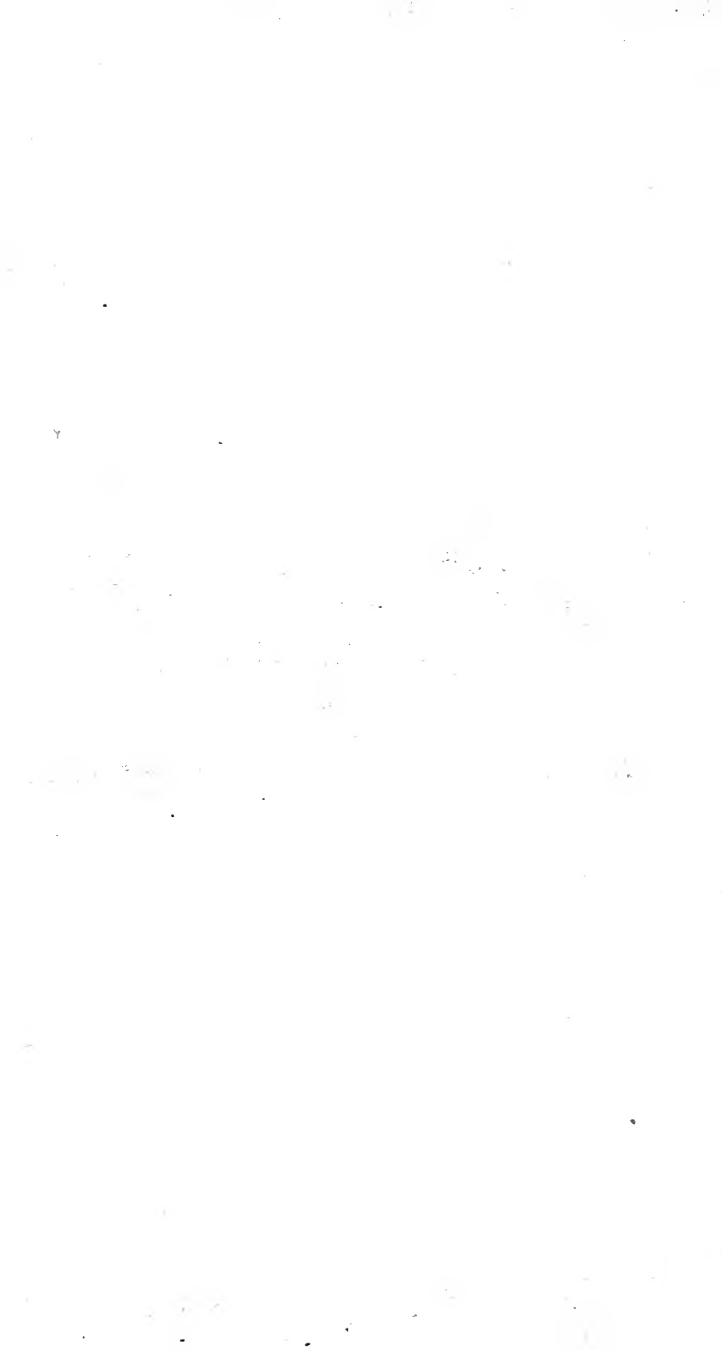
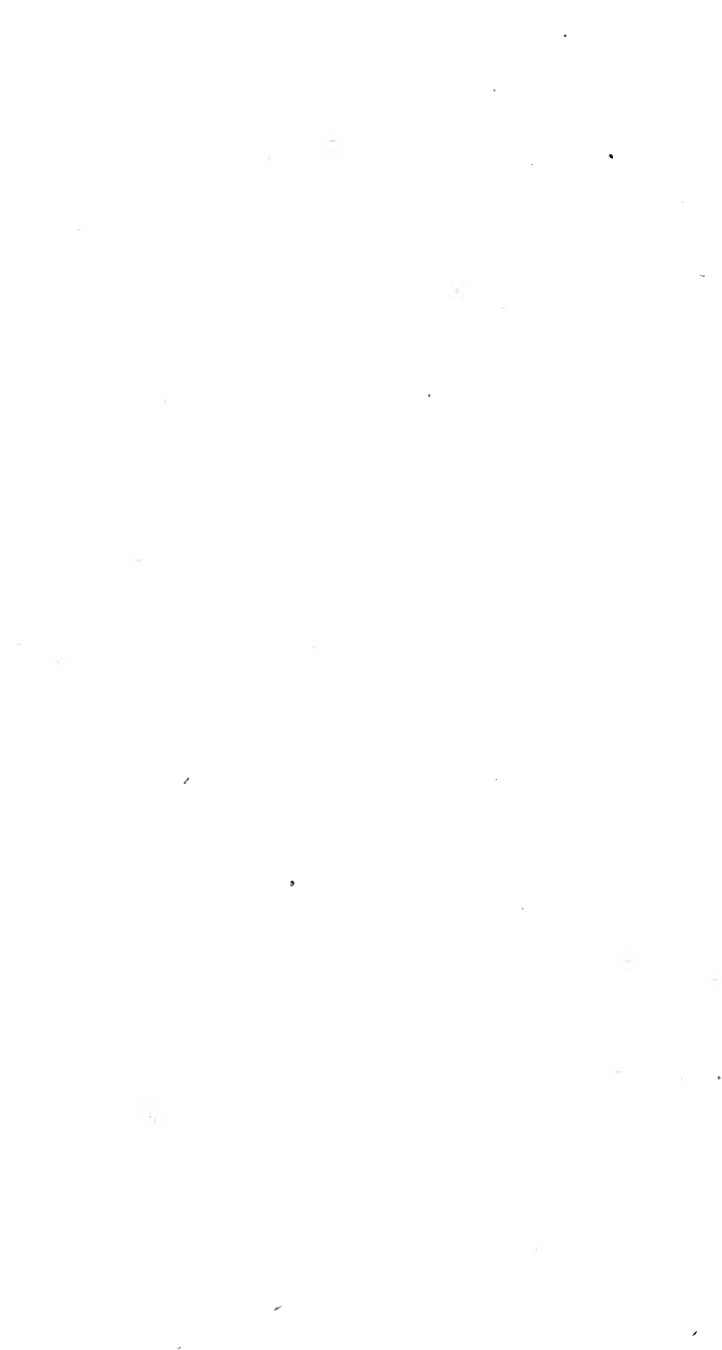






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EVANGELICAL
PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE :
BEING
FOURTEEN
S E R M O N S,
PREACHED IN THE PARISH-CHURCH OF
St. MARY MAGDALEN IN OXFORD.
TO WHICH IS ADDED,
THE
COMMUNICANT'S
SPIRITUAL COMPANION.

OR, AN
EVANGELICAL PREPARATION
FOR THE
L O R D ' S S U P P E R .

IN WHICH

- I. The Nature of the Ordinance is shewn.
- II. The Dispositions requisite for a profitable Participation thereof.

WITH

MEDITATIONS AND HELPS FOR PRAYER,
SUITABLE TO THE SUBJECT.

BY THE REVEREND THOMAS HAWEIS,

Late of St. Mary Magdalen-Hall, OXFORD; and Chaplain to the Right Hon.
the Earl of Peterborough.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following Discourses are sent into the world, to obviate the manifold misconceptions and misrepresentations which the author of them has lain under. As they contain all the grand points of christianity, and are a faithful epitome of all the author's preaching, they will best serve to declare what those doctrines are, which, as a minister of the gospel, he has thought it his duty to inculcate. Being thankful that he was educated in the communion of the church of England, he is much more so, that in the same he hath been called to the honour of ministering in holy things. Her only authentic standard of doctrine, exhibited in her articles and homilies, which he was required solemnly to subscribe, he professes himself to be conscientiously attached to, from a real persuasion that they contain the solid truths of God's word. How carefully he hath followed that form of sound words, a comparison of the ensuing discourses with those articles and homilies will best determine.

As by the Royal declaration prefixed to the articles he is forbidden, so he presumes not to take them in any sense but that which a literal and grammatical construction of them imports; and he knows no authority by which any minister of the church of England can indulge himself in a greater latitude of interpretation.

As the author cannot but regard subscriptions as bringing the soul under the deepest obligations to sincerity before the great Searcher of hearts, who requireth truth in the inward parts, he cannot think of those who in any degree allow themselves to trifle or prevaricate therewith; but

as of men devoid of conscience towards God, and of honesty towards man.

That the reader may have some general notion beforehand of what he is to expect, the following abstract of the ensuing discourses is laid before him.

The Divinity of the Son and Spirit, co-eternal and co-equal with the Father, not the idol-monster of inferior divinity, is here maintained, in full opposition to the Arian and Semi-Arian; whose blasphemy, though more specious, is not less real than the more avowed and open blasphemy of the Socinian.

The maintainers of the doctrine of the rectitude of human nature, and the freedom of man's choice to good as to evil, will find these proud imaginations attacked, he hopes laid low to the ground, even in the dust, by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The strong evidences of a fallen and corrupted nature, with its dire effects, are produced and confirmed; and the inability of man in his fallen state to any thing but evil, clearly, he trusts, made manifest.

The extent, purity, and spirituality of God's law are laid open, that the conscience may discover and feel its transgressions against it. The eternal obligation of this law is shewn; its awful sanctions declared; the impossibility of obeying it as a covenant of life evinced; and consequently the conviction of our state, as a state of helpless guilt, evidenced.

The one great, glorious and all-sufficient oblation of the Son of God for the sins of the world, as a true and real sacrifice, atonement and propitiation, is pleaded for; its necessity and influence proved; and the various blessings obtained for sinners thereby, set forth.

Faith, as the only means of justification and

acceptance with God, is pleaded for, from considerations demonstrating the impossibility of righteousness before God any other way. And as works of any sort are not admitted as the condition of our pardon and acceptance with God, the position that we are justified by faith only, is maintained and vindicated.

The works of piety and virtue which become men professing godliness, are at large opened, and the necessity of them enforced, from the only true principle of faith which worketh by love. The Antinomian blasphemy is rebuked and censured.

Finally, The means of grace are strongly urged, and the diligent use of them shewn to be the only method of obtaining advancement in the divine life.

The blessedness of the religion of Jesus concludes the whole, as the natural result of the principles and practice above recommended.

