dwelling in the souls of believers is his working there in such a peculiar manner as is not common to all men ; a familiar and continued working, such as produceth life, and likeness to Christ in righteousness and holiness, which is the same with gracious habits or the new nature, which is the more immediate principle of man's actions ; and the Spirit of God produceth and worketh all that good which we do by the mediation of the new frame of heart which he hath raised in us. Yet I chiefly understand the text of the Spirit of sanctification, by whom being regenerated we live unto God, for these reasons—

1. Because it is brought as a proof of that part of the privilege, his abiding in us. The privilege is mutual and reciprocal ; we abide in him and he in us. Now he doth not prove the former, but the latter ; the soul dwelleth where it delighteth, but God dwelleth where he worketh by his Spirit, which is the cause of this intimate and immediate presence, which is here expressed, not by cohabitation, but by inhabitation ; and so the meaning is, the constant operations of the Holy Spirit dwelling and working in you show that Christ hath not forsaken us, but taken up his abode in our hearts.

2. Because this is the great fruit of God's love, and reward of our obedience : John xiv. 23, 'If any man love me, and keep my commandments, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.' 'We,' that is, all the persons of the blessed Trinity ; not the Father and the Son only, but the Holy Spirit, who doth constantly and by his habitual effects abide in the hearts of the faithful, and thereby evidenceth God's love to them : John xiv. 17, Christ speaking of the Spirit of truth, saith, 'Ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.'

3. This Spirit is more discernible by us by his motions and powerful influence, and the ways which he hath to manifest himself ; and so more proper to discover and make known the dwelling of God in us than the bare habits of grace, especially both together than the latter singly and alone. Indeed, one way by which he doth discover his sanctifying presence is by that habitual bent of heart towards God which we call the new nature, and the fruits and works of it. When we find the frame of our hearts changed for the better, and if we act accordingly, we may conclude it ; but that which maketh all evident is his continual presence and powerful influence, by which we are acted and quickened ; for as the apostle saith, 'By the Spirit of God we know the things which are freely given us of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 12, both in the gospel and in our own hearts.

4. The Holy Ghost is said to dwell in believers as his temple : 1 Cor. iii. 16, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the



Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?' 1 Cor. vi. 19, 'Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?' So that the Spirit himself abideth in believers; and not only grace from the Spirit, but he is present in the soul as Christ's agent to convey light, life, and love to us; and not as a distant agent, but as the immediate exciter of all that grace that is in us. There is his power and presence, as in his temple and proper place of residence; he first builds up his temple, and then dwelleth in it.

II. Why this is a sure, rich, full, and pregnant evidence of God's dwelling in us.

1. Because the coming down of the Holy Ghost upon Christ was the evidence of God's love to him, and the visible demonstration of his filiation and sonship to the world: John iii. 34, 'The Father loved the Son, and gave him the Spirit without measure.' Now Christ prayed, John xvii. 26, 'That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.' Before he had said, ver. 23, 'That the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.' None will think in degree, therefore in kind, that God manifests his love to us the same way which he did to him, and that is by the gift of the Holy Spirit, or his filiation. John knew Christ to be the Son of God by the Spirit descending and abiding on him: John i. 32, 'I, John, bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.' Yea, God himself declared this to be a visible demonstration of his sonship, Mat. iii. 17. So do we know ourselves to be the children of God, by the Spirit's inhabitation and sanctifying work upon our souls.

2. The pouring out of the Spirit was the visible evidence given to the church of the valuableness and acceptation of Christ's satisfaction for us, to set afoot the gospel covenant. When God was reconciled and pacified, then he shed forth the Spirit: Acts ii. 33, 'Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.' So John vii. 38, 39, 'He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.' Now this is true of God's reconciliation to us in particular: when pacified towards us, he giveth the Spirit; because the part followeth the reason of the whole: Rom. v. 11, 'And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' There is the atonement made, and the atonement received; they are both evidenced the same way, by this fountain of living waters, which is given to all believers: John iv. 14, 'But whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water which I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life.' And all the good God worketh in us, he worketh as a God of peace reconciled to us by Christ.

3. Because it was the first witness of the truth of the gospel, and therefore the best pledge we can have of the love of God in our hearts; for believers are confirmed the same way which the gospel is confirmed;

that which confirmeth christianity confirmeth the christian, the reality of our interest; as the extract and original charter have value from the same attestation or stamp and seal: Acts v. 32, 'And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost.' And the wonders wrought by the Spirit: Heb. ii. 4, 'God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.' This was extraordinary, therefore the christian needeth not to have his christianity confirmed by miracles, but by the sanctifying Spirit: John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.' This the believer must have: 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself;' the Spirit comforting the conscience by the blood of Christ, and sanctifying and cleansing the heart as with pure water, ver. 8. This is our evidence that we are true christians: so the testimony of Christ is confirmed in us.

4. It is proper to the matter in hand, union and communion with Christ.

[1.] Consider the privilege itself, the nature of this union with Christ, the object, the author and continual preserver: 2 Cor. xiii. 14, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.' Communion is imputed to the Holy Ghost, as love to God, and grace to Christ: 1 Cor. vi. 17, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' As a man and a harlot are one flesh, so we are one spirit, because it is not a communion of bodies, but spirits. There is the same spirit in head and members; therefore the apostle concludeth, Rom. viii. 9, 'Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;' is not grafted as a living member into Christ's mystical body.

[2.] For the bands of this union, faith and love and new obedience, they are all wrought in us, and stirred up in us by the Spirit.

(1.) Faith, it is the Spirit which giveth faith: Gal. v. 5, 'For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.' It is he that doth internally enlighten our minds, and incline our hearts to embrace the gospel covenant, and Christ revealed in it. All that faith which we have is the gift of God, Eph. ii. 8; and God worketh by his Spirit, 'who openeth the eyes of our mind, that we may believe and receive the gospel,' Eph. i. 17, 18.

(2.) For love, it is his production also, for love is of God, 1 John iv. 7, that is, wrought in us by the efficacy of his Spirit. The great design of the gospel is to reveal the love of God, and thereby to recover our love to God, that we may love him again, who hath loved us first, 1 John iv. 19. Now the bare revelation of this love in the word will not do it, unless it be shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit given to us, Rom. v. 5. Therefore, as the Spirit of light, he worketh faith; as a Spirit of love, he worketh love in us, and recovereth us from the world and the flesh to God. Naturally we love our own selves, that is, our own flesh, above God; for 'that which is born of flesh is flesh.' And we love the world above God, 2 Peter i. 4. All this is remedied by the new nature given to us by the Spirit, that we may love God, and live to him.

(3.) For new obedience, it is wrought in us by the Spirit also: 'Seeing ye have purified your hearts in obeying the truth through the



Spirit,' 1 Peter i. 23. He quickeneth all the acts of the 'new life: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my Spirit into you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' So that the Holy Ghost being given to us as our sanctifier, he resideth in our hearts as the immediate agent of Christ, and the worker of all grace; as a Spirit of light and love maintaining and carrying on our communion with God in Christ. If we have such a spirit, we may know that he abideth in us; but without his illuminating, quickening, sanctifying work on the heart, we are not christians.

[3.] The Spirit given to us is fit only to satisfy us concerning our interest in this blessed and glorious privilege, for these reasons—

(1.) Because the privilege is so high, that we should dwell in God and God in us, that we need some great benefit to assure us of it. Now the Holy Ghost is a benefit becoming God to give and us to receive. For God to give us his Spirit, it is more than if he had given us all the world. A believer valueth it above all other evidences, and in its own nature it deserveth it, as being the highest demonstration of God's bounty and liberality to us; if he giveth all the world, he giveth something without himself, but when he giveth the Spirit he giveth himself. The uncreated Spirit is a person of the Godhead, and the Godhead is undivided, and saving grace is the permanent effect thereof. Other mercies run in the channel of common providence, but this could only be conveyed to us by the mediation of Jesus Christ. The Father sends him in Christ's name: John xiv. 26, 'And the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name.' And Christ sendeth him from the Father: John xv. 26, 'But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father.' He proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and is the fruit of both their loves to us. Christ hath merited this effectual operation, and conveyed the Spirit to us as our head: John xvi. 14, 15, 'He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.' Other things are given in anger, but not the Spirit; we may have them and perish for ever; but when we have this great benefit, then we know we live in God, and are fitted to live to God, and shall live with him for ever.

(2.) Because it is a privilege into which we are admitted after a breach. Persons that have been at variance will not easily believe one another, and trust one another, unless their reconciliation be sealed by some remarkable good turn and visible testimony of love. A great offender was never reconciled to Augustus unless he did put some mark of favour upon him; as David to Amasa, in giving him the generalship of his army. And further, the breach hath been so great between God and us, that we shall have no peace and joy in believing, till we have some gift that may be a perfect demonstration that he is at peace with us. This is the work of the sanctifying Spirit: 1 Thes. v. 23, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;' Heb. xiii. 20, 21, 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight;' Rom.

xvi. 20, 'And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly;' 2 Cor. v. 18, 'And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Christ Jesus, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.' Most men's confidence cometh from their stupid security and slowness in soul matters. A christian that is in good earnest must have a sufficient proof of God's love, that he is reconciled, taken into God's family, made 'an heir according to the hope of eternal life.' Now this is done by the Spirit.

(3.) It is an inward and spiritual privilege, and therefore must have a spiritual confirmation. Now this is within our own hearts. The death of Christ was a demonstration of God's love, but that was done without us, and before we were born. Justification is a blessed privilege, but that is either God's act in heaven accepting us in Christ, or else the sentence of his law and new covenant, constituting us just and righteous. But this is done in our hearts by the Spirit: Gal. iv. 6, 'He hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts;' 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' This witness we have within ourselves.

(4.) Because the Spirit may act transiently, and in a passing way upon others, and that which is seldom done may be mistaken or suspected, therefore the Holy Ghost abideth in us by his constant operations: John xiv. 17, 'Ye shall know him, for he abideth in you.' What we feel constantly, frequently, we cannot be deceived in it. They feel his operations comforting, quickening, instructing them, mortifying their lusts, exciting them to holiness, and so may see how they are beloved of God, and minded by him upon all occasions. The effects of the Spirit show it, such as are life, holiness, faith, strength, comfort, joy, peace, support under our crosses and afflictions, groans after heaven. This constant experience can be no delusion; therefore the observing of this breedeth true and solid comfort.

III. The properties or operations of this Spirit, as he is a proof and evidence of our communion with God.

1. It is a Spirit of life: Rom. viii. 2, 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus;' and Gal. v. 25, 'If we live in the Spirit.' The Spirit maketh the soul alive that was dead in sin; therefore when we are dead to the world, we are really alive to God, as will appear by our actions and earnest desires after heavenly things. Many have a name to live, for parts do strangely counterfeit grace; but if the Spirit becometh a principle of life within us, then we live indeed. Surely it is a sign of great weakness, at least, to be alive to other things, and dead-hearted in all acts of religion.

2. It is a Spirit of love as well as of life. Some make the Holy Ghost the love that passeth between the Father and the Son. Surely the operative love of God to us is conveyed by the Spirit. Now according to his nature so he worketh, inclining us to love God and our brother, yea, our very enemies: 'For the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.' The apostle saith, 1 Thes. iv. 9, 'We are taught of God to love one another.' God's teaching is by impression and inclination. Envious and bitter zeal, malice, and all uncharitableness and revenge, is not of God, but the devil; therefore they that are acted by these things know not what spirit they are of.



3. It is a Spirit of sanctification, often so called : 2 Thes. ii. 14, 'God hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit.' A pure and holy Spirit given to us to renew our natures, and put us into the way of salvation : Titus iii. 5, 6, 'He saveth us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord ;' to purge out sin, and suppress the motions of all that pride, worldliness, and sensuality which is so natural to us : Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live ;' and to quicken us to grow more complete in the will of God, that we may both do it and suffer it, and be prepared and fitted to live with God for ever.

4. It is a Spirit of power, enabling us to vanquish temptations that arise either from the terrors and delights of sense, by propounding the blessedness of the other and better world : 2 Tim. i. 7, 'For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.'

5. It is a Spirit of adoption : Rom. viii. 15, 16, 'But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God ;' and Gal. iv. 6, 'And because we are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.' It is the surest sign of God's fatherly love, and the pledge of our adoption, and so inclineth us to God as a Father in Christ, that we may love him, delight in him, and depend upon him. It breedeth a childlike affection to God, childlike confidence, childlike obedience ; these are the true fruits of the Spirit of Christ. All God's children have not a childlike confidence, but a childlike inclination ; they cannot keep away from God ; when they cannot own him as a Father with delightful confidence, yet they dare not offend him ; there is an awe of God, though they are not assured of his love. In short, they love him, though they cannot say he loveth them.

6. It is a Spirit of supplication : Zech. xii. 10, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication.' Wherein we manifest our childlike affection to God ; and in that duty he doth most help our infirmities, Rom. viii. 26, stirring up in us ardent groans and desires, and in giving us life in our prayers, and a holy boldness whenever we come to God. There the renewed soul doth directly apply itself to God, and the work of the sanctifying Spirit is most sensibly acted and discovered.

Use 1. To inform us how to know whether our communion with God be interrupted, yea or no, or whether God be pleased or displeased with us, by observing the motions or withdrawals of his Spirit. We cannot know it by outward things ; for God may 'rebuke those whom he loveth, and chasten every son whom he receiveth,' Heb. xii. 6, and may give outward comforts in anger ; these are not evidences of God's love and hatred, Eccles. ix. 2. God will not mark out men by their outward estate, discover the wicked by their afflictions, nor reward the godly with this world's good things, nor distinguish them by the blessings of his common providence, but hath taken another course to show his anger or his love, his pleasure or displeasure, by giving and withholding the Spirit. When he is provoked by his people, there is some

abatement, not only of the comforting, but quickening and sanctifying influences of his Spirit. Therefore David prayeth, Ps. li. 10, 'Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.' On the contrary, when he is well pleased with any, they are filled with the Spirit: Acts xi. 24, 'For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost;' Acts ix. 31, 'They walked in the fear of God, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost;' Acts xiii. 52, 'And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.' Therefore when there is any stop of this kind of influence, we should inquire what is the matter, where it sticketh, how came our delightful commerce with God to be interrupted, what unkindness there hath been on our part?

Use 2. To put us upon self-reflection, what kind of spirit dwelleth in our hearts. Some are acted by the wrathful unclean spirit: Eph. ii. 2, 'According to the prince of the power of the air, that worketh in the children of disobedience.' Others guided and influenced by the mere corrupt natural spirit: James iv. 5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' But all that are adopted into God's family, all that are members of Christ's mystical body, they are guided and influenced by the Spirit of God: Rom. viii. 14, 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.' If we will follow the impure and revengeful spirit, he will hurry us to destruction, as he did the herd of swine into whom he entered, Mat. viii. If we be guided by the wisdom of the flesh and our own carnal affections, we shall easily be led away from God and our happiness. It is the Holy Ghost only who bringeth us into a state of communion with God, and is as necessary to make all right between us and Christ, as Christ is between us and God. Now who are those that are guided by the Spirit of God? Our conversation will declare that *principiata respondent suis principiis*. The constant effects declare the prevailing principle; therefore what effects and fruits can you produce of the Spirit's dwelling in you?

1. The Spirit leadeth us to an holy life and perfect obedience to God. His first work is to renew the soul to the image of God, and change us into the likeness of Christ, 2 Cor. iii. 18. That is the impression of this seal, left on the hearts of those where he cometh, and by which God's children are distinguished from others. He is given on purpose to heal our natures, destroy our sins, and to excite us to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Now where this effect is accomplished, they may certainly say, God hath given his Spirit, namely, where God doth sanctify the souls of his people, mortify their lusts, and master their strongest corruptions, and raise them to those inclinations and affections which mere nature is a stranger unto. Surely a divine power hath been working there; when they are more like God, and fit for the service of God, they are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, Eph. i. 13. His first renewing and sanctifying work, and his carrying on that work, whereby the image of God is more imprinted on us, will be our surest evidence, especially when holiness of life floweth from it; for graces acted and exercised do more discover themselves; and such a supernatural effect as the sanctifying our natures, and the ruling and governing of our lives. Could the love and fear of God be produced by any other cause than the Spirit of God?

2. The Spirit is a perfect opposite to the flesh; and they that are under the power and conduct of the Spirit do resist and conquer the



desires of the flesh ; for it is not a fruitless resistance : Gal. v. 16, 17, ' This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh : for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other ; ' Rom. viii. 5, ' They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit ; ' Gal. vi. 8, ' For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. ' They spend their time and strength, life and love, care and thoughts in seeking after spiritual things ; their business is not to gratify the flesh, but enrich the soul, to excel in knowledge, love to God, faith in Christ, and hopes of the other world, though with the loss of carnal pleasures ; and so they comply with the precepts of Christ, which everywhere call upon us to curb the flesh, to dispossess us of the beast that is gotten into our natures, and to raise us in some measure into the degree and rank of an angel ; to draw us off from the natural and animal life to life spiritual and eternal, or, which is all one, to drive out the spirit of the world, and to introduce a divine and heavenly spirit. The brutish part of the world is enslaved to lower things, but they that are recovered out of this defection by the power of the Spirit grow wise and heavenly. The great disease of mankind was, that our immortal souls are depressed and tainted by the objects of sense, and did wholly crook and writhe itself to earthly things ; and instead of likeness to God, the image of a beast was impressed on man's nature, and the better part, his soul, was enslaved and embondaged to the worsen part, his flesh. Now the Spirit of God cometh by degrees to restore human nature to its primitive perfection, that the spirit might command his flesh, and man might seek his happiness in some higher and more transcending good than the beasts are capable of, something that suits with his immortal spirit, and to elevate us from a state of subjection to the flesh into a liberty for divine and heavenly things.

3. The Spirit inclineth us to all duties to our neighbours ; for it is said, Eph. v. 9, ' The fruits of the Spirit in us are in all goodness and righteousness and truth. ' Meaning thereby, he maketh men sincere, good, just in their carriage to men ; by ' goodness, ' taking all occasions of being useful to others as to their spiritual and bodily estate ; by ' righteousness, ' just dealings in all our transactions with others ; and by ' truth, ' a sincere carriage, free from lying hypocrisy and dissimulation. So Gal. v. 22, 23, ' But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance : against such there is no law. ' Duties to our neighbour are implied in all these graces. By ' love, ' understand love to our neighbour ; by ' joy, ' sweetness of converse, or delighting in their good ; by ' peace, ' that which concerneth all men as much as possible can be ; by ' long-suffering, ' patience, bearing and forgiving of injuries ; by ' gentleness, ' easiness to be entreated ; by ' goodness, ' a communicativeness to all, especially the household of faith ; by ' faith, ' fidelity, truth in our commerce ; by ' meekness, ' restraint of our anger ; by ' temperance, ' a holy moderation in the use of earthly things and the delights thereof. Well, then, when these things are practised by us, the Spirit is given to us.

4. The Spirit leadeth us to a heavenly life, as the flesh did to things

grateful to present sense; he discovereth those things to us: Eph. i. 17, 18, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' The reality of future glory and blessedness, he prepareth and fitteth us for it: 2 Cor. v. 5, 'Now he that hath wrought us to this self-same thing is God, who hath given us the earnest of the Spirit;' Rom. ix. 27, 'Prepared unto glory.' The heavenly mind, the purified heart; he assureth us of it: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit.' Comforteth us with it, and raiseth our longing after it: Rom. viii. 23, 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.' Quickening us to diligence and seriousness in the pursuit of it: Phil. iii. 20, 'But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour.' Much of the Spirit's operation is about fitting us for heaven.

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## SERMONS UPON ACTS II. 37, 38.

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### SERMON I.

*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?—Acts ii. 37.*

THIS scripture telleth us what was the fruit and effect of the first sermon that was preached after the pouring out of the Spirit. Peter preached that sermon, and brought in thousands of souls to Christ: Acts ii. 41, 'Then they that gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.' Never did Peter show himself such a fisher of men as now. Three thousand souls were gained at that one draught, or one casting of the net of the gospel; and those not very pliable ductile men neither, and easy to be caught, but sturdy sinners, such as had imbrued their hands in the blood of their Saviour, and were now in a mocking, scoffing humour. But thus it is to venture in the confidence of the power of Christ's Spirit. It was a mighty thing that an angel should slay a hundred and eighty-five thousand in one night in Sennacherib's host; but it is easier to kill so many men than to convert and save one soul. One angel, by his mere natural strength, could kill so many armed men, but all the angels in heaven, if they should join all their forces together, could not convert one soul to God. Here was more done. Well, then, this being the first instance of the power of the word accompanied with the Spirit, we ought to regard it the more. When we hear of some physick that hath notably wrought on others, and cured them of their diseases, every sick man would try that physick, or inquire after it. Here we see how the word worketh for the cure of sick souls; therefore let us consider a little the way of its operation. There is some account of that in the text, how it began to work, 'Now when they heard this, they were pricked at their hearts,' &c.

In which words observe three things—

1. The means and instrumental cause by which their trouble and perplexity was wrought, 'When they heard this.'

2. The commotion or affection wrought in them, *compuncti sunt corde*, 'They were pricked at the heart.'

3. The course they took for ease and relief, or the carriage of these converts after this piercing and brokenness of heart, 'And they said

unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ?

*First*, The means, 'When they heard this.' There are these things that offer themselves to our consideration—(1.) It was the word of God produced this effect ; (2.) The word judiciously and powerfully managed ; (3.) Closely applied ; (4.) In this close application they were charged with a grievous sin ; (5.) This grievous sin was wrong done to Christ. All these things conduced to the piercing of their hearts.

First, It was the word of God, which is of great power and force. Its piercing property discovereth its author : Heb. iv. 12, 13, 'For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart : neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' He speaketh not of the hypostatical and substantial word ; for he had before spoken of the word heard, and to be mingled with faith in the hearing. *Λογος*, for Christ, is peculiar to John ; only it is observable that the same things may be applied to Christ, the great prophet of the church, and the word by which he governeth the church, as if he resolved to discover all his power and glory by this instrument. Now of this word it is said that it is *ζῶν καὶ ἐνεργῆς*, 'quick and powerful.' It is not a dead letter, neither to them that believe, nor the wicked ; it quickeneth the one, and maketh the conscience of the other feel its force. Either it openeth the heart, or hardeneth it. And again, 'That it is sharper than any two-edged sword.' No weapon like this to wound the souls of men, 'piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.' It can search every bone, muscle, and vein ; 'and all things are naked and open,' cut down by the chine-bone before God. So doth the word rip up the conscience of the sinner, and make him throw aside all his disguises and pretences ; so that he hath no reasons to allege, no excuses to make, no arguments to plead, but wholly lieth under the convictions of it : Isa. lv. 10, 11, 'As the rain cometh down from heaven and watereth the earth, and returneth not again, so shall my word be.' The word is not preached in vain ; it worketh whereto it is sent, to convert or harden. When we have rain and snow in their season, we expect a fruitful year ; so God's word shall have its effect. It is very notable here in the text that the virtue of the Holy Ghost did not show itself in the gift of tongues, as it did in and by the word. When they spake with divers tongues, as the Spirit gave utterance, though it were a wonderful effect, yet the Jews were still hardened, and thought that this unusual jabbering was nothing, but that it came from the fumes of wine ; that the apostles had taken a cup too much, rather than the effect of the operation of the Holy Ghost. But 'when they heard this,' when the word came, and was urged, and applied to their consciences, then they were pricked at the heart, and relented.

*Uses.* Now this is—

1. An argument to confirm us in the divine authority of the word, because it worketh such terrors and agonies in men's hearts. What



but the word of God can cite men's consciences before his tribunal, who alone giveth laws to the conscience, and appalleth the stoutest sinners? Paul, a prisoner at the bar, maketh the judge tremble. It is true, natural conscience can accuse and terrify, but it is for sins evident by natural light: Rom. ii. 15, 'Which show the work of the law written upon their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or excusing one another;' Heb. ii. 15, 'Who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage.' But not for gospel sins, and not believing in Christ; that is the property of the word, accompanied by the Spirit: John xvi. 9, 'He shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me.' And to convince them in such a heart-breaking manner as that nothing will satisfy them but the favour of God in Christ, that is divine. They that have not felt this power of the word fear it: John iii. 20, 'For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' They see the majesty of God in his word ransacking the conscience.

2. It encourageth us to preach the word with power and authority, as knowing whose ministers we are, and whose word it is. Yea, though we have a refractory people, who are ready to deride and mock at what we say to them in the name of the Lord, yet we ought not to be daunted, but set our faces as an adamant stone. The prophet Jeremiah was discouraged, and ready to give over, when he heard 'the defaming of many, and the word of the Lord was made a reproach to him,' Jer. xx. 8-11, 'But the Lord is with me, as a mighty and terrible one.' That fetched up his spirits, and got up his courage again. We distrust the power of our Master, and his mighty Spirit, that hath ever gone along with his word, and made it able to break the stoutest and stiffest hearts. Two things may encourage us—

[1.] The blood of Christ, which is of virtue sufficient to work off men from their inveterate customs: 1 Peter i. 18, 'For ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversations received by tradition from your fathers.' There is merit enough on his part to make the word effectual, and the power of his Spirit, which can bear down all prejudices. As here, where it was first poured out, when some of the persecutors of Christ were in a scoffing, mocking frame, they were indicted and arraigned by Peter, and condemned in their own consciences, yea, were changed and converted by it. And such a power doth still accompany the word: 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25, 'But if they all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, and judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.' An infidel coming in by chance, God taketh him by the heart; therefore why should we be dismayed and discouraged in the Lord's work? 2 Cor. x. 4, 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.'

[2.] Encouragement to those that are sensible of hardness to wait on the word of God. It is a powerful instrument in the hand of God when used as his ordinance, and his blessing is waited for, to melt and soften us, and make us pliable to every holy purpose. God appealeth to our

experience: Jer. xxiii. 29, 'Is not my word like fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' A fire to melt, and a hammer to break! Oh, what can stand before the power of it? Use it in good conscience, as one of the means of grace, and you shall find it will awaken you; nay, wound and heal you, and prove the power of God to your salvation. Some consideration or other will be given out to set your hearts a-work in heavenly things with greater life and power. All the miracles which God showed, either before or at the death of Christ, did not work so as this one sermon of Peter's. Certainly either the word will do it, or nothing will do it.

Secondly, It was the word of God, soundly taught, and handled with wisdom, and in a convincing way; for Peter taketh the scriptures, and solidly proveth to them that Jesus, whom they crucified, was the Christ. That is his conclusion in the 36th verse, 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.' He maketh it evident in a powerful way of conviction: 'Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart.' Note, a powerful searching ministry, that bringeth men to a sight and sense of their sins, is best to fit men for conversion to God. There is a playing with scripture in oratorian flourishes, and a sound inculcation of it. When men strive to make those that hear them the better for what they say, that is the ministry that will prick the heart; the others scarce tear the skin. It was said of Pericles, that his speech was piercing, *in animis auditorum aculeos reliquit*: he left a sting in the minds of his hearers, not by the charms of rhetoric, but by a serious, pungent discourse. That is the best preaching which woundeth the heart; it is most for the glory of God, and for the good of souls. Speaking pleasing things to tickle the ear better becometh the stage than the pulpit. It is said, Eccles. xii. 11, 'That the words of the wise are as goads and nails, fastened by the master of the assemblies;' words that have a notable acumen in them; some spiritual sharpness to affect the heart and quicken our dull affections. He meaneth sound and spiritual doctrine, such as doth not flatter men in their sins, but awaken and rouse them up. *Si prædicatoris non pungit sermo, sed oblectat, sapiens non est*—He is not a wise preacher who doth not mind his end, whose speech is fuller of flashes of wit than of savoury wholesome truths, that rather thinketh to please the ear than to awaken the conscience. He doth not act like a master of the assemblies. *Illius doctoris vocem libenter audio, non qui sibi plausum, sed qui mihi planctum movet*, saith Bernard. They are the best preachers, and most affectionate to you, that wound your souls; though they rub an old sore till it ache, it is the better. The work of a minister is not to gain applause to himself, but souls to God. That maketh you go away, and say, not, How well hath he preached! but, How ill have I lived!—that ends with self-loathing rather than commendation of his parts. He must not *lenocinia quærere, sed remedia*, saith Salvian: seek out, not jingling words, but choice remedies for your souls.

*Use.* All this is spoken that you may not grow weary of a sound and searching ministry. Many think they trouble the world, and drive men to despair. Indeed God's witnesses do torment the dwellers upon



earth, Rev. xi. 10; they trouble their carnal rest, and will not let men sleep in their sins; but is it not better you should be troubled in your sleep of sin than awake in flames? Is it not a good despair that driveth you to God, and maketh way for a hope that will never leave you ashamed? And if we go to heaven by the gates of hell, can you be angry for leading you aright? I speak the rather, because the world cannot endure masculine, sound preaching. Ahab hated Micaiah: 1 Kings xxii. 8, 'He doth not prophesy good of me, but evil.' Men are displeased with them that deal faithfully with their souls: Isa. xxx. 10, 'They say unto the seers, See not; and the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits.' They would have the prophets sleek their tongues, and come with loose, garish strains; a sound practical sermon is loathed. They are cut at heart when they hear it, Acts vii. 54; they were unwilling to be searched at the bottom. It is one of the great sins of the age. Men preach in jest, and the people love to have it so; and speak of heaven and hell as things made to play withal, rather than propound them to their serious belief.

Thirdly, It was closely applied. The apostle doth not hover in generals, shoot at rovers; he holdeth the point of the sword at their breasts, and dischargeth in their faces: 'This Jesus, whom ye have crucified, is both Lord and Christ. When they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts.' Applicative and close preaching is the best way to wound the heart, or to bring men to a sight and sense of their miserable condition. 'Thou art the man,' saith Nathan to David, 2 Sam. xii. 6, 7; Acts vii. 51, 52, 'Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before the coming of the just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.' A clap of thunder at a distance doth not startle me so much as when it is in my zenith: 'The man is, convinced of all, and judged of all, when the secrets of his own heart are discovered,' 1 Cor. xiv. 25. We make little account of those things we have not a real interest in; therefore this is a warrant to fly in the face of sinners, and charge them home, You are the men. Souls that are rocked asleep in a sinful course will else throw off all. An indictment without a name signifieth nothing. It prevents that captious cavil, The minister meant me, will they say, when their corruptions are met with; not by an humble application of the word to their consciences, but by way of cavil and calumny, judging it some sinister intention or reproachful reflection upon them: Jer. vi. 10, 'The word of the Lord is to them a reproach, they have no delight in it.' They make reproof railing. If thy heart misgive thee that thou art guilty, he did mean thee, and should mean thee. The minister did no more than he ought, no more than he ought in point of conscience; and it is just that every man should bear his own blame. But that he intended to shame thee before men, that is the false surmise of a galled conscience, when it beginneth to be stricken in its comforts. Apply it so as to humble thee, not to hate thy reprover.

Fourthly, It was a close application of a grievous sin. That was it  
VOL. XXI. Q

touched them so nearly, that they had crucified the Messiah, whom they had so long expected, and whom by their profession they were bound to receive: 'Now when they heard this.' Usually in awakening a sinner there is some remarkable and special sin that God sets home upon the conscience; as here, that they had crucified him who was appointed to be Christ and Lord. Christ convinceth the woman of Samaria of adultery: John iv. 18, 'He whom thou now hast is not thy husband.' Nothing that Christ had said before could work upon her conscience till he took this course with her. There is some special sin we are guilty of, which, when it is touched in the word, maketh guilt fly in the face of a sinner most insensible; as a blunt iron, that toucheth many points at once, maketh a bruise, but a needle, that toucheth but one point, entereth to the quick. Loose discourses about sin in general do not affect the heart so much as the sound discovery of sin; and when that one sin is discovered, it bringeth others into the view of conscience. As a man that is asleep is not awakened but by some great sound, but when once he is awake, he easily heareth lesser sounds; so there is some gross or secret sin God sets home upon the conscience, some special sin that bringeth all the rest to remembrance; usually the most shameful sin that ever we committed. Now it is our duty to lay these convictions to heart, and to consider our estate before God, when we find the word falling with light and power on any one sin of ours.

Fifthly, This grievous sin was wrong done to Christ Jesus, 'Whom ye have crucified.' Now they find the nails pricking in their hearts as so many sharp daggers; and having formerly pierced Christ, are now pierced themselves: 'Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts.' Note from hence, that sin will then affect the heart most when the wrong done to Christ thereby is seriously thought of. It was prophesied of these Jews, Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born;' John viii. 28, 'When ye have lift up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he.' Christ had foretold this conviction; after it was done they should be convinced of it, and their consciences let loose upon them, that they might see what a woful sin they had committed. And did the Jews only wrong Christ? All of us have wronged him in his laws and servants; and it is not only Jews, but christians may look upon him whom they have pierced. Some are said, Heb. vi. 6, 'To crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame.' The blood of Christ may not only be upon them that shed it, but on those that slight it. We do him the greatest contumely; the Jews knew him not. Christ prayeth, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' We know him, or else do ill in professing his name, and rejecting his benefits.

*Secondly*, I come to the trouble and anxiety of heart caused by the word, *κατενύγησαν τῇ καρδίᾳ*, 'They were pricked in their hearts.' Mark, it was not a slight stroke, the razing of the skin, but a compunction or pricking, a deep remorse and trouble. This was not of the eye, as Esau sought the blessing with tears when he had lost it,



Heb. xii. 17, but in the heart. Not a lighter touch or sudden pang, but a deep wound. The words are passive, not pricked themselves, but 'were pricked.' Could they have told how to prevent it, it had never been; but God breaketh in upon their consciences by his word, and then they are sore troubled. We read of some that, when they were charged with the same crime, they were 'cut at heart;' Acts vii. 54, 'Ye have been betrayers and murderers of the just One. And when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth.' This is the more kindly work of the two. The word, when it is used as a means of conversion, then men are pricked at heart; but when they misuse it, as a means of embittering their spirits, then they are cut at heart. This perplexity and trouble we may consider as the fruit and issue of sin, or as the beginning of grace.

1. If you consider it as a fruit of sin, that sin will be bitterness and terror to the soul in the issue, however it seem to content us, and please the flesh for a while. It carrieth a sting with it in the tail, that will show itself one time or other: Jer. ii. 19, 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.' Thou shalt know it by the gripes of thine own heart. Though conscience be seared and senseless for a time, yet after a little while it will awake. For the present men do with difficulty smother checks of conscience, and repel the reproofs of the word, but after a while your trouble will come upon you like an armed man, which you cannot resist: 'The pleasures of sin are but for a season,' Heb. xi. 25. But all this while you are but providing for your own sorrow: Job xx. 12-14, 'Though wickedness be sweet in the mouth, though he hide it under his tongue, though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth, yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him.'

*Use 1.* Oh, take we heed then how we play with sin, or the occasions that lead thereunto. The contentment is soon over, like a draught of sweet poison, and then men feel the gall of asps within themselves, either in terrors of conscience in this life: Prov. xviii. 14, 'A wounded conscience who can bear?' or in the torments of hell hereafter: Luke xvi. 24, 'Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' Rom. ii. 9, 'Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.' Nay, though a kindly remorse should intervene: Mat. xxvi. 75, 'Peter went out and wept bitterly.' It will cost you heart-grief and sorrow. Therefore be not deceived; do not sow to the flesh; forbidden fruit will cost dear. You think it pleasant to satisfy your lusts: 'Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant; but he knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell,' Prov. ix. 17, 18. The sting of conscience and eternal torments will follow this. You are merry now, but this temper will not always last. If God put you into the stocks of conscience, or cast you into the prison of hell, then you will pay dear for all this frolicking.

2. As a preparation and step towards grace.

*Doct.* That the work of regeneration beginneth in a lively and smart sense of our sin and misery.

Because this is the main point, I shall show you—(1.) What is this pricking of heart; (2.) That this is the way God taketh to bring men to themselves; (3.) Why, or for what reasons.

I. What is this pricking at heart? There is a preparatory trouble that goeth before a saving change. It is *gradus ad rem*, a step to this change, though not *gradus in re*, a part of this change; as drying of the wood is not kindling of the wood. After this pricking at the heart, Peter biddeth them repent. This trouble lieth most in the passions and affections; yet it presupposeth some work upon the understanding. Among the passions it lieth most in the fear of being damned for ever; but it doth not exclude the work of other affections, as shame and sorrow; for nature hath a quick and more tender sense of danger than any other thing; as a man overgrown with sores is sensible of the filthiness and nastiness of his condition, but first and most of the pain. Well, then, let us consider it more distinctly.

1. There is in our understanding an apprehension of our miserable and undone condition, by reason of our many and great sins. A sight of sin is necessary, or a sound conviction of our sinful estate: Jer. xxxi. 19, 'Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth;' 1 Cor. xiv. 25, 'He is convinced of all, and judged of all, and falleth on his face, and worshippeth God.' Not a slight confused knowledge that we are all sinners in the general, nor empty notions by which sin may be made loathsome to us in a speculative way, but a setting it home upon the heart: 1 Kings viii. 47, 'Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captives, and repent, and make supplications unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and done perversely, we have committed wickedness;' Luke xv. 17, 18, 'And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish for hunger? I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee;' Jer. viii. 6, 'No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?' There must be also a sight and sense of the wrath of God that hangeth over our heads, and the danger we are in of being condemned and lost for ever; as a man asleep on a bridge, and ready to fall into the water: Rom. vii. 9, 'I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' Men snort securely over the pit's brink till awakened.

2. After this conviction follows compunction, which is made up of fear, shame, and sorrow. Guilt breeds fears and terrors, and the folly and filthiness of sin, shame, and our misery, by reason of both, sorrows and groans, and sad lamentations. Fear is one great part of it, or sense of the wrath of God due for sins: Ps. xc. 11, 'Who knoweth the power of thine anger? According to thy fear, so is thy wrath.' While others slight the wrath of God, pass their time merrily, not caring what estate they are in, these are deeply affected with the sense of God's dis-



pleasure. There is also shame, or a sense of being found faulty, or their folly in doing what they have done. When the soul is filled with confusion because of its own ways: Rom. vi. 21, 'What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.' Then sorrow and deep lamentations because of their sad condition. That affection is expressed by the prophet, Lam. v. 16, 'Woe unto us, that we have sinned;' Ps. xxxviii. 8, 'I am feeble, and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.' Now in all these things there lieth compunction or brokenness of heart, which serveth, not as a bridle to keep us from God, but as a spur to drive us to him.

II. That God taketh this course to bring home sinners to himself. God terrified Adam (Gen. iii. 10, 'I was afraid') to make him sensible of his defection, before he comforted him. So the Israelites, when he would enter into covenant with them, he first terrified them by giving the law with thunderings. When he would convert Paul, Acts ix. 6, 'He, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Acts xvi. 39, 40, the jailor came in trembling before Paul and Silas, and said, 'What must I do to be saved?' In the Old Testament, Ps. li. 17, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise;' and in the New, Rom. viii. 15, 'For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.' The holiness of God's nature seemeth with a kind of comely necessity to call for such a dispensation, that the sinner should be sensible of his displeasure by reason of sin, before he tasteth of grace; that he should not *per saltum* leap into comfort and the assurance of God's love all of a sudden. And herein God is contrary to the devil, the world, and sin, which make promise of much pleasure, gain, and honour at the first, and men find something that giveth contentment to their sensual desires and corrupt lusts, but it ends in bitterness and sorrow at last. But here a little bitterness at first, that maketh way for endless comforts. Not that all that are pricked in heart and troubled for sin shall be converted and saved; the work may die with some in the very pangs, or their trouble may be slight, and soon worn off; but all that are converted are thus troubled, and filled with perplexity about their eternal estate, though the degrees be different. As there is no birth without the pain of travail going before, though some have easier labour than others, as the Hebrew women; so here.

### III. Why?

1. To make us serious. A true sense of sin and misery maketh a soul active and inquisitive about a remedy; as a man sensible of his wounds will not rest till he hath found a plaster. The prodigal when bitten with hunger came to himself, and then thought of returning to his father. We never make it our chief care to save our souls till we come to this. A wounded conscience will inquire after balm in Gilead. As men's trouble is, so do they lay out for help and relief. If sickness be the trouble, they seek for health; if poverty, for riches; if disgrace and contempt, for favour and reputation; if outward affliction, for outward deliverance; if terrors of conscience, for the removal of the guilt of sin; all their thoughts are about that. Here in the text, 'What shall we do?' They now find they have souls to lose,

and souls to save. Till you find yourselves lost in the midst of your greatest earthly happiness and abundance, you will go on in a secure course of voluptuousness, worldliness, and profaneness; but when you are once in straits of conscience, your greatest care will be to save your souls. Many live without all care or fear, doubt or distrust, of their spiritual estate; they pass their time merrily, and hope well, but have no certainty, live at all adventures with God. But when God toucheth the heart of a sinner, then he beginneth to question himself about his estate and course of life. What is it, and what hath he been a-doing all his life hitherto? What provision hath he made for eternity? Whether he hath pleased the flesh, or pleased the Lord? and what will be the end of this when he cometh to die? None but the holy humble soul will seriously ask this question, 'What shall I do to be saved?' Men are not humbled. The wheel of the law never went over them, to the breaking of their hearts; and this is the cause of all idleness and slothfulness in religion. These are the questions an humbled heart is conversant about.

2. To wean us from sin. Corruption is the soul's darling, born and bred with us; and the league between us and it is not easily dissolved. Till we feel the vileness of sin we shall never be brought to hate it. While we taste the sweet of it only, we spare it, and hide it under our tongue: Job xx. 12, 'Though wickedness be sweet in the mouth, and he hide it under his tongue.' But when once we feel, we are cautious of thrusting our hands into the fire of sin again: Josh. xxii. 17, 'Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us?' Children will no more play with snappish dogs when bitten by them. The old compunctions are never forgotten: Prov. i. 31, 'Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.' We are too bold, and too apt to play about the cockatrice's hole; but when these sins have been as swords in your hearts, and you have felt the torment of an accusing conscience, this maketh you more cautious.

3. That Christ may be more heartily welcome to us, and that we may the better entertain his comforts and grace. Christ is sweet to hungry consciences. Our passover must be eaten with sour herbs; so it is the sense of our sin and misery that giveth these comforts a bitter<sup>1</sup> relish: Isa. lvii. 15, 'To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of contrite ones;' ver. 18, 'And restore comfort unto him and to his mourners.' Unutterable groans make way for unspeakable joys. It was not meet that Christ should be received with contempt or coldness, and made light of, and therefore exercised with piercing and heart-breaking sorrows. The bondage of Egypt maketh us long for Canaan.

4. That we may more readily yield to God's terms: Acts ix. 6, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Terrified Paul giveth God a blank to write his pleasure concerning him. A soul truly sensible of sin is ready to submit to any terms which God will impose upon him, and not stand hucking with God, as Pharaoh did. In our ease we would never hearken to the crucifying of the flesh, or deny ourselves, taking up our cross. Heaven must fall into our laps, or we will have none of it. Like Naaman the Syrian, we would pass away a troublesome condition; but when our souls are perplexed, we will be glad to

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'better'?—ED.



accept of mercy upon any terms, take things at God's price : Anything, Lord ; a perfect resignation to the will of God. In pangs of conscience any course will please that shall be prescribed for our comfort and relief.

5. That we may be more chary of grace afterwards. Things that cost dear are the better kept. There need all means to fix the heart. Now this is a good means, to consider how hardly we came by it. It cost us many a bitter groan, and shall we part with it easily ? How soon would we forfeit our pardon, and embezzle our stock of grace, and sin away our comforts, did we not remember how hardly we came by them ! As a riotous heir, that never knew what it was to get an estate, spends it freely.

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## SERMON II.

*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ?—ACTS ii. 37.*

USE 1. If it be so that this is the method of God in conversion, let us not hinder nor smother so good a work ; for so far as this is cherished, we are in our way home to God. Let us not hinder it by omitting hearing, meditation, application. First, Hearing. It is a sign men have a mind to remain in the hardness of their hearts when they will not come to the means that might soften them : Zech. vii. 11, 12, ' But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear ; yea, they made their hearts as an adamant, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets. Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.' The way to harden the heart is to refuse the means. The word would keep alive some notions and thoughts of God that would not let us sleep in sin. Secondly, Meditation and consideration, without which all availeth nothing, unless we debate points between God and ourselves in secret. All actions require time and space for their operations. A sudden glance without musing bringeth nothing to perfection ; as a hen that soon leaveth her nest. All arguments must be holden in the view of conscience, applied close to the soul : Ps. cxix. 59, ' I considered my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies.' A man may take fire in his hand, and presently throw it away without being burnt or hurt. The greatest matters in the world will not work upon him that will not think of them : Deut. xxxii. 46, ' Set your hearts to all the words which I testify among you this day.' Things will never go to the quick till the heart be set on them : Hosea vii. 2, ' And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness ; now their doings have beset them about, they are before my face.' There the business stops. Men will not take it into their thoughts. There is a time when you shall con-

sider, and not be able to look off: Ps. l. 21, 'These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.' You will not think of it now, but then you cannot choose but think of it; you will have nothing to occupy your thoughts but your sins, and the sad effects of them. If it be so irksome to think of hell, what will it be to feel it? Now we cannot prevail with you to bestow a few sober thoughts upon eternity, but then you shall do it without entreaty. As a man that hath the stone and the gout, he cannot forget the pain, if he would never so fain; though now you cast off all thoughts of your condition, and therefore live peaceably in your sins, the time will come when you shall remember them. Thirdly, Application, and urging our own souls with the truths heard: Jer. viii. 6, 'I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle;' Rom. viii. 31, 'What shall we say to these things?' Job v. 27, 'Hear it, and know it for thy good;' Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' We will not let the word come close and home to our own consciences. Rouse up thine own heart, and bring home the stroke of the word, or else it proveth not effectual. Self-love puts by the blow, and thrusts it to others, as if they were unconcerned.

2. Let us not hinder this work of compunction by way of commission. There is something that we cherish in ourselves that hinders this piercing of the heart.

[1.] A misconceit of God's anger against sin; this is one great means to hinder the power of the word. Men think that God doth make no great reckoning of their sins, that it will not be so bad with them as others say; indeed, that we care not for sin, it is no wonder we have not such a lively indignation against it. Oh, but 'God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' Hab. i. 13. His nature sets him against it. Any man that hath but a spark of the divine nature in him, how doth he hate sin! Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day; and if man, how much more God! If God make no great reckoning of sin, why hath he punished it so severely, as in drowning the whole world, burning of Sodom, bringing such calamities upon his people as we cannot read them with dry eyes? Why is 'his wrath revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?' Rom. i. 18. If God make so little reckoning of sin, why is it that little infants, that are free from all actual sins, die? Rom. v. 14, 'Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.' And many times with great gripes and pains, such as would make a man's heart grieve to see it. If God make so little account and reckoning of sin, why is it that little sins to appearance are chastised with so great punishments? Adam for eating an apple, Uzzah for touching the ark, the Bethshemites for looking into the ark, 1 Sam. vi. 19, 20; Ananias and Sapphira struck dead in the place for a lie, Zachary for unbelief struck dumb. Why are his people, the dearly beloved of his soul, so dreadfully punished? Prov. xi. 31, 'Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner.' If God make so little reckoning of



sin, why is hell and everlasting woe threatened to his creature, the work of his own hands? We cannot without horror think of the howling of a dog in a fiery furnace for half-an-hour. If God make so little reckoning of sin, why was Jesus Christ so troubled and exceedingly amazed when he stood in the place of sinners? Mark xiv. 33, 'And he began to be amazed, and to be very heavy.' He wanted not wisdom nor courage; he knew the value of things as well as you; had no want of fortitude; he foresaw the sufferings would be short, the event glorious; he knew God was his Father, that he loved him while he suffered; yet when he took the task of sinners upon him, he was sore amazed. Oh, therefore be ashamed of so sottish a conceit, as if sin were nothing.

[2.] Sensuality and inordinate love of pleasures. These take away the heart: Hosea iv. 11, 'Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart,' wasteth all tenderness and feeling. Pleasures bring a brawn and deadness upon us, thrust the soul into a dead sleep: 1 Tim. v. 6, 'She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' Like Nabal's heart, which died within him, and he became as a stone, 1 Sam. xxv. 37. These things stupify the conscience and dull the spiritual senses, so that men have not an ear for God, or a heart that is likely to be sensible of anything. Oh, therefore take heed of such a frame of heart.

[3.] Worldliness. Men throng their hearts with care and business, and so have no time and leisure to mind the state of their souls: Luke xxi. 34, 'Take heed unto yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life.' As Cain fell a-building to divert his conscience, or as they that offered their children to Moloch did still and drown their cries with drums and tabors; so the din and noise of business will not let conscience speak, they being 'cumbered with much serving.' They that cumber themselves with many things seldom mind the one thing necessary. This keepeth away all heart-qualms.

[4.] Great and heinous sins. These cast the soul into a swoon, and deprive it of all sense. There is some tenderness left with lesser sins, as a prick of a pin will make a man start, but a heavy blow stunneth him. David, for cutting off the lap of Saul's garment, his heart smote him, and so for numbering the people, he was pricked and wounded in conscience, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10; but in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba it was not so; he lay long dead and senseless. We hear of no kindly meltings and workings of heart from him till Nathan came to him: Ps. li., the title, 'A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he had gone in to Bathsheba;' and that was when the child was born: 2 Sam. xii. 14, 'Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to thee shall surely die.' Let a man run on in a course of gross sin, and he loseth his feeling: Eph. iv. 19, 'Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, and to work all uncleanness with greediness.' And that is a sad crisis and state of soul. Oh, take heed of these presumptuous sins: Ps. xix. 13, 'Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, and let them not have dominion over me; so shall I be upright before thee, and innocent from the great transgression.'

[5.] The customary committing of any lesser sins against conscience;

these lead on to hardness of heart, and senselessness, and stupidity. The heart of young men, especially if well educated, is tender, and startleth at the least sin and thought of God's judgments; the least sin will trouble it, and make it tender; but when once we give way to small sins against knowledge, we every day grow more and more bold and venturous, and then shall swallow greater evils without any great trouble or fear of wrath. Water, when it beginneth to freeze, will not endure anything; the least weight put upon it sinketh it presently; but after a while it will bear the weight of a laden cart. Therefore take heed of giving way to sin. That heart that was easily troubled before, when once it is inured to sin, loseth all its sensibleness and tenderness, and what seemed intolerable at first will grow into a delight; as Alipius, St Austin's friend, first abhorred the bloody spectacles of the gladiators, but giving himself leave, by importunity of friends, to be present, but would wink, and not open his eyes, yet at length, when the people shouted, he gave himself liberty to see, and then not only beheld them with delight, but drew others to behold what himself once loathed. Sin at first seemeth insupportable, then heavy, then light; then the sense gone, then delightful, then desired. Oh, therefore watch over your souls if you would keep any feeling. *Ab assuetis non fit passio.* Things to which we are used do not work upon us; we are not much moved with them. Custom maketh men sleep quietly by the falls of great waters where much noise is; and some parts of the body grow callous, brawny, dry, and dead, as the labourer's hand and the traveller's heel, by much use. So doth the conscience; when often offered violence to, and used to sin, it groweth senseless, and less capable of this work, which is of such use and profit.

3. Do not smother it when God beginneth it. Oh, it is dangerous to stifle convictions or lose the benefit of them; for either afterwards conscience is more stupified or terrified. First, More stupified. No iron is so hard as that which hath been oft heated and oft quenched; so no heart so hard as that which hath outworn these convictions and compunctions. As God saith of outward strokes, 'Why should ye be stricken any more?' Certainly he that will not take such warnings as God sends him is every day than other more unapt to be wrought to repentance. As water that hath been heated over the fire congealeth the soonest after it is taken off, so they that have felt the motions of God's Spirit freeze the soonest in the dregs and lusts of the flesh, and have their hearts extraordinarily hardened if once they forsake him. God ceaseth to renew and continue his former motions, and sin gets more strength; conscience giveth over its office of checking, accusing, and awakening them. A wounded conscience neglected will prove a dead conscience; as an ungracious child, after many corrections, is hardened thereby, and at length quite given over and cast off. Oh, therefore, when God cometh near, then call upon him: Isa. lv. 6, 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.' It is dangerous to slight these rebukes from God, and, when the waters are stirred, not to put in for cure: Prov. i. 23, 'Turn at my reproof.' Secondly, By slighting convictions, conscience is terrified; it maketh way for anguish of soul. They will be terrified when they come to die: Prov. i. 26, 'I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your



fear cometh ;' Prov. v. 11, 12, And thou mourn at last, when thy flesh and body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?' Oh, with what horrors and amazing thoughts will you be filled when conscience, which lay asleep in sin before, shall be awakened by the approaches of death and the fears of judgment to come, and your repentance shall not be repentance to life, but, like that of Judas, repentance to death, the beginnings of sorrow, or the pledge of the worm that shall never die. Oh, take heed then of smothering the work of God !

But when is this done ?

[1.] When you take up with other comforts on this side Christ. Your hearts are set a-work, and your thirst is increased, but you quench it at the next ditch, not at the fountain of living waters. You drown all this work in mirth, and pleasures, and merry company. As Saul sought to cure the fit of the evil spirit by music, so these, when they are haunted with thoughts of sin, and guilt, and the world to come, think to put it off, and do not turn it to a right use, which is to turn to the Lord ; or as a man arrested maketh the officer drunk that he may escape for that time ; and so, when it might have been a beginning of conversion, it is to them a means of further hardening their hearts. This is quenching the Spirit, 1 Thes. v. 17, by suppressing his motions. Guard the heart then against all comforts but those which God speaketh and alloweth : Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.' This is a work that must end well. Take heed lest the good seed be choked as soon as it is cast into the heart.

[2.] When you easily return to former sins, and after this qualm can lick up your vomit again. You have smarted, and been wounded, and burdened, and will you take up your load again? John v. 14, 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.' This is to run to hell again, when you have felt the smart of it. Pharaoh had his qualms, but as soon as the plague was off, he returneth to what he was : Exod. ix. 27, 'And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time : the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.' Who could have thought but Pharaoh would have been another man? But when the qualm is over, Pharaoh is Pharaoh still, and there must be a new judgment to humble him. Ahab oppresseth Naboth, and God threateneth him, and Ahab humbleth himself and walketh softly, but afterward imprisoneth Micaiah, and then God slayeth him. Felix trembled, but still continueth his course. Many have their tears, and sighs, and sorrows, and after all this they relapse. Oh, this is dangerous !

Thirdly, We come now to the course they take for ease and relief : 'They said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Observe here—

1. To whom they go, to 'Peter and the rest of the apostles.'

2. What they say, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Where—

[1.] Their civil compellation and form of address, 'Men and brethren.'

[2.] Their solemn question, 'What shall we do?'

From the whole I shall make these observations—

1. The change that is wrought upon a sinner when God hath him under this preparative trouble; it doth not amount to a full conversion, yet it inferreth a change; a strange change in these men, both as to their thoughts of Christ and his apostles.

[1.] As to Christ, where are those words now, 'Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?' They are now convinced that Jesus is Lord and Christ. Where is now their fury, crying, 'Crucify, crucify him'? They are now pricked in their hearts, and hang the head: 'If thou lettest him go, thou art no friend to Cæsar.' No such thing heard now. No; but, 'What shall we do?'

[2.] Their thoughts are changed towards the apostles. Now it is *virī, fratres*, 'Men and brethren,' whom before they looked upon as deceivers, and men full of new wine; those whom they hated as enemies they now consult with as friends and physicians. They do not in contempt call them Galileans and impostors, but 'Men and brethren.' They have other thoughts of men and things than formerly they had. I observe this—

(1.) To show the necessity of a change in conversion. If conviction and compunction work such a mighty change, what will conversion do? *Ego non sum ego*—I am not myself. A man should not be the same man he was before. There is as palpable a difference as between light and darkness, life and death, the old man and the new. Brokenness of heart varies the price and value of things and persons strangely. He that was judged to have a devil is now found to be Lord and Christ; and those that were mocked as men full of new wine, and had taken a cup too much, are now owned to be the precious servants of the Lord. We are not the same men, have not the same thoughts and notions of things, when the Lord beginneth to work upon us. Men look upon men and things in the glass of their own humours, and passions, and brutish lusts, when they are wild careless creatures; but when they come to themselves, and begin to be serious, they look upon things as they are in themselves. Men look upon men and things at a distance and by a slight view before; now they look upon them nearer at hand, and by a different and more accurate view. Peter Martyr's similitude wrought upon Galiacius Caraccialus. Those that afar off see men skipping and dancing would think they were light and vain persons, but when they draw near unto them, they find their motion orderly, and keeping time and pace with the music, and as the laws of the exercise and dance require. There is a great alteration in men's notions of wisdom and folly, misery and happiness, liberty and bondage. The work of a sound conviction bewrayeth itself in nothing so much as in these things. They are wise who mind earthly things, fools and crazy brains who consult not with their profit, but their conscience; no happiness but to flow in ease and plenty; no misery like that to be kept short and bare in temporal conveniences and worldly accommodations; no such bondage as to be held to duty and in the fetters of conscience; no such liberty as to live at large. But afterward they find it to be quite otherwise; no folly like pleasing the flesh; no misery like the loss of God's favour; no bondage like the slavery of sin.

(2.) I observe it to show what difference there is in our thoughts of sin before and after the commission. With what a hurry and madness



of a furious spirit were this people carried to desire the death of Christ ! 'Crucify him, crucify him !' And now it is done, their consciences work, they are pricked in their hearts, and are at an utter loss : 'Men and brethren, what shall we do ?' Christ foretold this : John viii. 28, 'Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lift up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.' Evil men are permitted to run their own course, but when their consciences and God's judgments are let loose upon them, to see what a course they are engaged in, then they are 'pricked in heart.' Our first parents, when they had sinned, then their eyes were opened, and they knew they were naked, Gen. iii. 7, that is, ashamed in their nakedness ; they began to take notice of the miserable and sad condition into which Satan had brought them, that they might be humble, and seek to God for pardon. Many discover not aforehand the evils which their sins lead them into ; but afterwards they see it, and are left shiftless and helpless. When Judas had betrayed his master, the foulness of the act terrified him, and he goeth and hangeth himself. Peter hath no sense of his condition while he is denying Christ ; but afterwards conscience beginneth to work : 'He goeth out, and wept bitterly,' Mat. xxvi. 75. It is well when this is discovered to bring us to repentance for failings past, to make us more watchful for time to come, and to give us a fuller and quicker taste of God's mercy in our reconciliation by Jesus Christ. But when it is only discovered in order to our despair, as it was to Cain, Gen. iv. 14, that is sad. Well, then, they have other thoughts. This is the general observation.

2. I observe again, that they took some course for their comfort and relief : 'They said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ?' Felix trembled, but it was but a superficial work, and came to nothing, Acts xxiv. 25 ; it was soon over ; he delayeth and adjourneth the consideration of his danger. Cain and Judas being terrified, they despair : Gen. iv. 13, 14, 'And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear ;' Mat. xxvii. 3, 4, 'He brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us ? See thou to that.' But this in the text was a more kindly work. They do not turn the sense of their misery into a slothful despair and despondency, but ask counsel. Many have some qualms and risings of conscience, but they soon die away. Therefore it is good to see what we do with our trouble. It is *opus respectivum* ; it reacheth to some further work, which we should look after, that we smother it not.

3. I observe that they take a good course. They do not go to the scribes and pharisees, whose malice would have prompted them to have defaced this work, but to Peter and the rest of the apostles ; not to merry company and carnal delights, where it might be quenched, but to those that could best direct them how to improve it for good, to the ambassadors of Christ. When we are sick, it concerneth us to think what physician we choose ; some are mere mountebanks, and will prescribe poisons instead of remedies. Many, when they are wounded in spirit, run to their carnal companions, and drink away sorrow, or game

and play away sorrow, or read away sorrow, and seek to put themselves out of the humour. Alas! this is but to put off that which they cannot put away, and to fly from grief, not to cure it: not to settle, but to sear the conscience; vain helps, that will in the issue perplex us the more, and make the cure the more difficult.

4. I observe in the general, that they speedily took a good course. It is not good to neglect the present time, and lose the importunity of the present conviction. While it is warm upon our hearts, let us carry on the work of God as far as it will go. Let us step in as soon as we see the waters troubled, John v. 4. There is much time in a little opportunity. As soon as the wound is given and felt; in bodily diseases delay is dangerous; as soon as we feel the first strivings and grudgings of conscience: Acts xxiv. 25, 'Felix trembled.' He was all in an agony; but he put off his conviction, and we hear no more of him. We read of converts that followed Christ forthwith: Mat. iv. 20, 'Straightway they left their nets, and followed him;' and Gal. i. 16, 'Immediately I consulted not with flesh and blood.' These impulses will be lost, and you will outgrow the feelings of conscience in a little time. These good motions are spent if not prosecuted, and then you will be in a worse condition than before. Your comforts will come the sooner, the sooner you look after a cure. Sorrow will increase to horror and desperation: 2 Chron. xxiv. 19, 20, 'When the king heard the words of the law, he presently rent his clothes, and commands them to go and inquire of the Lord for him.' Green wounds are the soonest cured. When a bone is out of joint, the longer the setting is forborne, the greater will the pain of the patient be; yea, it may be so long neglected that no skill nor art can set it right again. So it is in the cure of a wounded spirit and bleeding conscience. The ground is fitter to receive the seed after it is newly ploughed, and the present impression of grace is a great advantage. Work while you have that advantage. Worldly occasions and distractions will choke the sense we have of our condition; therefore let us betimes strike in, and seek a remedy. To put it off is strangely to neglect the soul and eternal peace. When thy conscience is struck by the word, and thy heart is pierced, withdraw thyself from all other distractions, and drive the work home; seek presently for direction and remedy.

### SERMON III.

*And they said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?—Acts ii. 37.*

OBSERVE in the words—(1.) To whom they go; (2.) What they say.

1. Their civil compellation.

2. Their solemn question.

First, Their civil compellation and respect to the apostles, 'Men and brethren.' Ministers are in season (and therefore in esteem) when



men lie under distress of conscience. Pharaoh ran not to his magicians in his trouble, but to Moses and Aaron. Those that humour our lusts are ministers only for our carnal prosperity; those that deal conscientiously are ministers for our distress; and though they were contemptible before, and scorned by us, yet then they are in request. Before, they and their pains might be well spared, their persons are hated, their doctrine scorned and despised; but stay a little, till a pang of spiritual trouble comes upon them, and then their sentiments are altered. Those that mocked at them before will now be glad of their advice. The jailor put the apostles into the inner prison, and put their feet in the stocks; but when a trembling fit cometh upon him, then it is, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' Acts xvi. 30. Those that slighted holy things before, yet when chastened with pain upon the body, and their soul draweth near to the grave, and their life to the destroyers, oh, then for a faithful minister, for a 'messenger of God, one of a thousand, to show a man his uprightness,' Job xxxiii. 23. Then they are of great account and esteem. Oh, that we had the same notions of men and things in trouble and out of trouble, living and dying! it would prevent a great deal of mischief.

Reasons—(1.) Because the men are altered; (2.) Because their work is altered.

1. The men are altered, both in their judgments and affections.

[1.] In their judgments. The pride of their carnal reason is subdued; or rather, their reason is set free from the captivity of brutish passions. Now they know what sin is, the nature of it, and the danger of it, and what necessity lieth upon them to part with it. Formerly they lived by sense, and were under the power of brutish lusts, and they thought it more than needs to wind up men to such a pitch of holiness, or to call upon them to be so watchful, serious, and diligent; that this niceness and fond scrupulosity was over-doing. Now they see it is but necessary strictness; that these were their best friends. Smart experience openeth their eyes. They now feel the evil they never feared before; and by experience and sensible proof they see the deceit of them that cried, Peace, peace, that declaimed against strictness, and hated those that taught them the way of salvation: Prov. xxviii. 23, 'He that rebuketh a man, afterward shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue.' Rubbing an itch breedeth soreness and rawness.

[2.] Their affections are altered, the stubbornness of their hearts is subdued: Job xxiii. 16, 'For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me.' Before, Shall they pine and whine, and tremble at the word? No; they are no such babies. Till the arrows of Christ stick fast in the heart, they do not fall down before the truth: Ps. xlv. 5, 'Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.'

2. Their work is altered. They mind that which requireth a minister's work, the salvation of their souls. They slight God and their souls, and therefore may well slight God's ministers. There is no work for them to do.

Use 1. To press ministers to evidence themselves to men's consciences rather than their lusts. Make known the truths of God sincerely to

them : 2 Cor. iv. 2, 'But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God ;' 2 Cor. v. 11, 'Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ; but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.' You are accounted enemies for a while ; but if ever God touch their hearts, they will love you, when they are freed from the slavery of their lusts. It is not those that have quaint notions and rhetorical flourishes, that cry, Peace unto them, that will then serve their turn.

*Use 2.* Is information, that he that hath a secret grudge and distaste against God's faithful servants and messengers was never kindly wrought upon. He might be touched at heart, but was not pricked at heart. They are sensible of a light that troubleth them, not a kindly remorse that maketh them to ask advice and counsel. If they had any true pangs of conscience, it would be otherwise.

Secondly, Their question, 'What shall we do ?' that is, do to escape the deserved punishment, do to obtain remission of sins, do to be saved ? Acts xvi. 30, as may be gathered by parallel places, and out of the apostle's answer, 'Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins ;' and, 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation.' The point is—

*Doct.* That men are at a good and hopeful pass when once they come anxiously and fervently to ask, 'What shall we do to be saved ?'

This is the usual question of men wounded in spirit and in straits of conscience : Acts ix. 6, 'And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?' Luke iii. 10, 'And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then ?' Acts xvi. 30, 'And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?' Job vii. 20, 'What shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men ?'

1. It is a weighty question.

2. When it is fitly proposed, it argueth a good and hopeful condition and state of soul.

1. It is a weighty question. The case is not for another, but for themselves. We read of an impertinent question put forth by Peter to Christ : John xxi. 21, 'Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, what shall this man do ?' But here it is, 'What shall we do ?' Many do not look inward, but are busy about the concerns of others. It is not, What shall he do ? but, 'What shall we do ?' It is not about intricate doubts, and nice debates, or the decision of scholastical questions, but a necessary thing. Curious questions argue too much levity and wantonness in those that propose them. Many that are heart-whole dispute and wrangle about nice things, but these ask advice. Those that wholly give up themselves to nice debates neglect the main profitable matters. A man in straits and pangs of conscience is not in a condition to trouble himself with niceties ; he is in danger of hell, and his care is how he shall do to escape it. It is not about the body, but the soul ; not for necessities for the outward man. There are questions of that nature which we are apt to put : Mat. vi. 25, 'What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we put on ?' 'Take



no thought for the body.' A man's main care is to save the soul. Christ, to divert them, puts them upon that: Mat. vi. 33, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' These worldly questions perplex men's hearts; as their trouble is, so they inquire. If they distrust God's providence, what more usual than these questions? Once more, it is not about speculations, but practicals; not, What shall we say? but, What shall we do? Not about events: Luke xiii. 23, 'Lord, are there few that are saved?' but about duty. Chrysostom observeth well, They say not, How shall we be saved? but, 'What shall we do to be saved?' It is presumptuous folly to hope for the end without the means. There is somewhat to be done if we mean to be saved. Balaam said, 'Let me die the death of the righteous,' Num. xxiii. 10. *At oportuit sic vivere*—We should live so. There are means leading to every end. We must not think to go to heaven with hand in bosom, and land at the haven of glory when you turn the boat to the stream. Salvation will not be had without duty. That is worth nothing that is gotten for nothing. You cannot imagine such a worthy thing will cost you no pains. There is a proportion still between the means and the end: 1 Thes. ii. 12, 'That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory; something that will answer the greatness of your hopes. Many will go to heaven as far and as fast as good hopes and good wishes will carry them. They make a gentleman-like life of the profession of godliness; their rents are brought in by their stewards, whether they sleep or wake, work or play. No; these converts propound it, 'What shall we do?' what course shall we take to save our souls?

But is not this a legal question, 'What shall we do?' as if heaven were to be had for doing?

Some think this is spoken with respect to the covenant of works, the sense of which is upon our hearts naturally. It is true such a question may be put in a legal way, as the young man that came to Christ, Mat. xix. 16, 'And behold one came, and said unto him, Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' He was a rich man, but he saw his happiness lay not in riches, but in everlasting salvation; he desireth that, but he would earn it, and seek his justification by works. But to inquire after the necessary means without such a presumption of merit is not legal. Christ answereth him according to his legal apprehensions: ver. 17, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' That was the best way to humble a proud pharisee, to bid him make good his pretensions to keep the whole law in all points without sin; that was to hold him to his own covenant. But now Peter answereth these according to their meaning; they inquire after the way and means of relief: 'Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins.' Well, then, we have found it a good and weighty question.

II. It is fitly propounded. It argueth a good and hopeful state of soul if anxiously and seriously put. We ask it in jest at other times, but convinced men are in the greatest earnest. Things now begin to be real, and seem other than formerly they did; they think, and speak, and talk like men in another world. Sin is another thing. They were

wont to marvel what made men keep such a stir about sin ; what harm was it to take a little forbidden pleasure ? that it was hard measure to be held so closely to duty ; but now they have other thoughts, are at a loss, 'What shall we do ?' This question seriously put argueth—

1. Their present helplessness, or a sense of their lost condition. They speak like men at a loss, and at their wit's end, finding Jesus to be the Christ, of whose death they were guilty, and so liable to God's heavy judgment. They had cried out, 'His blood be upon us and our children.' They could not undo what they had done, and now know not what to do. They speak like men wholly void of senses ; as Reuben, 'The child is not, and whither shall I go ?' Gen. xxxvii. 30. So upon this their perplexity ariseth. Sin will put men to a nonplus, and bring men to be shiftless and helpless ; as Christ spake when he stood in our room, John xii. 37, 'Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say ?' Job vii. 20, 'I have sinned ; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men ?' What shall a sinner do ? In earth there is no balm for his wounds. It is as the white of an egg. If he look to heaven, there is a God to condemn him ; if to hell, there are devils to torment him. Their minds are distracted with the sense of the present evil. Now thus it should be before we can be brought home to Christ. He came to save that which was lost. You should be at such a loss that nothing should comfort you on this side Christ. Till the prodigal was brought to penury, and could no longer sustain himself by his shifts, he never thought of returning to his father ; but then he did. There are two remarkable parts in conversion—to bring a man and himself together, to bring Christ and him together. A man cometh to himself by compunction, or a sense of his misery ; but one great means to bring him to Christ is helplessness, when he can no longer shift for himself, and patch up a happiness by his own devices. Till we are at a loss, we go about like Ephraim : Jer. xxxi. 22, 'How long wilt thou go about ?' Man is a proud creature, loath to be beholden, would be sufficient to his own happiness ; but when all his confidences are broken, then he casts himself into the arms of Christ, to be by him brought to God, when we see our utter inability to help ourselves.

2. This question argueth some kind of hope that there may be relief for them ; for they do not give over the business as desperate, as if nothing could be done, but inquire, 'What shall we do ?' Is there no remedy for such vile wretches as we are ? They presume there is some course to be taken. There is a kind of twilight in the soul, neither utter despair nor certain hope ; but only some present support, that we may not give over the business in despair : Joel ii. 14, 'Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat-offering and a drink-offering unto the Lord your God ?' They are in suspense, but incline to look for grace from God : Jonah iii. 9, 'Who can tell if God will return, and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ?' It is a venture, but such as encourageth them to wait. There is a possibility or probability, but not a certainty, that hope is the fruit of faith. Sensible sinners have many sad tossings and conflicts of spirit between the expectation of God's mercy and the sense of their own deservings, so that they cannot speak the pure language of faith nor the pure language of unbelief, but



mixed and made up of both ; as those Jews, Neh. xiii. 24, 'They spake half the language of the Jews, and half of Ashdod.' Yet such as it is, it maketh them wait and venture on God ; as Benhadad's servants on the king of Israel : 1 Kings xx. 31, 'And his servant said unto him, Behold, now we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings : let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth upon our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel ; peradventure he will save thy life.' So these doubtful thoughts have a mixture of hope ; yea, some predominancy of it ; so that though they do not certainly determine, yet they will try what will become of it. Now the soul is in a hopeful way. Faith is coming on, and comfort will not be far off, when we make these adventures, and inquire, though we do not know what will come of it : Jer. xviii. 12, 'All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him ; for his righteousness which he hath done, he shall live.'

3. It expresseth their solicitude and anxious care, 'What shall we do?' It is a point of the highest consideration, and therefore they ask counsel. When the Corinthians were made sorry by Paul's letter, 2 Cor. vii. 11, 'This self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you ; yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge ! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.' Carefulness and consultation about the means of grace and salvation is a hopeful beginning, and men are in a fair way of passing from death to life. The generality of the world is stupid and listless : Rom. iii. 11, 'There is no man that understandeth, there is no man that seeketh after God.' Many never saw a need to do anything, nor have a heart to do anything ; therefore when men come to consult, either with themselves or others, there is some hope. With themselves ; as those lepers, 2 Kings vii. 3, 4, 'And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate, and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die ? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there ; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians ; if they save us alive, we shall live ; and if they kill us, we shall but die ;' Luke xv. 17, 18, 'And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish for hunger ? I will arise, and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee.' And as the wise steward, Luke xvi. 3, 4, 'Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do ? For my lord taketh the stewardship from me : I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of my stewardship they may receive me into their houses.' Or when they consult with others, when a man asketh serious questions, how to frame his heart to the obedience of the gospel, how to establish his heart in the hopes of pardon and glory ; this will come to somewhat. Men begin to be awake : Ps. xxii. 27, 'All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn to the Lord.' For a while they are like men sleeping and distracted ; they do not act like men, having no sense, no heart for heavenly things. But when once they are full of pangs of con-

science then there is hopes of them ; then they are serious, and mind things.

4. It expresseth their resignation. They do not stand hucking and dodging, but with readiness of mind offer themselves to be directed by the apostles : 'Men and brethren, what shall we do ?' As if they had said, We will do anything that you shall enjoin. This is the fashion and manner of those that are in a hopeful way of conversion. They are wont to resign and offer themselves to be guided by Christ in his own way to heaven, without reservation : Acts ix. 6, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?' ready to obey him in all things. They do not dispense with some things, and say, Thus far can we go, or, The Lord be merciful to me in this ; but absolutely, 'What shall we do to be saved ?' There were some that would follow Christ upon conditions : Luke ix. 59-62, 'And he said, Follow me ; but he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. And Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury the dead ; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. Another said, Lord, I will follow thee ; but let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' Herod did many things ; and the young man had a forwardness, and a longing desire. Now what is the reason they are so pliable to God's will, so ready to obey him in all things, without reserving any sin or lust ? Partly because they see an absolute necessity of coming out of the condition in which they are. Turn and live, sin and die : Ezek. xviii. 32, 'For I have no pleasure in him that dieth, saith the Lord ; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.' Therefore they are willing to be and do anything to come out of it. God being peremptory to punish sin, they must be as peremptory in forsaking sin, unless they mean to perish for ever. And partly because they think any condition more tolerable than that under which they are ; for now they feel the evil they never felt before : Ps. xxxviii. 4, 'For mine iniquities are gone over my head ; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.' Therefore, if God will prescribe any terms to them, they will accept them. The evil of sin is so great, that there is no evil equal to it, no good that can countervail it. There is a pressing necessity on the soul. These are the considerations that prevail in this condition, before regeneration, or a real bent of heart towards God, and sound consent be wrought.

*Use 1.* Is reproof of our carelessness. We busy ourselves about the smallest matters : 1 Cor. vi. 2, speaking of the things of this life, he calls them 'the smallest matters.' We will ask, What shall become of us ? We are anxious about events, but not careful about duties ; and this for the outward man, What we shall eat ? not, 'What shall I do to be saved ?' this question is very rare. A few poor, humble, broken-hearted christians, and some that are fallen under the chastening of the Lord, and are ready to die, they see the need and worth of salvation ; but go up and down among people everywhere, we have no such questions as this. Now many live twenty or thirty years, and never question with themselves, Where am I ? whither am I going ? what shall become of me to all eternity ? Oh, that we could more frequently, more seriously, put this question, and were more diligent and



earnest to get it resolved. There is another question to make way for this: Jer. viii. 6, 'What have I done?' And then there is another question after this: Hosea xiv. 8, 'What have I any more to do with idols?' These are the questions to be put to conscience. Certainly if you were troubled for sin, this would be your main inquiry; but in most people this is not in all their thoughts. Oh, how do we forget ourselves and our main errand in the world! How little do we mind that which most concerneth us! One drudgeth for riches, and another giveth up himself to pleasures. Hardly have we a thought wherefore we were born, and what will be the end of things; and therefore this is the least part of our care, how we shall do to be saved. Some that seem a little affected yet are not soundly awakened, have not such a care as so weighty a business doth require; like those that are heavy to sleep, that hear a great noise in the night, of wind, and rain, and thunder, or fire, are a little disturbed, but lie down and sleep again, and trouble themselves no more with it.

*Use 2.* To direct you how to further, and also how to judge of, your progress in the work of conversion.

1. When you begin to mind necessary things: Mat. vi. 20, 21, 'But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.' When you put questions to yourselves about heaven and the way thither, your thoughts must be more upon it, and your discourses tend that way; at least, you will be running to means to hear more of God and heaven.

2. When you have an anxious sense of your lost condition, and God hath showed you your danger, your hearts are troubled because of sin, that you find it a heavy burden, you are in the eye of the promise: Mat. xi. 28, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall find rest for your souls.'

3. When you find the burden groweth so heavy (as it was with the young man that came to Christ, Mat. xix.) that you are resolved to save your souls whatever it cost you: Mat. xiii. 46, 'And when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all, and bought it.' Many cheapen the comforts of christianity, but do not go through with the bargain. You will not stick with God for anything, but set yourselves to do his will, whatever reluctances from within or disgrace and oppositions from without you meet with.

4. When your heart is so fixed and confirmed in this purpose, that when it cometh to trial and exigence, you do judge it better to deny your lusts, renounce your interests, run all hazards for Christ; you can thwart your affections, run through straits, disgraces, nicknames, scorns, and can lay down your life at Christ's feet, Mat. xviii. 8, 9; part with right hand or right eye. Better go to heaven with the loss of all, than to hell with the greatest crown.

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## SERMON IV.

*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.—Acts ii. 38.*

IN the former verse we had their serious question ; here is Peter's seasonable answer. They that take a right course, and seriously inquire after the way of salvation, are not likely to be disappointed. God saith, 'Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,' Mat. vii. 7. Men that are in good earnest in the use of means shall not be refused in any needful suit. Therefore 'Stand ye in the ways, and see ; ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls,' Jer. vi. 16. So do these poor wounded souls do, and so must we do. Now what was the effect ? It is the part of a good physician not only to discover the disease, but also to prescribe a remedy ; especially should spiritual physicians be tender of broken-hearted sinners, willing and ready to give them counsel. When Judas had a wound in his conscience, he cometh to the high priest, and said, 'I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.' But do they tender his case, or afford him any relief in his great straits ? No ; 'What is that to us ? see thou to that,' Mat. xxvii. 4 ; they leave him to his own horrors and despairing thoughts. But Peter dealeth more compassionately with these converts : he doth not upbraid them with their past sin, and leave them in despair, but giveth them wholesome counsel and advice for the good of their souls : 'Then Peter said unto them,' &c.

In Peter's direction and counsel to them take notice—(1.) What he persuadeth them to do ; (2.) The argument by which he persuadeth them ; what they shall do, and what they shall receive.

In the first, two things—

1. 'Repent.'

2. 'Be baptized in the name of Christ.' What ? why ? and to what end ? 'For the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.'

First, The first thing he persuadeth them to is repentance. But this advice seemeth needless, yea, burdensome. Was it seasonable to press men that lay under deep terror and compunction to repent ? Is not this to break a bruised reed, and add sorrow to sorrow ?

*Ans.* No such matter. Therefore I shall—

1. Show the difference between the former work, and that to which they are now pressed.

2. Evidence to you that this is a proper cure.

[1.] The difference. Before it was *κατενύγησαν* ; now it is *μετανοήσατε*. There is a great difference between these things. The word is more capacious, implying a change of mind and counsel. If you take repentance for godly sorrow and trouble of heart, yet still there is a difference between the former work and this. The former sorrow was legal, wrought by terror, and a fear of being damned ;



this is evangelical, wrought by a sense of God's love. A malefactor ought not only to be sorry for his crime while he is in suspense, and knoweth not how his prince will deal with him, but after he is pardoned is still to be ashamed and grieved for his offence. Their former sorrow was an involuntary impression; this an active grief. They were pricked at heart whether they would or no. Now repent: he would have that work theirs. That was *dolor morbi*, the pain of the disease; this was *dolor medicine*, the trouble of physic, or the smart that comes by the cure. That sting was the effect of an accusing conscience, which may be in the wicked; this the grief of a confessing penitent, which argueth a tender heart.

[2.] It is a proper cure. They were in sorrow; therefore repent. *Ars deinde sequatur, natura monstrante viam.* Physicians will cure men of fluxes by giving a purge, and stay vomiting and a disposition to cast by a vomit, divert bleeding by letting of blood; so they were in trouble and anguish, and he presseth them to repent, in a kindly manner to come and bewail their sin to God: 'Repent, and be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins.'

*Doct.* Repentance is one special means which God hath instituted for the cure of a wounded soul.

Not only faith, as Acts xvi. 31, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;' but repentance. Indeed those two are the two great means: Acts xx. 21, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.'

I. Let us see what is repentance, or wherein it consists. There are three words by which it is expressed: *μετανοια*; that word you have in the text, and it signifieth an after-wit, or a change of mind. Secondly, The next word is *μεταμέλεια*, an after-sorrow, or a change of heart; that word you have Mat. xxi. 29, 'But afterwards he repented, and went,' *μεταμεληθεὶς ἀπῆλθε*; he was sorry for his refusal. Thirdly, *μεταστρεψις*, an after-turning, or a change of course. That word you have Acts iii. 19, 'Repent ye, therefore, and be converted;' *μετανοήσατε καὶ μεταστρέψατε*: Acts ix. 35, 'And turned to the Lord;' as he that hath walked in a wrong course bethinketh himself, and goeth back again, and taketh another way. In all these three consists repentance; not in one alone, not in a change of mind. Many a man knoweth better, but doeth that which is worse. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.* There must be a change of heart as well as a change of mind, such a sorrow for sin as 'crucifieth the flesh, with the affections and lusts,' Gal. v. 24, that doth weaken the power and interest of sin in the heart; and not only a change of heart, but a change of course. Many men are troubled for sin, but still go on in the practice of sin. *Vera pœnitentia est*, saith Augustine, *pœnitenda non admitttere, et admissa deflere*; such a change of heart as draweth with it a change of life; to repent for what is past, and amend what is to come: Prov. xxviii. 13, 'He that confesseth, and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy.' Well, then, repentance consisteth not in an acknowledgment of sin, and saying, God be merciful; but it is a change of our minds, hearts, purposes, and evil course of life.

1. *Μετάνοια*, a change of mind and understanding: Rom. xii. 2.

'Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.' A transmutation is necessary, by which a sinner beginneth to approve the law of God, which before he disliked, and to prize holy things, which before he lightly esteemed; to see the excellency and sweetness of the spiritual life, and walking in communion with God, which before he disesteemed as a heavy bondage or a foolish niceness: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' In short, men's eyes are opened, and they have other thoughts of sin and duty than ever they had before. They did not think sin so bad as they find it; nor that there was so much good and sweetness in a course of obedience. Now he seeth that all this while he hath gone astray, and been prejudiced against his own happiness: Titus iii. 3, 'For we ourselves were sometimes foolish and disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another;' 1 Cor. iii. 18, 'Let no man deceive himself; if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.' That sin which was his delight before, is now his burden. He was wont to marvel why men kept such a stir about sin, and that their complaints were but words of course; now he seeth it is the most hateful thing in the world, and all that was said is little enough to express the odiousness of it. He was wont to think a course of holy walking to be a dark, sad, and gloomy course; but now his judgment is altered, he seeth that nothing is so lovely and sweet as obedience, and no liberty but in God's service; that none live at large so much as they whose lusts are restrained, and whose consciences are still held under the awe of God's precepts. He was wont to call the proud happy and blessed, and that none lived so comfortable a life as they that had both ability and opportunity to please the flesh; now he seeth they are the most miserable creatures in the world, because their snares and temptations are multiplied, and that poor afflicted godliness is a far better condition; no preachers or scriptures are now too strict for him. This is a change of mind.

2. *Μεταμέλεια*, an after-care, when the soul cometh to grief, and shame, and sorrow, and hatred of sin: 2 Cor. vii. 10, 'For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.' Godly sorrow is of great use in repentance, to alienate and turn away the soul from sin. Our evil estate consisteth not so much in this, that we have sin, as that we love sin. Here lieth the root of all our mischief, that we are *φιλήδονοι μάλλον ἢ φιλόθεοι*, 'that we are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,' 2 Tim. iii. 4. Therefore, to dig at the root of sin, this breaking and rending the heart with godly sorrow is necessary, that the bitterness of grief may make it loathsome to us: Job ii. 13, 'His grief was great.' Therefore we must exercise ourselves with grief, and shame, and sorrow, because of our doings, and be touched with a deep sense of our folly and unkindness to God, that we have wronged God, and abused his grace.

3. There is *μεταστροφή*, a change of life. This ensueth upon the change of heart. By the change of heart we put off the old man, with his deceitful lusts; and then there must needs be a change in our con-



versations : Mat. ii. 2, 'Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance;' such as will evidence a thorough change wrought in us, and give us a certain proof of it: Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' This is always a-doing, wherein there is something privative and positive: in the privative part, the internal work is the chief, when a man maketh conscience of his thoughts; the positive part is when a man maketh it the great business and trade of his life: Acts xxiv. 16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.'

Reasons to prove that this is one special means which God hath instituted for the cure of a wounded soul.

1. Because it is God's prescribed course. The Lord himself must state the terms upon which his grace shall be dispensed; now he hath appointed this way: Acts iii. 19, 'Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord.' Repentance is a means or condition, or moral qualification on our parts; it is *conditio sine qua non*, without which we are not capable of the benefit. The first moving cause is the mercy and grace of God: Isa. xliii. 25, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' The meritorious and procuring cause is the blood of Christ: Eph. i. 7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin.' That is the satisfaction given to God for our offences, to repair him in point of honour. But the causes do not exclude our duty; there must be something done on our part by way of application to make our right and title clear, and that is faith and repentance: these two sister graces, the one respects God, and the other the Mediator Jesus Christ: 'Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,' Acts xx. 21. The offence is done to God, and he is the party to whom we return by Christ. These two graces go hand in hand, and we must not put asunder what God hath joined together. If you ask which goes first? that is hard to say; there is not such a distinction of time in the work of conversion that we can tell which is first or which is last; the work is intermingled. The case in the new birth is somewhat like as it was in the travail of Tamar, Zarah putteth out the hand, but Pharez breaketh out first. We feel repentance, it is first in our sense; but faith is the first-born, the elder sister. When a candle is brought into a room, the light showeth itself before the candle. Faith is first in order of nature, for without it no act is pleasing to God, Heb. xi. 6. Well then, repentance is God's prescribed course to get our sins blotted out; that is, either out of the book of his remembrance, or out of the book of conscience. Out of the book of his remembrance: Col. ii. 14, 'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, which was against us, which was contrary to us, nailing it to his cross;' that is, crossed out by the blood of Christ. But out of the book of conscience it is blotted by the Spirit of Christ: Heb. x. 22, 'Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water;' when he giveth us gospel peace and comfort.

2. Because the saints have found it an effectual course, and marvellously successful. God taught David by his own experience that the exercise of repentance was the right way to seek relief, after his spirits had been wasted and his flesh almost dried up : ' I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity I have not hid ; I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin,' Ps. xxxii. 5. When he resolved sincerely to humble his heart before God, nay, though the purpose was not yet put into act, he felt the comfort. Another instance may be that, Jer. xxxi. 18-20, ' I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and I shall be turned ; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented ; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon the thigh : I was ashamed ; yea, confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. 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 Ephraim's bewailing his sin, and God's returning an answer full of fatherly affection : at first he was like an unruly bullock, not easily brought to the yoke, but yet at length, when he was touched with shame and sorrow, then, ' Is not Ephraim a dear son ? a pleasant child ?'

3. Because it is the way to remove sin, which is the ground of the trouble, and that which hath given the soul such a deadly wound. There are two things that trouble the conscience, the guilt and power of sin ; and we must be eased of both, or else the plaster will not be as broad as the sore. A man that hath his leg broken, to be eased only of his smart will not suffice him, he must have it set right again : 1 John i. 9, ' If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Now repentance worketh on both parts of the sin, the removal of the guilt, and also the filthiness and inherent corruption ; it maketh way for the pardon of sin and the removal of the guilt of it, as I said before ; and the whole tenor of the gospel sheweth it, as Melancthon rightly defineth it against Islebus first, and Flaccius and his followers. The gospel is nothing else but a doctrine of repentance and remission of sin : these are two great points. Look upon Christ as a lawgiver : Luke xii. 47, ' The servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.' Or as a saviour and fountain of grace : Acts v. 31, ' Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.' He requireth and giveth repentance in order to the remission of sins. Secondly, For the other part, the power of sin ; it mainly serveth for that, and is required for that. We use salt and bitter potions to kill the worms. The lusts that haunt our souls are best mortified by the bitterness and sorrows of repentance, otherwise it is sweet and dear to the soul, and we are apt to roll it under our tongue. This rending of hearts spoileth the taste of sin : Gal. v. 24, ' They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' Sorrow assaulteth sin in its



strength, which is love of pleasure, for all sin is founded in flesh-pleasing delights; it is lust draweth him away by some pleasurable lure or bait; the flesh is all for sensitive pleasure, and the proper cure for it is godly sorrow.

*Use 1.* If this be God's instituted course to ease troubled consciences, then they are physicians of no value for poor wounded souls that would direct you to another course; either, first, pleasures, and sports, and plays, and play-books, and other merry books and company, and carnal diversions to get off heart-qualms. Some such mountebanks in religion there be in the world, that seek to divert men's grief rather than to put it away; this is like a man in debt, that drinketh away the thoughts of it, but his misery is never the further off. Secondly, Others seek to cure trouble for sin with further sins; as men to ease themselves of the pains of a scald will hold the flesh to the fire again. This may stupify the conscience, but God hath means enough to awaken it. There is a worm that shall never die, and you will feel it one day. Others would have altogether lenitives, and cannot endure the sour doctrine of repentance, but would have men honied and oiled with grace; deery this as not suiting with their loose apprehensions of the gospel. John said, 'Repent,' Mat. iii. 2; Jesus Christ saith, 'Repent, and believe the gospel;' Mark i. 15; and Mark vi. 12, 'And the apostles went out and preached that men should repent.' There is a fleshly laziness and wantonness in men; they cannot endure to hear of the severe and grave exercises of religion; and when we go Christ's way to do them good, they are displeased. If we did come to you in our own name, and had a liberty of giving indulgence to one another, we might huddle up the matter; nay, if we were left to our reason and discretion, we need not stand so exactly upon godly sorrow and serious self-loathing; but God hath prescribed this course. Now why should we stick at it? You should thankfully acknowledge the privilege; be glad that repentance is granted, rather than grumble because it is required that we have leave to repent; not mutter because of this command to repent. It was counted a favour heretofore: Acts xi. 18, 'Then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life.' The law doth not say, 'I will not the death of a sinner, but that he repent and live;' but, 'Do this and live, sin and die.' The law doth not say, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden;' but, 'Depart, ye cursed.' It calleth for exact obedience, or threateneth eternal ruin. It is a grace granted to man above angels. God did not propound terms of repentance to them, whereby they should recover their lost estate, when they sinned; they were left to their own obstinacy. A truly burdened soul is glad of this order and method; the guilt of sin is not only his trouble, but the power of it: they like no terms like God's terms. Fulgentius saith, It is vile unthankfulness to prefer softness and carnal ease above the comfort of godly exercises. If repentance seem a burden, the fruits of sin in the end will be much greater: if this part of religion seem distasteful, the comfort of being well settled and established upon sound terms will be much greater than all the trouble it puts us to.

*Use 2.* Is to persuade you to this work upon the necessity of this course. It is not only necessary *necessitate præcepti*, but *medii*. It is

an irksome duty, but necessary. Till ye are brought to repentance, ye never had, nor can have, pardon of sins, and so no true peace of conscience. Some things have only the necessity of a duty, we sin if we do it not; but this hath the necessity of a remedy, we perish if we omit it. It is not only a duty but a remedy. When a father shall command a sick child to use such a remedy to save his life, he is not only guilty of disobedience if he refuse it, but destroyeth his own life by refusing a remedy necessary to preserve it. This is absolutely necessary. If you disobey God in other things, yet you should not in the command of repentance: those that need none, and care for none, Christ will have nothing to do with them: Mat. ix. 13, 'For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' Would you hope for mercy in another way than God and Christ are agreed on? But because exhortations lose their force unless they be particularly directed, I must speak to two sorts.

1. Some that never yet repented nor turned to the Lord. Oh, consider, without repentance no pardon, and without pardon no salvation; he that remaineth in his sins shall die in his sins. You may have experience of God's patience and common goodness, but never of his special mercy. A dog when he dieth will be in a better case than you: a dog when he dieth, his misery dieth with him; but the misery of an impenitent sinner then beginneth. You are condemned already, what hindereth execution? only God tarrieth, 'is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,' 2 Peter iii. 9. He is willing to take a little more pains with you, to give you a little further time; but do you know how long he will bear? Have you any certain lease of enjoying the world and the comforts you now have? After a few more refusals of his renewed offers, and slighting of his mercies and patience, who can tell but God may take the denial, and fret the slender thread of life asunder? Who knoweth but the next day he will say, 'Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?' Therefore it is time to set about self-loathing and grieving for your sins, and dedicating yourselves seriously to God's use and service.

2. To those that have repented already, to renew their repentance. This is a work that must always be doing, if you would maintain quiet and peace in your souls. As long as there is sin in your hearts, you ought to groan under it: Rom. vii. 24, 'Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!' And as often as sin is committed, so often must repentance be renewed: sin and trouble are inseparable. Conscience would be no conscience if it were otherwise. Therefore I would press you—

[1.] To use this way constantly of fetching out grace. As your salvation is carried on from faith to faith, Rom. i. 17, so from repentance to repentance. By repeated acts of the first graces our privileges are continued to us. Faith is never out of season, nor repentance; it is as necessary afterwards as it was at first, whenever you sin against God. Those that have a Father in heaven must still come to him for forgiveness, Mat. vi. 13. It is a renewed act, for the continuance, sense, and the increase of the sense and feeling of pardon. If you are prejudiced against such a course, you have no reason to think your



sins are pardoned. The christian religion revealeth no other way of comfort and sound peace ; and that assurance is justly liable to suspicion which can be maintained without repentance.

But you will say, Sinners are pardoned already ; justification is one indivisible act of grace, pardoning all sins past, present, and to come.

I answer—Though there be a justification of the person, yet there is a reiterated remission. There is a great deal of difference between the merit of pardon, justification of the person, and the actual remission of sin : the merit is but once, Christ never needeth to suffer more ; the justification of the person is obtained upon our actual interest in Christ ; then there is a release from the eternal punishment and wrath due to us because of sin. A believer can no more come under the power of the second death : this sentence is never reversed.

But now, pardon of sin is another thing : Acts xiii. 38, 39, ‘ Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.’ The sinner is justified, but not the sin ; these are distinct things. Justification noteth the state of the person, that is once upon our implantation into Christ ; but upon every peccant act we need a new pardon, that is repeated as sins are committed. Before it is committed it is not remitted, for it is not sin. It is pardoned in that notion in which it is sin ; virtually pardoned, but not formally. Justification is the grant of a privilege, that we have interest in remission of sin.

Well, then, let me press you to—(1.) A daily repentance for daily sins ; (2.) A solemn repentance on the occasion of special duties.

(1.) To a daily repentance for daily sins. As we pray for daily bread, so for daily pardon ; we need one as much as the other. We daily heap up new sins, and we must daily sue out our pardon. This was the method God took with Adam when he was fallen : God came to him in the cool of the day, Gen. iii. 8. God would not let them sleep in their sins, that he might bring them suddenly to recall themselves, and consider what they had done, that they might long rest quiet in their sins. Under the law, if a man were unclean, yet when the evening came he was to wash his clothes, Lev. xi. 25 ; so we read of the evening sacrifice : Num. xxviii. 3, 4, ‘ This is the offering made by fire, which ye shall offer unto the Lord ; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt-offering : the one lamb shall be offered in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even ;’ Eph. iv. 26, ‘ Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.’ If poison is taken, a man would get rid of it as soon as he could. While our faults are in mind, repentance is more kindly ; as fresh wounds are best cured at first, before they fester and rankle into a sore. Sin gets less ground, and we shall have rest the sooner ; and it is good to divide our work by parts, to come to an account, and make all even between God and us every day, as merchants sum up their accounts at the foot of every page ; we shall have the less to do when we come to die.

(2.) To a solemn repentance on the occasion of special duties. At the Lord’s table we come to renew our sense of the remission of sins ; for the cup of the new testament is given for that end : Mat. xxvi. 28, ‘ For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for

<sup>1</sup> Qu. ‘ might not’ ?—Ed.

many, for the remission of sins.' We use this duty for the obtaining of this benefit, either to get a confirmation or new extract when our discharge hath been darkened by former failings. Now as we would renew the sense of pardon, so we must renew the exercise of repentance. There are two duties required of us in order to that work—(1.) Examination; (2.) Meditation on Christ's death.

First, examination, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.' Look into thy bill; what owest thou? When we come to counting and reckoning with ourselves, how many defects and failings may we discover! If that work be done seriously, we must needs come humbly and penitently. Well, then, in this serious work consider—

1. The exact purity of the law; it condemneth the secret motions of our souls, thoughts, lusts, imperfect desires: 'The law is spiritual, but I am carnal,' Rom. vii. 14. 'What shall we do?' There are few that can stand before the letter of the law, but who can stand before the spiritual meaning of it? You do not set up other gods; ay, but your hearts are estranged by the secret idols of your hearts from the true God: Ezek. xiv. 3, 5, 'These men have set up their idols in their hearts, because they are estranged from me through their idols;' as the Jews preferred Barabbas before Christ. Practical atheism is worse than speculative. You may reason a man out of one, but not out of the other; that is cured by grace. You abhor idols and images, but do your hearts submit to all the ordinances of Christ, to use them to the ends appointed? You cannot endure vain or rash swearing, but doth thy life praise God? Is there that reverence and seriousness in all matters of God? You hate Sabbath profanations, but do you call it your delight? You honour parents, but do you carry yourselves well in all your relations, and live as in the fear of God, and make conscience of the duties which belong to them? You are no murderers, but make no conscience of rash anger; no adulterers, but yet have wanton glances and unclean motions, Mat. v. 28. No thief, but have no charity; do not take away that which is another's, but do not give your own; no liar, but a slanderer, whisperer, backbiter; thy life is a lie, when thou wouldst seem better than thou art; suppress the first motions; but, 'Who can say his heart is clean, I am pure from my sin?' Prov. xx. 9.

2. The holiness of God, we have not sense enough of that: Job iv. 18, 'His angels he chargeth with folly;' 1 Sam. vi. 20, 'Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?' I would excite christians to have a sense of this above all things.

3. Our proneness to sin: Ps. xl. 12, 'For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me.'

4. The strictness of the last day's account. A long process: 1 Cor. iv. 5, 'Who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart.' Not only the state of the person, but all our actions. Conscience will be extended to the recollecting of all our ways; a general bill will not serve the turn: else how will the wicked be ashamed, and the righteous applauded? Idle words will come into account at that day, Mat. xii. 36.



Second, Meditation of Christ's death. He that maketh light of sin is guilty of the contempt of Christ's blood, that either despiseth the causes or effects of it: Heb. x. 29, 'Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?' It was not shed for a light cause, nor to produce mean effects: it sheweth the heinousness of sin as well as the worth of God's image and favour: Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.' Faith is required to promote repentance.

(3.) After heinous sins we are especially to humble ourselves before God: this is the ready way to obtain pardon: Ps. xxxii. 5, 'I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquities have I not hid: I said, I will acknowledge my transgression unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin;' 1 Kings xx. 32, 'And they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee let me live.' Better come in voluntarily, than be drawn in by force. Heinous sins are wont to rattle all our confidences, therefore after such failings we are more seriously to renew our repentance, and to humble our souls in the sight of God.

## SERMON V.

*Repent, and be baptized in the name of Christ.*—Acts ii. 38.

DOCT. That we obtain remission of sins by believing in the name of Christ.

By 'the name of Christ' is meant Christ himself, as revealed and set forth in the gospel; the doctrine of his person and office: Acts iv. 12, 'Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved;' that is, Christ is the only person by whom we shall be saved; and Christ, as revealed in the gospel; for that is the name by which he maketh himself known to us. Now this must be received and applied by faith; so Peter explaineth it elsewhere: Acts iii. 16, 'And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong.' The name of Christ is Christ himself, and he puts forth his power upon believing.

I shall, for the opening of this point—(1.) Show what Christ doth or hath done for the pardon of sins; (2.) That no other but Christ can procure this benefit for us; (3.) The necessity of faith, that we may apply it to ourselves.

I. What Christ doth or hath done in order to the pardon of sins.

This benefit is chiefly the fruit of his priestly office. Now in his priestly office there are two parts—his oblation and intercession. They are spoken of in many places, but both together you have in one place : 1 John ii. 1, 2, ‘My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not; and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.’ Our propitiation and our advocate. Let me insist upon these two notions—

1. He is our propitiation. Christ is not only *ἱλαστής*, our propitiator, but *ἱλασμός*, our propitiation; that is, *vicțima*, *ἱλαστική*, the propitiatory sacrifice that was offered to God to appease his wrath for our sins. He is both the priest and the sacrifice, the propitiator and propitiation. This last is what we now pitch upon; and the apostle telleth us, 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 sins.’ The justice of God; and the truth of his commination in the former dispensation, permitted not so great a benefit to be bestowed without a satisfaction; and this Christ hath made: so that God may be just, though he forgive sin. There can be no propitiation for sin without the expiation of it. The expiation of sin is by suffering the punishment due to it, which Christ hath done for us by his death, and so made way for our pardon and discharge.

2. He is our advocate, ‘We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’ There are several terms by which Christ’s pleading his merit for us, and going between us and God, are set forth, and they have all their proper use. We shall compare them with this term of an advocate. The general word is ‘mediator.’ Christ is a mediator both in respect of his person and office, but an advocate only in respect of his office. A mediator, as a middle person indifferently disposed between two parties, that hath a mutual interest in both parties: Job ix. 33, ‘Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.’ One that mindeth the concernments of both, and could value the honour of God and the sins and misery of man. A mediator in respect of all his offices, but an advocate in respect of his priestly office. A mediator, as he doth deal with God for man, and with man for God, pacifying God towards man, and bringing man to God; but an advocate as interceding with God and pleading our cause in heaven: ‘We have an advocate with the Father.’ Another word is ‘intercessor.’ Intercession doth more of itself look like a friendly entreaty; as Jonathan interceded for David: 1 Sam. xix. 4, ‘And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because his works have been to thee-wards very good.’ And Joab for Absalom’s return, after he had suborned the woman of Tekoah: 2 Sam. xiv. 22, ‘And Joab said, To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.’ But advocate is *verbum forense*, a judicial word; it noteth Christ’s undertaking the cause of a believer in a legal and judicial way; not to solicit our pardon, but plead it, and make it out in a judicial way. Once more, Christ is not *patronus*, a word used in the civil law, but *advocatus*. A patron or defender is one that undertaketh to justify



the fact, but an intercessor or advocate is one that pleadeth to prevent the punishment, that doth not defend the fault, but intercedeth for the remission of the offence.

Now in what manner this intercession is managed, and how Christ acts the part of an advocate for us, needeth a little to be cleared.

It will not be enough to say that his merit and sufferings do continue to deserve such things for us, as if his pleading were only the virtue of his merit, which figuratively may be said to plead good for his people. So the apostle telleth us, 'The blood of sprinkling doth yet speak,' Heb. xii. 24. As the blood of Abel against Cain, so his blood for us. To grant no more than this would quite overturn the great act of Christ's intercession. And yet, on the other side, it cannot be thought that he intercedeth with such gestures and verbal expressions as men use with men, or as he himself did in the days of his flesh, when he offered up prayers with strong cries and tears, Heb. v. 7, which did become the state of his humiliation, but not his glorification. These are the two extremes.

Let us now see what it is.

[1.] This intercession of his may be conceived to consist in his appearing in heaven in our name, whereby the Son of God, being now man, presenteth himself as ready to answer for such and such sinners. His very being there in our nature speaketh his purpose in reference to this end, and God accepteth of it according to appointment: Heb. ix. 24, 'For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' He presenteth himself as one that hath made satisfaction for our offences, hath performed his sacrifice without the camp, and bringeth blood before the mercy-seat.

[2.] It may be supposed also to include a declared willingness and desire in our behalf to have such requests granted, such sinners pardoned. This was a part of his intercession: 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.' 'Father, I will.' He declareth this to be his will; it was his interceding to have it accomplished. The like may be conceived in heaven. Thus far Aquinas explaineth it: *Interpellat autem pro nobis, primo, humanitatem, quam pro nobis assumpsit, representando; item animæ suæ sanctissimæ desiderium, quod de salute nostra habuit, exprimendo*—he intercedes for us by presenting his human nature, which he took for us; and also by expressing the desire of his most holy soul for our salvation.

But is there not more? Certain it is that a proper and formal prayer is not contrary to the human nature of Christ in that glorious estate in which it now is, neither as hypostatically united to the Godhead, nor as glorified. Not the first, for that he had *in via*, in which he made prayers and strong cries, Heb. v. 7. Not the second; still it is a creature, inferior to God, therefore capable of prayer. Indeed, when he was in the form of a servant, there was more subjection than now in heaven; but still he prayeth. Therefore—

[3.] There is a holy, reverent, though inconceivable adoration of the sovereign majesty of God, whereby the Mediator, now at the Father's right hand, doth in all his appearing for us, as being the head of the

body, adore the sovereignty, goodness, and wisdom of God with respect to the covenant of redemption, and sue out the benefits due to him thereby, namely, the pardon of our sins, and our comfort and peace: 'Ask of me,' Ps. ii. 8. By virtue of his paid ransom he may call for those blessings that are necessary for those that come to God by him. His saying to his disciples oftener than once, 'I will pray the Father for you,' John xiv. 16, 'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;' this doth imply some address to God, even in respect to peculiar persons and particular cases. It is a suing out of his merit in their behalf. I would add one thing more.

[4.] He presents our prayers and supplications which we make in the behalf of ourselves to God, after he hath set us a-work by his Spirit: Rev. viii. 3, 'And there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne;' Heb. viii. 1, 2, 'We have such an high priest, who is seated on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary.' He presents our prayers to his Father, perfumed with his merit. By his Spirit we are furnished with sighs and groans.

II. No other but Christ can procure this benefit for us.

1. Because none else was appointed: Acts iv. 12, 'Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.' Authorised by the Father: Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.' This is necessary, because the supreme authority resideth with God, who must and will choose in what way he will be satisfied and reconciled to sinners. Moses, that interposed of his own accord to be a mediator, was refused: Exod. xxxii. 32, 33, 'Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.' Christ is authorised to do you good: John viii. 42, 'Neither came I of myself, but he sent me.' Christ had a commission from his Father.

2. Because it needed to appear to us upon good evidence that he is the party whom God sets forth to save sinners. This is *opus liberi consilii*, an act of God's free grace; and therefore it cannot be determined by natural reason, but we must stand to the way revealed by God. The light of nature may show that man is fallen, but the light of nature cannot show the way of restoration. Heathens could not dream of it. The angels only knew it by the church: Eph. iii. 10, 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' Those natural apostles, the sun and moon, are gone up and down the world to preach a God, an infinite and an eternal power; their sound is gone out into all lands; and conscience joining with this discovery will easily tell us that this God hath not been glorified as God; therefore we are obnoxious to him.

3. This appointment needed to be evidenced to the world by some notable discovery, that the world may be satisfied that this revelation



is from God: John vi. 27, 'For him hath the Father sealed.' Christ hath a commission and letters patent sealed with the broad seal of heaven. As every ambassador hath letters of credence under the hand and seal of that prince from whom he is sent, so Christ working miracles, and giving other demonstrations of the divinity of his person, hath manifested his commission, that he is the person authorised to do us good: Acts x. 38, 'How God hath 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;' ver. 43, 'To him gave all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him should receive remission of sins.' He is the person. If you saw none of his miracles, the whole church in all ages and places will come as a witness and deposit for it, and we have the scriptures of the old testament, and many evident principles of natural light, that have a fair correspondence with this mystery. Well, then, God, the supreme judge, hath taken up the controversy between him and us, and appointed Jesus Christ to be the person. His institution is instead of all reasons.

Again, none else is able to satisfy God and pacify conscience.

[1.] Not to satisfy God. Sin being committed against an infinite majesty, the suffering by which he is expiated must be of an infinite value; and therefore it is impossible that any or all the angels, though holy and just, should propitiate God for our sins. As angels, they were not capable of punishment; and though they should have assumed human nature, yet being but finite creatures, the worth of their sufferings would not be infinite. Therefore Christ himself, being God and man, was capable to suffer, and give a value to his sufferings; and therefore we are said to be redeemed by the blood of God, Acts xx. 28, that is, by the blood of that person that was God. God would lose no glory by the fall; therefore, whoever was the redeemer, he was to restore what Adam lost: Ps. lxxix. 4, 'I restored that which I took not away.' Adam was the robber, but Christ was to make amends. By the fall God's authority was violated, his honour despised. His authority was violated in the creature's transgression; his command was just, our obedience reasonable. Now it was meet that God should keep up the authority of his law. His majesty despised in the threatenings; his holiness, as if he did not hate sin; his justice and truth, as if he would not punish it; his power, it was an act of presumption, and a contest with God. Now in all these respects it was necessary God should vindicate his glory, and be no loser, which is fully done by Christ.

[2.] Not pacify conscience. Conscience is not pacified till God be satisfied. God is infinitely merciful, but infinitely just. We cannot expect any more pity from his mercy than fear from his justice; yea, guilty nature is more presagious of evil than of good, as appeareth when we are sensible and serious. Every conscience must have content and satisfaction; therefore till we can have such a righteousness as will take off the guilt of former sins, and make us bold to stand before God, which only we can have in Christ, guilty nature can never be quiet, nor till God be pacified. Conscience is God's deputy; till he be satisfied, the creatures are at a loss. The great inquiry of nature

is, 'Wherewith will he be pleased?' Micah vi. 6, 7, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, and the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' Barbarous cruelties and costly offerings. Again, lost nature knoweth something of a sacrifice, and something of price and value. Now judge you whether God be satisfied or no. First, *A priori*. He hath the sacrifice of his own appointing: Heb. ix. 13, 14, 'For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God?' The sacrifices of the law could do that for which they were appointed, which was typical expiation and external sanctification; they did qualify for worship-work, so far as appointed. And the same apostle saith, Heb. ix. 9, 'Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as appertaining to the conscience.' There was no real worth in themselves. The conscience could not have found any ground of satisfaction how God's justice could be satisfied by such mean things as the blood of bulls and goats. There must be something penal, something of value. But in this sacrifice, besides God's institution, there is a real intrinsic worth, which is the dignity of the person and the innocency of the person; but he could not offer it for himself, therefore it must be intended for some other. Secondly, *A posteriori*. Consider how God hath accepted Christ. Christ is risen, our surety let out of prison. The Lord sent an angel to remove the stone, not to supply any lack of power in Christ, but as a judge, when the law is satisfied, sends an officer to open the prison doors. As the apostles, Acts xvi. 38, 39, 'And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates; and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans; and they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.' 'The God of peace brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ,' Heb. xiii. 20. Though Christ had power to rise, yet not authority till the angel rolled away the stone: he did not break prison, but was brought out; then he arose. If our surety had perished in prison, we could have no assurance; and if he had continued under death, the world could have no discharge. But he rose again for our justification, Rom. iv. 25. And not only so; Christ is not only taken out of prison, but carried up to God in glory and honour: received into heaven, 1 Tim. iii. 16; not ἀνέβη, ascended, but ἀνελήφθη, received. God hath rewarded him; therefore Christ hath perfectly done his work. God hath not only taken him out of the grave, but taken him up to glory. Certainly God is well pleased, since he hath not only given him a discharge, but a reward. He did undertake to carry it through; as Reuben said, Gen. xliii. 9, 'I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, let me bear the blame for ever.'



[3.] None so willing to relieve a poor afflicted creature as Christ: Heb. ii. 17, 'Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and a faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.' He was once at liberty, but when he had undertaken he was bound. He was merciful to undertake, and faithful to accomplish it. He was God, equal in glory with the Father; yet merciful to us, and faithful to God: merciful in dying, faithful in interceding, and mindful of us at every turn; and so every way qualified to do our souls good.

III. The necessity of faith, that it may be applied to us.

1. There must be an application. Many think there is a Jesus Christ, we need take no further care, he did die for sinners, and therefore we shall do well enough. No; there must be some way how we may come to receive benefit; besides the meritorious cause, there must be an effectual application, for we read of blood shed and blood sprinkled, of making the atonement and receiving the atonement, Rom. v. 11. It is for Christ's sake, for his merit and worthiness, that we are accepted. But then there is a way appointed how we shall be accepted; therefore let us not presume of a propitiation without application. The cup of salvation yieldeth no benefit to us except we drink of it. Therefore since such a great part of the world miscarry, let us see that we do not defraud ourselves of so great a benefit.

2. That God must state the way of application as well as the way of redemption. There is the same reason for the one as for the other; that God should propose the terms upon which Christ should be made ours; for all is a work of his free grace and counsel. Well, then, we must be careful to find out God's appointment, and the way of salvation which he hath declared: Rom. iii. 25, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.' Not, 'through his blood;' but 'through faith in his blood.'

3. God hath declared this way to be faith: Acts x. 43, 'That through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.' First, The scripture is very express in limiting the promises of pardon to believers: John iii. 16, 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Secondly, In declaring all those to be under the curse that believe not: John iii. 36, '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.' Thirdly, In placing faith, correlatively taken, in the room which works had in the first covenant. Thence so often have we these sayings, 'It is of faith, not of works,' which we meet with everywhere; so that there needeth no more ado. Faith is then required, not in the popish sense, as if faith were the beginning of that righteousness for which sins are forgiven; neither is faith that which God accepteth instead of righteousness, but the means to receive it as our legal qualification.

4. This faith must be of a right constitution; namely, such a believing in Christ as receiveth him to all the ends and purposes that God hath appointed him; that he may be Lord and Christ, Prince and Saviour: John i. 12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he

power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name ;' James ii. 14, 'What doth it profit, my brethren, though he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?' Christ must be received so as he may dwell and rule in our hearts, and quicken us in the way of holiness to everlasting glory. When a sinner doth thus take Christ to himself, and give up himself to Christ, the work is ended : Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.' This is the faith that is required on our part, as on God's part there is required the intervention of Christ's merits ; this is the faith that every one should strive to get, and see if we have it, yea or no.

*Use 1.* To show us what course to take for peace and pardon. When we lie under a sense of guilt and anguish for sin, plead Christ's satisfaction to God's justice. O Lord Jesus Christ, thou didst take these my sinful debts upon thyself, and undertake to satisfy for them ; and I know that he hath made a full satisfaction ; I renounce all other hope of pardon and rest for my soul but upon his precious blood. If he be not able to save, I am content to perish : 'But he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.' When you do this in a penitent broken-hearted manner, God will not refuse. As Adonijah took hold of the horns of the altar, 1 Kings i. 51, and said, 'If I perish, here will I perish ;' so are we to plead that satisfaction before the tribunal of God. We are allowed to ask blessings in his name, and use his merit in pleading with God : John xvi. 23, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' When you have a feeling of all your wants, and seriously need the pardon of sins, you will get a good answer. This is to use Christ as our propitiation : Heb. x. 14, 'For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' There needeth no more to be done by way of expiation.

2. When you are confessing your sins, depend upon him as your advocate, as one that died for your sins, and is ready to appear before God, to plead for you, and put all your debts upon his score. Let us be sure to arraign and accuse ourselves : we must confess our sins, 1 John i. 9, and then Christ will plead for the pardon of them. If we think to be our own advocates, and do deny, extenuate, or excuse sin, it will never succeed well with us ; but if Christ be our advocate, how can we miscarry ? There will not want accusers to lay sin to our charge : 'But we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'

It is not a servant or a friend, but the dearly beloved of his soul that pleadeth for us, one that pleadeth not by way of entreaty, but merit : he is Jesus Christ the righteous. Now 'the prayer of a righteous man availeth much,' James v. 16, but much more the prayer of a righteous Saviour ; he that hath fully suffered for thy sins, that can bring blood to the mercy-seat, he prayeth for no more than he hath paid for. Oh, who shall condemn ? Rom. viii. 33, 34, 'Who shall lay anything 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, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh



intercession for us.' Here is comfort enough, if we were in a condition to beg it, nay, if we were in a condition to need it; for this comfort is for poor burdened souls.

The next clause in this verse is remission of sins; but this being handled in the first and second sermons of the twenty that were printed in quarto, and in the Lord's Prayer, and on 1 John ii. 11 in this volume, it is omitted here.

## SERMON VI.

*Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.*—Acts ii. 38.

IN Peter's answer we have two things—(1.) His advice; (2.) The encouragement.

In his advice we have two things—(1.) Repent every one of you; (2.) 'Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.'

The second part of the advice I shall now insist upon: 'Be baptized every one of you.' And here I shall speak to three questions.

*Quest. 1.* Why is baptism mentioned rather than faith, and other things more internal and necessary to salvation?

*Ans. 1.* Faith is implied: Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' For baptism is an open and real profession of faith in Christ crucified; so that it must be explained thus: Be baptized, believing on the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins. Surely he would not have them dissemble, and seek remission of sins without faith in Christ, by the bare submission to the outward rite of baptism.

2. Baptism is mentioned, because it was the visible rite of receiving proselytes to Christ. Now it imported them who were convinced as persecutors to turn professors, if they would have ease for their consciences; and not only to believe with the heart, but to make their profession manifest and open by submitting to this way: Rom. x. 10, 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.'

*Quest. 2.* Why in the name of Christ only? The Father and the Holy Ghost are not mentioned, according to the precept, Mat. xxviii. 19, 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

*Ans.* He speaketh not of the form of baptism, but the use and end thereof. Now the great use of baptism is, that we may have benefit by the mystery of redemption by Christ; therefore we are said to be baptized into Christ, Rom. vi. 3, and Gal. iii. 27, 'For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.' He is the head of the church, and by baptism we are planted into the mystical body.

<sup>1</sup> All contained in prior volumes of this Edition.—Ed.

*Quest.* 3. Doth not this put too great an honour and necessity upon baptism to entitle remission of sins to this act, as if every one that were baptized had his sins forgiven him?

*Ans.* When we submit to the gospel covenant, we believe that God for Christ's sake will forgive us our sins: in testimony of this faith we receive baptism, which, supposing that we do not *ponere obicem*, lay any block in the way, that we repent and believe the gospel, doth seal and deliver a pardon to us; it doth seal, that is, confirm us in the expectation of it, and deliver it to us. It is our legal investiture; it is the rite by which we are first solemnly put in possession of it. Supposing that we have a promise before, as all that repent and believe have, it doth seal and deliver. But because most are baptized in infancy, it doth excite and oblige us to take the way whereby we may obtain pardon according to the new covenant; doing what is necessary, it assures and confirms us that he will be as good as his word.

*Doct.* That baptism hath an especial use and respect unto this benefit of obtaining remission of sins in the name of Christ.

To evidence this unto you, I must take it for granted for the present that baptism belongeth to the gospel or the new covenant; or, if you will have it confirmed, that place doth it fully which was mentioned before: Mark xvi. 16, 'Go, preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Whence it followeth clearly and undeniably that baptism belongeth to the gospel or new covenant. Supposing this, let me take my rise a little higher.

1. That God hath ever delighted to deal with his creatures in the way of a covenant, that we might know what to expect from him, and we might look upon ourselves under the firmer bonds of obedience to his blessed majesty; for in a covenant, which is the most solemn transaction between man and man, both parties are engaged; God to us, and we to God. It is not meet that one party should be bound and the other be free; therefore both are bound to each other, God to bless, and we to obey. Indeed, in the first covenant the *debitum pœnæ*, the debt of punishment, is only mentioned, because that only took place: Gen. ii. 17, 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' But the other part is implied, Do and live, sin and die.

2. Because the first covenant was broken on our part, God was pleased to enter into a second, wherein he would manifest the glory of his redeeming grace and pardoning mercy to fallen man. This was brought about in Christ: 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.' And therefore this second covenant was called a covenant of peace, as being made with us after the breach, or with man obnoxious to the wrath of God: Isa. liv. 10, 'The covenant of my peace shall not be removed, saith the Lord.' Man needeth such a covenant, and Christ offereth it to us.

3. In this covenant of peace, both the privileges and duties are suited to the state in which man was when God invited him into covenant with himself. Man was fallen from his duty, and obnoxious to the wrath and displeasure of God, and therefore the new covenant is a doctrine of repentance and remission of sins. What is 'preach



the gospel to every creature,' in Mark xvi. 15, is in Luke xxiv. 47, 'That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.' That is the gospel, or the new remedial law of our Lord Jesus; repentance to heal us and set us in joint again as to our duty, and remission of sins to recover us into God's favour; and both these benefits we have by the Redeemer: Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.' He giveth the one simply, and both gives and requires the other; so that by the new covenant remission of sins is conveyed to all true penitents.

4. The more distinctly to understand the nature of this covenant, we must consider both the duties and privileges thereof; for in every covenant there is *ratio dati et accepti*, there is something promised and given, and something required; and usually the promise consisteth of somewhat which the party is willing of, and the duty or condition required is that to which he is more backward, and loath to submit unto. So in the covenant of grace; in the promise God respecteth man's want; in the duty, his own honour. Every man would have pardon, and be saved from hell, but God will have subjection: every corrupt nature is not against desires of happiness; these God maketh use of to gain us to holiness. All men naturally greedily catch at felicity, and would have impunity, peace, comfort, glory, but are unwilling to deny the flesh, and are unwilling to renounce the credit, profit, or pleasure of sin, or to grow dead to the world and worldly things. Now God promiseth what we desire on condition that we will submit to those things we are against. As we sweeten bitter pills to children that they may the better swallow them; they love the sugar, though they loathe the aloes; so doth God invite us to our duty by our interest. Therefore whoever would enter into the gospel state must resolve to take the blessings and benefits offered for his happiness, and the duties required for his work. Indeed, accepting the benefits is a part of the condition, because we treat with an invisible God about a happiness that lieth in another world; but it is but part, for there are terms: Heb. x. 22, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.'

5. The privileges are two—pardon and life. These are the great blessings offered in the new covenant; you have both together, Acts xxvi. 18, 'To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.' These two benefits are most necessary, the one to allay the fears of the guilty creature, the other to gratify desires of happiness, which are natural to us; the one to remedy the misery incurred by the sin and fall of man, the other to establish our true and proper felicity in the everlasting enjoyment of God; the one to ease our consciences, and to support us against troubles of mind, the other to comfort us against all the outward troubles and afflictions which sin hath introduced into this world. In short, the one to free us from deserved punishment, the other to assure us of undeserved blessings; for one importeth deliverance from eternal death, the other entrance into everlasting life.

6. The duties thereof do either concern our first entrance into the christian state, or our progress therein. Our Lord representeth it under the notions of the 'gate' and 'way;' Mat. vii. 14, 'Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.' Other scriptures deliver it under the notions of making covenant and keeping covenant with God. Making covenant: Ps. l. 5, 'Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.' Keeping covenant: Ps. xxv. 10, 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep his covenant;' Ps. ciii. 18, 'To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.' The covenant must not only be made, but kept.

[1.] As to entering into covenant with God, there is required true repentance and faith: Mark i. 15, 'Repent ye, and believe the gospel.' Repentance respects God as our end, faith respects Christ as the way to the Father: Acts xx. 21, 'Repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.' God is our end: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'Christ also hath once suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' And Christ is our way: John xiv. 6, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.' And christianity is a coming to God by Christ, Heb. vii. 25. Now in our first entrance faith and repentance are both mixed, and it is hard to sever them, and to show what belongeth to the one and what to the other; at least it would perplex the discourse. Both together imply that a man be turned from a life of sin to God by faith in Christ, or a renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a devoting and dedicating ourselves to God as our God.

(1.) A renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh; for these are the three great enemies of God and our salvation. When God is laid aside, self interposeth as the next heir. That which we count self is the flesh: Eph. ii. 2, 3, 'Wherein in time past ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' There all your enemies appear abreast: the devil as the grand deceiver and principle of all wickedness; the world, with its pleasures, honours, and profits, as the bait by which the devil would deceive us, and steal away our hearts from God, and pervert and divert us, that we should not look after the one thing necessary; the flesh is the corrupt inclination in us, which entertaineth and closeth with these temptations, to the neglect of God and the wrong of our own souls. The flesh is importunate to be pleased, and is the proper internal cause of all our mischief: James i. 14, 'But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.' These must be renounced before you can return to God: Josh. xxiv. 23, 'Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, God of Israel.' We must be turned from Satan to God; we must be delivered from the present evil world; we must abstain from fleshly lusts; for God will have no copartners and competitors in our hearts.

(2.) A devoting, consecrating, and giving up ourselves to God,



Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as our God: 2 Cor. viii. 5, 'But first gave themselves to the Lord;' Rom. vi. 13, 'But yield yourselves unto God.' As our owner by creation: Ps. c. 3, 'The Lord is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.' As his by redemption: 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, 'And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' As your sovereign Lord: Jer. xxiv. 7, 'I will give them an heart to know me that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart;' Isa. xxvi. 13, 'O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us.' As the fountain of our life and blessedness: Ps. xxxi. 14, 'But I trusted in thee, O God; I said, Thou art my God;' Lam. iii. 24, 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore I will hope in him;' Ps. cxix. 5, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord; I have said, I will keep thy words.'

[2.] As to our progress, continuance, and perseverance; for this is not the work of a day, but of our whole lives. This is our walking in the narrow way, and evidenceth our sincerity in making covenant, and our pursuit sheweth it is a true consent. As to this progress and perseverance, three things are required—

(1.) As to the enemies of God and our souls, there must be a forsaking as well as a renouncing. The devil must be forsaken, we must be no more of his party and confederacy; we must resist, stand out against all his batteries and assaults: 1 Peter v. 8, 9, 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith.' The world must be overcome: 1 John v. 45, 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth Jesus is the Son of God?' The flesh must be subdued and crucified: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts;' that we be no more governed by the desires of it. If we be sometimes foiled, we must not go back again, but the drift of our lives must be for God and heaven.

(2.) As to God, to whom we have devoted ourselves, we must love, and please, and serve him all our days: Luke i. 75, 'In holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' We must make it our work to love him, and our happiness to be beloved of him, and carefully apply ourselves to seek his favour, and cherish a fresh sense of it upon our hearts, and continue with all patience in well-doing, Rom. ii. 7, till you come to the complete sight and love of him: 1 John iii. 2, 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

(3.) You must always live in the hope of the coming of Christ and everlasting glory: Titus ii. 13, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;' Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' As we die at first, thankfully accept of our recovery by Christ, and at first consent to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and resolve to follow God's counsel and direction, we must still persevere in

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'did at first thankfully' ?—Ed.

this mind, and use his appointed means in order to our final happiness. The sum then of our christianity is this, that we should by true repentance and faith forsake the flesh, world, and devil, and give up ourselves to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that he may take us as his reconciled children, and adopt us into his family, and for Christ's sake pardon all our sins, and by his Spirit give us grace to persevere in these resolutions, till our glory and final happiness come in hand.

7. This covenant, consisting of such duties and privileges, God hath confirmed by certain visible ordinances, commonly called sacraments. These are baptism and the Lord's supper; both which, but in a different manner, respect the whole tenor of the covenant; for as the covenant bindeth mutually on God's part and ours, so these duties have a mutual aspect or respect to what God doth and what we must do. On God's part they are a sign and seal; on our part they are a badge and a bond.

[1.] On God's part they are sealing signs. As circumcision is called a 'sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith,' Rom. iv. 11; that is, of the grace offered to us in Christ; so is baptism, which came in the room of circumcision: Col. ii. 11, 12, 'In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism.' Surely the gospel ordinances sign as much grace as the ordinances of the Jews or legal covenant; as circumcision was a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith, or a pledge of God's good-will in Christ, so is baptism, and so is the Lord's supper, to signify they are signs, and to confirm they are seals, to represent the grace, and confirm the grant of pardon and life by the use of these duties. As, for instance, baptism signifies pardon and life, so doth the Lord's supper: Mat. xxvi. 28, 29, 'For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins. I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.' That for our growth and nourishment, this for our initiation. Baptism is under our consideration at present. That this hath respect to remission of sins, the text is clear for it; and so are many other scriptures. It was Ananias' advice to Paul, Acts xxii. 16, 'Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' His sins were solemnly washed away by baptism: Eph. v. 26, 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water through the word.' This washing represents the washing away of the guilt and filth of sin. And it signifieth also our resurrection to a blessed and eternal life: 1 Peter iii. 21, 'Even baptism doth now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' Well, then, it is a sealing sign: 2 Kings xx. 8, 'What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me?' It is a witness between us and God: Gen. xxxi. 48, 'This heap is a witness between me and thee this day.' So baptism is a witness that God will pardon our sins, and upon pardon give us eternal blessedness.

[2.] On our part they are a badge and a bond to oblige us to the duties of the covenant; a badge of the profession, and a bond to engage us to the duties which that profession calleth for. It is a debt: Gal. v.



3, 'For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to the whole law.' He bindeth himself to the observances of Moses' law; so a christian to the law of Christ: Therefore the apostle saith, Rom. viii. 12, 'We are not debtors to the flesh.' And it is an answer towards God, 1 Peter iii. 21, or an undertaking faithfully to perform the conditions required of us. It is a vow or obligation taken upon ourselves: Rom. vi. 11, 'Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' It bindeth us chiefly to the duties that belong to our entrance; as the Lord's supper doth more directly to the duties which belong to our progress. It bindeth us to a true belief of the gospel, or an acceptance of Christ, and a consent to the covenant of grace; to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh; and therefore the baptismal covenant, by which we are initiated into the christian religion, is expressed by being 'baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' Mat. xxviii. 19, which implieth a dedication or giving up ourselves to them in their distinct personal relations. To the Father, that we may return to him and obey him as our rightful Lord, that we may love him and depend upon him as our all-sufficient happiness, and be happy in his love as his dear children, and may prefer his honour before all sensual pleasures in the world. We are baptized in the name of Christ, that we believe him and accept him as our Redeemer and Saviour, expecting to be saved by his merits, righteousness, and intercession, from the wrath of God, and the guilt of sin and eternal death. And we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost as our guide, sanctifier, and comforter, that he may free us from sin, and change us into the image and likeness of Christ, and lead us into all truth and goodness, and fit and frame us for all holiness and godliness of conversation, and comfort us with the sense of our present interest in God's love, and the hopes of future glory.

8. These visible confirming ordinances give us great advantages above the word and bare proposal of the covenant there, as these sealing signs are an expression of God's earnest and sincere respect to our salvation. God hath opened his mind in the word concerning his love and good-will to sinners in Christ, and he hath also added his seal, that the charter of his grace might be more valid and authentic.

[1.] It argueth the goodness and communicativeness of God to give notice in his word, but his solicitousness and anxious care of our good, to give us visible assurance, as sacraments do, as being willing over and above to satisfy the heirs of promise, Heb. vi. 17. When any one is more than ordinarily cautious to make all sure, it is a sign his heart is upon the thing. It is a great condescension that God would dispose his grace into a covenant form; but it is a further condescension that he would add seals, which needed not on God's part, yet he added them to give us the more strong consolation. *Nudum pactum*, a naked promise is not so valid and authentic as when articles of agreement are put into a formal instrument and deed of law, and that signed and sealed, and interchangeably delivered; this breedeth more confidence and security on both sides. God's word certifieth us of his good-will; but when he is pleased to make a formal indenture of it, and to sign it and seal it, it doth breed more assurance in our minds

that his promises are made with a real intent to perform them ; and it bindeth us the more firmly to God when, besides our naked promise, there is a kind of vow and oath on our part solemnly entered into by baptism.

[2.] There is this advantage in the sacraments above the word, that they are a closer application. The word speaketh to all promiscuously, as inviting ; the sacrament to every one in particular, as obliging. By the word none are excluded from the grace offered to them upon God's terms : ' Go, preach the gospel to every creature ;' but by the sacraments every one is expressly admonished of his duty. The object revealed in the word is like the brazen serpent, which without difference was exposed to the eyes of all, that whosoever looked upon it might be healed ; but the same object offered in the sacraments is like the blood sprinkled on the door-posts, that every man might be assured that his family would be in safety. Now the reason of this difference is because things propounded in the word are like a treaty between God and us. It is an offer and a debating of matters till the parties do agree ; but sacraments are not of use till both sides have agreed upon the conditions of the covenant, in adults at least. The word conduceth to the making of the covenant, the sacraments suppose it made ; therefore the word universally propoundeth that which in the seals is particularly applied. Now those things do not affect us so much which are spoken indifferently to all as those that are particularly applied to ourselves. These stir us up to a more accurate care and endeavour to fulfil the duty incumbent upon us. The conditions are propounded in the word, Repent and believe, and I will pardon and give eternal life ; but the sacraments suppose an actual consent, that thou hast done or undertaken to do it. And then God cometh and saith, Take this as an undoubted pledge that thou shalt have what I have promised, which doth more increase our hopes, and persuade us to our duty.

[3.] By these sealing signs we are solemnly invested into a right to the things promised, put in possession ; as when we are put in possession of a bargain by formalities of law ; so, ' This is my body.' It is our solemn investiture. A believer receiveth Christ in the word : John i. 12, ' To as many as received him.' And is he not received in the Lord's supper ? his right is solemnly owned and confirmed in the way which God hath appointed. As soon as a man consents to a bargain, he hath an interest in the thing bargained for ; but that right is made more explicit when it is delivered to him by some formality of law ; as an house by a key, or a field by a turf or twig, when put in possession of what he hath bargained for. Every penitent believing sinner hath a right to Christ and pardon, but his solemn enfeoffment is by the sacraments : ' Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Christ for the remission of sins ;' ' Arise and be baptized for the washing away of thy sins,' Acts xxii. 16. God gave Abraham the land of promise by word of mouth, Gen. xiii. ; but he biddeth him go through the land, and build an altar, and offer sacrifice there ; then he was actually invested. God gave Israel a grant of Canaan, but the clusters of Eshcol were as it were the livery and seisin of it. Though the gift be sufficiently made over by the promise, yet it is further rectified, and more solemnly conveyed and delivered, by the sacraments.



[4.] This is one advantage more, that the mysteries of godliness are laid before our eyes in some visible rites, and so have a greater force to excite the mind to serious consideration. When God will condescend to give us helps against our infirmities, it must needs be by the senses, by which all knowledge cometh into the soul. Now feeling, smelling, tasting, seemeth not so fit for this, as being more gross, and conducing to the welfare of the body; but sight and hearing convey objects to the understanding, and therefore are called the senses of discipline and learning. Now the covenant is made by words which strike the ear, but the seals by visible things before our eyes: Gal. iii. 1, 'Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you.'

Use 1. Is caution to us, that we be not slight in the use of baptism and the Lord's supper, for they imply a solemn covenanting with God, that we may obtain remission of sins and eternal life, if we accept the covenant for ourselves or others. For ourselves in the Lord's supper, for others in offering our children to baptism. We must come 'with a true heart, in full assurance of faith,' Heb. x. 22; with a true heart, purposing the duties; in full assurance of faith, depending upon the promises of Christ for the privileges thereof.

As to children, we must resolve to instruct them in the duties of the covenant, repentance, faith, and new obedience: Eph. vi. 4, 'And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' This is to make way for the blessing, and to remove the obstructions: Gen. xviii. 19, 'For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.'

As to the privileges, to admire the grace of them: Gen. xvii. 3, 'Abraham fell on his face when God talked with him;' and David, 2 Sam. vii. 19, 'And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come: and is this the manner of man, O Lord God?' Waiting for the accomplishment of them in God's way, as considering how loath God is to let go his covenant children: Acts iii. 25, 26, 'Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed: unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning every one of you from his iniquities.'

Use 2. Is to put us upon self-reflection. We are all baptized in the name of Christ, but what are we the better? have we the more confidence of pardon of our sins for his sake? Voluterranus reports of Lucian, that scoffing atheist, that when he revolted from the profession of christianity, he scoffed at his baptism, saying, *Se nihil ex eo consecutum, quam quod nomen ipsi esset corruptum, ex Lucio Lucianum factum*—That he got nothing by his baptism but a syllable to his name. What do the most get but a name? It should not be so with you; you should improve your baptism.

1. For the obtaining of this benefit by a more serious work of

faith and repentance, for the washing away of sin : 1 Cor. vi. 11, ' And such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'

2. For the further sense, continuance, and increase of it, even to the rejoicing of faith : Heb. vi. 18, ' That we may have strong consolation ;' Acts viii. 39, ' And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more ; and he went on his way rejoicing.' Hath God applied to me his covenant, taken me into his family, planted me into the mystical body of Christ ; and shall not we be glad, and rejoice in his salvation ?

3. For comfort in all our afflictions, perplexities, doubts, and fears. Luther telleth us that all his answer to the devil tempting him to despair was, *Ecce ego baptizatus sum, et credo in Christum*—I am baptized into the belief of the christian faith. We must expect to be tempted. The devil tempted Christ after his baptism to question his filiation : Mat. iv. 6, ' If thou be the Son of God,' &c. So in outward troubles, Dionysia comforted Majoricus her son, an African martyr, with this, *Memento fili, te in nomine Patris, &c.*—Remember, son, that thou wast baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. So in temptations to sin : Luther speaketh of a holy virgin, who, when tempted to sin, replied, *Baptizata sum*—I am baptized. A christian hath but this one answer, I am dedicated to God to obtain pardon and life.

Use 3. To condemn—

1. The careless, who never look after the remission of sins so solemnly sealed in baptism, and those saving graces which may evidence their title thereunto : 1 Peter i. 3, ' Blessed be God, who hath begotten us to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'

2. The profane, that live directly contrary to their baptismal engagement. To be worse than our words to men is bad enough ; but to forfeit our words to God, to list ourselves into his service, and then to turn deserters and fight against him, is grand apostasy. To be made christians by baptism, and then to live like heathens, is a sin which will be attended with a severe doom.

## SERMON VII.

*And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*—Acts ii. 38.

THIS chapter giveth an account of the pouring out of the Spirit, according to promise, presently after Christ's ascension. As soon as he was warm in the mediatorial throne, he was mindful of the church, and shed abroad his Spirit for the gathering and increasing thereof by the gospel. As soon as the Spirit was poured out, the apostles were enabled to speak in various languages, to the astonishment and wonder of the hearers.



This was for the glory of God, and the confirmation and authorising them as messengers. At the sight of this miracle, some wonder, others mock, as if this speaking with divers tongues had been a confused jabbering that proceeded from the fumes of wine rather than the operation of the Holy Ghost. To satisfy both, Peter declareth the effect and intent of the miracle, proving Jesus Christ, whom they had slain, to be Lord and Christ. When they heard this, many of the most obstinate among them were pricked in their hearts, and relented. A happy sermon it was that Peter preached; for it brought in thousands of souls to Christ; the first handsel of the power of the Spirit and success of the gospel. It is good to observe what course they took for ease and relief after this piercing and brokenness of heart: 'They said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?' This is the usual question of men under sound and pressing convictions. To their serious question Peter maketh a seasonable answer, of which the text is a part. It is the part of a good physician not only to discover the disease, but also to prescribe a remedy; especially should spiritual physicians be tender of broken-hearted sinners, willing and ready to give them counsel. In Peter's direction and counsel to them observe—

1. What he persuadeth them to do.

2. By what motive and argument. We have seen already what they must do. Now what they shall receive: 'And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' There are twofold gifts of the Spirit—common or saving. The common were either miraculous or ordinary. The miraculous and extraordinary were those gifts of tongues, and prophecy, and healing, which, in the primitive times, were poured out upon the church. The common are such gifts as are still vouchsafed.

Now the question is, which of those gifts are intended in the promise, the extraordinary gifts, which were so rife in those times, or the gifts of the Spirit, which are necessary to salvation.

I answer—I take the promise indefinitely, as it is propounded, and so exclude neither the one nor the other.

First, The extraordinary gifts are not wholly to be excluded, partly because these were the things which they now saw and admired in the apostles. Now saith Peter, Repent, and believe in Christ, and ye shall be made partakers of these gifts which ye so admire in us. And partly because the promise is to be interpreted by the effect. Those gifts were given to many upon their baptism: Acts iv. 30, 31, 'By stretching forth thine hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of the holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost;' Acts x. 44, 45, 'While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word; and they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.' And partly because these gifts are not to be slighted, because they conduced much to the propagating and confirming of the gospel: Heb. ii. 4, 'God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.' They were wonderfully confirmed by this means in the assurance of the truth of the gospel.

Secondly, Besides this *gratia gratis data*, these free gifts, there is *gratia gratum faciens*, saving graces; these are principally intended; for—

1. Miraculous gifts would have been small comfort to them that were pricked in heart, and did so anxiously inquire after the way of salvation, to put them off with tongues, and prophecy, and gifts common to hypocrites: Mat. vii. 22, 23, 'Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity;' 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.' The apostle, who knew better how to satisfy and to heal these wounded souls, promiseth such a gift of the Holy Ghost as is joined with remission of sins.

2. All parts of Peter's answer, both the precept and the promise, must be supposed to be suited to the question asked. Now the question asked was, 'What shall we do to be saved?' or freed from the misery into which we have plunged ourselves? His answer was, Repent, and seek remission by baptism in the name of Christ. If you do so, you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, which shall teach you all things, and make you fit to do all things that are necessary to your salvation; you are weak and impotent, but you shall have power from the Holy Ghost. For it concerned them not only to know what they should do, but whence they should have strength to do what was required of them.

3. In the next words the apostle speaketh of a promise, and such a promise as was to them and their children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. This promise was the promise of internal grace; be it the promise in Joel, or the promise in John vii. 38, 'He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters.' And the evangelist telleth us in the words that follow, 'But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.' Those rivers out of the belly imply something flowing out of the heart; a spring of living waters there, that would send forth life and influence to all their actions. Well, then, this was the promise, and a promise that did not only concern the first age, when these miraculous and extraordinary gifts were dispensed, but all the ages of the church; a promise to us and our children, and as many as the Lord our God should call. It relateth to the gracious covenant, that God will be our God, and the God of our seed; even that promise spoken of Gal. iii. 14, where the apostle saith that Christ was made a curse for us, 'that the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.' The blessing of church privileges was Abraham's blessing, even ordinances accompanied with the Spirit.

4. The process of the story sheweth what the gift of the Holy Ghost is: ver. 41, 'There were added to the church about three thousand souls that day,' who received the faith of Christ, joined themselves to the



apostles, conversed together in a wonderful, charitable manner, owned Christ boldly and comfortably in the midst of afflictions. The sum is this, that though all had not miraculous gifts, yet they had better, being enabled to believe on Christ unto righteousness, and make a bold profession of his name with their mouths, and live with his followers in a high pitch of charity.

*Doct.* Those that repent, and believe on Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

I shall handle this point in this method—

1. Show you in what sense we are said to receive the Spirit after repenting and believing.

2. The use and office of the Spirit so received.

3. The peculiar property and right of those that repent and believe to this gift.

I. In what sense we are said to receive the Spirit after repenting and believing; for this doubt doth presently arise in our minds, Can we repent and believe before we receive the Spirit? or can a man convert himself to God without the Holy Ghost? So much seemeth to be intimated by the apostle's method, 'Repent, and be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' I answer—

1. We must distinguish between the spirit of regeneration and the spirit of adoption and perseverance; for though the spirit of regeneration be tied to no condition, but is dispensed according to the good pleasure of God, yet the spirit of adoption and perseverance in holiness is tied to conditions, and is promised to all those that, with true faith and repentance, do seek after the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore this receiving of the Spirit is meant of the increase of his grace in us; namely, that the spirit of regeneration is followed with a great increase of light, comfort, and virtue. First the Holy Ghost is given to us to unite us to Christ, and afterwards to take up his abode in us as in his temples, and to dwell in us for our comfort and support. First as a Spirit of regeneration he buildeth an house for himself, then as a Spirit of adoption and perseverance he cometh to dwell in the house so built and furnished; as bees first make their cells, and then dwell in them. By repentance and faith there is a fit mansion and resting-place prepared for him, and then he resteth upon us: 1 Peter iv. 14, 'The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.' He taketh up his residence in us: not, comes upon them, but resteth on them. These two things must be carefully distinguished, the Spirit of regeneration and the Spirit of adoption, or God's converting and confirming grace. The first is given us that we may believe, the second upon believing. The first is spoken of Titus iii. 5, 6, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. The Lord out of his good pleasure, not excited by any works of ours, but merely by his grace, shed abroad the Holy Ghost in our hearts, to renew and sanctify us, that we may repent and believe, and return and obey him. This his prevailing<sup>1</sup> grace also is spoken of Zech. xii. 10, 'I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and supplication.' This

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'prevening'?—Ed.

goeth before faith and repentance, and is the cause of it, as is there expressed.

2. There is the Spirit of adoption and perseverance, that is, after believing: Gal. iv. 6, 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' First we are sons, and then we have the spirit of sons. When we are entered as heirs to the promises, the Spirit of God doth more manifest his presence in our hearts, and put forth his gracious operations there: Eph. i. 13, 'After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.' Though none can actually believe before the Spirit of God works in them, yet upon believing, he cometh to dwell in the heart, and doth manifest that he hath taken up his abode there.

II. The use and office of the Spirit so received. It may be referred to two things—(1.) Sanctification; (2.) Consolation.

First, Sanctification. The great work of the Spirit is to be the fountain and principle of the new life of grace within us, or to maintain and keep afoot the interest of Christ in our souls: Gal. v. 25, 'If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.' He doth not only begin life, but continueth it, and still actuateth it, enabling us to all the duties thereof. There is having and walking; thence he is compared to a spring or well of living water, that is always springing forth: John iv. 14, 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.' Not only a draught, but a well. They that have any measure of true grace have the Spirit as a fountain to make this grace endure in itself and in its effects. Some have only a draught, a vanishing taste, others a cistern or a pond, that may be dried up; but they that have the Spirit have a well, and a well that is always fresh and springing up and flowing forth till this stream become an ocean, and mortality be swallowed up of life. It is a spring that sendeth forth streams to water the ground about it. As the heart of man sendeth forth life to every faculty and member, and a general relief to all his parts, so doth the Spirit influence all our actions. Now both parts of sanctification are promoted by the Spirit, mortification and vivification, subduing of sin and quickening us to holiness. Mortification is seen in two things—purging out the lusts, or suppressing the acts of sin.

1. In purging out the lusts of it. The Spirit is said to cleanse us, and to purify us to the obedience of the truth: 1 Peter i. 22, 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.' The Spirit sheweth what purity of heart is pleasing to God, and worketh it in us, casting out pride, and hard-heartedness, and malice, and hypocrisy, and sensuality, and all those lusts which defile our hearts, and dispose us to walk contrary to God. It is the contrary principle that sets us a-warring and striving against the flesh.

2. Preventing and suppressing the acts of sin: Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' That they may not break out to God's dishonour and our discomfort. We cannot do it without the Spirit, nor the Spirit without us: Gal. v. 16, 'This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' There is no possibility of getting the power of inbred corruption subdued, or the lusts of sinful flesh curbed to any saving pur-



pose, without the Spirit of God ; otherwise lusts will gather strength, and range abroad without any effectual resistance. He warneth us of our danger, and checketh sin. If we would hearken to him, and observe his checks and restraints, sin would not transport us so often beyond the bounds of duty ; a man cannot sin so freely as before.

[1.] He doth quicken us to holiness, increasing the internal habits: Eph. iii. 16, 'That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man.' That we may be fitted for the service of God, for which before we were indisposed to, and prepared to every good work. There is an inward man, holy and gracious qualities infused into the soul, which are so called. These are created by the Spirit of God, and supplied and cherished by him that reneweth strength upon us from day to day, that we may go from strength to strength, and be more able for God's service. Though a renewed heart be yet continued, yet, as the two olive-trees, Zech. iv. 13, dropping into the lamps, and emptying through the golden pipes the golden oil out of themselves ; so doth the Spirit of Christ supply an increase of grace to our graces.

[2.] Exciteth to action, and helpeth us and aideth us therein, and inditeth good thoughts, and stirreth up holy motions and desires, besides new qualities, that we may be lively and fresh in God's service : Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them : ' Phil. ii. 13, 'For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.' Especially in prayer : Rom. viii. 26, 'The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities ; ' goeth to the other end of the staff. Clothes do not warm the body till the body warm them, and the body cannot warm them till the soul, which is the principle of life, warm it ; so there can be no fervency in prayer without the Spirit, no warmth in the heart. Oh, what a mercy is it that we have an help at hand ! the Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts, to relieve us in all our necessities, and quicken us in the ways of God, which else would soon grow wearisome and uncomfortable to us.

Secondly, The Spirit serveth for consolation, to uphold our hearts in the midst of all trials and difficulties, that we may go on cheerfully in a course of holiness, waiting for the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. The Holy Ghost, where he cometh, he cometh as a comforter, refreshing and relieving the soul, especially when we most need comfort, after great conflicts, and contrition, and brokenness of spirit. Cordials are for those that faint : 'To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the hearts of the contrite ones,' Isa. lvii. 15. To those that were pricked in their hearts Peter saith, 'Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' It is welcome news to poor wounded souls that they shall have the Comforter. So in deep afflictions : 1 Peter iv. 14, 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.' The Spirit of God dwelleth in the hearts of all his own, whether they be sufferers or not ; but especially in the hearts of those that suffer, in regard of his comforting and supporting operations. Philip, the Landgrave of Hesse, in his imprisonment said, *Se divinas martyrum consolationes sensisse*—that he felt the divine comforts of the martyrs. Their sense of his presence

is greater and sweeter, and their allowance of comfort larger than what others have, or themselves formerly had. How doth the Spirit comfort? Partly with respect to the time present, and partly with respect to the time to come; to witness our present standing in a state of grace, and to assure us of life and glory to come.

1. For the present, to witness to us our adoption and pardon of sins, and acceptance with God: Rom. v. 5, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.' The love of God is shed abroad in the scriptures: 'Thy name is poured out as a precious ointment.' But it is shed abroad in our hearts, that is, by the Holy Ghost. How doth the Holy Ghost comfort? *Per modum argumenti, et per modum causæ efficientis. Per modum argumenti*, by way of argumentation. The Spirit is given as a pledge of God's love; he is known by suitable gifts. Those whom God pardoneth he enricheth with grace. Some things are never given in judgment, as the Spirit. The comforts and honours of the world may be given us in wrath; it is a plain evidence. So *per modum causæ efficientis*, by way of an efficient cause. He maketh us to feel the love of God in our consciences, and to be sensible of the comfort of it: Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost;' Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.' A witness is one who giveth in a testimony against a man or for a man. Every matter of worth and weight is to be transacted before and proved by two sufficient witnesses. Now here are two witnesses, our spirit and God's Spirit. Our conscience doth accuse or excuse, but that is fallible; but then there is the Spirit itself. A greater witness cannot be had than the Spirit of God, that knoweth all things, the deep things of God and our own hearts. When he assureth us that we have God's favour, and may go boldly to him as to a father, why should we doubt?