These are the grand outlines of the following Sermons; and as they are the most essential matters which relate to salvation, they deserve a serious and attentive perusal;

The gospel of Christ alone is the power of God unto salvation; and though many among ourselves have arisen speaking perverse things, as if a man, whatever were his opinions, provided he was sincere in them and walked conscientiously according to them, was in a state of safety; yet the word of God seems to speak differently, that there is salvation in no name but that of Jesus. And our Reformers were not afraid of the censure of uncharitableness, when they denounced a curse upon the maintainers of so latitudinarian an opinion.

It is earnestly to be wished, that every man who is called a lover of truth may read without prejudice, and judge with candor. As the great Searcher of hearts knows the design of these writings, they are by earnest prayer commended to his blessing; and should they prove the means of bringing but one soul to the knowledge of Jesus, and obedience to the truth, this labour of love will be amply repaid.

Remember, Reader, that awful day which is near, even at the door, when thou must answer for having seen, and I for having written these Discourses: Happy will it be, if we may then together give in our account with joy and not with sorrow.

T. H.

October 20, 1762.

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SERMON I.

OF MAN'S STATE OF INNOCENCE.

GENESIS I. 26.

AND GOD SAID, LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE,
AFTER OUR LIKENESS.

THAT man once enjoyed a state of greater moral rectitude than he doth at present, was an opinion universally received in the heathen world. Their poets describe this happy state as favoured with the visits of their gods, as distinguished with the highest simplicity of manners, as blessed with the spontaneous productions of the earth, and abounding with universal peace and joy; from which concurring circumstances of felicity they have given it the title of "The golden age." Corrupted as their relations are, they plainly indicate the source from whence originally they arose; and amidst all the dark shades of ignorance and error some bright strokes of traditional truth remain. For that man came not from the hand of his Creator the deformed and wretched creature he now appears, is certain: and we are no longer left to vague traditions and uncertain conjectures about it, but enjoy from the mouth of him, whose hand fashioned and formed us, the account of his own workmanship.

The creation of the heavens and the earth, with all their hosts, by the Almighty *fiat*, is in the preceding verses with the most sublime simplicity and brevity declared to us: when, to grace

their new creation, and as the last stroke of infinite wisdom, power and love, consultation is held between the divine persons, (*Gen. i. 26.*) and man is the result of it: Man, to be created in the image of God, as his representative and vicegerent here below, and as the head of the whole family on earth, by whom they should render unto their great Creator due homage and adoration.

“He spake and it was done:” for will and deed with God continually coexist. Behold then the man! “created after the image of God:” adorned with every perfection of mind and body the nature he possessed was capable of; and receiving the divine approbation, pronouncing him “very good.” (*Gen. i. 31.*)

This happy state of man, though but of short duration, well deserves our consideration. Whether to affect our hearts in the view of what we are, compared with what we were designed to be, or to endear to us the Redeemer, the second man from heaven, ordained to be the repairer of the breach the fall hath made; or finally to make us long after the restoration of this original righteousness in part below, and to wait in hope for the fulness of it above; when our Redemption obtained for us and begun on earth shall be completed in heaven.

I shall endeavour therefore, agreeable to the words chosen, To set before you some views of man such as he was originally created: Shew you the blessing and felicity he enjoyed: Indicate the cause of his departure from it; and how we are affected thereby.

“God made man upright,” (*Eccles. vii. 29.*) his own image was stamped upon him, as far as his nature could be he was a faithful mirror, reflecting the wisdom, righteousness, and holiness

of his Creator. God's great design in all his works is the manifestation of his own glory. God's glory is then manifested when the thing formed answers exactly the end for which he created it. All the creatures in their place and state, from the highest archangel to the lowest of rational beings, are therein, by the law of their nature as dependents, called upon to fashion themselves after the rule prescribed by their great Original. They are then perfect in their generation when they do so, and God is glorified in them. Man in innocence was thus "perfect and entire, lacking nothing:" his heart had written upon it the approbation of God's will, and possessed a disposition to obey in whatever particulars it might be revealed to him; so that in general the whole frame of his nature exactly coincided with the rule of his duty.

But to take a more minute survey of his situation.

1. Of his intellectual powers. God in creating the first man after his own image, "created him in knowledge." (*Coloss. iii. 10.*)

His natural knowledge of the world in which he was placed, and all the things and creatures around him, was no doubt most exact and comprehensive. A specimen of which we have immediately after his creation, when "God brought unto Adam every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." (*Gen. ii. 19.*) But this was the least considerable part of his knowledge.

He had the clearest knowledge of God himself, as the author of his being, "in whom he lived and moved;" of the bright perfections of the JEHOVAH, who had made all things around

him to cry aloud, and proclaim his wisdom, grace and power, and of the peculiar obligations lying upon him, not only as a dependent subject, but as a favoured child ; in whom therefore the constraints of love united with the bonds of duty.

He had the most perfect views of the rule of his obedience. Knowledge must precede obedience. Where no law is, there is neither transgression nor obedience. Where no knowledge is, the law cannot bind. And perfection of obedience can only follow from perfect views of the rule prescribed and conviction of the obligation to obey. But this the first man had, and he knew also that the laws he was under were not merely arbitrary commands, but in themselves most holy, just and good, fit for God to enjoin, and meet for him to obey, resulting from the very relation they bore to each other ; and withal that to submit to these laws was perfect freedom, his own happiness arising from the exactness of his conformity to them.

2. Of his moral powers. These corresponded with the intellectual. Whatever his understanding proposed as fit, his will readily consented to. God had written his law, not as afterwards on tables of stone, but deeper on the fleshy tables of his heart. In this disposition to righteousness and true holiness did his likeness to God especially consist.

The excellence and perfection of obedience depends on the full and free choice and approbation of the will. Hence after the first sin man's unrighteousness appears, and consists most in the alienation of his will from God. This in its original was as exact a copy of God's will, as the impression on the wax is of the corresponding seal ; and it followed invariably, as the

needle doth the pole, the manifestation of duty which God revealed. His will was not formed and set merely in a state of equal freedom to choose the good and refuse the evil ; nor rested in an indifference to either ; (for this would have been in itself faulty, as God's service to a will rightly constituted can never appear a matter of indifference and indetermination ;) but it was habitually inclined to good, and averse to evil : so that whilst yet the power of falling remained, its natural bent was fixed intensely in obedience to the divine commands. No necessity indeed impelled it. For what glory could have arisen to God from service constrained and necessary ? Or what obedience, properly so called, could man have shewn, if fate, not choice, had determined his conduct ? The freedom of his service was that wherein he was to answer the end of his creation. Hence arose the mutability of his state ; though free to stand, yet free to fall. Yet not so free to fall as stand ; whilst all things within and without him conspired to engage his heart to God, and to fix unwavering his choice on that which was ordained his duty.

3. His affections, passions, and all the inferior faculties of the soul, were framed in due subserviency to the great design, as so many ready servants to execute what reason dictated, and the will approved.

Thus the entire soul of man was then the habitation of the Deity. He daily beheld, what he required, the universal service paid him. These passions, now become so turbulent and unruly, each ministred in humble subjection before the Lord. Love stood before the altar, and pouring on the sacred incense, kept up the hallow-

ed flame. Hatred of sin (for yet no other ground of hatred was known) hatred of sin guarded every avenue of the temple, and kept the gates that nothing might enter which defileth or maketh unclean. Hope lifted up her hands and eyes to heaven, and shewed, by the intenseness of her countenance, where her anchor fixed. Fear, with reverential awe, bowed down before the sanctuary, where yet no veil had hid the presence of the Deity. Joy told its raptures in hosannas of neverceasing praise ; and sought on earth to join those songs which beings of superior excellence poured forth before the throne of God. Whilst memory unfolded the volume of divine mercies, and stood in pleasing contemplation revolving the past transactions. And conscience, yet unsullied, beheld, as God's vicegerent, the hallowed service, and gave its approbation, as the voice of God.

Thus was his soul beautiful in holiness, and his body, where yet unbridled appetite and lawless lust had found no place, yielded every member an instrument of righteousness unto holiness. Such was man. " God beheld and blessed them, and bid them multiply and replenish the earth." (*Gen. i. 28.*) that there might be a generation to serve him, sharing in all their parents' excellence. God could not but be pleased with the work of his hands ; and, as the present mark of his regard crowned him with glory, honour, bliss and immortality.

1. Man enjoyed a state of great glory. It is the conjecture of an ingenious author, that man in innocence was clothed with a visible glory : such as we still image to ourselves, whenever we form an idea of an angelic vision ; or according to that representation of the Psalmist, that when God appears, he clothes himself " with light as

with a garment." It must be owned, that there is more than one text of scripture that seems to allude to this. And the transaction on the mount, when the "body of Jesus was transfigured, and became white and glittering," (*Matt.* xvii. 2.) compared with the promise, of "being made like unto his glorious body at the resurrection day," (*Phil.* iii. 21.) seems to make it not improbable, that such external irradiation might be the attendant on man's innocence until sin had uncovered his nakedness. Besides, if Moses by once beholding, not the face of God, but his back parts only, brought down from that vision "a glory on his countenance, which the children of Israel could not look upon," (*Exod.* xxxiv. 30, 33.) why might not the frequent, and as it seems familiar intercourse, which man in paradise had with the blessed God, leave deeper impressions of glory behind it? But however this may be, we are sure his body became the divine Architect. The last and most excellent of all his works below. And if, corrupted as it is now become, we cannot without some admiration regard it, "so fearfully and wonderfully is it made," (*Psal.* cxxxix. 14.) what may we not conceive of its paradisaical glory? His soul, the foregoing description intimates to have been surpassing excellent: and united, such a body and such a soul could not but form a creature, that, as the sun in the firmament, shone forth the chief of all the works of God.

2. Honour was heaped on him with a liberal hand. By nature, "but little lower than the angels." (*Psal.* viii. 5.) By grant, endowed with a dominion coextensive with the regions he was placed in. The universal monarch of this lower world, and all things in it. "God put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, the beast of

the field, and the fowls of the air, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." (*Psal.* viii. 6, 7, 8.) The majesty of man impressed an awe upon the whole creation; their Maker's visible representative on earth.