2. To assure us of life and blessedness to come. The Holy Ghost is given for this end, that we may look and long for heaven. Our hearts of themselves are taken up with trifles and childish toys. Therefore, that we may more vehemently long after and desire the actual possession of this glory, and to sweeten the bitterness of the cross, the Spirit of God doth somewhat about our future hopes as well as our present interest. It is an earnest, and as the first-fruits. An earnest: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who also hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit;' Eph. i. 14, 'Which is the earnest of our inheritance.' It is not only *donum*, a gift, but *pignus*, a pledge; not only *pignus*, but *arrha*, an earnest. A pledge may be taken away, but God hath given us an earnest, that is, a part to assure us of the whole. Now it is not only an earnest to show how sure, but the first-fruits to show us how good: Rom. viii. 23, 'We ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit.' Some foresight and foretastes of glory to come, some preparations. Increasing grace is begun glory: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.'

III. *Quest.* How is this peculiar to them that believe, to have the gift



of the Holy Ghost? Acts v. 32, 'And so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him;' that is, that obey the gospel, that repent and believe: John xiv. 16, 17, 'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.' That place plainly showeth and proveth that he is peculiar to believers; and that they are incapable of such a gift in the increase of it that have not any begun presence of the Spirit in their hearts. (1.) The world doth not receive him, because they value him not. Carnal men value nothing but the visible pomps and powers of the world; they slight other things. It is so with all men in the state of nature and under the power of sin: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' They have no value for spiritual comforts and spiritual privileges. If religion would make them great in the world, they would embrace it; but these things are so little desired, because so little known. (2.) The world cannot receive them; they are not prepared. There is a capacity or receptivity necessary; they neither see him nor know him. They took no notice of his visible operations, and did as little understand with their heart as see with their eyes; but ye know him, and he dwelleth in you. His familiar presence shall be in them in a larger measure.

*Use.* First, Why? To quicken us to look after this gift. Let us see why and how.

1. Consider our necessity. Better never had the spirit of a man, if we have not the Spirit of God. Man is only *in fieri*, in the way to his perfection. A brute hath all things now that belong to the perfection of his nature. Man, that was made for a higher end, must have a higher guide: Job xxxii. 8, 'But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.' A brute, when he hath served out his time, hath done his work, and when he dieth, his misery and happiness dieth with him; but man's happiness or misery then beginneth.

2. If the Holy Spirit of the Lord be not in you, the evil spirit is. God and Satan divide the world. The heart of man is not a waste; it is either possessed by God or the devil. Natural men, the devil worketh in them, Eph. ii. 2. The heart of a wicked man is Satan's forge and workhouse: 1 Sam. xvi. 14, 'The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.' As soon as God is gone, the devil taketh possession.

3. You may know where your mansion, your everlasting residence will be, by the spirit that dwelleth in you. Every spirit fitteth for his own place. There are vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and vessels of mercy prepared unto glory, Rom. ix. 21. Heaven is not only prepared for us, but we for heaven; and who prepareth us? 2 Cor. v. 5, 'Now he that hath wrought us for this self-same thing is God, who hath given us the earnest of the Spirit.' The house and home of good spirits is heaven, of bad is hell. Each of them labour to conduct us to the several places whence they come.

4. Thou art unable for any duty, and incapable of any comfort : 1 Cor. xii. 3, 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost ;' that is, acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the true Saviour of the world. Thou canst not so much as pray, which is the most natural duty : Rom. viii. 26, 'For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.' Instinct teacheth all creatures to look for relief of their necessities. And thou art incapable of any comfort. All the good thoughts in us, all the good desires, the good hope we have, is by the Spirit ; all that we have and shall receive, all the spiritual joys and satisfactions. The Spirit indeed did not die, suffer, satisfy, reconcile you to God, purchase grace and glory for you. You are beholden to Christ for this ; yet all the sweet comforts depending thereupon, and the application of them to our souls, is from the Spirit. Your joy is from the Holy Ghost. You can neither live nor pray, nor work, nor walk, nor hope without the Spirit.

Secondly, How?

1. Pray for it. If you feel the want of the Spirit, and do in good earnest seek for him, you shall find him. A cold suitor shutteth the door upon himself : 'Ask, seek, knock,' Mat. vii. 7 ; Luke xi. 8, *διὰ τὴν ἀναίδειαν*, 'Because of his importunity he will rise and give him.' A father may deny a wanton child bread to play with or throw under his feet, but not a starving child, that cries, Bread, bread, to preserve his life. He may and will deny the Spirit to them that ask him in a careless fashion, or to pride himself in his gifts ; but not the hungry soul, that is pinched with a want of his grace, that crieth to him, Father, give me thy Holy Spirit. Nay, the vehemency is some evidence that thou hast him already : Isa. xlv. 3, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground : I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.'

2. The hopes to obtain him. It is *donum*, a gift : 'Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' It is *donum promissum*, a promised gift : 'I will pour my Spirit upon all flesh,' Acts ii. 17. It is *donum necessarium*, a necessary bequest. When you pray for the Spirit, you pray as children when they ask bread. Bread is not so necessary for this life, as the Spirit for the life of grace ; it is the spring and fountain of holiness. We may crave health, and wealth, and outward prosperity, and receive that answer, 'Ye know not what ye ask.' But when you go beg the Holy Spirit, you ask that which is good and necessary for you. It is such a gift as is the foundation of all the rest, and without which we can have no pledge and assurance of God's love. Compare Mat. vii. 11, with Luke xi. 13. That which is called 'good things' in one place, is called the 'Holy Spirit' in the other. Of whom do you seek ? Of God, who is your Father. *Tam pater nemo, tam pius nemo*. No one is so much a father and so good a father. In whose name do you seek it ? In Christ's, whose merit hath purchased this gift for you : Titus iii. 5, 6, 'The renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour ;' Eph. iii. 12, 'In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence by the faith of him.' By him we have a kind of right. He opened the door by his merit, and keeps it open by his intercession.

3. Wait in the word ; the Spirit is gotten and increased there : Gal.



iii. 2, 'Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' The ordinary means whereby God worketh this grace is by the hearing of the word: 2 Cor. iii. 6, 'Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life;' Acts x. 44, 'While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.' Therefore wait at wisdom's gate; lie at the pool till the waters are stirred, John v.; wait for the secret illapses of the Lord's grace; improve the Lord's supper. Sacraments are blessed means to convey the Spirit. Christ is said to return from his baptism full of the Holy Ghost, Luke iv. 1. Especially the Lord's supper: 1 Cor. xii. 13, 'For by the Spirit we are all baptized into one body, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.' One Spirit is spoken of as the author, and the other as the end. It is the Spirit that is figured by water, which maketh fruitful, and wine, which maketh cheerful: Cant. i. 4, 'We will remember thy love more than wine.' Now what further degree do you get by every receiving? What further comfort and strength? Now quicken your desires after the Spirit. When Elias was about to depart, he saith to Elisha, 'What shall I do for thee?' 'Only,' saith he, 'that thy spirit may be doubled on me.' Christ, in the same night in which he was betrayed, instituted this supper. Lord, thy Holy Spirit we ask. Will God deny such a request? When Solomon asked wisdom, the thing pleased the Lord. Will a natural father give a scorpion instead of fish, or a stone instead of bread? Ask the Spirit to guide and sanctify and comfort you with the sense of his love; ask and fear not: let your faith be strong. The woman said, 'If I can but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole.' We have more reason to expect a blessing on these instituted signs than she by touching the hem of his garment. Renew your expectations. You take the cup to assure you. Christ continueth the same form in the covenant still. Observe what effect you have. In ordinary repast, how doth a man know that what he hath eaten doeth him good? Why, he findeth himself fresher, abler, stronger, and more cheerful for his work. Do you go away walking in the fear of God and the comforts of the Holy Ghost? Only take heed there be no secret sin harboured in the heart or allowed in the practice: Ps. lxxvi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.'

*Use 2.* Let us see whether we have the Spirit or no. We cannot say it—

1. Because we have some good motions stirred in us. The devil stirreth up evil motions in the hearts of the godly, and maketh a foul stir in their bosoms; yet he doth not dwell there as in those that are in the carnal state. These are slaves of Satan. But the Holy Spirit is often moving in the hearts and consciences of carnal creatures, counselling, rebuking, exciting them; but all cometh to nothing: Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.'

2. It cannot be known by common gifts, illumination, conviction, restraining grace, assistance to perform external duties even to admiration: Mat. vii. 22, 23, 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works, and then will I profess, I

never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity ;' 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 'Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.' All this is nothing when he doth not take possession of your hearts as his dwelling-place and temple, 1 Cor. vi. 19.

3. It will be known by your temper and frame ; if you have a divine nature and disposition put into you : John iii. 6, 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' A soul is raised above his natural inclination as much as a man is above a beast : 2 Peter i. 4, 'Whereby are given unto us great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature.' A man beginneth to look like God his Father, and to resemble him for heavenly wisdom, holiness, and righteousness ; he acts in another manner, as one that hath a divine spirit in him.

4. By your savour : Rom. viii. 5, 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.' Find therefore what thy gust is, and thou mayest know whether thy life be natural or spiritual. Dost thou value thyself by earthly enjoyments or spiritual ?

5. They are led by the Spirit : Rom. viii. 14, 'As many as are led by the Spirit are the sons of God.' Dost thou take his counsel ? Art thou ruled and determined by him which way thou shalt go ? What authority and sway doth it bear with thee ? Art thou not driven, but led ? There is spontaneity and readiness for holy things.

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## SERMONS UPON 1 PETER I. 23.

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### SERMON I.

*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.—1 PETER i. 23.*

IN the context the apostle presseth to holiness, and in the immediately preceding verse to the love of the brethren; he enforceth both from regeneration.

First, Holiness. They that have a new birth should have a new life; for another principle doth necessarily infer other manner of operation. By the natural life, which consisteth in the union of the soul with the body, a man is enabled to move, speak, reason, and discourse, and do such actions as are consistent with that life; so by the spiritual life, which consists in the union of the soul with Christ, a man is enabled to act suitably; therefore if christians would walk answerably to their new birth, they should be holy.

Secondly, Love to the brethren or fellow-saints.

1. There is ground and reason to love them, for they are brethren; not in respect of the first birth, which is from the flesh, but in respect of the second birth, which is from the Spirit. *Φιλადελφία* and *ἀγάπη* are joined together by the apostle Peter: 2 Peter i. 7, 'And to godliness, brotherly kindness.' All are brethren or our own flesh, as coming from the same stock; but there is another relation, which is spiritual. Saints are brethren, as children of the same Father in heaven. If we be born again, it is but reason that we should live in love with the rest of our Father's children.

2. The new birth doth not only yield us a reason to love them, but an inclination, heart, and power to love them. It begets this love, as well as enforceth it: 1 John v. 1, '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.' The same new nature that inclineth us to love our Father doth incline us also to love his children, which bear his image; for there are the same inducements for the one as for the other. Therefore, 'See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.'

In these words observe—

[1.] The state of believers; they are 'Born again.'

[2.] The instrumental cause or means used to bring them into this estate, 'Not of corruptible seed, but by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.' Where the instrumental cause is laid down, *ἀντιθετικῶς καὶ ἐξηγητικῶς*, both by way of opposition and by way of explication.

(1.) By way of opposition to other births: 'Not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible;' alluding either to the seed of fruits, to which the word of God is compared, Mat. xiii. 19, or else to that seed by which we are born after the common course of nature; that is, corruptible, perishing, and defiled with sin: Job xiv. 2, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one;' John iii. 6, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh.' A frail and polluted creature. But the second birth is from incorruptible seed, spiritual, clean, and holy: 1 John v. 18, 'For we know that whatsoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not.' The fruit of that birth is immortal.

(2.) It is set forth by way of explication; for the apostle explaineth himself what he meaneth by incorruptible seed, 'The word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.' Only mark the difference of phrase; it is *ἐκ σπορᾶς*, of seed, but *διὰ λόγου*, by the word; for the word of God is not the matter of spiritual regeneration, but the instrumental cause of it. And he commendeth the word of God by a twofold property—(1.) That it liveth; and (2.) That it 'abideth for ever.'

(1st.) Its actusity and durability; or from the constructure of the Greek phrases, the two attributes may be thought to be given to God, *διὰ λόγου ζῶντος θεοῦ καὶ μένοντος*, 'by the word of the living God,' and 'abiding for ever.' But by the following verses, which are a quotation out of the prophet Isaiah, it appeareth plainly that they are to be applied to the word. Only by the way observe how the same attributes that may be given to God may be given to his word also; as Heb. iv. 12, 13, 'For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart: neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, for all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' God's word is like himself. These titles are elsewhere given to the word. It is said to be 'living,' because of its efficacy; it quickeneth us, and begets a life in us that cannot be quenched. It is *ζῶν καὶ ἐνεργῆς*, Heb. iv. 12, 'living and powerful;' 'Thou hast the words of eternal life,' John vi. 63; and it is called 'the word of life,' Acts v. 20; and Phil. ii. 16, 'Holding forth the word of life,' and elsewhere. The word of God is a living word, not a dead letter.

(2d.) The word 'abideth for ever.' The word dieth not when we die: Luke xxi. 33, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away;' Ps. cxix. 89, 'For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in the heavens.' It is an eternal truth. The word abideth in the effects of it upon the regenerate. The sum of the words is this, that life which we have by natural generation is a mortal, frail life, but that life which we have by being born again is eternal.



The first point is, Those that do truly believe in God through Jesus Christ are born again.

Such are spoken of in the context; and of such the apostle saith, 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.'

I shall inquire—(1.) What is regeneration, or what it is to be born again? (2.) The necessity of such a work, if we would be Christ's disciples, or truly believe in him.

First, What is regeneration? It is a notion often used in scripture: John iii. 3, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' And baptism is called *λουτρὸν παλιγγενεσίας*, 'The layer of regeneration,' Titus iii. 5; and a godly man is said to be born of God, and that his seed abideth in him, 1 John iii. 9. The occasion of the expression might be, that the Jews were wont to call their proselytes *recens natos*, men new born. But whatever the occasion were, the expression is solemnly consecrated by the Spirit of God to note our first implantation into Christ, and doth not barely signify outward profession, nor yet naked faith, or persuasion of the truths of the gospel, as appeareth by the dialogue between Christ and Nicodemus, who came to him and owned him as a teacher sent from God; yet Christ presseth it upon him to be born again. Let us see then what is the true importance of this notion in the christian faith. It implieth such a work of God upon the heart as carrieth proportion with the outward and first birth, as appeareth by all the places where it is used. And it is that work of God whereby a new spiritual life and nature is communicated to us. The analogy may be supposed to stand in these things—

1. A child is not born without some pain more or less, so neither is this change carried on without its pangs. The first work of the Spirit is to give us a sight of our own vileness and sinfulness, and to work in us the fear of deserved wrath; therefore called a 'spirit of bondage;' Rom. viii. 15, 'We have not received the spirit of bondage, again to fear.' The Spirit worketh according to the covenant that we are under. In our sinful estate we are obnoxious to the first covenant, unable to perform the duty, and liable to its curse; so the Spirit maketh us sensible of it. Those converts in Acts ii. 37 'were pricked in heart;' they had their pangs and troubles; and still this is the ordinary way of coming to the new birth, by sorrow and brokenness of heart, as the child cometh into the world by the sorrows of travail.

2. It is not a birth when there is nothing brought forth, though there be never so much pain; so convictions, qualms of conscience, and pangs of legal sorrow, terrors wrought in us by the spirit of bondage, will never prove a man regenerate unless the new creature be brought forth. There is in many some deliberation and trouble about the ways of God, yet no actual choice; as the young man went away sad when he heard the terms, Mat. xix. 22; he was sorry because he could not have heaven in his own way. Some anxious thoughts they have, but go not further. They have some throes, and give over.

3. A new creature is brought forth entire and whole; so it is when the birth is regular; but in the new birth it is so always. No new creature is born maimed, but of perfect shape, because that is the immediate work of the Spirit, who cannot miscarry in his operations;

and a defect in parts cannot be supplied by after growth, and it is fitted for the sight of God. Therefore here is a new creature brought forth, not a new substance of soul or body, but the faculties renewed and purified, and fitted for God's use and service, by certain infused qualities or graces, which is called the 'inward man,' 2 Cor. iv. 16; Eph. iii. 16, 'That he would grant unto you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man;' and the 'hidden man of the heart,' 1 Peter iii. 4. And it is entire; a new mind, heart, conscience, will, and affections; new thoughts, new desires, comforts, and contentments. It is all perfect as to parts, though not degrees. In the natural birth, from little beginnings there is a going on to perfection; so in the new birth, from the stature of a child there is a growing up to a perfect man in Christ Jesus, as they get more knowledge, more grace, and more experience.

4. The child so born cometh from a place of darkness and confinement into a state of light and liberty; so doth the new creature. The *terminus a quo*, term from which, is darkness and bondage, figured by the state of the child before his birth; and the *terminus ad quem*, term to which, is a state of liberty, of light, and the knowledge of God in Christ: 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'For 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.' And they are called into the liberty of God's children, or freedom from the slavery of sin, and subjection to wrath: Rom. viii. 2, 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.' We are freed from those manacles of corruption wherein we were wrapped before.

5. The new creature brought forth is living, endued with properties, inclinations, and dispositions agreeable to the nature that begat it; so there is in us a principle of a new life that carrieth some measure of resemblance and conformity with the life of God. The effects of every perfect generation are life and likeness. Likeness is not enough to constitute a generation. An exquisite limner may draw a perfect picture of his son, yet this picture is not said to be begotten or born of him, but made by him. The products of art have likeness, but not life. Again, life is not enough; in equivocal generations there is life, but not likeness; as frogs and worms and putrid creatures breed out of the slime by the heat of the sun; these are produced, but not born. Both must be; as when a man begets a son in his own image and likeness, there is both: so here, when we are born again, there is life and likeness.

[1.] Life. There is another manner of life than we lived before. We live the life of God, from which we were alienated before, Eph. iv. 18, as appeareth by new actions, desires, and delights. So there are other manner of principles and operations than came from life natural. It is now a living unto God: Gal. ii. 20, 'The life that I live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God.' As life natural is a living to itself, to its own ends and interests, so is this. Take end and principle together, it is a living to God. All the acts of the natural life are overruled to nobler ends: 1 Peter iv. 6, 'That they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the



spirit.' They are quickened by the Spirit to live a life of purity and holiness.

[2.] Likeness: 2 Peter i. 4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature.' A restitution of the image of God lost at first. And because many duties imply inferiority and subjection, and many necessities are introduced by the fall, therefore we are not only conformed to God, but to Christ, or God in our nature: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' That is the great work of the Spirit by the gospel; there is a nature put into us, that of all things in the world cometh nearest to the nature of God himself.

6. Upon the new birth there ariseth a visible relation between the child born and his parents; so, besides change of disposition, there is a change of state, a relative change, and a real change; from a child of the devil he becometh the son of God through faith: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' And from a child of wrath he is made an heir of salvation, accepted for one of God's family, and hath a right to all the privileges depending thereupon.

Secondly, The necessity of this work of regeneration.

1. With respect to grace and glory.

[1.] As to the work of grace, a man is unmeet for God's use till he be purified by this work of God upon his heart. There is something that doth hinder, nothing doth further this work. Something doth hinder: 2 Tim. ii. 21, 'If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and made meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.' There is a mass of corruption which remaineth as a clog upon us, which maketh us averse and indisposed for the work of God; all this must be done away. As a man that would build his house exactly regular and uniform must not patch up the old building, but raze it to the very bottom, that he may lay a new foundation, so doth God take away the old rubbish of corruption, wholly demolish Satan's work, purge the soul from those lusts which inclined it to carnal vanities, before it is meet for his spiritual service. Nothing to further; and so you cannot serve God till you are born again: Eph. ii. 10, 'You are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' Every creature hath faculties suitable to those operations which belong to that creature; so man must be a new created and formed creature, that he may be prepared, fitted, and made ready for the Lord. You cannot expect new operations till there be a new life. Here the business sticketh with man. This should be looked after and desired first, as a peculiar branch of the spiritual life. We expect strengthening grace before we have received renewing grace. This is like little children, that attempt to run before they can go. This is as if a man complained of an aching tooth when a mortal disease hath seized on his vitals, of a cut finger when at the same time he is wounded at heart, of wandering thoughts in prayer when at the same time the heart is habitually averse and estranged from God. They complain of want of quickening grace when they want converting grace;

as if we would have the Spirit blow to a dead coal. They confess only the infirmities of soul, when they should bewail the misery of an unregenerate and carnal estate. They complain of incident weakness, when we should first see that our habitual aversion from God be cured.

[2.] As to the privileges of grace, you have no interest and title to them till you are born again. Nothing avails to establish your interest in Christ but a new creature: Gal. vi. 15, 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.' It is not being of this or that party or opinion, though some more strict than others; not doing this or that particular thing, submitting to this or that ordinance, praying or hearing the word. This is only an evidence in our consciences of our justified estate and union with Christ: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new.' Every one that is an adopted son of God must have a new birth and a spiritual being: John i. 12, 13, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name; which are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' A change of disposition. God adopts otherwise than men; they take as they find, they cannot put in new qualities. To be the people of God without regeneration is as impossible as to be the children of men without generation; for we are born God's enemies, and must be new-born his sons, or else remain enemies still. No hope of glory: 1 Peter i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.' Children only can look for a child's portion.

2. As to glory. It is said, John iii. 3, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' I know 'seeing' is put for 'enjoying'; yet the phrase is emphatical: he shall not have a glimpse, or be suffered to look within the veil. A stranger cannot lay claim to the inheritance, but a son; and sons we are not till we be regenerated. As I said before, we are incapable of blessedness; there is no suitableness between us and it. The apostle speaketh of being 'made meet,' Col. i. 12, meet for the enjoyment of God. Man neither knoweth his true happiness, nor careth for it, but followeth his own lusts. By nature man is opposite to the kingdom of God, being corrupt and fleshly in all the faculties of soul and body; hath no spiritual sense, disposition, motion, and inclination towards heavenly things. In short, our frail bodies must be changed before they can be brought to heaven: 'We shall not all die, but we shall be changed.' If the body must be changed, how much more the soul? If that which is frail, much more that which is filthy; if bare flesh and blood cannot enter into heaven till it be free from its corruptible qualities, certainly not a guilty soul till it be freed from its sinful qualities. Think again and again of the necessity of this.

Use 1. To exhort you all to look after this work, to be new-born. And let me direct it to all sorts of men, young men and old.

1. You that are young, you have been born in sin: Ps. li. 5, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me;' Gen. v. 3, 'Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image.'



Sinful man begets a sinful child. You must be born again. God provided a laver for us as soon as we were born. Baptism is the laver of regeneration, Titus iii. 5; and little ones were circumcised, Deut. xxx. 6. There is filthiness in you, and it is lusty and strong. It is good to begin with God betimes; they glorify God more, and enjoy him sooner. They glorify him more: Eph. i. 12, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.' They that get into Christ before others bring more honour to God than they that are brought in after: Rom. xvi. 7, 'Who also were in Christ before me.' Old men may be ashamed when little ones get the start of them. The sooner you close with Christ, the work is done the more easily, before you are accustomed to a slavery to Satan, and your lusts are rooted in you. You enjoy him more. Christ calleth little children: Mark x. 14, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.' He is willing to take them into his arms. You cannot come before you are welcome. The great God will deign to dwell in the hearts of little ones.

2. You that are old, oh, it is high time for you to be born again; you are as good as dead already: Heb. xi. 12, 'Therefore sprang from him one, and him as good as dead.' Chimneys long foul, if they be not swept, will be fired at length. You have long lived or died in the world: 'A sinner of a hundred years old shall be accursed,' Isa. lxv. 20. He that liveth unreclaimed and unrenewed, though his life be never so much prolonged, shall die an accursed wretch. You never begin to live till you live in Christ; you have but told over so many summers and winters. All that time is lost that is spent in your unregenerate estate; as a man may be a long time at sea, and yet make but a short voyage, get but a little ground though long tossed upon the waves. Oh, bethink yourselves before your hoary heads go down to the grave in sorrow. Say not, as Nicodemus, 'Shall a man return into his mother's womb, being old?' This is a spiritual work which must pass upon you. God promiseth to pour out his Spirit upon old ones, Acts ii. 17. A ruinous heap of stones, that is ready to drop in pieces, God can raise up to himself a temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. Submit to this work before it be too late.

Secondly. Let me speak to the poor and rich.

1. To the poor and them of low esteem in the world, to be born again, and this will ennoble your blood; to be of God's family, heirs of the kingdom: James i. 9, 10, 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; and the rich, in that he is brought low;' James ii. 5, 'Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?' You are indeed honourably descended; you are begotten of God, not of corruptible seed: John i. 12, 13, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' And honourably provided for, heirs of a kingdom. Though you cannot reckon up a long pedigree of famous ancestors, nor entitle yourself to such great families as others do, yet you are born from above; there is your genealogy. You can speak of a descent from heaven. It was one of the works that

Christ produced to declare that he was sent from God: Mat. xi. 5, 'The poor have the gospel preached unto them,' *πτῶχοι ἐυαγγελίζονται*, the poor are all to be gospelled.

2. The rich are exhorted to look after this. It is no great glory to be born of the froth of the blood and the will of man: John i. 13, 'Not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' It is better to be a new creature than to be the son of nobles, yea, kings and princes. It is not the dignity of men's rule, but the quality and frame of their hearts, by which they are judged before God. *Omnis sanguis concolor*—all blood is of a colour. The great men of the world shall one day be cast out as the scum and off-scouring of all things if they be not born again of the Spirit.

Thirdly, Let me speak to men as profane or as civil. Every man must be born again, be he to appearance better or worse. The state and frame of the heart must be changed, be he an epicure or carnal man, a gross sinner or a painted pharisee.

1. The profane. Surely it concerneth you to be born again. You that can savour nothing but carnal things, and wallow in all manner of filthiness, you are to change heart and life; but first the heart, otherwise you build without a foundation. Nature beginneth first with the heart, as the fountain of life. It is the painter that only draweth an outward shadow, that beginneth with the external lineaments and outward proportions first. Now you who declare your sin as Sodom, surely you must be changed. You cannot expect to go from Delilah's lap to Abraham's bosom. The new heavens and new earth are provided for new creatures; there are no dirty swine can enter there. Oh, submit to this change: 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.' Meditate on that scripture, 'Know ye not?' It is an appeal to conscience. And 'be not deceived,' for the worst are full of confident presumptions. You are travelling west; that is not the way into the eastern parts. You set your faces against heaven and happiness.

2. The civil and ingenious; that have been well educated and brought up, need also to be born again: Mat. v. 20, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Who more exact than they as to external conformity? There is a strait gate that you are to pass through, and that is of repentance and the new creature, Mat. vii. 14. Oh, how many are deceived with this common error, that sin and holiness is nothing but moral virtue and vice, spiritual regeneration nothing else but good education and philosophical institution, godliness nothing but honest behaviour, christianity nothing but a well acquired civility! These have no change of nature. Alas! these differ as the shadow and substance. The earth bringeth forth grass and baser flowers of itself, but it must be tilled to bring forth corn and finer flowers. There is a work of the Spirit, with respect to the two covenants, carried on. You must be born again, or you cannot see the kingdom of God. Regeneration signifieth such a change, that a man,

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



not only of vicious becometh virtuous, but of carnal becometh spiritual. I gather that from John iii. 6, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh.' A man by nature is carnal, yea, very flesh itself. He is so when he inclineth to things pleasing to the flesh, seeketh them only, and savoureth them only, affecteth them only. This is a natural man, that hath not the Spirit of God: Jude 19, 'Sensual, not having the Spirit.' Nor receiveth the things of the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Acteth but as a nobler and better-natured animal. He only liveth an animal life, common to us with the beasts. All his thoughts and cares run that way, void of spiritual life, ignorant, mindless of another world or the way that tendeth thither, desireth it not. Now, though they be not profane, do not wallow in divers sins and wickedness, whereby others dishonour human nature, yet because they do not look after a better life, and have no desire of better things fixed upon their minds, they are carnal. But now he is regenerated when he that only before sought after carnal things, breathed after carnal things, contented himself with this lower happiness, afterwards desireth spiritual and heavenly things, and really endeavoureth to get them. This nature can never do; water riseth no higher than its fountain. That which carrieth us to God must come from God.

To quicken the exhortation, I shall give you two arguments or motives—

1. From the danger. Better you had never been born if you are not born again. Many have cursed the day of their first birth, but never any cursed the day of their new birth. Better to be a toad or a dog, because his misery endeth when he dies; but your misery then begins. You think, perhaps, that the God that made you will save you; as his creatures, he will have pity on you. No: Isa. xxvii. 11, 'It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favour.' God hath set up another rule; his delight is in his workmanship, in Christ Jesus. The unregenerate will curse the womb that bare them, and the paps that gave them suck.

2. Better you had never been baptized if you be not new-born. A carnal christian is worse than an infidel: 1 Tim. v. 8, 'If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' Such know nothing of sin and righteousness with respect to a covenant, nothing of virtue and vice as a perfection or blemish of nature. They are baptized indeed, but have no benefit by it. It is not the laver of regeneration to such: John xiii. 8, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.' Better scalding oil had been poured upon your heads than the water of baptism. It is a witness of thy breach of vows, for thou art by baptism engaged to be a new creature.

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## SERMON II.

*Being born again, not of corruptible, but incorruptible seed.—*

1 PETER i. 23.

I HAVE pressed you to seek after this work by divers arguments suited to all sorts of persons.

But you will say, To what end is this exhortation? Is there any help in the hands of man? Can men work this regeneration in themselves, and so change a carnal sinful heart into a holy and new heart, or cause themselves to become new creatures?

I answer—No; surely regeneration is the proper work of an omnipotent God. But yet the exhortation is not in vain. I shall prove both the parts—(1.) That regeneration is the work of God; (2.) Yet this exhortation is not in vain; and then go on with the exhortation.

First, That regeneration is the proper work of God, and the sole effect of his Spirit—

1. From the state of the person who is to be regenerated. The object of regeneration is a sinner lying in a state of defection from original righteousness, averse from God, yea, an enemy to him; prone to all evil; weak, yea, dead to all spiritual good. And how can such an one renew and convert himself to God? It is true man hath reason left, and may have some confused notions or general apprehensions of things good or evil, pleasing or displeasing to God; but to choose the one and leave the other, that is not in his power. They may have loose desires of spiritual favours, especially as apprehended under the quality of a natural good: Num. xxiii. 10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' So that excellency which they discover in these spiritual things is apprehended in a natural way: John vi. 34, 'And they said unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.' These desires are neither truly spiritual, nor serious, nor constant, nor laborious; so that to apprehend or seek spiritual things in a spiritual manner is above their reach and sphere. So man is represented as blind, perverse, rebellious; blind in his mind, perverse in his will, rebellious in his affections, so as he cannot know: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them.' Cannot believe: John vi. 44, 'No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.' Cannot obey: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' You cannot think: 2 Cor. iii. 5, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.' Cannot speak: Mat. xii. 34, 'How can ye, being evil, speak good things?' Cannot do: John xv. 5, 'For without me ye can do nothing.' This is necessary to be considered; for conversion beginneth in a sense of our impotency, and the first step to regeneration is a sense of the naughtiness and corruptness of our hearts. When men only dislike their evil actions, and are not humbled for their evil nature, they rest only in a moral reformation, and do not look after a spiritual change.



2. From the nature of that work by which this change is to be accomplished. It is a new birth. There is no more power in any man to work this change in himself than there could be imagined to be in him to beget himself at first. It is ascribed to God: James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;' 1 Peter i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;' 1 John v. 1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.' It is the infusion of a new life; and to give life is God's prerogative: John v. 26, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.' Therefore called the 'life of God,' and the 'seed of God;' a principle of doing that which is savingly good according to the will of God. Christ bringeth it as a proof of his own Godhead, to be a fountain and cause of life; for it is the prerogative of God alone. It is also called a 'resurrection,' or a quickening of the dead: Eph. ii. 1, 'And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.' Man's will is no co-worker with God; it is his power, and such a power as raised Christ from the dead: Eph. i. 19, 20, 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.' It is a new creature: Eph. iv. 24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' Eph. ii. 10, 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' A new creature: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' Creation is a work of omnipotency. Vicious qualities are subdued, and contrary virtues and graces planted in their stead. In the beginning God made something out of nothing, and some things *ex inhabili materia*, out of such matter as was wholly unfit and indisposed for those things to be made of it; as when God made Adam out of the dust of the ground, and Eve out of the rib of man, Gen. ii. 7. 22. Just such a work is this; he maketh those that were wholly indisposed to good, and averse from it, yea, perverse resisters of all motions towards that which is godly and holy, to be lovers of holiness and walkers in it. God, that made man at first, must renew him, and restore him to that image which he lost: Col. iii. 10, 'And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.' Therefore we must hold this, and not so enforce exhortation as to weaken prayer; it is the Lord's work, and he will be acknowledged in it.

Secondly, The exhortation is not in vain, for these reasons—

1. Because the object of regeneration is the reasonable creature, upon whom God worketh, not as upon a stock or a stone, but maketh use of the faculties which he hath, and dealeth with reasonable creatures in a reasonable manner; draweth them with the cords of a man, not only by invincible grace, but by doctrine and persuasion. He worketh not on us as on senseless blocks, but as reasonable creatures: Hosea xi. 4, 'I drew them with cords of a man, with the bands of love.' First showing man his lost estate by the law, and in the gospel revealing Christ, and the possibility of salvation to all those that will come

to God by him ; and then by the preaching of the gospel sweetly inviteth them to receive Christ, that he may pardon their sins, and sanctify their natures, and lead them in a way of holiness unto eternal life, upon which followeth the powerful operation of his Spirit, infusing life into them, and conforming them to Christ.

2. It is not in vain, that man may own his duty and be sensible of the necessity of the change of his estate, who would otherwise be altogether careless and mindless of such a thing. In the name of God we may require you to believe, repent, turn to God, though God giveth you all these things. So likewise we may exhort you to be regenerate, to put off the old man, and to put on the new: Eph. iv. 22-24, 'That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind ; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' To warn you of your duty : Eph. v. 14, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' To point out to lost sinners what is their duty, namely, to turn to God, and set about the duties of holiness, flowing from the principle of a new life ; which is enjoined by God to sinners ; not that it is in their power, but because it is their duty so to do ; yea, such a duty as must be speedily and earnestly gone about, if they mean to be saved ; for our utter inability to help ourselves, or to do anything acceptable to God, contracted by Adam's fall, doth not weaken or abolish God's sovereign right and dominion over us ; and though we be not able to do his will, yet he may justly require and exact it of us. It is a demanding of God's right, and a making of the creature sensible of what he must look after.

3. Because by such exhortations and commands, as by an outward means, the Spirit of God doth effectually work that in them which he requireth of them : 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,' Rom. x. 7. There is no power in us, or principle of life in us, whereby we can quicken ourselves or bring ourselves from nature to grace ; yet by the exhortation, as by the means, God infuseth this power and principle, conveying thereby the effectual working of his power, and so giveth what he requireth. As it was not in vain said to Lazarus, 'Come forth ;' there was a power went along with the words, 'Lazarus, come forth,' John xi. 43. Christ in using his omnipotency doth not look upon things as they are in themselves or seem to be to us, but in speaking and commanding giveth life and strength to do what is commanded. So he 'calleteth things that are not as though they were,' Rom. iv. 17. He speaketh to him as one living, and ready to come forth on a call ; because of this very word he puts life into him to hear and to obey. So when God by us calleth upon lost dead sinners to get life and grace, who knoweth but that the blessing may go along with the exhortation, and he may work what he requireth ?

4. The exhortation is not in vain, because there are some things to be done before regeneration. In order thereunto, the preparative dispositions that lead unto regeneration must be distinguished from regeneration itself. They are not *gradus in re*, parts of regeneration, but *gradus ad rem*. When Adam was created, the matter was prepared, and the body organised and fitted to receive the soul before God breathed



that spirit of life into him, and in ordinary generation there is a disposing of the matter before it be quickened. Now though God be not always tied to this course, yet he would have man tied to them in the use of external means, so that by these preparative exercises he may come nearer than he was before: Mark xii. 34, 'And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he saith unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.' These preparations in regard of conversion are like the drying of the wood to the kindling of it or setting it on fire. The dryness of the wood is not the firing of the wood, or any degree of it, only a preparation of the matter, that it may take fire when it is put to it; or like the heating of metals before they are melted, and are cast into the mould to be fashioned. Such kind of preparations there are to regeneration; as when a man by the study of the law hath a discovery and anxious sense of his miserable condition out of Christ, and doth seriously deliberate what to do, and hath a desire and purpose to make use of all good means for the escaping of God's wrath, as to hear, read, meditate, confer with others about the things that belong to regeneration. We may require you to use all these godly exercises, and to be diligent therein, that you may be in some readiness, and lie near at hand for God's work, which is better than to be afar off. So these preparations are as the drying of the wood, though it be not fired; the heating of the metal, though it be not melted; and in these we feel some common operations of the Spirit at least; and they that refuse these preparatives are without excuse, and it is a sign they slight reconciliation with God and regeneration by his Spirit. Thus you see why we are to exhort, and you to look after it, that you may lie fair for God's work.

5. The exhortation is not in vain, that men may not hinder this work, and obstruct their own mercies. This a man may do two ways—(1.) Either by neglecting the means which God hath appointed; or, (2.) By refusing the helps which God vouchsafeth to prepare and mollify the heart.

[1.] By neglecting the means. Though God doth renew men by his Spirit, yet he hath appointed the means by which man is to be subservient to such a work; the which if he will not try, and use the means, the blame is in himself, not God. If we are unwilling to take pains in seeking it, it sheweth that we have no desire to find it, and shall at the last day be reproved as the 'wicked and slothful servant,' Mat. xxv. 26. His pleading he had no power, and that God requireth brick where he giveth no straw, will be of no use to him. He had no heart, no will to the thing, and shall be answerable for the contempt of God's word. But is it not folly to use the means, since it is not in our power to effect it? No; for if there were no hope of success, yet in obedience to the command we should be doing: Luke v. 5, 'Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing: howbeit, at thy word I will let down the net.' And if ever we look for the effect, it must be this way; we are bound, though God is not bound. It is not in man's power to beget a rational soul, yet none abstaineth from marriage for that reason, because the soul must be created by God; so regeneration is God's work; but therefore we must not neglect God's prescribed course, but be diligent in the use of means, waiting for this effect. What the means are I shall show you by and by.

[2.] By refusing the helps which God vouchsafeth us. So man may render himself more unapt to be changed ; as, for instance, some preparative excitation of conscience ; either by the word, as Felix : Acts xxiv. 25, 'Felix trembled,' *ἔμφοβος γενόμενος* ; he was in an agony ; or by some notable affliction, when conscience casts up their sin : Gen. xlii. 21, 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us.' Many such involuntary impressions there are, and strong motions to good, that come upon us without any endeavour or forethought of ours, by which the soul is awakened as out of sleep ; and these are a closer offer on God's part to help us out of the estate wherein we are. Now so far as we are acted by God, we are to carry forth this work, and when the waters are stirred, to put in for cure ; for otherwise we hinder and set back ourselves so much as we slight this common grace, or offer wrong to conscience. As water which hath been heated on the fire congealeth the soonest after it is taken off and removed from it, so they that have felt the motions of God's Spirit freeze soonest in the dregs and lusts of the flesh, and their hearts are most hardened, and they grieve God's Spirit that he ceaseth the work, or to continue his former motions : Isa. lv. 6, 'Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.'

6. The exhortation is not in vain, because upon our use of the means usually God cometh in with success, and it is a hundred to one if it be otherwise. I cannot say to every one that plougheth, infallibly that he shall have a good crop ; but this I can say to him, It is God's use to bless the diligent and provident. I cannot say to every one that desireth posterity, Marry, and you shall have children ; I cannot say infallibly to him that goeth forth to battle for his country's good that he shall have victory and success ; but I can say, as Joab, 1 Chron. xix. 13, 'Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people and the cities of our God, and let the Lord do what is good in his sight.' I cannot say infallibly you shall have grace ; but I can say to every one, Let him use the means, and leave the success of his labour and his own salvation to the will and good pleasure of God. I cannot say this infallibly, for there is no obligation upon God. And still this work is made the fruit of God's will and mere arbitrary dispensation : James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth ;' Titus iii. 4, 5, 'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Let us do what God hath commanded, and let God do what he will. And I need not say so ; for the whole world in all their actings are and should be guided by this principle, Let us do our duty, and refer the success to God, whose ordinary practice is to meet with the creature that seeketh after him ; yea, he is with us already ; this earnest importunity in the use of means proceeding from the earnest impression of his grace. And therefore, since he is beforehand with us, and hath not showed any backwardness to our good, we have no reason to despair of his goodness and mercy, but rather to hope the best.



Well, now, let me go on with my exhortation. Since we are to labour after that which God will give, let me persuade you earnestly to desire, and carefully to endeavour after, this great benefit. But what is it that we are to do? (1.) Something to prepare for this work; (2.) Something that doth more immediately concern the work itself.

1. By way of tendency and preparation thereunto.

[1.] Observe what God doth to awaken your hearts, either by the touches of his providence or the motions of his Spirit. It is our great advantage to observe God's approaches: Isa. lv. 6, 'Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.' He is nearer sometimes than at other times. There is a time of finding, if we have the skill and heart to take hold of it. Don't lose such an advantage as you will not lightly have again, when by your frowardness and negligence you let it pass out of your hands. Take heed, then, of carnal shifts and delays, and putting off God when he doth so fairly draw nigh unto thee, lest he be gone and never come more. As he biddeth his disciples shake off the dust of their feet against such as would not receive them when they tendered themselves to them: Mat. x. 13, 14, 'And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet;' Acts xiii. 46, 'Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word should first be spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the gentiles.' So God may take his leave when you will not suffer him to go on with his work in thine heart. Take heed of curing the evil spirit with an instrument of music.

[2.] Somewhat you must do yourselves besides this involuntary impression from without. I shall not instance in reading, hearing, or the general means, but only such as concern a closer application. The want of such is the main reason why men, though there be such a necessity upon them, do not look after the new birth, and they are consideration and examination.

(1.) Consideration. Reason with yourselves: For what end were you made? and what shall become of you to all eternity? Ps. cxix. 59, 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies;' Ps. xxii. 27, 'All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindred of the nations shall worship before thee. Men go on in a senseless security, never thinking of God, nor of their own salvation, nor dreaming of any other world but this which they now enjoy, wherein they place their happiness, without desire or hope of a better estate. Oh, but if men would rouse up themselves, and consider that all the world are going to heaven or hell, and that in one of them there must be their long home or final abode, and that within a short time, they could not but be more serious, and see whether they are qualified to enter into the kingdom of God, yea or no. Oh, then, bethink yourselves how dangerous and woful will your condition be if you should be as Adam left you; if you should not be born again, and become a new creature; for new creatures are the only inhabitants of the new Jerusalem.

(2.) Examine and reflect upon thine own estate, whether indeed thou art born again, yea or no. What you have to depend upon; a duty which God often presseth us to: 'Let a man examine himself,' 1 Cor. xi. 28; and 'Communie with your own hearts upon your beds,' Ps. iv. 4; 'Search and try your ways, and turn to the Lord;' 'Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' 2 Cor. xiii. 5. A man that hath a conscience may reflect upon his own ways, and say, How is it with me? is the image of God formed upon me? But men are loath to examine, for they are afraid of raising such spirits as they cannot easily lay again; and being intoxicated with the sweetness of carnal peace, and being impatient of labour and trouble, will not deal seriously with their own hearts. And therefore, here the work sticketh in their hands; either they do not examine, or else break up the court before things come to a full hearing and decision. All is quiet now; they make no question of the love of God, and have no scruple about their condition; and why should they trouble themselves? they shall but open the door to fears, and scruples, and perplexities, and weaken their confidence in God; for so they call the security of the flesh. They have a mind to sleep securely in their sins, and have many pleasing dreams of their own good condition, and the devil lets them alone. Foolish creatures will not remember that they are in danger of a more severe search when God shall lay open the secrets of men's hearts.

2. With respect to the work itself.

[1.] You are with brokenness of heart to bewail your corruption and the wretchedness of your natural estate: Luke xviii. 13, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a miserable sinner.'

[2.] Beg grace of God: 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: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; thou art the Lord my God.' You can pray literally, though not spiritually. 'Take with you words, and call upon the Lord,' and put a natural fervency into them (as the new birth concerneth his happiness), though you have not a spiritual affection to the thing itself.

[3.] Wait for it.

(1.) With patience: 'Of his own will begat he us,' James i. 18. God's time is not yet come: John iii. 8, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' God acts with liberty, as the wind bloweth when and where it listeth. The wind bloweth freely, but not at the command and beck of any creature. Some lay at the pool for many years; others had cure sooner. We are not to limit the holy One of Israel, but wait upon him, without throwing up duties, or saying, 'Why should I wait upon the Lord any longer?'

(2.) With hope. There are absolute promises of taking away the heart of stone: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh, and I will



put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them;' Jer. xxiv. 7, 'And I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; and they shall return unto me with their whole heart;' 'And I will put my laws into their mind, and write them upon their heart,' Heb. viii. 10. These are not only promises *to* grace, but *of* grace. These encourage us in the constant use of means, especially considering how willing God is to give out grace when the hearts of his creatures are set upon it; and you lie as fair for them as any others.

[4.] Observe the secret illapses of his grace: Acts x. 44, 'While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.' It is not impossible for a spiritual man to feel the very first illapse of the Spirit into the soul. It may sometimes bring that sense with itself, though it is not so always; for the giving life and the giving sense are distinct things; they go not always together; yet observe the stirring of the waters. When he draweth, you should run, Cant. i. 4; when he knocketh, we should open, Rev. iii. 20. Sometimes you may feel that he knocketh loud; observe the impulse. When the wind bloweth, then let loose the sails, John iii. 8; when the waters are stirred, put in for cure, John v. 4. Our great duty is to obey the Spirit's sanctifying motions, and before they cool or cease, set about the business.

### SERMON III.

*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed.—*  
1 PETER i. 23.

USE 2. Is trial; are we born again, or have we been truly acquainted with this work of God upon our hearts? To this end let us see—(1.) What regeneration is; (2.) How it may be discovered that such a work hath passed upon us.

First, What it is. I shall proceed here both negatively and affirmatively.

1. Negatively; and here—

[1.] It is not our visible inauguration into the company of Christ's people by baptism; for many that are baptized may never enter into the kingdom of God. Baptism indeed is the outward sign and seal of it, and therefore called the 'laver of regeneration,' Titus iii. 5. But we must distinguish between the outward sign and the spiritual effect. There is *signatum* and *res terrena*, the sign and earthly matter; and there is *signatum* and *res cœlestis*, the heavenly work signified. The sign is water; the thing signified is the Spirit renewing and fashioning us according to the image of God. Now a man may be born again of water, and yet not born again of the Spirit. Both are necessary: John iii. 5, 'Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter

into the kingdom of God.' Simon Magus was baptized, Acts viii. 13, but Simon Magus was not regenerated or born again, being as yet in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. It is not submission to outward ordinances, but the efficacy of the Holy Spirit that worketh this work in us. As in Christ's baptism the Holy Ghost descended upon him. What was then done visibly must be done spiritually in every baptism, or else it is of little comfort to us; for without this God will not own us for sons, as he then owned Christ: 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Well, then, it concerneth us to see that we have the effect of baptism, or otherwise we may be miserable for all that, yea, the more miserable: 1 Cor. x. 2-5, 'And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.' And these things happened to them, *ὡς τύποι*, as types and pledges of that everlasting destruction which abideth for them that rest in their outward admission into the church of God, and never take care to be of the church of the first-born, or to fulfil their baptismal engagement; that glory in external privileges without internal grace. Therefore, if this be all you have to say for yourselves, that you were baptized, or visibly washed in the laver of regeneration, your very plea maketh for your condemnation; for you do but glory in your breach of vows, and do not look after a gracious change. You forget that ever you were baptized or washed from your sins: 2 Peter i. 9, 'He hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.' You neglect and undervalue the prime benefit of it. Therefore it is a vain plea to say, We are christians; we are baptized in the name of Christ, and dedicated to his service. This is but a vain plea—

(1.) Because there is more need that you should be born again, that you may receive the effect and fruit of your baptism, that it may not be an idle ceremony. Because they had 'put on Christ,' the apostle biddeth them 'put on Christ,' Col. iii. 10, 12; and again, because 'risen with Christ,' therefore 'set your affections upon things above;' and because 'dead,' therefore 'mortify,' Col. iii. 3, 5. We are more engaged to look after regeneration by our profession and covenant sealed in baptism. If you have put on Christ sacramentally, then put him on really. That putting off and putting on, Eph. iv. 22, 24, relateth to baptism. So Rom. vi. 11, 12, 'Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.' However God may deal with infidels, be sure it will not fare well with you. If you mock God with an empty formality, and put him off with baptismal regeneration without a real regeneration, if you put on Christ in profession, and do not really put him on, and know his grace in truth, you can never speed well at last. There is a common necessity upon all mankind of seeking after the reconciling and renewing grace of the Redeemer, but especially those that live in the church, because of their covenant vow and profession: Rom. vi. 3-5, 'Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried



with him by baptism into death, that, like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life: for if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.'

(2.) In baptism you were entered by others: Deut. xxix. 11, 'Your little ones.' In grown years you must enter yourselves disciples to Christ. There is required a personal act of all that come to age, that they may stand to the covenant, and own what their parents promised for them, and subscribe with their own hand to the God of Jacob: Isa. xlv. 5, 'One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.' As they grow up they must engage themselves to the Lord. As the parents of the blind man said, 'He is of age, let him speak for himself,' John ix. 21; so when persons are of age, then the renouncing of Christ's enemies, profession of faith in Christ, and the resignation of ourselves to God, should be made with our own mouths when we are able. Therefore christianity is called a 'confession,' Heb. iii. 1; and every christian is a confessor: Rom. x. 10, 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.' You may openly own Christ. 'There must be a 'professed subjection to the gospel of Christ,' 2 Cor. ix. 13.

(3.) This personal consent must not only be outwardly professed, but the heart must be renewed, and the bent of it set towards God; for we have not only to do with men, but with God; and God will not be mocked: 1 Peter iii. 21, 'The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ;' Rom. vi. 13, 'But yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.'

[2.] It is not a moral reformation or a change of life, but regeneration or a change of nature. Many change their manners and course of living, and yet are far enough from the new birth, which signifieth the infusion of a principle of spiritual life into the soul. To change our actions whilst our hearts are unchanged will never bring us to heaven; for God requireth not only good fruit, but a good tree, and maketh actions to be the fruit of a new life: Ezek. xi. 19, 20, 'And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them.' A man may change his course, as he that was lewd before may become sober, and yet his nature may be the same, a carnal wretch for all that; as a sow that is washed is a sow still. O christians! let not this seem a paradox to you. The scripture doth everywhere distinguish between the old man and his deeds and the new man and his actions, the nature and the fruits; and therefore do not deceive yourselves. Holiness of life floweth from a renewed heart, and the Lord's method is first to infuse the principles of the new life, or gracious habits or powers into the soul; next to actuate those powers, making them actually to do those things that are spiritually good:

Gal. v. 25, 'If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.' Spiritual motion and action presupposeth a principle of spiritual life, as a thing previous unto and different from it. Therefore you do but delude yourselves to think to alter your course and way, or do anything pleasing to God, without a principle of life. Therefore it is not enough to look after a change; is it a spiritual change, a passing from death to life, so that you are born again?

[3.] It is not a slight tincture and superficial gospel change. Some have good moods, pretend to religion for a while, which may produce some notable reformation; as those that 'have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' These may cleanse their outside, and yet be worse than they were before the change; never renouncing their secret lusts, though forbearing some acts of sin. These have real inclinations to be happy, some slight tincture of holiness, but not a new creature. The carnal nature will return to its old bias again.

[4.] It is not an internal, transient motion. Some are affected at times, as an assumed body by an angel is moved and carried up and down for a time. It is not a transient motion by which the soul is a little moved, as fire is excited by the bellows; but an infusion of true life, as a principle of operation. Not an actual motion, but an habitual mutation: 'He that is born of God, the seed of God remaineth in him,' 1 John iii. 9, which cannot be understood of transient actions, but true and permanent qualities: John iv. 14, 'But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' The Spirit doth not only work on them, but dwell in them by virtue of those permanent and fixed habits which he hath wrought in the soul. This is not a stream or a pond, but a well, always springing and bubbling up in holy actions; and by this a renewed man differeth from another, that he hath abiding in him the seed of God, or a gracious principle which liveth and groweth more and more. There may be a transient operation in carnal men: Num. xxiii. 5, 'The Lord put a word into Balaam's mouth;' Num. xxiv. 15, 'And Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are opened hath said;' and Saul: 1 Sam. x. 10, 'The Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them;' as the air enlightened by the sun retaineth that light no longer than the sun shineth into it, because it hath no fountain of light in itself. There are some acts the Holy Ghost worketh as a passenger, not as an inhabitant; but a regenerate man hath the 'anointing abiding in himself,' 1 John ii. 27. Well, then, it is not to have some fleeting motions, as Herod had his joy, and Jehu his zeal, and Felix his trembling, and Balaam and Saul their prophetic fits and starts; but the Spirit of God doth dwell with us. It is true he doth not act always at the same rate; and therefore a christian is sometimes enlarged and sometimes straitened, according to the measure of actual influence; but still there he is, there is still an indwelling principle of life. The life of God doth not appear with a like activity, but it abideth with us.

2. Let us see what it is, or wherein it consists. It is the infusion of a new life. You may conceive it thus—

[1.] We are united to Christ by the Spirit of sanctification. There is



no fountain of life but God alone, and no means to convey it to us but Jesus Christ : John v. 26, 'For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself ;' John xiv. 6, 'Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me ;' Col. iii. 3, 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.' From God, as the fountain of all grace, it cometh out through Christ by the Spirit. There is an inseparable union by the Spirit, often called 'the beginning of the creation of God,' Rev. iii. 14.

[2.] The Spirit that thus worketh in us dwelleth in us, or giveth us that habitual power which enableth us to do all things spiritually. An habitual power I call it, because there is no fitter name to express it by ; for it abideth constantly in them that receive it, as habits do in those that have them. Notwithstanding it differeth, because habits are partly and wholly acquired by use and often practice ; whereas this is not gotten, but infused. Or you may call it a spiritual principle. But for the name there is no such great matter as for the power. This new principle is not a new faculty added to those which are in men by nature. A man that is regenerate hath no more faculties in his soul than he had before as unregenerate ; only those faculties which he had before are improved, and receive a further strength to act spiritually, as before they did naturally. As our bodies in the resurrection from the dead shall have no more nor other parts than they have at present, only those which are now natural shall then be made spiritual : 1 Cor. xv. 46, 'Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.' Or as those natural and sensitive faculties which we have in common with the beasts ; what they (having no higher principle than sense) use sensually, we, having the same faculties under the command of a rational soul, use rationally ; so that understanding, will, and affections, which were formerly under the command of reason, and so could produce nothing but rational operations, now being under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ, work spiritually. Therefore a regenerate man is said to 'walk after the Spirit,' Rom viii. 1, in opposition to fleshly interests ; to be led by the Spirit, Gal. v. 18 ; to 'walk in the Spirit,' ver. 25.

3. This habitual power or spiritual principle, as it worketh forth towards several objects, and in several kinds and ways of operation, hath divers names ; as faith, hope, love, meekness ; all which are called so many graces or fruits of the Spirit, but indeed are but the various discoveries of the same principle of spiritual life, according to the several uses for which it serveth. Or if you will distinguish them for clearness, there is, first, a spiritual principle ; secondly, spiritual habits ; thirdly, actual operations and motions according to those habits ; the spiritual principle of saving grace flowing in a regenerate man from Christ, his head, by the Spirit of God.

This habitual grace with relation to various objects is called charity, faith, hope, temperance, &c. ; all which are but the diversification of the actings of that spiritual principle. These are much increased and strengthened by the use and much exercise of them.

But you will say, How cometh it then to pass that christians excel more in one grace than another ?

*Ans.* Because the spiritual principle is more exercised and drawn out

that way, as most suitable to their temper; Abraham for faith, Timothy for temperance, Moses for meekness, and Job for patience.

Out of all we may gather, that regeneration is not the improving what was in us before, nor the strengthening of what was weak, but the bestowing of something that we had not before; a vital principle or habitual power.

Secondly, How we may discover that such a work hath been wrought in us. There are ways of knowing it—(1.) By the manner of working it; (2.) By the effects of it.

1. Sometimes it may be evident by the manner of working, because this work hath certain preparations which lead thereunto, and are very sensible, as terrors and agonies in the heart, by a sense of our miserable condition. Now if we consider when we felt these terrors and awakenings, and how we came out of them, a man may go near to trace the way of God with him, and to observe his passage from death to life. Now because regeneration, though for the most part (yet is not always) evident to sense in the way and progress of the work, yet it may be evident in the discovery and fruits of it; and it may fall out with some as it did with the blind man in the 9th of John, who, when they asked him what Christ did to him, how he opened his eyes, answered, I cannot tell; but this one thing I know, that whereas I was born blind, I now see; so how or when Christ was formed in me, when the immortal seed was sown in my heart, I cannot tell, but I am glad to find him here. Therefore I shall in the second place see what are the effects of this work.

2. There are such effects left upon us as are—

[1.] Answerable to baptism, which is the sign and seal of it: Titus iii. 5, 'He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Then they did *ἀναθεματίζειν ἑαυτοὺς τῷ Θεῷ* as Justin speaks, solemnly dedicate themselves to God. That is our first solemn implantation into Christ's mystical body. The spiritual life beginneth in an entering into covenant with God, or a dedication of ourselves to him; for the first impression left upon the soul is a tendency towards God; and therefore, as soon as grace entereth, we devote ourselves to his use and service: 2 Cor. viii. 5, 'But first gave themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God;' Rom. vi. 13, 'Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.' And that is the meaning of being baptized into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Mat. xxviii. 19. We take Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be our God, and heartily and really profess ourselves to be his people. God the Father to be our sovereign lord and everlasting portion, God the Son to be our redeemer and saviour, and God the Holy Ghost to be our sanctifier, guide, and comforter. We take God to be our sovereign lord, to obey his will, to please him in all things, and also to be our everlasting and all-sufficient portion; reckoning our happiness by his love and favour, and preferring it above all the delights of sense, and the pleasures, honours, and profits of the world. If this be the frame of our hearts, we are regenerated: Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;' Ps. lxxiii. 3, 'Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my



lips shall praise thee.' To his judgment we must finally stand or fall; if we take Christ for our redeemer and saviour, who only can reconcile us to God, and repair the ruins of the fall, and maintain God's interest in our souls: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'For Christ also hath suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit;' John xiv. 6, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.' Therefore, continuing in well-doing, we may venture our souls in his hands, and by him come to God, depending upon his merit, righteousness, and intercession, and taking his promises for the ground of our faith and hope. And we must give up ourselves to the Spirit, to sanctify and guide us in the ways of life, and to perfect the image of God in us, and prepare us for glory. The Spirit is as necessary to keep all right between us and Christ, as Christ between us and God. This being the great necessary vital act, I would pitch the evidence here: If you have God for your God, then you are regenerated; if Christ for your redeemer: 1 John v. 12, 'He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life;' if the Spirit for your guide and sanctifier. Take either of the notions, for one implieth all, though it be good to be distinct in them.

[2.] To enter into covenant with God doth imply a renouncing of other lords and masters which are opposite to Christ and the Spirit. These are the devil, the world, and the flesh; for these are enemies of that salvation to which God of his infinite love would bring us, through the merits of Christ, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit. One trinity is chosen and another renounced. The devil is an enemy; for therefore we are rescued out of the power of darkness, whereby is meant the devil: Col. i. 13, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' The world is an enemy: Gal. vi. 14, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' The flesh is an enemy: Rom. viii. 12, 13, 'We are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh; for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.' The devil by his suggestions would tempt you to atheism and disbelief of the promises, that all the glory of the other world is but a fancy, and it is best to seek your happiness here by courting the world, and gratifying and contenting the flesh, and doing everything it craveth at your hands. Now this is grievous and burdensome to the renewed soul; therefore it watcheth, striveth, and resisteth Satan: 1 Peter v. 8, 9, 'Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith;' James iv. 7, 'Resist the devil, and he will fly from you.' The world allureth and enticeth us from our duty, and by a secret witchery enchanteth our hearts, and so the love of God is lessened, and the care of salvation jostled out: 1 John ii. 15, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;' James iv. 4, 'Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.' A man is not sincere till he taketh his affections from these things, and placeth them upon God and heavenly things,

from the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world, that he may mind, choose, and seek after better things. The flesh must be renounced, lest we hearten our enemy: 1 Peter ii. 11, 'Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' Whosoever is under the dominion of his lusts and fleshly desires, and doth gratify rather than mortify them, will soon mind the things of the flesh above the Spirit, and will soon prefer the satisfaction of his lusts above the will of God, and so cannot be sincere and upright with him. In our natural estate we were under the power of all those, as it is set forth in one place: Eph. ii. 2, 3, 'Wherein in times past ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, that worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom we had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' The custom and corrupt course of the world, that was their rule; the prince of the power of the air, that was their guide; and the flesh, or the bent of corrupt nature, that was their principle. While we are in our corrupt estate, the devil doth powerfully rule us, and the example and common practice of the world encourage us, and corrupt nature within doth incline us to sin against the Lord. Well, then, these enemies must be renounced, that we may have another rule, another lord, and another principle. Another rule, which is the law of God; another lord, Jesus Christ; another principle, his Spirit dwelling in us.

2. Such as is answerable to the notion of regeneration; for surely the Holy Ghost would speak intelligibly, and so as to beget a right apprehension of this thing in our minds, when he useth this term. Now of every perfect birth, and so of regeneration, there are two effects—life and likeness, of which by and by. Now suitably to these principles thus laid down, I shall frame a few questions to be seriously put to conscience.

[1.] Do you not think that you were sometimes unsanctified, and in a state of wrath and condemnation? If not, then you are not of the offspring of Adam, nor of human race; for all mankind have corrupted their way, and involved themselves in sin and misery: Ps. li. 5, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me;' Rom. iii. 23, 'We all have sinned, and are come short of the glory of God;' Eph. ii. 3, 'Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' If not, then you need no saviour, no redeemer, are wholly unconcerned in redemption by Christ, which is a recovery out of our lost estate; for 'the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost,' Luke xix. 10. Have we had a sense of our lost estate, wherein we were by nature? Usually it is with fear, shame, and grief: Acts ii. 37, 'They were pricked in their hearts.' Fear; for nature hath a quicker sense of danger than anything else. Then shame, because of our folly and filthiness; and grief and sorrow, because of the unkindness of sin. A drunken man that layeth himself asleep on a rotten plank on a bridge over a deep and rapid water, and there walloweth in his vomit, is in great danger, but is not sensible of his danger till he be awakened;



then he is first afraid, and then ashamed of his beastliness; when he cometh to himself, and the wine is gotten out of his head, then he is sorrowful that he should so much forget himself. So while we are in an estate of nature, we are without remorse, and go on with delight in sin, and think no harm or shame of it. But when a man is awakened from sleep, Eph. v. 14, 'Awake thou that sleepest,' then he is ashamed of the folly of his former course: Ps. lxxiii. 22, 'So foolish was I, and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee.' Or if he be given up more to an inordinacy of the filthiness of it, then he is troubled what to do; he groweth unsatisfied with his estate: I must run a new course; and crieth out, What shall I do? Now were you ever acquainted with such a work so as to groan under the burden of your sins? Mat. xi. 28, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' and with brokenness of heart seek God's favour. That is one part of the change, to take away the heart of stone. Before sin is made a light matter; but when the soul beginneth to feel it to be of such a weight as will sink us to hell, then it groweth weary of it, and desireth to come out of this condition. There is many a man that hath weak and waterish notions about the evil of sin, and will coldly confess that he is a sinner, but when he comes to feel it indeed, and it sets close to his heart, and he saith, If I die in this condition I shall be damned eternally: O foolish creature! that I have lived thus long in this danger, and never thought of it! oh, what shall become of me? wretched man that I am! how shall I escape? Now hath thy heart been broken, that it may be ploughed and sown? Jer. iv. 3, 'Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.' Hast thou been broken in heart with the apprehension of sin? Ps. li. 17, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' Have there ever been such workings of spirit (as somewhat to this purpose there will be in all that are converted), since this was the first occasion of your more intimate acquaintance with God? There is a step towards the knowledge of your estate: What manner of entrance hath it had? though I do not pitch it wholly upon that.

[2.] Is there any change wrought in us? A man that is renewed is not the same man that he was before, they differ as light and darkness: Eph. v. 8, 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord.' As much as an old man and a new, Eph. iv. 22-24, as if he were not the same man; a dead man and a living: Eph. ii. 1, 'And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.' As it is true of Christ, 'He was dead and is alive,' Rev. i. 8, so it holdeth good of every man in Christ; he was dead and is alive: Luke xv. 24, 'This my son was dead and is alive.' There is not only a difference between them and others, but between them and themselves. They live by another rule, and have another aim and tendency; not according to the fashions of the world, but according to the will of God. They do not say with the pharisee, *Ego non sum sicut ceteri homines*, but *Ego non sum ego*: I am not as other men, but I am not as myself; I am not what I was; as if another soul dwelt in the same body. It is not enough to be differenced from others by a change of life, but from ourselves by a change of heart. When Onesimus was converted,

Philem. 11, 'Before unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and me.' He was quite another man; before loose, vain, carnal, doting upon the vanities of the world; now strict, serious, spiritual, taken up with the things of God; before pleasing the flesh, now pleasing the Lord; before the mind was blind, now the eyes are opened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation; he hath another sight of divine things than ever he had before. Before the conscience was stupified or terrified, now it is tender, and has some sense of the love of God. Before the will was obstinate in evil, changeable and fickle in that which is good, now it hath some freedom towards God, is more settled in a holy course. Before the affections were unmortified, unbridled in carnal things, dead and cold to things spiritual and heavenly; now the strength of them runneth out in another channel: now they have other desires, delights, fears and joys; before idle, now hard at work for God. Before you merely minded your own things, now unfeignedly study and mind how to glorify God, and serve him with the best advantage.

[3.] Is it such a change as doth amount to conversion or regeneration? Every change will not serve the turn, but such as doth induce a new life and likeness unto God.

First, The infusion of a new life or vital principle is the great thing in regeneration. Is it so indeed that you begin to live in Christ? Life is known by sense, appetite, and motion.

(1.) Sense. They that have another life have another sense of good and evil than ever they had before. Another sense of evil. The soul as soon as born is sensible of the injuries of that life he hath; so the new creature is sensible of the hurt of the life of grace. They feel their corruptions, groan under the burden of them: Rom. vii. 24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' More troubled with the relics of sin and the opposition of the flesh. They had but notions about these things before, now they have a feeling of them; but superficial apprehensions before, but now sin is as great a trouble to them as pain and sickness to the life natural.

(2.) Appetite. They have another gust and savour. The new creature longeth after the means appointed to feed it: 1 Peter ii. 2, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.' Such as the food is, such is the life. A carnal man liveth a carnal life, when his secret thoughts and inward affections are set upon carnal delights: Luke xii. 19, 'And I will say unto my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, eat, drink, and be merry.' He cheereth up himself with these things. They have other supports, other comforts, as Christ, and grace, and eternity, and the promises of the good word: 1 Peter ii. 3, 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' They find these things sweet; so the new creature hath its tastes and distastes; a promise set home upon the soul, it is sweeter than honey to the taste, Ps. cxix. 103.

Now you that come to Christ's table for the food of the new creature, have you no appetite, no gust? New creatures are welcome. This banquet was provided for them, and they will come with most gust and desire. There is a suitableness of Christ without and Christ within us. Christ within helpeth us to live upon this food. Fleshly



minds find no pleasure in the things of God; somewhat else doth please them better.

(3.) By motion or action. If there be life, it will be stirring. A man cannot have fire in his bosom, and not feel it. 'I will give you a new heart, and you shall walk in my ways.' Now the vital principle is discovered—(1.) By the uniformity of our actions; (2.) By the tendency of them.

(1st.) The uniformity. Natural actions are uniform. Fire doth always ascend and a stone descend. That is casual which is but now and then. A wicked man sinneth constantly, frequently, easily. It is preternatural if he doeth good; it is only by fits and good moods; it is casual, not natural; whereas a godly man maketh religion his business. It is true, there is a fleshly nature always at work, opposing and thwarting the Spirit or new principle; therefore the uniformity of our motion is known by this, what advantage the Spirit hath over the flesh, or the flesh over the Spirit? Gal. v. 16, 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' Now, briefly, do you maintain the motions and directions of the renewed part, or the new man of grace in the heart, so as to keep under the motions of the flesh or the corrupt part? Though inbred corruption be not totally suppressed, yet the motions of it shall not be fulfilled.

(2d.) The tendency, the inclination and bent of the soul is turned. He that giveth himself to God must live to God. Our dedication is known by our use, our scope by our work, our making covenant by our keeping covenant with God. Our life must show the reality of our first consent. We are his: 'He hath bought us with a price,' 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; and therefore we must live to him: Rom. vi. 4, 'So we also should live in newness of life;' 1 Peter iv. 1, 2, 'For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.' You must make it your main business to be what God would have you to be, and to do what God would have you to do. The spiritual principle is carried to God; a living to God. The new nature came from God, and worketh towards God or for God. God is the centre of the soul, and the ancient strength of the soul was made for God and towards God. So when it is renewed and restored, it is for God: Rom. vii. 4, 'Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead; that we should bring forth fruit unto God.'

Secondly, The next effect is likeness: Gal. iv. 19, 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth till Christ be formed in you.' His image portrayed, drawn upon the soul; so that a christian representeth Christ and expresseth his life in all that he doeth; discovereth his Spirit working in him. The image of Christ is darkened in many as to purity and holiness: 1 Peter i. 15, 16, 'As he that hath called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of conversation; for it is written, Be ye holy as I am holy.' We should be like Christ in meekness and self-denial: Mat. xi. 29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.'

## SERMON IV.

*By the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*—1 PETER i. 23.

DOCT. The instrumental cause of regeneration is the word of God: James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth.' There is the principal efficient, 'He;' the moving cause, 'Of his own will;' the instrumental cause or means, 'By the word of truth;' and the final cause is for his own glory and service. So 1 Cor. iv. 15, 'For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel;' where we have the author, 'Christ;' the subordinate instrument, 'I,' Paul; the means, 'The gospel.'

1. Let me explain the point.

2. Confirm it by reasons how and why.

First, How the word concurrerh to regeneration.

1. There is a twofold operation upon the soul—physical and moral. The physical operation is the infusion of life; the moral operation is in a way of reason and persuasion: both these ways are necessary, not of any need in God, but mere love to us. God worketh strongly like himself, and sweetly, that he may attemper his work to our nature, and suit the key to the wards of the lock. Both these ways are often spoken of in scripture: John vi. 44, 45, 'No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. And they shall all be taught of God: every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' They are both taught and drawn; so taught as also drawn and inclined; and so drawn as that also taught; as it becometh God to deal with men. And therefore sometimes God is said to 'create in us a new heart,' Ps. li. 10, and to 'create us to good works,' Eph. ii. 10, to note his almighty power. Sometimes to persuade and allure: Hosea ii. 15, 'I will allure her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her;' Gen. ix. 27, 'The Lord shall persuade Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem.' By fair and kind words draw men to a liking of his ways. The soul of man is determined to God by an object without and a quality within. The object is propounded with all its qualifications, that the understanding may be informed and convinced, and the will and affections persuaded in a potent and high way of reasoning. But this is not enough to determine man's heart without an internal quality or grace infused, which is his physical work upon the soul. There is not only a propounding of reasons and arguments, but a powerful inclination of the heart, and so by a strong hand we are plucked out of the snare of death. Well, now, as to the physical or powerful operation, the word is not the instrumental cause, but God worketh immediately; for the word written and preached, voice, letters, syllables, are not subjects capable of receiving spiritual life to convey it to us. I say, there is not any such virtue in the sound of syllables and sentences of the word, but the Spirit doth this work immediately. But as to the moral operation, in a way of argument and persuasion, so the word is the instrument. There are other occasional helps, but this is the instituted means. Word and sacraments are *instrumenta quandam tenus moralia*,



in a sort moral instruments ; the word to beget grace, and the sacraments to confirm it. We are born again of the word, but our growth and increase we have from the sacraments.

2. Though the infusion of life be God's immediate work, yet because it is done in concomitancy and association with the word, therefore the effect is ascribed to the word as well as to the Spirit. So the law of God is said 'to convert the soul,' Ps. xix. 7; and the gospel is said to be the 'power of God to salvation,' Rom. i. 16, that is, God doth not ordinarily work any other way; and hath tied us to depend upon him in the use of this means for such an effect. As the stars shed abroad their influences by air and clouds to make the earth fruitful, and insinuate their effects by other natural causes; so doth God convey his power in a concomitancy with the word, though not by the word; that is, there is not any natural force put into it to produce such an effect.

3. In the moral way the word hath a double operation. First, it prepareth to receive the gracious principle; secondly, it exciteth the gracious principle newly infused to actual believing and turning to God. The one is ordinarily done by the law, the other by the gospel. Moses may bring to the borders, but Joshua leadeth into the land of Canaan. It is true, God may make use of any part of christian doctrine to strike the first blow, but the work issueth itself into this method, that first a man is sensible of his misery, and then cometh to God by Christ for a remedy. A sense of wrath is the effect of the law: Rom. iv. 15, 'Because the law worketh wrath.' And hope of grace is the fruit of the gospel. Therefore I say, he maketh use of the law to prepare us to begin the pangs of the new birth; and of the gospel to excite and allure the soul into his bosom. Because this is of great consequence, I shall a little enlarge upon it.

[1.] The word doth prepare the heart to receive the gracious principle, as it informeth us of our duty, and so taketh from us the pretence of ignorance; and showeth our guilt in the neglect of duty, and so taketh from us the conceit of our own righteousness; as it convinceth us of our impotency to satisfy the law, and free ourselves from this estate whenever we get out of it, and so taketh away the presumption of our own sufficiency; so that the sinner is laid at the feet of God as a lost and undone creature. As ground is ploughed up to receive the seed, so by this preparative work is the heart of man ploughed up, Jer. iv. 3, broken, and humbled, and perplexed, and rendered capable to receive the immortal seed. When the sinner is cast down with the sight of sin, and a sense of God's wrath due to him, he is broken and fitted to receive the new birth.

[2.] It exciteth the gracious principle, newly infused, to actual believing and turning to God. This is done by the gospel revealing the way of reconciliation, peace, and life, as tendered by God himself to self-condemning and penitent sinners through the mediation of Jesus Christ. For the understanding of this, know that when we are acted by God, we act under him: Cant. i. 4, 'Draw me, we will run after thee;' Phil. iii. 12, 'We apprehend that for which we are apprehended by Christ.' When his grace layeth hold upon us in effectual calling, we having the principles of a new life infused into us, do bestir ourselves in a way of holiness; for as there is a passive reception of Christ by

the Spirit, so an active by faith. The acts on our part are made three, with respect to the trinity of persons in the Godhead—a turning from the creature to God, from self to Christ, and from sin to holiness, or a free and cheerful subjection to God, that we may be happy in the enjoyment of him. Now to all this the word serveth to quicken and excite this voluntary act on our part; for the gospel showing the possibility of grace by Christ, yea, his readiness to give life and righteousness to every one that cometh to God by him, yea, by powerful arguments and sweet invitations calling upon us to look after Christ for these things, the renewed heart is excited earnestly to seek after Christ, and doth vehemently desire to be united to him, and doth cheerfully receive him, and embrace him as offered in the gospel, and wholly give himself to seek and serve him by the Spirit in the way of new obedience; so that in all this part of the work of conversion wherein we are active, the word is of great use.