3. Blessings surrounded him on every side. Within every thing was peaceful and serene. His soul, like the smooth surface of the sea, unruffled by the least blast of air, had yet felt no tumult of contending corruption; but satisfied in itself, and conscious of its innocence, was replenished with consolations as from "a well of water springing up into everlasting life:" (*John* iv. 14.) whilst above all, the presence and favour of God, the most intimate and endeared communion with him, and the constant notices of his love, could not but minister the most ravishing delight. And without, all nature was formed to minister not only to his wants, but innocently to gratify his senses. "Whatever was pleasant to the sight, or good for food," (*Gen.* ii. 9.) arose in Eden's happy ground; the Almighty husbandman had planted it." (*John* xv. 1. *Gen.* ii. 8.) purely to bless his favourite man: and what could be wanting, where God vouchsafed to prepare for him a residence of bliss?

4. Immortality crowned the whole. What he was, he would for ever have been: or if any change succeeded, it would have been a change from glory to glory. When translated to a higher place of bliss, his obedience, however undeserving the reward, should be still more abundantly repaid. "The tree of life," (*Gen.* ii. 9.) sacramentally sealed the continuance of his bliss, whilst he persisted in obedience. And the declaration concerning "the tree of knowledge" (*Gen.* ii. 17.) implied farther in it a promise, that his life

should be eternal if he did not eat of the forbidden fruit. In its constitution, the natural body either had not the seeds of dissolution, or some powerful quality implanted in the tree of life might prevent it, or from God the fountain of life his body might immediately be fed with living streams. Certain it is, that death and all its hateful evils, disease, decay and pain were unknown, until sin broke down the wall, and introduced the monster pregnant with woe.

For such high favours, to be continued to his posterity, God might justly have demanded from him whatever marks of allegiance and fidelity he chose to impose : but herein how wondrous was the divine goodness ! he would not debar him the least satisfaction he enjoyed ; but chose only one single tree to be the test of his obedience, “forbidding him to eat of it on penalty of death.” (*Gen. ii. 17.*) The thing was in itself indifferent ; the command of God enjoined it ; it was the most easy to be complied with ; and simply required acquiescence in the divine will. Who would not have been content to rest the issue of his life and death on such a test, especially in the hands of One so highly furnished with every good and perfect gift ?

Yet here, astonishing to tell ! the scripture informs us that man, through the suggestions of the devil, was seduced. His heart, led first by reasoning to entertain unhallowed desires after knowledge ; then looking until lust kindled, he is at last tempted to “pluck and eat :” (*Gen. iii. 6.*) and as the fatal consequence, to forfeit all his bliss, bring down the wrath denounced, and render himself obnoxious to death spiritual, temporal and eternal. Short is the dire description ; yet long and dreadfully felt the issue.

A thousand questions which follow from the pride which now possesses us, of why and how this was permitted, the holy Ghost hath been pleased not to resolve. He relates the simple fact, commands implicit faith. To reason here is to disbelieve ; that so it was, is enough for us to know.

How deeply we are affected by the first man's disobedience, what we feel may tell us.—Adam, our father and representative, in whom the whole nature of man then subsisted, tainted his blood by this atrocious act of treason. An act of the most complicated baseness and unprovoked rebellion. We were in his loins. “ In Adam all died. (1 *Cor.* xv. 22.) By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all, forasmuch as all have sinned.” (*Rom.* v. 12.) Man's nature is wholly fallen under the curse. And as our articles declare “ every child of Adam born into the world, doth for this deserve God's wrath and damnation.” (*Article IX.*) I shall rest here for the present, purposing to consider more distinctly the consequences of the fall in some ensuing discourses : concluding the present with the following observations.

1. What an alteration hath passed on the nature of man ? “ How is the gold become dim ? How is the most fine gold changed ?” (*Lam.* iv. 1.) Who can reflect on the first beauteous image, and withhold a tear of sorrow ? “ How art thou fallen, son of the morning ?”

When Judah's sons, escaped from the house of their prison, returned to Sion to build again the temple of the Lord, the new foundation could be laid only by removing the splendid ruins of the desolated sanctuary ; then came the remembrance of its former glories

fresh into their mind, and "they wept aloud." (*Ezra* iii. 12.) And have not we greater cause of sorrow, when we review the spiritual temple of the most High laid desolate, and "swept with the besom of destruction?" Yea, when we feel our own concern in it, and find by nature in our hearts so doleful a contrast to that original excellence, when man was "polished after the similitude of a palace." (*Psal.* cxliv. 12.) Now alas! desolation sits on the threshold, and within darkness and ruin are spread abroad. The glory is departed from us; God hath forsaken us. Guilt spreads its gloomy horrors over the soul; fear trembles at the consciousness of certain judgment; the voice of joy is fled, and sorrow utters her remediless cries. The fiends of darkness shed their baleful influence around, and Satan, now become the sovereign lord, opens wide the gate, to welcome in every unclean and hurtful beast. Pride, malice, rancour, revenge, unbridled appetite, and inordinate concupiscence, with all their train, take up their abode in what was once God's temple: and death, dreadful monster! death before unknown! stalks with his iron mace along the ruined fabric, continuing to beat it wholly down, and lay it low even in the dust. "O! who shall restore our desolations, and build up again these waste places of many generations!" (*Isa.* lxi. 4.)

2. The pride of man refusing to submit to the declarations of God, hath been one chief cause of the continuance of this his miserable estate. The account which God hath given, men will not believe; puffed up by their fleshly mind, and vain in their own imaginations, they have presumed to reason against the divine truth instead of submitting to it; and will not allow any such effects to have flowed from one man's disobedience,

as those above described : much less that God's wrath and damnation justly lies against the millions of our nature yet unborn." (*Article IX.*) For as all the subsequent proceedings of God in the redemption of man, are so intimately connected with this first view ; where this is misunderstood or perverted, there the need of the Son of God, the necessity of an atonement, the want of another representative, and all the procedures of divine grace, must be mistaken or denied. From hence have sprung the heresies of *Pelagius*, *Arius*, *Socinus*, and the Deists. Man's fall, as it is recorded in scripture, they will not receive, and, unacquainted with the depth of our misery, see not the necessity of the greatness of our remedy.

3. We cannot but admire the wonderful grace of God, that had compassion upon miserable man, and would not execute upon him the death he had deserved ; but with the declaration of his high displeasure opens to him yet a door of hope in the promise of " the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head." (*Gen. iii. 15.*) God hath not left us, as he left the angels that sinned to their place of torment ; but hath raised up a new salvation for us ; hath appointed as another and safer Covenant-Head, the second *Adam*, by whom we may escape from the dreadful ruins of the transgression under the first covenant. This seed shall break our bonds from off our neck : he shall deliver us from the power of Satan : he shall " raise up our ruined tabernacle which is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof ; he shall raise up its ruins, and build it as in the days of old." (*Amos ix. 11.*) The manner how he shall effect this, by his incarnation, death, intercession, and final redemption of us, shall hereafter be more fully opened. Yet here it becomes us to trace God's love in the first

beam of Gospel-grace, (*Gen. iii. 15.*) that darted forth upon fallen Adam's soul, and inspired him (for nothing else could have done it) with sentiments of repentance towards a pardoning God. May we see in this first promise the rich grace of our Jehovah, and feel a deep sense of the divine compassions and mercies; and as we trace the growing discoveries of these towards man more fully manifested, may they have an increasing and more effectual influence on all our hearts, and engage us to return to Him, from whom we have so greatly departed.

SERMON II.

OF THE CORRUPTION OF HUMAN NATURE.

ROMANS V. 18.

BY THE OFFENCE OF ONE, JUDGMENT CAME UPON ALL MEN
TO CONDEMNATION.

THE Apostle in these words affirms the universality of that guilt under which the whole human race lieth at present. He had in the beginning of the Epistle proved by scripture and experience, that "Jews and Gentiles were all concluded under sin;" (*Gal. iii. 22.*) and consequently exposed to suffer the penalty annexed to every transgression of disobedience. In this and the foregoing verses he traces up sin to its origin, and shews by what means it entered into the world, and maintains its dominion; namely, by the first man's fall, and the corruption of nature which thence ensued: which points he labours to fix upon their hearts, both as a ground of deep and abiding humiliation, in the view of their deplorable situation by nature and as containing the strongest motive to embrace and highly esteem that Gospel of the revelation of the grace of God, wherein "life and immortality were again brought to light;" (*2 Tim. i. 10.*) and a relief provided adequate to the necessity of fallen sinful man.

The knowledge of this our fallen state from scripture, and a clear conviction of its truth from experience, are still the chief means the Holy Ghost uses to bring men into the dust of abase-

ment, to plead for the mercy held forth in Christ Jesus. "He convinceth us of sin, then of righteousness." (*John* xvi. 8.) Our disease must be felt before our remedy can be sought. "Jesus came to seek and save only that which was lost." (*Luke* xix. 10.) They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." (*Matt.* ix. 12.)

Yet here the many stumble. Through unacquaintedness with the truth of their real estate, they "think more highly of themselves than they ought to think;" (*Rom.* xii. 3.) either conceiving that man is still by nature as upright as ever, or at least that such powers and abilities remain with him, that he is of himself capable of pleasing God by the right exercise of his own reason and exertion of his sincere endeavours: or, as some imagine, that though of himself he is insufficient, yet the holy Spirit helping his infirmities, he hath still some moral powers remaining, which if he will exert shall effectually procure his acceptance with God. All which high imaginations, whilst entertained, cannot but puff up the vanity of man, naturally proud, and lead him to depend either more or less on himself, instead of submitting in helpless selfdespair to him, "who is mighty to save;" whose office it is "to justify the ungodly," and with deliverance from the punishment, to save his people from the power of their sins."

For the undeceiving of such as these; for the information of such as desire to know the truth; for the confirmation of the faith of the sincere, and for the greater humiliation of all, I shall endeavour at this time to prove it a fact,

That man is fallen, wholly fallen from God.

May the Spirit of God assist me with clearness of argument, and send conviction of the

truth to every man's conscience, giving you "an understanding to know the Scriptures" and yourselves.

I am to prove to you that man is a fallen creature ; yea, wholly departed from God. And here I shall make use of two chief arguments, namely, the testimony of the scriptures and universal experience ; each of which, I trust, will convince those who reverence the authority of God, and coolly examine the evidence, that our state is truly deplorable and corrupted. O ! that it may lead every soul of us to him, " who alone is able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him." (*Heb. vii. 25.*)

1st, The testimony of the scriptures. And in a point of such weight and importance, you may be sure to meet with the strongest assertions of it. I will select a few of the principal, as they lie their order, and open their contents that we may feel their force.