4. This word that has such an use is not only the word written, but the word preached, as the context here will inform us: ‘He hath begotten us, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, which is the word of God;’ ver. 25, ‘And this is the word which by the gospel is preached to you.’ It is not enough to look upon the written word as the seed and principle of our spiritual being, and accordingly to esteem it, but also we ought to have the same good esteem of the particular messages from and according to that word by the Lord’s servants, or those portions of truth which the Lord carveth out to them by the messengers that he sendeth to them; for the word preached hath a singular efficacy, and ministerial subserviency, over and besides the word written, to explain, apply, and excite the hearts of men to their duty. And therefore we are called *σύνεργοι*, ‘Labourers together with God,’ 1 Cor. iii. 9; and 2 Cor. vi. 1, ‘We then, as workers together with him, do beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.’ We are workers together with God, not by an immediate producing of spiritual effects, but by the external application and inculcation of the counsels and doctrines of the word, which being solidly explained, forcibly pressed, and closely applied, have a notable subserviency to God’s work of grace upon the hearts of his people; and therefore our ministry is called the ministration of the Spirit unto life, 2 Cor. iii. 6, 8.

But you will say, This is true indeed of the apostles, who were infallibly assisted, and had the power of miracles to evidence their mission and call. I answer—The ordinary ministerial teaching is Christ’s institution as well as that of the apostles: Eph. iv. 11, ‘He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.’ This is done *pleno jure*: Mat. xxviii. 19, 20, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;’ by virtue of that authority given him by God. They are in the same commission grounded on his plenary authority, and have a promise of the same presence and Spirit as to the substance of the work, and they do the same things. Though they be not immediately called, and miraculously gifted, and infallibly assisted and sent out to all the world, yet as to the substance of the work it is the same. Apollos as well as Paul and Cephas are but ministers of God by whom ye believe, 2 Cor. iii. 5.

5. Though the blessing of this preaching cometh wholly from God,



yet he usually joineth the strongest influences with the most lively means: Acts xiv. 1, 'They so spake that a great multitude of Jews and Greeks believed.' 'They so spake.'

*Quest.* Doth the faith of the hearers lie in the power of the speaker?

I answer—No; but usually God accommodateth his operation to the means which he uses. That doctrine that is most pure, most clear, most pressing and persuasive, is most like to succeed; for God worketh congruously. He that hath a gift of rightly dividing the word of truth, and applying it prudently with force and strength, is more apt to edify than another of slower gifts or a weaker understanding in spiritual things; as darts that are cast forth by art out of engines, and fitted with feathers, are more apt to fly faster and pierce deeper than those that are thrown casually, or than those that fall by their own weight; and so, though the word of God be the word of God, from whose mouth soever it cometh, or however discovered, yet when it is well and properly enforced with distinctness of language, vehemency, and vigour of spirit, and prudent application, it is more conducive to the end; and therefore doth God bestow such gifts that he may more plentifully dispense his grace. 'They so spake,' with such clearness, evidence, and persuasiveness.

6. This influence of grace is given out at the time of hearing, or afterwards: Acts x. 44, 'While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word;' in the very speaking: Luke xxiv. 32, 'Did not our hearts burn within us when he talked with us by the way, and opened to us the scriptures?' Sometimes at the rebound, when we go aside and meditate. As the spouse thought of Christ's words when he was gone: Cant. v. 6, 'My soul failed when he spake;' which she slighted while they were speaking: ver. 2, 3, 'Open to me, my sister. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?' and so the effect is accomplished.

7. God in working by the word doth not work necessarily, but voluntarily: James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us.' The effectual working of his Spirit doth accompany it when and where God pleaseth; for the wind bloweth as it listeth, John iii. 8. The wind is not at the command of any creature; so the Spirit is a free agent, working where and on whom, when, and in what measure, he pleaseth, and will be hindered by none. The word works not necessarily, as fire heateth, or water floweth, but at the will of God, when he will join his assistance. Thus Lydia's heart was opened by God when others were shut, Acts xvi. 14; and many scoffed at Peter's sermon, which notwithstanding converted three thousand souls, Acts ii. 41; and Acts xvii. 34, 'Howbeit, certain men clave to him and believed,' when others mocked; so that the connection between the word and the power of God is not natural, necessary, and perpetual. The works of nature do naturally produce their effect, but that is natural to them; whereas this is supernatural. God doth not tie himself absolutely to the means, yet we are tied in the use of them. We are bound, but God will be free.

Secondly, Why—(1.) The word is used as a means and instrument; (2.) Why the word preached.

1. Why the word? The main reason is God's pleasure: 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save some,' 1 Cor. i. 21. The

same reason is given for salvation by Christ, Col. i. 19. As vain a course as we think it to be, yet the Lord hath chosen to work this way. But because all God's works have a reason in them, and are designed with excellent wisdom, let us see what may be observed in this institution. God is pleased to make use of the word as the instrument of regeneration—

[1.] Because there is nowhere else such a discovery of God. The main end of regeneration is conformity to God's image, or to make us 'partakers of a divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 4, to work such a change in us as may make us like unto God in wisdom, righteousness, and humility, and pity to poor creatures. Now what fitter instrument to be used in such a work than the word, which is the fairest draught and copy of God that ever was, and so a fit pattern whereby the new creature may be framed? It is for God's honour that he should be expressed as fully and exactly as may be. Now where can this be but in God's word? Not in the doctrines of men; they know little of him, and they cannot set him out as he doth deserve. And men are more apt to transform God into an idol of their own fancy, and turn his glory into a lie, Rom. i. 25, than to give us any true mirror and glass wherein he can be represented. God's own works do discover his wisdom, power, goodness, but not so evidently his holiness. They do but half discover God, and cannot give us such a distinct knowledge of his nature and will till we see them altogether in the whole contexture, and then but darkly; we need the commentary of his word to interpret them. David was fain to go into the sanctuary before he knew what to make of providence, Ps. lxxiii. 17. Otherwise he could not understand the holiness and righteousness of God's actions. It is true, his works praise him. They show him in his tender mercies, and mighty power, and Godhead, and justice in rewarding and punishing; but they never express him so distinctly, nor in that fulness and latitude as his word doth, and therefore cannot affect the heart so deeply. But now here we 'behold the glory of the Lord as in a glass, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory,' 2 Cor. iii. 18. The image of God is most exactly expressed in the word, the perfect draught of his face; and therefore a fit stamp whereby to leave an impression upon the new creature, as the seal well engraven doth upon the wax: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them.' Christ is the image of his Father's glory, and the gospel the lively image and representation of Jesus Christ. As God the Father shineth forth in the Son, so the Son in his glorious gospel. So that here is a happy way for us to recover again our lost image of God in which we were created, and which by the fall was defaced in us. In the face of Jesus Christ is to be seen the glory of God; and Jesus Christ is to be seen in the glass of the gospel, according to which the new creature is formed and fashioned.

[2.] Because nothing is so likely to sway the heart of the creature, nor to come with such authority and power upon the conscience, as the word of God. Man's heart would be hardly brought to stoop to any power but God's alone, whose voice prevaieth upon the conscience and imaginations of the heart, which the voice of no man can do, and therefore is able to shake our hearts. God appointed some to go in his



name, and with evidence commending themselves to the consciences of every one, to challenge man of his duty. 'Where the word of a king is,' saith Solomon, 'there is power,' Eccles. viii. 4. We reckon not of the words of a private person, but of a king we do; so ought we much more of God.

[3.] No means are so accommodate for this purpose as the word, so suitable to man's nature. It is such a doctrine as the conscience doth require. No doctrine is so fitted to humble, to comfort, to persuade us to holiness.

(1.) To humble us, by working in us a sight and sense of our misery and natural filthiness. It is a glass wherein we see God's face and our own: James i. 23, 'If a man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass.' A light by which we see every sin in our own bosoms. The new nature is never sought after but by them that are dissatisfied with their old estate. And now when a man hath a sight of his natural face, what a deformed, loathsome creature he is, he beginneth to abhor himself, and to look after another state and frame of heart.

(2.) No doctrine so fit to comfort and revive the broken heart with hopes of mercy as the gospel, that revealeth the way of life upon gracious terms. It is the charter and grant of Christ and all his benefits from God to every one that will receive him: Ps. xix. 8, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.' This doth the heart good to think of it.

(3.) To persuade to holiness in a high and potent way of reasoning, by pure precepts and strict injunctions, by high patterns and examples of being perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, holy as he is holy; by fit inducements from the rewards and punishments, strict precepts requiring not only external practice, but a right disposition of heart towards God; notable encouragements from the love of God, the purchase of Christ Jesus: 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' Powerful inducements from the punishments; the wrath of God, that shall seize on the soul as well as the body in this life, and the flames of hell. Men that require an ordinary conversation outwardly threaten only, and promise some outward and temporal good or evil; but he requires regeneration upon eternal good or evil.

[4.] The word is suited as a proper cure for the diseases of men's souls. The diseases of men's souls are ignorance, slowness, and impotency.

(1.) The first disease is ignorance, set forth by the notions of darkness and blindness: Eph. v. 8, 'Ye were sometimes darkness;' 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that wanteth these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.' Though they have a natural power of understanding, yet no spiritual discerning, 1 Cor. ii. 14, no saving knowledge of the things which pertain to the kingdom of God. This is the great disease of human nature, worse than bodily blindness, because men are not sensible of it: Rev. iii. 18, 'And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Because they look not for guides to lead them: Acts xiii. 11, 'And immediately there fell on him a mist and darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.'

(2.) Slightness ; they will not mind these things, nor exercise their thoughts about them : Mat. xxii. 5, 'They made light of it ;' Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ?' It is a long time ere we can bring them to ask, 'What shall I do to be saved ?'

(3.) Impotency and weakness, which lieth in the wilfulness and hardness of their hearts. Our *non posse* is *non velle*. Our inability lies in our unwillingness : Ps. lviii. 4, 5, 'They are like to the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the charmer, charming never so wisely ;' Mat. xxiii. 37, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ?' Luke xix. 14, 'His citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.' Now what more proper cure for all these evils than the word of God ? Teaching is the proper means to cure ignorance, for men have a natural understanding. Warning of danger and mindfulness of duty is the proper means to cure slightness. And to remove their impotency (which lieth in their obstinacy and wilfulness), there is no such means as to beseech them with constant persuasions. The impotence is rather moral than natural. We do not use to reason men out of bare natural impotency, to bid a lame man walk, or a blind man see, or bid a dead man live ; but to make men willing of the good which they rejected or neglected ; in short, to inform the judgment, awaken the conscience, persuade the will : yet it is true the bare means will not do it without God's concurrence, the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit ; but it is an encouragement to use these means, because they are fitted to the end, and God would not appoint us means which should be altogether in vain.

2. Why the word preached by those whom God hath sent for that work ? This hath a further subserviency, that God hath authorised some to interpret scripture as well as explain, to draw the arrow to the head, by earnest and copious exhortations to inculcate what is more briefly delivered in the word. Scripture possibly may be laid by as a neglected thing ; therefore some that should be Christ's spokesmen must be sure to call upon us, and put us in mind of our eternal condition, must bring the word nigh to us, Rom. x. 5. This institution speaketh much of the wisdom and goodness of God.

[1.] His wisdom. Death entered by the ear, so doth life and peace. Seeing is in heaven, but hearing in the church. God will try the world by his ordinary messengers. We would have visions, oracles, and miracles, Luke xvi. 30 ; some to come from the dead ; but God hath sent some to deal with us more rationally, by external applications in the way of a man, and not rule us by strong hand and mere force.

[2.] His goodness and condescension. He sends men of the same mould : 2 Cor. v. 19, 'And committed unto us the word of reconciliation.' Men subject to the same affections. As the fowler catcheth many birds by one decoy, a bird of the same feather. He dealeth with us as by men of the same nature, subject to the law of the same duties ; men with whom we may have ordinary and visible commerce ; not by angels that might affright us, but our fellow-creatures, who are concerned in the message as much as we are ; men that know the heart of a man by experience, our prejudices and temptations. If they



deceive us they deceive themselves, whose fidelity in other things we have experience of, that are to confirm their message by their practice, yea, with their suffering and their blood if need be.

*Use 1.* Is to inform and instruct us in the nature of the word's concurrence, that we may keep even between the Pelagians on the one hand, who give all to the word, so that they shut out the Spirit, and the Swenfeldians or familists on the other, that cry up the internal word or Spirit, to shut out the external use of means, and look for rapt motions from the Spirit without the word. Though the word can do nothing without the Spirit; the word, say they, is a dead letter; yet it may be called the 'power of God to salvation,' and 'the ministration of the Spirit,' 2 Cor. iii. 8; 'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believe?' 1 Cor. iii. 5. Though the pen can do nothing without the hand of the writer, yet it is the instrument of writing; so is the word the instrument of regeneration, and Christ died that we might be sanctified upon these terms: Eph. v. 26, 'By the washing of water through the word.' These are the prescribed appointed means, without which we cannot look for any such thing as a work of grace upon us. Therefore let us not jostle out external means with the familists. Then, on the other side, we must not idolise the means to shut out the work of the Spirit, without which all ministry is dead and ineffectual. All depends upon that blessing which God hath annexed to a lawful ministry. It is true that all human callings and manual arts have their efficacy from God's blessing, without which our toil and labour is in vain, Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2. It is in vain to watch, to build, to labour in ordinary callings. Many labour without God, and therefore cannot produce natural and human effects, to which yet they have a certain proportion and natural aptitude. But there is more of God required to bless the ministry, by which, by man's labour and natural discourse, you expect spiritual and supernatural effects; as the enlightening the eyes, and turning from darkness to light, and turning from the power of Satan to God. This production, though it goeth in concomitancy with man's discourse, yet it is solely from God: 1 Cor. iii. 7, 'It is God giveth the increase,' by an immediate course, though he useth our labour as an external means. The miracles which the apostles did were performed by certain rights and ceremonies, as laying on hands; they were not the natural effect of these ceremonies, though done in concomitancy with them; so doth God by our ministry.

2. It informeth us what cause we have to bless God for the word, which God hath blessed throughout all generations to the saving of many souls. If there be such great effects accomplished by it, it is a great mercy that he hath given us his word in writing: Hosea viii. 12, 'I have written to them the great things of my law.' It is a great benefit to mankind to have a public standard to confute the objections of every idle conceit upon our faith, and one so exact as this. And then when the word is preached, to have it quickened and actuated by a lively voice for the greater good of mankind, that they might be minded of their duty, and have drop instilled by drop. Surely the ministry of the word should not be looked upon as a burden, but a great favour. In the day of Christ's royalty he gave his gifts to the

church, Eph. iv. 11, 12; and will you count it a burden, and throw it in his face?

3. It informeth us of the woful estate of all such congregations as live without the word of God in the life and power of it. They sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. This is the greater misery, because many people are little sensible of it; and others that thirst after it cannot have it. Now let us think of this; partly that we may not be accessory to their guilt, who have cast away and thrown out a lively, savoury ministry, and so brought a famine of the word upon the land. This is to do the devil's work; for the hindering of the gospel is the work of the devil and his instruments: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them.' And partly that we may pray for the redress of this evil: 2 Thes. iii. 1, 2, 'Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you, that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith.' Pray for God's sake that the word would work mightily for the gathering of souls into the kingdom of God. Pray for Christ's sake, who had compassion over souls, and has bid us pray, 'That the Lord of the harvest would send forth labourers into his harvest,' Mat. ix. 38. There was a visible face of worship kept up then. How many congregations in the kingdom are without a shepherd, or furnished with an idle shepherd, when many of God's faithful servants are thrust into corners! Pray for souls' sakes that God would 'give them pastors after his own heart, to feed them with knowledge and understanding,' Jer. iii. 15. Pray for the land's sake. Never shall we get rid of those wasting and destroying judgments till God's ark be brought home. God only gives an heart to bring back again his outcasts. Now the physicians of the nation are met together, help by your prayers that they may not prove physicians of no value.

4. It informs us how much they are out who think there is too much preaching. Is there too much converting souls to God? They think if preaching were not so common it would be the more revered. This is the popish plea, that ignorance is the mother of devotion. Indeed that is the way to keep up devotion to men's interest. Excellent things, the more common and the more discovered, the more glorious, as the sun the more it shineth forth. There is something contemptible in them that must keep at a distance, and seldom come in view, to feed reverence. True worth, the more it appeareth, the more it excelleth. Things gilded over, their lustre wasteth away with use; but gold, the more it is used, the more it shineth. When men hear the word out of curiosity, they are soon glutted; but this is an adulterous affection to holy things. If they hear it out of respect to their soul necessities, they prize it not only when new and fresh, but the more they are acquainted with it.

*Use 2.* Is exhortation.

1. To ministers to rouse up themselves.

[1.] Get love to souls. Are we co-workers with God? Oh, then in zeal to God's glory, and in compassion to souls for whom Christ died, put on the bowels of Christ. Surely if we knew the worth and weight



of souls, we could not be so cold and careless in such a ministry and dispensation. Oh, let us never leave inviting, exhorting, pressing, till Christ be formed in them, Gal. iv. 19, Col. i. 27, 28, as unwilling to be refused, hungering and thirsting for the salvation of them that hear us. This will put an edge upon the doctrine we deliver, otherwise there is no savour in the finest words.

[2.] Preach with life, and diligence, and authority. God's words should not be delivered in a faint and languid manner and way. Thou art casting abroad thy immortal seed that is to beget souls to Christ, and shall we do it in a drowsy fashion? Let us pick out words that have some force and strength in them, that the truths of God may be represented convincingly and with liveliness: Eccles. xii. 10, 'The preacher sought to find out acceptable words.'

[3.] Let us look to the Lord for the fruit and success, not attributing any efficacy to the warmth of our frame, clearness of our understanding, or liberty of speech. Oh, let us look higher, praying that the effectual operation of his Spirit may accompany it: 1 Cor. ii. 4, 'And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;' that it may come in with power.

2. To people to attend upon the word, waiting for the influence and illapse of his Spirit.

[1.] Attend upon the word with diligence. Without grace you cannot be saved, and without the word ordinarily you cannot have grace. Therefore say, I will wait: Prov. viii. 34, 'Blessed are they that wait at wisdom's gates.' Wait, then, though you find not presently what you wait for. God's means in God's time will prove effectual; as he that lay at the pool, John v. Cast out the net. Wait though you find nothing, somewhat of God's work will appear. Many conceit themselves to be converted already, have no need of such diligence. Oh, no; see James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth;' wherefore 'Be swift to hear.' Take heed of despising prophesying, 1 Thes. v. 19, 20. No such means to quench the Spirit.

Arguments.

(1.) That of the text, it is immortal seed. If wisdom be sown in your souls, it begets a life there which shall never be quenched. Though all have immortal souls, yet the natural estate of all shall be shortly dissolved. The eternal life of wicked men is an eternal estate of corruption and perishing; Mat. xvi. 26, he shall lose his soul; not in a natural, but legal sense: Gal. vi. 8. 'He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;' that is, eternal perdition; for corruption is here opposed to eternal life. The state of the wicked after death is a state of corruption. It is not the corruption of our being, but of our happiness; where, though the substance of their soul and body shall not be annihilated, but upheld to all eternity by the mighty power of God in the midst of unutterable torment: Mark ix. 49, 'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;' yet all their carnal happiness is then consumed, and they themselves do languish and pine away under the wrath of an highly provoked and irreconcilable God.

(2.) It is a living word. The word is lively as to its lively influence

and powerful effects upon the soul. It is the word of life, John vi. 63. It will comfort and revive you in all your afflictions, yea, in death itself: Ps. cxix. 50, 'This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me.' Now never leave till thou findest it to be a living word to thee, till thou findest some kind of life in it, and receive not only light but life by it. It is not enough to seek truth in it, but seek life in it.

(3.) It abideth for ever as to the effects—(1.) In the execution of wrath on the wicked, it is the word of God that keeps them for ever in hell: Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.' (2.) As to the enjoyment of everlasting blessedness: John vi. 40, 'And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' It is the charter and grant by which we hold heaven to all eternity.

[2.] Look out still for the influence of the Spirit. Doth it come in power? You want a notable argument against atheism and scepticism in religion till you feel it. Some deny the power, shut it out, will not let it break in upon their hearts: 2 Tim. iii. 5, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.' They have a map of truth, but never look after the power in changing the heart. Others do not look after the power of the word, and then want a testimony: 1 John v. 8, 'There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood.' Oh, therefore say, what power of the word of life have we felt in our own souls? There are usually three effects of the word upon the heart—humbling, changing, and strengthening or comforting the heart.

(1.) It humbleth. Those that feel least feel this work many times. Felix trembled when Paul was discoursing of judgment to come, Acts xxiv. 24. What startlings of heart do you feel? Lose not that work: Acts ii. 37, 'They were pricked in their hearts.' There is such a power in the word; will you only be a stranger to it? Jer. xxiii. 29, 'Is not my word as fire, and as an hammer to break the rock in pieces?' To break, melt, and make it capable of any form.

(2.) To change the heart from sin to holiness. Is the temper and frame of your heart altered? John xv. 3, 'Ye are clean through the word that I have spoken to you.' Doth it set you a-purging and working out sin? Ps. cxix. 9, 'Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.' Doth it work in you an hearty subjection to God?

3. Doth it comfort you? Did it ever revive thy distressed and wounded spirit? Rom. xv. 4, 'That we, through comfort of the scripture, might have hope;' Job xxxiii. 25, 'His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth.'

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## SERMONS UPON PSALM XIX. 13.

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### SERMON I.

*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins ; let them not have dominion over me : then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*—Ps. xix. 13.

IN this psalm David first admireth the brightness of the sun, and then the purity of the law. The joining of both these meditations sheweth that man can as ill be without the word of God as without the light of the sun. What would this inferior world be without the sun, but a great cave or obscure dungeon, wherein men would live like worms in a pit. Now the light of the word is as necessary for the blessedness of our souls as the sun's light is comfortable to our bodies. Again, the comparing of both these sheweth that there are two books wherein we shall do well to study, and both made by God himself—the book of nature and the book of scripture ; and both discover God to us, as everything that hath passed his hand discovereth the author. You cannot look well upon the book of the creatures, but in every page and line of it you will find this truth presented to your eyes, that there is an infinite eternal power that made all things ; this is enough to leave the world without excuse. But in the book of the word you may see more of God, and the way how to enjoy him. This doth more powerfully convince man of his misery, and show him his remedy. The use which the psalmist maketh of these two books is notable ; of the first, to admire the glory of God by the beauty of the heavens ; of the second, to humble man by the purity and strictness of the law ; as all religion lieth in the knowledge of God and ourselves. The text is a branch of the latter use, namely, that which ariseth from this consideration of the power and purity of the law, as converting the soul, and reaching to the very thoughts and inward workings of the heart. The holy man of God maketh a double use of it—for humiliation and caution. Humiliation and desire of pardon of what is past : ‘ Who can understand his errors ? Cleanse me from secret faults.’ And then grace to prevent future enormities.

1. Humiliation. The best man, when he cometh to compare himself with the law of God, will be forced to blush and acknowledge more faults than ever he took notice of before. Too short an exposition of the law begets a large opinion of our own righteousness ; that the ell

may be no longer than the cloth. Men have a gross notion of the law of God, as if it did only require externals; but when they look upon it as reaching to the soul, the act as well as the aim,<sup>1</sup> every thought and every desire and motion of the heart, they have other manner of conceits of themselves; then they cry out, as David, 'Who can understand his errors?'

2. That this is not all the use that David maketh of the purity of the law, to beg pardon of what is past, but also grace to prevent future enormities, to get sin prevented as well as pardoned; otherwise we mock God, and mind our own interest rather than the offence done to him. There is the same method in the Lord's prayer, 'Forgive us our trespasses;' and then, 'Lead us not into temptation.' One petition concerneth the guilt of sin, and the other the reign and power of it. The text falleth in with this latter branch of the use, 'Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins,' &c.

In the words observe—(1.) A prayer; (2.) Arguments to enforce it. In the first take notice—

1. The mischief he desireth to be freed from, 'Presumptuous sins.'

2. The quality of the person that maketh the prayer, 'Thy servant.'

3. The prayer itself is twofold; for one part of the request is simple and absolute, to be kept from them; the other upon supposition, and by way of reserve; yet in case God should suffer him to fall into these kind of sins, yet at least that they might not have dominion over him.

[1.] He prayeth absolutely: Arm me by the special assistance of thy grace, that I may not fall into any of these sins.

[2.] That they may not get a full power over his will, so that, instead of a servant of the Lord, he should become a slave to sin.

[3.] The reasons are taken from the fruits or the consequent benefit and advantage of this preservation. They are two—

(1.) The testimony of his conscience concerning his integrity, 'Then shall I be upright.'

(2.) His avoiding further guilt, 'And shall be innocent from the great transgression.'

I shall now pitch upon the first part of the prayer, 'Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.'

*Doct.* That God's best servants need earnestly to beg grace to be kept from presumptuous sins.

The point will be best explained by a view of the circumstances of the text.

1. The mischief he would have prevented, 'Presumptuous sins.'

2. The person praying, David, God's servant.

3. The mercy asked, 'Keep back.'

1. The mischief or evil feared, 'Presumptuous sins.' I shall show—(1.) Their nature; (2.) The heinousness; (3.) The danger of them.

First, The nature, 'from prides,' so the Hebrew word signifies, which we render sins of presumption. The term must be a little explained. We are said to presume when we take more upon us than is meet. In these kind of sins men doubly presume.

1. That they shall be safe, and do well enough, though they continue in their impenitency and hardness of heart: Deut. xxix. 19, 20, 'And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'the aim as well as the act'?—Ed.



himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, and add drunkenness to thirst. The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.' And so, take a liberty to sin upon the presumption that he shall find mercy after all. But—

2. It is rather a presumption upon God's power than God's mercy. They carry on their sins against God as if they could make their party good against him: 1 Cor. x. 22, 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?' This is the presumption, that they undertake to contend with and resist God: Num. xv. 30, 'But the soul that doth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among the people.' They that live in a professed or clearly implied opposition to God: Job xv. 25, 'For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty.' And it is expressed, Lev. xxvi. 21, by walking contrary to God, and so falleth in with the Hebrew expression of prides. Sins against knowledge, with full consent of will and pride of heart. To understand this more fully, you must consider there are two sorts of sins—

[1.] Sins of mere infirmity and human frailty.

[2.] Sins of presumption. We cannot understand the one without the other.

[1.] Sins of infirmity; they are of four kinds—(1.) Sins of ignorance; (2.) Sins of sudden surreption or surprise; (3.) Sins of daily incursion; (4.) Sins of violent passion.

(1.) Of ignorance. These are opposed here to sins of presumption: 'Cleanse thou me from secret sins;' and then, 'Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.' As small sins, that are for the matter indiscernible, and sometimes grievous sins, if the ignorance be invincible and not affected, these find favour for this circumstance wherewith they are accompanied: John xv. 22, 'If I had not come and spoken to them they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin;' that is, no excuse for their sin: Luke xxiii. 34, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Their ignorance is pleaded as a motive to persuade God to pardon their sin: Acts iii. 14–17, 'But ye denied the holy One and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Lord of life, whom God hath raised from the dead: and now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers;' 1 Tim. i. 13, 'Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly.' Paul was as bad as bad could be. On the contrary, knowledge aggravateth sin: Luke xii. 47, 'And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes;' James iv. 17, 'Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' To jostle a friend in the dark may be by mistake, but to run full butt at him argueth malice. So to run full butt upon God, with eyes wide open, is a sin of presumption; as to dash upon him blindfold, provided we have not hoodwinked ourselves, is a sin of weakness

and infirmity. When God standeth in the way to stop the sinner by his precepts and threatenings, and the sinner shall say, Yonder he standeth that would stop me in my unlawful gain, stop me in my unlawful pleasure, stop me in my profane course of life; yet have at him; I will go through in this madness and obstinate pride: this is an aggravation of the offence. But now to press on out of mistake, as Balaam when he saw not the angel, is an infirmity; provided this ignorance be not affected, and vincible by the means afforded, that they are not willingly ignorant, refuse the light, shut their eyes and harden themselves by their own prejudices.

(2.) Sins of sudden surreption and surprise, that creep upon us unawares, or by Satan's assaulting us on a sudden; we cannot use that recollection, or have time to interpose those remedies, that might conduce to our preservation. Of these the apostle speaketh: Gal. vi. 1, 'If a brother be overtaken in a fault.' A child of God is usually rather overtaken by the suddenness or overborne by the violence of the temptation; surprised before he hath time to deliberate. The suddenness of the assault giveth no leisure to represent those considerations that might stay the heart. These are the sins that suddenly steal upon us, like sly thieves, and soldiers that lie in ambush for their enemies, and show themselves in us when we think them far enough from us; as sudden flashes of evil thoughts, and evil words, and sudden actions; those swarms of noisome and unsavoury thoughts which are injected of a sudden, and do distract us, and hinder us in the best employments; carnal and wicked thoughts, that suddenly arise, but are rejected with indignation; wandering thoughts in the time of prayer, never distinctly consented unto, but crowding in upon us; rash words spoken of a sudden, and some unpremeditated actions, when we have no due time for deliberation.

(3.) Sins of daily incursion, that are not avoidable by the usual assistance which God giveth to his people, but cleave to us while we are here in this world: Eccles. vii. 20, 'There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not;' James iii. 2, 'In many things we offend all.' We are daily assaulted, and there is no man so exact but sometimes his watch is intermitted, and then he will be tripping. That it should be otherwise cannot be looked for in this estate of frailty wherein now we are; especially considering the different conditions we are to pass through, the several occasions and provocations we meet with, and the many duties of piety and charity which we are to perform, many a sin cometh frequently, yea, daily upon us. In our duties to God much dulness, weariness, and formality will discover itself; our domestic crosses will put us into sudden fits of anger and discontent; our converses upon some failings of lightness and want of sincerity; our public employments, something of hypocrisy and intermixtures of vainglory; our prosperity, a touch of high-mindedness and carnal complacency; our adversity, upon distrust and uncomely disquiets of spirit: these defects and inseparable blemishes and wrinkles are found in the faces of all the saints. Our Saviour telleth us, John xiii. 10, 'That he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit;' that is, though they are in a holy state, yet by walking up and down in the world, in the several



businesses and employments of the present life, they contract some filth, which must be washed off every day by a renewed application of the blood of Christ, that fountain which God hath opened for uncleanness. The infirmities of the saints are not like the voluntary wallowing of swine in the puddle, 2 Peter ii. 22. But only the defilements of their feet, of their affections and conversations in going through this polluted world; as men's feet are fouled by the ground they tread upon. Every minute almost we are in danger, and therefore a total exemption cannot be hoped for in this world.

(4.) Sins committed by the sway of great and headstrong passions, or by some present prevailing temptation, which may strangely transport those that do in the general make conscience of their ways. These in some cases pass for infirmities; as when a man offends through some great fear or anger, joy or sorrow, or some other consternation of spirit which hindereth the free debate of the soul, and so may run into some inconveniences; as when any natural trembling or any other passion hindereth men from discerning or weighing the sinfulness of some light small sins; but *in materia gravi*, in weighty cases, it is hard to say that passions excuse; as sacrificing to idols out of fear, or killing another in passion or anger, or running into oaths and execrations; because it is to be supposed that a christian doth not presently do so; for the horridness of such facts cannot but stop the career of a generally well-disposed mind; but when the fear is above the proportion and size of those ordinary notions that we have of the sin, it may pass for an infirmity that time, because through the sway of the present passion there is not a perfect deliberation, and those sudden unadvised acts are in part excused; as, for instance, Deut. xvi. 29, 'A gift doth blind the eyes of the wise and pervert the words of the righteous.' A judge, though for his understanding wise, for his disposition a just man, yet may under a great temptation be so enchanted for a time as to err in judgment.

[2.] Sins of presumption are sins against light and knowledge, wittingly and willingly committed, with a full consent of will, carried on obstinately and proudly against God. They are usually such open and gross sins as are manifest; as whoring, gluttony, drunkenness, which are manifest even to natural conscience; or else are manifest by the common light of christianity, as denying the faith; so that there is no doubt of the unlawfulness of the act done.

(1.) There is knowledge in it as one ingredient, according to that, Gal. v. 19, 'The works of the flesh are manifest.'

(2.) Deliberation and studied contrivance. Men have time and space to consider with themselves; and the more advisedness in any sin, the greater it is. It is not a thing done in passion, but in cool blood. But when men project and plot their sin, it is not an infirmity, but an iniquity: Prov. vi. 14, 'Frowardness is in his heart; he deviseth mischief continually;' Micah ii. 1, 'Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds.' The heart dwells long upon it, as David plotted Uriah's death. All sins that require some space of time for their execution are deliberate sins; as all acts of fornication and adultery, acts of drunkenness, unless suddenly intoxicated by ignorance of the strength of the liquor. So lying, speaking that which

is false to the wrong of others. So swearing, when men devise new oaths, and study to be wittily wicked in this kind: James i. 15, 'When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.' There is no stay.

(3.) There is a constancy or resolved purpose in these sins, without fear of God or men: Jer. xviii. 12, 'And they said, There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart;' Jer. xlv. 16, 17, 'For the word that thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee; but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth out of our own mouth.' This obstinacy is seen in men's going against express admonitions, commandments, and reproofs from the word of God: Deut. i. 43, 'So I spake unto you, and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up unto the hill.' Against warnings and threatenings in God's name from those that wish well to your souls: Prov. xxix. 1, 'He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed without remedy.' But men are wedded to their inclination, out-facing all challenges of duty in God's name: Ps. xii. 4, 'Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?' 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14-16, 'Moreover the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathens, and polluted the house of the Lord. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of God arose against his people till there was no remedy.' Especially against checks of conscience: Acts vii. 51, 'Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.' Conscience telleth them, You ought not to yield to this sin, whatsoever the profit or pleasure be; yet men will kick against the pricks, and do that which their own heart disalloweth in spite of inward motions. They will go on to follow the sin they have in chase, especially when against restraints of providence, and God hath hedged up their way with thorns. Or when they have found much inconveniency in that course: 2 Chron. xxviii. 22, 'And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord. This is that king Ahaz.' God sets a brand upon him: Josh. xxii. 17, 'Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord?' Well, then, here is some rude description of presumptuous sins.

But because this is not strict enough, and does not search the core to the bottom, I shall only add two things—

First, That presumptuous sins are double—by way of omission and commission; when they live in any known sin, or allow themselves in the omission of any necessary duty.

1. For presumptuous sins of commission, there are many texts: 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves



with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God ;' Eph. v. 5, 'For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.' They deserve in themselves an exclusion from the favour of God and the kingdom of heaven, and do actually exclude them that commit them ; the unregenerate certainly, and the regenerate from that degree of favour which they enjoyed before ; and if it could be imagined that they could persevere in them, they would eternally exclude them from the kingdom of heaven.

2. For presumptuous sins of omission ; when a man omitteth voluntarily, against the light and checks of conscience, any necessary duty : James iv. 17, 'Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' Not only to commit a sin against conscience, but to omit a duty against conscience ; for the authority of God is equal, and his threatening and sanction is express, and sins of omission have the nature of sin in them ; so that to live in any of these is to live in a known sin.

Secondly, That sins of infirmity may, by carelessness and neglect, become sins of presumption, and infirmities commence into iniquities. When we are wanting to ourselves, in neglecting the use of the means prescribed to avoid those sins, or for some wilful sin of ours God withdraweth that grace which is necessary for the resisting of these sins, we are partakers of this wilful sin, and are not humbled for them, do not beg pardon, but run easily, frequently, constantly upon every return of the temptation. It might be an infirmity at first, as rash swearing, or taking the name of God in vain ; Christ's words are plain : Mat. v. 37, 'But let your communication be, Yea, yea ; Nay, nay ; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil ;' when a man hath brought a custom upon himself that he cannot speak otherwise. There is no sin but, by a deliberate and licentious multiplication of acts, may become a sin of presumption ; for sins of infirmity are only sins of infirmity to them that watch against them sincerely, repent of them, strive and labour against them. The neglect or contempt of them cannot be without some neglect and contempt of God, and then rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, 1 Sam. xv. 23.

As a small leak neglected may sink the ship as well as the most boisterous and greatest wave. Some sins are of a lighter nature than others, yet may be very presumptuously committed ; as in some colours the dye may be more than the stuff.

*Secondly*, The heinousness of these sins of presumption.

1. Every sin of presumption is an implicit blasphemy : Num. xv. 30, 'But the soul that doth aught presumptuously reproacheth the Lord ; and that soul shall be cut off from among the people ;' Ezek. xx. 27, 'Thus saith the Lord God, Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me.' There is a blasphemy included in it, as if God were an ignorant God, and did not know his wickedness ; or a careless God, that would not take notice of it ; or an impotent God, that could not punish his rebellion ; or an unjust God, that would not. This drunkenness is blaspheming drunkenness, this whoredom blaspheming whoredom ; for thou makest

God to be an idol God, that hath no respect to thy actions, or would not judge according as he hath said in his word.

2. There is the highest pride in it that a creature can be capable of. It is that pride whereby you despise God and his authority. When David fell into presumptuous sins, it is said, 2 Sam. xii. 9, 10, 'Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, and done evil in his sight? Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me;' Amos ii. 4, 'I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandment.' When men walk as they list, they do but make a jest of the word of God. What is he that we should regard him, or his commandment that we should stand upon it? They make a sport of sin, and a mere mock of scripture; for they knowingly and willingly do the quite contrary to what God would have them.

3. It is a daring of God, or a provoking him to do his worst: 1 Cor. x. 22, 'Do ye provoke the Lord to jealousy? are ye stronger than he?' What care they? Some are said to be wicked in the sight of the Lord: Gen. xxxviii. 7, 'Er, Judah's first-born, was wicked in the sight of the Lord.' They were bold, presumptuous, and impudent, daring him to do his worst.

4. It is a disposition to the unpardonable sin; as here in the text, and by that scripture, Heb. x. 26, 'For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.' It is an allusion to Num. xv. 30, 'The soul that doth aught presumptuously shall be cut off.' And to that place Christ alludeth: Luke xii. 10, 'Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.' Wilful sins are against clear light, and will in time bring on despite and malice.

*Thirdly*, The danger from the effects, both to the unregenerate and regenerate, are common to them both—(1.) The unregenerate; such sins are not easily repented of; (2.) Not easily pardoned; (3.) When pardoned, easily return again.

[1.] Not easily repented of. They harden the heart wonderfully, and make it stout against God: Zech. vii. 11, 12, 'But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears that they should not hear; yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets.' Every day they sin away their tenderness. Men grow wilful by frequent sinning, and their hearts become as hard as the highway by frequent treading upon it. These kind of sinners, the most grave admonitions, seasonable reproofs, powerful exhortations, and convincing reasons, will not move them. By every presumptuous sin they put a new difficulty in the way of their conversion, Jer. xiii. 23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.'

[2.] Not easily pardoned. Deep stains are not easily washed out. It will cost many a sad hour, frequent sorrow and anguish of heart, ere there be a reconciliation between God and their souls, and their



peace will not easily be obtained ; as Manasseh's repentance was great : 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 'And when he was afflicted he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.' An ordinary humiliation will not serve the turn.

[3.] They ever and anon return, and the remembrance of them is very grievous to the soul : Job xiii. 26, 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me possess the sins of my youth ;' as frightful ghosts raised out of their graves. When God hath cancelled them, yet this old sore bleedeth afresh ; or as deep wounds ache upon change of weather : Ps. lxxix. 8, 'Oh, remember not against us former iniquities ;' Ps. xxv. 7, 'Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions : according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord.'

2. After regeneration they make a sad breach between God and the soul, throwing us into the depths of fear and perplexed thoughts. They waste our comforts, wound our consciences, sequester us from the privileges of the covenant ; so that we lose our present aptitude of entering into the kingdom of heaven. Whereas a pardon of course is granted for sins of infirmity, as they are retracted by a general daily repentance ; but now a particular repentance and renewing of our grant is required for these sins. As when David bewailed his blood-guiltiness, and Peter wept bitterly for his denying of Christ. Sins of infirmity do not hinder the use and claim of God's grace and pardon. They are not such for which God will bid thee keep out of sight, as David did Absalom for his rebellion, but these cause us to lose the actual fruition of God.

3. The mischiefs in common to both.

[1.] A blot on the name : 1 Kings xv. 5, 'Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.' See Ps. cxix. 110.

[2.] Many troubles and calamities, especially on God's children ; but on others as often as it is meet for the vindication of his justice and providence. Especially on God's children : Amos iii. 2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.' They of all others are God's peculiar and chosen people, and if they do not walk answerably they shall smart for it. More certainly and severely will he punish them ; their means and mercies are more, and their ingratitude greater. It concerneth God to vindicate his own glory and holiness. We will single out two instances, David and Eli. David, what troubles ensued his presumptuous sin in his house and family ! His daughter ravished, Amnon slain in his drunkenness, Absalom driveth him from his palace-royal, his subjects desert him, his concubines ravished before his face, and he forced to go weeping up and down, and to shift for his life ; all which are effects of his sins ; for so it is foretold, 2 Sam. xii. 10-12. The next instance is Eli, for tolerating scandalous sins in his family ; his sons are slain in battle, Israel discomfited, the ark of God taken, Eli broke his neck, his daughter died in child-bearing, his house rejected, 1 Sam. ii. 30. The anger of the Lord is very hot when we provoke him by these kind of sins ; the revenging hand of God will lie very

heavy on our persons, children, estate, and all other outward comforts. It is not safe to offend him.

[3.] It bringeth a dishonour on the name of God, and a disgrace on religion: Rom. ii. 24, 'For the name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles through you;' 2 Sam. xii. 14, 'Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.' You make others judge ill of the ways of God, and encourage them to sin, which certainly will strike deep in the consciences of good men, and make them bethink themselves.

## SERMON II.

*Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.*—Ps. xix. 13.

HAVING made some progress in the doctrinal part raised from these words, I shall now make some application thereon.

Use 1. For the just condemnation and reproof of them that never take care to be kept from these sins. They are of two sorts—

1. Some that live in known sins against the light of conscience.
2. Such as please themselves that their sins are but infirmities, when indeed they are presumptions; and therefore are never troubled about what they do. I must speak to both.

First, Such as live in known sins against the light of conscience. Every one of you that, under the light of the gospel, do live in the customary neglect of necessary duties, or the customary committing of any gross sin, you sin presumptuously, and allow yourselves in it. You who are so blinded in judgment as that ye know not that the gross ways ye live in are sin, and so wallow in all manner of sensualities, without any care and government of your souls and senses, and live in a present oblivion of the world to come, and the way that tendeth thither, do not you know that to live in an utter unmindfulness of God, and a neglect of your everlasting interests, without praying, meditating, reading, hearing and other means of grace, or a serious addressing yourselves to come to God by Christ, is a presumptuous violation of God's will, and is inconsistent with salvation? Do you not know that you ought not to lie, or swear, or to be drunk, deal unjustly, and fraudulently in your callings? Are not these bogs and quagmires visible, and yet you will run into them? Doth not nature and scripture condemn these things? Gal. v. 19–21, 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresy, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and the like.' This is apparent to a common understanding that these are to be called works of the flesh. Scripture telleth you so, and conscience telleth you so; yet you will not give over, because of the habituated rooted wickedness that is in your hearts. You cannot plead ignorance, temptations, passions, weaknesses; this is the element you live and breathe in.



Hell will be heated seven times hotter for such proud and arrogant sinners as you are. Oh, think of your condition before it be too late!

That you should not sin presumptuously, take these dissuasions—

1. If you have any respect of God: Jer. xlv. 4, 'Oh, do not this abominable thing which I hate.' You are his servants; of right all should be so; and what is the condition of a servant? *μὴ ζῆν ὡς βούλευται*, not to live as he list. We are not *nostri juris*, have no power to dispose of ourselves; but *de facto* you have actually resigned up yourselves to God, to be guided by his will; and will you in apparent cases set your own will in contradiction to his, as if you would try whose will shall stand, God's or yours? God saith, 'Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not bear false witness; nor take my name in vain;' and thou in a flat contradiction sayest, I will swear, lie, and wallow in all manner of filthiness. Is this to be God's servants? Oh, how far are you different from the temper of those that are indeed so! That which is their terror is your choice; that which they desire to be freed from, you with all earnestness run into, with great proneness of heart. We may say, Deut. xxxii. 5, 'Their spot is not the spot of God's children.'

2. If you have any respect to yourselves. Presumptuous sins will cost you dear at length, both in this world and the next. Men make a scourge for their own backs while they run wilfully into sin, and shoot arrows against heaven, that return upon their own heads. If God hath been so terrible against sins of infirmity, sudden passion, and temptations, what may you fear that provoke God, and dare him to his face, and, in contempt of him and his commandments, deliberately run into known sins? It is a wonder God giveth such any longer time upon earth, that he doth not suddenly strike them. Surely he will not always bear. Lot's wife for looking back was turned into a pillar of salt. Uzzah for touching the ark, though out of a good meaning, struck dead, 2 Sam. vi. 6. Moses, for a few unadvised words, shut out of Canaan: Ps. cvi. 32, 33, 'It went ill with Moses for their sakes, because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvised with his lips.' When meek Moses was drawn into the snare of a rash speech, God shutteth him out of Canaan. Therefore certainly gross sins obstinately persisted in cannot but provoke God to anger.

3. One argument more. If the offences of his children, that are dear and precious to him, are recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner, Prov. xi. 31. If Sion sip of the cup, Babylon shall drink up the dregs of it. If the hand of a father be so heavy, what shall the wrath of a judge be? If offending children smart for their folly, how will his anger break out against daring impudent sinners?

4. Consider that your presumptions will not secure you, but ruin you the more. In all these proud acts of rebellion against God there is some pretence men presume upon, or else they would not go on thus directly against the will of God; therefore they are called sins of presumption. There is some pretence or other wherewith they harden their hearts; but alas! they are but presumptions, the silly suppositions of their own deceived hearts. He that is surety to himself is but little secured by his own thoughts and words.

That I may drive the nail to the head, it will not be amiss a little to touch upon the things men presume upon, and they are five; either—(1.) That God will not call them to an account; (2.) That God will be merciful, though they go on in them; (3.) That they shall repent at last; (4.) That they will make amends for one sort of sins by abounding in their other duties; (5.) That their estate will bear them out.

First, That God will not call them to an account, or punish them for their sins. There is atheism at the bottom of sins of presumption. They think they shall do well enough though they add drunkenness to their thirst. Why? Because they either believe there is no God, or that he is a weak and careless God. They either deny the being of God, or else make an idol of him, while they fear not his power and justice. Now consider, surely there is a God, or else how can these things fall into this order and proportion wherein we see them? Scripture and nature, creatures and conscience, will tell thee there is a God. Look within thee, without thee, upward or downward, round about thee, everything thou seest, hearest, or feelest proclaimeth a God to thee, by whose will good and evil is stated. Certainly there is a God, and there is such a thing as good and evil, vice and virtue, sin and righteousness; that the one is worthy of blame and the other of praise. If it be not so, whence cometh it that we all affect to be counted honest and good? to seem so at least, if not to be so? The most wicked are offended when they are taken for such as they are, and endeavour to cover their vices with the appearance of virtue and goodness, as fearing blame. If all things were indifferent in their own nature, it were no more crime for a man to kill his father than his neighbour's dog; to rob in the woods than to hunt a hare or deer there; to lie with his mother or sister than to use lawful marriage; and no less honest to lie and forswear than to be sincere in our dealings. Certainly there is a God, and there is good and evil, sin and righteousness, vice and virtue; and if it be so, will not God punish the evil and reward the good? If you think he will not, it is either because he hath no right to do so, or no power, or no will or care to do it. No right to punish, because mankind is exempted from his jurisdiction: can you imagine that? Certainly God hath a right to govern his creatures. As he is a creator, he is an owner; and as he is an owner, he is a ruler and a judge. He that made all is the judge of all, the king of the earth. If man be God's creature, he must be his subject, and judiciary power is part of his government, to dispense the rewards of virtue, and the penalties of vice. If God hath a right, hath he not power? 1 Cor. x. 22, 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?' How will you make your party good against him? Will you arm your lusts against his angels? What can an earthen pitcher expect by dashing against a brazen wall but to be broken all in pieces? Let the potsherds of the earth contend with the potsherds of the earth; they are no match for God. Or is it because he will not? that he neglects the looking after mankind, and doth not mind what is done here below? It was the conceit of Epicurus and his followers that it would not stand with the happiness of God to trouble himself with the affairs of the world, as if it would disturb and discompose his bliss. *Nec pro meritis*



*capitur, nec tangitur ira* ; that he is neither pleased with our good deeds, nor angry with our offences. And because many that live in the bosom of the church are poisoned and leavened with this blasphemy, as appeareth, Zeph. i. 12, 'I will search Jerusalem as with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.' It is their latent and hidden thought, though not their declared opinion ; I shall a little speak to it. It is against all reason and sense. It is against all reason, against the wisdom, power, justice, the purity and perfection of God's holy nature, that he should be indifferent to good and evil, and mindless of his creature whom he hath made ; that he should not use his authority and power in executing vengeance on them that do evil, but connive at all the disorders here below, without any taking notice of things. It would destroy all worship and respect to God. The two first motives that ordinarily induce men to religion are fear and hope ; fear that God will avenge their misdoings, and hope of support when men lie under straits and necessities. But now, when men have nothing to hope and fear from his providence, why should they regard God ? The epicureans indeed owned that God was to be worshipped for the eminency of his doings, and for the happiness and excellency and greatness of his nature ; but alas ! that would breed a faint respect ; for who regardeth those in whom they are not concerned ? Here in the world kings and potentates are not only revered with regard to the eminence of their dignity, but as they govern and protect us ; and the common peace and safety depends upon the homage and obedience which we pay to them. Who are there that have reverential thoughts for princes and potentates who are separated from us by an arm of the sea, or some small distance of place ? Who hath thoughts of allegiance and awfulness towards the Mogul or kings of Persia and China, because of their magnificence and the splendour of their courts, their vast armies and retinue, and the largeness of their dominions ? So would our respects to God be cold and languid if we were not interested in him and he in us. And besides hearsay, have we not continual proof of his justice and goodness ? and doth he not daily make himself known by punishments and benefits ? Doth not every man value the authority of the meanest gentleman where he liveth, because he seeth it and feeleth it ? In case of offence he may be punished by it ; in case of doing well, supported by it. The reports of the greatest potentates affect us not unless we are interested in their rewards and punishments. So it is against sense. Internal sense, the frights and terrors of conscience, that hidden fear and bondage which sinners are subject unto all their lives : Heb. ii. 15, 'And deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage ;' 1 Cor. xv. 56, 'The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.' It is as a thousand witnesses in our bosoms that God will take vengeance of evil doings. Certainly the impressions are involuntary ; they are not things we delight in, for fear hath torment in it. Men would fain get rid of it if they could, but they cannot wholly root it out of their breasts what time soever they take to do it. It is evident to external sense : Rom. i. 18, 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness ;' Heb. ii. 1, 2, 'Therefore we ought

to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip; for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? God's justice executed should strike us with dread, when we see the effects of it in pestilences or any other noisome diseases, wars, famines, tempests, inundations, lightnings, thunders, particular instances upon ourselves, upon any notorious disorders; so that we are forced to say, 'Verily there is a God that judgeth the earth.' I have been the longer on this, because atheism is at the bottom of presumptuous sins, and men seek to extinguish out of their minds all thoughts of God's justice and severity against sin. I know the grand objection, the promiscuous dispensations of God to good and bad. But that ariseth from our haste and rashness, like ignorant and impatient spectators, that will not tarry till the last act of the tragedy.

Secondly, Another thing that men presume upon is, that God will be merciful though they go on in their sins. This is a presumption wherein they harden their hearts, that God will not be so severe as is told them, but more gentle and merciful to his creatures. But this is to turn the mercy of God to a wrong use: Jude 4, 'Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness;' to abound in sin that mercy may abound. True penitents, *volunt misericordie divine oneri esse*, would not be burdensome to God's mercy. Mercy may become our enemy when it is abused. Licentious persons cannot expect it; for it is dispensed according to rule. Mercy to convert us as a free lord, but mercy to reward us as a governor; and God hath told us he will not be merciful to such: Deut. xxix. 19, 20, 'And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst. The Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man.' Therefore do not presume thou shalt find mercy at length. Mercy is for the support of the penitent: Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' Their cordial is thy poison: Ps. lxxviii. 19-21, 'Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his benefits, even the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses.'

Thirdly, Thou presumest that thou shalt repent at last. It is uncertain. God may take thee away in the act of sin, as he did Zimri and Cosbi, Korah and his accomplices, or deny thee space to call for mercy. Death doth not always give warning; and those that forget God in health may forget themselves when they come to die; by some apoplexy, lethargy, or some stupifying disease, may be deprived of all use of reason. If a man were sure to repent, yet it is folly to play the mountebank with our own souls. Who would break his head or wound his body to make all whole again to try the strength of a plaster or sovereign unguent? or surfeit his body in expectation to remove the



distemper by a vomit? Better be always sure. But usually God giveth them up to hardness of heart, so as they never repent. There is such a thing as judicial hardness of heart. When God giveth up a sinner to his own counsels, and this is inflicted on those that resist powerful means long vouchsafed: Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man;' Prov. i. 24, 25, 'Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof.' Therefore for any in the time of youth and health to depend upon the presumption of his repentance hereafter, and therefore defer the forsaking of wilful sins and the known vanities of his life, he doth for the present grieve and resist the Holy Spirit, while he importuneth to be heard and obeyed. God will at length be wearied out, and not so ready to give grace as before; therefore they run a desperate hazard of growing more wretched, profane, and atheistical every day.

Fourthly, That they shall make amends for a course of sin in one kind by abounding in other duties; as some that live in uncleanness will be charitable, to excuse or to expiate for the offences of a filthy life; and so make alms a sin-offering, which should be a thank-offering. So some will be just and do no wrong, but shut up their bowels from those that need; some that mind first-table duties, but are faulty in the second: Ezek. xxxiii. 13, 'If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered, but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.' Upon that account or presumption the apostle taxeth this want of entire and uniform zeal: Rom. ii. 22, 'Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?' His method would lead to say, Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou worship idols? But the Jews' form was a detestation of idols, and yet they were entangled in a crime as enormous. Most men's goodness is but to hide their secret indulgence to some lewd practice or sinful course; to hide it not only from the world, but from their own hearts, that they may sin with greater leave from conscience; as if our delinquency in some things we affect might be excused by a supererogation in other duties which are not so contrary to us; as the Jews did hope to repair their want of mercy by a multitude of sacrifices; as the stomach, when it hath no solid food, fills itself with wind. But God will be obeyed in all things: Exod. xx. 1, 'God spake all these words.' Not 'these words;' but 'all these words.' The same authority runneth through all the commandments.

Fifthly, Some that think themselves regenerate, and in a state of grace, think their estate will bear them out, so as they need not lay to heart their presumptuous sins with such bitterness and remorse. They are sure to find favour with God.

*Ans.* But consider, grace doth not make sin less evil. The nature of it is the same both before conversion and after. Sin is the same, as odious to God, as damnable in itself; yea, in some sense our estate doth aggravate the offence: John vi. 67, 'Will ye go away also?' They that have tasted more of the sweetness of grace, and so have a greater obligation to resist sin, have felt more of the power of grace, and so are more enabled to resist it. But more especially I shall show you the inconveniency and mischief of it to the regenerate, because men presume to sin because their sins can and may stand with grace.

1. The sinner is excluded from that degree of favour which before he enjoyed. There is a twofold love of God—*amor benevolentiae et complacentiae*. God hath a great love to his people, first, in intending us benefits by Christ: Jer. xxxi. 3, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee;' and then delighting in what he hath bestowed: Ps. cxlvii. 11, 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him;' Cant. ii. 14, 'Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely;' Heb. viii. 16, 'For with such sacrifices God is well pleased,' Zeph. iii. 17, 'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.' The more grace we have, and the more we act it, the more like God, and so more delightful and lovely in his sight. Now as to his love of benevolence and his love of complacency, in both these respects God's love may be lost as to a great degree.

[1.] The love of benevolence, or that love whereby he doeth us good, which may be considered either in the eternal purpose of God, or his present readiness to execute his purpose, or indeed our readiness to receive it. *Amor intentionis et executionis*; his purpose to do them good remaineth firm, notwithstanding their sins. He had such a good-will to them before they were born, and before they were new-born, and in time it worketh for their good: 'He is the Lord, that changeth not,' Mal. iii. 6. But it is a purpose obstructed; his present readiness to do them good is much hindered and obstructed by these presumptuous sins. Though God be always ready, yet they are not ready, they putting themselves into an incapacity of receiving these benefits: Isa. lix. 2, 'But your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear;' Ps. lxvi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' The good-will of God is, as it were, bound up and hindered from showing itself in all those gracious effects which otherwise it would put forth for our comfort and peace. He doth not actually pardon their sins, and make them partakers of spiritual benefits in so ample and full a measure as otherwise he would, such as comfort, peace of conscience, protection against temptations; their sins put a bar against them during that state. You provoke God to withdraw, to hold his hand, and cut you short in these spiritual blessings which otherwise he would plentifully dispense unto his people; though there be some effects, for the seed of God remaineth in them, 1 John iii. 9.

[2.] As to his love of complacency. God hath not such a delight in us. We grieve his Spirit, Eph. iv. 30. He hath no pleasure in them that draw back: Heb. x. 38, 'He hateth the workers of iniquity.' Therefore God's children, when they do so, are no way acceptable to God, neither their persons nor their offerings. He will not take an offering at their hands. We find it by the effects. They have no internal sense of his love; no external answer of their prayers.

(1.) No internal sense of his love. They lose their assurance. God doth not hold delightful communion with them in the Spirit. The joy of the Holy Ghost is gone. The Spirit of God doth not shed abroad his love in their hearts as formerly, Rom. v. 5. They have not that liberty and holy confidence in prayer: 1 John iii. 21, 'If our hearts



condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' Those lively hopes of glory, that sweetness in the word, that readiness and cheerfulness in obedience; nor strength to resist sin, nor comfort in reproaches, nor courage in afflictions. Oh, in what a sad condition is a christian that is gone backward in God's love, and wants the comfortable effects of it, like Sampson when his locks were gone! Nothing maketh a well-disposed servant so ready to do his master's will as the knowledge that he is in his favour, that what he doeth will be well taken. So when there is assurance that our persons and work is accepted of God, all goeth on cheerfully: Ps. cxix. 32, 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' Dilatation of the heart is the effect of joy. So for courage in tribulation: Rom. v. 3, 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulations;' Heb. x. 34, 'And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' When anything troubleth us, we may go to God and ease our griefs, and pour out our complaints into his bosom. Well, then, internally all delightful communion with God in the Spirit is suspended and interrupted.

(2.) Externally; this is manifest by the non-audience of our prayers, or non-acceptance of our persons: Isa. lix. 2, 'Your sins have separated between you and your God;' Ps. lxxvi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me;' Hosea v. 6, 'They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord, but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them.' To lose our duties is a sad loss. To go to the throne of grace and find the oracle dumb; to call upon the God of mercy, who is ready to hear, and to have no answer, is a sad case. As Baal's worshippers were abashed when they had lanced and gashed themselves and could not get a drop of water from him, so it is a great cause of sadness when God shutteth up himself from the prayers of his people, and taketh no notice of their cry. When a child cannot get the father to speak to him, but rather when he turneth away in indignation; as it is said of Miriam, Num. xii. 14, 'If her father had spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?' There is a time when God spits in the faces of his children; when God poureth anger, shame, and contempt upon us by refusing to own us, or accept a prayer at our hands. Is it not sad and grievous when he that formerly had such liberty of access to God and assurance of welcome shall pray and no notice taken of it? Isa. i. 15, 'When ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you, when ye make many prayers I will not hear.' Oh, therefore it is dangerous to sin presumptuously. You lose the sense of the favour of God. David's plotting Uriah's death was more laid to his charge than any other sins which he committed: 1 Kings xv. 5, 'Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah.' How many of David's failings are left upon record! His distrust: 'I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul;' his dissimulation; his rash vow to destroy Nabal; his injustice in the matter of Ziba and Mephibosheth; his indulgence to Absalom; numbering the people, wherein he showed his carnal confidence; all these are passed over in silence as infirmities; only the matter of Uriah stuck close to him.

2. They do exceedingly weaken the work of grace that is wrought in their hearts. It is far abated; it is much weakened, though not totally abolished. *Gratus remittitur, actus intermittitur, licet habitus non amittitur.* The degree may be remitted: Mat. xxiv. 12, 'Love may wax cold;' though not extinguished, yet abated; it is more cold than it was, though there be love still: Rev. ii. 4, 'Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.' Not all love, but 'first love;' those high and raised operations wrought in the soul upon first acquaintance with Christ and christianity. Qualities are capable of intension or remission. The act is intermitted. Ephesus lost her first love, left her first works, Rev. ii. 5. The apostle's advice is to keep from family breaches, that our prayers be not hindered, 1 Peter iii. 7. Such men are altogether unfit for action, and perform duties in a very uncomfortable fashion, because of the guilt of the injuring party, and the grief and passion of the injured; but the habit is not lost, for the seed of God remaineth, 1 John iii. 9; and that fountain of living water that springeth up to eternal life is never dried up; and the unction abideth in you, 1 John ii. 27; and they are kept on foot by the power of God, and the continual intercession of Jesus Christ.

3. That by presumptuous sins we may weaken the habit, therefore the apostle biddeth us not to quench the Spirit, 1 Thes. v. 19. Fire may be quenched by withdrawing fuel or pouring on water; presumptuous sins of omission do the first, and commission the second. When we live in the neglect of those duties that may increase grace, or commission of gross sinful acts, they are as pouring on water, they are as a wound to the body, that lets out our blood and strength. Now this should breed caution in us; for there is a double principle in us; as the one increaseth, the other languisheth; as sin increaseth, grace is ready to die: Rev. iii. 2, 'Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, which are ready to die.' There is this advantage on the flesh's side, that it is a native, not a foreigner, a home-bred plant, which the soil breedeth naturally without any tillage, as nettles will sooner preserve themselves and get ground upon better plants, because the earth bringeth them forth of her own accord; as water heated, the cold is natural to it, and will prevail against the heat, unless driven out by a constant fire.

4. The hurt is exceeding great to lose any degree of grace. How shall we answer it to God when we embezzle our stock? It is not only *donum*, a gift to be preserved, but *talentum*, a talent to be increased upon our hands, and of which we must give an account to God. It is a precious gift dearly bought, serving for the highest use, to fit us for communion with God. He that had five talents answered for five, and he that had two accounted for two. You are to give an account of all that you have received. So much as we lose, so much we lose of our fitness to serve God, and our glory suitable.

5. To be careless of degree makes way for the loss of the whole. Christians are like a hen when many eggs are taken out of the nest; as long as one or two remaineth, she taketh no notice of it, forsaketh not the nest. Therefore consider whether there be not abatement of some degree of grace, though some may remain still. Content not



yourselves that all is not lost, but something remains, except it be in a great proportion as formerly.

6. Those that are guilty of presumptuous sins will not be intrusted with so much again. A man may recover his peace, comfort, and strength, but in a lower degree; as a prodigal that hath once broken is not intrusted with a like stock again; his friends are more cautious. David did not recover that largeness of spirit and fulness of inward strength and comfort he had before: 2 Chron. xvii. 3, 'And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David.' After a great disease we do not regain that pitch of health we had afore; then the acts are intermitted. When the soul is distempered it is unfit for action; either duties are omitted, or else done in such an overly manner as doth increase our distemper and harden us the more. In what sorry fashion did David worship God till his conscience was awakened by Nathan, which was nine months. Now this was a great loss to be so long without expressing his love to God, to have his spiritual trade and commerce with heaven at a stand, or to serve him in such a careless fashion.

7. They lose their present aptitude of entering into the kingdom of heaven by falling into these gross presumptuous sins. The scripture tells us, Rev. xxi. 27, that 'there shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven anything that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.' And again, the apostle, speaking of fornication, adultery, drunkenness, wantonness, saith, Gal. v. 21, 'They that do such things shall not enter into the kingdom of God.' Now the ministers of God are to declare it to them, and they that commit such things are to apply it to themselves. It is true, the regenerate that do fall into these sins do not actually perish in them, because they repent in this life, and come to themselves, and recover their estate again; but for the present, till they do repent, their pardon is not actually passed, but the guilt remaineth of them; for that is the difference between these sins and sins of infirmity; that whereas infirmities are pardoned of course, and by virtue of our general interest in the covenant, these sins are not pardoned but upon express and particular repentance. When David humbled himself, 2 Sam. xii. 13, the prophet told him, 'The Lord hath put away thy sin.' But till this be done, though they have a dormant right by virtue of their general state, yet they are under a sequestration; as a leprous man was compelled to want his own house till he was cleansed from that disease; he had a right to the house, but could not use it; so these lose their fitness for heaven till they recover themselves; therefore scandalous sinners are shut out by the keys of the kingdom of heaven: Mat. xviii. 18, 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' What a misery is it for a man to be in such an estate, wherein, if he should die, you may suppose he cannot be saved! Well, then, you see it is ill depending upon your estate. Those that are in a good estate lose ground in the three great privileges of christianity—justification, sanctification, and glorification. If they should fall into drunkenness with Noah, adultery with David, incest with Lot, idolatry with Solomon, perjury with Peter, yet they smart for it.

## SERMON III.

*Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.*—Ps. xix. 13.

HAVING showed you the danger of the first sort of men, that live in known sins against the light of conscience and the things they presume upon, I now come to a second sort, that live in sin, and please themselves in this, that all men are sinners, and so are they, and that their sins are but sins of infirmity.

To this I answer—That which you constantly practise, without resistance and remorse, how can you call that your infirmity? Every man almost thinketh his sins to be infirmities. Come to the drunkard, swearer, adulterer, oppressor of godliness, the vilest of men, they will tell you that they are sinners, as all men are, and that their sins are but slips and frailties incident to mankind. But what are these slips and frailties you call so? Swearing frequently, drunkenness, wantonness, and the like sins: this they call making themselves merry; and in their mirth they are commonly ridiculing and deriding religion. Though they daily go to the taphouse, playhouse, whorehouse, though they have not one drachm of grace, or any serious care about eternal life, yet this is their excuse, that they have their infirmities as well as others.

To these five things must be offered—(1.) The distinction of persons; (2.) The distinction of sins; (3.) The nature of sins of infirmity; (4.) Some observations thence; (5.) The vanity of their excuses and pleas, by which they would prove their sins to be infirmities.

First, There is a distinction of persons to be regarded. Some have passed from death to life, 1 John iii. 14; others do as yet remain in 'the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity,' Acts viii. 23. Some are in the flesh, and 'they cannot please God,' Rom. viii. 8; others make it their business to find acceptance with him, 2 Cor. v. 9. Some that live after the flesh, Rom. viii. 13; others who are in Christ, and 'there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ,' Rom. viii. 1. The one sort of men are under the first covenant, and the sins which they commit are deadly and damnable. To the other sort indeed we cannot say all their sins are venial and sins of infirmity; for they may fall in some rare and extraordinary cases into great and atrocious crimes; but this we can say, their infirmities are pardoned of course, which we cannot say of the other. The state of the person, though it doth not all, yet it beareth much weight in the case; for the first sort of men are without the verge of the covenant of grace, and wholly destitute of the spiritual life. How can their sins be said to be infirmities or venial faults? The state of the covenant will not permit it, nor the state of their hearts. Not the state of the covenant; for sin, all sin, is in its nature deadly and destructive. The end of it is death, and the wages of it death, Rom. vi. 21, 23. How can wicked men, that never accepted of the covenant of grace, hope for any release? for the grace and mercy of God goeth along with that covenant, and reacheth not to them that are not under it. Therefore their lighter faults are deadly and destructive, both *ex merito*, in their own nature and merit, and *ab eventu*, in



respect of the event. They shall have judgment without mercy, when others are judged by the law of liberty, James ii. 12, 13. And the state of their hearts will not permit it, for he hath no spiritual life; for infirmity is in one that hath life. He hath life, but it is weak, and so he faileth out of weakness: 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,' Mat. xxvi. 41. But infirmities cannot properly be said to be in them who are said to be 'dead in trespasses and sins;' where sin remaineth in its full strength, and they have no power of grace at all. You do not say of a dead man that he is weak. It is true, the faults of wicked and impenitent persons are not all of a like nature; some are more wilfully committed than others, but they are all mortal, even their vain thoughts and idle words, and bring them under the curse, which is not taken off till they fly for refuge to the covenant of grace, and change states. A wicked man so living and so dying shall be judged according to that covenant which saith, Gal. iii. 10, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' But now, for the other sort, we cannot say that all the sins of the godly are infirmities. It is true, the sins whereinto they ordinarily fall are not presumptuous sins, but sins of weakness and infirmity, because the general bent and frame of their hearts is towards God. But they may, in some extraordinary cases, fall into gross and foul sins. As outwardly, besides the daily infirmities the body is subject to, as hunger, weariness, faintness, and pain. There are grievous distempers and diseases, in which a man cannot tell whether the patient will live or die; so a godly man that hath the life of grace may, besides incident weaknesses which cannot be avoided by the grace that is ordinarily given, fall into great enormities, which are ordinary and frequent, and so may lose his sense of the love of God, and his hopes and fitness for eternal life as before; but this advantage he hath above the wicked man, his infirmities and daily failings do not bring him under condemnation, but are pardoned by virtue of his general interest in the covenant of grace, while the main of his course is to walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh, Rom. viii. 1. He hath the seed of God in him to awaken his heart, and some former experiences of the love of God that encourage him to sue out his pardon. In his grievous offences he is not altogether so hopeless and helpless as a wicked man that never was acquainted with God. It fareth with him as with Nebuchadnezzar when he was brutified through his melancholy or God's secret judgment, Dan. iv. 15. The stump of his roots remained in the earth when his branches were cut off and his leaves shaken and the fruit scattered. There was the foundation of a reasonable creature under brutish manners. Well, then, the different state of the persons must be considered. What! should men dead in trespasses and sins, and wholly strangers from the covenant of promise, talk of infirmities?

Secondly, The distinction of sins. All sin, but not all alike. The scripture intimateth a distinction: 'Their spot is not the spot of God's children,' Deut. xxxii. 5. They are a perverse and crooked generation; their sin which spotteth and blemisheth their souls is not such a sin which is of infirmity, which his children may, and many times do, commit, but not of malignity, and perverseness, and contempt, or such as proceedeth out of wilfulness or an impenitent heart. God gave the

priest under the law direction how to put a difference between leprous persons, to pronounce some clean and some utterly unclean, Lev. xiii. 38, 39; with the 44th. If the leprosy spotted the skin, but did not fret the flesh, the priest was to pronounce him clean. God is merciful to the infirmities of his people; not esteeming every spot and deformity in them as a malignant sin. We read, Jude 15, of 'ungodly deeds which they have ungodlily committed;' and Ezek. xxiv. 13, 'In thy filthiness is lewdness.' Some things are done out of mere weakness, others in a more provoking manner; as when a man is sufficiently convinced in his understanding that the thing that he would do is unlawful and displeasing to God; or at least hath means to convince him if he be not wanting to himself in the use thereof, and hath time and leisure to advise with himself, and examine the case, and apply the light of his understanding to direct him, yet resolveth to put his intention into act, and to fulfil his own will; this is an ungodly deed ungodlily committed, a presumptuous sin; and whosoever doth so is become highly culpable before God. Thou canst not say, It is thy infirmity, no more than if a man should voluntarily beat another and say it is his infirmity. A man may strike another by chance, or in his sleep, as night-walkers; that is passed by; or as under the law there was a city of refuge for him that slew another by chance, and not of malice prepense. As casual homicide and wilful murder differ, so doth sinning out of infirmity and sinning out of presumption; and a middle between both is striking another in passion, as sins of violent passion are in some cases infirmities, in others presumptions.

Thirdly, The nature of sins of infirmity: The more of voluntariness or wilfulness, the less they are sins of infirmity; for to sin wilfully, resolvedly, without restraint, reluctancy, or tenderness of conscience, is to sin presumptuously, not out of infirmity. Now what degree of voluntariness there is in our sinning is here to be determined, and must be known by observation. The will may concur several ways, habitually or actually. Habitually; as Jolin iii. 19, 'They loved darkness rather than light;' which is more plainly expressed Ps. lii. 3, 'Thou lovest evil more than good.' What is done wittingly, willingly: Isa. lxx. 12, 'And did choose that wherein I delighted not;' Isa. lxvi. 3, 4, 'They did evil before mine eyes; yea, they have chosen their own ways; and their soul delighteth in their abominations.' When men willingly choose and betake themselves to such practices: Rom. vi. 16, 'Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?' And an actual consent; this may be in some cases to some particular sinful action. Their actual will to sin at that time is greater than their actual will to forbear it. Now this may be deliberate or precipitated. Deliberate: Heb. x. 29, 'Who have trodden underfoot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing; and have done despite to the Spirit of grace.' That is a presumptuous sin; a thorough consent of will to forsake the known truth, or else precipitated by the violence of the present passion, which is a kind of surprisal; as Peter, being surprised of a sudden, denied that he knew Christ. Again our willingness may be full or half full, plenary or partial. Plenary is set forth in that expression, Eccles. viii. 11, 'Therefore the heart of



the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil ;' when there is a voluntary delivering over ourselves to such a practice. Partial or but half full when there is a consent and a dissent, but the consent is stronger for the time ; as when they do that which they allow not, Rom. vii. 15. This may be an infirmity, the other an iniquity. Sometimes the will may concur not by an express consent so much as by a naked permission or connivance ; not a strong dissent ; which, though it be culpable considering our duty, yet it argueth a weakness. Again, consent of will is found out by considering our strength, or advantages of standing out against the temptation, as when there is more time for deliberation. A deliberate act hath more of the will than sudden risings or bubbling up of sins. So also in the nature of the sin. To blaspheme and curse God is a greater sin than an idle thought, and we have more advantages against it. Idolatry is a greater sin than stealing a shilling, shedding of blood than an officious lie. Or when we have more checks of conscience, and warnings and stops in providence, or our temptations are not great ; as the murmuring of the Israelites was not out of want, but wantonness. Or when men have greater helps, quickness of understanding, and grace to prevent it. In short, an evil intent hath more of the will in it than an evil action ; the one is purposed, the other done by way of surprise.

Fourthly, The observations are these two—

1. That there is some difficulty in the case to state what sins are sins of presumption, and what of infirmity ; partly because some sins which in their nature are infirmities may prove iniquities in the committer, as when he abandoneth himself to vain thoughts, idle words or actions. And partly because the same sin may be an infirmity in one man which is not in another, because the other hath more knowledge and helps of grace. And partly because that may be an infirmity at one time which is not at another, as it cometh backed with more temptations, and so make a more forcible impression, and have no time for deliberation. And partly because that which was an infirmity at first may afterwards commence into an iniquity ; as when he has sinned away his spiritual strength ; his conscience is not awake, because lulled asleep by some foregoing sin. And partly because it is hard to determine how long sensual passions may keep the soul from sober consideration.

2. That the best way will be to stand at a distance universally from all sin ; for thereby we shall be kept out of dangers. If the scripture had expressly set down how much sin is consistent with grace, we might have been tempted to have gone as far as we could, and would not so strictly stand upon our guard as now we are obliged to do ; for since it is so nice a case, we should be the more cautious. And here these corollaries arise from the debate—

[1.] If you see how much it concerneth you to keep up a constant care and felicitous desire to please God in all things : Heb. xiii. 18 ; ' Pray for us ; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly ;' and a solid purpose and inclination of heart against all sin : Ps. xcvi. 10, ' Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.'

[2.] How much it concerneth us to cherish and increase these every

day, that our hatred against sin may be more keen and lively : Ps. cxix. 104, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way ;' and our inclination to God, and holiness, and heaven more strengthened and increased : 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'That as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more ;' Ps. lxxxiv. 10, 'They go from strength to strength ;' Phil. iii. 14, 'I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.'