That God made man after his own image you have heard ; an image to have been perpetuated to his posterity, had he continued in obedience. He fell : God's image was effaced. The curse hath succeeded. When Adam therefore begat a son, the holy Ghost peculiarly notes, that it was " in his own likeness," (*Gen. v. 3.*) not the likeness of God, in which originally he gloried, but of his fallen nature : a pregnant evidence of which presently ensued, when brother imbrued his hands in brother's blood, soon after, if not in the very act of sacrificing, the appointed means of acknowledging their guilt, and the season when they were peculiarly called upon to be humbled for and repent of it.

From such an early specimen of man's nature, we may the less wonder at the following relation. When " God saw the earth filled with violence,

and that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, for every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (*Gen.* vi. 5, 11.) Such is his description, "who knew what was in man." The heart of man was then evil; yea every thought of it; yea every imagination, before the thought is framed or desire perfected: it was evil and only evil, not the least mixture of spiritual goodness remaining; nor was any moment excepted, evil continually flowed, as the stream from the fountain.

But it may be objected, the evil mentioned here was not natural but acquired; that men were not born wicked, but made themselves so. This point then let the next declaration of God determine. Does he not say to Noah after the flood, in the view of generations yet unborn, that he "will not again curse the ground for man's sake," though the same provocation would again and must for ever exist, "because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth?" (*Gen.* viii. 21.) Here it is evident that evil is charged upon the heart of man as its genuine produce. No reference is there in these words to the persons then in being, or the influence of their or any future examples or instructions; but it is mentioned as arising simply from the corruption of nature.

In consequence of this the rising generation, influenced by the same cause as their forefathers, turned every man quickly to their ways; so that in the days of Abraham idolatry reigned universally.

Well then may we join holy Job in asking, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one:" (*Job* xiv. 4.) and subscribe the Psalmist's confession, "Behold, I was shap-

en in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (*Psal.* li. 5.) The nature is in fault : the fountain is marred at its head, and the streams must flow polluted.

As we advance we have increasing proofs of the universality of this corruption. The holy Ghost by the mouth of David assures us, that when "the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that would understand, and seek after God ; Lo ! they were all gone out of the way, they were altogether become abominable, there was none that did good, no not one." (*Psal.* xiv. 2.) And what was revealed to the father, was by the same Spirit manifested to the son ; for this, among the first evils under the sun, the Preacher found, and indeed the origin of all the rest : "That the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." (*Eccles.* ix. 3.) The heart is a fountain full of evil ; and all the time men live upon the earth, this hereditary madness shews itself, till death closes the scene, and becomes at once its cure and its punishment.

Such apprehensions the holy Prophets had also of the state and temper of men : "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; who can know it ?" (*Jer.* xvii. 9.) It is a great deep of corruption : when we have fathomed it with the longest line of observation, and found it to be indeed desperately wicked, still "the half is not told us." Who can know the fulness of evil, which dwells in an apostate nature ?

Our blessed Lord therefore, when himself upon earth, among other divine lessons he pointed out what peculiarly defileth the man, declares it arises from his heart : "Out of the heart pro-

ceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies; these come from within." (*Matt.* xv. 19.) There is the seat of sin where Satan dwelleth: there the conceptions of it are formed, and thence they flow, as from the subterraneous fire proceed the earthquake, the sulphurous exhalation, and the burning lava.

And this is the necessary effect of being born into the world. For "whatever is born of the flesh, is flesh." (*John* iii. 6.) The nature is called wholly flesh, because it is wholly void of the Spirit, and become enslaved to fleshly lusts and appetites, & hath by its fall sunk almost into the beast.

Our nature thus declared to be evil, we must expect to hear it condemned; and so it is written, "by nature children of wrath:" (*Ephes.* ii. 3.) wrath follows sin as closely as the shadow does the body: where sin is, there wrath will be; and where wrath is, there we may be always assured sin hath been.

From all these, and many the like testimonies which might be adduced, and indeed from the entire system of divine revelation, where this is implied throughout all the transactions and methods taken for our recovery, I presume it will incontestably appear, that man is at present a fallen, corrupted creature, wholly defiled in his nature, and in consequence become loathsome and hateful in the eyes of divine purity. Such was the conclusion our pious Reformers drew from these views of scripture in the IXth Article, "Original sin standeth not (as the *Pelagians* do vainly talk) in the following of Adam, but is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far* gone from original

* The original, *quam longissime*, is much stronger than our translation, *very far*.

righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh always lusteth contrary to the spirit ; and therefore in every person born into this world it deserveth God's wrath and damnation."

2dly, That the fact is really so, experience abundantly confirms. The truth is certain, though it be denied ; but it is immediately confessed, when the heart begins to be really enlightened to know itself. The ignorance of the blind, or their disputing against the light, prevents not the shining of the sun, nor can persuade us that at mid-day there is darkness.

1. The experience of all ages to the present attests the corruption which God's word reveals. It was not only in the first ages of the world, that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth ;" the complaints of every succeeding age shew the same cause operating uniformly throughout. Consult the Heathens ; they observed it, confessed it, lamented it, in theory at least, and talked of precepts, though impotent to restrain the power of corruption. Consult the scriptures ; they describe all the nations, and even the chosen people of God "as a seed of evil-doers ;" (*Isai. i. 4.*) and their Prophets rising up continually reproached them for their ungodliness. The account St. Paul (*Rom. i. and ii. chapters*) gives of the Jews and Gentiles, learned and unlearned alike, shews the deplorable and universal deluge of sin. And what succeeding times have mended the account ? Surely not our own. Cast your eyes round, and read man's present apostasy, written as with a sun-beam : see how iniquity lifts up its hydra-head and hisses on every side. "By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery," says the prophet, "they break out, and blood toucheth blood."

(*Hosea* iv. 2.) What a scene of blackness and guilt appears to the observant eye? The lying Prophets indeed “see visions of peace;” boast of man’s moral rectitude; palliate the flagrant evils they cannot deny; and seek to hide themselves and others from the light, *speaking peace, peace*, when it is so evident, as Jehu said, “What peace, when our iniquities and our whoredoms are so many?” (*2 Kings*, ix. 22.)

Where can you look, without beholding the broken tables of the covenant trod under foot? whilst one part of mankind are plunged in the grosser crimes of perjury, drunkenness, all manner of lewdness, sabbath-breaking, profaneness and disobedience; the other more decently corrupt themselves and forget God; in Mammon’s idol service; in Honour’s empty pageantry; in Pleasure’s thoughtless throng. *The world, the world* is the universal cry, where envy, malice, disappointment, covetousness, ambition, successively torment the fortunate and the unsuccessful. The learned and the unlearned, the high and low, the rich and poor, have their separate walk, concurring all in this, “to worship and serve the creature more than the Creator.” (*Rom.* i. 25.) But these things men hate to see or hear of, though truths so flagrant; and, fixed on their own deceivings, will neither attend to their danger, nor be restrained. Hence so ineffectual have been all the means which God or man hath used. Doth God raise up servants to remonstrate against iniquity? They hate and persecute them. Like their fathers that “killed the Prophets, and stoned them which were sent unto them.” (*Matt.* xxiii. 37.) They smite them “with the words of the tongue,” and would with the edge of the sword. “All the day long therefore have we

stretched forth our hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people. (*Rom. x. 21.*) They hate to be reformed, and cast God's word behind their back." (*Psal. l. 17.*) Nor do they regard men much more than God. In general how ineffectual are all the restraints of human laws? How evaded or broken through? What would men say, if only the laws against sabbath-breaking, drunkenness and lewdness, were actually put in execution? But if these things are so, a sad demonstration arises of man's deep corruption. Facts like these prove that his neck is *an iron sinew*, that he determines to go on in the frowardness of his heart, "an evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God." (*Heb. iii. 12.*)

2. Another confirmation of this truth may be drawn from observation on the tempers of children, even before they have reached any years of reflection. It will be found universally true, that "folly (that is sin) is bound up in the heart of a child." (*Prov. xxii. 15.*) And those who would be convinced of the corruption of our nature, need only observe the babe in the nurse's arms. Those perverse passions which afterwards in life break forth and fill our houses with violence, appear then in embryo. What anger may you remark in their little breasts when crossed or contradicted? What self-will and obstinacy do they shew under correction? What envy at favours done to others? And scarce have they begun to speak, but they begin to lie, and disingenuously and artfully, like Adam, seek to conceal their transgressions. So true it is, that "ungodly man is froward, even from his mother's womb; as soon as he is born he goes astray, and speaks lies." (*Psal. lviii. 3.*) Nor can this be ascribed to the influence of education, or laid to the fault of bad examples before them. It is the

case with those who are the most carefully educated ; and the most pious parent with grief beholds the seeds of corruption springing up continually in this their native soil, notwithstanding his pains by the rod of correction and by instruction to root them up.

And though some shew stronger dispositions to sin than others, and a milder constitution appears from the cradle in a few ; yet none are excepted from the above symptoms of corruption, though, like different animals of the same savage species, some exceed others in ferocity. Nor can this be accounted for on any other principles than those the scriptures open to us : For what could be more impious, nay blasphemous, than to suppose that we came such out of our Maker's hands as we now evidently are ?

3. I add, as a corroborative proof to the foregoing remarks, the miseries which appear in the world. That " man is now born to sorrow and trouble, as the sparks fly upward," (*Job* v. 7.) cannot be denied. We hear on every side the complainings of the afflicted, the murmurings of the discontented, the repinings of the poor, the vexations of the disappointed, the cries of the sick, and the groans of the dying. What is the world but a *Bochim*, a place of weeping ? Whilst sorrow cometh upon sorrow faster than *Job's* messengers of evil. And who are exempted from the general lot ? Doth not every living soul feel within the forebodings of approaching dissolution, the decays of age, the wastes of time, and know that he is, even in the midst of life, hastening to the dust, to the grave, the heritage of the sinner ? Now can it be thought, that the God " whose mercy is over all his works, (*Psal.* cxlv. 9.) who never willingly afflicts the children of men," (*Lam.* iii, 33.) can it be imagined that

the God "whose name and nature is love," (1 *John* iv. 8.) would thus unprovoked lift up the scourge, and with scorpions chastise us? That be far from him: "He is righteous in all his ways, and just in all his judgments." (*Psal.* cxlv. 17.) He giveth us less, but never more than our iniquities deserve. If it be said, true; but we have actually sinned, and are plagued for our own offences. I say, that will not account for the scene we have been describing; for we see all the like evils, and death the greatest of them, "pass upon those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." (*Rom.* v. 14.) Stand by the cradle, and see that child of man scarce started from the womb; hear its doleful moans, see it convulsed and agonizing with pain; covered with loathsome ulcers, and pining, laid in its coffin; what can this mean? Is there no preceding cause, no meritorious ground for this heavy chastisement? To suppose it, would be making the most High, like the idol Moloch, pleased with dying infants' cries. But here the mystery is solved: that babe, scarce a span long, is a corrupted creature: it hath a nature which is enmity against God: it possesseth every abomination, not indeed in their maturity, but which have already taken root "to bring forth fruit unto death." And thus we shall no longer question God's righteousness in punishing, death being universally "the wages of sin." (*Rom.* vi. 23.)

4. The acknowledgments of the best of men have borne a strong testimony to this great truth, that man is a corrupted creature. Whoever reads the scripture with an attentive eye, will necessarily observe the ancient worthies full of their confessions of guilt and corruption. David, Job, St. Paul, high as their advancements were, "groan-

ed under this evil, being burdened. A body of death" hung about them; a nature departed from God, and ready continually to hurry them down its stream into the dead sea of perdition. It was only by wrestling, striving, labouring, and by the grace of God beating down this body of sin, that they were enabled to stand: so true it is that "the righteous scarcely are saved;" arising from the difficulty of subduing this strong bent of our fallen nature. And the experience of God's servants hath and doth continue to confirm it. For who of them doth not feel "a law in his members warring against the law of his mind?" (*Rom. vii. 23.*) Who is not often forced to say, "when I would do good, evil is present with me?" (*Rom. vii. 21.*) Yea, do they not all go mourning to their graves under this burden, and long especially to "be absent from the body," that they may be delivered wholly from the bondage of corruption which now presseth down the soul?

From what hath been said, who can any longer doubt of the universal corruption of our nature? Who will have the hardiness to say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (*Prov. xx. 9.*)

It remains therefore only to improve what hath been spoken.

First, For our deeper humiliation before God. Though we are never so deeply convinced of this or that sin, if we see the fact only, the impression of guilt will be but partial, and though terrifying, not truly humbling and emptying us of our self-sufficiency. If we would see sin in its true malignity, we must ascend from the act to the temper; from the temper to the nature. And what can so entirely confound our pride as this view we have taken of ourselves? Not merely corrupt in practice but in principle; not sinners

by habit only; but sinners in nature. Here sin appears exceeding sinful; (*Rom. vii. 13.*) confounds us in the dust, silences every plea, and brings the soul before the throne of grace, with the true sensibility implied in that penitent confession, which God himself hath put into our mouth, *Unclean, unclean.* (*Levit. xiii. 45.*) A person thus convinced, knows himself to be one mass of corruption; that he never was possessed of one good temper, nor performed or could perform a single act pleasing to God. For what but uncleanness can proceed from the unclean? And hence he is entirely cut off from help and hope in himself, and led simply and fully to make use of that help which the gospel sets before him in Jesus, who "came to deliver us from the bondage of corruption," by the efficacy of his blood, and the power of his Spirit. The reason why so many who are awakened in a measure to a sense of sin continue still in bondage, and fruitlessly are labouring to mend themselves, is this, that they are not truly humbled: they are not acquainted with the depth and universality of the corruption which the fall hath brought upon them; nor consequently with the absolute impossibility of doing any thing pleasing to God, till he himself justifies their persons as ungodly, and sanctifies their nature as unholy.

Secondly. What a dreadful thing is sin! one sin hath introduced all this misery into the world; and yet we are daily trifling with it as a little thing. Instead of regarding it as the evil and bitter thing it is, with what unconcern do we pass it by in ourselves and others? And here again have we not a strong additional proof of the reality of our fall, in this deep insensibility to it, whilst we behold its consequences so tremendously fatal? O did we but consider how God hates

sin; did we but attend to the present marks of the divine displeasure against it; or could we be persuaded really to believe "the wrath to come!" surely there is not one of us, but from the bottom of his heart must tremble. As the "earthquake which shook the prison," (*Acts* xvi. 26.) and brought the trembling Jailor on his knees, this view of sin's dreadful evil, and the consciousness how deeply we lie under it, would shake the inmost powers of the soul, and lay us low before the footstool of mercy, "if yet the iniquity of our hearts might be forgiven us." In how dangerous a situation then and drawing on fast to eternal ruin must that soul be, who hath never yet groaned under the burden of sin, nor felt the least of its evil and bitterness, nor cried to him who "hath appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself?" (*Heb.* ix. 26.)

Thirdly, What a welcome message doth the gospel bring to those who are truly sensible of their fallen state. We cannot in such case hear with cold unconcern, that "the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world;" (*John* i. 29.) we shall not pass by, and look upon his sorrows unmoved, when "the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all." (*Isai.* liii. 6.) We shall no longer dispute against the dispensations of God, nor proudly ask, "How can these things be?" but, humbly bowing before the gracious throne, shall believe, admire and adore. We shall then see that there is elsewhere neither help nor hope; here all help, all hope revealed to us. We all misery, God all mercy; we all corruption, Christ all perfection; we all guilt, he all pardon; we all weakness, he all power; we wholly lost in sin, he "able to save to the uttermost;" in virtue of the sufferings of his human nature, and the dignity of the divine. O that each soul of us really

felt our disease ! How ready then should we be to submit to the divine Physician, and lay our sinful corrupted souls at his feet ? Happy the man that thus comes to him in all his native wretchedness, he never sent one such “ poor sinner empty away. He healeth all our infirmities, and delivereth the souls appointed unto death.” (*Psal.* ciii. 3.—cii. 20.)

SERMON III.

THE DECEITFULNESS AND CORRUPTION OF THE HEART.

JEREMIAH XVII. 9.

THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS, AND DESPERATELY WICKED, WHO CAN KNOW IT.

TO know ourselves, the Philosophers reckoned the pinnacle of wisdom : and however mistaken in the means proposed for that end, they were right in the assertion ; no knowledge being more necessary for us than this, nor any perhaps so difficult to be attained. None more necessary, because thereon stands, in the christian plan, all that superstructure of newness of life, the foundation of which is laid in deep humility, arising from the real knowledge of ourselves as fallen creatures. None so difficult to be obtained, because the subject of this knowledge is so extensive, and self-love and self-deceit so misrepresent the facts, that, as by the art of a cunning painter, the real deformity of the figure is concealed, and we admire the false and flattering portrait as if it was the true.

It shall be my endeavour therefore to open to you the truth of our state, and lead you into the discovery of your own hearts. But herein I must beg you will not be offended to see yourselves in a faithful mirror, the word of God ; nor start back from the sight of our natural deformity, stripped of that mask which usually conceals the monster. I cannot flatter ; God forbids it. His

word declares, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?"

There are indeed, who pretend to give a more favourable view of things; who talk of the dignity of man's nature, its noble faculties, its self-taught perceptions of universal right and wrong; and if not bearing the first strong out-lines of virtue from the womb, at least represent it as a fair sheet, prepared of itself to receive the genuine impressions of whatever is fit, and wise, and good. I have already said enough to confute this infidel representation; but trust, in the progress of this discourse, more clearly to reveal the truth as it is to every man's heart, who will observe what passes within him: when it will be found, that the only dignity we can boast of is our unhumiliated pride; our native wisdom, the *φρονιμα σαρκος* which is "enmity against God;" and our fair traces of virtue, the strong lines of a spirit which is "earthly, sensual, devilish." (*James iii. 15.*)

We are now entering an unbounded field: for "who can understand his errors?" (*Psal. xix. 12.*) or who knoweth the deep things of a man, save He only, "before whom all things are naked and open?" Let it not be thought, therefore, that the following is a full or exact representation of man's heart. It must be always said here, as the queen of Sheba said to Solomon, "The half is not told us:" (*1 Kings, x. 7.*) yet, so far as it goes, it will, I trust, be found faithful; and be at least a clue for those who desire to see themselves, to lead them into the dark labyrinth within; and they may lengthen it as they advance, by closer and more intimate observations on themselves and mankind.

I. The radical evil seems to be unbelief, from

whose fruitful stock the other corrupt tempers spring. "Ye shall not surely die," (*Gen. iii. 4.*) found admission into the first man's heart, in opposition to the divine denunciation, and emboldened him to eat. This spirit of infidelity is naturally rooted in the mind of every child of Adam, scarcely to be eradicated by the clearest evidence of scripture truths; such "fools and slow of heart are we to believe, what the scriptures have spoken!" (*Luke xxiv. 25.*) The name infidel hath been in the christian world stamped with infamy; therefore the profession of infidelity is made by few, yet the fact is universal. And the truth of it a few observations will confirm: intimating, by the way, that the first work of the spirit of God upon the heart of man is this very thing, "conviction of unbelief," and therefore where no such conviction has been made, such a soul continues as yet dead in a state of nature and sin.

That in the heathen world the hopes of impunity, or disbelief of punishment, were at the bottom of all men's transgressions, is a truth which, I presume, will be readily admitted.

How else, in opposition to so many natural forebodings and traditionary notices, that "they who do such things are worthy of death," could they make themselves so easy under, and talk so gaily of their vices, as their histories and other writings evidently shew they did. Now they could be supposed to act thus only on this principle, that these notices and forebodings had no real foundation, or that somehow or other there was a reserve of mercy: either that the gods took no notice of human actions at all (which was the affirmation of many, and the hope of more) or that they would overlook the little escapes of human frailty.—Thus their unbelief operated. But I rather

speak of ourselves, who profess to believe the revealed truths of the scriptures.

Who of us really and heartily submits to the divine declarations? We admit them in words, in works we deny them. You hear God's determinations to punish sin with death eternal, (*Rom. vi. 23.*) yea every sin: (*Gal. iii. 10.*) Yet who believes them? did we really assent to and duly revere God's word, how would every sin affect us? But now what is the universal hope and language? "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imaginations of my heart." (*Deut. xxix. 19.*) To establish this persuasion we too, as the heathens did, give way to fallacious reasonings; either my transgressions are venial, and they will be overlooked; at least, they will not deserve so heavy a scourge as "the worm which dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched." (*Mark ix. 44.*) But what is this fire which is not quenched? It cannot be actual burning; for how can one lie in everlasting burnings unconsumed? And how know I, but the whole may be a delusion; and that "man dieth as the beast, and is no more." Yea sometimes it advanceth farther, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." (*Psal. xiv. 1.*) As it is our interest as sinners that there should be none; many doubts about it are in more hearts than mention them. Such are some of the workings of unbelief; a man must be a great stranger to himself that hath not found their influence.