[3.] This must be not only our purpose, but our constant business, our constant care, Phil. ii. 12 ; our prayer, Mat. xxvi. 41 ; our tears and groans, Rom. vii. 24 ; our striving, Rom. vi. 13, 14 ; our serious endeavour, Acts xxiv. 16. But some may say, What needeth there so much ado ? I answer—'Though the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak.' Our understandings and wills are but imperfectly sanctified. The understanding is an imperfect guide ; the will doth not stand upon its empire ; there is an obstinacy and rebellion in the lower faculties. If this care be not taken, they will prove more than infirmities.

[4.] When through frailty we sin more grievously, it concerneth us early to recover ourselves again : 1 John ii. 1, 'My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not ; and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' Under the law, if a man were unclean, he was to wash his clothes before evening. And after we have fallen to be more watchful and circumspect : Ps. li. 6, 'In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom ;' lest we settle into a trade of sin.

Fifthly, The vanity of their excuses and pleas. What have you to say why your sins should be counted infirmities ?

1. Is it because you run not into those gross and roaring sins and abominations wherewith others are blemished ? I answer—

[1.] There may be much contempt of God in a small sin, when for a trifle we will break with him, and go against his express will. This is a slighting of the divine majesty. What love and reverence hath he to God that will displease him for a trifle ? Among men, to deny a small thing to a friend, or to resist authority upon a light occasion, maketh a man more culpable. It is not an excuse, but an aggravation : Amos ii. 6, 'They sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes.' Adam's eating the forbidden fruit, the smallness of the thing forbidden aggravated his sin. Saul's sin, for which God rejected him, was of no great outward bulk ; sparing Agag, and the best of the sheep, and oxen, and fatlings for sacrifice. It was neither murder that he committed, nor adultery, nor drunkenness, but it was against the express command of God ; and so rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, 1 Sam. xv. 23 ; that is, disobedience to God in a small matter may be as heinous as the greatest sins. In some cases there are more aggravating circumstances in small sins than those that seem greater, as the dye many times is more than the stuff. It is rather an argument that sin beareth full sway, than any sign of your goodness ; as a little thing will make a stone run down-hill, because it is its natural motion. As there may be much crookedness in a small line, so there may be much contempt of God in small sins. He that was found gathering sticks on the sabbath-day, and Moses knew not what to do with him,



the Lord said unto Moses, 'The man shall surely be put to death : all the congregation shall stone him without the camp,' Num. xv. 35. You will say, Was that such a great matter, to gather a few sticks ? Or, he being the first instance, might have been spared. No ; it was against God's express law ; it was a presumption, therefore capital. Among the four sorts of death inflicted by the Israelites, stoning was the chief. There was stoning, burning, slaying with the sword, and strangling. Maimonides saith, stoning was counted heavier than burning, and burning than slaying with the sword, and that than strangling. Now God said, 'The congregation shall stone him with stones. Go now and plead that thy sins are but small sins ; with Jonathan, 'I did but touch a little honey with the top of my rod, and for this I must die,' 1 Sam. xiv. 43. The matter may be small, but the sin great, as it hath more or less of wilfulness in it. Do but consider God's infinite majesty, and supreme right to the creature's obedience, and see if this plea will stand, It is but a small matter, and let me be allowed in this. God will be punctually and exactly observed, so as there may be no allowed failings. The matter may be small, and yet not the nature of the sin small. The least sins are committed against an infinite majesty, and are breaches of his eternal law.

[2.] Small sins neglected may breed great danger to us. As a small leak neglected may sink the ship, as well as the greatest wave ; so do small sins destroy the soul for ever if they be neglected ; if a man allow himself in them, and deliberately multiply them, they will damn us as well as great and heinous sins that make more noise, and are more hateful in the world. What matter is it to the loss of the ship whether it be swallowed up by one great wave, or sunk by degrees ? We read of some that have been slain by the sword, of others that have been killed by bodkins and penknives ; some that have been devoured by lions, others eaten out with vermin, destroyed with mice and lice. Pope Adrian was choked with a gnat : Mat. v. 19, 'Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven ;' a man of no place or room in the kingdom of grace and glory : ver. 20, 'He shall in no case enter into heaven.'

[3.] When men give themselves liberty in lesser sins, they presently fall into greater : Ps. i. 1, 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.' Mark, here is walking, standing, and sitting ; ungodly, sinners, and scornful ; counsel, way, and seat ; hearken to their counsel, walk in their way, sit in their seat. The little sticks set the great ones on fire, and a little wisp is often used to enkindle a great block of wood. A man that keepeth his heart so carelessly that he suffereth breaches to be made upon his soul, he doth thereby fit himself for greater. Every sin bringeth not only a guilt upon the soul, but a blot, a stronger inclination to sin again ; as a stick that hath been in the fire is the more apt to fire the second time. Corruption is strengthened as well as wrath increased ; as a lesser degree of heat disposeth to a greater, as water heated to such a degree will soon be heated to further degrees ; as many acts of sin bring on a customary necessity and inclination ; it removeth the fear of God. They that make

bold with him in little things will venture upon greater. We grow bolder, and so doth Satan too. When we have lost our reverence of God, he is encouraged to come on with stronger temptations. God is provoked to withdraw his grace, that awe, bond, or bridle by which we are withheld from sin. God suffereth them to fall into greater, because they made nothing of lesser; yea, small sins engage a man to do more, to excuse, conceal, or maintain what we have done already. Peter's fear drew on his denial with oaths and execrations; and so there is no stopping when we run down-hill. The wimble pierceth the wood; and maketh way for the auger; so these make the first breach in the conscience, which still groweth wider and wider for temptations to enter upon us. Small sins may harden the heart more than greater, because there is more neglect of God; they are committed without regret; and digested without remorse. Great sins are more apparent and more hateful. Natural conscience blusheth at them; but small sins are let alone till a custom groweth upon us. A violent distemper maketh us run to the physician, but when a disease groweth upon us by degrees, we carry death in our bosoms before we are aware. All this is spoken to teach us to make conscience of lesser sins and failings, and not willingly to allow them. The lesser commandments are an hedge to the greater; as cruelty to the beasts is forbidden that it may be a rail about the life of man. Jerome saith of Paula, *Ita levia peccata deflebat, ut gravissimorum scelerum diceretur ream*—She so bewailed small sins as if she had been guilty of great ones.

[4.] Consider the multitude of them. Small sins with their multitude and number hurt the soul as much as greater sins with their weight. David, a good man, crieth out, Ps. xl. 12; 'Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me.' They are a burden too heavy for me. Though little sins seem light in themselves, what are they altogether? Nothing lighter than sand; yet what is more weighty than sand? Prov. xxvii. 3. A gnat, a fly, a locust, poor inconsiderable creatures, yet when they come in multitudes they are God's 'great army,' Joel ii. 25. We may count our sins by the moments of our lives, the number of our thoughts, words, and deeds. We must not look on them as single sins, but as the sins of one that hath greatly sinned before, in the whole track and course of his life; as a figure added to a sum already fixed makes it rise high. What a miserable spectacle is a poor creature that hath a complication of diseases, and is exercised with many at once, the stone, gout, strangury, pain of the teeth! Consider it; oh, what are we that have so many kinds of sin? We look on sins severally, but God conjunctly. Though he can see every sin apart, yet he seeth them altogether, in the whole course and track of it.

[5.] Small sins have met with great judgments; Uzzah for touching the ark struck dead, 2 Sam. vi. 7; Moses shut out of Canaan for a few hasty unadvised words, Num. xx. 24; Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt, Gen. xix. 26; the disobedient prophet torn in pieces by a lion, 1 Kings xiii. 26; Nadab and Abihu cut off for offering strange fire unto the Lord, Num. xxvi. 60.

[6.] It is a greater evil to be guilty of one of those sins than to suffer



the greatest temporal losses. It is a step towards the loss of the favour of God, and an offence to God: Heb. xi. 26, 'Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.'

2. Is it because you are tempted and drawn on by others?

*Ans.* Yet there may be presumption and consent on thy part for all this. Adam was tempted to the eating the forbidden fruit by Eve, and Eve tempted by Satan, yet the mischief of that action was very great. He had time of deliberation, and to give check to the temptation. All that are drawn into sin are tempted; some by themselves, and some by others. David gave leave to his eyes to fire his heart, 2 Sam. xi. 2. Indeed those that tempt themselves sin more; but yet you may sin, and that presumptuously, without being tempted by others. David was tempted to number the people: 1 Chron. xxi. 1, 'And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel;' yet David doth not lessen and excuse the sin by the temptation: ver. 8, 'I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing.' Joseph was tempted, but he stood, because the fear of God preserved his heart. If you had stood upon your guard, you might not miscarry. It is true God considereth men according to their temptations; so should we (Gal. vi. 1, 'If a brother be overtaken in a fault.') in judging others, but not in judging ourselves. A self-excusing heart is none of the best. We, that are conscious to the workings of our hearts, may find wilful circumstances and voluntary inclinations in ourselves, besides instigation from without. But how are we enticed? why drawn away by our own lusts and enticed? James i. 14. *Si Sathanas loqueretur, et taceret Deus, haberes unde te excusares*—If Satan only speak, and God hold his peace, it were another matter. But when we are set between God's admonitions and Satan's suggestions, why should we yield to one more than to another? God adviseth that which is good, as well as Satan enticeth to evil. Now voluntarily and deliberately to hearken to Satan and neglect God, judge whether that be not a presumption, yea or no. They that sin, and are not tempted, reject the commandment of God; but they that are tempted reject God and prefer the commandment of a base creature or sinful man before God, and are pliable to men when the heart is not to be entreated by God, which is a double affront and disgrace.

3. Or is it because you say you strive against it?

*Ans.* So did Pilate against the crucifying of Christ, but yielded to it at last against his own conscience for his interest's sake, to preserve the good-will of the people and his credit in his government; though he would fain have washed his hands of it, yet it sticketh to him to this day. Balaam resisted for a while, but yieldeth at length for the wages of unrighteousness. The consciences of most will bear back and hold off for a time from a thing which they apprehend to be offensive to God and destructive to the soul, but the pleasure and profit of sin prevaieth, and they are carried away. If sin hath not wholly beclouded and subverted our reason (which happeneth only to such whom God abandoneth in an extraordinary manner), men do not, cannot commit any considerable crime without some reluctance of conscience; but at length, after some encounter and contest, reason is captivated by the violence of passion, and men are strangely transported by the instigations and urgings of the flesh; but the actions are not the

more excusable for these strivings; no, but the more culpable, since their own conscience does not acquit them. No question but every one is the most favourable judge of his own actions. Now our own hearts condemn us, and there is a sentence against what we do in our own breasts. I say, these reluctances and grudgings of conscience make the rebellion the greater, when you will venture upon what is evil against the checks of your own consciences. He that will break through when he hath rubs in his way, his heart is the more bent upon that action. There is a double evil—to do the sinful act, and overcome that which hindereth the doing of it.

4. Do you excuse yourselves because you are troubled about it?

*Ans.* So was Esau troubled after he had sold his birthright. The apostle telleth us he sought it again with tears, Heb. xii. 15, 16. Judas, when he had betrayed his master, had his qualms: Mat. xxvii. 4, 'I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.' He was troubled even to a deep despair. There is a necessary connection between sinful acts and stings of conscience. Heathens felt accusing thoughts after they had done any foul gross evil, Rom. ii. 14, 15. Adam was ashamed and hid himself. It is not a godly sorrow when it doth not weaken the sin committed. We are troubled, yet fall into it again for all this; these are but involuntary impressions.

5. Some excuse themselves because they have no power to do otherwise; the swearer would leave his swearing if he could, and the drunkard his cups if he could.

*Ans.* The truth is, this one thing is considerable concerning infirmities and presumptions. That is an infirmity that doth not arise from wilfulness, but want of strength to resist: Rom. vii. 19, 'The evil which I would not, that I do.' But sins of presumption are those which are more easily avoided by the ordinary assistance of grace which God vouchsafeth, either habitual or actual. They are easily known, easily observed, and occasions and opportunities easily prevented. Either prevented by habitual grace, or the actual aids of God's Spirit. But yet to say you have no power is a vain pretence in most men; for many times this want of power doth aggravate the sin. It is a lazy *cannot*; that is, they cannot find in their hearts to take pains, but give way to spiritual sloth, and if they will not bestir themselves and use the means that God hath appointed, they cannot be excused. A sluggard cannot do any such thing, because his hands refuse to labour. It is a wilful *cannot*: John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?' Or else it is the penal, judicial *cannot*. The want of power to resist may be more faulty than the act they commit; as when they have provoked God to withdraw his grace and leave them under a customary hardness and necessity of sinning; as, 'How can ye do good that are accustomed to do evil?' Jer. xiii. 27. There is an inclination in them to do evil; as a drunken man cannot do his business because he hath disabled himself. They are guilty of a double crime, for their drunkenness and disability; as a naughty man cannot go because the magistrate hath locked him in the stocks. Well, then, when they will not take pains to mortify their lusts, or to watch against sin, or have forfeited grace, and brought a necessity upon themselves, their sin is the more.



*Use 2.* To press us—(1.) To take heed of presumptuous sins; (2.) Not to depend upon our own strength, but seek the grace of God.

First, Take heed of presumptuous sins; of all sin as much as we can, but especially of these sins; for these reasons—

1. Because these are more unnatural: 1 John iii. 9, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' Not in such a manner as others do. He hath his failings, and now and then some great fall, but it is contrary to the new nature; as if an hen should bring forth the egg of a crow.

2. These are more mischievous. They exclude us from the favour of God, which sins of infirmity do not. Hinder the acceptance of our prayers: 2 Chron. xxx. 19, 20, 'The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.'

3. They bring a scourge on our families: 'The sword shall never depart from thine house,' 2 Sam. xii. 16. It is a misery to a parent to see his family scourged for his sin.

4. Pardon is not so easily obtained for these sins. There is a pardon of course for sins of infirmity, but for these not till they be particularly repented of. It is good to repent of every sin with a distinct and particular repentance, yet it is not so absolutely necessary. A special repentance is required for these sins in all the parts of it.

[1.] A greater sorrow and humiliation: 'Peter went out and wept bitterly,' Mat. xxvi. 75; and Luke vii. 38, 'Mary Magdalen washed Christ's feet in her tears.' The incestuous Corinthian, that was almost swallowed up in uncleanness, was swallowed up in sorrow, 2 Cor. ii. 7. David speaketh of broken bones, Ps. li. Great wounds must have broad plasters. Now a less degree of sorrow will serve for other sins, even the ordinary and daily exercise of repentance, such as we express to God in our daily prayers. A great disease needeth more special physic than an ordinary, or is necessarily used in health.

[2.] A particular confession and acknowledgment of this sin: Ps. li. 14, 'Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God;' with Ps. xix. 12, 'Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from my secret sins.' A general, serious, but dolorous acknowledgment of our corruptions, with a general prayer for pardon: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.' No man's knowledge is so exact, his conscience so watchful, his memory so perfect, but, so far as we observe, we must acknowledge and bewail them.

[3.] An actual reformation is more necessary. A man cannot ordinarily avoid all sins of infirmity. A virtual, habitual forsaking of them is required, as the soul is more confirmed in the love of God, and there is a general desire to be rid of them: 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. vii. 24. And striving against them is victory, and an endeavour to resist them as far as we are able. But as to actual forbearance, that is not so strictly required, and under such penalties. A man may die when such sins are breaking from him, and yet go to heaven. But these sins are not actually pardoned, unless actually relinquished: Prov. xxviii.

13, 'He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy;' John v. 14, 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.' Probably they had smarted for some gross provocation: Ezra x. 19, 'They gave their hands that they would put away their strange wives;' Acts xix. 19, 'Many of them which used curious arts brought their books together, and burnt them before all men.' Real actual avoiding that sin is required of themselves and others.

Secondly, Take heed of depending upon your own strength. The more holy any one is, the more sensible of their sinfulness and readiness to fall. Their hatred against sin is more strong; they are more acquainted with God and themselves, and so are more jealous of offending him, more humble. A jealousy of a man's proneness to fall into these kind of sins is a good preservative: Rom. xi. 20, 'Well, because of unbelief, they were broken off, and thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear;' 1 Cor. x. 12, 'Wherefore let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.' The best christians need the strongest assistance. Oh, then, take heed of this self-dependence.

The notes of it.

First, It discovereth itself by venturing on temptations without a call or warrant. When men will lay their heads in the lap of a temptation, or run into the mouth of danger, they do not only tempt God, but tempt themselves. Peter would be getting into the devil's quarters; and what was the issue? He denieth his master there. Dependence on God is ever accompanied with an holy solicitude and cautiousness: Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.' It is a presuming on our own strength, when we will be playing about the cockatrice's hole. When you run upon occasions of sin, you provoke God to leave you. Avoid tempting objects; we soon take fire.

Secondly, When we neglect means whereby graces are fed and supplied, waiting for a dole at wisdom's gate: Prov. viii. 34, 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting daily at the posts of my doors.' We cannot regularly expect anything from God but in God's way; therefore be much in prayer, hearing, taking all opportunities of doing and receiving good. Now when once we begin to think we need not pray so much and hear so much, and are more arbitrary and negligent in the use of means, we live upon our own stock, and quit God.

Thirdly, When we go forth to any conflict without actual renewing our dependence. The Ephraimites took it ill that the Gibeonites did not call them into the field when they went out against the enemy: Judges viii. 1, 'Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not when thou wentest to fight against the Midianites?' May not God much more when you take not him along with you?

Fourthly, When we boast of our courage before we are called to trial. They that crack in their quarters do not always do best in the field. Remember Peter's boast, 'Though all men be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended,' Mat. xxvi. 33; and 'Let not him that putteth on his harness boast as he that putteth it off.'



## SERMON IV.

*Let them not have dominion over me:—Ps. xix. 13.*

WE have handled the first branch of David's prayer as it is absolutely considered. I now come to speak of the second, which is conceived upon supposition and by way of reserve, that if he should fall into those sins, yet that they might not have full dominion over him. Or, if you will, in the first branch, sin is considered in the cause and rise of it, pride and rebellion against God; here in the fruit and effect of it, 'Let them not have dominion over me.' The former notion represented sin as an offence to God, a presuming of the creature upon him or against him; this clause, as a mischief to the creature, as that which exerciseth a tyranny upon us, 'Let them not have dominion over me.'

*Doct.* It concerneth the children of God to take care that sin get not dominion over them.

Here I shall inquire—(1.) When sin is said to have dominion over us; (2.) Why we are to take care that this mischief doth not befall us.

The first I shall open in these propositions—

First, In every man by nature all sin doth reign; for where there is no principle of grace set up, sin remaineth in its full strength. Therefore carnal men are said in scripture to be under the power of darkness: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God;' Col. i. 13, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.' As long as man continueth in his natural estate, he is kept in slavery under the power of sin and Satan. His corruptions have a great power over him, and he liveth in a peaceable, willing, uncontrolled subjection to them: Titus iii. 3, 'Serving divers lusts and pleasures.' Sundry men have their sundry lusts, but all are in servitude and bondage, wholly free from the yoke of righteousness: Rom. vi. 20, 'For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.' They do voluntarily and without opposition live in a trade of all sin, and under the slavish tyranny thereof. Till Christ come to trouble them, all is in peace; wind and tide go together. This should put us upon looking after a change, and to see if the power of sin be broken. There are two contrary kingdoms—of sin and Satan, Christ and righteousness. We are either in the one or the other. Doth sin yet reign in you? It did in all by nature; when and how was it broken?

Secondly, Though sin doth reign in every one by nature, yet this dominion doth appear more evidently in some than in others, who are judicially given up to be visibly under the dominion of sin, as the just fruit of their voluntary living under that yoke, that they may become warnings to the rest, and instances of this woful slavery. They are apparently and *in conspectu hominum* outrageous sinners, led up and down the world by the devil; so that every man that seeth them, and is acquainted with their course of life, may without breach of charity say, There goeth one who declareth himself to be a servant of sin; either to sin in the general, or to some particular sin.

1. To sin in the general. He that, instead of trembling at God's word, scoffeth at it, and maketh more account of the course of the world than of the will of God, of the fashions of men than of the directions of the word, and thinketh the scorn of a base worm that would deride him for godliness a greater terror than the curse of God, and the love of his carnal companions more valuable than communion with God, and, instead of working out his salvation with fear and trembling, runneth into all excess of riot, and carelessly neglects his precious soul while he pampereth his frail body, and doth voluntarily and ordinarily give up himself to serve his corruptions without resistance, or crying to Christ for help, this man is in the eye of all the world a slave to sin: Rom. vi. 16, 'Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?' It is an apparent case. A man that giveth up himself to go on in the way of his own heart, restraining himself in nothing which it affects, he is one of sin's slaves, so our Lord Christ telleth us, John viii. 34, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.' There is no further doubt nor debate about the matter. He that goeth on in a trade of sin, and maketh that his work and business in the world, without looking after other things, he is one in whom sin reigneth.

2. To some particular sin. As we have instances of carnal wretches in the general, so of some poor captive souls that remain under the full power and tyranny of this or that lust, and are so remarkable for their slavery and bondage under it, that the world will point at them, and say, There goeth a glutton, a drunkard, an adulterer, a worldling, a proud or an envious person. Some are remarkable for covetousness, others for gluttony, another for ambitious affection of greatness; one whose god is his belly, a slave to appetite; another famous for his worldliness and arts of gaining: 2 Peter ii. 19, 'Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.' They grow proverbial for giving up themselves wholly to such a conquering and prevailing lust. As in the natural man, some are famous for a strong sight, a quick ear, a nimble tongue, so are these for notable excesses in some corruption; or as the saints are eminent for some graces, Abraham for faith, Moses for meekness, Job for patience, Joseph for chastity, Timothy for temperance, so these are notorious for contrary blemishes.

Thirdly, As to the godly, sin remaineth in them, but reigneth not there. It is cast down in regard of regency, though not cast out in regard of inherency, like the beasts in Daniel, chap. vii. 12, 'Their dominion was taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.' There is some degree of life, but their reign is broken. The Israelites could not wholly expel the Canaanites, yet they kept them under. There will be pride, earthiness, unbelief, and sensuality, dwelling, moving, and working in them; but it hath not its wonted power over them. It is not only incongruous that it should be so, considering their advantages by grace, but also in some sense impossible. *De jure*, it ought not; but *de facto* it shall not. We have the apostle's exhortation, Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.' While ye have these mortal bodies, sin will dwell in you; but let it not reign over



you. God suffereth it to dwell in you for your exercise, not your ruin. We have a promise, Rom. vi. 14, 'For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace;' as, let it not, so it shall not. Christ will not reckon men slaves to sin by their having sin in them, nor yet by their daily failings and infirmities, or by their falling now and then into foul faults by the violence of a temptation, unless they make a constant trade of sin, and be under the dominion of it without control.

Fourthly, The not reigning of sin in the children of God will be understood by these distinctions—

1. There is a predominancy of one sin above another sin, and the predominancy of sin over grace. In the first sense, renewed men may be said to have some reigning corruption or predominant sin; namely, in comparison of other sins, as appeareth by the great sway or power they bear in commanding other evils to be committed or forborne, according as they may contribute to advance them. By violent and frequent relapses of the saints into them, or their unwillingness to admit of admonition and reproof for them, or their falling into them out of an inward propensity, when outward temptations are none, or weak, or very few; some sins that are less mortified than others, or into which they are hurried by natural inclination, constitution, or education. Thus David had his iniquity, Ps. xviii. 23, be it hastiness, distrust of the promise, or an inclination to revenge himself. Some sins that men favour most, and are most urgent and importunate upon them, and steal away their hearts most from God; the ocean into which the other streams of iniquity do empty themselves; that sin which outgroweth all the rest, as the tall trees take away the nourishment from the under shrubs; that which is loved and delighted in above other sins. Thus, in regard of other sins, one may reign in the throne of the heart, and be beloved more than another; but not in regard of predominancy over grace, for that is contrary to the new nature, that sin should have the upperhand constantly and universally in the soul; for any one thing habitually loved more than God will not stand with sincerity: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' If we must not love our natural comforts above Christ, certainly not our carnal lusts: Mat. vi. 24, 'No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' It is a dispossessing Christ to put anything in his stead; to love anything with him or above him.

2. The next distinction is in reference to sins prevailing over grace. There is a twofold prevalency—actual or habitual. Actual is only for a time; habitual for constancy. Though a regenerate man be not one that letteth sin reign over him habitually, yet he too often letteth sin reign over him actually, as to that particular act of sin; when we do that which is evil against our consciences, or yield *pro hic et nunc*, at the present time, to obey sin in the lust thereof, or upon its command run into any particular wickedness. By presumptuous acts a man doth for that time put the sceptre into the hands of sin; for consent to sin maketh it reign. This a child of God may do for a fit,

but as to the general state and frame of their hearts, they are at liberty.

3. The next distinction is of sins reigning with a full and plenary consent, or with reluctancy and contradiction; as Herod reigned over the Jews for many years by mere force, they opposing and contradicting him, but afterward they willingly consented to his government. So sin reigneth in some who readily and willingly obey the lusts thereof, and take its bonds and chains upon them. But now sin doth sometimes prevail on the godly, yet not quietly and without blows: Rom. vii. 15, 'What I hate, that do I.' They are in combat and conflict with it. The virgin that cried out was innocent; it was a ravishment, not a consent. *Peccatum patitur, non facit*—He suffers sin, but does not do it, saith Bernard. The seed of God is disliking and opposing: 1 John iii. 9, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' They are sometimes foiled, but they keep up their resistance. Sin gets the mastery, but as a tyrant, not a lawful possessor. You groan under that oppression, and strive for liberty and freedom. Chrysostom hath an expression on that of the apostle, Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lust thereof;' *οὐκ εἶπε, μὴ τυραννέτω, ἀλλὰ μὴ βασιλεύετω*. He does not say, Let it not tyrannise; but, Let it not rule. Sin will play the tyrant in the best heart, but you must not let it have a quiet reign and government. Sin, taking advantage of some present distempers and difficulties, may encroach upon us, but it hath not our hearts. Whereas otherwise, if a man be not in arms against it, but liveth in peace and good contentment under the vigour and life of his lusts, there is no opposition, unless it be some checks of a natural conscience, or a few thoughts of fear and shame; there is no opposition of a renewed heart; sin reigneth in them, though there be some risings against it, as a mischief and inconveniency, not a hatred or resistance of it as it is an offence to God.

*Secondly*, The reasons why we are to take care that sin reign not over us.

First, Because in giving way to the dominion of sin, we renounce the government of Christ, and transfer the kingdom from him to Satan. Let me—

1. Prove that we do so, and that to do so is—(1.) A great wrong and injury to Christ; (2.) A great folly and disadvantage to ourselves.

[1.] He that giveth way to the reign of sin taketh the sceptre out of Christ's hands, and puts it into the hands of Satan. What though he doth not formally intend this, yet virtually he doth it, and so God will account it. It is *finis operis*, the end of the work, though not *operantis*, of the workman. Look, as the setting up of an usurper is the rejection of the lawful king, so the setting up of sin is the setting up of Satan: John viii. 44, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.' And the setting up of Satan is the laying aside of Christ. As no man can serve two masters, God and mammon, so every man serveth one of these two, God or mammon. In being a servant to sin you become a servant of Satan, and every degree of service done to Satan doth include in it a like degree or portion of treason and



infidelity towards Christ. All will grant that the heathen, that lived in abominable idolatries, were slaves and bondmen of Satan; and may not christians be such as work iniquity with greediness? Though they profess Christ to be their Christ, to be their Lord, yet they may be as true slaves and bondmen to Satan as the heathen were, which offered sacrifice to him. A drunken and a wanton christian gives the devil as much interest in him as he had in those that sacrificed to Bacchus and Venus. Satan desired that worship from them but as a means to gain an interest in their souls. Now, if you give him a power to dispose and command your affections, you are his by possession or occupation. The bond of your servitude to Satan is altogether as firm and strong as theirs was. Barely crying, Lord, Lord, will not excuse: Mat. vii. 21, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' And we were all formerly made over to Satan as well as they: Titus iii. 3, 'We ourselves were sometimes foolish and disobedient;' and the god of this world ruleth in the hearts of the disobedient.

[2.] This is a very great wrong to Christ, to put ourselves in subjection to Satan, for we have no power to dispose of ourselves, being Christ's by purchase and covenant. By purchase: 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, 'What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.' The buyer hath power over what he hath bought. We were lost, but Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. We were sold, we sold ourselves against all right and justice, and Christ was pleased to redeem us, and that with no slight thing, but with his own blood: 1 Peter i. 18, 19, 'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from our vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' How can you look your Redeemer in the face at the last day? If you have any sense and belief of christian mysteries, you should be afraid to rob Christ of his purchase: 1 Cor. vi. 15, 'Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.' He hath bought us to this very end, that we may be no longer under the slavery of sin, but under his blessed government and the sceptre of his Spirit: Titus ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.' This was his end, to set us at liberty and free us from our sins. Therefore for us to despise the benefit, and to count our bondage a delight, this is to build up what he came to destroy. This is as great an affront to Christ as can be. But we are not only his by purchase, but by covenant: Ezek. xvi. 8, 'I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine.' This was ratified in baptism, when we dedicated ourselves to the Lord's use and service; and shall we rescind our baptismal vows, and give the sovereignty to another, after we have resigned ourselves to Christ, and the hands of consecration have passed upon us? When Ananias had dedicated that which was in his power, and kept back part for private

use, God striketh him dead in the place, Acts v. 5. And if we alienate ourselves, who were Christ's before the consecration, of how much sorer vengeance shall we be guilty? God's complaint was just: Ezek. xvi. 20, 'Moreover, thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast born unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them.' Children born to me; that is, born during the marriage covenant. And if Satan hath a full interest in you by doing his lusts, as he had in them by that rite of worship, is not the wrong done to God the same?

[3.] It is a great folly and disadvantage to ourselves. What a poor and sorry exchange is this, of grace for sin, and Christ for Satan, a good master for a bad, which is not only a mischief to us, but an affront to God? When we will turn back upon him with so much loss to ourselves? The work and wages are very different. The apostle compareth them when he dissuadeth them from the reign of sin: Rom. vi. 20-22, 'But when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.' You had full experience of the fruits of Satan's work; what fruit then before you had tasted better things, before you had a contrary principle set up in your hearts? You are ashamed now to think of that course. Now you know better; but what fruit then? Satan's work is drudgery, and his reward death. Satan hath one bad property, which no other master, how cruel so ever, hath, to plague and torment them most which have done him the most continual and faithful service. None are punished like those that have most sinned; for every degree of service hath a proportionable punishment. He is an unreasonable tyrant in exacting service, without rest and intermission. The most cruel oppressors, Turks and infidels, give some rest to their captives, but sin is insatiable. Men spend all their means, and all their time, and all their strength in the pursuit of it; yet all is little enough; and what is the reward of all but death and destruction? Now judge you to whom should we yield obedience, and who hath most right to be served? He certainly who made and redeemed us, and preserveth us every day. None but he can claim a better title to us. He to whom we are debtors by so many vows, so many obligations; not Satan, our worst enemy, who is posting us on to our own destruction.

Secondly, The second reason is, because they have so many helps and encouragements to resist sin.

1. The helps. Grace planted in the heart. Seeing Christ hath put in them grace to mortify sin, it is their part not to suffer it to be idle and unfruitful: Rom. vi. 11, 12, 'Likewise reckon ye also yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.' You want no ability to encourage you. You have the Spirit of God to help you in this work: Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' He will be your second. Neither we without the Spirit, nor the Spirit without us. The law was a dead letter; it gave bare instruction, without helps or power; but there is a life and power goeth along with



every gospel truth. Laziness pretendeth want of power; but what is too hard for the Spirit?

2. For encouragements. In every war there are two notable encouragements—the goodness of the quarrel, and the hope of victory. As David said, 1 Sam. xvii. 36, ‘Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.’ We have these in our conflict and combat with sin.

[1.] Our quarrel and our cause is good. It is the quarrel of the Lord of hosts in which thou fightest. Let the goodness of the cause put courage into thee. The honour of christianity dependeth upon the issue of the conflict. Let the world know that the school of Christ breedeth the excellent men of the earth; that the divine life is the most powerful principle in the world. We stand with Christ our Redeemer in this combat, who came to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8. He hath begun the battle; we do but labour to keep under that which Christ hath begun to slay and destroy. Sin is not only an enemy to us, but to him; it is against his law, and hindereth his glory in the world, and the subjection of his creatures and servants. Were it not for sin, what a glorious potentate would Christ be, even in the judgment of the world!

[2.] The hope of victory. Our strife will end, and it will end well. If we strive against sin, we are sure to conquer: Rom. vi. 14, ‘For sin shall not have dominion over you.’ Let it not, and it shall not. If there be but a likelihood of victory, we are encouraged to fight. Here a christian may triumph before the victory. In other conflicts it is good advice, 1 Kings xx. 11, ‘Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.’ There will come a good and happy issue in the end. For the present, they overcome it in part it shall not totally and finally overcome us in this world; and shortly all strife will be over: Rom. xvi. 20, ‘The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.’ It is but a little while, and we shall receive the crown, and triumph over all our enemies.

Thirdly, The third reason is, because of the danger if we do not take care against the reign of sin. There is sin in us all; it is a bosom enemy, born and bred with us; and therefore it will soon get the advantage of grace if it be not watched against and resisted; as nettles, and thistles, and rushes, and suchlike weeds as are kindly to the soil, will choke flowers and better herbs that are planted by care, and grow not of their own accord, when they are neglected, and not continually rooted out. Yea, they are not only within us, but always working and striving for the mastery: Rom. vii. 8, ‘Sin wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.’ If sin did work in us as a sleepy habit, and a dull, inactive principle, the danger were not so great; but it is always exerting and putting forth itself, and seeking to gain an interest in our affections, and a command over all our actions; and therefore, unless we do our part to keep it under, we shall soon revert to our old slavery. Sin must be kept under as a slave, or else it will be above as a tyrant, and domineer. The more it acts, the more strength it gets; as all habits are increased by action. For when we have once yielded, we are ready to yield again in some further degree.

Therefore any one sin let alone, yea, that which we least suspected, may bring us into subjection and captivity to the law of sin : Rom. vii. 23, 'I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.' Yea, this bondage is daily increasing, and more hard to be broken ; for then a custom groweth upon us, which is another nature ; and that which might have been remedied at first groweth more difficult. As diseases looked to at first are more easily cured, whereas otherwise they grow desperate, so sins before they harden the heart, or bring us under the power of any creature or comfort which we affect (1 Cor. vi. 12, 'I will not be brought under the power of any') are more easily subdued. When it cometh to a complete dominion and slavery, then if a man would he cannot help it. Well, then, if sin be in us, and thus working to a conquest and dominion over us, and it ought and may be kept from reigning, then it behoveth every child of God to do his part, that sin may not reign ; for where this care is not taken it certainly will reign ; on the contrary, every limb of the body of sin that is mortified causeth the rest to languish by consent.

*Use 1.* To exhort us to take heed of this great mischief, That sin may not have dominion over us. How shall I enforce this exhortation, or say anything beyond what I have already spoken ?

First, Shall I urge you in point of duty and obligation to Christ, as you would not frustrate the end of his death ? Let not sin reign over you. If you would have any benefit by Christ, express any mystical conformity to him, and to show yourselves to be christians indeed, weaken the power of sin yet more and more in your hearts : Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' If you be Christ's, wherein do you show forth the virtue of his death ? Are you always suppressing and smothering the effects and endeavours of indwelling corruption ? 'Christ' (the apostle telleth you) 'being raised from the dead, dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over him,' Rom. vi. 9, 10. Is there any suitableness to this in you ? There will be in all that are Christ's.

Secondly, Shall I move you in point of your own interest ? No bondage like the servitude of sin. Sin is thy enemy as well as God's. It is not only against his honour, but the everlasting well-being of thy soul : 1 Peter ii. 11, 'I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' Pharaoh's oppressions of the Israelites made them weary of their lives. Certainly, if you have any true sense in you, any respect to your precious and immortal souls, you will groan under the burden of sin : Rom. vii. 24, 'O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?' The least relics of sin will be grievous to you, and make you weary and heavy laden. But alas ! the want of sense and feeling is a great sign that sin reigneth. If once it began to be a burden and a wearisome bondage, there were some hope of people. Shall I tell you of the loss of all that liberty and happiness which is in the service of God : John viii. 36, 'If the Son therefore shall make you free, then are ye free indeed.' You think that liberty lieth only in a power to do what we list. Oh, no ! It is a power to live, that we may be happy, so as we may enjoy God, and receive the consolations of his Spirit.



What comfort, peace, joy, would there be in the soul if your hearts were once enlarged to run the way of God's commandments! Shall I tell you of the sad reward sin will give for all your service? What will it prove but bitterness in the issue? and thou shalt mourn at last, when all the comforts and joys wherewith thy soul is now enchanted shall be spent and quite gone. Oh, then, consider, it is liberty and blessedness that we invite you to; and, if you be not wanting to yourselves, you may have it.

The means are these, to help you against the dominion of sin.

First, Watchfulness. Sin cometh to reign by degrees. A man getteth his neck under the yoke by little and little. First we cherish the lusts of the flesh and its secret enticings; the heart regardeth them, and delighteth in them: Ps. lxi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart.' The heart museth, setteth a-brood on them: Micah ii. 1, 'Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds, and when the morning is light practise it.' Then it hatcheth these cockatrice's eggs, and then resolveth, and then, when the fire is kindled, the sparks begin to fly abroad. Men execute what the heart contriveth, and then finish it; go on without stopping: James i. 14, 15, 'But every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.' There is suggestion, conception, and consummation, and so they go on to the very last, till they drop into hell. Now watch, that you may break off betimes, before the mischief increaseth. Give no indulgence to the least sin, for afterwards it may prove thy master, and ruin thy soul. Watch against thoughts, which are sin's spokesmen, and make the match between the soul and the object. Watch against outward occasions; it is ill sporting with occasions of sin, playing about the cockatrice's hole, and standing in harm's way. We are often warned of this: Prov. iv. 14, 15, 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil men: avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away;' Prov. v. 8, 'Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.' The wisdom of God thought fit to give us these directions. They that think they have so good a command of themselves that they think they shall keep within compass well enough, though they venture upon occasions of sin, converse with vain persons, and the haunts of the wicked, go to plays, and entertain themselves with dalliances, and all the blandishments of sense, surely they are not acquainted with the slipperiness and infirmity of human nature; they know not what the new nature meaneth, nor what a tender thing it is to preserve it in strength and vigour. Is sin grown less dangerous? or have men gotten a greater command of themselves than they were wont to have when the scriptures were first written? Surely man is as weak as ever, and sin as dangerous; why then should we venture upon evil company, and the places where they resort, and go so near the pit's brink, and freely please ourselves with the allectives of sin and apostasy from God, and use such songs and wanton plays as if there were no infection in them? They secretly taint our hearts. Some say they get as much good by these plays as sermons. In a sense it is true, while you are so unmortified and savour nothing that is truly good and spiritual: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'The natural

man receiveth not the things of God.' Watch against evil customs, that you lose not your tenderness of conscience. Conscience, as the eye, is offended with the least dust; but afterwards it is like the stomach of an ostrich, which digesteth iron. Men inure their souls to sin till their consciences are seared as with a hot iron, 1 Tim. iv. 2. Conscience is like water when it beginneth to freeze; at first it will not bear a pin, but when hard frozen, it will bear a laden cart.

Secondly, Take heed of presumptuous sins, of doing anything that is evil against checks of conscience. Nay, small sins may get the upper hand of the sinner, and bring him under in time, after it is habituated by long custom, so as he cannot easily shake off the yoke, or redeem himself from the tyranny thereof. These steal into the heart insensibly, and overcome us as they get strength by multiplied acts; but presumptuous sins, by one single act, bring a mighty advantage to the flesh, and weaken the Spirit, and advance themselves suddenly.

Thirdly, Take heed of your daily sins: Ps. xviii. 23, 'I was also upright before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity;' your master-lust, that is most apt to prevail, and to settle into the tyranny of an evil custom, because of its frequency and importunity; unless we humble ourselves more for these, strive and pray against these, cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye, Mat. v. 29, 30, it will be your ruin, and the stumbling-block of your iniquity, like Judas' covetousness, Herod's uncleanness, and the young man's worldliness. It will be the ground of our apostasy in the time of temptation.

Fourthly, Set the contrary principle of grace a-work: Gal. v. 16, 'Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' Cherish and obey the motions and directions of the renewed part; this will keep the carnal part under, so as the motions of it, if they be not totally suppressed, yet will not be completely fulfilled. If the flesh be brought into subjection to the Spirit, it will be found by examining every day what advantage the flesh hath gotten against the Spirit, or the Spirit against the flesh; how providence and ordinances are blessed to that end, to the weakening of sin, when the Spirit of Christ hath gotten the sovereignty over the flesh, and won the better part of the natural affections to its service. The flesh is getting ground, or the Spirit, every day. We are never free from the reign of sin till the Spirit get above the flesh, and the prevailing bent of the heart be set and fixed towards God. Dough once soured with leaven will never totally lose the taste and smatch.

Fifthly, Remember thy baptismal vows and engagements: Rom. vi. 2, 3, 'How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?' Every one hath engaged himself by his covenant, sealed in baptism, so to do.

Sixthly, In the sense of thy weakness have recourse to God for help: Ps. cxix. 133, 'Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' God will hear the groanings of thy poor afflicted soul.

Use 2. Hath sin dominion over us, yea or no? Doth it reign in us or not? Some things may increase our fear and caution. It may be known—

First, When the soul readily closeth with temptations, or when it is



a force you cannot withstand: Prov. vii. 21, 'With her fair speech she caused him to yield; with the flattering of her lips she forced him.' Easiness of insinuation, efficacy of operation: James i. 14, 'Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed.' You are at sin's beck. If it say, Go, you go; if it say, Come, you come. As the angels, Ps. ciii. 20, 'that do the Lord's commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word,' so they hearken to the voice of their lusts, whatever cometh of it. If envy and malice bid Cain kill his brother, he will break all bonds of nature to do it. If ambition bid Absalom rebel against his father, it shall be done, and he is up in arms presently. If covetousness bid Achan take a wedge of gold, he will do it. If adultery bid Joseph's mistress tempt her servant, she doeth it. That is done readily which sin willet and commandeth to be done; we are as ready to yield to temptations as our corrupt heart to suggest them. We are at the beck of sin; we cannot withstand it, whatever checks and reasons we have to the contrary.

Secondly, When this is our ordinary practice as often as the temptation returneth. Meadow ground may be overflown with a great flood, but marshy ground is drowned with every return of the tide. Some cannot cease from sin, 2 Peter ii. 14. Sin is become our element, out of which we cannot rest; it is our paradise, a very Eden to our souls. Whatever sin biddeth us love, we love it; and whatever it bids us do, we do it; and by little and little it eateth out all reverence of God and delight in him.

Thirdly, When men grow impatient of reproof. They have a privy sore, that cannot endure to be touched. Till John preached against Herodias there was no trouble to him, Mark vi. 20, but when he urges *non licet*, he dieth for it; as the sensitive plant shrinketh and contracts itself when touched; as Ahab hated Micaiah, and the young man went away sorrowful, Mark x. 22.

Fourthly, When we set up a toleration in our hearts; as he, 2 Kings v. 18, 'In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.' Is there no sin for which you would crave pardon and indulgence? When men will be excused in this or that, it is an ill sign.

Fifthly, When all your care is to hide or feed a lust. Judas masketh his covetousness with religion: John xii. 5, 6, 'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor.' When sin maketh us religious, some interest and advantage of our own sets us a-work for God.

Sixthly, Wilful obstinacy, to go against the express will of God: Prov. xiii. 13, 'Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed;' as Balaam, 2 Peter ii. 16, was 'rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, rebuked the madness of the prophet.' When Ulysses feigned himself mad, because he would not go to the Trojan war, and in his madness drove his plough fantastically, those that were sent to discover him laid his young son Telemachus in the furrow, to see if he would drive over him; at the sight of whom all

his mask of madness fell off. Though sinners run mad in sin, though they drive on furiously, as Jehu did, yet if we lay before them their wives and children, *dulcia pignora*, those sweet pledges, if any sense remain, they will forget their madness, and not drive over them. Men are wedded to their inclination, stout-hearted, and will go in their own way, over the belly of more than ordinary opposition, till they perish. But the surest and closest note is, if there be not the reign of grace, there is the reign of sin.

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## SERMON V.

*Then shall I be upright.*—Ps. xix. 13.

WE have done with David's prayer. We now come to his arguments, taken from the effects, 'Then shall I be upright.' 'Then,' that is, when kept from presumptuous sins and the dominion of sin. 'Then shall I be upright;' that is—(1.) Upright in the account of God; (2.) In the judgment of his own conscience.

First, In the account of God. Though God's children are guilty of many failings through ignorance and infirmity, yet their claim, by the covenant of grace, ceaseth not, when they do not allow themselves in the customary practice of any sin against the light of their consciences. A man is a transgressor before God either according to the covenant of works or according to the covenant of grace. According to the covenant of works; so the least failing layeth us open to the curse: James ii. 10, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' According to the covenant of grace; so wilful and allowed customary transgressions lay us open to the curse too. Understand that sentence in the rigour of the first covenant which was made with Adam, and the burden of which lieth upon all Adam's seed till they be in Christ, and it concludeth all men under the curse; so none can be upright, but all are transgressors in the account of God. But according to the covenant of grace, if a man should keep the whole law, conform in many things, and yet willingly indulge and allow himself under the tyranny and customary practice of any one sin, he is guilty of all; as one article not observed maketh void the whole agreement. Out of frailty and weakness, the most holy man may and doth break every commandment of God, and yet guilty of none, so as it shall be imputed to him; but he that habitually, wilfully, and of set purpose shall dispense with himself in the transgression of one commandment, or any breach thereof, he is a transgressor, and shall be accounted guilty before God; for he has forfeited the grace of the second covenant.

Secondly, In the judgment of his own conscience. The reign of sin is inconsistent with grace, and though a presumptuous sin may be committed by a renewed man, yet that destroys peace of conscience, and a man hath not the comfort of his sincerity; as David, Ps. li. 8, 'Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken



may rejoice.' But on the other side, though there be many failings, yet, Heb. xiii. 18, 'We trust we have a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly.' Well, then, the sum of all is this, that those may look upon themselves to be upright, and in a capacity to claim by the second covenant, that are kept from an allowed course of sin, though they be guilty of many failings; for David, that saw need to say, 'Cleanse thou me from secret sins,' yet saith also, 'Then shall I be upright, and innocent from the great transgression.'

*Doct.* Uprightness and integrity of obedience may stand with sins of ignorance and infirmity, but not with sins of presumption, customarily committed against the light of conscience.

First, Let me open the nature of sincerity, and show you what uprightness and sincerity is.

Secondly, The inconsistency of uprightness with presumptuous sins.

Thirdly, The privilege of being upright.

First, What is uprightness or sincerity? It is a blessed frame of heart wrought in us by the Spirit of God, whereby we are inclined and fixedly bent to please God in all things, and to offend him in nothing.

1. It is a blessed frame of heart. Not one grace, but that which runneth through all our graces, like a thread of silk through a chain of pearls. Faith unfeigned, 2 Tim. i. 5, and an unfeigned love of the brethren, 1 Peter i. 22. It is a qualification of all graces. Truth and sincerity is the essential commendation of all christians. Some christians may be famous for several graces, but all for sincerity; Moses for meekness, Phineas for zeal, Abraham for faith, David for devotion, but every one that is a new creature for truth and sincerity. This is the common praise of all the saints. The least grace with uprightness maketh a new creature. It was Christ's commendation of Nathanael, John i. 47, 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!' The mark of a true Israelite in the spirit is not sinlessness or absolute perfection, but sincerity. Why doth he call him an 'Israelite indeed,' rather than any other term? Why not a saint indeed, or a believer indeed, or a child of God indeed, or a holy man indeed? It was because he was like good old Israel or Jacob, who was called Israel, of whom it was said, Gen. xxv. 27, 'That he was a plain man, and dwelt in tents.' So we may say of a plain-hearted christian, how weak soever he be otherwise, behold a christian indeed, because like Christ, of whom it was said, Isa. liii. 9, 'He did no iniquity, neither was there any deceit in his mouth.'

2. Wrought in us by the Spirit. Naturally we are full of guile and falsehood, off and on with God; the deceitful old man prevaileth over them, and hath them under his power: Eph. iv. 22, 'That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts.' A man in that estate dealeth crookedly and perversely with God till the heart be renewed by grace, and God cast it into the mould of regeneration. It is bowed and bended to carnal things, and therefore as useless; as things that are battered and bowed are cast into the furnace that they may receive a new shape, so doth God new mould us and fashion us: Ps. li. 10, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.' It is the Spirit of

God puts us in this right frame, that we may not deal deceitfully with God: Eph. iv. 24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' opposite to those deceitful lusts spoken of in the 22d verse, which do by subtlety carry sinners captive to their slavery. Holiness and truth is a sign of God's image wrought upon the soul. Good inclinations and actions are false and deceitful without this.

3. Whereby we are inclined and fixedly bent. There is a difference between velleities and good wishes and a hearty volition, between sudden motions and imperfect and wavering resolutions, which may be without fruit, and that fixed deep bent of heart which beareth up a christian in all his actions towards God: 1 Chron. xxii. 19, 'Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God;' Acts xi. 23, 'And exhorted them all, that with full purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord,' *τῇ προθεσῇ τῆς καρδίας*, by a full decree and bent of soul. Others have wavering purposes, faint inclinations, superficial or slight motions, that come to nothing: Deut. v. 29, 'Oh, that there were such an heart in them.' There is a moral integrity when they do not dissemble, and a supernatural sincerity when there is a foundation of grace to carry us out constantly and uniformly to God in a course of obedience; such a purpose as produceth considerable endeavours henceforth to serve God from right principles and to right ends.

4. To please God in all things and offend him in nothing: Col. i. 10, 'That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.' He that is upright with God maketh it his business to please God, not to please himself or his own flesh: Rom. viii. 12, 'We are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh.' Not to please men: Gal. i. 10, 'For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ;' but to please God by doing the things which he hath commanded: Ps. xl. 8, 'I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart;' and avoiding the things which he hath forbidden: Ps. cxli. 4, 'Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works;' and as far as he knoweth the mind of God, and frailty incident to human nature will permit him.

So that in uprightness three things are considerable, by which it is discovered—

[1.] Purity of intention. It is a bent of heart towards God, or a desire to please him whosoever be displeased, whether our own flesh or the world. Therefore it is called 'godly sincerity,' 2 Cor. i. 12, because it chiefly respects God, his eye and approbation, and his glory and honour: 1 Thes. ii. 4, 'For we speak not as pleasing men, but God.' We urge our hearts. So Col. iii. 22, 'Not with eye-service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God.' There is a deep impression of the awe, and fear, and love of God upon our hearts: 1 Cor. x. 31, 'Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' God is at the end of all their actions.

[2.] There is constancy and uniformity of endeavours. There is a desire to please God at all times and in all places; at one time as well as another, not by starts. It is but a humour if we do it in good moods only. Job saith of the hypocrite, Job xxvii. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?' The worst



men have their good moods. They use duties as we do strong waters, in a pang, not for a constant diet; soon grow weary of their observance; but a godly man is uniform: Ps. cxix. 112, 'I have inclined my heart to keep thy statutes always unto the end.' In all conditions, prosperity and adversity, in good report and ill report. It is a double and a crooked heart that only mindeth God in its need. So in all places, in private and closet duties, between God and our own souls, as well as public duties liable to the notice of others. A sincere christian is alike in all places and in all companies, because God is alike everywhere; he prayeth with as much strength and earnestness when alone with God as in the company of others. His Father seeth in secret, Mat. vi. 6; and there he hath the advantage of a religious privacy and retirement, and can more freely enlarge himself in the presenting his own wants and requests to God. He is not one that is devout abroad, but slight and careless at home: Phil. ii. 12, 'Ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.' It was all one when Paul was by or when he was away; as birds in the wood sing as sweetly as when in houses and dwelling-places of men.

[3.] A universality of respect to all and every part of God's will. He that is sincere performeth all known duties and avoideth all known sins.

(1.) He performeth all known duties: Acts x. 33, 'Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' Singling out one precept and leaving another is usurping God's sovereignty. We make ourselves our own masters when we do what we list. Everything that God commands, even those things which are less esteemed and countenanced in the world, and more cross to our humour, yea, that are persecuted and hated: Gen. vi. 9, 'Noah was a just man, and upright in his generation, and Noah walked with God.' When so many opposed and scorned those that were good, and corrupted their ways, then Noah was upright. To be good in bad times, and to swim against the stream, is a note of uprightness. So in all parts and points of life: Luke i. 6, 'Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.' In their worship blameless, and in all their business and ordinary conversation blameless: Acts xxiv. 16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.' Not only in commerce with God, but dealings with men. In their callings, they do it as God's work, to God's glory; in their refreshings and recreations, they act as one that would approve his heart to God.

(2.) He avoideth all known sins. He is in league with no sin, but hateth all sin because God hateth it: Prov. viii. 13, 'Pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth do I hate.' All is contrary to the image of God and the new nature in him: 1 John iii. 9, 'Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin;' contrary to grace infused. Original sin is the seed-plot of all evil. It is contrary to the revealed will of God, and the law forbiddeth all, and therefore he alloweth none: Ps. cxix. 133, 'Order my steps in thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.' It is contrary to communion with God: Ps. lxi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not

hear me.' The prayers of a false heart that is in league with any sin are never accepted. He doth not say, If I sin, but, If I regard it in my heart. When all doors are shut, and though a room be never so close, yet some air will get in; but he doth not leave a door open. Sin remaining and sin allowed and reserved are different things; and all sin is contrary to his comfort and peace of conscience. Forbidden fruit, though it be sweet in the mouth, yet it is terrible in the bowels: Rom. vi. 21, 'What fruit had you then of those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.' Sin will breed shame, and anguish, and horror, and many a stinging and troubled thought. Well, then, out of all we may conclude with Solomon, Prov. xvi. 17, 'The highway of the upright is to depart from evil. He that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.' If he would keep his God, and keep his soul, he must keep God's way without turning aside either to the right hand or the left.

Secondly, The inconsistency of uprightness with presumptuous and reigning sins.

1. These two are contrary. Now it is impossible two contraries can be together, *in gradu intenso*, in a high and prevailing degree; *in gradu remisso*, in a lower degree they may be, as heat and cold in a lower degree, for the opposition of the one weakeneth the other. Therefore grace in truth and sin in its reign cannot stand together: Gal. v. 17, 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that ye would.' Carnal nature must needs be broken, and the force of it abated, when there is a war in all the faculties and resistance of the Spirit against the flesh. Indeed, in carnal men, that have only some illumination in their minds, but no renovation in their hearts, lusts may bear sway, they may have great convictions, and yet strong corruptions; but true sanctification being seated in all the faculties and parts of the soul, will cause a war and a resistance, so that sin will not carry it so freely, but it is opposed in the mind, will, and affections, and in the execution of it.

2. Wherever there is sincerity, the fixed bent of the heart is towards God; therefore sin shall not reign; for then the fixed bent of the heart is towards the creature, and the vanities of the world, and the contentments of the flesh; and we cannot point at two things at once: Mat. vi. 21, 'Where the heart is there is our treasure also.' We can have but one treasure and one chief good; therefore he that doth heartily resign himself to God, to be guided and directed by him in all things, cannot let sin reign habitually in his heart.

Thirdly, The privileges of being upright; for it is here propounded as a motive.

1. Your defects will not hinder your acceptance with God. In the covenant of grace, God doth not look after measure so much as truth. Though what we do will not endure the balance, yet it is accepted if it will endure the touchstone. Every piece of gold that is of the right stamp and metal may not be full weight: Heb. x. 22, 'Let us draw near, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.' We may come to God with confidence, if we come with a true heart, a sincere heart; though not with a sinless heart, yet without guile. If we study to



approve our hearts to God, God will accept our little, our two mites. A small pearl is worth a great deal of rubbish. All the pompous service of wicked men, when they come with their flocks and herds, they are not accepted of God : Hosea v. 6, 'They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord, but they shall not find him.' All their pompous and glorious services are not accepted. It is a wonder to consider how many infirmities God will oversee when the heart is right. God valueth us not by perfection, not by glorious shows, but what we have in truth. He that desireth in all things to look to God, though he be often put besides his purpose, God will pardon him : 2 Chron. xxx. 19, 20, 'The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.' Asa had many weaknesses and failings, yet it is said, 'His heart was perfect with the Lord all his days,' 1 Kings xv. 14. God passed by other things. We read of Jehoshaphat, that he had many and great failings, he made a league of amity with Ahab, and went with him to battle against Ramoth-Gilead, though he had heard what Micaiah the prophet spake against it, 2 Chron. xviii. ; and though reproved by the prophet, 2 Chron. xix., yet doth he make a special league with Ahaziah, Ahab's son, a most wicked man, 2 Chron. xx. 9 ; and he bestowed Jehoram, his son, in marriage with Ahab's daughter, 2 Chron. xxi. 6 ; yet for all this God accepted him as a good man : 2 Kings xxii. 13, 'He turned not aside from doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord.' And why did God so esteem of him ? Because his heart was upright with God : 2 Chron. xix. 3, 'Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek the Lord ;' Jer. v. 3, 'O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth ?' God doth not regard gifts, and parts, and outward serviceableness in the church, but truth of heart. It is not a pompous prayer or setting forth our parts, but a sincere prayer that God regards : Prov. xv. 8, 'The prayer of the upright is his delight ;' or in any other duty the upright are his delight. A cup of cold water given in singleness of heart shall not be forgotten.

2. The more upright we are then, the more we do, and the more we shall have grace to do what God requireth : 'The way of the Lord is strength to the upright,' Prov. x. 29. Wherever truth and sincerity are, there is a growing to perfection : 'To him that hath shall be given.' The more we labour to please God in all things, the more shall we have grace to do so. A true christian is always on the mending-hand, and bettering and improving himself by God's blessing. Where God giveth a little in truth, though it be but a grain of mustard-seed, he shall cherish it till it come to be a tree. God addeth grace to grace ; but an hypocrite groweth worse and worse, till he be altogether uncased, and then turned into hell. Frothy gifts are blasted and withered. A man loseth every day when his flower and vigour are gone ; but the upright shall wax stronger and stronger, as a living tree gets more root, and sendeth forth more branches, the longer it standeth. All things that have life increase by age : one drachm of grace, how will it increase !

3. This will be a comfort and support to you while you live in all the changes and circumrotations of the world, that you are upright with God: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.' A man can never have any sound peace of conscience till the bent of his heart be sincerely set towards God. Others may have the toil of religion, but they have not the comfort of religion. Their hearts may reproach them for their partial dealing, and so all is lost they do. Men may applaud us for many things for which conscience will not acquit us, for they are not acquainted with our temper and the ordinary strain of our hearts; but when we have rejoicing in ourselves that it hath been our course to live in all good conscience to God and men, then we are glad indeed. Others are but like those that are honoured abroad, but mated with a shrew and cursed wife at home. No note so sweet like that of the bird in the bosom. A good conscience cheering us with the sense of what we have sincerely done, and have no great sin to make a breach upon our comfort.

4. You will die comfortably when you have sincerely made conscience to serve and glorify God here in the world. When Hezekiah was arrested with the sentence of death, what was his plea? 2 Kings xx. 3, 'O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' God's servants can plead their sincerity upon their sick-beds, and look death in the face with confidence, even then when hypocrites usually vomit up their own shame. O christians! we should prepare comforts against that time when all other comforts vanish. If you think how rich you have been, what pleasures and delights you have had, this is so far from comforting, that it will torment you the more. Conscience, if ever, is then awakened, and the devil will be busy to trouble thee. We stop the mouth of conscience now, and charm it with carnal pleasures, but then it will speak and we cannot keep it quiet. If any sin did formerly sting thee, thou wilt feel it then. When we are immediately to appear before God, to be judged to heaven or hell, will it not be sweet then to say, Lord, though I were once overtaken with many infirmities, yet my heart was set to serve and glorify thee. Oh, how will this strengthen thee against all the terrors of death! Our time is running on, and we are hastening to the pit; it is good to be able to say so in truth, and without any check from our own hearts.

5. Uprightness will give you boldness and comfort at the day of judgment: Ps. cxix. 6, 'Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments.' Shame is φόβος δικαίου ψόγου, a fear of a just reproof. No shame so intimate, and troublesome, and confounding as a rebuke from the judge of the world when he sits upon the throne. Now those that set themselves to do the whole will of God shall be able to hold up their heads at that day. When the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, their failings will be produced, but blotted out as a cancelled bond, which the debtors need not fear though it be shown.

Use 1. Oh, study this grand case of conscience more, whether we be sincere and upright with God.

I shall state this—(1.) Negatively; (2.) Positively.



First, Negatively. Perfect none of us can be ; but can we stand before God upon a gospel account, and endure the touchstone though not the balance ? If we do not attain to perfection, do we attain to integrity ? It is a sad thing that so few study their qualification, but leave the state of their souls to such an adventure. Till thou art able with a clear conscience to plead thy uprightness, thou wilt live doubtfully and die doubtfully, and go into the other world as a man that leapeth blindfold over a deep and terrible gulf and ditch, and knoweth not where his feet shall light. Will you come to a trial ? Here is one in the text.

No man can think himself upright till he hath cast off the dominion of every sin, especially presumptuous sins. Therefore they that live in the constant allowed practice of any known sin, whether it be public or secret, whoredom or wantonness, drunkenness or sensuality, open ambition or secret pride, rapine or covetousness, or any allowed passion, they cannot make their claim to the new covenant. Not only such as by their lewd conversation give an open account of their irreligion, but such as live in any secret allowed sin. Whatever their repute be for godliness, if they hold any sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue, set up a toleration in their hearts, and say, God be merciful to me if I bow in the house of Rimmon ; if thou continuest in the pleasing or profitable practice to which thou hast special enticements, some particular warrant or profession, and thou carriest this sin closely and in a clever way, so as not to lie open to the malice and reproach of others : Luke xvi. 15, 'Ye are they which justify yourselves before men ; but God knoweth your hearts ; for that which is highly esteemed amongst men is abomination in the sight of God ;' God knoweth, conscience knows it, and so thou canst not have the comfort of integrity ; yea, whatever parts and abilities or expressions thou hast, thou mayest be carnal for all that ; all thy parts are but like a jewel in a toad's head. Refined notions with an unrenewed heart are but a form of knowledge. Yea, whatever exercises and duties of religion thou performest, reading, hearing, praying, there is a worm at the root that blasteth all, even that unmortified lust which hath dominion over thee : Ps. l. 16, 17, 'But unto the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee ?' What good will ordinances do when sin is allowed in thy soul ? The seed of the word falls among briars and thorns ; the word is choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of life, Luke viii. 14. Any lust let alone will in time outgrow the word. Nay, though with these exercises men had some experiences, humblings, tastes. Convictions die away, and tastes vanish, and men in time lose all their savour, and lose all the cheerfulness of their profession ; for 'that which is lame is soon turned out of the way,' Heb. vi. 13. Carnal affections having the first possession of a man's heart, and being preferred by long use and custom, get a stronger root than godliness can have, and will draw the greatest strength of thy heart and desires after them. Therefore godliness, though somewhat prized and esteemed, yet wanting earth, must needs grow weak and languish.

Secondly, Positively. He that is upright may be known and tried

by these four things—(1.) His principles ; (2.) His conversation ; (3.) His ends ; (4.) The fruits and effects of his constant endeavours.

1. His principles, which are—

[1.] The new nature fitting and suiting his heart to the things of God, so that he loveth them not only out of interest, but inclination : Ps. cxix. 140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' Surely he is upright that is thus naturally carried to the things of God. In some measure the man is restored to that frame of heart which mankind had in innocency ; his heart inclined him to God. God made man upright ; grace giveth somewhat of this : Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts.'

[2.] By his love to Christ : 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' That cureth his self-love, which maketh us act crookedly and perversely. Self is his principle, self his business, self his end ; his own contentment and satisfaction is all that he looketh at. But the love of Christ maketh him readily go about those things which are pleasing to Christ, and hath a mighty force and efficacy upon the soul to overrule our self-love, that we may not live to ourselves, but unto God, and obey his will.

2. By his conversation, wherein he betrayeth a constant care—

[1.] To avoid all known sin ; to weaken the lusts, to suppress the acts : 1 Peter ii. 11, 'Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' But especially he is most careful to avoid his own personal sin : Ps. xviii. 23, 'I was upright before thee, and kept myself from mine iniquity ;' which the affections of his own heart might most transport him into. He can sacrifice his Isaac, cut off his right hand, pluck out his right eye, laboureth to subdue his particular corrupt inclinations, useth no guile to cloak and extenuate them before God : Ps. xxxii. 2, 'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' This is the man who may comfort himself with God's acceptance, and the comforts and privileges of the new covenant.

[2.] As to the other part of his conversation, his way and the constant tenor of his walk is to please God, and he maketh conscience of obeying the will of God in all his actions : Phil. i. 10, 11, 'That ye may approve things that are excellent, and ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God.' His aim is at the constant practice of every thing that is good : 'And having learned how to walk and to please God, so you would abound therein more and more,' 1 Thes. iv. 1.

3. By his ends, which are the pleasing and glorifying of God. This is his main fixed scope : 2 Cor. v. 9, 'Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him ;' 1 Cor. x. 31, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God ;' Col. i. 10, 'That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.' There is no corrupt design of vainglory, credit, or by-respect, but what he doth for God it is to God.

4. The effects and fruits, which is not an exemption from sin altogether, but a growth of the contrary principle, and the flesh is brought.



every day more and more into a subjection to the Spirit, and Christ's interest prevaileth in the soul. The Spirit gets above the flesh, and the prevailing bent of the heart is set and fixed towards God. Either sin reigneth or grace must reign; something must be *in solio*, in the throne. That which is in the throne sheweth the state of the heart, be it sin or grace, and that which generally and mostly commandeth and influenceth our conversations, that is in the throne. As the sun in the midst of heaven sendeth abroad his influences on every side, so doth that which is seated in the heart, as a sovereign governs all the parts of our lives. Well, then, here the mark must be fixed. There is no man so good and spiritual that hath not something in him bad and carnal, nor so fully addicted to God but the creature or some inferior good hath an interest in his heart. On the other side, there is no man so addicted to worldly and sensual lusts, that God hath no manner of interest in him at all. Carnal men, if they have not renounced all conscience, and outgrown the heart of a man, have some good thing in them, and a renewed man hath much of the old tang yet left. When, then, is a man sincere? Why, when grace gets the upper hand; not for a fit, but habitually. When the soul is more for God than against him; more against sin than for it; more for obeying, loving, serving, and pleasing God, than for gratifying and pleasing the flesh, and your inclination and love to the ways of God is greater than your dislike. But on the other side, they that love any inferior thing above God are not sincere and upright with him; as those that love pleasure more than God: 2 Tim. iii. 4; John xii. 43, 'They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God;' and the profits of the world more than grace: Luke xii. 21, 'So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.' These are the great sins which do more directly fight against the sovereignty of God. Therefore these we must look after to see whether they get ground or strength, yea or no, and encroach upon Christ's interest in our hearts, or the interest of Christ gets ground upon them.

*Use 2.* To persuade you to be upright. There are many arguments which the scripture useth to press us to it.

1. This will be your safety in all times of danger. They that are upright betake themselves to God, look to God as their paymaster, and God thinketh himself concerned more for them than others. They are under his special protection: Ps. xxv. 21, 'Let integrity and uprightness preserve me;' and Ps. xviii. 25, 'With the upright thou wilt show thyself upright.' God will defend the sincere; he will either deliver or support them in all their troubles.

2. This will be your safety, not only from temporal danger, but spiritual. The upright do avoid presumptuous sins, and the dominion and reign of sin hath no place in them. An hypocrite is one that doth partially obey God; he is divided between God and the world, therefore uncertain and unstable in all his ways, James i. 8. He that is false-hearted at first setting out can never hold on with God, nor carry on the business of his salvation to any good purpose; for when his lusts or interests entice or invite him, he voluntarily dispenseth with his duty, and either falleth wholly off, or at least very foully. The young man came forwardly on with Christ, but he had a

carnal bias in his heart, and therefore when his privy sore was touched he went away grieved, Mark x. 22.

3. It will be a sweet cordial to you in all exigencies.

[1.] In reproaches from men, when they question and tax your sincerity: Job xii. 4, 'I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him; the just, upright man is laughed to scorn.' It is a grievous sore trial. The church complains of it: Ps. cxxiii. 4, 'Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.' Now in such a case it is a mighty help and support to consider that God will accept us though men scorn us. Though God's children want not their failings, yet God looketh more to their good than ill, though he know more of their failings than any; therefore none that are truly sincere will be rejected by him, though they be scorned by men. If we find acceptance with God, why should we be troubled? Job often fled to this: chap. xvi. 19, 20, 'But, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. My friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears to God.' Upright men are comforted in his testimony, which is the witness and observer of all men's ways.

[2.] In the midst of many infirmities and imperfections, when our hearts condemn us, not for any wilful or allowed sin, 1 John iii. 21. It is a mighty comfort to be sincere, and yieldeth advantages that cannot be easily told. Believers find it when condemned by others, when God's dispensations and their own inward temptations make them ready to question their condition.

4. Eternal happiness will be the portion of the upright: Ps. cxl. 13, 'The upright shall dwell in thy presence.' Besides all the testimonies of God's love in this world granted to the believer, he shall have everlasting fellowship with God in the world to come. David propoundeth the question, Ps. xv. 1, 2, 'Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?' That is, If I should take the boldness to interrogate thee, who art the Lord of heaven and earth, Who shall be rewarded with eternal bliss hereafter? the answer will be certainly thus, 'He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.' He, and none but he, that goeth on in a course of uniform and steady obedience, and doeth all things sincerely, and as in his sight. A sincere endeavour of universal obedience is the only sure mark. He asketh the question of God, because God can best interpret our sincerity.

*Means.*

1. Beg it of God to renew a right spirit within you, Ps. li. 10. The new man, which inferreth true holiness, is created, Eph. iv. 24. Renovation cometh from the same power from which creation came; for this is a second creation, a thing to be done by an omnipotent hand, the work of his grace upon our hearts.

2. Something is to be done by ourselves.

[1.] In the performance of our duty we must take God for party, not only as our witness and approver, but also our defender and rewarder: Ps. xvi. 8, 'I have set the Lord always before me.' Before me in point of reverence and in point of dependence; both are necessary to sincerity; to do all things as in his sight, who is our witness, and



approver, and judge, and who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins. Remember you have to do with God. You may carry the matter fairly before men, but God is not deceived with a false appearance: Prov. v. 21, 'For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.' What a shame is it to be convicted of evil before men? As a thief is ashamed when he is found; and is it not a greater shame to be convicted of evil before God? This hath a great influence upon uprightness: 'I was upright before him.' A serious apprehension of his omnipresence and all-seeing eye, doing all things as in his sight.

[2.] A belief of his all-sufficiency: Gen xvii. 1, 'I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' A man that doth not trust God with his all can never be true to him. All defection and apostasy lieth hid in distrust: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.'

2. Earthly affections must be mortified, and we must get a deadness to all things of a temporal interest. We fall into presumptuous sins out of an indulgence to some fleshly and worldly lusts; for though there be an express knowledge of our duty, and time enough for mature deliberation, yet, if a man be given to please the flesh or the world, he will make a breach upon his duty, and temptations will seem to have an irresistible force: James i. 14, 'But every man is drawn away by his own lust and enticed.' Drawn away by the sensitive lure; as the harlot, Prov. vii. 21, 22, 'With much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.' Some pleasure or profit which cometh in competition with our known duty carrieth us away. Thy conscience telleth thee thou oughtest not to yield, yet some sensual or worldly lust prevaieth. Therefore, if you would be upright and not yield, you must be mortified to the world, which is the bait which enticeth the rebelling flesh. When men dote on pleasures, honours, profits, they can never have a sincere spirit, but are crooked, perverse, and distorted. But when once we come to count honours small, as Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 3, 'With me it is a small thing to be judged of you;' and riches small matters, as 1 Cor. vi. 2, 'Are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?' that is a sign of uprightness.

3. A tender, waking conscience. Without this vigilancy we can never keep right with God. David's heart smote him. The most upright are obnoxious to these heart-smittings when they go wrong, whereas others are not moved unless they commit some gross sins. Light and love keep it tender, and then lesser sins and daily imperfections will be bewailed; much more will they watch against raging passions and boisterous affections.

4. A clean heart, which is as irreconcilable with sin as filthiness, and is always working it out. Purity of heart is now seen in our hatred of sin, when that is kept lively: Ps. cxix. 104, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way;' and love: Ps. xcvi. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' Now this hath a great influence upon uprightness. Pure and upright are often joined together

in scripture: Job viii. 6, 'If thou wert pure and upright.' So Ps. li. 10, we read of 'a clean heart' and 'a right spirit.' The one respects the frame and disposition of the heart, and the other the conversation.

5. Use often recollection and search: Ps. iv. 4, 'Commune with your hearts.' If men would discourse with themselves, they would better know themselves. If we suspect a servant, we call him to an account. Bankrupts cannot endure a reckoning. Offer yourselves also to God's trial: Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me.' Appeal to his all-seeing eye. Frauds, colours, disguises will not long hold out.

6. Look not only what you do, but upon what principles and aims: Prov. xvi. 2, 'All the ways of a man are right in his own eyes; but God weigheth the spirits.' See if there be no carnal bias, and be not good by chance or by force or by craft; as many follow a good way because of company, or because it is their present interest, or because of crosses lying upon them. Some are good by chance, as the man that taketh up religion barely on tradition, not from any sound conviction of the truth: John iv. 20, 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain;' 1 Peter i. 18, 'Christ redeemed you from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers.' Some by force or fear of men, because else they cannot be had in credit and security. Or else entertain a slavish religion. The evil they love they avoid, and the good they hate they do. Some out of craft and design; there is a carnal bias; they are not sincere in closing with Christ or rejecting what is wrong.

Lastly, Often renew your covenant with God, because of many breaches. Bind your resolutions afresh. It is one of the Lord's appointed means to keep us firm in the covenant. Things done long ago are soon forgotten, therefore we should revive them upon our memories.

## SERMON VI.

*And innocent from the great transgression.*—Ps. xix. 13.

WE now come to the second motive or encouragement, which is in the text. There is a double reading of these words—that in the margin, and that in the text. In the marginal reading it is, 'Much transgression,' as relating to other heinous sins. In the text, 'The unpardonable sin,' or, as we express it, 'The great transgression.' From the marginal reading observe this point—

*Doct.* He that alloweth himself in one sin cannot promise himself freedom from the greatest sins.

The point will be made good by these two considerations—(1.) That some sins are greater than others; (2.) That the lesser sins make way for greater.



I. That some sins are greater than others. Certainly there is a difference between sins ; some are lesser, some greater. That appeareth because the scripture telleth us of gnats and camels, Mat. xxiii. 24, moles and beams, Mat. vii. 3. All sins are not alike, nor all sinners. Some sins are more heinous than others: 2 Kings iii. 1, 2, 'Jehoram, the son of Ahab, wrought evil in the sight of the Lord, but not like his father and like his mother ; for he put away the image of Baal which his father had made.' His sins were great, but not so great as theirs : John xix. 11, 'Therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.' All that had a hand in the persecutions of Christ were guilty, yet some more heinously than others ; they that betrayed him out of mere malice than those that judged him *secundum allegata et probata*, upon pretence of proof. They that are trained up in the church have more knowledge than a pagan. It appeareth also by the judgment, which is always proportioned according to the offence, Mat. xi. 22. Some have *περισσότερον κρίμα*, a more intolerable judgment ; Mat. xxiii. 14, 'I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.' And some have many and some few stripes ; Luke xii. 47, 48, 'And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes ; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.' Though for duration all are punished alike, and as to *pœna damni*, the punishment of loss, all are alike, yet as to *pœna sensus*, the punishment of sense, there are degrees of torment ; some more and some less. Then certain it is all sins are not equal. But whence doth the inequality arise ? Not merely from the opinion of the multitude and shame among men. There is *peccatum majoris infamiae*, a sin of greater shame, and *majoris reatus*, of greater guilt. Spiritual sins, as unbelief and impenitency, may be of greater guilt than those acts of sensuality which are more odious in the eye of the world, and betray us to greater shame.

The difference and aggravations of sins do arise—(1.) From the lawgiver ; (2.) From the law, by which good and evil are determined ; (3.) From the offender ; (4.) From the nature of temptations ; (5.) From the consequents and effects.

First, From the lawgiver. The more contempt is done to God, the greater the offence: 1 Sam. xv. 23, 'Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft ; and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.' When men wilfully transgress God's known will, and commit a sin the rather because they know God hath forbidden it, that is rebellion ; so that the quantity is not forbidden so much as the quality, not the materiality so much as the formality of it. Rebellion, it is no small matter ; it is like going to witches and devils, or worshipping idols. The authority of the lawgiver expressly known is as much contemned in the one as the other, as in Saul's sparing Agag against God's express command: Ps. xcv. 10, 'Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their hearts.' There is a sin out of ignorance, and that is an erring with the mind and there is a sin out of incogitancy and inattentiveness, which is an

ignorance for the time, or a not considering our duty; and there is an erring with the heart, when we love to wander, and care not to regard the mind of God. A man erreth in his mind that knoweth not the ways of God, but he erreth in his heart when he desireth not to know his ways. The fault is not in his mind, but his heart. These sins grieve God and provoke him exceedingly, because his authority is slighted.

Secondly, From the law. Sins of the highest degree against the first table are greater than the sins of the highest degree against the second, because Christ telleth us, Mat. xxii. 38, 'This is the first and great commandment.' He committeth a greater offence that beateth his father than he that striketh another man, that immediately resisteth his prince than he that resisteth his officer. The more directly any sin is against God, the greater the offence, for God is greater than man, Job xxxiii. 12. He that sinneth against his neighbour sinneth also against God, but not so directly: 1 Cor. viii. 12, 'But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.' Duties of the first table must needs be greatest, because they enforce the second. We perform our duty to them as in and to the Lord; but yet this must be understood so as the comparison be rightly made; the chief of the first table with the chief of the second, of the middle with the middle, the least with the least; otherwise not: Isa. i. 15, 'And when ye spread forth your hearts, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood;' Hosea vi. 6, 'For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.' First, love to God, then love to men; acts of outward worship to God, and acts of outward kindness to men; the circumstantial and ceremonial duties of the first table must give place to the necessary and moral duties of the second. But when the comparison is duly made in the same rank, those laws which do simply and directly respect God are to be preferred; the love of our neighbour must give place to the love of God; the love of wife, children, friends, brethren: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man will come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' God is chief and most worthy of respect.

Thirdly, From the offender, and his temper and quality and advantages; as—

1. Sins against light and knowledge; there is more of the nature of sin in such acts. Sin is a breach or violation of the law; the more we know of the law, the greater is the offence. Therefore sins are greater or lesser as we have more or less knowledge: James iv. 17, 'Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin;' 1 Tim. i. 13, 'Who was before a blasphemers, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly.' I that offered injury to God and men and saints, yet, *ἡλεήθην*, 'I obtained mercy.' Why? I did it in ignorance and unbelief. Sins against knowledge are greater than those committed out of simple ignorance. Ignorance doth not excuse; it doth not cease to be sin though committed ignorantly, because of the obligation that is upon the creature to



know his Creator's will; yet it is not a sin so grievous and heinous; there is more malice and violence offered to the principles of conscience in sins against knowledge.

2. The voluntariness and wilfulness of it, when men freely and obstinately give up themselves to do evil, and not only do the sins, but have pleasure in them that do them, Rom. i. 32. Their souls delight to see others as bad as themselves; this is malice and doing despite to the Spirit of grace: Heb. x. 29, 'Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?'

3. When men have received many mercies. Men cannot endure to have their kindness despised. Joseph thought it ingratitude to wrong his master, who had committed all things to him, Gen. xxxix. 9; and shall we wrong God? Every sin is not a sin against knowledge, but every sin is a sin against mercies. There is a common love which all receive, food and raiment. It is their charge, Rom. ii. 4, that they despise not his kindness and the riches of his goodness. But his people have tasted his love in Christ. Every sin of yours is a stab at the heart: John vi. 67, 'Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?' Is this the fruit of all his tender love sealed to you by the Spirit? Ps. lv. 12, 13, 'It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it. But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.' David took it ill from Achitophel, and Christ from Judas. From a professed enemy we could expect no better; but from a friend, it is grievous; you have tasted of his bread, and been fed with hidden manna.

4. You have more opportunities to be acquainted with the will of God: Rom. ii. 9, 'Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, to the Jew first, and also to the gentile.' To the Jew first, because more advantages and opportunities: Mat. xi. 23, 'And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day.' Yea, they have not only external means, but experiences to the contrary: Num. xiv. 11, 'And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me for all the signs which I have showed among them?' When God trained them up in a constant course of experiences, but especially inward experiences, to break with God after all, how heinous is this! After they have tasted his love, Heb. iv. 6; after experience of his multiplied favours: Jer. ii. 5, 'Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me that they are gone far from me, and are walked after vanity, and are become vain;' Micah vi. 3, 'O my people! what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.' You have had some experience of the sweetness of God's ways. What! return to Egypt after a sight of Canaan? Men loose their lust, and fall off from God. You have had experience of the evil of sin. You have smarted once or twice, yet will you venture again? Send the other fifty, 2 Kings i. 11; James iv. 2, 'Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and

desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.' You have many times repeated this. This is a plain contest with God, a kicking against the pricks. It hath cost you dear, and still you will be meddling with forbidden fruit: Jer. ii. 19, 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and a bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.' Like foolish children, who remember the beating no longer than it smarteth. We are not yet whole of the old wounds; we should remember the former anguish and stings of conscience: Ps. li. 8, 'Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.' We have found how tedious and bitter this course of sinning hath been.

Fourthly, The difference of sins does arise from the nature of temptations.

1. When a small temptation, a little matter, carrieth us off from God; an handful of barley and a piece of bread, a vain pleasure, a small profit; and we can hazard our peace, neglect our duty, and pervert our ways for a trifle. Adam for an apple: 'They sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes,' Amos ii. 7.

2. When a great temptation draws us to apostasy from Christ; idolatry, blasphemy, adultery, murder, or gross enormities; to hearken to these is contrary to all that natural sense of honesty and piety, or those notions which we have of either of these. There are *peccata clamantia*, crying sins, that solicit God for vengeance, and will not let him be quiet. To fall into these is a great evil: Ps. li. 2, 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.'

Fifthly, From the consequence and effects. So a sin may be greater or lesser as it turneth to the prejudice and loss of him that committeth it, or to the dishonour of God.

1. When it turneth to his loss; when it terrifieth or stupifieth him. Terrifieth: James iv. 17, 'To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin;' Gen. iv. 13, 'And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.' When a man goeth up and down under the burden of his despairing thoughts, and is a terror to himself, to him it is sin indeed; he findeth and feeleth it to be so. Or when it stupifieth and setteth into an evil custom and bondage upon the soul, which we know not how to break, so that men go on impenitently, and resolve to make the best of their lives, and to live as sweetly in their sin as they can: Jer. xviii. 12, 'And they said, There is no hope; we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.' When it hath strangely prevailed over us, that is a great transgression indeed; when it cometh to that, to yield up ourselves to the tyranny of any lust, to carry us where it will. Yet this is the fruit of relapses, or frequent committing of the same sin, as a bone often broken in the same place is hardly set; so when men will frequently run into the same sin, they bring a necessity upon themselves, and then yield their necks to the yoke.

2. As to God, when his name is dishonoured: Rom. ii. 24, 'For the name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles through you.' When you encourage others to sin in like manner, or by your inordinate



walking give them occasion to speak evil of the ways of God: Mat. xviii. 7, 'Woe be to him by whom offences come! for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!' Such sins will bring a reproach upon godliness, and ruin others' souls. These are great sinners indeed. There is *scandalum activum et passivum*, either given or taken by weak christians. A man should not offend them; Mat. xviii. 6, 'Whoso shall offend one of those little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea;' Exod. xxi. 22, 'If a man strive and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow, he shall be surely punished.' Or malicious ones, as the pharisees were scandalised at Christ. When there is no occasion given on our part, it is well; but when you open the mouth of iniquity, and furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised, the dishonour of God's name is put on your score.

II. That the lesser sins make way for the greater, and the greater for the unpardonable sin. This it doth *meritoriè* and *effectivè*.

1. *Meritoriè*. Meritoriously, it provoketh God to give us up to our own heart's counsel; for God is wont in his just judgment to punish sin with sin; our carelessness, looseness, and security in small sins, by leaving us to wallow in greater: 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11, 'And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. For this cause God sent them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie.' David giveth himself liberty in idleness to wanton eyes: 2 Sam. xi. 2, 'And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and he saw a woman washing herself, and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.' God left him to the foul sins of blood and uncleanness. Therefore Job made a covenant with his eyes: 'Why then should I think upon a maid,' Job xxxi. 1. He would not allow himself in a wanton glance for fear of further mischief. He kept his eyes under a law, and a firm resolution and endeavour, that they might not dwell on any object of lust, lest it should prove a means to infect and poison his heart.

2. *Effectivè*. Though it be but a small sin, yet it weakeneth the interest of God, and so taketh off that awe-bond that is upon the soul to keep it from other sins. A man is apt to grow careless and to lose conscience of sin when he giveth himself liberty in the least sin; for he breaketh the bond and cord which should restrain him from any sin, namely, the commandment of God against it: Ps. ii. 3, 'Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us.' If once this bond be of no force with us, then what can be of force to hold us to the Lord: Rom. vi. 19, 'For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.' One maketh way for another; and in running down-hill, there is no stay. Oh, therefore, how should we tremble at the thought of tolerating ourselves in one sin, lest it lead you to hell! for there is no stop when once ye yield up yourselves.

*Use 1.* First, To show the vanity of that plea whereby the heart is deceived : It is but a little one ; and I will yield but once. Oh, deny at first ; better never yield at all.

1. In little things we must be faithful. *In minimo fidelem esse magnum est.* It is a great matter to be faithful in a little. Yea, our Lord telleth us, Mat. v. 19, 'Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, he shall be least in the kingdom of heaven.' It is a good note not to yield to the least violation of God's law. It is a sign you have the awe of it upon your hearts.

2. Sin is of an encroaching nature, like a river, that is small at the first rising, but it spreadeth and enlargeth itself in its progress. Grant it but a little, and it will come to a great deal. When once the sluices be open, there is no stopping of the waters. Sin is better kept out than gotten out. You cannot say how far you shall go. I will yield but once, saith the deceived heart, but a little after yields again. The devil will carry thee further and further, till he hath left no tenderness in thy conscience. Some will say they will venture but a shilling, till, by the secret witchery of gaming, they come to play away their lands, heritages, yea, the clothes off their backs ; so all principles of conscience will be lost at length to those that give way to sin.

3. If we should stop at small sins, yet these may harden the heart so as to neglect the greater : Mat. xxi. 31, 'Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you ;' that is, before the pharisees.

4. If we do not abstain from small sins, we do not abstain from the grossest out of conscience, but by-respects, not because God forbiddeth it, and is offended with it. There is the same reason for one as for all : James ii. 10, 11, 'For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art a transgressor of the law.' He that said, Swear not great oaths, hath also said, Swear not at all. He that said, Thou shalt not hate thy brother, hath said also, Put away anger. It is not sincerity of heart if we keep from one and not from another.

Secondly, It sheweth the vanity of that plea of committing small sins upon other considerations ; as for preventing of greater danger. No danger like the great transgression ; and we must choose the greatest affliction rather than the least sin : Heb. xi. 26, 'Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.' We must not commit the least sin to procure the greatest good : Rom. iii. 8, 'Let us do evil that good may come.' This is to make the devil serve God, and God to serve the devil. It is a doubt of God's all-sufficiency : he needeth not my lie. We may not commit the least sin for avoiding a greater, fouller sin. None is reduced to that necessity. Lot cannot be excused, who, to keep the Sodomites from committing the sin against nature, offered his two daughters to their filthy lusts, Gen. xix. 8. There is no such necessity laid on God's children, that they must do a smaller sin to prevent a greater. Refer the issue to God.

Thirdly, It informeth us that sin is of a spreading nature. One sin is the cause of another ; as being left by God, and given up to Satan ;



or by the affinity of sin, by one they are inclined to another; by prodigality to theft or fraudulency. Lusts must be fed; one sin cannot be committed without others; as covetousness: 1 Tim. vi. 10, 'The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.' When one is committed to palliate and hide another; as David's murder, to hide his lust. The same sin spreads further: James i. 15, 'When lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin.'

Fourthly, It shows what need we have of constant hatred and mortifying of sin, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, Heb. vi. 12, 13. Therefore labour to be humbled for and to strive against the least sin; as Hezekiah was for his pride: 2 Chron. xxxii. 26, 'Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart.'

Fifthly, Take heed of the least sin, either as to judgment or practice.

1. You must not give yourselves liberty to swerve from the least truth which God has revealed to you, and of which conscience has been convinced. Though you do not fail in the main and in fundamental matters, yet you must make conscience of holding fast the truth in the smallest things: Gal. ii. 5, 'To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.'

2. For practice. We may not do anything which we have cause to doubt of whether it be such as is forbidden: Rom. xiv. 23, 'He that doubteth is damned if he eats.' David was afraid of his secret faults.

Let us now take the expression as it lieth in the textual translation or reading. There are many great transgressions, but there is one above the rest, which deserves to be called the great transgression, and is usually spoken of in scripture as such; and fitly, because it is only excepted out of the covenant of grace, as not to be pardoned by it. And also because it importeth the highest malice and contempt of God that a creature on this side hell can be guilty of, and cometh near to the sin of the devils or evil angels. And it deserveth to be spoken of in this place, because presumptuous sin is a disposition to the unpardonable sin. That place, 'If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin,' Heb. x. 26, alludeth to Num. xv. 28-31, where no sacrifice was allowed for presumptuous sin, or sinning with an high hand. And it is said, ver. 30, 'That he that sinneth presumptuously reproacheth the Lord;' is guilty of blasphemy against God; and this great sin symboliseth with it, for it is called<sup>a</sup> a 'blasphemy against the Holy Ghost;' Luke xii. 10, 'Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.' Wilful sins imply or express a blasphemy. Therefore, for the consolation of the weak and wounded in spirit, who are apt to charge themselves with the committing of this sin, and for our own caution, that we may not run into it nor come near it, there are certain degrees and steps that lead down unto this sin unto death, and we shall do well to keep out of harm's way. Those that sin wilfully against light and checks of conscience are in the highway to final apostasy and falling off from God. All presumptuous sins give a fearful wound to the conscience, and Satan gets advantage by them;

therefore let us a little state what is this great sin. I shall not make a set and solemn discourse of it, yet something I shall open of it to you.

First, Let us consider the names by which it is called : ‘ Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost ;’ Mat. xii. 31, ‘ Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.’ Here I must give an account why it is called ‘ blasphemy,’ and why ‘ against the Holy Ghost.’ Why blasphemy. Blasphemy is either explicit or implicit. There is implied blasphemy in every presumptuous sin ; it is a reproach to God. Thus Pharaoh openly and by consequence and interpretation, blasphemed God when he said, ‘ Who is the Lord, that I should obey him ?’ a questioning of his authority, or a questioning of his power and truth. Implied blasphemy is a saying in the heart, as security and presumption in sin denieth God’s providence or just government : Zeph. i. 12, ‘ That say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.’ But this sin is not only implied, but often explicit (if not always) and express blasphemy, as appeareth by all the descriptions of it ; as Mat. xii. 24, ‘ This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils ;’ which occasioned Christ’s speaking of this sin. So Heb. vi. 6, ‘ They crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame ;’ that is, they judged him such an one as the Jews that crucified him, who judged not Christ to be the Messiah and the Son of God, but a seducer, impostor, and malefactor ; they desired judgment against him as such, that he might be crucified and put to shame ; and they ratify this *ex post facto*, by their after consent. So again, this sin is aggravated by the blasphemy which is contained in it ; when it is said of the total and final apostate, Heb. x. 29, ‘ That he hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of grace ;’ he doth blasphemously vilify, undervalue, and debase Christ as low as the dust and dirt under his feet, and judgeth him an impostor, a false prophet, and malefactor, and justly and worthily crucified. His blood, which was the ground of the new covenant, he counteth it common blood, such as had no expiating and purging power, and reckoneth it as impure and unholy, despising and disdaining the Spirit of grace, accounting the gifts, illuminations, motions, comforts of the Spirit as delusions and impulses of the devil, both in himself, if formerly he felt them, and in others ; and all this out of malice and detestation of the christian religion, after he hath felt some of the divine effects of this Spirit in his own soul, both in terrors and comforts.

Secondly, Let us consider the nature of the sin. It is a malicious contempt and wilful rejection of the truth of the gospel, when it is propounded to us by the Holy Ghost with sufficient evidence ; or else it is a total and final defection and apostasy from it, after we have received it, and have been convinced of the truth of it by the Spirit. Where—

1. Observe, the object of this sin is the gospel ; it is not a sin against the law, but against the gospel ; not against some one point of truth, but against the whole gospel covenant, contrary to the main substance of christianity, and contrary to Christ as the Redeemer, that upon re-



penitance in his name, we may obtain remission of sins, and by his Spirit be sanctified and fitted for eternal life. These three blasphemies show the nature of it. The first of these blasphemies relateth to the person and office of Christ as the Redeemer of the world; the other two to his benefits, justification and sanctification. The one is founded upon the merit of his blood, the other depends upon the efficacy of his Spirit. The whole sheweth that it is a total defection and apostasy from the christian faith.

Now, why is it called 'blasphemy against the Holy Ghost?' It is called 'blasphemy against the Holy Ghost,' or 'the sin against the Holy Ghost,' because it is committed against the peculiar operation of the Holy Ghost, rather than against the Father and the Son. I say, it is against his personal operation, or that relation which he sustaineth in the mystery of redemption. The sins committed against the law may be said to be committed against the Father as the governor and judge of the world. Now there may be pardon for such sins, because God hath provided a remedy in Christ. The sins that are committed against the gospel, such as impenitency and unbelief, they may be said to be committed against the Son, for these are sins *contra remedium*, against the remedy, as the other *contra officium*, against the office of Christ. And the gospel is the new remedying law of the Lord-Redeemer; these are sins against the Son. The Father gave the Redeemer to men, but he is not the Redeemer to them till the Spirit doth open the eyes of our minds, that we may acknowledge and embrace our Redeemer. But the Holy Ghost was not made sin for us, nor did he endure the wrath of God for our sakes; therefore he is not called our redeemer. That honour is put upon Christ, who is exalted to be prince and saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, that we may own him and receive him, which if we do not, we sin grievously, and incur a just condemnation. But all are not condemned who for a while reject Christ. Paul did it with some persecution, yet afterward was converted. There is a third sort of sins that we must seek to find out, and that is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that is when we do despite to the Spirit of grace, who is to convince and convert, and bring men to Christ, which when we refuse and blaspheme, and slight his evidence, be it never so full and clear, and sufficient to force belief, and will not see it, nor hearken to it, but obstinately speak evil of it, this is to sin against the Holy Ghost. The Spirit is the great witness of the gospel, and he witnesseth thereunto two ways, objectively and efficiently, as by and by more fully shall be shown. Now if we wilfully shut our eyes against this, and continue blaspheming, this is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and then there is no hope for us; for after the three persons have done their part, every one their proper work, there is no remedy. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost have divided the work of salvation among themselves; God the Father as the lawgiver, the Son as redeemer, and the Spirit as the applier. He that sinneth against the law sinneth against the Father; he that sinneth against the gospel sinneth against the Son, but he that wilfully, maliciously, and blasphemously withstandeth conviction, and the power of the Holy Ghost in bringing souls to Christ, his convincing, persuading, and converting work, he sinneth against the Spirit. According to these three dispen-

sations and respects hath God revealed himself to us. Before the coming of Christ in the flesh, God was more known as a lawgiver ; God the Son was manifested obscurely, and the Spirit given sparingly. When God was manifested in our flesh and dwelt among us, the person, dignity, and office of the Son was set forth ; but upon his reception into heaven, the Spirit came as God's vicegerent or vicar-general. Now he hath a special inspection over all affairs of the church : Acts v. 3, 4, 'And Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost, and hast kept back part of the land ? While it remained, was it not thine own ? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power ? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart ? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God ;' Acts xx. 28, 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.' He liveth, and walketh, and dwelleth in you : 'His temples we are.' All operations that belong to faith and repentance come from him. To resist them is to resist the Holy Ghost, Acts vii. 51. Therefore this sin, which questioneth the main evidence upon which faith is built, is called, 'The sin against the Holy Ghost.' Once more ; it is called 'a sin unto death ;' 1 John v. 16, 17, 'There is a sin unto death, and there is a sin not unto death.' In some respect, all sins are sins unto death, as they deserve it ; but this is especially so. A sin may be called a sin unto death *quo ad meritum*, in respect of its desert : Rom. vi. 23, 'The wages of sin is death.' *Vel quoad eventum*, or in respect of the event ; so is unbelief and impenitency, or all that sin which men continue in till death : Prov. iii. 18, 'Her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead,' if continued in ; but if broken off, it is pardonable, or rather pardoned. But this sin is *quoad naturam*, in its own nature, a sin which cannot be pardoned neither in this world nor the next : Mat. xii. 31, 32, 'Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.' Why is this sin irremissible or unpardonable ? Surely it is not in respect of God the Father, as if he wanted mercy enough to pardon it ; that cannot be, for his goodness and mercy is infinite. Not in respect of the Lord our propitiation, for his blood being of an infinite and matchless value and worth, is above the transgression of the creature. Nor merely subjectively in regard of the sinner, who by reason of former impieties and frequent convictions is given over to an hardened heart, an heart which cannot repent, and through custom of sin is seared and made as hard as the nether millstone ; but chiefly from the special nature of this sin, which lieth in some contradiction to the pardoning terms, or the way which God taketh to bring home sinners to himself. It is an aggravated sort of an impenitency in its own nature, which God will not pardon, it being an obstinate refusal of the means of conviction and conversion.

2. Observe the qualification of the object, the truth of the gospel represented by some powerful evidence of the Spirit ; for it is a blas-



phemy against the Holy Ghost, or an obstinate refusal of the means of conviction and conversion. A sin of ignorance it cannot be, for the greatest blasphemy committed ignorantly may be forgiven : 1 Tim. i. 13, ' Who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious ; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.' A sin of incogitancy it cannot be, for of all sins, that hath the most of infirmity when a man is suddenly surprised. It is not a rash opposition, but wittingly and willingly committed against some special operation of the Spirit ; and that operation of the Spirit in applying the gospel must be such as is a sufficient evidence to work faith concerning the truth of it. Now two ways doth the Holy Ghost evidence and witness the truth of the gospel to the souls of men—either *objectivè* or *efficienter* ; either as an objective testimony or argument : Acts v. 31, 32, ' Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.' Or efficiently : Eph. i. 17, 18, ' That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him ; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints.' By miracles without, or some divine effects within, such as is illumination and taste. The outward work is enough, for it is full evidence. And the pharisees had no internal conviction from the Spirit, or illumination that we read of, but only maliciously slandered Christ's miracles, to whom Christ applieth the sin, Mat. xii. 31. ' They fathered these works of the Spirit on Satan.' And it is possible some may have more illumination, as those that reject this evidence by malicious and total apostasy. They may be enlightened : Heb. vi. 4, ' For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.' They may have a taste, some internal preparative work.

3. It is a wilful, malicious, and blasphemous rejection of this truth, as sealed by the Spirit. To this blasphemy I spake before.

[1.] It is a wilful sin : Heb. x. 26, ' For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin ; ' that which is committed with a full will, and a deliberate and obstinate malice. Sin may be committed either by a full will or a mixed will. Things may be done with a mixed will when swayed from the right rule by violent passions ; and with a full will when done with consent and obstinate will. It is not ignorance, fear, or violent passion. That which we do out of fear, we seem to do it unwillingly ; for the will refuseth a while, though afterwards, overcome with fear, it yieldeth ; as a man throwing goods into the sea, it is done *ἐκὼν ἀέκοντι γὰρ θύμῳ*, willingly, yet with an unwilling mind. But what a man doeth wilfully and stubbornly against God is another case. There is a difference between sins wittingly and wilfully committed.

[2.] It is a malicious rejection, for it is accompanied with an hatred : John xv. 24, ' If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin ; but now they have both seen

and hated both me and my Father.' Generally this sin is made to be an hatred of the truth as truth ; but that cannot be. It is true that the person which hath sinned this sin hateth the truth from whence he is fallen, hateth God, and hateth Christ. Conviction disappointed maketh a man turn devil. But to hate truth as truth is not agreeable to reason. Hatred hath evil for its object, not truth. A man cannot hate truth but as contrary to our carnal inclinations and interests, and that raiseth the malice that God would convince us of, that which we have no mind to.

4. This may be done either by infidels or apostates.

[1.] By infidels, and those who never received christianity, but were or might have been, by the sufficient evidence of the Spirit's work, convinced of the truth thereof, but they did obstinately shut their eyes against the light thereof, and choose to scorn and blaspheme rather than to believe, and so become incapable objects of mercy. This was the case of the pharisees, Mat. xii.

[2.] Apostates. In the sixth of the Hebrews we find they were once christians, made profession ; they had some light and taste, some illumination, some consolation ; some sense they had, but it was superficial ; some joy, like fire in straw. The stony ground received the word with joy, Luke viii. 13 ; there was not a firm adherency, and deep radication of grace in the soul ; they did but taste. To taste is a real participation, yet but in a little or low degree, so that it gets not a universal dominion over sin and corruption ; and therefore they might fall away, and afterwards hate, and persecute, and blaspheme the truth. This is a most heinous sin, and the highest degree of this sin, because they had received the knowledge of the truth of the gospel ; they were fully convinced that God had done much towards their salvation, not only by power and miracles without, but some effects within.

Because this is the way of sinning against the Holy Ghost. Now I must tell you that every apostasy is not this sin, but it is more or less heinous according to the wilfulness and malice of it. They that cast off the profession of godliness for some great earthly hope, involve themselves in a more heinous sin than they that shrink from it out of some great fear ; for those things that we fear, as death, torment, and all matters of that kind, are destructive of our nature, and therefore it cannot be said how much nature abhorreth them ; but those things we hope and desire for the most part are such that nature may easily and without great inconveniency want them ; as great riches, splendour of life, noble affinities and marriages ; for these things are not absolutely necessary, but only conduce to our more abundant felicity ; not only our being, but our well-being is concerned in them. Our being may be kept and supported in a far meaner condition. Thence it is that great dangers, when they are at hand, are difficultly sustained, and the fear of them doth often sway us from the right rule. If we lose our great hopes, and be cut short in our ambitions or worldly expectations, it is no great matter ; wise and gracious men have easily borne it with a quiet and composed mind. The apostasy of those that are moved with such hopes is greater, more voluntary, and cometh nearer the great transgression ; and the repentance of them that lapse is more rare and seldom, as daily observation may inform you ; for they are only



enticed away by their pleasure and lusts, which christians are obliged to deaden and mortify.

But though to fall out of fear be not so heinous a sin, yet a great and heinous sin it is; for grace should govern fear as well as hope; and though the coercion and bridling of it be more difficult, yet it doth not excuse *à toto*, from all sin, but *à tanto*, only from part of the sin; and it is very hard to set a christian in joint again. Witness those terrors that haunt men when they are once gotten into the snare; as Peter went out and wept bitterly; it cost him much sorrow of heart. Christ is fain to direct a comfortable message to him by name: Mark xvi. 7, 'But go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall you see him, as he said unto you.' So that it doth not exclude all hopes of repentance and pardon. Some checks of conscience may revive his love to religion again. But when it is joined with obstinate malice, persecutions, contempt, and hatred of the known truth, because it is troublesome to his thoughts to consider how much he hath forsaken for so little, this is a great aggravation of the sin.

*Use 2.* Is caution to take heed of the great transgression, and the steps that lead thereunto.

1. Take heed of a contempt of the word of God, and the offers of his grace against the evidence and light that shineth in our consciences. This sin lieth in a malicious and scornful contempt; it is so represented in Esau, the type of the reprobates: Heb. xii. 15-17, 'Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' The root of it lieth in neglecting and slighting Christ for light causes, and preferring base lusts and pleasures before him. Esau despised his birthright when he sold it, Gen. xxv. 34; he apprehended the birthright would be of no use to him till after the death of his father, which might be for a long time, therefore, to satisfy his present pleasure, sold it. So many are apt to think our happiness is to come, and Christ is unseen; therefore our neglect of him is described by a contempt: Heb. x. 28, 29, 'He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of grace?' What is treading under feet but contempt? Oh, let the despisers of Christ and his grace lay this to heart, who make light of heavenly things, as negroes trample upon pearls: Mat. vii. 6, 'Neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet.'

2. Take heed of apostasy and falling from the truth after conviction. Some receive and profess christianity by tradition and implicit faith, yet never have any distinct knowledge of the truth so believed; and some believe and understand more explicitly the doctrine of christianity, are convinced of the truth of it, yet never affected with the matter so

as to forsake their sins. Some know and believe, and in some sort are affected with the matter, so as they begin by the power of the Spirit to forsake the pleasures of the world, find some spiritual joy and comfort; this estate is hopeful, yet must not be rested in. Some lust may be left unmortified, which in time of trial doth break out and discover the hidden malignity of the heart, not yet fully regenerated: 2 Peter ii. 20, 'For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end with them is worse than the beginning.' Now for these to fall away, to deny the truth in profession and practice, is very dangerous. Take heed of the great transgression.

3. Take heed of the hatred of God, and Christ, and his ways. There are haters of God of a lower rank; every unregenerate man is so by prepossession: James iv. 4, 'Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.' Carnal liberty: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity to God; for it is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be.' Legal bondage: Gen. iii. 7, 'And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.' Men hate what they fear. It crosses us in our way, and cuts off our desired pleasures, and punishes us for our sins. Somewhat of this remaineth in the godly. An higher sort there is that hate instruction: Ps. l. 17, 'Thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.' That hate the light: John iii. 20, 'Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.' Cannot endure to be minded of duty or warned of danger: 1 Kings xxii. 8, 'And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man (Micaiah, the son of Imlah) by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.' Cain hated his brother, 1 John iii. 12. A higher degree is persecution. But this is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, because it is some particular truth they hate, not the main of the christian faith; in spleen to the person that holdeth it, or is divided from them by contrary interests; not the truth itself is hated: yet this is dangerous. So hatred of the power of godliness; when men hate others that are godly, as godly, it is a great degree of sin. They cannot endure the lustre of grace shining in them, and therefore load them with all manner of injuries and contempt.

4. Take heed of scoffing and mocking at the word of God, and the serious counsel that is given you to reconcile yourselves to Jesus Christ. The chair of scorers is an eminent preferment in Satan's school: Ps. i. 1, 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.' I cannot say these are guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, for scorers are invited to return: Prov. i. 22, 23, 'How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorner delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you.' We know not their measures of conviction, or that thorough evidence



they have ; yet for any in the bosom of the church to do it, where Christ is professed and owned, is very dangerous. Oh, take heed, as you love your salvation, that you do not make a jest of religion, nor scoff at that doctrine which seeks to draw you to Christ, nor reproach the sanctifying work of the Spirit in any, because they desire to fear God and walk with him. Take heed of mocking at serious diligence as preciseness. Shall the image of God be made a scorn ? To scorn at godliness is to scorn at the Holy Ghost, whose office and work it is to sanctify. But this is not the unpardonable sin ; yet it comes very near that which is unpardonable, so that the thought thereof should humble all that are guilty, and make them fear so horrible a sin.

5. Take heed of presumptuous sins. It is a fearful advantage the devil gets by the wounds which wilful sins give the conscience. Every gross sin is not it, but when committed against knowledge and conscience, especially if we have time for deliberation and consideration of God's prohibition and displeasure.

Secondly, It serves by way of consolation, for such as fear they have committed this sin. Complaining christians have no reason to fear it. The nature of this sin is to harden the heart. They that are guilty of it despise our Lord Jesus Christ, but are not at all grieved to think that they have lost him. And therefore, if thou hast a value and esteem for him, and a desire of him, it is certain that thou hast not committed this great sin.

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# SERMONS UPON PSALM CXXXI.

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## SERMON I.

*Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty ; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.—*  
Ps. cxxx. 1.

THE purpose of David in this psalm is both to exhort and direct the people of God constantly and perpetually to place all their hopes and confidence in God. He exhorteth them to hope, and directeth them in the right way of hoping and trusting God. He doth both by propounding his own example ; wherein—

First, He professeth his humility, and so denieth the opposite of this hope, and that is presumption and self-conceit, ver. 1.

Secondly, By declaring his submission and absolute resignation of himself to the will of God. Both together teach us this lesson—

*Doct.* That an holy humble heart, that is content to live at God's finding, can best trust in God.

It must needs be so—

1. Partly in regard of God ; for those that exalt themselves shall be humbled. He is a party against the proud : James iv. 6, 'He resisteth the proud,' ἀντιτάσσεται. Pride crosseth God's design of abasing all flesh before him.

2. Partly in regard of trust. Pride and self-conceit are contrary to trust, to the very nature of it ; for it is an humble dependence upon God for all : Zeph. iii. 12, 'I will leave an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' Whereas a proud spirit beareth up itself upon itself, its own merit and sufficiency. So if we seek great things for ourselves, and not refer ourselves to God, we set him a task to provide meat for our lusts. Therefore it is said, Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have ; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' Implying that the heart must be purged from covetousness, ambitious affectation, or aspiring after worldly greatness, before it is fit to meddle with promises.

*Use.* Therefore, if we would trust in God, we must be sensible of sin and impotency to help ourselves, and, however matters be, refer all to God, with an humble and quiet mind.

I begin, first, with his profession of humility. Therein I shall a



little discourse—(1.) Of the exactness or integrity of it: (2.) The sincerity of it; (3.) The lawfulness and usefulness of it.

First, The integrity and exactness of it. He did carefully beware of all pride in heart, gesture, and practice. For you may observe three degrees—

1. Pride is seated in the heart; therefore he saith, 'My heart is not haughty.'

2. It bewrayeth itself in the members and gestures of the body; therefore he saith, 'Mine eyes are not lofty.'

3. It sheweth forth itself in some unwarrantable actions besides our calling or beyond our power; therefore he saith, 'I do not exercise myself in things too high for me.' He that would be a complete humble man must show it in his heart, gesture, and behaviour.

Secondly, The truth and sincerity of it; for a doubt may arise how he could wholly acquit himself of pride, since it is called 'pride of life,' 1 John ii. 16, because it sticketh by us as long as we live; and the best of God's children have been troubled with it to the last. Therefore one compareth it to the shirt, the garment which we last put off. The apostle Paul, who was an elect vessel, one rapt into the third heaven, found some seeds of pride in his heart, which would have sprung forth, but that God repressed them by a sharp correction: 2 Cor. xii. 7, 'Lest I should be lifted up above measure, by the abundance of revelation, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me.' I answer—

1. Not absolute perfection is here asserted, but gospel sincerity. He endeavoured to keep pride and ambition out of his heart, and did in a great measure prevail against it. Till we get rid of the flesh we shall never wholly get rid of pride; but if we watch and strive against it, and overcome it in any considerable measure, we are accounted and accepted as humble.

2. As to David's instance; we have great evidences of his humility, though also some few signs of remaining pride.

Instances of his humility are these—

[1.] That he continued in his mean vocation as a shepherd, following the ewes great with young, till God called him to an higher course of life. He never affected the royal diadem, neither would it have been any grief of heart to him if God, passing him by, had made another king. When for his merit Saul called him to court, and he was to be the king's son-in-law, he thought himself unworthy of that honour: 1 Sam. xviii. 22, 'Seemeth it a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?' When Saul was in his power, who chased him, and pursued him to the death, he was tender of ravishing the blessing, and therefore said, 1 Sam. xxiv. 7, 'The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed;' so 1 Sam. xxvi. 8, 9, 'God hath delivered thine enemy into thy hand this day.' 'Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be innocent?' These are not words of a man affecting the crown.

[2.] That he bore insufferable injuries and contempts with so much patience: 2 Sam. xvi. 10, 'Let him curse, because the Lord hath said, Curse David.'

[3.] That he could love them that reproved him for his sins: Ps. cxli. 5, 'Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me, and it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break mine head.' Far meaner people would not take it so kindly.

[4.] That he was so submissively ready to take what portion God would carve out for him, when God began to chastise him for his sins: 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26, 'And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here I am, let him do to me as it seemeth good to him.'

[5.] That in all his heroical acts he did not seek his own honour, but the glory of God: Ps. cxv. 1, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory.'

[6.] That in his whole dealing with God he durst not trust in his own righteousness, but wholly took sanctuary in the new covenant: Ps. cxxx. 3, 4, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;' Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' Now judge you whether a man that found all this in himself could not say, 'Lord, my heart is not haughty'?

Yet, notwithstanding this, David was not wholly divested of this evil habit of pride, but something of it remained in his heart; some strings of this evil root were found there. Why else doth he beg of the Lord to be kept back from presumptuous sins? Ps. xix. 14; in the Hebrew, from prides. He found some inclination, else why should he pray they had dominion over him? So when the people all about were subdued by him, he began to be drunk with worldly prosperity: Ps. xxx. 6, 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.' Again, no man can deny but that his heart was lifted up with pride when he caused the people to be numbered from Dan to Beersheba, that he might know what a mighty king he was, 2 Sam. xxiv. 2; which vain-glory of his cost him and the people dear. Yet, notwithstanding all these remnants of pride, he doth and might say, 'Lord, my heart is not haughty.'

3. Therefore I add, for the truth of his plea he appealeth to God; and from all those that are affected like David, God will accept of the appeal.

[1.] He could in truth of heart appeal to God: 'Lord, my heart is not haughty.' He appealeth to him who knoweth all things. Lord, from whom nothing is hid, thou knowest that this is the very disposition of my soul. If I have anything, it is from thee; it is thy providence which brought me from following the ewes great with young to feed and govern thy people.' Such an holy man would not rashly invoke God, and take his holy name in vain; but knowing his integrity, durst call God to witness. The saints are wont to do so upon like occasions; as Peter, John xxi. 17, 'Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.' They know they have a God that will not be deceived with any shows, and that he knoweth and approveth them for such as he findeth them to be. So Job doth in the sincerity



of his heart appeal to God : ' Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high,' Job xvi. 19. So Jeremiah, chap. xvii. 16, ' I have not desired the evil day, Lord, thou knowest.' Bold men, that mind not what they say, may falsely and rashly appeal to God ; but it is one thing what some do in passion and with a troubled mind ; as Sarah, Gen. xvi. 5, ' The Lord judge between me and thee ;' and it is another thing what holy persons, divinely inspired, do upon deliberation, and having considered what it is to make an appeal to God out of the tranquillity of a good conscience, and upon new covenant terms.

[2.] From those that are affected like David, God will accept the appeal ; for in the account of God we are that which we sincerely desire and endeavour to be, and for the general course and tenor of our lives are, though there be some intermixtures of failing. David saith, ' Lord, my heart is not haughty ;' and yet he was not altogether free from pride. His profession respecteth his sincere purpose and constant endeavour, and that predominant disposition of his soul. God himself confirmeth such appeals by his own testimony : 1 Kings xv. 5, ' My servant David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, neither departed from all that which he had commanded him, save only in the matter of Uriah.' And yet we have many failings of David upon record. He sinned many other times and ways besides in the matter of Uriah. His distrust that he should perish one day by the hand of Saul, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1, when he had God's promise that he should outlive him. His deep dissimulation before Achish, especially when he tendered his service to him in the wars against Israel, 1 Sam. xxvii. 10. His rash cholerick vow to destroy Nabal and all that belonged to him, 1 Sam. xxv. 22, when indeed he had done him, in rigour of justice, no wrong. His injustice to Mephibosheth, and that contrary to the kindness of his old trusty friend Jonathan, upon the bare suggestion of a servant and false informer, 1 Sam. xvi. 4, and then restoring but half when he knew the suggestion to be false ; he was blinded by reason of state, &c. His fond affection to Absalom, and taking his death with such impatience. His numbering the people, and perhaps some other sinful oversights, are recorded of David, as well as the murder of Uriah ; yet these are passed over in silence ; only his presumptuous sin is mentioned. Such a testimony also doth God give of Job, when he saith to Eliphaz the Temanite, Job xlii. 7, ' My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, because ye have not spoke of me that which is right, as my servant Job.' Yet he himself confesseth that he had spoken amiss of God, ver. 3 and 6 ; and in the 3d verse, ' I have uttered that I understood not.' Therefore, ver. 6, he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. But these things, so inconsiderately spoken by him, fell from him besides his purpose, and out of mere human infirmity, and therefore not laid to his charge ; he was right in his main cause, though he had his failings. Rash expressions, in a fit of passion, are passed by, when there is not a corrupt disposition of heart. By all this it is shown that the plea of sincerity is allowed by God, though there be some mixture of failings and weaknesses.

Thirdly, The lawfulness and usefulness of it. Is not this boasting like the pharisee ? Luke xviii. 9, ' God I thank thee, I am not like

other men.' If David were thus humble, why doth he speak of it? Is he not guilty of pride while he seemeth to speak against pride? It is a saying of Austin's, *Magis Deo placet humilitas in malis factis, quam superbia in bonis factis*—Humility in bad actions is more pleasing to God than pride in good actions.

*Ans.* We must not conceive so of what was spoken through the instinct and inspiration of the Holy Ghost by such an holy person. This is spoken either as—(1.) A necessary vindication; or (2.) A necessary instruction.

1. As a necessary vindication against the censures and calumnies of his adversaries. Saul's courtiers accused him as aspiring after the kingdom; yea, his own brother taxed him of pride when he came first abroad: 1 Sam. xvii. 28, 'I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down to see the battle.' If his brother would calumniate his actions, much more might others. Now it is for the honour of God that his children, as they would not commit a fault, so they should not be under the suspicion of it; therefore he appealeth to God.

2. A necessary instruction; for whatsoever David said or wrote here, he said or wrote by the instinct of the Holy Ghost, that Israel may learn how to hope in God. Now herein David is a notable pattern of duty both to superiors and inferiors.

[1.] To superiors. God had required in his law, that when he had given them a king, their hearts were not to be lifted up above their brethren, Deut. xvii. 20. If any might seem to have cause to be lifted up, David much more; he was famous for notable exploits and heroical actions; he had vanquished the lion and the bear, vanquished Goliath, the great champion of the Philistines, waged great wars, and always returned a conqueror. If these things had been done by others, how would they vaunt themselves, and be puffed up with the thoughts of their own excellency! We see how mean people, upon far lighter occasions, are wont to boast.

[2.] To meaner people. If so great and powerful a king had neither an haughty heart, nor lofty eyes, nor high presumptions, surely they should be ashamed to be proud of lesser enjoyments and poor trifling actions.

As a pattern and instance of the power of grace. The grace of God is able to keep a man humble and lowly in any degree of excellency. David, a rich powerful king, a mighty conqueror, can appeal to God, and say, 'Lord, my heart is not haughty.' Vain man hath much ado to keep down his heart if conscious to any excellency, real or supposed; if wise, learned, honourable, rich. But though with man it is impossible, with God all things are possible.

Let me now come to the points. Time will only give leave to insist on the first clause, 'Lord, my heart is not haughty.' Thence observe two things—

First, That those that have any dealing with God should be able to plead that they are not proud and haughty.

Secondly, If we would root out and remove pride from us, we must begin first with the heart.

First, They should be far from pride that would have any dealing with God.



*Reasons.*

1. Because God is a great enemy to pride, and his word hath sufficiently declared how ill he is pleased with it. See Ps. cxxxviii. 6, 'Though the Lord be high, yet he hath respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off.' God is far exalted above all creatures, and it is an abasement to him to take notice of man or angel; yet his superlative grandeur doth not hinder him to take notice of the meanest lost sinner who humbleth himself before him, or of the poorest suppliant; but with the proud he will have no communion, but proceed most severely with them. So James iv. 6, 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble;' Prov. vi. 16, 17, 'These six things are an abomination to the Lord, yea, seven things doth the Lord hate; a proud look, a lying tongue,' &c. All these places, and many more, do show that this is an hateful sin to God. Now what is hateful to God should not be lovely to us. See Prov. viii. 13, 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.' *Eadem velle et nolle*, &c. We must will and nill the same things, if we would live in amity and friendship with God.

2. In the course of his providence, the Lord opposeth himself to them that lift up themselves, and giveth his grace and favour to them that abase themselves; so that his providence declareth his hatred as well as his word.

[1.] His judgments on the wicked are for this. What is God a-doing in heaven but debasing the proud and lifting up the humble? Nebuchadnezzar learned this lesson at his own bitter cost: Dan. iv. 37, 'All his works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.' God may suffer them to prosper for a while, yet he standeth in battle-array against them, and will take his fittest opportunity to bear down all them that live in the sin of pride: Isa. ii. 12, 'The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low.' The humble need not be afraid of his power, majesty, and wrath, but the proud shall not escape the effects thereof. In short, God hath an especial quarrel against proud persons, and hath special knowledge of them, and will find them out, and bring them low.

[2.] His sharp corrections on his people. One special reason of his smart discipline is to correct pride or prevent pride: Job xxxiii. 17, 'That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.' When God seeth his servants to be in danger of being lifted up, he provideth a sharp cure. Paul's thorn in the flesh was that he might not be exalted above measure. God will keep them low that will not keep their hearts low; sometimes by sore sickness, sometimes by bitter reproaches, sometimes by disgraceful sufferings; yea, sometimes by some scandalous and grievous fall.

[3.] Consider the reasons why the Lord hateth it so, and sets himself against it.

(1.) It is a sin in most direct opposition to God, and therefore God standeth in most direct opposition to it. It usurpeth his honour and glory, and sets self as an idol in his place; as if we had the power of our own affairs, and all esteem were due to us. The prince of Tyre is

charged with setting his heart as the heart of God, Ezek. xxviii. 2. Though we do not say it openly by so many explicit thoughts and words, we say it implicitly by secretly arrogating to ourselves glory and honour, or seeking to ourselves our own esteem and advancement in all that we do. This is like Reuben, who went in to his father's bed. God is the first cause and last end; we have all from God and for God, not from ourselves nor for ourselves.

(2.) Because it is cross to his design, especially in the gospel, wherein his grace is offered to the humble and penitent and broken-hearted, that no flesh might glory in his presence, 1 Cor. i. 29-31. God's design is to abase all flesh before him, that the glory may redound to him alone.

(3.) It is an imitation of the devil, God's great enemy and ours, who fell by pride and affectation of divine honour, and is the proudest creature and most discontented with his condition: 1 Tim. iii. 6, the apostle would not have a novice ordained, lest he 'fall into the condemnation of the devil;' that is, lest so great dignity suddenly bestowed upon him may tempt him to pride and vanity, and so bring the same ruin upon himself that fell upon the devil, who was tempted in like manner by that glorious condition wherein he was created, and for his pride was cast out of heaven into the torments of hell.

(4.) It is a contradiction to the Lord Christ, 'who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, and humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation,' Phil. ii. 6, 7; was not thrust down for robbery and usurpation, but came down, and lived a poor and mean life, that he might become a pattern and an example to us: Mat. xi. 29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' He went not before us in a life of pomp and ease and worldly glory, but meanness and abasement.

(5.) It is an unreasonable sin. How vain are all those things for which the hearts of men are wont to be puffed up! Usually pride feedeth upon empty shadows; and if any seem to arise out of any true worth and excellency, it is rather supposed and imaginary than really existing in us. What! are men proud of birth? Were not all our ancestors conceived and born in sin? and is not all blood of a colour? When the Jews were proud of their stock, the Lord telleth them their father was an Amorite and their mother an Hittite, Ezek. xvi. 2. Is it for our greatness and dignity? which, though it be never so great, will not warrant our pride; for our best estate is but vanity, brittle when it is brightest, Ps. xxxix. 9. We shall not long continue what we are, but death will level us with others, Ps. xlix. 10-12, and others will tread upon our graves, as we do upon the graves of our ancestors, who enjoyed the same honours before us. What is it we are proud of? acuteness of wit and singular erudition and learning? If it be not sanctified, our understanding will be our ruin: Isa. xxix. 10, 'The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.' By understanding we are undone. The devil is more subtle, Gen. iii. 1, yet a tormented creature. If it be sanctified, we shall see more cause to be humble than lifted up. Is it our riches we are proud of? 1 Tim. vi. 17, 'Charge them that are rich in this world,



that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.' Who would trust in such an uncertain thing, without a man, no more to us than rich trappings to an horse? Is it for grace? To whom is the glory due, to thee or God? 1 Cor. iv. 7, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?' Will you rob God to put the crown upon your own head? What a suspicion do you bring upon your gifts and graces, if you are proud of them, that they are rather common than saving, 1 Cor. viii. 1, 2, rather supposed and imaginary than real! Gal. vi. 3, 'If any man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.' Usually common gifts and common graces are of a more swelling nature.

(6.) Because of the mischiefs of pride, what was the bane of our first parents, and the whole world of mankind, but pride? What hath divided the church and tore it in so many factions but pride? Therefore the apostle, when he presseth to unity and like-mindedness, he giveth cautions against pride: Phil. ii. 1-3, 'Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory,' &c. What divideth friends and neighbours but pride? 'Only by pride cometh contention,' saith Solomon, Prov. xiii. 9. They that have a proud heart, envy superiors, contend with equals, disdain inferiors, they would shine alone in the earth. Why did Miriam and Aaron rise up against Moses, the meekest man upon earth? Nothing but their pride, Num. xviii. 2. Yea, was not this the cause of contention among the apostles themselves? They strove who should be greatest. Therefore Christ telleth them, Mat. xviii. 1-3, 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot be my disciples.'

*Use.* Oh, then, if we would enjoy communion with God, let us remove pride far from us; all sorts of pride.

1. There is a pride which consists in impenitency and disobedience, which maketh us slight the great business of reconciliation with God through Christ: Ps. x. 4, 'The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.' And also neglect the clearest and most necessary duties, which the word of God recommendeth to us: Neh. ix. 16, 'Our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments;' ver. 29, 'They dealt proudly, and sinned against thee.' What is pride if this be not, to contest and enter into the lists with God, and to set up our wills against the will of our Creator?

2. There is a pride which sheweth itself by swelling against God's providence, entertaining mercies with disdain, crosses with anger. It venteth itself by unthankfulness for his mercies: 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 26, 'Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath upon him,' &c. Or slighting mercies: Mal. i. 2, 'I have loved you, saith the Lord; yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?' Also by muttering and complaining of God's dealings with us, Lev. xxvi. 41. Now, opposite to this, a christian should always have a mean esteem of himself, flowing from a sense of his own sinfulness: 1 Cor. xv. 9, 'I am the least of the apostles,' &c. The undeserved goodness of God: 2

Sam. vii. 18, 'David sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' and kindly take all chastisements from him as less than our deserving.

3. There is a pride which consists in overvaluing ourselves, and showeth itself either in the mind and conceit or desires. In the mind and conceit, when we set an high price upon ourselves, and represent ourselves to ourselves in a feigned likeness: Rom. xii. 3, 'Let no man think of himself above what he ought to think.' Alas! we that are so well acquainted with ourselves and our own weakness should be inclined to prefer others in honour before ourselves, Rom. xii. 10. We know more by ourselves than we can by others. Let us not look upon ourselves in the glass of self-love, for there is nothing more fallacious than that glass: Prov. xvi. 2, 'All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirit;' if God put us into the balance. But when we look upon ourselves in the glass of self-conceit, everything seemeth double to what it is, and we think ourselves much wiser and better than we are. On the other part, we should desire no more esteem from others than God alloweth us to have; and not overvalue that neither: 1 Cor. iv. 3, 'With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment,' ἐλάχιστον. We should not make too great a matter of other men's thoughts of us; otherwise how soon will it be a snare to us! John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?' John xii. 42, 'Among the rulers many believed on him; but because of the pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.'

Lastly, There is another sort of pride, and that is seeking great things for ourselves; we must have such honour, such estates. Surely they ascribe too much to themselves that would prescribe to God at what rate they would be maintained. No; let him choose our portion for us, who is wiser than we, and knoweth what condition is best for us: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' Mat. v. 3. In the heart it is seated, and powerfully rooted.

## SERMON II.

*Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.—*  
Ps. cxxx. 1.

Two doctrines I proposed—

First, That whosoever would have any commerce with God should put pride far from them.

Secondly, That whosoever would put pride far from them must begin with the heart.

This latter point I must now insist upon—(1.) What pride is; (2.) How it bewrayeth itself; (3.) Why it begins with the heart.



First, What pride is. It is an evil so comprehensive and capacious, that it will hardly endure the limits of a definition. It is a sin, or corrupt disposition, by which the soul is lifted up by an inordinate esteem and admiration of our own real or supposed excellency, together with an affectation of honour and praise from others. There are two branches of it—(1.) Self-conceit; (2.) Vainglory.

1. Self-conceit, which is also twofold—(1.) When we ascribe to ourselves what we have not. (2.) When we transfer upon ourselves the praise of what we have. To boast of what we have not is folly. To boast of what we have is sacrilege, a robbing God of his glory.

[1.] The first sort of pride is very usual. Men that have nothing to be proud of are most conceited many times. Bloaty spirits are soonest puffed up, like bladders filled with wind; whereas solid worth, solid knowledge, solid grace, is least ostentatious. Empty vessels and shallow rivers make the greatest noise. The apostle Jude compareth seducers to clouds without water, Jude 12; and Solomon giveth us the true meaning of that expression: Prov. xxi. 14, 'Whoso boasteth of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.' They seem to look black, and promise to refresh the earth to make it fruitful, but give not one drop, being carried away with the winds; so these boast of the Spirit, and greater measure of gospel light, but give no relief to any poor thirsty soul that would understand holy and wholesome doctrine.

[2.] The other kind is when we transfer upon ourselves the glory of what we have; whereas we had it not from ourselves, nor for ourselves: 1 Cor. iv. 7, 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive?' It is all given, and given of grace; not for our use and honour, but God's: 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'By the grace of God I am what I am,' &c.; Luke xix. 16, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.'

Affectation of honour and esteem from others. When men set an high price upon themselves, if others will not come up to their price, they are discontented. When a man hath made himself his own idol, he would have others come and worship him. There is an inordinate affectation of glory from men. All they do is to be seen and admired of men; to set off themselves as the idols of the world, for veneration and reverence; as the pharisees, to be seen of men, Mat. vi. 1, 5, 16, in alms, prayers, fastings. Therefore the apostle saith, 'Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another,' Gal. v. 26. An itching desire after estimation and applause is the evil which we speak of; we would have others prostrate themselves before the idol of those pretended or real excellences which we ourselves so much dote upon and admire.

Secondly, How it doth bewray itself. In thought, word, and deed, which are the usual operations of the human spirit.

1. In thoughts. As a man's temper is so are his musings; so will he talk and speak to himself by his own thoughts. An unclean person sets up a state of unclean representations in his own heart, and commits adultery there. A covetous person, his heart is exercised with worldly thoughts and covetous practices. So a proud person entertaineth his soul with self-adorning thoughts, and feeds his fancy with the echoes and suggestions of applause and honour from men, what they think

and speak of him. Therefore it is said, Luke i. 51, 'He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.' Proud men are full of imaginations. And all sins of thought are expressed by pride in that noted place, Prov. viii. 13; and we read of their musings in scripture: Dan. iv. 30, 'Is not this great Babel, which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and the honour of my majesty?' Thus men, in their private thoughts, are dreaming of the greatness and advancement of their families, the applause of the world, the vastness of their treasures, largeness of their inheritance, and glory of their successes and achievements. A man is become, by pride, his own flatterer and tickler, filleth his mind with self-admiring thoughts, the conceit of his own worth. This is to dream waking.

2. By words. When men dote upon themselves, they forget all bounds of modesty, and are trumpeters of their own praise: Prov. xxvii. 2, 'Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth.' Yet, in the rage and reign of pride, men will boast of the good things which they have or have done; as if all were lost that is not known and applauded by men. Proud boasters, Rom. i. 30. It is against reason that a man so partial and self-loving should be witness in his own cause. Let us do that which is praiseworthy, and let our deeds commend us rather than our own words.

3. By deeds; and this comprehendeth our gestures, vestures, and actions.

[1.] Our gestures. This scripture takes notice of haughty eyes, and so do many other. Under 'lofty eyes,' he comprehendeth every outward discovery of our pride, in gestures, vestures, speech, and behaviour. As long as we hang out apparently the ensigns of our vanity, we cannot account ourselves humble. But I begin with gestures, a lofty look or gait. Where pride is truly rooted out of the heart, there it will not show itself in the external gestures, in an haughty look and gait. The argument is firm and conclusive: My heart is not haughty, therefore mine eyes are not lofty. It will not hold backward, and have such a necessary truth: Mine eyes are not lofty, therefore my heart is not haughty, *non sequitur*, for some have the art to conceal their pride. But certain it is humility in the heart will take away pride out of the eyes, because the heart governeth the whole man. But the humble eye and gait doth not always argue an humble heart, as is evident in hypocrites. In vain do men boast of humility in their hearts who show forth pride in their gait and eyes. At least the show of pride giveth scandal and offence, and we must avoid all appearance of evil, 1 Thes. v. 22. More especially lofty eyes are abominable, David else would not with so much earnestness express his humility by this sign, that his eyes were not lofty. This is also plain by other scriptures: 'These six things are an abomination to the Lord; lofty eyes,' &c., Prov. vi. 16, 17. This bringeth up a troop of other faults. So Prov. xxi. 4, 'An high look, and a proud heart, and the ploughing of the wicked, is sin.' So Prov. xxx. 13, 'There is a generation, oh, how lofty are their eyes, and their eyelids are lifted up!' So it is said, Ps. xviii. 27, 'God will bring down high looks.' Now all these places show how careful we should be that we do not suffer pride to peep out. To nourish it in our hearts is a sin; to bewray it is a scandal as well as a



sin. Ezra saith, 'I durst not lift mine eyes to thee,' Ezra ix. 6. He considered his own sin and the sin of his people. So Luke xviii. 13, 'The publican stood afar off, and would not lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast.' It is one law concerning Israel's king, Deut. xvii. 20, 'Not to lift up his heart above his brethren.' They will soon be stripped of all their glory. Much more should meaner people. David would not bear in his own house, Ps. ci. 5, 'One that hath an high look and a proud heart.' If a good man will not bear this, will God bear it?

[2.] In vestures. This also is a sign of pride; and it is the more odious because it is a mere external thing, like trappings to a horse. Clothing was the consequent of sin, and having the mark of our shame about it, it is mightily abused when it is made the ensign of our pride. And strange apparel is reprov'd in king's children: Zeph. i. 8, 'I will punish the princes and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.' How will those painted butterflies answer it to God, that abuse that which was appointed for health, warmth, and comeliness, into an occasion of pride and ostentation, whilst they affect superfluity and pomp in it, and that far above their rank? Vanity of apparel is a certain effect of vanity in your mind. Wisdom, meekness, and holiness should be your ornaments, 1 Peter iii. 4; and you think of no other adorning than vain and light apparel. By this you plainly tell the world what you are, vain and worthless, only lifted up in your own conceit. Usually a neglected inattentive soul dwelleth in the body that must be thus decked and adorned. In other cases men are careful to hide their sin; here they plainly bewray it; for you carry the badge of your pride abroad with you wherever you come, and proclaim that you are not ashamed of it, how hateful soever it be to God. It is as if you disclaimed Christ, the doctor of humility, and preferred the image of the devil before that of God. When God first made garments for man, he made them of the skins of the beasts, plain and simple. But I forbear.

[3.] In our actions.

(1.) By ambition. When we are continually affecting honour and greatness, and how to exceed others, contemning them in comparison of ourselves, or taking it ill that others should be more esteemed and preferred before us. The fault is first in the mind. Men will say, I am as good a man as such and such; I deserve as well as they; I see no reason why I should not be respected as well as others; and then seeking to advance and put forth ourselves before them, 3 John 9, 'Diotrephes loved the pre-eminence,' φιλοπρωτεύων; he would fain be first. When men affect precedence, and show it, it is an evident sign of pride. Many men mistake ambition; they think a desire of great places is only unlawful when it is sought by unlawful means, but the bare desire and affectation of greatness is sinful, and contrary to the rules of the gospel. We should refer our advancement to the fair invitation of God's providence, and tarry till the master of the feast biddeth us to sit higher. In our private choice, we should be contented with a tolerable supply of necessities. Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, Luke xiv. 11; not, Whosoever is exalted. In the Olympic games, the wrestler did never put on his crown and garland, but it was

put on by the judge of the sports. The apostle telleth us, our Lord 'Glorified not himself as high priest, but he was anointed of God, as Aaron,' Heb. v. 5. If you do not stay for the call of providence, but advance yourselves, it is an untimely desire of promotion. Usually men are set to soar higher and higher, without setting any period to their towering thoughts.

(2.) Vainglory. When a man earnestly desireth praise and glory from men, and bewrayeth it in all his actions; when a man mindeth his own praise more than the glory of God, and is tickled and pleased with it, and all that he doth is to get himself a name, Gen. xi. 4. Now this is seen when you are marvellously pleased with it, as having obtained your end: Prov. xxxvii. 21, 'As a fining-pot for silver, and a furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise;' that is, tried by it; for a man may know his temper according as he is affected when he is praised or dispraised by others. He that admits of all praises, whether deserved or undeserved, that greedily hunteth after popular applause, that easily swelleth when he is commended, can bear no reproach or reproof patiently, is a weak vainglorious man; more especially he that seeketh to bring himself into request rather than Christ, and is willing and content to take to himself the glory due to God. Certainly that instrument seeketh to undermine God who usurpeth to himself the praise due to the supreme agent. Contrarily, Joseph: Gen. xli. 12, 'God shall give the king an answer of peace;' and the apostle: Acts iii. 16, 'His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong.' In short, they that debase others to exalt themselves, is a wrong done to God, to set myself in his room; a wrong done to my neighbour, to rob one another, and blast him by rash censures, that I may set off myself alone, build my credit upon the ruins of his esteem.

Thirdly, Why must pride begin with the heart?

1. Because the heart is the proper seat and rise of pride. There would be none in the gesture, none in the vesture, none in the life, if it were not first in the heart; there is the root of it, and there it lieth hidden. Now why should we shake off the leaves and let alone the branches? or lop off the branches, and let alone the root? When the prophet would cure the brackishness of the waters, he did cast salt into the spring: 2 Kings ii. 24, 'He went to the spring of the waters, and cast in salt there.' The heart is the spring of actions: Prov. iv. 23, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' In the purging out of all sins we must begin with the heart; so in the purging out of pride. Our Lord was angry with the pharisees for washing the outside of the platter: Luke xi. 39-41, 'First cleanse that within.' If the heart be humble, the eyes will be lowly, the speech humble, the garments humble, gait humble. If pride had a deadly wound in the heart, it would die away in the practice.

2. It is a sin of deep radication, and very powerful in the hearts of men. You will find it a very hard matter to subdue it in the heart, partly because it suiteth with self-love, which is natural to all. Men love themselves, and therefore esteem themselves and seek themselves. Selfishness is the life of pride, which consists in an excessive self-esteem, and a desire of excessive esteem from others, and to be magnified by them. Now self is the great idol of the world. A man is not easily dispossessed of an



inordinate love to himself. This is a corruption so deep in the heart of man, that it may be called his natural inclination; and it must be changed into a new nature, which principally consisteth in the love of God, which leadeth and directeth all our actions to his glory. Self-love is the heart of original sin, as the love of God is the heart of the new creature. So that, this considered, you may easily know what man is by nature, an inordinate self-lover and self-esteem; and as he is, so will he act. Partly because there is not such a turpitude in this as in other sins. There seemeth to be a kind of bravery in it; therefore no sin is of such an easy insinuation and such a difficult removal. Surely a proud person is hardly cured; there is more hope of a fool than of him. Drunkenness, adultery, unmanneth us; this seemeth to make us gods. Indeed it is easy to prove that pride is a base sin, and there is no such weak heart as a proud imperious heart: Ezek. xvi. 30, 'How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord, seeing thou doest all these things?' It doth embase the spirit while it seemeth to greaten it. No temper so vile and servile as that of the proud aspiring person. *Curvatur obsequio, ut aliis dominetur*; he basely flatters others that he may rule over them. Absalom kisseth the people, 2 Sam. xv. 5, that he may win them to him. *Oscula et omnia serviliter pro imperio*. They will do base things to make way for their advancement. Those spirits that are proud and insulting, none more fawning and base for their own advantage. Besides, he is so weak, he is little able to bear a scorn or a frown. Partly because it is natural. We all suck it in with our milk. That it is a very natural sin appeareth by the experiences. One is, that it taketh with us upon a small occasion, a fair garment, a lock of hair, a good horse, or a dog, &c. It is a weed that groweth in any ground; nothing so high, nothing so low, but pride can make use of it, though never so contrary; proud of humility; nay, rather than not be proud, some will be proud of their sin, glory in their shame, Phil. iii. 19. A thing so catching is certainly natural. Again, it is a sin that puts us upon most self-denial. How will men travail and rack their spirits to serve their ambition or vainglory! As charity endureth all things and suffereth all things, so doth pride. How will men pinch to feed their pomp! Prov. xii. 9, 'He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread;' that is, flaunteth and maketh a fair show in the world, when at the same rate he might live comfortably in a meaner garb and equipage; as we see many live above their rank and condition, and can part with all their solaces and conveniences of life to supply their pomp and state, and are content with an hungry belly to clothe a proud back.

Once more: It is a very natural sin, because it is at the bottom of other sins. Covetousness is pride's purveyor; though in some sense it be the root of all evil, yet it hath a deeper root, a desire to make ourselves and ours great. It is said, Hab. ii. 5, 'He is a proud man, and therefore enlargeth his desire as hell.' We scrape, and spare, and busy ourselves to advance ourselves and families, and that we may shine alone in the earth.

3. The third reason why he that would root out pride must begin with his heart is, because it is a close sin, that seeketh to disguise itself in the practice. It is a sin that is ashamed of itself, and there-

fore it goeth under the mask of humility, or some other pretence. If pride blow a trumpet, it is to call the poor within hearing, Mat. vi. 2. Now this cheat will not be discovered unless we look to the heart. If people be vain and flaunting in their apparel, it is to keep up their necessary repute in their place. Men dare not hunt after praise but by stealth, and sail by a side-wind to it, not in a straight line. They know it is a prohibited commodity, not lawful to be purchased in the open market; but it must be gotten underhand and by stealth. Direct pride is odious to the proud person himself, therefore he useth stratagems and devices, and seemeth to beat back their praise when it cometh to them at the first hop, that they may the better take it at the rebound; apparently will discommend themselves, but their hearts tell them they would not be believed, and take it angrily if you do believe them. If pride hath a mind to censure others, the censure is always prefaced with a commendation; as an archer draweth back his hand that he may let fly the arrow with the more force. They commend with a 'but,' which is a stab at the heart of another man's credit. If pride hath a mind to affect some higher place, men will pretend a desire of doing more good, and of glorifying God in an higher station; but this is but pretence, because the serving of God is least in their minds. We desire an higher condition before we have conquered all the temptations to which a lower is exposed. We should be faithful in a little first, trusty, watchful, vigilant in our former station, ere we can look after greater matters and greater honour in the world. Plants that thrive well in a valley soon wither and are blasted on the top of a mountain. But such men are eagerly set to soar higher and higher, setting no period to their towering thoughts. Besides, the rankest pride will sometimes appear in an humble garb; but humility in the gesture and outward behaviour is but counterfeit while the heart is lofty. Some, whose hearts were not broken, yet would hang the head like a bulrush for a day, Isa. lviii. 5, erewhile seemed to be deeply affected with sin and misery; but this is like ice in giving weather, thawed at top, but hard at bottom. Ahab went softly, and was in outward show very humble, 1 Kings xxi. 27, affected for the present, but his heart not subdued to God. Absalom was in show very humble, courting the meanest of the people, 2 Sam. xv. 2-5, but it was for his ambitious ends. So many take on a veil of humility to deceive men and mock God; but a bladder is not more blown with wind than they are swollen with pride. There are two extremes. Some think pride only consists in outward things, as vestures, gestures, modesty of eyes and speech. Thus many of the popish monks and friars place much of their religion in their exterior mortification, when their hearts are full of the conceits of self-righteousness. Among us, the quakers cry out upon the pride of others, and by their plain garb pretend to avoid it; yet how conceited of themselves and obstinate! Very ignorant, yet scornful of a gospel ministry that should teach them better! The other extreme is, men will pretend their hearts are humble though their eyes are lofty, their apparel vain, and by all external signs they show their folly, pride, and luxury, in their garb, their entertainments, their household furniture. These miserably deceive themselves; for if the heart were humble, the eyes would not be lofty, nor would they display the ensigns of their vanity. Well, then, from



all this you may see what need there is that the heart should be purged of pride.

*Use.* To persuade us to purge out this leaven of pride. It cannot be purged out at once, but it must be mortified and subdued more and more. Daily labour and diligence is necessary for this end.

The means are these—

First, Frequent examination of ourselves; for self-acquaintance breedeth humility. No man extolleth himself but he that knoweth not himself. Therefore the best way to take down pride is to consider often what we have been, what we are, and what we deserve.

1. What we have been. Let us often consider the horrible filthiness of our corrupt nature, stinking worse than any carcass before God. Take the softest notion of original sin, we wanted a righteousness to place before God: Ps. li. 5, 'I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' We wanted strength to serve him: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' We had nothing to incline us to God or commend us to him. Yea, not only an impotency, but an averseness. Partly out of carnal liberty: Rom. viii. 7, 'Because the carnal mind is enmity to God.' Partly through sensuality, or addict-edness to present things grateful to the flesh: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh.' Partly through legal bondage: Gen. iii. 7, 'The eyes of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked;' ver. 10, 'I heard thy voice in the garden, and I hid myself, because I was naked.' Through carnal liberty our hearts were averse from him as a lawgiver; through bondage, as a judge: Col. i. 21, 'You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works.'

2. After grace received, mixed principles, and therefore mixed operations, flesh and spirit, law and gospel, Gal. v. 17. If we consider in what state our soul is, what our actions are, how polluted with a tangle of the flesh, how little comfortable sense of the love of God, we should soon see that we still carry about with us the cause of a deep humiliation in our bosoms, and to cry out with the publican, Luke xviii. 13, 'Lord, be merciful,' &c.; or with Paul, Rom. vii. 24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Besides your wants and defects, consider the loathsome corruption of your souls, which follow you wherever you go. The sins of our best duties are enough to humble us, to have such low conceptions of God, such heartless prayers, &c.

3. Consider what we have deserved. The eternal wrath of God, due to us for sin. It is a wonder that he doth not turn us into hell every moment, and that fire doth not come forth from his jealousy to consume us, who are ever and anon tripping in his service.

You will say, Blessed be God, we are escaped by Christ; we are passed from death to life.

*Ans.* I do not tell you what God will do, but what you have deserved; and this not to weaken your confidence, but to humble your hearts. Now it is enough for that, that you had once the sentence passed upon you, and have had the rope, as it were, about your necks; that you have been at the gates of hell, and might have entered in, but for the

grace of your Redeemer. Besides, you deserve it still ; your daily sins and best actions deserve the wrath of God. And such a sense of it is still necessary as quickens to thankfulness, and prays for pardon, and promoteth to humility ; and you turn grace into wantonness, and abuse it, if it lessen any of these acts. Well, then, though God forgive us, we must not forget we were once as bad as the worst, and children of wrath, even as others, Eph. ii. 3. We must still condemn ourselves when God justifieth us, and set our sins ever before us though God do cast them behind his back. Now shall such creatures as we be proud, so sinful, so liable to the curse, whose righteousnesses are as filthy rags ? Isa. lxiv. 6.

Secondly, Frequent communion with God in prayers and praises ; for so we more and more come into the knowledge of God, and a sight and sense of his majesty and glory ; and a serious sight of God will humble us : Isa. vi. 5, 'I am unclean, for I have seen the Lord of hosts ;' Gen. xviii. 27, 'I am but dust and ashes ;' Job xlii. 5, 6, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' Can they be proud that have so often to do with an holy and glorious God ? Surely one glimpse of his majesty will take down thy self-exalting thoughts. The stars differ from one another in brightness and glory, but when the sun appeareth they are all obscured, and those differences unobserved. So when we compare ourselves with men, we seem great, wise, powerful ; but God, rightly apprehended, lesseneth us in our opinion, estimation, and affection. He is all, we are nothing but what he maketh us to be. All the creatures to him are nothing, less than nothing, Isa. xl. 17 ; nothing in opposition to him ; nothing in comparison of him ; nothing in exclusion of him. Now the mind should be often seasoned with these thoughts, as surely they will where men have much to do with God, and are often with him, if they be serious in their addresses to him.

Thirdly, Constant watchfulness, especially when we are most in danger of this sin ; then we should keep a double watch. Pride is incident to all, but especially to those who are ennobled with any excellency of birth, honour, or estate, or parts, or office. Few are able to master their comforts ; they are too strong wine for weak heads. To learn to abound is the harder lesson, Phil. iv. 12. When God lifteth them up, they lift up themselves ; the wind of strong applause soon oversets a little vessel. Even gracious persons may be tainted. Pride once crept into heaven, and then into paradise ; and it is hardly kept out of the best heart. Christians are not so much in danger of sensual lusts as of this sin ; it groweth upon us many times by the decrease of other sins ; as mortified, so proud : are ministers by their office : 1 Tim. iii. 6, 'Not a novice, lest, lifted up by pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' But withal, those are most prone that rise out of the dunghill and from a low estate to great wealth and honour ; partly because they are not able to digest such a sudden and unusual happiness ; partly because they look less to God, and more to their own prudence and industry : Hab. i. 16, 'Sacrifice to their own net.' Now all these should watch : Deut. viii. 14, 'Take heed lest thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God ;' 1 Tim.



vi. 17, 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches.' The honourable should watch, the minister watch, the gifted watch, but especially those whom God hath more than ordinarily blessed with worldly increase, Ps. cxix. 70, 71.

Fourthly, Use those things with fear which may feed your pride, and so avoid all occasions of being lifted up. As, for instance, do not look upon your graces and privileges without looking upon your infirmities, which may be a counterbalance to you : Mark ix. 24, 'Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief.' There is much corruption still remaineth in us, and often gets the advantage of us in thought, word, and deed. Never reflect upon your praises, but remember your imperfections, which the world seeth not, the many sins which you are conscious unto, and how much more you deserve reproofs than praises ; And if you will thoroughly slight the honour and vainglory of the world, never count yourselves humble, till you are more willing to be admonished than praised, reprov'd than flattered. It is the proud man that despiseth reproof, but the humble prizeth it. Instances of the one : Amaziah to the prophet : 2 Chron. xxv. 16, 'Art thou made of the king's counsel ? forbear ; why shouldst thou be smitten ?' The false prophet Zedekiah to Micaiah : 2 Chron. xviii. 23, 'Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to thee ?' The pharisees to Christ : 'Are we blind also ?' John ix. 39, 40. Holy and humble men are of another temper. Job did not despise the cause of his servants when they contended with him, Job xxx. 13, 14 ; David : Ps. cxli. 5, 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.' This is a notable remedy against pride, to bear a faithful reproof, and take it in better part than praises and acclamations. Again, when you reflect upon your enjoyments, consider your account, Luke xii. 48. What will ye do when ye shall appear before the tribunal to answer for all this honour and estate ? Surely such a day and such a reckoning should damp men, and quench all self-exalting thoughts. Never look upon your afflictions, but consider the mercies yet continued, notwithstanding your ill-deservings, Ezra iii. 19, that we may not murmur, which is an effect of pride, but submit to God's chastisements ; that is the way to increase humility ; for afflictions are humbling occasions, and so must be improved.