Again, with regard to the other revealed truths of God's word, how deep-rooted are our objections to them? Nicodemus was not singular, when to our blessed Lord's declarations he answered, "how can these things be?" (*John. iii. 9.*) Some, and the many indeed, shew so little regard to the word of God, that they cannot be so well said to

doubt the contents as not to understand them ; and are rather ignorant of the truths than unbelieving. But no sooner does any man begin to examine, than he will find this “ root of bitterness springing up in his heart.”

The revelation of God, as subsisting in unity of essence and trinity of persons ; the divinity, person and character of the Redeemer ; his undertakings and the issue of them ; the necessity and nature of the new birth unto righteousness ; and the whole work of God’s Spirit on the heart : these and the like truths, as related in the scriptures will often be objected to. “The natural man receiveth not the things that be of the spirit of God ; for they are foolishness to him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1*Cor.* ii. 14.) Hence all the heresies and schisms which have divided the church of God : hence all the doubts and distresses that have disturbed the hearts of the sincere ; as well as the fixed rejection of the gospel, which possesses the mind of the avowed infidel. Our nature is in fault.

And, by the way, this shews the folly of that method of metaphysical disquisition, with which the celebrated “ disputers of this world” have led the crusade, and joined in embattled squadrons against the infidels. When after all the boasted triumphs of reason, we see infidelity maintain its ground as firm as ever : though the outworks seem to have been carried, the body of the place remains unhurt ; thither they have retired, and are still as far from a surrender as ever. It is the heart not the head only which must be attacked. Infidelity is too much our nature to fall before the untempered sword of fallen man’s reason, it can only be subdued by “ the

sword of the spirit, which is the word of God." (*Ephes. vi. 17.*)

II. Pride hath set up its throne in man's nature. "Ye shall be as gods," (*Gen. iii. 5.*) was one grand bait the devil proposed to man. And since that day this unhallowed temper is rooted deep in the heart. Its actings are various, according to the object on which it fixes, or by which it is excited. Let us take a cursory view of some few instances of it.

(1.) Pride shews itself on our wisdom ; for "vain man would be wise : " (*Job xi. 12.*) an insatiable thirst after knowledge is the effect of connecting with such attainments ideas of superior excellence. Hence emulation and the pride of surpassing others, is the sinful motive usually urged upon the students of science to excite industry ; that, like coursers straining for the goal, they may each carry off from their competitors the envied prize. An extensive knowledge can be the lot of few, because leisure or abilities are wanting : but the affectation of appearing wise, at least wiser than we are, is general. Who in conversation, whatever be the subject, is not desirous of appearing knowing ; whether it be divinity, politics, science, or any other profession ? How readily, and even unasked, do we say what we know upon it, drop hints of deeper views of the subject than we discover ; and where ignorant, artfully seek that our ignorance may be concealed ? Why do you expect a deference to your judgment ? Why so loth to appear mistaken in a proposition or opinion you have advanced ? Why so little deference to the opinion of others, wiser, older, and more godly men ? Why "so swift to speak, so slow to hear ?" (*James i. 19.*) Why pleased to have your parts admired, or your genius com-

plimented? Why hurt when contemned as a person of mean understanding, especially in your profession; or an author of no learning? Come not these from pride of heart?

(2.) Pride on natural, is as common as on mental endowments. Did you ever see a beauty without vanity? And where fine features are wanting, the elegance of form supplies the fuel? Are not these the envy of one sex and the idol of the other? Hence the secret pleasure of being taken notice of, and the deep chagrin of being neglected; the arts practised to attract the one, and avoid the other; the easiness of credit given to flattery, and the affectation even to grey hairs of appearing young, genteel or handsome.

Nor is this temper less obvious amongst men; though womanish beauty would be counted an effeminacy, yet to be manly agreeable, genteel in person, strong in body, and of a fine address, is just as much coveted after by one sex, as beauty is by the other; is the ground of the same pride when possessed or commended for it, and of the same discontent if unpossessed or unnoticed.

Dress comes in, in both sexes, as an auxiliary to nature and to pride. The Fashion is consulted: be it expensive or indecent or dangerous, pride must be gratified, though at the loss of health and modesty. And what a pleasure to be well dressed? What a satisfaction when we first appear in any thing new and in taste? What a jealousy of a finer dressed figure than our own; and what an ambition to excel? Hence not only the contention among equals, but the confusion of ranks and station: and the difficulty sometimes to distinguish the Master from his servant, or the chambermaid from her Mistress.

(3.) The gifts of Providence, however adventitious, afford also an abundant occasion for

pride. Honour is the food of ambition. We all aspire to be something great, and every step of advancement fills us with a secret delight and higher apprehension of our own importance. Whoever will reflect on his heart, when he first set out in life, will remember those castles, which frequent disappointment may have now perhaps begun to convince him had their basis only in airy pride.

Yet these do not entirely undeceive us. Though our hopes are more confined, they still soar : and secret discontent with what we are, urges us to pursue what we would be. We regard whatever is bestowed on us as less than we deserve ; and whilst we look forward with greater eagerness from every summit gained, we look back with conscious satisfaction on those whom we have left behind. Whoever makes observation on the world, will see this verified in every profession ; for ambition is not confined to dignity. The meanest officer in a corporation is affected in the same way as the minister next the throne ; and he must be a great stranger to himself who hath not felt the glow which recent honour brings.

Riches also give the like gratification, as affording us an opportunity of distinction. And the show of affluence is often made, even where want at home must support the finery abroad : For to be thought indigent is extremely mortifying. The gilt equipage, the laced livery, and the multitude of useless attendants, make a figure in the world. The elegant villa calls forth the same spirit from the heart which Nebuchadnezzar felt when he said, "This is great Babylon, that I have built for the house of my kingdom." (*Dan. iv. 30.*) And when we are affecting to overlook these things, we do it that they may be admired, and are secretly delighted with the com-

mendation of them. The shew of vanity appears also alike in every inferior station, all vie with their neighbours, and pique themselves on their little distinctions. The lady that rides not in her chariot, is proud to be followed by her footman. And the satisfaction the lower people take in going on a party of pleasure on a Sunday, and spending so much money at a wake, indulges the same temper as the wealthier do by keeping so many country-houses.

Money also itself ministers to pride, and so adds a new gratification to covetousness. Is there pride in that man yonder, whose figure is so very mean, and dress so sordid, complaining of the hardness of the times and the scarcity of money? Could you know the pleasure that man feels when he hears it whispered, "He is a wealthy man; no man commands so much cash;" you will be no longer at a loss to determine. His pride is as much flattered by that, as the other man who rides by in gold and grandeur is by his shew, supported, it may be, by mortgage-money out of this rich miser's purse.

Family also is another fund of vanity, the foolishness of all pride, yet how general? Those of high birth look down on their inferiors as a different race of beings. As you descend the distinction is still observed, and connexions and relations, however distant, give them an air of quality above their equals in station. The gentleman regards the vulgar with a disdainful contempt, as sprung from the dust. And even in the parish workhouse the contest for family will be maintained by the decayed tradesman's orphans, against the children of those of baser original.

Our worldly character also in its various references continually leads us to seek "the praise

of men more than of God.” (*John*. xii. 43.) Pride would be notable ; and what will it not do to maintain, increase, or recover any measure of esteem ? What a vexation and uneasiness do we find at the loss of this idol ; and how unwilling are we to believe those declarations of God, “ that the friendship of the world is enmity with God ; and that if any man will be the friend of the world, he must be the enemy of God.” (*James* iv. 4.) Hence all that dislike to the cross, and the constant labour of reconciling the inconsistent services of God and Mammon. Hence that inordinate desire to please men : Hence, especially, the cowardice of ministers, and the compliances of many with the corrupt taste of the times, who secretly condemn the things they in practice allow. Reputation is at stake, and conscience must conform a little.

Thus pride operates.

I have reserved,

IV. Its most formidable appearance as the last ; and that is, its insinuations where religion is concerned. Spiritual pride appears in a high conceit of our own excellence above other men ; a desire of appearing more holy than we are, an exterior appearance of devotion, and scrupulous attendance on the ordinances of worship, without humility and the love of God in the heart.

In the duties of devotion, either in or after the exercise, this will appear. Have you never found your heart, when you have been at what you call your prayers, pleased with yourself, as having performed some work meritorious ? Are you not led to compare yourself with others, who do not frequent the church so often, and say, “ Stand by thyself ; I am holier than thou ? ” You pray and communicate, and give alms, and mind your duty ? Are you never “ thanking God

you are not as other men?" (*Luke* xviii. 11.) These are the symptoms of pharisaic pride. Where this is discovered and disclaimed, a more refined self exaltation appears in the pleasure we take in a lively frame of mind, when after the exercise of prayer or preaching or exhortation, we here that whisper, "Well done," within us; or when we have been engaged in these exercises, especially before others, and fancy we have not acquitted ourselves with that propriety, fullness and excellence we proposed to ourselves, we grow uneasy and dissatisfied. Pride working just as strongly in our dissatisfaction as in our self-applause.

But pride on duties is still increased by pride on our graces. The very fruits of God's spirit corruption would pervert: our meekness under provocation affords a handle for self-approbation. Our zeal for God is made subservient to our own glory. Yea our very humility shall sometimes cater for our pride, our abasements shall exalt us, our confessions of unworthiness make us think highly of ourselves, and our very condescensions be the footstool on which vanity would raise itself. Well may we say of our heart, "Who can know it?"

As the effect of the above, hypocrisy creeps in. "Deceitful above all things is the heart." Deceitful respecting others: willing they should "think more highly of you than they ought to think." Hence that desire of appearing an experimental christian; seeming to know and feel more than you have known or felt. The secret satisfaction of having it whispered "What a gracious soul? How deeply acquainted with the truth?" especially if you are young; and therefore it should be esteemed more uncommon. This is spiritual hypocrisy. And you may deceive

yourself as well as others. If you have learned to talk, you may conceit you have possession of the thing, and that your prayers are as real as your expressions are ready : easily persuading yourself, that the opinion others have of you hath foundation, and that you are indeed what they think you to be. Hence the delusions that too many fall into, “ vainly puffed up, and taken in the snare of the devil.”