Fifthly, The example of Christ. There was not a more excellent person, nor more worthy, in all the world. Now what was his life but a lecture of humility ? Mat. xi. 29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart ;' 'He sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him,' John v. 41. That is our business as well as Christ's ; not to seek ourselves, but to please God and glorify God. He chose a mean life, withdrew himself when they would make him a king, John vi. 15 ; came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, Mat. xx. 28. Vain men would be admired of all, are desirous of worldly power and glory ; but this is contrary to the Spirit of Christ. Surely we should dress ourselves by this glass. The meek, humble, lowly mind is an express resemblance of Christ, as pride is of the devil. When Christ came to save us, he would not choose a life of pomp, but poverty. He submitted to be conceived in the womb of a maiden, took the form of a

servant, was laid in a manger, sacrificed two pigeons. He lived in the world as a man of sorrows, born of mean parents, working at their trade. Justin Martyr saith he made ploughs or yokes: 'Is not this the carpenter?' Mark vi. After he entered into the ministry, he was scorned, opposed by men, preached out of a ship to people on the shore. Finally, he humbled himself to the death, the death of the cross. Now the same mind should be in you that was in Jesus, Phil. ii. 5. Unless you think it a disgrace to imitate him, either you must be humble, or seek another lord and master.

Sixthly, Thoughts of death, and the great change that we must once undergo, should still keep us humble. This flesh, which thou deckest with so much art and ornament, must shortly become a dead carcass, removed out of sight, that it may not become offensive to those that most love and prize thee, and rot in the grave, and become food for worms. Dust we were in our composition, and dust we must be in our dissolution, Gen. iii. 19. What is viler than dust? Eccles. xii. 7, 'Our dust shall return to the earth as it was.' We do but for a while act a part upon the stage of the world, and then we must be unclothed; as he that acteth the king in the comedy, and then goeth off and is a poltroon, as before; he vaunteth on the stage for a while, then *ad staturam suam redit*—Seneca. Though his excellency mounteth unto the heavens, yet within a while he perisheth, as his own dung, Job xx. 5–8. Our ornaments must be left behind us.

Seventhly, A gift sanctified, though never so mean, is more than the greatest gifts that puff us up. It holdeth good in all things. In estate, the truest contentment is to be kept humble in the enjoyment of it, James i. 10. The rich, in that he be made low. So for honour; it is not the outward splendour which is our happiness, but the humble mind. To be *minimus in summo*, least at the highest, like a spire or pyramid, is an argument of a great spirit. So for parts, the humble christian is the better qualified, 1 Cor. viii. 1. Knowledge puffeth up, charity edifieth. So grace; the less conceited, the more grace. Pride starveth every grace, but humility feedeth it. It is the humble soul which hath the solid comforts, and hath made most progress in religion.

Eighthly, Consider the evils of pride, both as to sin and punishment.

1. As to sin. It puts us upon other sins, murmuring against God, contempt of others: Prov. xxi. 24, 'Haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth with proud wrath.' Contention with them: 'He that is proud in heart stirreth up strife,' Prov. xxviii. 25. Envy; Saul eyed David ever afterward, 1 Sam. xviii. 9. An evil eye: Mat. xx. 24, 'When the disciples heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.' Censuring: James iii. 1, 'Be not many masters.'

2. Evils of punishment. Others cannot be expected, since the proud are so odious to God: Prov. xvi. 5, 'Whosoever is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.'

[1.] The judgments of God against the proud are sure: Prov. xxix. 23, 'A man's pride will surely bring him low.' So Prov. xvi. 5, 'Though hand join in hand.' All the world shall not keep him, as that doth not keep down his own spirit. God will cross him in his person or posterity: Prov. xv. 25, 'The house of the proud shall be destroyed.'



[2.] It is swift. Judgment cometh upon other sins with a slow pace, but always treadeth on the heels of pride, in that instant wherein they exalt themselves. Nebuchadnezzar, when his heart was lifted up and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from the kingdom, Dan. v. 20. The angels fell in that instant. Herod adored as a god, and immediately eaten up of worms, Acts xii. We lose our children, estate, parts, by some sudden stroke of providence, when we grow proud of them.

[3.] It is shameful; that God may pour the more contempt on them: Prov. xi. 2, 'When pride cometh, then cometh shame.' Not only ruin, but shame; Herod punished by lice, Pharaoh by gnats and flies, Miriam by leprosy; Goliath falleth by a stone out of a shepherd's sling.

[4.] It is impartial. Not only upon Pharaoh, Herod, Haman, but his own people. Uzziah, 2 Chron. xxv. 26, 27, died without being lamented. Hezekiah: 2 Chron. xxxii. 45, 'His heart was lifted up, therefore there was wrath upon him.'

### SERMON III.

*Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, nor in things too high for me.—Ps. cxxx. 1.*

HERE is the third sign of David's humility, that he did not affect or attempt great things, above his power, or beyond his calling, 'Neither do I,' &c. The word for 'exercise' signifieth also to walk; and the word for 'too high' signifieth also wonderful.

This part of the profession may be understood either—

First, Of his study, and inquiries of his mind, that he did not search out the hidden things of God. There are certain things which surpass the light and capacity of human understanding: Ps. cxxxix. 6, 'This knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it.' So Job, when he had censured God's providence, chap. xlii. 3, 'I have uttered things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.' To presume to dive into or comprehend the counsels of God is an act of pride, because it is a presumption beyond man's ability.

Secondly, Of his practice, that he did not aspire after great things, nor seek to wrest the kingdom out of the hands of Saul. He would not step forward, nor backward, but as God directed him; which certainly was a great effect of humility and modesty in David, though the promises of God gave him such hope, and the persecutions of Saul irritated him. And therein becometh a pattern to the people of God, that they should not aspire to nor look after worldly greatness, but be contented with the condition and estate of life wherein God placeth them; and our utmost ambition should be to be serviceable to God and his people, without presuming beyond the bounds of our

calling or strength to manage things: Jer. xlv. 5, 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.'

Which of these senses to prefer is not easy to know. Interpreters are divided. I will frame the doctrine so as to comprise both.

*Doct.* That humble souls do not exercise themselves in great matters, nor in things too high for them.

First, I shall consider how many ways this may be done.

Secondly, I shall show that it is contrary to humility so to do.

*First,* How many ways this may be done. First, I shall take the former distinction.

First, In point of understanding, when they search out and presume to understand things which God hath not revealed. The general rule is, Deut. xxix. 29, 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.' Our business is to study our duty, which is plain and open; and for great matters, and things too high for us, we may, without any great loss or danger, let them alone.

Now these great matters that are too high for us are of two sorts—(1.) Some things that exceed the capacity of all men; (2.) Some things that are above our particular capacity, or the measure of our apprehension, or the limits of our vocation and calling.

1. Some things exceed the capacity of all men, and are too high for us to judge of. Now these things may be ranked in two classes—(1.) When men reject any revealed truth because they know not the cause; or (2.) When they neglect any present duty because they know not the events.

[1.] When we reject any apparent truth or doctrine revealed in the scriptures because it exceedeth our capacity to understand all the causes and reasons of them. This is to exercise ourselves in matters too high for us, and to set up our reason in opposition to God's revelation. As many deny the Trinity, and the incarnation of the Son of God, because they cannot conceive or understand how these things can be. Others deny the creation of the world, because they cannot apprehend what God did, or wherein he was employed, during all that infinite space of time before he proceeded to the creation. In many other cases they will not believe the truth, because they understand not the causes thereof; as God's decrees of predestination and preterition, because they cannot reconcile this with the justice of God and their prejudices and preconceptions, though it be clearly revealed in the word, that while the children were yet unborn, and had done neither good nor evil, yet 'Esau have I hated, and Jacob have I loved,' Rom. ix. 10, 11. So many deny the institution of Adam as a common person, in whose act all his posterity were concerned, though it be a truth clearly revealed in the scripture. These, and many other things, are propounded to be believed, not vexed with anxious inquiries. God dealeth with us here as physicians with their patients. They give pills, not to be chewed, but swallowed. If chewed, they are cast up again by proud reason; if swallowed, they prove an wholesome remedy to us. We are to acquiesce in the testimony of God, made evident to us by other reasons, though we cannot reconcile them with



the conceits of our shallow and corrupted reason. So many deny the providence of God because of some seeming incongruities, by the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous, and so cry up chance instead of God's wise and holy government. Surely we exercise ourselves in things too high for us when we will still be inquiring into the causes and reasons of all things. As why God from eternity decreed this and that, in his providence doeth this or that. Why he would not send his Son for fallen angels as well as for fallen man, when one angel, as to the dignity of his nature, is more precious than a thousand men. Why Christ would save one thief upon the cross, and not both. Why he will execute his judgments upon his people by the wicked, and afterward, when he hath used the rod, throw it into the fire. Why he will visit the sins of the fathers on the children. Why Achan's family was to be burned with him, Josh. vii. ; and an hundred such things, which God hath hidden from us. Yea, some will deny the immortality of the soul, because they know not how it is caused, by seminal traduction or immediate creation. So the work of God's differencing grace, because they understand not the way of it. It is endless to follow all the exceptions of vain man against the doctrine of God, and how the pride and arrogance of reason vents itself against divine revelation.

In practical matters, some will question the Spirit's dwelling in believers, because they cannot understand the manner. Some saving grace, communion with God, or praying in the Holy Ghost, as if they were but fancies. Some truths cannot be understood without experience, and it is only sanctification that giveth that experience; therefore unsanctified persons take them for fancies.

[2.] This pride showeth itself in the desire of the knowledge of future events, either concerning the church of God, ourselves, or others; and many are so set upon this, that they will have figures cast, unlawful arts used, seek unto wizards and them that have familiar spirits, Isa. viii. 19. But whether they use lawful or unlawful means, the scripture disapproveth this vain curiosity and desire to know future contingencies, as arguing a distrust of God; for true godliness requireth we should trust ourselves blindfold in his hands, and obey him though we do not know what will come of it; as Abraham did, Heb. xi. 8. But we are very anxious about futurities; we would know what Christ will do with the church, what with ourselves, what with others. It better becometh us, in every condition, to know what we should do than what we shall be. It doth not become us to understand events, but it doth greatly become us to understand our duty. But our minds run upon this. Sometimes we are inquiring about the church, 'Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' But he answers, 'It is not for you to know the times,' &c., Acts i. 6, 7. So we desire to know our own destiny, whether we shall have prosperity or adversity, die a violent or a natural death, at home or abroad. We desire to know the time when our affliction shall cease: Ps. cxix. 8, 'How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?' David was surprised with this infirmity. We are weary of sufferings, and would fain know an end. So for others: John xxi. 21, 22, 'What shall this man do? If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to

thee? follow thou me.' Peter would fain know what should become of John, for which he was checked of Christ, as meddling with that which concerned him not. He bids him keep to his duty. It is vain curiosity, when we have so much needful work upon our hands, to desire to know what shall become of us and ours in this lottery of human affairs. Do your duty, and venture upon God's providence. Consider what an horrible diffidence and distrust of God it is that we cannot acquiesce in his wise and holy government, whose wisdom, power, and goodness is infinite. We suspect that he will not perform the part of a father and righteous governor to us, and therefore we dare not trust ourselves with his providence, but we must know beforehand how the event will be cast.

2. Some things are above our particular capacity, and measure of our apprehension, and the limits of our vocation. The apostle biddeth us: Rom. xii. 3, to 'be wise to sobriety, as God hath dealt to every one the measure of faith.' But men forget their ignorance, shallowness, and incapacity, and, though never so empty, take upon them to judge of all controversies in religion, as if they were the most knowing. Therefore the scripture layeth in so much caution against this; as, 'Lean not to thine own understanding;' and again, 'Be not wise in thine own eyes;' and Isa. v. 21, 'Woe to them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight;' Prov. xxvi. 12, 'Seest thou a man wise in his own eyes, there is more hope of a fool than of him;' Prov. xxvi. 5, 'Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.' And in many other places; that we might consider what a vanity it is to be meddling in things above our reach and measure of understanding. Many will run before they can go; mind controversies before they have well digested the necessary saving and practical truths. The weak must govern all, and model churches, when the Lord knoweth they are unskilful in self-government and the vitals of christianity. Who were most forward in the divisions of Corinth but the weak christians, who had need of milk, and not of strong meat, as the apostle sheweth, 1 Cor. iii. 1-3. Certainly there is a certain order of truths, and that one presupposeth another; and the knowledge of the lower truths is required before we can attend to the higher. And till their understandings be prepared by a sound practical knowledge of the ordinary truths, they cannot well understand the higher. But it is a wonder to see the pride and arrogancy of some ignorant men, who will confidently pass a censure on things they understand not, as if they were as thoroughly acquainted with them as the best, and scornfully call that an error which is the precious truth of Christ. These would go to the top of the stairs without ascending by the lower steps; or like hasty children, that will undertake to read before they can spell; and will determine great points when they have neglected the necessary truths which make way for the knowledge of them.

Secondly, I shall prove that this intermeddling with things too high for us is pride. I shall prove it by these steps—

1. It is certainly a great disease incident to mankind to contemn things easy, and to busy themselves about things hidden, difficult, and forbidden. Needless speculations and curiosities are a sort of knowledge that bringeth more pain than pleasure. This is a disorder and a disease; partly because reason will tell us that things necessary should



be preferred before arbitrary, and therefore things necessary to practice should be preferred before abstruse things and unprofitable. Partly because the most obvious truths are most necessary and most useful ; as the Lord, in great goodness, hath made the most useful and necessary things the most common. Those things without which we cannot live are obvious, but jewels, pearls, and gold are hard to come by ; we go for them to far countries, dig deep for them ; but bread and food is at hand, and brought home to our doors. So in the business of religion ; those points which are absolutely necessary to salvation are obvious to every man's understanding, and are in every man's mouth ; intricate disputes lie more off, and are not everywhere found. The truths we live by, as the creation, fall and redemption by Christ, the necessity of holiness, the hopes of eternal life, are plain and clear ; but yet these are least considered, believed, or improved. We learn them by rote, but seldom consider of their truth, weight, and consequence. These are too common and familiar to be regarded by us. We desire unvulgar notions, abstruse speculations. Partly because the mind is so weak, and time so short, that we cannot attend to everything. Surely in all reason we should attend upon the most weighty things ; there is no loss in being ignorant of other things ; and therefore, when we have so little time that it scarce sufficeth for the main things of our salvation, to spend this either upon impossible or unlawful knowledge is a great fault. Surely if men were better husbands of their time, what progress might they make ! Their faith would not be so weak, nor their love of God so cold, nor such defects in every grace. Well, then, though diligence in inquiring after the truth be laudable, yet if be it polluted with the sin of curiosity, it is a fault and a great disorder.

2. It is that disorder which is called pride.

[1.] Its entrance into the world sheweth it ; for this is one of the things our first parents aspired unto. The fruit of the forbidden tree was good for knowledge, Gen. iii. 6. Man would know good and evil for himself, and be a god to himself, and would see all things in their own evidence, rather than upon divine revelation ; he would know, and not believe. This is a bone that sticketh in many a throat, which he cannot digest and swallow ; that there should be a sovereign lord, to dispose of him at his pleasure, and teach him, and provide for him. Certain it is that searching into things not revealed must of necessity be joined with some unthankfulness for things that are revealed ; as if man by his own wit could find out more curious things, and more worthy our knowledge, than God was pleased to teach him. This was our first parents' sin, and this is nothing else but rank pride.

[2.] The formal nature sheweth it ; for the two branches of pride are in it—self-conceit and vainglory.

(1.) Self-conceit. It argueth too great a conceit of ourselves : Rom. xii. 16, ' Mind not high things : be not wise in your own conceits.'

(2.) For vainglory. We would set off ourselves as knowing more than others. We all affect the reputation of wisdom : Job xi. 12, ' Vain man would be counted wise, though he be born like the wild ass's colt.' Man is empty, but conceited of his perfection ; will own a wickedness in morals rather than a weakness in intellectuals. Though we have not the reality of wisdom, yet we affect the reputation of wis-

dom. The pharisees took it tenderly to be accounted blind : 'Are we blind also ?' John ix. 40.

[3.] It is a mischievous sort of pride.

(1.) It weakeneth our faith and belief of the mysteries of the gospel. There can be no sound believing till our proud imaginations and reasonings be captivated to the knowledge of God and obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5. The corrupt nature of man is more prone to question the truth of God's word than to see and confess its own ignorance and incapacity. I say, men will suspect the scriptures rather than their own wit, and will still be reasoning, How can this be ? and, How can that be ?

(2.) It destroyeth our submission to God, and dependence upon his providence, when we are so foolishly conceited as to take upon us to judge of his works, and to reflect upon his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power ; and we must prescribe to God, and model his dispensations, and censure them when they are not according to our mind. No ; God will be known to be sovereign ; all the creature's enjoyments are in his hand, to be disposed of according to his pleasure : Job ix. 10, 'He taketh away, and none can stay his hand, and say unto him, What doest thou ?' He is sovereign lord and proprietor. We are forced passively to submit, because we cannot help it ; but we must actively submit. We must not quarrel and censure that which we cannot comprehend. God, having absolute dominion and sovereignty, is unaccountable to any : Job xxxiii. 13, 'Why dost thou strive with thy Maker, since he giveth no account of his matters ?' Before what tribunal will you cite him to answer ? before the bar of your corrupted reason ? God will not tie himself to those rules which men prescribe to him. You take too much upon you, exercise yourselves in matters too high for you, when you will judge of his providence.

(3.) It divideth the church by vain jangling about unnecessary things, and turneth all religion into a way of dispute ; for this pride and presuming above our measure is that which breedeth contention. When the weak will guide all, and they will sit judges in matters of religion, and mould churches, even those who are scarce gotten into any sense of the first principles or knowledge in the way of God ; when men presume beyond their skill, and confidently determine ; hence come offences, grieving their guides, censuring their fellow-brethren, scandalising the world. O brethren ! how much doth it deserve to be written over the doors of every place you meet, 'Be not wise in your own conceit.' Much of the devil's work is done in the world by raw heady professors, who, having weak understandings and strong passions, will take upon them to rule all, till they undo all by their turbulency. And here is the mischief ; the nature of this ignorance is to be ignorant of itself ; as he that never saw the light knoweth not what it is. There is a good deal of knowledge necessary to make men know their ignorance ; and therefore there is no way but to check the presumption as much as we can.

(4.) It hindereth serious godliness by an unprofitable misspence of time, and a needless distracting our thoughts, and a neglect of searching into things more necessary and useful for ourselves and others. The apostle telleth us, that 'he that doteth about questions is proud,



and neglecteth the doctrine which is according to godliness,' 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4.

*Use 1.* To press you to take heed of this sort of pride ; not pressing into God's secrets, or going beyond our bounds, and the limits of our gifts and calling, or censuring his word and works.

1. Consider that it is the honour of God to hide a thing, that he may the more humble us. There are some truths in his word we know not the reasons of them ; we must accept them upon his revelation. We will allow parents to conceal the reasons and ends of many precepts from their children ; and princes have their *arcana imperii*, their mysteries of state. And why must you not allow this to God ? Prov. xxv. 2, 'It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.' Especially in his providence. There is a veil upon his proceedings : 'What I do thou knowest not now ; but hereafter thou shalt know,' saith Christ to Peter, John xiii. 7. God's name is written both upon his word and works, and therefore they have somewhat in them that is incomprehensible.

2. Many times the inconspicuousness of the reasons of providence is not from the object, but a defect in the faculty. Blind men think the sun is put out, when the web is upon their own eyes. Shall we presumptuously censure the word and works of God who are blind and hasty ? Sometimes blinded by our passions and carnal prejudices ; our judgment is perverted by an indulgence to sense and carnal affections ; and while we examine God's providence by sense, we mistake it. Sometimes there may be order where we think is confusion, and beauty where we see nothing but rudeness, and love where we interpret hatred ; when Christ died, when Joseph was sent to prison, &c. The first lines in a picture or statue have no beauty in them. Suspend your judgment till the work be brought to an end : 'Judge nothing before the time,' 1 Cor. iv. 5.

3. What a monstrous arrogancy it is in us to sit as judges of God's word and works, and presumptuously to pass censures upon them ! This will appear if we consider either our baseness or the majesty of God.

[1.] Our baseness. We are but a handful of enlivened dust, poor worms that but lately started out of nothing, and shall soon be turned into dust again ; and shall we take upon us, and have such an opinion, that we should know the secrets of the king of kings, and must have an account of all his dealings ? As if every rustic should press into the cabinet of princes, and demand an account of all things they do in the administration of the kingdom. Will the eternal God bear it, that poor worms should inquire into all his secrets ?

[2.] The majesty of God. It is a despising of his majesty, and a strange pride, to call our Maker to an account, and know of him the reason of all his works, or else we will not be satisfied. Can we dispute with God, or comprehend the counsels of God ? 'His judgments are a great deep,' Ps. xxxvi. 16, 'And his ways past finding out,' Rom. xi. 33. Not according to our laws, but his own infinite wisdom. A cockleshell may as well contain the ocean as we fathom all the depths of God.

*Use 2.* In point of practice. We should not affect great things

in the world, or be unsatisfied with that degree and state of life wherein God hath placed us, and so aspire after greater. Now this is a token of humility.

1. It is God's express direction : 1 Tim. vi. 8, 'Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content;' and Heb. xiii. 5, 'Be content with such things as ye have.' There is a contentment in opposition to covetousness, and a contentment in opposition to pride. They both agree in this, that, have we more or have we less, if it be but bare food and raiment that we may live, and so live as that we have time to serve God, and seek his kingdom, and the salvation of our souls, we should be content. That is, in opposition to covetousness, we should not distract ourselves with distrustful cares and covetous desires, but with a quiet mind rely upon God's precious promises and merciful providence for support and necessities. But then there is a contentment in opposition to pride, when we do not repine and murmur against God, but are content to be at his finding; accounting a little is enough by the way, and so we get heaven at last. It is no great matter how much or how little we enjoy by the way. If our condition be mean, we disdain it not; if higher, we desire to improve it for God. This the apostle practised : Phil. iv. 11, 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.' To rest satisfied with our present condition, without repining against God.

2. That is the best condition wherein God hath placed us, though it be never so low and mean. Partly because of God's sovereignty. Men must not arrogate to themselves the disposal of their own estate, because we are receivers and not prescribers : Job ii. 10, 'Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?' He appointeth to every one his portion. Therefore it is not what will please us, but what will please him. All the good we have cometh from God, and he must be left to dispose of it as he will. Partly because God is infinitely wise and better knoweth what is fittest for us than we do for ourselves. He knoweth our infirmity better than we do ourselves, what our shoulders will bear, and what not. Partly because of his goodness and kindness. He is no less kind and loving, nay, much more than we are to ourselves, and will not fail to give us anything that may be truly good for us. It is a mighty point in our dependence upon God to hate thoughts of God; and as it is a great help and relief to the soul, so it is easy to prove from his love in Christ : Rom. viii. 32, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' From his gracious covenant : Ps. xxxiv. 10, 'They that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing;' and Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Therefore, upon the whole, let God choose our portion for us.

3. Those great matters which the world crieth up for such are but small things in comparison of those things which christians should be most busied about. There are two sorts of great things—either in reality or in appearance.

[1.] The great things in reality are God, and Christ, and the law of grace, the promises of the pardon of sin and eternal life : Hosea viii. 12,



'I have written to him the great things of my law.' There are great things indeed discovered in the law of God, as a great God, a precious Saviour, a sanctifying Spirit, the way of salvation, and salvation itself; these are great things indeed: 2 Peter i. 4, 'To us are given exceeding great and precious promises,' τὰ μέλιστα ἐπαγγέλματα. They contain spiritual and eternal riches, and dear-bought blessings. Now in these great matters should we exercise ourselves. It is a low and base spirit that doth not seek these spiritual and heavenly things. But these suit not with carnal sense, because they are only valued and esteemed by faith.

[2.] Great things in appearance. Those are worldly things which in reality are the smallest matters, 2 Cor. vi. 2; but the flesh counteth them great, because of the suitableness they carry to our fancies and appetites. Great affections make the things of the world seem great. They are only great in our own conceit: Prov. xviii. 11, 'The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.' We promise ourselves much happiness in the enjoyment of these things, therefore our hearts run after them; but a christian hath higher matters to mind.

4. These things, the more they are sought after, our desires are greatened with the enjoyment, and still we seek greater and greater things. Allow this disposition, and it will still carry us further; for the soul is never satisfied; Isa. v. 8, they are joining house to house, field to field; Eccles. v. 10, 'He that loveth abundance shall not be satisfied with increase.' The flesh is wise in its own matters; it aimeth at first only at those things which are within our grasp and reach; but then still it enlargeth itself, and would have more; and when that is obtained, we would fain be built a story higher in the world. In honour and greatness there is no end. Now it is better to stop at first, because, to be contented with what we have, and improve it to God's glory, argueth the highest and noblest spirit: 1 Tim. vi. 6, 'Godliness with contentment is great gain.' A christian life with a competent subsistence is the best wealth in the world.

5. The danger of seeking after these great things. There is danger in the pursuit, danger in the enjoyment. In the pursuit: If our hearts be set upon these things, it is ten to one but that we will step out of the way to obtain them; for as he that will be rich falleth into a snare, so doth he that will be great, 1 Tim. vi. 9. Aspiring minds will get their preferment at any cost. What poor things do the ambitious stoop to to attain their ends! Humour the lusts and uncertain minds of men, writhe themselves into all postures, yea, too often wriggle themselves out of all good conscience and neglect of God, and trample upon what is sacred; all must go down that they may rise. But when, with all this ado, they have gotten up, there is danger in the enjoyment. An higher condition is more slippery and obnoxious to ruin. Mountain tops are tempestuous habitations, where men still live in the storms of envy and jealousy. Mounting hath cost many dear in this world; the higher they are, the fall the greater. But we should not be too keenly set on that which may endanger our everlasting welfare. In this state of corruption, it is hard to be high and not lifted up; and we have no reason to be in love with our temptations. A strong head

will run round on the pinnacle of a steeple; it is better and safer to stand on the ground. When we enjoy great things here in the world, it is hard to please men, and we find them the greatest hindrances of pleasing God; yea, few find that pleasure which they expected to themselves.

Secondly, That this affecting great things argueth pride.

1. Because affecting greater things argueth discontent with our present estate. Now that is clearly the daughter of pride and self-love which maketh us think ourselves worthy of much more than we have. That we are discontented appeareth partly by our unthankfulness to God for what we have received, undervaluing those blessings we enjoy as far beneath us: Mal. i. 2, 'I have loved you, saith the Lord; yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?' And partly by our unquietness in our own hearts when our desires are not satisfied; as Ahab had not rest in himself when he could not get Naboth's vineyard, 1 Kings xxi. 3, 4. And partly also by our envy and discontent with our neighbours who possess that which we desire to enjoy, and are consequently looked upon by us with an evil eye, as standing in the way of that we aim at: Esther v. 13, 'All this availeth me nothing as long as I see Mordecai in the king's gate.'

2. The very affectation of great things is that dangerous and baneful sin of pride; because the scripture commendeth to us a mean condition as most safe: Mat. v. 3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.' The poor in spirit are those who are contented to be poor, if God will have it so; and those that have an heart suited to or reconcilable with a low condition, though they cannot flaunt it in the world as others do. So Prov. xvi. 19, 'Better it is to suffer with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.' Now our condition is to be valued by the judgment of God in his word rather than by our own carnal affections; partly because to keep much ado about our own greatness, and glory, and advancement, argueth a base temper of spirit: Prov. xxv. 27, 'For men to search their own glory is not glory.' Seeking, affecting these things, is a mark of indignity. Let us attract it by our deserving, not affect it by our ambition. It is the violet is found out by its own smell, though it be shrouded and covered by leaves; so should we be found out by our own worth. Where the matter is combustible, we need not blow so hard to keep in the fire. Such carking and caring for it argueth little worth. Partly because worldly honour or honour from men should be little valued by a christian, who is acquainted with a greater honour and glory that cometh from God: John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one from another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?' A christian should be contented to be approved and respected of God, who hath made him his child and servant, and given him his favour and image. That should be our great ambition: 2 Cor. v. 9, 'We labour that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him,' *φιλοτιμούμεσθα*. The faith and belief of this cannot consist with the dominion of ambition or affectation of worldly glory. To hunt after respect from men, and receive it with lustful delight, or to rest in it as the chief scope of our actions, sheweth that our faith is not sound. In being servants, or sons, or friends to God,



is such an honour of estate and privilege that all other honour should become vile in our eyes. They that attend upon God and depend upon him have a sweeter life than they that wait upon princes; all the honours of the world are but as a dream and child's game to the real glory. You are courtiers and family servants of the infinite sovereign of heaven and earth, and your heart is employed in loving him, your tongue in praising him, your life in serving him, and at length you shall enjoy him. Now if this be valued according to its worth, you will be so contented with this that the love of honour from men will be much weakened and deadened in you, so that you will not much regard how you are looked on by the world if you may have the approbation of God. Partly because if this affecting and seeking of great things in the world be allowed, affected, and indulged, you can never keep a good conscience, nor be thoroughly faithful to Christ. Men are under a temptation to unconscionable dealing, that they may purchase that by any means without which we think not ourselves supplied according to our worth; for ambition is like a whirlwind, that teareth all things in our way; and for favour and preferment men will break through all restraints of honesty and conscience; and Christ, and the gospel, and owning the truth, will be trampled upon to make up a step for their rising; when called to undergo an ignominious cross, or to practise those duties which are of no respect in the world; as John xii. 43, 'They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.' On the contrary, where this disposition is checked or mortified, Acts v. 41, 'They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.'

3. I have one reason more; because our Lord appeared in an humble garb to teach us to slight the pomp and glory of the world: Mat. xx. 28, 'He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.' Divines give this as a reason why Christ came in a poor condition, because if he had preached up heavenly-mindedness, self-denial, and mortification, and had himself lived in pomp and fulness, the people would not have regarded his words, as contrary to his practice. And doth not the same reason hold good of his followers? We profess heavenly-mindedness, mortification, and self-denial; and if we should affect and seek great things for ourselves here in the world, is there not a manifest contradiction between our profession and our practice? Therefore, out of all, we should be contented with a mean and low estate, and have a heart suited to it; which we can never have unless this natural affection to greatness be mortified; that is to say, unless we would concur that the suspicion of pride, dignity, and honour in the world should be less desired, more feared, and more cautiously used; and if any step before us, we should see very small cause to envy them.

*Use.* To press us to take heed of this seeking great things. Let us approve our present estate as every way best and fittest for us and God's honour and glory; limiting our desires, that we wish it not to be otherwise than it is; yea, bringing our affections to delight in it, as that which God hath laid out for us. And then, let me tell you, you have gotten a very great conquest; you have mortified the proud spirit, which is a notable point of grace.

To help you, take these considerations—

1. Whatever we enjoy is more than we have a title to by nature: Job i. 21, 'Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I return;' and 1 Tim. vi. 7, 'We brought nothing with us into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.' We came into the world contented with a cradle, and we must go out contented with a grave. This life is nothing but a coming into the world and a going out again; if, between both, God keep us low and bare, we want nothing that we can claim by original right. And within a short time we shall be stripped of all, though we had never so much. Death levels all, and maketh them equal.

2. We are unworthy of what we enjoy, and have it merely out of favour and free grace: Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant.' And if we be not worthy of what we have, should we murmur because we have no more? Surely then we think more is due to us; for it is a certain truth that whosoever do prescribe to God at what rate they will be maintained, do ascribe too much to themselves, and complain because men of their deserts are neglected in the world.

3. What we have we have no ability to manage as we ought, nor can we give an account of it if God should deal strictly with us. All talents must be accounted for: Luke xxi. 19, 'After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them.' And according to the greatness of our talents our account will be greater: Luke xii. 48, 'To whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. And to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.' You have talents enough to answer for. He that cannot bear a less burden, how will he bear a greater?

4. That maxim of our Lord striketh at the root of worldly affection: Luke xii. 15, 'Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' Superfluity of wealth is not able to prolong life, or to make it more happy and comfortable to us. You can enjoy no more than you need and use, and you enjoy that by God's blessing; and therefore, without so much ado, man may live comfortably.

5. The opposite maxim, Ps. xxxvii. 16, 'A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.' Usually there is an emptiness and want of satisfaction in wealth that is ill-gotten. They have it, but it doeth them no good. They have neither the temporal nor the spiritual use, for the glory of God and the benefit of others; and within a while there is a visible curse and blast that attendeth it. The meanest pittance, well acquired and holily improved, is more contentedly enjoyed, and doth more good, than all those riches.

6. Remember the ends of this life, and wherefore it was given us; to glorify God and save our souls. Mind this thoroughly, and it will check aspiring projects.

[1.] To glorify God. You were not made for your own glory, but for his. Now God may be glorified though you be not exalted. It is more for our glory to shine in a glorious orb and sphere, but oftentimes not for God's. The mean glorify him as well as the honourable, and sometimes much more; the afflicted as well as the prosperous. He requireth no more of you than to finish the work he hath given you to do, John xvii. 4; and that may be in any state of life.



[2.] This life was given us to seek a better ; and let the seeking of heavenly glory be your work and scope, and you will have a double advantage.

(1.) Worldly glory will be darkened and lessened in your eyes ; for what is greatness here to that glory we expect as coming from God ? Mat. xvi. 27.

(2.) You are entitled to God's protection and provision. Earth necessities are given us to preserve this life. All, besides food and raiment, is not necessary. Necessaries God will care for : 'He knoweth that we have need of these things,' Mat. vi. 32. They may comfortably expect it who first seek his kingdom ; he hath bound himself to give them these things, Mat. vi. 33.

#### SERMON IV.

*Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother ; my soul is even as a weaned child.*—Ps. cxxx. 2.

It is not enough to avoid pride, but we must study to excel in humility. The rooting out of sin is never thoroughly done till the heart be planted with the contrary grace. Of many it may be said that they are rather not vicious than virtuous. We may say of a sensual man that he is not proud, but we cannot say that he is humble.

In the former verse, he had told us of his avoiding pride ; now he telleth us of his endeavours after humility. There, 'My heart is not haughty ;' Here, 'My soul is even as a weaned child.' He declareth his humility by his quiet submission to God's providence.

This is here represented—

1. By a vehement asseveration, 'Verily.'
2. By a sincere endeavour, 'I have behaved and quieted myself.'
3. By an apt comparison, taken from a child that is 'weaned of his mother.'

And it is doubled and repeated for the greater emphasis, 'My soul,' &c.

I. Here is a vehement asseveration, 'Surely.' He is the more earnest in it, to remove the suspicion of ambition, which some were apt to impute to him, as if he sought to wrest the kingdom from Saul. Therefore he prefixeth this 'Surely' to show the truth of what he spoke. In the original it runneth in the form of an oath ; Septuagint, *εἰ μὴ*. Such a form of speech as you have Ps. xcv. 11, 'To whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.' Heb. marg., 'If they enter into my rest.' Half the speech is expressed, *verba mali ominis suppressenda sunt*, to teach us we should not use our mouths to imprecations ; therefore that part is not mentioned. There is a horrible boldness in some men, who are ever and anon wishing great plagues and curses and damnation unto themselves, and interlarding their speech with these imprecations, as if it were a glory or a

sport to them; whereas holy men upon weighty occasions suppress words of cursing or of a direful sound. Yet sometimes, in weighty cases, the imprecation may be expressed; as Ps. vii. 3-5, 'O Lord my God, if I have done this, if there be iniquity in my hands, if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; let the enemy persecute my soul and take it; let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust.' So here, 'If I have not behaved and quieted my soul as a child, that is weaned of his mother,' then let me be accounted as a liar, or suffer as a proud person; or let me miss of my hope, *disperream*, or the like. But the imprecative part is concealed, as in many like cases. Well, then, the quiet submission of God's children to providence is sometimes so great that it seemeth incredible to the world, and needeth sometimes to be confirmed with an oath.

II. His sincere endeavour. The submission he attained unto was not pretended, but seriously endeavoured; 'I have behaved, I have quieted myself.' He laboured to suppress all ambitious motions, that he might compose his mind to a modest submission to God.

Here observe four things—

1. That in the best heart there may be some rebellious motions and inclinations rising up against the sovereign government and providence of God. The best heart is but a kingdom divided. In the heart of the renewed there is flesh and Spirit, Gal. v. 17, as two irreconcilable enemies. There are motions and inclinations of the Spirit agreeable to the law of God; and there are motions, inclinations, and lusts of the flesh rebelling against God and making trouble in the heart. This strife is not ended but with life. We must always stand upon our guard and quiet ourselves. The soul may be sometimes under some undue commotion, either by our lusts or passions; when we are exercised with adversity, or injuries, or sickness, our passions may raise a storm, but we must bridle our impatience. Nay, sometimes there will arise in us desires of a higher condition; you have a will to something or other which God seeth not fit for you; you must bridle your ambition. Sometimes the tempest may be so violent that it is not easily calmed. It is said of the wicked that they are like a troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, Isa. lvii. 20. There is a dead sea, the senseless; a stormy sea, the discontented wicked; the calm sea, the godly, that may be stirred by the force of winds.

2. That we must quiet and compose these stirrings, as David endeavoured to still his soul, and suppress all those inordinate motions and desires wherewith ambitious men disquiet themselves. He was naturally inclined to these as well as others, his heart apt to be dis-tempered with them; but he would not give way to them, but endeavoured to bridle them by the government of reason. Thus must we fit and order our spirits or quiet our souls.

3. Though the power of making the means effectual be not in us, but in the Lord's hands, yet we must use the means rationally still, whereby God useth to convey this power. We must check ourselves, stir up the grace of God in ourselves, call ourselves to an account, put conscience to answer for the disorder of our affections. Can we give a reason? Ps. xlii. 5, 11, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul,' &c.



Jonah iv. 4, 'Dost thou well to be angry?' Thus we must cite ourselves, plead with ourselves, 'I quieted myself.'

4. The freer from ambitious thoughts and distrustful cares, the more quiet we are. It is our lusts that breed our disturbances and troubles. A restless spirit is the fruit of our distrustful fears and anxious cares, or of our ambitious and worldly desires: Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2, 'It is in vain to rise early, to go to bed late, to eat the bread of carefulness. For he giveth his beloved sleep.' Take either the general or limited sense; our duty is our quiet, and our sin our trouble. The Lord hath forbidden our distracting cares and fears and doubts, and hath made it unlawful to be miserable; and vexation is our sin before it is our trouble.

III. It is represented by an apt comparison, or by the similitude of an infant newly weaned, which being the lively emblem of a contented spirit, is repeated twice, that we may observe it the more. The weaned infant challengeth nothing, expecteth nothing, but what the mother will give it. The similitude implieth the greatest obedience, dependence, self-denial, and resignation that possibly can be. I am tender of similitudes, but in this I shall a little expatiate, for these reasons—

1. Because our Lord Christ did not only make use of this similitude, but actually taketh a child, and setteth him in the midst of his disciples, when they were contending for pre-eminence and superiority, as a visible emblem and representation whereby to confute their pride: Mat. xviii. 1-4, 'At the same time came the disciples, saying, Who is greatest in the kingdom of God? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' This is warrant enough to take occasion from little children to preach to you of humility; for if our Lord Christ would use this method, who are we that we should oppose ourselves to his wisdom, and think it lost time a little to insist upon it?

2. Because we may learn many things from children; for though they have the seeds of pride in their natures, yet they are not acquainted with the acts of it; they know not the greatness and glory of the world as a thing above them. But a christian should slight the things of the world as things beneath him, and therein put himself into the posture of a child, though not upon the same reason; they are above the child and below the christian. See also, 1 Cor. xiv. 20, 'Brethren, be not children in understanding, but in malice be ye children, howbeit, in understanding be ye men.' Children envy not the princes and lords of the world, but are as contented with their lower matters as kings and emperors are with their crowns. They do not contrive to undermine others, and to get above them in their worldly dignities; nor to malice others, and blast the name of others, to magnify their own. They know no distinction between lords and beggars; can as well play with the children of one as the other.

3. It is a notable emblem to represent the condition of the wisest and highest of mortal men. The wisest, such as were Christ's disciples, trained up in his own company; yet an infant is produced to shame

them, and show them their weakness, whose minds were busied about sharing the honours of the mediatorial kingdom. Christ tells them he that was most like a child was greatest in the kingdom of God; he that was most humble in his own eyes had most of the gospel privileges. So the highest of mortal men are but as a feeble infant before God, that wholly hangeth on the mother. It is no disgrace to the greatest potentate to carry it humbly to God. David here saith his soul was as a weaned child. When he was to fight with his and God's enemies, who more like a lion than David? But when his business lieth with God, he was as a weaned child. All are beggars before God, king and peasant, base and noble. We have nothing but what he is pleased to give us and continue to us; and we need daily pardon and daily supplies, the meanest as well as the greatest.

4. To obviate our usual replies, when we are reprov'd for pride or passion: I am not such a child, to put up with this injury; and they shall know they have not to do with a child. But yet we are put ourselves into the posture of a weaned child if obedient to God.

Now let us open the similitude, and show wherein it holdeth good. David behaved himself, and quieted himself—(1.) As a child; (2.) As a weaned child.

1. As a child. A child is not troubled with ambitious thoughts: Mat. xviii. 3, 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children,' &c. A little child knoweth not what striving for state meaneth. The inclinations and desires of carnal ambition are very contrary to the christian temper, namely, seeking after dominions, dignities, and honours. So Christ would confute his disciples' pride; as if he had said, You strive for worldly greatness and pre-eminence in my kingdom; but my kingdom is a kingdom of babes, and containeth none but the humble, and such as are little in their own eyes, and are contented to be small and despised in the eyes of others, and to look not after great matters in the world. Thus would Christ take them off from the vain ambition and pursuit of esteem and worldly honour, and the expectations of a carnal kingdom. And is it not necessary still that we should become as little children? A great part of the work of grace is to take down our pride, and make us little in our own eyes. We should all prove ourselves to be children of God by the lowliness of our hearts and sobriety of our carriage, and submission to all God's dispensations, and desire no higher condition than God would bring us into by the fair invitation of his providence. We must put ourselves into the posture of a feeble impotent child, without ambition, without covetousness, looking wholly to be directed, supported, and enabled by God.

2. Why as a weaned child.

[1.] A weaned child is taken off from the breast and its natural food; so when the Lord is pleased to withhold from us what we expected, and to keep us in a low and afflicted condition, we must patiently submit to God's will and pleasure, and be contented to be what God will have us to be. Oh, how well were it for us if we were weaned from the world's breasts! Certainly then temptations would be plucked up by the roots. How easily should we please God, and press on to everlasting glory, worldly and fleshly lusts mortified! By some bitterness or other the weaned child is driven from the breast, and it useth it no more.



Oh, that a christian were as soon weaned from the world, and might grow dead to the honours, riches, and pleasures of it ! and could say with the apostle, 'I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me,' Gal. vi. 14. Few are taken off from the dug by the bitterest wormwood that can be laid upon it ; they are still sucking here, though they suck but wind ; and, after many disappointments, still return to the love of the world, as their natural milk. It is a prodigy for a child to keep sucking till thirteen or fourteen years ; we are as greedy at fifty or sixty years as we were before. The world by nature is sweet to us ; the bitterness of affliction doth not wean us from it ; and after all the warnings that we cannot love the Father if we love the world, 1 John ii. 15, yet we love the world still. In death it is made bitter to us, for then the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof ; then we cry out on the world, how it hath deceived us, and tempted this rebelling flesh to neglect God and higher duties. But then it is questionable whether we are weaned or driven from the dug. Surely it becometh us to be weaned sooner.

[2.] The weaned child can do nothing for itself, but is provided for by the care of another ; so should we look upon ourselves as a most feeble and impotent child, able to do nothing of ourselves ; but after we have weaned ourselves from our natural affections and desires, wholly be sensible of our necessities, emptiness, and weakness to shift for ourselves, leaving all to God : Ps. xl. 17, 'I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinketh upon me.' We may be despised of the world and contemned of the world, but that doth not make us loathsome to God. Yea, the lower we are brought, the more is his care engaged for us. The empty, the destitute, who have not the dug to live upon, are devolved upon the Lord, that he may take care of them.

[3.] Though the weaned child have not what it would have, or what it naturally most desireth, the milk of the breast, yet it is contented with what the mother giveth ; it rests upon her love and provision. So are we to be content with what providence alloweth us : Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have ;' and Phil. iv. 11, 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.' Whatever pleaseth our heavenly Father should please us. The child that is put from the breast to an harder diet is yet contented at last. The children of princes know not what the swelling of pride, the honour of the world meaneth. The child doth not prescribe what it will eat, drink, or put on. They are in no care for enlarging possessions, heaping up riches, aspiring after dignities and honours, but meekly take what is provided for them.

[4.] The child, when he has lost the food which nature provideth for it, is not solicitous, but wholly referreth itself to the mother, hangeth upon the mother. So for everything whatsoever should we depend upon God, refer ourselves to God, and expect all things from him : Ps. lxxii. 5, 'My soul, wait thou upon God ; my expectation is from him.' With such a simplicity of submission should we rest and depend upon God. Let us take heed of being overwise and provident for ourselves, but trust our Father which is in heaven, and refer ourselves to his wise and holy government.

Thus you see here is a perfect emblem—

(1.) Of self-denial; for the child is weaned, taken off from what it most affects. So we must not look to be satisfied in our childish will and appetite; we must be weaned, and put from the breast to an harder diet.

(2.) Of humility, or a sense of our impotency and nothingness; for the child cannot shift for itself, so neither can we. We are weak and witless all of us, as are little children, and know not what is good for us, nor how to provide it, but are merely cast upon the care of another.

(3.) Contentedness and resignation to the will of God, who is our provider. The more impotent, the more entitled to God's care.

(4.) Of dependence and quiet recumbency on God in any state or condition whatsoever; for we must cast the whole care of affairs upon him. Oh, happy we if we could thus be children!

But now let us come to the doctrine.

*Doct.* That an absolute resignation of ourselves to the will of God doth well become an humble and a trusting soul.

I shall show—(1.) What this resignation is; (2.) Why it argueth both humility and trust.

First, What is this resignation of ourselves to the will of God? I shall show you—(1.) The nature; (2.) The grounds; (3.) The opposites of it.

1. The nature. It is a plenary submission of our will to the will of God for all events that concern us and ours.

This resignation hath too branches—

[1.] An indifferency of mind with respect to future events, leaving them to be disposed according to the will and wisdom of God, for his own glory and our good. This you will find often commended to us in scripture by the practice of the saints and of our Lord Christ: John xii. 27, 28, 'Now is my soul troubled, what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I to this hour. Father glorify thy name.' We learn of Christ that, when we are in great perplexity, and know not the event, we should absolutely submit it to his will, with a respect to his glory; that God will determine and cast the matter so as may be most for his glory and for our good. For Christ consulted not with his own ease, but God's glory; as he respected not the innocent inclination of his human nature, but the glory of his Father. So should we be content that God be advanced, though it be with our loss and bitter cost; as natural things will act against their particular inclination for a general good; fire will descend, water ascend, to avoid a vacuity, and to preserve a continuity in nature. Another instance of such a resignation is in David: 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26, 'Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation. But if he say, I have no delight in thee; let him do unto me as seemeth good unto him.' He sweetly and meekly submitteth to God's pleasure, wholly denying himself and his own will, and resigneth up his person, crown, and estate, as it shall seem good in his eyes. So in the three children: Daniel iii. 17, 18, 'Our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. But if not, &c. So Esther, when she referred the case to God: 'If I perish, I perish,' chap. iv. 16.

[2.] A contentation in every condition wherein God sets us. Though



it be not so pleasing to us, yet it is that which God appoints. Be we rich or be we poor, solitary or full of company, friends, and relations: Phil. iv. 12, 'I have learned to be abased, and abound; to be full and to be hungry,' &c. They never quarrel with God's government, but take their lot as they find it, and their way to heaven as they find it, be it fair or foul, smooth or rugged.

2. The grounds of this resignation. They are the three grand attributes, the wisdom, power, and goodness of God.

[1.] God is infinitely wise, and knoweth what is best for us: Isa. xxx. 18, 'The Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they which wait for him.' All his dealings with his children are full of wisdom, and therefore he is to choose our condition, and not we ourselves. We would choose riches when God knoweth poverty is best for us, to keep us holy and humble. We would undo ourselves if we had our own will, if God did not often deny us that which we have a mind to; as a man in a fever would have cold water, which pleaseth in the drinking, but afterwards proveth his death; or as a child would soon undo himself if you did let him have his will.

[2.] God is omnipotent, and able to do what he pleaseth. None can stay his hand or stop his work; so that, whether we will or no, all our affairs are at God's disposal: Job ix. 12, 'Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him, and say, What doest thou?' The first reason of our submission is his mere sovereignty, till he giveth some further account of his dealings. We are as clay in the hands of the potter, and God maketh us vessels of honour and dishonour at his own pleasure.

[3.] He is incomprehensibly good and gracious to his children, that love him, and fear him, and will convert all that befall them to their everlasting good: Cant. iv. 16, 'Awake, O north wind, and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out: let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.' Out of what corner soever the wind bloweth, it bloweth good to the saints.

3. The opposites of this resignation are these three—

[1.] An over-eager desire and vehement prosecution of any good that we want, or of anything that we would have or be in the world. When the heart runs out inordinately and impetuously, you do not accept and reserve the will of God; as Rachel: 'Give me children or else I die,' Gen. xxx. 1. Words of impatience, as the motions of lust, are rapid and vehement: James iv. 3, 'Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain. Ye fight, and war, and have not.' Nay, ye ask, and have not; for in their prayers they set God a task to provide meat for their lusts. Be not too eager to have what you love, for this is the way either to be denied or to have it with a curse. You are so passionate because you would not have the flesh want its contentment. But the rule is not, my will, but thine be done. Whatever thou wantest and desirest, leave it to God. A christian should be positive in nothing but his duty; there a fixed resolution becometh us. If God will deliver, well; if not, we will not complain.

[2.] Another thing that is contrary to this resignation is an obstinate cleaving or holding to any state or condition in the world, or any com-

fort of ours, be it never so amiable, sweet, or suitable to our desires. To bind up our souls with any creature maketh us unwilling to submit to God, and we are in danger to deny his sovereignty and authority over us. It is death to many to think of a change, or any divorce from that state in which they are. A christian should hold all his comforts at God's will and pleasure, as ready to resign them when God calleth for them. As David speaketh of carrying his life in his hands, so should we all worldly things, as ready to resign them, and reserving still a submission to God's pleasure. Otherwise we make a snare for ourselves, and the overvalued natural comfort is a door open to let in trouble to the soul, as our affection causeth our affliction, *sine dolore amisit, quia sine amore possedit*. He lost without grief, because he possessed without love, temperance, patience, 2 Peter i. 6; 1 Cor. vii. 30, 'They that weep, as though they wept not, and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not.'

[3.] The next opposite is distrustful fears and cares, or carking solicitude; as if we would be our own carvers, and would take God's work out of his hands; not daring to rely upon God's providence and promise, and take the event as he shall dispose it for us. No; you should refer yourselves to God, and attend how he will dispose of you and yours; for a christian is wholly guided by his will. This carking is—(1.) Needless; and (2.) Fruitless.

(1.) It is needless; for all events are in the hands of God, and are to be disposed of at his pleasure; and what need we trouble ourselves about what God will do for us? Ps. xxxvii. 5, 'Commit thy ways unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass;' Ps. lv. 22, 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee;' 1 Peter v. 7, 'Cast all thy care upon God, for he careth for thee.' We needlessly take a burden upon ourselves, of which God is willing to ease us. He hath a prospect of all future contingencies at once, which we have not, and is faithful to dispose of them for his own glory and your good.

(2.) It is fruitless: Mat. vi. 27, 'Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?' We cannot change the colour of an hair, make it white or black at our pleasure, much less make ourselves taller or shorter. We busy and vex ourselves with anxious thoughts, and what do we get by it? We cannot cure a disease in our bodies, nor prevent a breach upon our relations, nor the decay of our estates. When all is done, we must stand to God's allowance; for our beings and comforts depend upon him. Therefore it is best at first to go on cheerfully in our duty, referring all events to him.

[4.] The next opposite is repining or murmuring at God's dispensation, because it is not according to our minds and fancies; as if we were to sit judges of God's actions, and to like and dislike the disposals of his providence at our will and pleasure. These the apostle calleth 'murmurers, complainers,' Jude 16. We should not murmur, or repine at, or complain of, any dispensation of his; for God's will must govern the world, and not ours. He will not ask our consent what he shall do.

Now you see what this resignation is.

Secondly, That this argueth—(1.) Humility; and (2.) Trust.

1. Humility.



[1.] It is an act of submission to be contented to be at God's finding, especially in such a proud creature as man, who would be as a god to himself, providing for himself, both as to the avoiding of evil and obtaining of good : Gen. iii. 22, that smart irrision, 'Behold, man is become as one of us.' But the humble man is contented to be dealt with as the Lord pleaseth, and to submit himself to God's will and God's dispensation, waiting for the manifestation of his favours when and how he is pleased to dispense them. These are humbled under his mighty hand.

[2.] It cometh from an humble temper of spirit, like the disposition of a weaned child, who thinketh not great things of itself.

(1.) They are like the infant in this, that they have no high thoughts of themselves; for it is self-conceit that establisheth self-will. We think ourselves wiser and better than we are, that we deserve more, or can do more for ourselves. Otherwise we would stoop to God, and let him choose our inheritance for us. And if we refer it to God we would not prescribe to him; for that always argueth ascribing to ourselves. We take too much upon us when we wield our own fortune, without dependence upon God and submission to him. His choices are more fit for us than our own.

(2.) They that will stand to God's allowance do not seek great things for themselves. It may be that God may bestow great things upon them here in this world, as he did upon David and upon Abraham; but this was not their aim. When God's will goeth before ours for wealth, honour, riches, then we may take it sweetly out of the hands of his providence, and use it for his glory; but when we seek for our lusts, and peremptorily fix our carnal will, and would set God a task to comply with it, and find out provisions for it, it is the greatest pride imaginable. In setting yourselves and vaunting yourselves before others, you do but despise men; but in setting up your own will to be rich and great, you despise God. If you think to do it without God, you undertake a task too hard for you, and provoke him to disappoint you. If you think to do it by God, you make him to serve with your sins, and to maintain you in your lusts. Therefore it is best to keep still as a weaned child, to be content at the parent's finding; let God's will first interpose.

2. It argueth trust.

[1.] It is a special act of trust, and the only trust required as to temporal things, to go on with our duty, and refer the event to God. Submission before the event is faith; after the event, is patience. It argueth high and honourable thoughts of God when we can trust all in his hands, and refer all to his pleasure. Our Saviour, when he reproveth anxious cares, he showeth they proceed from unbelief: Mat. vi. 30, 'Shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' You have not honourable thoughts of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, when you cannot depend upon his conduct and government.

[2.] Resignation is built upon dependence, and dependence goeth upon two principles—his fatherly care over us, and the particularity of his providence.

(1.) That God is a father. As the weaned child is left to the mother's care, so are we to the power and care of a father. God, that

hath the wisdom of a father, hath the bowels and tenderness of a mother: Isa. xlix. 15, 'Can a woman forget her child, her sucking-child, her only child, the son of her womb? They may forget, but I will not forget you, saith the Lord.' Fix but this one principle, that God is a father and loveth his children, and then you may easily depend upon him, and refer yourselves to him; for the ground of this trust is founded in his fatherly relation and the love of God, and the comfort of it in the sense of our adoption: Mat. vi. 32, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.' Christians should acquiesce in his love and care. Children of the family, whether infants or more grown, never take care for their food and maintenance, but naturally expect it from their parents. God's fatherly love will not suffer him to neglect his children, nor any of their concernments; therefore the people of God, in all estates, do or may cheerfully refer themselves to him. They that believe God's fatherly providence may easily be persuaded that he will provide for them, and order all things for their good.

(2.) That particularity of God's providence which reacheth to all things, especially to those who have a care of his glory and seek his kingdom. Justin Martyr telleth us that it is the opinion of some philosophers that God hath a care of the universe, but not of the kinds and species of all things, much less of the individuals, that is, of me or thee. If this were true, we were left to our own providence. This would destroy all prayer and praise, love and trust. No; all things are subject to his providence. He 'upholdeth all things by the word of his power,' Heb. i. 3. All things are subject to his providence, and supported by the same word by which they were first created. He holdeth all things in his almighty grasp: Job vi. 9, 'That he would let loose his hand, and cut me off.' God could easily do it; all creatures are at his finding: Mat. x. 29, 'A sparrow shall not fall to the ground, without your heavenly Father.' The least of the creatures doth not die casually; they cannot kill a sparrow more than God's providence seeth fit to permit and order. Now we may reason, as the apostle doth, 'Doth God take care of sparrows and of oxen?' 1 Cor. ix. 9. 'Ye are of more value than many sparrows;' much more believers in Christ. The hairs of your head are numbered, Mat. x. 30, 31. God hath the knowledge, and care, and overruling of all the least things that belong to you or shall befall you. They are the kernel of mankind, the first-fruits of his creatures, for whose sake the world is continued, and without whom it would be soon brought to an end. In a family, children are much more cared for than dogs and swine: 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'Especially of them that believe.' The Lord's portion is his people. God careth for them in a peculiar manner; heareth their prayers, how despicable soever they are in the world: Ps. xxxiv. 6, 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.' He careth for all things wherein they are concerned: Job i. 10, 'Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about all that he hath on every side?' Providence doth so guard them, and everything that is theirs, that without God's permission Satan cannot touch them. He observeth their tears and telleth their wanderings: Ps. lvi. 8, 'Thou tellest all my wanderings, put thou my tears in thy bottle; are they not in thy



book?' Now this is a mighty relief to faith. Can we be backward to trust him who hath such a particular care over us, our persons, name, and estate?

*Use.* Of exhortation, to persuade us to this resignation of our wills to the will of God, and to put ourselves into the posture of weaned infants; that is, with composedness of mind to wait for the issues of God's providence.

1. It is difficult to bring the heart to such an equanimity. Corruptions will arise; we shall find distrusts when mercies fail; and it is hard to persuade men against present sense that it is good to be poor, and sick, and imprisoned, and afflicted. A sanctified heart findeth it at last: Ps. cxix. 71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.' But sense will not easily subscribe to it, that poverty is good, that we may not be proud; diseases good, that we may learn patience; troubles good, that we may have oftener recourse to God; frowns of the world good, that we may have more familiarity with God; that breaches made upon relations are good, that we may more entirely and more in good earnest seek our comfort and happiness in God; that everything is good that leadeth to the best good; that if thou hadst not lost an estate thou mightest have lost thy soul; if God had not taken away thy health, thy wealth, these might have taken thee away from God; that if he doth not add to thy estate, yet he diminisheth thy lusts. Surely to those that have chosen God for their portion, and do measure all things by their chief good and supreme happiness, it should not be so grievous. You must labour to get your hearts into this frame.

2. But in the issue it will be comfortable. Yea, for the present it breedeth a quiet frame of spirit to refer all things to God: Prov. xvi. 3, 'Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established;' Phil. iv. 6, 7, 'Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' This is the wisest way to an holy security and sound settlement of soul. Never is the heart at rest till it can refer itself to God for all events; as Noah's dove had not whereon to rest the sole of her foot till she returned to the ark: Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' It is perfect trust that breedeth perfect peace; it easeth you of many tempestuous and unquiet thoughts. Others are always distracted with anxious and dubious thoughts about future events; they do *μετεωρίζεσθε*: Luke xii. 29, 'Neither be of doubtful mind.' Margin, 'Live not in careful suspense.' It is a blessed frame of spirit to have thoughts established.

*Means.*

1. See you be weaned. There is no talking of referring all things to God while worldly affections reign in us. Trust is for the mortified soul: Heb. xiii. 5, 6, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what men shall do unto me.' There is no room or work for faith till the heart be purged from ambition and covetousness. If your chief care be for heavenly things,

you will be sooner contented with a moderate supply of earthly things, and will find trust more easy, Mat. vi. 33. That is our Lord's cure, 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' Carnal affections unbroken are vehement, and must have satisfaction, and you cannot quiet and still your souls in the want of it. Surely you cannot expect God's providence should serve your lusts.

2. When you have abated the desire of worldly things, remember you have a father. The weanling is not left shiftless though he be taken from the dug; he hath a mother. So have you a father in heaven, to whom you may repair in all straits: 'Doubtless thou art our Father,' Isa. lxiii. 16; and Ps. ciii. 13, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity those that fear him.' Surely if God stand in this relation to us he will pity us, and do the part of a father to us; for none is so fatherly as God; there is not only an *as*, but a *much more* in the case: Luke xi. 13, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' What may we not promise ourselves from a father's bowels?

3. You must trust all events in his hands, without anxiety and solicitude, upon two grounds; for,

[1.] He can do what he pleaseth, and will do what is for the best. Nothing can be done amiss which is done by God; for infinite wisdom, power, and goodness cannot err. As for God, his work is perfect, Deut. xxxii. 4. Some things may fall out cross to our opinions and desires, but God maketh not our desires the measure of his dispensations, nor will he govern the world according to our opinion. Most persons in the world would have nothing but wealth and health, and love and respect from men; but it is wisdom, not our partial conceits, which must judge what is necessary for us. And therefore many things fall out which restrain our lusts and pleasure; but because God doeth it, it is good, it is best for us. God knoweth what is good for us, better than we do ourselves; and his divine choices are to be preferred before our foolish fancies. If you were once thoroughly persuaded of this, you would be fitted, not only for a patient, but a cheerful entertainment of all that is or can come upon you. It is expedient sometimes that God should displease his people for their advantage. The shepherd must choose the pastures for the sheep, whether bare or full-grown. The child is not to be governed by his own fancy, but the father's discretion; nor the sick man by his appetite, but the physician's skill: John xvi. 6, 7, 'It is expedient for you that I go away.' Christ's dealing is very expedient and useful, when it is very unsatisfactory to us. We are short-sighted, distempered with passions; our requests many times are but raving; we ask we know not what; would pray ourselves into a mischief and a snare. If it were good for us to have large revenues and means, we should not want them. Therefore out of love and perfect submission to God you should count that good whatever God doeth.

[2.] Whatever the event be, certainly he will not be wholly wanting to us, nor leave us utterly destitute: Heb. xiii. 5, 'For he hath said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you;' a negative gradation, where the



least is first denied. He will be so far from forsaking us, that he will not leave us: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear.' 'Two things are promised there—

(1.) The gentleness and wisdom of his conduct.

(2.) A comfortable issue. For the present, when our condition is at worst, if it be not comfortable, it will be tolerable; for the future, a way to escape; you are not cast into the deep ocean, where no banks nor bottom. As long as a man can look to the end of an evil, he is not quite discouraged; as a man in the waters hath hope as long as he can see banks. So that the afflictions are qualified, both as to the grievousness and as to the continuance, by the support and by the issue.

[4.] We must not resign ourselves to God in name and pretence, but in deed and reality; and when our resignation is tried, it must be verified for its constancy. The reality is tried by acknowledging God in all our ways, Prov. iii. 5, 6; and you must still fetch the rise and reason of your desires and resolutions from the will of God. We must know what is his will before we give way to any will of our own particularly. Many resign all to God, but it is with a secret hope God will never put them to trial. If God taketh anything from them, they are troubled. When Jonah's gourd was blasted, nothing would please him but death. Desires pettishly solicited and finally disappointed breed vexation. Any overvalued comfort will soon prove our trouble. Therefore we must sit loose from the creature: Jonah iv. 9, 'Dost thou well to be angry?' He requested for himself that he might die. A man that savoureth the things of the flesh will think himself undone when his pleasure, honour, and plenty is taken away. It is the overloving of worldly things which maketh us grieve for the loss and abatement of them. That love that maketh you eager when you are in expectation, to delight so immoderately when you are in possession, the same love maketh you mourn inordinately when you are in want and loss of these things. The loss will tear those hearts which stuck so inordinately to them.

## SERMON V.

*Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever.—*

Ps. cxxxi. 3.

THIS verse sheweth the use of the whole psalm. David did not pen it to praise himself, or to extol and set forth his own humility, but to instruct the people of God, that they might learn the right way of trusting or hoping in God.

This way is intimated in the two former verses, wherein he representeth his humility and resignation to God.

First, Humility, in the first verse, 'My heart is not haughty, nor do I exercise myself in great matters,' &c. He did not speak great things of himself, nor seek great things for himself. If we would learn to trust God, we must learn to have mean thoughts of ourselves, desiring nothing, attempting nothing, but what God approveth and inviteth us unto; for then we can best depend upon God's grace and providence; for otherwise we depend upon our own strength, or look for such an assistance from heaven as shall gratify and serve our lusts.

Secondly, His resignation and quiet submission of all events to God, waiting for the issues of his providence without carking, without murmuring. This is to be observed in David, who was in himself a worthy man, provoked by Saul, and one that had assurance of the kingdom by God's own promise; yet, though the accomplishment were delayed, he would not step one foot forward further than God directed him. This humble temper and abrenunciation of self-trust and secular confidence will stand you in more stead than all your shifts and contrivances; for God will never be wanting to such as do so submissively devolve themselves upon him. Therefore 'let Israel hope in the Lord,' &c.

In the words we have four things—(1.) Who exhorteth, David, by his own example; (2.) The persons who are exhorted, Israel; (3.) The duty to which they are exhorted, trust or hope in the Lord; (4.) The constancy and perseverance required in this duty, 'From henceforth and for ever.'

From hence three points of doctrine.

*Doct.* 1. That those who have found peace, rest, and satisfaction in their own souls by trusting in God may best invite and encourage others to take the same course.

So doth David here, who had such comfort, quiet, and peace by submitting his affairs to God, that he could not but encourage others to follow that way with confidence. As if he had said, If you can be but meek, humble, and trust the Lord, he will take care of you, and give you those things which belong to your peace and salvation. So elsewhere: Ps. xxxiv. 8, 'Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.' As God is very communicative of his goodness, so gracious souls do invite others to share with them in whatsoever grace the Lord doth bestow upon them. They would have others come and make the experiment, and by obedience to him and reliance on him they shall soon find that God is a gracious master.

*Reasons.*

1. Because they are instances both of the duty and the success.

[1.] Of the duty. Our words are of the more force when our actions correspond; and do not disprove and contradict them; as the Lord Jesus, that taught humility, was the great instance and example of it: 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly;' not only in his doctrine, but his practice: Mat. xi. 29; and his servant Paul, 'Be followers of me, as I also am of Christ,' 2 Cor. xi. 1; 2 Thes. iii. 7, 'Yourselves know how ye ought to follow us; for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you.' Actions have a strange force to produce like practice in others, far more than words and exhortations. The doctrine sheweth our duty, but the example sheweth it is practicable, by men who have



not divested themselves of the interests of flesh and blood, no more than we have.

[2.] The success : 2 Cor. i. 4, 'Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.' That is more warmly said which is spoken by experience. A report of a report is a cold thing. David did not thrust forth himself into the world, but waited the will of God, and it succeeded well. For the present it quieted his soul, and afterward obtained the thing promised. So in a case of comfort for pardon of sin : Ps. cxxx. 5-7, 'I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, yea, more than they which wait for the morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord ; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.'

2. This is one part of the communion of saints, to provoke and encourage others to trust in God by our example and experience, as we ourselves also should be excited by their experience and example to be more obedient to God, and patiently and comfortably to wait for his salvation : Rom. i. 12, 'That I may be comforted by the mutual faith both of you and me.' We thus mutually strengthen one another. Good is diffusive, and seeketh to propagate itself, as fire turneth all about it into fire. Certainly it is the disposition of God's people, when they have found any comfort and benefit by Christ themselves, they invite others to share with them. Thus David penneth his Maschil, Ps. xxxii., the title. When he found the way of easing his own conscience, he is willing to instruct others. So in the first of John, Andrew calleth Peter when he had found Christ, ver. 41 ; and Philip calleth Nathaniel, ver. 45. Carnal things are possessed with envy ; they that are rich and great in the world would shine alone ; and when they are gotten at the top themselves, are loath to teach others how to climb up after them. And when any take up religion out of faction and carnal aims, they would enclose and impropriate the common salvation ; therefore they envy the credit and hope of it to others, that they may shine alone, or be the better esteemed. Mules and creatures of a mixed and bastard production never procreate and beget after their kind. False and mongrel christians are envious rather than communicate. But those that have really tasted of the Lord's goodness are glad of company, and it is a great satisfaction to them when they can promote the good of others' souls : 1 John i. 3, 'These things declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us,' &c.

3. Mercy, according to the covenant of grace, giveth the same grounds of faith and hope to every one within the church ; so that whatever of favour is shown to one of God's people, it is of a general use and profit to others : Ps. cxv. 9-13, 'O Israel, trust thou in the Lord ; he is their help and shield. O house of Aaron, trust thou in the Lord ; he is their help and shield. Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord ; he is their help and shield. The Lord hath been mindful of us ; he will bless us : 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.' The scripture sheweth that as the duty of trusting in the Lord is common to all sorts of persons, so the blessing of trust is common, and doth belong to all sorts of believers, small and great. God's Israel consists of several degrees of men. There are magistrates who have

their peculiar service ; there are ministers who intercede between God and man in things belonging to God ; and there are the common sort of them that fear God, and are admitted to the honour of being his people. Now these have all the same privileges. If God be the help and shield of the one, he will be the help and shield of the other ; if he bless the one, he will bless the other. Every one that feareth God, and is in the number of true Israelites, may expect his blessing as well as public persons ; the meanest peasant as well as the greatest prince, as they have leave to trust in God, so they may expect his blessing. And the reasons are, partly because they have all interest in the same God, who is a God of goodness and power, able and willing to relieve all those that trust in him. He is alike affected to all his children, and beareth them the same love. His saints are now as dear to him as ever : ‘ This honour have all his saints,’ that he will beautify their faces with salvation, Ps. cxlix. 9. Partly because they have the same covenant as a common charter : Acts ii. 39, ‘ The promise is unto you and unto your children, and to all that are afar off.’ Partly because they have the same Redeemer : 1 Cor. i. 2, ‘ Jesus Christ, theirs and ours.’ Rich and poor, he paid the same ransom for souls : Exod. xxx. 15, ‘ Half a shekel.’ He is not a more worthy Christ to one than to another : Rom. iii. 22, ‘ There is no difference.’ There may be in the degree of reception. A jewel may be held by a child and a man. Partly because the faith of one is as acceptable to God as the faith of the other, as to the kind, though not to the degree : 2 Peter i. 1, ‘ To them who have obtained like precious faith with us,’ *ἰσότημον πίστιν*. So that though there be some difference in God’s dealing with his saints as to arbitrary blessings, yet the universal promise belongeth to all ; and the particular promises, which are but branches of that universal, will be made good to all in the same case. They are branches of the covenant made with all the faithful, &c.

*Use 1.* To show the reason of public thanksgiving for private mercies.

1. It is more for the honour of God that we should extend the fruit of our mercies as far as we can ; not only for the increase of our own faith, but for the increase of the faith of others.

2. It is for their benefit ; for every believer’s mercy is a sensible confirmation of the goodness of God, not only to themselves, but others. They may see what is to be expected from such a good God. As it is profitable to them to mourn with those that mourn, so to rejoice with those that rejoice.

*Doct. 2.* That God’s Israel must put their trust and hope in God.

Here are three things to be discussed—(1.) Who are God’s Israel ; (2.) What is this hope in God ; (3.) Why they are to hope in God, or the reasons.

First, Who are the Israel of God that are here invited to trust in the Lord ? The scripture maketh mention of a double Israel—

1. Of Israel according to the flesh : 1 Cor. x. 18, ‘ Behold Israel after the flesh.’

2. Israel according to the spirit, who are also called ‘ the Israel of God,’ Gal. vi. 16. Both together are mentioned in one place : Rom. ix. 6, ‘ All are not Israel who are of Israel.’ Now the present exhortation concerneth all men so far that they should be converted, and become the Israel of God, that they may hope in him. But directly and



immediately the persons exhorted are the Israel described : Ps. lxxiii. 1, 'Surely God is good to Israel, to such as are of a clean heart.' In their natural estate, men, as they are without God, so they are without hope, Eph. ii. 20 ; or they have only a dead hope if they have any. They that are renewed after the image of God, and are made like him in truth and holiness, are most easily persuaded to believe and trust in him. God doth neither allow the trust of wicked men, nor can they ever have any firm and sure hope and confidence towards God.

[1.] God alloweth not the trust of those that continue impenitently in their sins ; as if the goodness, power, and wisdom of God should be employed for them to bear them out in their transgressions. He complaineth of them that were very naughty and wicked : Micah iii. 11, 'Yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord amongst us ? no evil can come upon us.' No ; God will shake off such as thus lean upon him, as Paul did the viper that fastened upon his hand. If security were hope and trust, then the hardest heart would make the best faith.

[2.] They cannot have a firm confidence towards God ; for shame, and fear, and doubts do always follow sin, Gen. iii. Can a man trust him whom he doth continually wrong and provoke ? None have a firm confidence but those that have a clear conscience : 1 John iii. 21, 'If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' Fear and shyness of God is the effect of sin, and dogs it at the heels, and follows it as close as smart doth a cut or wound : 'The hearts of the wicked are subject to bondage,' Heb. ii.

Secondly, The nature of this hope in God. We must distinguish before we can describe it to you. The hope of glory, or the hope of those things which are necessary for us during our pilgrimage ; for though the state of glory be the principal, yet not the adequate or only object of christian hope.

1. Let me speak a little of the first branch, though not chiefly intended in this place. The hope of glory is the certain and desirous expectation of the promised blessedness. Faith respects the promise ; hope rather the thing promised. Faith considereth the thing promised as in a sort present, and set before us in the promise : Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the evidence of things not seen.' Hope considereth it as absent and yet to come ; and therefore doth earnestly long, and look, and wait for it. Faith considereth the certainty of the thing promised ; hope the goodness and excellency, so as to draw the heart after it, to quicken us to make preparation for it. Now this hope of eternal glory should be always cherished in us.

[1.] Because it is a special act of the new creature : 1 Peter i. 3, 'Begotten to a lively hope.' As soon as we are children, we look for a child's portion. The new nature presently discovereth itself by its tendency to its end and rest, which is the fruition of God in heaven.

[2.] Because it is the great end wherefore the scriptures were written, to beget and raise this hope in us : Rom. xv. 4, 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning ; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.' *Id agit tota scriptura*, it is the business and design of those holy books.

[3.] The keeping up of this hope with zeal and industry is the dis-

tinguishing character between the temporary and the sincere convert. The one loseth his taste and comfort, and so casteth off the profession of godliness, or neglects the powerful practice of it; the other is diligent and serious, patient and mortified, heavenly and holy, because he keepeth up that rejoicing of his hope, and his end sweeteneth his work; for this grace doth quicken the whole spiritual life: Titus ii. 12, 13, 'Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.'

[4.] We have nothing else to fortify us against the difficulties which intervene and fall out betwixt our first right to eternal life and our full possession of it. In our journey to heaven there are many sufferings and trials which must be undergone, and hope is our strength and support. He that sets his face heavenward will find difficulties that attend his service, temptations that assault his constancy, and troubles and calamities to which his religion exposeth him. It is hope carrieth us through, and therefore is compared to an anchor: Heb. vi. 19, 'Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.' To an helmet: 1 Thes. iv. 8; Eph. vi. 17, 'Take the helmet of salvation,' &c. As we would not go to sea without an anchor, nor to war without an helmet, so we must not think of carrying on the spiritual life without hope. Nothing else will compose the mind, and keep it stable in the floods of temptation, or cause us to hold up the head in our conflicts and encounters; without this anchor our souls are in danger of spiritual shipwreck; without this helmet our heads are exposed to deadly blows from sin, Satan, and worldly discouragements.