I must rest here for this time, to conclude with a few observations.

1. How deplorable is their ignorance who boast of the goodness of their hearts, and fancy themselves free from all the workings of pride ! Can there be a stronger evidence, that “ the god of this world hath blinded their eyes ?” (*2 Cor.* iv. 4.) Yet how many put in pretensions to such goodness of heart, and live and die in the vanity of their fallen mind ; unacquainted with their real state ; unperceived the bondsmen of corruption, and blindly led to ruin, whilst they promise themselves the surest place in the kingdom of heaven.

2. If God hath made any discovery to us of these things, it should stir us up to a more diligent search and inquiry into ourselves : “ We know nothing yet as we ought to know.” (*1 Cor.* viii. 2.) The deepest read in self-knowledge have much of their hearts unseen : as Ezekiel, the farther he went “ into the chambers of imagery,” (*Ezek.* viii. 12, 15.) the more he saw of abominations : I may venture to say the same of our fallen nature, the more we know of it, the more evil we shall know of it ; and the less we shall like it. A thousand perversenesses are still overlooked ; many deceptions undiscovered ; and hidden principles of pride will be found lurking, where we least of all suspected them. It should

teach us therefore to examine ourselves narrowly, and pray earnestly to him who alone can "open our hearts," and make us "understand our errors." We shall have need to take up the Psalmist's cry, "Search me, O Lord, and see the ground of my heart; try me, and examine my ways; and look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (*Psal.* cxxxix. 23.)

3. The discovery of their deep corruption should not discourage those who feel the burden of it. It is our highest interest to know the truth of our state, and the more explicit our views the better. The cure is partly wrought when the disease is thoroughly known. Far from being cast down with these views, it is our comfort that the most sensibly convinced of their sin, are the most welcome to Christ. They will see "grace abound, who have felt sin abound." (*Rom.* v. 20.) In Christ there is relief. The most unbelieving the proudest nature, "the fountain opened in his heart for sin for uncleanness," (*Zech.* xiii. 1.) can make whole. O that we may all flee thither, and seek "that balm which is in Gilead, and the physician there!" (*Jer.* viii. 22.)

E

SERMON IV.

THE DECEITFULNESS AND CORRUPTION OF THE HEART.

JEREMIAH XVII. 9.

THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS, AND DESPERATELY WICKED, WHO CAN KNOW IT.

I HAVE been endeavouring to enter into the heart, "that root of bitterness" which is in our nature; and to discover to you the grand sources from whence the overflowings of ungodliness arise: distinct and clear discoveries of which have the most direct tendency to bring us low into the dust of humiliation, and to lead us to him "who taketh away the sin of the world." (*John i. 29.*)

That "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," (*Hab. i. 13.*) and that "no evil can dwell with him," (*Psal. v. 4.*) is evident from his nature, and the discoveries he hath made of his adorable perfections in his word. He cannot but require of his creatures to be like himself, possessed of "truth in the inward parts." It is his property "to try the hearts and reins." (*Jer. xvii. 10.*) The pure in heart." (*Matt. v. 8.*) only can enjoy his approbation; but "our inward parts are very wickedness." (*Psal. v. 9.*) We are become the very reverse of his nature: the whole man is corrupt before him; root and branch he is polluted. We are therefore enemies in our mind: for the carnal mind is enmity against God." (*Rom. viii. 7.*) He searcheth our hearts, and sees the wickedness of our inward

parts : and what can so provoke his displeasure, as the perfect views of the entire apostasy of our nature from him ? Our transgressions may be many, and our backslidings increased ;” but what are all compared with the natural deep-rooted aversion of our hearts to him ? A child, though at times disobedient, through the prevalence of temptation may be borne with, where dutifulness is still the habit ; but do we see that he is determinately and constantly bent on disobedience ? that his whole heart is contriving how to grieve and provoke us, what human patience would not be wearied, and expulsion from the family ensue ? God hath indeed tempered judgment with mercy, and in the depth of his wisdom and the riches of his grace, whilst he hath shewn his fearful indignation against the sinful nature, in his own son made in the likeness of sinful flesh ;” (*Rom. viii. 3.*) hath found out a way to spare the sinful persons. But neither the rich mercy nor the righteous judgment can be seen before the real discovery of our state appears : till then we can neither revere the holy, nor love the pardoning God.

Let us therefore continue the inquiry into ourselves, and see what branches spring from this corrupted tree, where unbelief is at the root and pride the body ; and it may be said of them, “ Their name is Legion, for they “ are many.” (*Mark v. 9.*) The most remarkable I shall endeavour to point out to you under the heads of self-will, disobedience, impatience, wrath, envy, hatred, malice and revenge ; the grand characteristics of a fallen spirit.

1st. Self-will is the first branch of pride. We “ would be as Gods.” Our will is our law. *Sic volo, sic jubeo** ; is the language of fallen na-

* “SO I WILL, SO I COMMAND.”

ture. Hence it is a very just observation, "Every man hath a pope in his own breast." You see this in every station of life : How imperious are we ? How peremptory our commands ? How determined to be obeyed, right or wrong, when we have fixed our resolution ? How obstinate in our errors ? How deaf to advice ? "I will have it so," is thought reason sufficient. But, Lords as we are, we dwell among others like ourselves : our wills interfere ; and amidst this contrariety of desires what but confusion can ensue ? Hence, whilst each will have his own way, the world is in a continual tempest ; the winds contend, the waters foam, and disputes and animosities and every evil work disturb the peace of families, of cities and of kingdoms.

Closely connected with this is,

2dly, The spirit of disobedience. We cannot brook restraint from God or man. The yoke of God's commands is irksome to us, and our subjection to man constrained. We aspire after independence. This is the darling wish of our souls. Hence it is not only the general thought of our heart, that God is a hard master, and his commandments grievous, so that when we obey or are restrained by them, it is merely through fear ; but also, dreadful as the sanctions are, we dare to break the sacred bonds, and "cast away the cords from us." And this disobedient spirit particularly manifests itself in our rebellious dispositions towards those whom God hath put in authority over us. From our infancy with what difficulty are our stubborn hearts bowed to submission ? What propensity for doing what we are forbid ? Restraint only whets, as it were, the appetite of concupiscence. As we grow up, disobedience grows with us ; and in our various stations shews itself. In the state every little poli-

tician would be a prime minister, and murmurs that he should be subject to those who, he conceits, are so unfit to govern. He assumes the right therefore to censure their measures, to evade as much as he dares their injunctions; nor counts it any sin to "withhold custom from those, to whom custom is due."

In the social connections of life this spirit still more appears. The forward youth thinks it hard to have a father contradicting and restraining him. He would be glad to be left to himself and his own management; and hates the needful correction or reproof. And whoever have brought up children can witness with aching hearts with what difficulty they bent their stubborn necks, and how often they have proved rebellious and obstinate against them. "Disobedience to parents," (*Rom. i. 30.*) is the character of our ungodly nature. God hath constituted the husband to be the "head of the wife;" and hath pronounced as his will, "that her desire shall be to her husband, and he shall rule over her:" (*Gen. iii. 16.*) yet what woman is there in a thousand that doth not wish the word obey out of the matrimonial service? And whilst the many, from the time they have vowed, make it their labour to invert that order God hath established, are not the best wanting in that "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in God's sight of so great price?" The school-boy and apprentice regard usually their state as that of hard servitude; and though their neck be brought under the yoke, their heart sighs for liberty. The rod can hardly restrain them from taking it before the time; whilst at certain seasons the spirit of disobedience is too strong to be withheld by fear, and subjects them to deserved correction. The servant, discontent-

ed at his station, thinks it unreasonable always to submit to a man like himself : he will not be found fault with ; but his heart, if not his tongue, answers again : on his own head he will often act without orders, & sometimes contrary to them. He kindles at rebuke, and will not bear expostulation. Instead of “ being subject with fear and trembling, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward ; ” (1 *Pet.* ii. 18.) it is with difficulty that the most gentle masters or mistresses are borne with ; whilst the common and the just complaint is, the sauciness and perverseness of servants, and the general wish that they could live without them.

3dly, Impatience is among the desperate wickednesses of the heart : it is that rising of heart we feel against God or man, as our will is crossed by them, or our expectations disappointed.

(1.) Against God : this temper frequently appears under his corrections and afflictions. It was not without deep knowledge of the human nature, that Satan said to God concerning Job, “ put forth thy hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.” (*Job* i. 11.) For such usually are the effects produced by his chastisements.

1. Under poverty this impatience is seen, especially when we are reduced to it from preceding affluence. When Agur prayed against poverty, he gives this reason for it, “ lest I take the name of my God in vain : ” (*Prov.* xxx. 9.) he knew how apt the heart was in such a state to murmur. And who is there thus needy, that hath not experienced the risings of discontent, and secret repinings of heart ? Have you been brought low ? Doth the world frown upon you ? Are you reduced to be obliged to others ? How dissatisfied are you with this your situation ?

How many hard thoughts of God rise up in your mind? Whoever hath been conversant among the indigent, must have been often a witness of this complaining discontented spirit. Every man thinks God partial in the distribution of his gifts, and dares find fault with him merely because he "does what he will with his own." (*Matt. xx. 11, 15.*)

2. The same spirit is seen under bodily afflictions. "Doth God lay his hand heavy upon you? Is your flesh dried up as a potsherd, and your moisture as the drought in summer? (*Psal. xxxii. 4.*) Doth he cut you off with pining sickness, and from day even to night make an end of you?" (*Isa. xxxviii. 12.*) How restless are you under his hand? How fretful your temper? your body is not more uneasy. You may not seem in your own eyes to be angry with God, but be assured that this is at the bottom; and you give your anger vent on those about you. Nothing is done to your mind. You are scarcely touched, even by the friendly hand that means to assist you, but you complain. The least delay or mistake makes you impatient; and troublesome as by your sickness you unavoidably are to all around, you make yourself still infinitely more so by your discontent with them; and whoever comes near you must hear all your complaints, aggravated, repeated, as though there was "no sorrow like your own;" and what is this but that spirit which "fretteth against the Lord?" (*Prov. xix. 3.*) Whoever hath attended sick beds, needs no evidence of this truth.