[5.] We shall have need of it, not only while we live, but most need of it when we come to die. They that are destitute of the hope of glory then are in a dangerous, woful, and most lamentable case: Job xxvii. 8, 'For what is the hope of the hypocrite, if he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?' They may be full of presumption and blind confidence while they live, but what hope have they when they come to die? All their worldly advantages will afford them no solid comfort. They live in a presumptuous dream that all shall be well, but then they die stupid and senseless, or else despairing, and their hopes fail them when they have most need of them.

[6.] Think often of the happiness of the blessed, who are now enjoying what we expect, and are in possession of that supreme good which we hope for. They are entered into the joy of their Lord, and have neither miseries to fear nor blessings to desire beyond what they do enjoy. They possess all that they love. And though the time of our advancement to these privileges be not yet come, yet we should look and long for it. We are of the same family: Eph. iii. 15, 'Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.' It is but one household; some live in the upper room, some in the lower; some in heaven, some on earth. We are of the same society and community: Heb. xii. 23, 'To the general assembly and church of the first-born,' &c. We are said to be already come into this fellowship; only they have gotten the start of us, and are made perfect before us, that we should follow after. We are reconciled to the same God by the same



Christ, Col. i. 20, and expect our portion from the bounty of the same Father. If he hath been so good to that part of the family which is now in heaven, will he not be as good to the other part also? Therefore they that are working out their salvation with fear and trembling may encourage themselves, and look upon this felicity as prepared for them, though not enjoyed by them; it will one day be their portion as well as of those others who have passed the pikes, and are now triumphing with God.

[7.] Observe what God giveth you by way of earnest. Hope is not built upon promises alone, but also upon assurances and earnest. The promises are contained in the word of God, but the earnest is given into our hearts: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts;' 2 Cor. v. 5, 'Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit;' Eph. i. 13, 14, 'In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.' Though God be truth itself, and promiseth nothing but what he meaneth to perform, yet he will give earnest of his promises and a pledge of his affection to us. As an earnest is a part of the sum which is promised, so is the earnest of the Spirit a part of the promised felicity. God would not altogether weary us, and burden us with expectation, but give us somewhat in hand. Surely he that giveth us earnest will give us the whole sum. The earnest of the Spirit consisteth in light, life, grace, joy; one drachm of these is more precious than all the world; and yet these are but an earnest. Now having such a confirmation in the midst of our doubts and fears, let us with more confidence look to receive the whole in due season. This, with much more that might be said (if it were proper in this place), should excite us to hope for glory.

2. There is another sort of hope of those supplies which are necessary for us during our pilgrimage; for God hath undertaken not only to give us heaven and happiness in the next world, but to carry us thither with comfort and peace, that we may serve him without fear all the days of our lives. His providence concerneth the inward and outward man; so do his promises. An whole believer is in covenant with God body and soul, and he will take care of both. Now this kind of hope and trust is such a dependence upon God and his promises for whatever we stand in need of as encourageth us to go on cheerfully in the ways wherein he hath appointed us to walk. Where note—

[1.] The object of this trust and hope is God: Ps. lxi. 5, 'My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.' Where else can we securely settle and fix our souls if not on God? Ps. cxlvi. 5, 'Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.' This is the only sure hold, and never failing foundation of confidence.

[2.] The warrant of hope are the promises of God: Ps. cxxx. 5, 'I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.' These are the holdfast which we have upon God, the sacred bands which he hath put upon himself, the rule and warrant of our faith. We must not make promises to ourselves and become false prophets to ourselves; but, so far as God hath promised, so far may we confi-

dently expect relief from him. Our necessities lead us to the promises, and the promises to Christ, and Christ to God as the fountain of grace; and at the throne of grace we put these bonds in suit, and turn promises into prayers; for we have free leave to challenge God upon his word: Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember thy word,' &c. But now what hath God promised us? All the good things we want, and are truly for our good: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' So Ps. xxxiv. 10, 'They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing;' Rom. viii. 28, 32, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;' and 1 Tim iv. 8, 'Godliness is profitable unto all things, and hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' These and suchlike are the promises. We must not imagine that God will do everything which cometh into our minds to ask, serve all our carnal turns. No; God will be challenged no further than he hath engaged himself. He hath promised eternal things absolutely; whatever falleth out, you may be sure of your final reward if qualified: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Spiritual things, as to degrees, are neither given nor promised to all christians alike absolutely. Necessary grace is secured; but for degrees, Eph. iv. 7, 'To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ;' 1 Cor. xii. 11, 'All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.' But now for things temporal, they are only promised conditionally, so far forth as may be for God's glory and our good. We must not absolutely look for temporals, unless we had an absolute particular promise; such as David of the kingdom, and Hezekiah of fifteen years added to his life.

[3.] The nature of this hope is a dependence upon God for whatever we stand in need of. Where mark—

(1.) The necessity of the creature is the occasion of God's interposing by his gracious providence, Mat. vi. 32. In the Lord's prayer we are taught to ask bread, not dainties. If we set God a task to provide meat for our lusts, we do but dishonour God, as if his providence should wait upon our humours and vain fancies, and provide the trouble of a disappointment for ourselves. It is the ordinary practice of God's free grace and fatherly care to provide things comfortable and necessary for his children; yet he never undertakes to maintain us at such a rate, to give us so much by the year, such portions for our children, and supplies for our families; we do but ensnare and perplex our thoughts, while we would reconcile the promises with our lusts.

(2.) On the other hand, we ought not to be faithless and distrustful about necessary supplies: Mat. vi. 25, 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink,' &c. Because if we had no promises, there is a common bounty and goodness of God which is over all his works, which watcheth to the preservation of the smallest worm, decketh the lilies, feedeth the ravens and fowls of the air; therefore



certainly more noble creatures, such as man is, may expect their share in this common bounty. How much more when there is a covenant, wherein God hath promised to be a father to us? And temporal blessings are adopted and taken into the covenant as well as other blessings, so far forth as they conduce to God's glory and our good; and upon other terms a mortified and weaned heart would not desire them. Will he not give to children that which he giveth to beasts, to fowls of the air, to enemies? You would count him an unnatural father that feedeth his dogs and hawks, and lets his children die of hunger.

(3.) The dependence we exercise about these things lieth in referring ourselves to God's wisdom, power, and goodness, and to determine all events as it shall seem good in his eyes. He is so able that he can bear us out in his work; so good, that we have no reason to trouble ourselves about his will, but absolutely to submit it to him without hesitancy; so wise, that he will do what is best, all things considered. Now if we could bring our hearts to this, it would ease us of many troublesome thoughts and burdensome cares and fears: 1 Peter iv. 19, 'Commit yourselves (*i.e.*, your lives) to him in well-doing;' Prov. x. 3, 'Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established;' Ps. xxxvii. 5, 'Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust him, and he shall bring it to pass.' Put yourselves into God's hands, and let the Lord do what is good in his sight. But we would have the world governed by our fancies, our particular affairs at least, and expect a certain tenor of temporal happiness; and so lay ourselves open to Satan, who makes an advantage of our disappointments, and abuseth our rash confidence into a snare and temptation to us to distrust God's ordinary providence and the misbelief of other truths.

[4.] Such a dependence as encourageth us to go on cheerfully with our duty, whether of our general or particular calling.

(1.) General: 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'Therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.' Hope in God is not an idle expectation or a devout sloth, but such a dependence as giveth life to our services, that we go on readily, without disquiet in our minds, notwithstanding all difficulties.

(2.) So in our particular calling; for when we hope in God, we must not neglect to use the means. God never undertook to protect us or provide for us in our sins, in our laziness, carelessness, luxury, and neglect of our affairs, that sin should not be our ruin. Then his providence would run directly contrary to his word. The diligent hand maketh rich, and the blessing of the Lord maketh rich: Prov. x. 4, 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand, but the blessing of the Lord maketh rich,' ver. 22.

Thirdly, The reasons why they are to hope in God.

1. Trust is naturally required in the fundamental article of the covenant, in the choice of God for your God. If you do not trust and hope in him, you deny him to be God. It is natural worship, *jure venit cultus ad sibi quisque Deos*: Jonah i. 5, 'Every one will seek unto his god.' It immediately resulteth from the owning of a God that we should trust him with our all.

2. We cannot be true and faithful to God unless we rely upon him.

The soul will necessarily warp, and turn aside to crooked ways, unless we be persuaded that God taketh care of us, and will maintain us by honest and lawful means. The ground of uprightness is the persuasion of God's all-sufficiency: Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be thou upright.' As, on the other side, the ground of apostasy is unbelief: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' They that do not trust God cannot long be true to him, but will seek another paymaster.

3. To keep up a commerce between God and us. Therefore a continual hope and dependence is necessary for a christian, to engage him to prayer and thanksgiving. That is only made conscience of by those who take all out of God's hands: Ps. lxii. 8, 'Trust in the Lord at all times; pour out your hearts before him;' 2 Sam. xxii. 3, 4, 'God is my rock, in whom I trust; I will call on the Lord, so shall I be saved.' We act our trust and hope at the throne of grace, encourage ourselves in God's hearing.

4. To keep the heart fixed and quiet: Ps. cxii. 7, 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' He looketh higher than the course of affairs in the world; not senseless, but established: Ps. xlii. 5, 'I have trusted in thy mercy, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation;' Ps. xlii. 5, 'Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him.' Vexation is the fruit of distrust: Ps. cvi. 24, 'They believed not his word, and murmured in their tents.' God is carrying on all things for our good, and we cannot trust him. Distracting cares are forbidden: Mat. vi. 25, 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink,' &c. It is a reproach to our heavenly Father. Go to God, then be at peace: Phil. iv. 6, 7, 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds,' &c.

5. The great benefit that resulteth thence; present support and final deliverance.

[1.] Support: Isa. xl. 31, 'They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.'

[2.] Final deliverance: Ps. xxxvii. 3, 'Trust in the Lord, and do good, and thou shalt dwell in the land, verily, thou shalt be fed.' Trust is the ready way to have success. Order thy affairs by God's will and command, and thou mayest cheerfully wait for the event.

*Doct. 3.* That our hope and trust in God should be perpetual.

Israel is bidden to hope in God 'from henceforth and for ever,' Ps. cxxx. 3. For—

First, It is not enough to hope in God for a while, but we must persevere in hope as long as life shall endure; not only to-day, or to-morrow, or for a time, or till our probabilities be spent. No; we must believe in hope against hope, Rom. iv. 19; probabilities or no probabilities.

Secondly, We must persevere to the end and in the end: Heb. vi. 11, 'Show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end;' 1 Peter i. 13, 'Be sober, and hope to the end;' in life and in death. And Heb. iii. 6, 'Keep the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end.' We may repose our hearts on the fidelity of Christ;



he will no ways fail and be unfaithful, but give eternal life, according to his promise.

Thirdly, In all estates and conditions. In prosperity and adversity : Ps. lxii. 8, 'Trust in the Lord at all times.' It is a duty never out of season. In a time of fear, misery, and distress : Ps. lvi. 3, 'At what time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee.' Then is a special season to consider the attributes of God and the promises of God. On the contrary, in a time of prosperity our hearts are secretly corrupted unless we think of God : Ps. xxx. 6, 'I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved.' He saw a want of his trust then. We are to depend upon God, and make use of him, in all conditions : Ps. xci. 9, 'Thou shalt make the Most High thy refuge, and my God thy habitation.' A refuge is a place of retreat and safety in a time of war, and a habitation is the place of our residence and abode in a time of peace ; so that, whatsoever our condition be, our dependence must be on God. If things be never so prosperous, he must be owned as the fountain of blessings, and all of them taken out of his hand ; acknowledging that we hold all by his mercy and bountiful providence, because of our forfeiture by sin, and the uncertainty of these outward comforts, and the necessity of his providential influence. Trust is as necessary in prosperity as adversity, lest the heart be enticed into a neglect of God by carnal confidence. Our hearts are very prone to it. Good Paul was in danger : 2 Cor. i. 9, 'But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in him which raiseth the dead.' But then in adversity, when kept bare and low, then is a time to show trust, how hard soever our condition be : Zeph. iii. 12, 'I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and a poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' When all things go well with us, we think trusting in God easy, because we make it but a notion, for we indeed trust in other things ; we eat our own bread, drink our own drink, wear our own apparel, only God carrieth the name of it. But now, when we are cut short, kept hard and low, then to quiet our minds in God is the trial of trust. The creature is blasted that we may look for all in God. David, when he was left alone, refuge failed him : 'No man cared for my soul ; I cried unto thee, O Lord, and said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living,' Ps. cxlii. 4, 5. When means fail, God never faileth. When riches take wings and worldly friends forsake us, then is a time for trust, whether the mercy expected be hastened or delayed. Some can trust for a while, if the mercy be not kept off too long ; but then their patience and faith is spent. David's actual possession of the kingdom was delayed, yet he waited. So when God delayeth help, still must we wait. How contrary did that king, 2 Kings vi. 33, 'This evil is from the Lord, why should I wait any longer?' Must we always wait upon God ? in a passion. Yes ; wait and wait still : 'The needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the expectation of the poor perish for ever,' Ps. ix. 18. Though God for a while permit his meek and obedient servants to be oppressed and triumphed over, and in the eye of the world to be forgotten, forsaken, and perish, yet if they constantly adhere to him, and contentedly wait his leisure, without relieving themselves by any unlawful means, he will at last return, and save

them out of their enemies' hands. Upon their daily attendance upon God, and living upon the hope of what is promised, they will at length overcome.

Lastly, No other means, or no means to accomplish the expected end. Supposing it be our duty to continue that course wherein we are engaged, if means, yet we must have recourse to God, acknowledging the event is in his hands: Ps. lx. 11, with the title, 'Give help from trouble, for vain is the help of man.' His army was then victorious. In such a case it is harder to trust God with means than without means of a visible supply; so prone are we to look to what is present. If no means; when all was lost, David encouraged himself in the Lord his God, 1 Sam. xxx. 6; Jehoshaphat: 2 Chron. xx. 12, 'We have no might, but our eyes are unto thee.' Thus trust must be continually and perpetually exercised.

*Reasons.*

1. Because we have continual need of hope while we are in the world. Partly because our whole being dependeth every minute on the will of God: Job vi. 9, 'If he loosen his hand, and cut us off.' One beck of his will can turn us into nothing. Partly because of the frequent return of afflictions, necessities, and temptations: Ps. xxxiv. 19, 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of all.' God, that hath delivered, must deliver again. As our necessities return, so we must renew our confidence and humble addresses to God.

2. God is never weary of doing good. He is not exhausted by giving. I AM is his name. He is where he was at first; hath the same power, wisdom, and goodness. We seem to doubt of it if we discontinue our trust. Our condition may be altered, but God is not altered; and therefore, how hard soever the condition be that we fall into, the grounds of confidence are not lost, but must be still improved. As, for instance, God continueth a God of infinite power: Isa. xxvi. 4, 'Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' His wisdom continueth, for he is never at a loss: 2 Peter ii. 9, 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation.' We are at a loss, but God is not, when his hand is in. A potter loseth not his skill, but increaseth it, if he make a thousand vessels—Basil. His goodness and grace is the same: James i. 5, 'If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him;' with Prov. xxv. 17. Our drop is soon spent, we are weary of doing good; it is hard to bring us to continue our favours. 'Ye have ministered, and do minister,' was a great commendation to those saints, Heb. vi. 10.

3. The great promise is not yet come in hand; therefore there is room for hope till we come to eternity, and then we shall everlastingly enjoy the thing hoped for. Now we should train up ourselves in a way of faith; trust God and try God here by the way, that we may the better depend upon him at the end of the journey. As men learn to swim in the shallow brooks before they venture in the deep waters, so before we come to launch out into the gulf of eternity, and trust him with our everlasting estate, we should try how we can trust him for temporals. Trust him with your business, trust him with your



lives, trust him for daily bread, that you may the better learn to trust him with your souls. Trust him every day with the affairs of the day; trust him every night when you go to bed with your names, estates. To go to an unknown God, with whose fidelity you were never before acquainted, will be very hard and difficult.

4. We lose our reward if we cease hoping: Ps. cxliii. 3, 'Our eyes wait upon the Lord until he have mercy.' Saul tarried a while for Samuel: 1 Sam. xiii. 8-13, 'Seven days, the time appointed; I forced myself, and offered a burnt-offering;' so he lost the kingdom. Our eternal reward: Heb. xiii. 6, 'So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me;' Heb. x. 35, 'Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.'

*Use 2.* Let me commend to you these things—

1. The adventure of faith: Luke v. 5, 'Howbeit at thy command.' When you cannot apply the promise, venture for the command's sake. When we cannot see what God will do for us in ordinances and providences, see what believing will come to, and looking to God, when supplies are not in the view of sense.

2. The waiting of faith, when expectation is not answered, and you find not at first what you wait for. Do not despond or despair, or be hasty in your distresses, so as to turn aside to other remedies: Isa. xxviii. 76, 'He that believeth doth not make haste.' It is carnal affection that must have present satisfaction. Greedy and impatient longings argue a disease. Revenge must see its desire on its enemies presently; covetousness would wax rich in a day; ambition must presently mount; lusts are earnest, ravenous; like a diseased stomach, must have green fruit. But faith waiteth, and resolveth to keep the promise as a pawn till the blessing cometh. Hope is seen in waiting as well as looking, and patience is as necessary as believing: 1 Thes. i. 3, 'Work of faith, labour of love, patience of hope.'

3. The holy obstinacy and resolution of faith. Resolve to die holding the horns of the altar. You would not be put off from God; as the blind man, the more he was rebuked, cried much the more, Mark x. 48; or as the woman of Canaan turned discouragements into arguments, Mat. xv. 27. Faith is deaf to all discouragements: Job xiii. 15, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him.' No rebukes of providence shall beat us away from the throne of grace.

4. The submission and resignation of faith in all temporal things. Especially your great work: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' Make sure of heaven, and for other things be at a point of indifferency; let God order that as he will.

5. The prudence of faith. Settle your mind against present necessities; and for future contingencies, leave them to God's providence: Mat. vi. 34, 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' Children, if they have to allay present hunger, do not cark how to bring the year about, but leave that to their parents; so we should not anticipate future cares, but compose ourselves to bear our present burden as well as we can. Leave futurities to our heavenly Father. Manna fell daily; where it was kept till the morning, it putrified: 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

6. The obedience of faith. Mind duty, and let God take care of success. Let God alone with the issues of things: 1 Chron. xix. 13, 'Let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people and for the cities of our God, and let the Lord do that which is good in his sight.' Otherwise we take his work out of his hands. A christian should more take care what he shall do than what shall become of him: 'Be careful for nothing,' Phil. iv. 6; 1 Peter v. 7, 'Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.' God is more solicitous for you than you can be for yourselves.



## SERMONS UPON EZEKIEL XVIII. 23.

### SERMON I.

*Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?—*  
EZEK. xviii. 23.

THERE is nothing so necessary to draw us to repentance as good thoughts of God. In the first temptation the devil sought to weaken the reputation and credit of God's goodness in the hearts of our first parents, as if he were harsh, severe, and envious in restraining them from the tree of knowledge, and the fruit that was so fair to see too, Gen. iii. He layeth his first battery against the persuasion of God's goodness and kindness to man; if he could once bring them to doubt of that, other things would succeed the more easily. So still he laboureth to raise jealousies in our hearts against God. David was fain to hold to this principle when the prosperity of the wicked was a temptation to him; yet 'God is good to Israel,' Ps. lxxiii. 1. That was the truth which the temptation did oppose, that God is good to his people. With carnal men he prevaieth the more easily. The blind pagan world had this for a maxim, τὸ δαιμόνιον φθονερόν, the gods were envious, and took no pleasure in the felicity of man, and therefore looked for some notable cross after some eminent triumph or applause for any worthy undertaking. In the bosom of the church this conceit possesseth many men's hearts, that God is harsh and severe, and delighteth more in our ruin than salvation, and therefore they cast off all care of their soul's welfare. Oh, what a monstrous picture do men draw of God in their thoughts, as if he were a tyrant, or an inexorable judge, that gave no leave for repentance, or left any hope of pardon to the guilty! Thus in the prophet's days there were some that thought they must die and be miserable, and none could help it. They had a proverb, that 'The fathers had eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth were set on edge.' They must smart for their fathers' sins, whether they repented, yea or no. Therefore God standeth upon his justification and vindication from so foul a surmise. Here you have a part of his purgation; 'Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God?'

The words are propounded by way of interrogation; in which form of speech there is more evidence, efficacy, life, and convincing force; *q d.*, Ye know it is evident that I have no such desire, no such pleasure. It dareth not enter into your thoughts that I should take pleasure in

the bare destruction of the creature. This pleasure of God is expressed—

1. Negatively, what he delights not in, ‘Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?’

2. Positively, what he doth delight in, ‘That he should turn from his ways, and live.’ God had rather his conversion. In both are implied two great truths; as, *omnis questio supponit unum et inquit aliud*; namely, the connection between sin and death, repentance and life, wicked and die, return and live. God doth not obscurely null or disown his judgment and execution according to that law, or give you any hopes that his law shall not be executed, but telleth you what he taketh pleasure in; rather in the conversion than in the destruction of the creature. The first question implieth a strong negation, that he doth not delight in the mere slaughter of the wicked. The latter question is a strong affirmation; only remember in both parts that these things are spoken by way of comparison. Repentance is more acceptable to God, as an holy God, than sin and wickedness; their conversion than their disobedience. And as God is a merciful God, and loveth all the creatures which he hath made, so their life is more pleasing than their death; a thing more acceptable in itself to such a being as God is.

[1.] I might observe the immediate tie that is between sin and death, as between the cause and the effect, the work and the wages; how fitly these things are suited by God’s wisdom, which disposeth all things into their proper places. On the other side, the connection between repentance and life, but not of its own merit, but God’s grace. But that argument hath a more proper place elsewhere.

[2.] That the repentance and salvation of the wicked is more pleasing to God than their death and damnation. The point is clear in the text, and may be elsewhere proved, if we take God’s word or oath. His word, or simple affirmation: Ezek. xviii. 32, ‘For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye;’ that is, he hath no delight that any man should die and perish in his impenitency. It is not all one to God whether ye repent or no, whether you behave yourselves well or ill. Though they are sure to suffer, yet God doth not take delight in killing and destroying: Ezek. xxxiii. 11, ‘Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; why will ye die, O house of Israel?’ *Ne vivam*—Let me not live. We take a man’s oath; it is *πέρας αντιλογίας*, ‘the end of all strife,’ Heb. vi. 16. Our prejudices against God’s nature are so deep and inveterate that he needeth to interpose an oath.

To manage this argument with profit I will show—(1.) How God delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but in his conversion to life; (2.) How contrary it is to the nature of God to be otherwise affected; (3.) Give you some proofs of God’s having pleasure in our conversion and salvation, rather than our sin and destruction; (4.) The uses.

1. How God delights not in the death of a sinner; for it seemeth a contradiction to what is written: Prov. i. 26, ‘I will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear cometh;’ Ezek. vii.



8, 9, 'Now will I pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee, and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations. Mine eyes shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy wages;' Ezek. v. 13, 'Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon thee, and I will be comforted.' Men are eased when their anger is executed. And it seemeth also to be contrary to the course of God's providence. If God hath more pleasure in the conversion of sinners than their destruction, why are there not more converted than we find to be? The greatest part of mankind are perishing in their unbelief and impenitency.

*Ans.* (1.) I might answer, that this text speaketh not absolutely, but comparatively. God rejoiceth in the execution of his justice, as well as in all his other works; but if you compare things with things, he rejoiceth rather in acts of mercy than in acts of vengeance. His disposition inclineth him to mercy rather than to wrath: 'Mercy pleaseth him,' Micah vii. 18; and mercy rejoiceth over judgment in the conflict. Justice is *alienum opus*, 'his strange work,' Isa. xxviii. 21; Lam. iii. 33, 'He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men;' not with his heart. Mercy, like live honey, droppeth of its own accord. He is forced to the other; it is wrested from him. Though the properties are equally infinite in God, yet they do diversely exert themselves towards men as to the effects. Now the world is upon its trial. God's primary end is the conversion of a sinner; his secondary end the honour of his vindictive justice.

(2.) I might answer, that this place doth not speak of events, but constitutions; not what shall fall out, but what is fitly ordered; not what is secretly purposed in his decree, but what is by the sentence of his law declared to the creature, and this contrary to their thoughts. They thought it was all one whether they sinned or repented; they thought God had such a delight in killing and destroying that he would not save the penitent nor accept of their repentance. Now God in answer to this sheweth how unfeignedly he should receive them to mercy, in case of repentance, that they may be saved upon God's terms. But to prevent all objections and misapprehensions in God, we must distinguish of the will of God, and a threefold resolution which is in him.

1. The will and pleasure of God; it is either taken for his simple complacency in things according to their worth, value, and degree of goodness that is in their natures, or for his purpose and effectual resolution to accomplish what he liketh. Liking and approbation in man is one thing, and choice and resolved pursuit is another. God may be said to like the salvation of all men, yet not to intend it with an efficacious will. Of his efficacious will he speaketh: Isa. xli. 10, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.' So that if God took no pleasure in the death of the wicked, that is, were resolved to do all that he can to hinder it, no wicked man would be condemned or die the second death. It is a thing more pleasing in itself, as conversion is better than disobedience, and salvation than destruction. The complacency of God in things is according to their nature and degree of goodness. He is unfeignedly pleased with the salvation of men.

2. The next distinction; there is a threefold relation in God; he

may be considered—(1.) As an absolute lord ; (2.) As a law-giver ; and, (3.) As a judge.

[1.] As an absolute lord, that hath grace at his own disposal : Mat. xx. 15, 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own ?' He may give it as he will, and withhold it as he will. Now the pleasure of God as a supreme lord is his efficacious resolved will, and respecteth events what shall be rather than what should be ; and so God willeth not the salvation of all ; that is to say, doth not all that he can to procure it.

[2.] As a lawgiver ; and so he declareth his pleasure, that is, his liking and disliking of things, by the laws he maketh, and the sanctions annexed thereunto. So he hath showed us what is good and pleasing in his sight ; innocence in the first covenant, and repentance in the second, and hath annexed to both the promise of life. This is the primary intention of the law, the obedience and happiness of the creatures ; but in case of refusal he hath threatened death. Now that which the lawgiver first and principally aimed at is the obedience of his laws. He doth not desire that men should incur the penalty ; that is only to bind the laws that he hath made for the common good. Other things he willeth and purposeth, but not principally : Deut. x. 12-15, 'And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to love him, and serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul ; to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes which I command thee for thy good ? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens is the Lord thy God's, the earth also with all that therein is ; only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people as it is this day.'

[3.] As a judge that is to pass sentence according to the law so made. The relation of a judge in the exercise of that office hath respect to the law kept or broken, and accordingly he resolveth on rewards and punishments ; and in this sense we may say that he taketh pleasure in the death of the wicked. He rejoiceth and is comforted, in the places alleged before ; that is, he hath decreed to punish the impenitent, and they are sure to suffer his vengeance ; yet his end is not properly the destruction of the creature, but the manifestation of his justice. So the apostle telleth us God raised up Pharaoh that his glory might be manifested upon him : Rom. ix. 17, 'For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.' I say, he doth not simply rejoice in the destruction of the creature, but the discovery of his own justice and glory in their destruction. The sum of all is this, though he doth not all that he can do, as an absolute lord and disposer of grace, yet he doth all that belongeth to him to do as a lawgiver ; and that not only in the first covenant, when he gave us an holy and innocent nature, and made a righteous law established by promises and threatenings, and adds penalties and rewards, but much more in the new covenant, when he did that for us which he was not bound to do, namely, in that he did provide us a saviour, and open a door of hope for us, and warn us of our danger, and called us to repent and believe in Christ, even every creature : Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth shall be saved, but he that



believeth not shall be damned,' with a promise of pardon, life, and salvation, which he will surely make good out of his abundant mercy. And on the other side, threateneth death and damnation on those that unthankfully reject his offer and continue in their sins; yea, he manifesteth the more grace and goodwill to our salvation, and that he is more ready to pardon than to punish, in that he waiteth so long on the sinner's choice: Rom. ix. 22, 'What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath filled to destruction?' He tarries the sinner's leisure till the day of patience be quite spent ere he executeth this threatening of the new covenant; and offereth men all this while many helps and advantages, enticing them by his mercies, awing them by his judgments, persuading them by his word, drawing them by his Spirit, knocking at the door of their hearts by the serious impressions of his grace, and awakening them by the stings and checks of their own consciences; all which are so many signs and evidences that he taketh no pleasure in the death of sinners, as the prejudiced world thinketh, but doth all that becometh him to do, as a prudent and gracious lawgiver (though not all that he could do as an almighty God) and sovereign disposer of his grace; and if he should do that, the world would never be put upon choice and trial, and obedience would be a matter of necessity and constraint, not of willing acceptation; and men may as well quarrel at this as that he hath not made them all angels.

II. How contrary it is to the nature of God to be otherwise affected.

1. It would be contrary to the wisdom of God simply to desire the destruction and death of the creature; for what wisdom can there be in that to mar his chiefest work. Would it become the wisdom of God to have raised such a creature as man is, with such faculties and endowments, merely because he would destroy him? We do not dispute of his absolute right and authority to do with his creature as he pleaseth; nor of his justice, when man abuseth his talents, and is unthankful to his Creator. We speak now of his wisdom. Will a wise man raise a curious structure with a great deal of cost and art, merely that he may pull it down again, as children build houses with cards to blow them down in an instant with one breath? Certainly the making of a second covenant sheweth that it would not stand with the wisdom of God that the world of mankind should be wholly destroyed as soon as it was made; for then God might have broken off and dissolved all things; but it would not suit with his wisdom, and therefore he would try the creatures he had made with other means.

2. His goodness will not permit him to take pleasure in evil as evil, such as is the sin and destruction of the creature. They were accounted monsters of men that glutted their eyes with cruelties; and can we imagine that God will make sport with the eternal ruin of his creatures? Prov. xii. 10, 'A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast.' The more good any man is, the less pleased with the torment of any creature, not of the smallest vermin. It was noted of Domitian as a piece of cruelty that he took pleasure in tormenting flies; and can we imagine it of God, that he delights in the torment, death, and destruction of what he hath made?

3. His mercy; how can it stand with his mercy to desire or take

pleasure in the misery of his creature? We read much of his merciful nature; where he proclaimed his name: Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, 'And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord thy God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.' In this description there is more spoken of his mercy than his justice. First, his mercy is described, and then his justice. Justice is only added to invite men to take hold of mercy, and to show that justice is never exercised but in avenging the quarrel of abused mercy. So in the prophet's exclamation: Micah vii. 18, 'Who is a god like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.' We may compare God with all other gods for any of his perfections, but chiefly for his mercy. The devil held the world in subjection by the tyranny of fears and torments, but God exercises mercy: Exod. xx. 6, 'Showing mercy to thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.' Therefore we ought to conceive of him that he can have no pleasure in our death, for mercy is an attribute that inclineth God to succour them that are in miseries. How then can our destruction be more acceptable to God than our salvation?

4. It would destroy all that natural reverence that man hath of God, and hope of pardon from him, which is the first motive to incline sinful creatures (such as we are) to come to him, and would choose the suspicions to prevail above our hopes, and so in despair we should hate God, and slight his service. In the conduct of the affairs of the universe there are mixed effects of God's justice and goodness; the one begets fear, the other hope. Indeed, fear is more natural to carnal men, because a bad conscience is very suspicious. Our observance of God's benefits is not so great as the sense of our own ill-deservings is quick and lively; therefore our serious hopes are weaker than our fears while we are in our natural estate. Now it would feed our prejudices if we did not strongly assert God's delight in our salvation more than in our destruction, and convince men of it; for as their fears increase above their hope, their hatred of God increaseth. *Oderunt quem metuant*, and *Quem odimus, periisse cupimus*. Whom men fear they hate, and whom they hate they wish he were out of the way. When we only dread God for his vengeance, we keep off from him, and the least desire of repentance and amendment of life would never enter into our souls. A dissolute youth hateth his master that would scourge him for his debaucheries; but the hope of pardon, that inviteth men to return. 'God is good.' He made all good; he preserveth and maintaineth all: 'His tender mercy is over all his works,' Ps. cxlv. 9. We have no cause to suspect him. Notwithstanding our continual offences, he doth not cease to do good to us: Ps. cxxx. 4, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'

III. Wherein God hath showed that he taketh pleasure in our conversation rather than in our ruin and destruction.

1. In that, when we had forfeited the mercies of our creation, he was mindful of our sin and misery, and gave us warning of it when we were drowned in worldly cares and pleasures, and thought of no such matter.



He that warneth before he striketh, certainly he hath more mind to save than to strike. God might have left the sleepy, sinful, and secure world alone, till they had wasted away all their precious time in following their fleshly pleasures and the course of this deceitful world, till they had plunged themselves into their everlasting estate, and did awaken when it was too late, and then had nothing to do but despairingly and with fruitless cries bewail their past negligence; but the Lord took pity on us, and warneth us of the danger ere it come upon us. All his business is to make us mindful of our latter end: Deut. xxxii. 29, 'Oh that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!' Rom. vi. 21, 'What fruit had you then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death;' Jer. xvii. 11, 'At his end he shall be a fool.' By his word and by checks of conscience: Ps. xix. 11, 'Moreover, by them is thy servant warned.' God seeth how you forget him and your latter end, make light of everlasting things, as men that have no sense of their danger; therefore he telleth you that the end of those things is death. When he seeth you bold in sin, fearless and careless of your souls, he mindeth you of the dreadful end that is at hand, when your sorrows must begin. He that telleth you so plainly why it is: Luke iii. 7, 'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come?' As Reuben said, Gen. xlii. 22, 'Spake I not unto you?'

2. Not only warned you of your danger, but hath given you means to escape it if you will, a new covenant wherein he hath offered you free pardon upon the terms of faith and repentance, and set heaven before you to call you off from your carnal vanities. It is the great business of the word to call men to faith and repentance. John preached, Mat. iii. 2, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;' and Christ, Mark i. 14, 15, 'Now after John was in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God; and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.' And the apostles, what was the tenor of their commission? Luke xxiv. 47, 'And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.' Surely God would not have given such directions, made such promises, found out such a way for our recovery, but that he taketh pleasure in our conversion rather than our destruction.

3. In providing a redeemer to ransom us from the death which we had deserved, one that should keep up the authority of the law, and yet a way made to save the sinner: Isa. liii. 4-6, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted: but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' Would God have bought us at so dear a rate, even with the blood of his own Son Jesus Christ? 'He gave him a ransom for us all,' 1 Tim. ii. 6. If he delighted in the death of sinners, he would not have been at such cost to save them.

4. With what passionateness and meltingness of expression he wooeth men to return: Deut. v. 29, 'Oh that there were such an heart in them,

that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it may be well with them, and with their children for ever ;' Hosea xi. 8, 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together;' Isa. lvii. 16, 'For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made;' Ps. lxxxi. 13, 'Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!' Mat. xxiii. 37, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together, as an hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?' Luke xix. 42, 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.' When a servant hath provoked his master, or a son behaved himself ungraciously to his father, will a master sue to his servant, or a father to his son for reconciliation? yea, will not an equal that hath a quarrel with his equal hold it a great disgrace and disparagement to make any means that the quarrel may be taken up? they keep at a distance, and look that the party offending should seek first; yet such an affection God beareth to us that he expostulates, prayeth, entreateth that we would return and be reconciled.

5. By the commission given to his ministers: 2 Cor. v. 20, 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God.' He hath appointed some to call us to faith and repentance, and to quicken us to make ready for eternal life. He has appointed men in our nature to offer you mercy, and teach you the way to eternal life; to warn every man, to instruct every man; men of the same nature, the same affections, the same temptations; who have advantage of familiar converse with us to help, comfort, and quicken you upon all occasions.

6. The course of his providence. Mercies to entice you to him: Rom. ii. 4, 'Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?' We might long ago have been in hell. God might have taken you away in the very act of sin; but he is pleased to use correctives. *Affligit, ut non affligat*—He afflicts that he may not afflict. He sent a tempest after Jonah. He sets our cornfield on fire to bring us to him, as Absalom did Joab's.

7. In the ready entertainment of returning sinners. Ahab's counterfeit humiliation had a temporal reward, 1 King xxi. from 19, to 29, but much more where it is real. Though sinners have done infinite wrong to his holiness, yet upon repentance, and as soon as they begin to submit, mercy embraceth and huggeth them, as if no breach had been: Luke xv. 20, 'But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and fell on his neck and kissed him;' Isa. lxv. 24, 'Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear;' Ps. xxxii. 5, 'I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin;' Jer. xxxi. 18–20, 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; as a bullock unac-



customed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned. Surely after that I was turned, I repented, and after I was instructed, I smote upon the thigh. I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, because my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.' He comes apace to the sinner; is exceeding swift, like a roe on the mountains, Cant. i. 8. He is ready to support us with early comforts. We return to a father as the prodigal when he returned.

## SERMON II.

*Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?—*  
EZEK. xviii. 23.

FROM the words I have observed this doctrine, That the repentance and salvation of the wicked is more pleasing to God than their death and damnation.

1. I have showed you how God delighteth not in the death of a sinner.

2. How contrary it is to the nature of God to be otherwise affected.

3. I have given you proofs of God's having more pleasure in our conversion and salvation, than our sin and destruction.

4. We now come to the uses.

*Use 1.* Of information.

First, That God is not the cause of man's destruction, but it is man's own fault if they be not converted and saved. That men are apt to charge God foolishly appeareth by that monition, Hosea iii. 9, 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.' But more expressly by Prov. xix. 3, 'The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord.' But the blame cannot lie in God; he doth all that seemeth fit to be done as a lawgiver and governor of the world. There is nothing wanting on his part: Isa. v. 4, 'What could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done to it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes.' From first to last we may plead the cause of God with you. God made man upright, gave him a righteous law, which, when broken, that all hopes might not be cut off, he sent his Son: Rom. viii. 3, 'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,' to be the foundation of a new covenant; offered you grace in him, pardon of all your sins past, to help you in the course of obedience for time to come; moved you by powerful arguments, not by low and cheap considerations, but those of the greatest weight, the joys of heaven, the torments of hell; called upon you often by the ministry, knocked at your hearts as well

as your ears by his Spirit; waited for your amendment for many years, tried you by mercies if they could melt you, by afflictions if they would reduce you to a sense of your duty. But all this will not do; yet you are still alive, and these means continued. What shall God do more? Now why are you not converted? Others are wrought upon by the same means and turned to the Lord, and have entered in by the strait gate, and framed their desire to walk in the narrow way. They have not offers more rich, or free, or particular. God hath not told them of a hotter hell or a better heaven, or another or a more taking gospel. God speaketh to you and them in the same terms, with the same grace and favour, and maketh the door wide enough to get in. Why are you not converted? Did God cut off all hopes from you, and tell you that your repentance would do you no good? No; certainly the fault is in your own obstinacy and impenitence: Ps. lxxx. 11, 'Israel would none of me;' Luke xix. 14, 'We will not have this man to reign over us;' Jer. ii. 17, 'Hast thou not procured this to thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God when he led thee by the way?' It was not his leaving you, but your leaving him. You would not try what you could do with these common means. And will you after all this bring a charge against God and say, If you be damned, you cannot help it? It was God delighted in your destruction? What have you to allege against him?

1. Is it because you would continue in your sins and yet be saved? But God hath decreed the wicked shall be damned, and hath made a law that whosoever will not accept of his grace, but continue in their sins, shall perish for ever: Rev. xxi. 27, 'And there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.' This is to tax the wisdom of the lawgiver, and the whole way of his government in the world. Must God be accounted cruel because he taketh that course which all governors take to exact duty, upon penalties and rewards? Is there not a mercy and an help in that he will bind you to your duty by so strict a way of engagement? Are not these the 'cords of a man,' Hosea xi. 4. A way of dealing suitable to reasonable natures? Do not men even renounce humanity in excepting against such a curse, fear and love being the two things that excite us to anything? Or is it because these rewards and penalties are eternal? Is there not the more help, the more weighty the considerations are that move us? And can they be supposed to have any inclination to virtuous and holy living that will not be drawn by so great a benefit as eternal happiness, and warned by so great a danger as eternal misery? If God did enforce duty, and conceal the importance of it as to your personal happiness or misery, were not then the objection against his proceeding more rational? And besides, is it not fit that God should deal according to the excellency of his being in his way of government? That his laws should be more spiritual, since he is a judge of spirits? His punishments and rewards must be greater and eternal, since he liveth for ever. Earthly princes must promise and threaten as their being and power will permit, lest their authority be made ridiculous by affixing penalties which they cannot inflict. As your obedience to God is built upon an higher right, so his enforcements should be proportionable. The power of earthly princes is



temporal, and reacheth only to the body ; they die, and can reach no further than the outward man ; but God liveth for ever : therefore, according to the sublimity of his nature, so must his punishments be more terrible. Your offence is greater, so is your punishment. Or what is it that your cavil lieth against ? Not so much the making of the law with penalties, as the executing of it. Would you think so basely and blasphemously of God that he should not satisfy his word lest such as you should suffer ? Will it stand with his wisdom to make a law and never execute it ? or with his truth to threaten punishment and break his word, and cause it to become a vain scarecrow ? Must he rule the world by a law, and say that to awe sinners which he never meaneth to do ? with his goodness, that the worst should fare as well as the best ? that he should suffer a sort of sinful creatures to despise his mercy, abuse his patience, trample his laws underfoot, and after all this escape unpunished ? Oh, consider how unreasonable it is that God should alter the tenor of his covenant to gratify you in your sins ? Surely it would be a bold demand if any creature should ask it of God that he should turn day into night, and night into day at their pleasure, to gratify their sports. It is bolder by far that he should alter all his wise counsels by which he governeth the world ; to make the way to hell serve for the way to heaven ; that they may wanton it in their sins, and please their senses without control. Therefore your hearts should not fret against the Lord because he hath appointed such a punishment. You love the bait, and yet complain of the hook.

2. Is it because you would have God force you to be good whether you will or no, and by an absolute constraining power drive you out of your flesh-pleasing course ? Consider how unbeseeming it is to the wisdom of God that men should be virtuous and holy by necessity, and not by free choice. Virtue then were no virtue ; not a moral, but a natural property, as burning is to fire ; and it were no more praise-worthy for us to mind heavenly things than it is for a stone to move downward or a spark upward. It is true God must make us willing, but willing we must be. Now there is no such thing on your parts, when you wilfully refuse the helps God affordeth : Acts xiii. 46, ' It was necessary that the word of God should have been first spoken to you, but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the gentiles.' At least you do not oblige your hearts to meet with God, and to improve means and mercies, providences and helps. You refuse his help, and then God justly forsaketh you ; for he forsaketh none but those that forsake him first : 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, ' If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever ;' 2 Chron. xv. 2, ' If you seek him, he will be found of you ; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.' Did you improve your helps, and beg God's grace, and carry on his common work as far as you can, then it were another matter ; but you break off with God.

3. Is it because God hath given you such a mutable will, and an appetite and desire to those contentments that beset your senses ? God that hath given appetite, he hath given reason to guide it, and scripture to inform reason, and the Spirit to apply scripture. Your appetite was given you as a servant, not as a master. Adam might

have stood as well as fell. He had a mutable will, but more helps to stand than occasions to fall. What of corruption came in since the fall, man must bear the blame of it, not God. If Adam threw away original righteousness, God took it not away. He could not leave us original righteousness, no more than a condemned man can leave his goods to his children.

4. Is God to blame for leaving temptations in the world? Man's foolish heart thinketh so: Gen. iii. 12, 'The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.' She was given as an help, not a snare. The poison is in the spider, not in the flower. It is our naughty lustful hearts and inordinate affections that make our abode in the world dangerous: 2 Peter i. 4, 'The corruption that is in the world through lust.' And therefore, 'Let no man say, when he is tempted, he is tempted of God: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,' James i. 13, 14. We are more ready to entertain temptations, than providence is to offer them to us; for we seek them out when they are wanting. All temptations work, not by constraining efficacy, but objectively, and by enticing persuasion; and have we not more earnest persuasions to be good, to serve God, and forsake sin? Persuasions to love God are as frequent as temptations to desert him to please the flesh. If you cannot deny the devil and the flesh, how can you deny God, who pleadeth with you with better arguments than the devil, the world, and the flesh can? by endless joys and easeless torments. The temptations from worldly comforts arise from your naughty hearts. You should thank God for his mercies, and use them as cords of love, rather than snares of sin. The creatures in themselves are God's spokesmen: it is we make them proctors for sin. Is not God and Christ a more lovely object than all the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world? These things do not force our will; they do but draw our consent; and surely more lovely things, and more apt to do that, are those things which God hath propounded to you in the covenant of grace. If the devil entice you, it is because you were more willing to hearken to him than to God who warned you of his wiles, and told you of your danger, and invited you to a better happiness. Satan can but solicit, not constrain. He findeth matter to work upon, or else you would not easily give entertainment to his suggestions.

The devil findeth the fire kindled, he only bloweth up the flame. Well, then, you see from all this that God is not to blame. He willeth not the destruction of his creatures, but their salvation. But man is naught, and would fain transfer his guilt upon others. When Zopyrus had cut his own nose and lips, he gave out that the Babylonians had so barbarously used him. We ruin ourselves, and lay the fault on others, yea, on God himself. It is said in the gospel, 'The enemies of a man are those of his own house;' so we harbour these snakes in our bosoms that will sting us to death.

#### *Use 2. Of exhortation.*

To exhort you to repent and turn to the Lord. The Lord desireth not the destruction of a sinner. God doth not deny the sentence, or retract the law, only it is not his delight. Some abuse it to hopes of impunity, or at least to delay.



First, To hopes of impunity. Though God doth not with an antecedent will desire the death of a sinner, yet with a consequent will he doth, upon supposition of their sin and obstinate rebellion against him. Will you then grow the bolder in sinning because of God's mercy? This is to suck poison out of the sweetest flower. 'He will by no means clear the guilty,' Exod. xxxvii. 6; 'He will wound the hairy scalp of all such as go on in their trespasses,' Ps. lxxviii. 21. The pit is a-digging; sentence is given, but not executed, Eccles. viii. 11; condemned already, John iii. 18; forbearance is not remission: Rom. ix. 22, 'He endureth with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.' Here is suffering, long-suffering, and much long-suffering, yet all this while fitted to destruction. God giveth them a long day, but reckoneth with them at last. A man may be reprieved when sentence is gone out against him, and at last executed. We are not sure of a day's respite. The warrant for execution is signed, as well as sentence passed. All is forfeited; will you not be affected with this woful condition? What, condemned men, and never moved at it! there is but a step between you and death. Sentence is passed; God forbeareth the execution, and will you rest only upon that? it is but *I victor, obnubito capus*. It is but one word from God's mouth, and they will cover thy face as they did Haman's and despatch thee presently. That little space that is given is not given to frolic away in sins and carnal pleasures, but for repentance, and making sure your salvation: Rev. ii. 21, 'I gave her space to repent, and she repented not.' God is bending his bow, and whetting his sword, if they turn not: God is angry with the wicked every day, Ps. vii. 11; their pit is a-digging, Ps. xciv. 12. Admire God's patience, and make good use of it. Build not thy hopes of heaven upon it. Sue for his forgiveness. Forbearance may be the portion of his enemies; forgiveness is the portion of his children. Punishment may be respited for a time, and then execution. Oh, therefore, do not make an ill use of God's unwillingness to strike; we know not the number of God's calls. See what is the right use we should make of it: Ezek. xviii. 32, 'I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.' Some abuse it to another purpose. When we tell men how ready the Lord is to receive them, this doth but make men delay their repentance, and grow the bolder in sinning. Oh, therefore, now turn to the Lord. If a malefactor arraigned at the bar should perceive by any speech or gesture, sign or token, any inclination in the judge to show mercy, how would he work upon that advantage? what suit, what means would he make for his life? how would he importune all his friends to entreat for him; fall down upon his knees, and beg for his life? God maketh an overture of his mercy; discovereth a desire to pardon you, yea, he stretcheth out his hands all the day long; why do we not make means to him? Time was when the flaming sword was in the way, and the curse of God's law would have kept thee back, if thou hadst been never so willing to turn to God; all that thou couldst do could never have procured the pardon of thy sins past, if thou hadst never so much lamented and reformed them; but this impediment is taken out of the way, and 'God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not

imputing their trespasses to them. But that this exhortation may not be lost, let us consider what this turning is; whether we have turned, yea, or no; whether we do not yet need a further turning.

1. What this turning is. We shall know that by three propositions which contain the whole sum of the christian faith.

[1.] That God is man's chiefest good and last end; and unless he be so to every one of us, we cannot be saved: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and wine increased.'

[2.] That there is no way of coming to God, and enjoying him everlastingly, but by Christ: John xiv. 6, 'Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.'

[3.] There is no way of enjoying communion with Christ, but in a constant uniform course of holiness and obedience: 1 John i. 6, 7, 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin;' Heb. xii. 14, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Therefore this turning that we may live everlastingly consists in three things—(1.) In a turning from the creature to God; (2.) From self to Christ; (3.) From sin to holiness, and herein lieth the great work of grace. Let me a little evince the necessity of these three things.

(1.) That there must be a turning from the creature to God. Here is man's original deviation, his lapse and fall from God to the creature, and by repentance we return to God again, as our chief good and last end. That appeareth partly by the end of our creation. Man was made for God, for the glorifying and enjoying of him: the very constitution of his soul sheweth it. There are three sorts of beings; angels, that are pure spirits without flesh, made for heaven, and the company of God, not for earth. Brutes that are made flesh without immortal souls, made for earth, not for heaven; and man that is of a middle nature between both these, that hath a fleshly substance, and an immortal soul: so that he was made partly for earth, and partly for heaven, as partaking of both. A body that was made out of the dust of the earth, and a soul that came down from the superior world, and must return thither again. Now these two things must be sorted according to the dignity of the parts of which man consisteth. The soul being the better part, the good of the soul is the chiefest good, and the good of the body inferior and subordinate. The one is the way and means, the other the end. He was made for earth in his passage and way to heaven, but his house and happiness is in heaven, where he is to enjoy the blessed God, and to glorify him among his holy angels, and those blessed creatures that dwell above in the region of spirits. Well, then, this was the end for which man was created, and while he remained innocent he had an heart disposed and inclined to God as his chiefest good, to love and fear him, and depend upon him as the fountain of happiness. Partly by the first temptation, by which man was foiled. Satan's aim in the temptation was to set man loose from God; and to fasten him



upon the creature, that he might have no cause to look back upon God any more; to draw him off from God by unbelief and disobedience, and to fasten him to the creature, by bringing him to delight in some outward thing forbidden by God. Man at first referred and carried on all things to God's glory; afterwards made his own bodily good the end and scope of his actions: Jer. ii. 13, 'Left the fountain of living waters, and hewed out to themselves broken cisterns that will hold no water.' As subtle men, when they intend to break off a treaty of marriage, set another match afoot: as those that would draw a man's heart from the love of his own wife entangle him in the love of a strange woman; so as Jeroboam when he fell off from Judah for the securing of the kingdom of the ten tribes to himself and his posterity, thought of keeping them from going up to Jerusalem according to God's ordinance, which might in time unite them to the kingdom of Judah again, and for that end sets up two calves in Dan and Bethel; so Satan sets up sensual good, the creature, to detain our affections. Well, then, the fall was nothing else but change of the last end of man's actions. He fell off from God as envious, false, and wishing ill to him which before he loved and feared, and depended upon as his chief good and last end; turned to the creature, especially sensible things, that whether God would or no, he might seek his own happiness there. By the change of the end, all moral goodness is lost, for all actions are subordinated to the last end, and determined by it. In relation to it, things are good or evil. Here was man's disease, a conversion from God to the creature. Partly by his restitution by grace. What is the work of grace, but to bring us to this, that we may make God our great end and scope, that we may enjoy God? As the needle that is touched with the loadstone turneth to the north; so is the soul wrought upon by grace turned to God: Ps. lxxx. 19, 'Turn us again, O Lord of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved;' Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;' Deut. xxx. 6, 'The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed to love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.' The soul is awakened, made sensible of the emptiness of the creature and carnal things, in the enjoyment of which we were formerly satisfied. Secular vanities become tasteless. Then seeking and inquiring after God, and how they may be happy for ever, is their work. Before they loved pleasures more than God, 2 Tim. iii. 2; now all their desires and endeavours are to enjoy him. This man is turned and gone a-whoring from God to the creature.

(2.) From self to Christ. When we think of turning to God, we cannot accomplish our purpose without Christ. There is a legal exclusion against us. We come to God by Christ: Heb. vii. 25, 'Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him.' To God as our chief good, by him as mediator: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God;' in a joyful and delightful communion with him. Before that could be done, we were to be ransomed from the curse of God, and rescued from the power of the devil, which none but Christ could do for us. Well, then, till we give up ourselves to

him to be saved in his own way, we can never be happy. A man that findeth himself liable to the wrath of God must have a mediator, and he that would love and serve God must have a powerful helper. This is conversion, thankfully to entertain an offered saviour. Every converted man doth so that feeleth himself undone by sin, and liable to the wrath of God: he frameth himself to believe in Christ with all his heart, that he may become to him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. In his whole converse with God he maketh use of Christ, seeing his own lost and undone condition: not for a fit or pang, but Christ liveth in him and dwelleth in him.

(3.) From sin to holiness. We must turn from his ways and live; otherwise what communion between light and darkness, Christ and sinners? all that would make God their portion, and Christ their saviour, must be changed in the tenor of their lives. You can have no part in Christ, nor be saved, unless the current be turned, and the course of your endeavours run in another channel, 1 Peter i. 14, 15. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. He is a man of another strain, and maketh it his business to become holy, and to please God in all things. He hath no sin but what he hateth, and striveth against.

2. Have you ever turned? It must be so, or you will never live; all by nature need a turning: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh.' Since the corruption of nature in Adam, men have an inclination and poise of heart that inclineth them to fleshly and sensible things. Man lost that original righteousness that should dispose him and incline him to God as his chiefest good and last end; so that the bent of his heart in his degenerate estate is wholly set by natural inclination, much more by inveterate custom, to temporal and sensible things, to please the flesh, not to please the Lord. The soul being destitute of grace, or the image of God, or original righteousness, it can only close with things present and known, as the pleasures of the body, which being wholly minded divert us from the love of God, and the study of heavenly things. You were born after the flesh, and do only mind lower and earthly things; and if your hearts be not turned, and the bent of it altered, you are undone for ever. Though the soul still cometh down from the superior world, yet it soon forgets its divine original, and being put into the body conformeth itself to the body, and accommodateth all its faculties and operations to the interests thereof, and hath an inclination to please itself in earthly things; as water put into a square vessel or a round vessel receiveth a square or round form from the vessel: Rom. viii. 5, 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;' are strange to God and strange to heavenly things.

3. Do we yet need turning? Two sorts of persons do yet need turning—(1.) The wicked, that wholly need a turning to God; (2.) The regenerate, that in this world are but turning in part.

[1.] The wicked. Certainly they have need to look to themselves. Now all the question is, who are wicked? The world hath a gross notion of this term, and apply it only to the drunkard, or swearer, or fornicator, or murderer. These indeed need to be turned and converted;



but the scripture giveth us another notion of wickedness; whosoever liveth after the flesh: Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.' Though he be not such an open sinner as others are. Whosoever hath placed his contentment in earthly things, and seeketh them more than heavenly felicity, that savoureth not the things of the Spirit, as heaven and glory, or the saving graces of God's Spirit, that cometh down from above, and tend thither: Heb. xii. 16, 'Not a profane person, as was Esau, who sold his birthright for a morsel of meat.' Such as count more of their sensual lusts than of their spiritual prerogatives, they are profane persons, they are *βεβηλοι*. It is not a glutton or drunkard only that is a wicked man, or an whoremonger, but any that loveth earthly things rather than heavenly; that doth not set himself to come to God as his chiefest good, and make that the business of his life. Profaneness is a light esteem of things of the greatest price.

[2.] Those that have begun already to turn to God. None are yet so turned but they need to be turned more. We still seek too much happiness in the creature, and do too little set our hearts on God: Col. iii. 1, 'If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above.' Though we be turned in part, yet still we must turn from the creature to God, from earthly things to heavenly, from self to Christ. To renounce your own righteousness: Phil. iii. 8, 'I do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.' From sin to holiness. We have not yet attained, Phil. iii. 13. The work is not the work of a day.

Use 3. Of comfort. To comfort the sincere and broken-hearted, that are troubled with the sense of God's wrath. God delights not in your destruction. There is joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner, Luke xv. 7; Ps. xxxiv. 18, 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and he saveth such as are of a contrite spirit;' Isa. lvii. 16, 'For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.'

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## SERMON UPON JEREMIAH XLV. 5.

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*And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.*—JER. XLV. 5.

JEREMIAH's former prophecies were concerning whole nations or public persons, but this passage concerneth a private man—Baruch, the prophet's scribe. What was the matter? Jeremiah had used Baruch's help for writing in a book, or gathering together in one roll or volume, what God had prophesied concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, as you may see, Jer. xxxvi. After he had written it, he was to pronounce it in the hearing of the people in the house of God on the fast-day; which he doth boldly. Some of the nobles being affected, carry the roll to the king Jechoniah, who was enraged at it, and burned the roll, and gave order to apprehend Jeremiah and Baruch; but the Lord hid them. Now because *contumacia accumulât pœnam*, God biddeth Jeremiah and Baruch write another roll, wherein were written the same things, and many more like words. But now he began to be discouraged, by considering what things were likely to befall him by the writing and publishing of this second roll. Seeing the storm arise, his heart faileth; and though before he acted valiantly, and seemed to stand out like an oak, yet now his heart shaketh like a leaf; his complaint was bitter: 'The Lord hath added grief to my sorrow.' So his lamentation is expressed, ver. 3. Upon this, the Lord telleth him he was about to pluck up all, to make desolate the Jewish state and people—as he himself knew, for he had written the roll—and should he be troubled for his own peace and safety, and desire to live at quiet and ease when all was going to wreck and ruin? never dream of any such matter; suffice it thee well that thou escapest with thy life. God would promise to spare his life; nothing else, 'and seekest thou great things,' &c.

In the words we have—

1. A reproof of Baruch, 'And seekest thou great things for thyself?'

2. A dissuasive or dehortation, 'Seek them not.'

What were these great things which he might be supposed to seek for himself? Rabbi David Kimchi and other Jewish writers think it was the gift of prophecy, or the prophetic office; that he might not only write out the prophecies of another, but be a prophet himself. Vatablus followeth them. But this is but a foolish conceit. The true reason is, when he saw the prophet but newly escaped one trouble, he was ready to fall into another; and the Jews so wedded to their sins



that they would rather tear in pieces their reprovers than be admonished by them ; and expected daily new troubles and torments if apprehended and imprisoned. It was a hot business to be assistant to a prophet so distasted : 'The Lord hath added grief to my sorrow.' So that these great things were a prosperous and peaceable estate for his own particular, or quiet, ease, and safety in the midst of so great calamity. Are thy concerns more precious than the temple or salvation of my people? Leave off this dream of a pleasant life in this world. Men are mightily addicted to self-love, and when God calleth them to endure great things, they seek great things for themselves ; and when they should prepare for sufferings, dream of honour, and credit, and a quiet state in the world.

*Doct.* That seeking great things for ourselves is a sin very unbecoming the people of God, especially in a time of common calamity.

Shouldst thou, an holy man—it is spoken with indignation—thou that hast written the prophecy, and believest, be so troublously careful for thine own safety?

I shall first state the sin in these considerations.

First, When man fell from God, he set up himself in the place of God. Self is the great idol of the world. Lay aside God, and self interposeth as the next heir to the crown. As Reuben went up unto his father's bed ; so when man had done what he could to cast God out of the throne, self usurped divine honours. It is the end of all our desires, inclinations, and endeavours, and the dominating principle in the soul ; the principle, rule, and end of all their actions. They live from self, 'in self, and to self, Phil. ii. 21. All men seek their own things, and none the things of Christ. Adam would be as God, provide for himself, shift for himself : 'The man is become as one of us.' His own personal contentment is his highest aim. Therefore Christ, when he came to restore the world as a prophet, establisheth self-denial as the first lesson : Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' Man would be his own god, sufficient to himself, live according to his own will and for his own ends ; and there is no rectifying the nature of man till this self-love and self-will and self-seeking be unravelled. As a redeemer, he would discover such wonders of love in our recovery that self-love may be checked and quitted by the obligation of an higher love : 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'If he died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them.'

Secondly, As self is misplaced and set in the throne of God, so self is mistaken. The soul is not counted self, but the flesh or the body ; and they value the interests of the bodily life before God and the true proper interests of the soul. The body of man is the worst half, *vilissima pars hominis*, the shell, the sheath, as it is called in Daniel. That which is man is within. To get the soul beautified by grace is the chief thing. We never read of any man that hated his own flesh, but there are many that wrong their souls : Prov. viii. 36, 'He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul.' To please their body they neglect their souls ; yea, to please the body with sensual and worldly

things they forfeit their souls: Mat. xvi. 26, 'What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?' It is in Luke, 'He loseth himself:' Luke ix. 25, 'And lose himself and be cast away.' And so a man properly loseth himself while he loveth himself sinfully. And while they seek themselves and their carnal pleasure when they live, they lose themselves when they die. The soul is not extinguished, but forfeited; not in a natural, but legal sense. While they seek the good of the body to the hurt of the soul, they do not seek their happiness, but the destruction both of body and soul. The merchant that overloadeth his ship, to the drowning both of the ship and himself, doth not seek his good, but hurt. So the man that is all for self, that is, his body, that he may live in ease, and honour, and pomp, doth not seek himself, but ruin himself; and whilst he spendeth all his time and care that he may live delectably and comfortably in this world, he maketh himself miserable for ever in the other world; his soul is snatched away of a sudden, and in time it will draw the body after it: Luke xii. 21, 'Such a fool is he that heapeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.' He only seeketh the good of his body; he accounteth that himself, and he seeks it to the prejudice of his soul; bestoweth all his time, care, endeavours in providing for his perishing carcass, and neglects to provide for his immortal soul, and so ruineth both body and soul. In short, all sin and disorder cometh from this self-love, mistaken and misplaced: 2 Tim. iii. 2, 'In the latter days men shall be lovers of themselves, proud, covetous, boasters,' &c. A long train of sin followeth. If men be lovers of themselves, they will be covetous, proud, neglecters and blasphemers of God, haters of those that are good; for this lordly idol of carnal self can neither endure superior nor equal man nor God.

Thirdly, The body being taken for self, the interests of the body and bodily life are the main things sought after. Then they must have great things for themselves here in this life, and so the world cometh in as the food and supply of the flesh, and that is set up above God as another idol. And therefore men are said to love pleasure more than God, 2 Tim. iii. 4, and the praise of men more than the praise of God, John xii. 42, and the profits of the world more than God, 1 John ii. 15; the creature more than the Creator. Present things, that are grateful to sense, are the only great things. 'Seekest thou great things for thyself?'

Great things are of two sorts; either—(1.) In reality; or, (2.) In appearance.

1. Great things in reality are God and Christ, the law of grace, the promises of pardon of sin, and eternal life: Hosea v. 12, 'I have written to them the great things of my law.' There are great things indeed discovered in the word, as a great God, a precious Saviour, the way of salvation: these are great things indeed. So 2 Peter i. 4, 'To us are given exceeding great and precious promises,' τὰ μέγιστα ἐπαγγελματα; they contain spiritual and eternal riches. These are worthy and dear-bought blessings. It argueth a low, base spirit not to seek these spiritual and heavenly things. But these suit not with carnal self, because they are only valued and esteemed by faith.



2. Great things in appearance. Those are worldly things which in reality are the smallest matters, 2 Cor. vi. 2; but the flesh counts them great because of the suitableness they carry to our fancies and appetites. Great affections make the things of the world seem great; these are only great in our own conceit: Prov. xviii. 11, 'The rich man's wealth is a strong tower, and an high wall in his own conceit.' We promise ourselves much happiness from the enjoyment of these outward things, and therefore our hearts run after them. Well, then, these are the great things here spoken of.

Fourthly, When men seek earthly things, they seek them in an over-great proportion, as much of the world as they can possibly get into their hands. But you will say, How can this be applied to Baruch, when he only sought his safety and the preservation of his life, which was in danger by reason of his zeal and activity for God? I answer—

1. In troublesome times, he that would be at ease and security seeketh great things, and to be unwilling to undergo difficulties and dangers for God's sake is to seek great things for ourselves, for it argueth a spirit wedded to its own worldly felicity.

2. The same disposition, allowed without check, would carry us further. Every man, as far as he can reach, seeketh his own things. The flesh is wise in its own matters; at first it aimeth only to things which are within our grasp and reach; but then still it enlargeth itself, and would have more; and when that is obtained, we would fain be built a story higher in the world in honour and greatness. Now God can interpret the disposition of our hearts. He judgeth of the sin not according to the actual intendment of the sinner, but the intent of the sin. There is *finis operis*, and *finis operantis*. He seeth how far this disposition would carry us. Every one aspireth as high as he can, and then he would be higher. Consider Elisha's speech to Gehazi: 2 Kings v. 26, 'Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants?' Why, he asked no such matter of Naaman; he asked but a talent of silver and two changes of raiment, 1 Kings v. 22. But the same covetousness and self-seeking would carry him further. The prophet dilateth on the full end of the sin: he that was weary of being the prophet's man, and must set up for himself, he must then enlarge himself into a family, and then purchase vintages, and be a great man in Israel. So Baruch seeks great things when troubled at the danger he was in for God's sake.

Fifthly, When these great things are affected, then they are sought after primarily and earnestly; their most serious and continual endeavours are after earthly things, the pleasure, honour, and profits of the world. There is an innocent regular self-love, even to the body, which sets the world a-work: Ecces. vi. 7, 'All a man's labour is for the mouth;' the support of the body and the bodily state first; a metonymy of the subject, the mouth, for the nourishment put into it; then a synecdoche, a part for the whole; food and raiment, the sum of all that he needeth. Now this is put for whole. So Prov. xvi. 20, 'He that laboureth, laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of

him.' The husbandman laboureth in the earth, the mariner at sea, the shepherd in the field, the carpenter in the wood, the tradesman in the shop, the scholar at his books; they all labour for the mouth. There is apparel, lodging necessary; yet this is the most urgent necessity: a man will sell lodging, clothing, house, land, and all that he hath for his mouth: Gen. xlvii. 15-19, 'Give us bread, for why should we die?' And Joseph said, 'Give your cattle,' &c.

But then there presently cometh the faulty self-love, which sheweth itself in three things—(1.) Immoderate desires; (2.) Immoderate endeavours; (3.) An ill ranking of means and ends.

1. An inordinate desire. In that place quoted, Eccles. vi. 7, 'All a man's labour is for the mouth; yet the appetite is not filled.' The covetous desire of the worldling remaineth still insatiable; though he hath abundant provision for his necessary wants, yet he toileth still as if he had nothing. The mouth is a narrow portal, the stomach not very large, the whole man not above five foot long; yet his mind not satisfied, no satisfaction nor contentment in his present state: Phil. iv. 11, 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. But godliness with contentment is great gain;' ver. 8, 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content;' Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have,' &c. If it were so, we would comply with providence without distraction, or complaining that God hath added grief to our sorrow. But when our wandering desires still covet and crave more, we cannot so well trust ourselves with God, and refer all issues and events to his good providence; and would not grudge and repine against God, and give way to heartless dejection. But when we set our thoughts on great things, we would be maintained at such a rate, and have us and ours thus provided for, then Baruch's complaint will be ours. And therefore Baruch's reproof must be ours also. We cannot go about our duty with cheerfulness, but are full of fears and troubles; for it is lusts that breed our disquiet.

2. Immoderate endeavours. Carnal self-love will so wholly engross our endeavours, that better cares will be jostled out, and God and heaven will be neglected, the stream of our most industrious thoughts and cares run in another channel. We are bidden to labour for the meat that perisheth not; and 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.' We cannot do too much there. But alas! the lean kine devour the fat; the only great things are little sought after, but the fancied great things do continually set us a-work, and there appeareth not half that care, not the hundredth-part of care for heaven and the grace of Christ as there is for the pleasures, honours, and profits of the world.

3. A disorderly ranking of means and ends. There should be a subordination of all our labours to higher ends. Baruch was not to consider of life and livelihood, but to discharge his duty; but he looketh to life and safety, and subordinateth the command of God to that end: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek first the kingdom of God.' All christians should first seek to honour God, and please God, and enjoy God. But we prefer our own ease, quiet, profit, before the glory of God, and our pre-



sent good before our future; and, to get the world, lose ourselves, sell the soul, break our peace, part with better things for these things' sake, sell our birthright for a mess of pottage, dig for iron with mattocks of gold and silver, and so grossly seek after great things for ourselves.

Sixthly, That God's people have not wholly divested themselves of this evil frame of heart. Self-love is not extinguished in them, but only mortified. They do not so grossly, heinously, and principally gratify carnal self; yet ease is good; they would have the world friendly; and when they cannot reconcile God's dispensations and their selfish and fleshly inclinations, their hearts are disquieted.

*Reasons*—(1.) Self is dear; (2.) The world is near; (3.) Faith is weak; (4.) Love to God is not so fervent as it should be.

1. Self is dear. A man is not wholly dispossessed of carnal self till he come to heaven. Flesh dwelleth in them, as well as the Spirit: Gal. v. 17, 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.' As long as flesh dwelleth in them, they would have things grateful to sense; and sometimes in such an inordinacy that they cannot so sweetly trust God when dangers assault them; or submit to God when his providence is past; but they bewray, before the event, some diffidence; after the event, some impatience.

2. The world is near. While the soul dwelleth in flesh, and looketh out by the senses, present things will work upon us: 'Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world,' 2 Tim. iv. 10. Partial defection, forsaking Paul's company, loath to undergo the hazards of the gospel; so Baruch here.

3. Faith is weak, which should carry us to the world to come: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' It is not easy to shut the eye of sense or open that of faith.

4. Love to God is not so fervent but that it suffereth some abatement by carnal self-love: 2 Tim. i. 7, 8, 'I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord,' &c. 'Timothy needed to be put in remembrance. It is hard to deny all for an unseen God.'

Seventhly, The children of God may have too great desires of their own peace, safety, and welfare before some imminent calamity; as Zebedee's children: Mat. xx. 19-21, 'Then came the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy kingdom.' Christ had but newly foretold his passion. Oh, how hard a thing is it to get rid of the love of the world, and pleasant dreams about it! The apostles and their friends dream of an earthly kingdom, and worldly honour to Christ's servants, notwithstanding he did so often tell them the contrary, and did study to prepare them for the cross. Oh, how necessary

is it that all should watch their hearts, that the love of the world may not creep upon them ! . Once more, the disciples quarrelled at Christ's last supper who should be greatest, Luke xxii. 24, which should be looked upon as the worthiest, and so be preferred before the rest. So Baruch here, who had written the roll, and believed it, and so must know that God was about to pluck up and cast down ; yet he seeketh his own personal welfare, loath to hazard his interests for God. The best men are too much apt to be taken up with a care of their own safety, and so neglect their duty.

*Reasons.*

1. That it is a sin misbecoming the people of God.

[1.] They have chosen God for their portion, and so seek all their happiness and comfort in him, and not delight in anything apart from God. If they lose all, they have enough in God : 1 Sam. xxx. 6, 'The people spake of stoning him, but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God ;' Hab. iii. 18, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, &c., yet I will rejoice in the Lord ; I will joy in the God of my salvation.' On the contrary, Saul comforted himself in the creature when he had lost God's favour : 1 Sam. xv. 29, 30, 'Then he said, I have sinned : yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God.' The Lord hath rejected thee ; yet honour me before the people. He should have mourned to get God's favour again. To rejoice in anything besides God, that is, apart from God, and not in order to him, is adultery. Covetousness, which is but another word for seeking great things for ourselves, is sometimes called idolatry, Eph. v. 3, because it is a setting up another chief good, and so another God. And sometimes adultery : James iv. 4, 'Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God ? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.' If God hath given thee the creatures as servants, they must not come into the master's bed.

[2.] They have resigned themselves to God, are not their own, and have nothing their own, but in order to God : 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, 'Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own ? For ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's ;' Rom. xiv. 18, 'He that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.'

[3.] You cannot seek great things for yourselves, but you must make light of Christ ; when a man seeks things, but doth not seek the things of Christ also : Phil. ii. 2, 'All seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's.' They are propounded as *ἀσύστατα*, that is, his own things chiefly and principally. If he be thus addicted to his own things, he will seek them before and more than the things of Christ ; his own profit and preferment, his own praise and glory, more than the profit, praise, and honour of Christ and his gospel. The Gadarenes preferred hogs before Christ, the merchants their merchandise, the farmers their farms, Mat. xxii. 3. At least it will be a blot upon your service ; you cannot act with such a pure spirit when you seek your



own ease, safety, profit, not caring what becometh of Christ and his interest in the world.

[4.] Self-seeking is very dishonourable to religion. The world is very sensible of it : Job i. 9, 'Doth Job serve God for nought?' The world, which is upheld by a combination of interests, judge of others by themselves, think religion is but a cleaner way of self-seeking. Therefore if we seek great things for ourselves, we lie open to their reproach.

[5.] Our Redeemer pleased not himself, Rom. xv. 3; therefore he taught us not his religion that we might make an advantage of it to scramble for worldly things.

[6.] It is not only an evil thing, but an evil sign, to be carried out to temporal things for self-ends. Some sins are evil, but not evil signs; as sudden passions, fainting in great troubles, vain thoughts. But this is an evil sign : James iv. 4, 'Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God;' and 1 John ii. 15, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'

2. Especially in the calamities of the church and people of God. The time maketh sins more odious : 'Is this a time to receive money,' &c., 2 Kings v. 26. It is to lay a stumbling-block in the way of new converts. Christ was angry with the pharisees for not discerning the signs of the times. It is noted as a great shame in the enemies that they gave themselves to jollity when the people of God were devoted to destruction : Esther iii. 15, 'And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed.' That jollity is noted when the ruin of God's people was determined, and that they used carnal jollity when it was a time of mourning. It is too soft and delicate a thing for one's self to desire security and safety when the whole is in danger. It is as if we were building our own nests when the tree is cutting down, or mending our cabin when the ship is likely to be torn in pieces or sinking. Is it a time to drive a trade for ourselves when we should drive it for heaven? We will not be diverted from the creature when God seemeth ready to snatch it out of our hands. The holy men of God would take their share and lot with God's people. Joseph was high, yet made no provision for his children in Egypt; they went with their brethren into Canaan. Moses chose rather affliction with the people of God, &c., Heb. xi. 25. God maketh him his minister to disinherit the seed of Moloch, and people of God come out of Moses' loins : 'Blot me out of thy book.' Joshua thought of no inheritance for himself, till by lot he had given inheritance to all the tribes.

*Use.* To dissuade us from seeking great things for ourselves. To this end—

1. Take down self. What greatness is in this self that thou shouldst be of such account with God, or that thou dost so project for it? What a low conceit of themselves have the best saints had? 'I am a worm, and no man,' saith Christ. The least of saints, the greatest of sinners, saith Paul. The best of God's children have abhorred themselves, like the spire of a steeple, *minimus in summo*, the least at the highest. David a king, yet like a weaned child.

2. What are these great things which carnal sense craveth? The world, *οικῆμα*, 1 Cor. vii. 31, an empty pageantry, a fair outside, not skin-deep. Broken cisterns hold but a little; if God shall fill them up, they cannot hold, but leak out our comfort if not filled again. God hath written a book on purpose to take off men's hearts from the creatures, and employed Solomon about it, who took not only a sensual but a critical delight in them, and he found them all vanity and vexation of spirit.

END OF VOL. XXI.