3. Impatience rages when God takes away some darling our heart was fixed upon. God in his wise providence afflicts us for our good; and when he sees his gifts abused or made a snare to us, he kindly resumes them. Then what a fer-

ment is in his soul? and often violent "as a bear robbed of her whelps," our repinings testify our displeasure against God. Who hath not heard the cries of impatient anguish? Who hath not seen the determined obstinacy of inconsolable grief? Their idols, like Micah's, are snatched away: their life was bound up in the husband, the wife, the child, the friend, or some dear object of their affections, and they are dead, irrecoverably lost to them: and now, like Rachel, "they refuse to be comforted." (*Jer.* xxxi. 15.) Then what reflections arise in the mind against God, as though cruelty, not kindness, injustice, not mercy, directed the blow? With what determinedness, whilst they can, do they hold it fast, as though they would not let it go? And if it be violently plucked from their arms, how fretful is the language of their hearts, "It is better for me to die than to live." (*Jonah* iv. 3.) Hence in some the most fatal effects follow; by impious violence on themselves they seek to fly from God; or in their sullen sorrows pine away: and where matters go not to this excess, still, who doth resign to God his gifts as he ought, without once impeaching his kindness, or murmuring at his dispensations?

Many other providential disappointments might be brought to evidence the same thing. But from what hath been already said, whoever observes his heart will find sufficient proofs of this spirit within him.

(2.) Impatience discovers itself also with respect to ourselves. We cannot bear our burdens with content: our weakness, infirmities, the discoveries of our corruptions, all operate this way. When we do not answer the opinion we have conceived of ourselves, when what we have been engaged in does not satisfy our expectations,

when we cannot please ourselves in any matter we have in hand, when by our imprudence or mistakes we have run ourselves into trouble, how uneasy have we made ourselves; turned self-tormentors, and added not only sorrow to sorrow, but sin to sin? This will be particularly observed by those who have some knowledge of their own hearts in their spiritual concerns. If you have fallen into temptation, and been laid lower in your own eyes by your misbehaviour; if after many struggles you find still the risings of old corruptions; if you enjoy not the peace which others do; if you have not made that advancement in the divine life you proposed to yourself; in these and the like instances, instead of quietly lying down in the dust of self-abasement, impatience will be ready to increase the evil, by fretting at being found so bad. This deserves to be much remarked, because I fear sometimes we are apt to indulge complaints about our corruptions, and mistake them as tokens of humility, when they savour more of the spirit we have been describing.

(3.) This evil temper is shewn also towards others. We can as little bear disappointment or correction from the world, as afflictions from God; and hence a continual ground of uneasiness. We have naturally no compassion for the faults or infirmities of others, and yet require the greatest indulgence to our own. Hence not only in the weightier matters of the world, but on the most inconsiderable trifles (and here oftenest it may be observed, because these oftener occur) this spirit works. You have something to be done, and the person, through ignorance or mistake, either cannot or does not please you; such an one acts foolishly in his business, or imprudently in his Christian course; you cannot af-

ter all your pains prevail on this person to follow your advice or take your instructions ; upon such occasions what is your temper ? You are heated, hasty, impatient with them ; and your spirit sharpens your remonstrance. Thus you exasperate, when you should either overlook or correct with mildness. On the other hand, when you yourself offend, how little can you bear reproof ? though sweetened with love, how hardly is it palatable, and how intolerably offensive if accompanied with harshness or aggravations ?

4thly, Anger is another temper of the fallen spirit. “ It is the resentment shewn to injuries or provocations, whether real or imaginary.” Our pride is generally at the bottom ; that is hurt : then our bosom rises, our countenance changes, our voice is quickened, our words are bitter : and this frequently is the case on the most insignificant occasions. We cannot bear contradiction : though being in the midst of many like ourselves, we must meet with it : we have set a value upon ourselves which others do not seem to take notice of ; we are ill-used by those from whom we least expected it ; we are imposed upon by those we trusted ; we hear in company something disrespectful said of us, or it is reported to us by others ; our person is insulted, our character defamed, or our friend injured : then the heart boils, and passion struggles for vent : sometimes circumstances restrain it, sometimes it rages and is violent, “ returning evil for evil, and railing for railing.” And this temper especially breaks out at home, where, on how trivial a matter are our houses filled with disputes, and noise, and clamour, and every evil work ?

5thly, Envy also is what the fallen spirit lusteth unto. “ It is the repining the heart feels at

another's superior excellence or prosperity. "Because his father loved Joseph, his brethren hated him; they regarded with an evil eye the coat of many colours, and it had nearly cost him his life. We cannot bear that another should be more esteemed, more successful or richer than ourselves; especially if he was once our equal; particularly if he be of the same profession, or competitor with us for any distinction. Hence, since "many run in the race, and one only receiveth the prize," the effect of disappointed pride appears in all men; for all have some things wherein they fail; though in others they may be the objects of envy. This is the source from which most part of the conversation in company arises: each hath his complaints; accuses the partiality of the world; wants to hear something depreciating of the envied rival; is ready to derogate from his worth; and pleased if any step be taken to lessen his excellence or remove him out of the way. Hence slander, scandal, backbiting, lies, are invented, reported, propagated: and in general, it becomes a difficult matter among such misrepresentations to know a man's real character.

And, whilst vice universally thus prevails in the world, those who are separated from the world will find the remainders of the same corrupt temper. If you see a brother, whose graces are more eminent, and whose advancement in the divine life surpasses your own; especially if thereby he is highly esteemed by those, whose favour you value; above all, if his superior piety eclipses and makes you less taken notice of; you must be very deeply humbled indeed, if envious jealousy against such an one does not find a place in your heart.

6thly, Hatred: "This is the settled dislike of those by whom we have been injured, or whose

conduct in any manner reproaches us." This "Esau hated Jacob" for depriving him of his blessing, "and in his heart said, The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob." (*Gen. xxvii. 41.*) And our hatred betrays itself on the appearance of the person disliked, especially if it be unexpected. When "his brethren beheld Joseph afar off, they said, Behold, this dreamer cometh," (*Gen. xxxvii. 18, 19.*) and took counsel to slay him. You hear it often said, "I forgive, but I cannot forget." Here the root remains. Though an apparent reconciliation seems for a time to heal the wound, it continues to fester within. This is the case in a thousand particulars which might be instanced, but it appears no where more frequently than where religion is concerned. There is an eternal "enmity put between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman;" (*Gen. iii. 15.*) and those who are of the latter must be hated of the former. As their light "reproves abidingly the works of darkness, and testifies of the world that its deeds are evil," (*Eph. v. 11, 13.*) it cannot but produce hatred. Since the day that Cain hated Abel, "because his works were righteous," so it is still. "He that is born after the flesh, persecutes and hates him that is born after the spirit." (*Gal. iv. 29.*) And no marvel: "He that was a murderer from the beginning," could not but stamp this strong mark of his image upon the fallen heart.

7thly, Malice: this is envy and hatred united and heightened. It is peculiarly the spirit of the devil. "It is the delight men feel in the wickedness or misfortunes of others, particularly of their enemies." This temper shews itself abundantly in the world. There is indeed a conspiracy against God: not content to serve the devil a

little, we seem ambitious to serve him much; as though it was our veriest happiness. To engage a number to join in the same "excess of riot;" to see the drunkenness or quarrels of others; to teize and exasperate those whom you know to be fretful; especially to prevail on some, who made profession of religion, to betray it; what satisfaction does it give to the heart? And how ready are you to glory over them, and, devil-like, turn accuser, and report, and reproach them for the very sins you tempted them to commit? You hear something evil of your enemy, and how happy are you to run open-mouthed into the world and spread it, heightened by your relation? One differs from you in his religious sentiments, and happens to give a handle for offence. How confidently you attribute it to the corruptness of his principles, and reproach the whole body for the faults of an individual? If any misery or calamity hath befallen the object of your hatred, doth not your heart feel a secret glow? Does your rival in trade fail, what a satisfaction? Is he that troubled you called off by death? The tolling-bell is music in your ears. Is your adversary fallen? immediately your cry is, "there, there, so would we have it." (*Psal. xxxv. 25.*) These are the indications of the malicious spirit.

8thly, Revenge brings up the rear; the last, but not the least of our spiritual wickednesses. "It is the desire or actual infliction of some punishment, according to the dictates of malice, on those who have offended us." "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." (*Rom. xii. 19.*) But man, the arrogant assumer of God's prerogatives, would be saying, nay, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." Hence the contrivances how to return the injuries we have suffered; the

watching the best time and opportunity for it ; the restlessness till that time comes ; the eagerness to seize the moment ; the violence if your adversary falls into your power ; and the pleasure you take in tormenting when occasion offers.— It is a common saying, “ Revenge is sweet ; ” and it is a true one : yet what a dreadful mark of a diabolical spirit, and an especial proof of the doctrine advanced in the text, “ that the heart is above all things desperately wicked ? ”

If the hints above given have the blessed effects of leading us more experimentally into the knowledge of ourselves, then shall not our labour have been bestowed in vain. For the following effects will be produced by it :

1. In proportion as we discover the vileness of our nature, we shall have admiring apprehensions of the riches of God’s grace, who thought upon us in this low, this deplorably wretched and wicked estate. That when we were the enemies of God and his law, and no one trace of any thing pleasing remained, but “ evil, and that continually,” was found in us ; that when we were become abominable, yea altogether abominable ; that when by nature we were as apostate from God as the devils themselves ; that then God should have compassion on us : that then he “ should think towards us thoughts of peace, and not of evil ; ” that then he should plan out a covenant of redemption ; that then he should give his own Son ; that then “ the brightness of the Father’s glory ” should be incarnate ; that then he should “ lay on him the sins of the whole world ; ” that then “ in his own body on the tree he should take away sin by the sacrifice of himself ; ” that then he should bleed and groan and die in torment, in ignominy, in dereliction, for us, miserable sinners ; for us, ungodly ; for us,

his enemies ; for us, that were fallen into the belly of hell ; that he might redeem, justify, sanctify, glorify us. "This indeed is love ! (1 *John* iv. 10.) Love, "the height and length and breadth & depth of which surpasseth knowledge." (*Eph.* iii. 18, 16.) Did we know more of ourselves we should know more of God's love to us ; and because "much hath been forgiven us," be led to "love him much." (*Luke* vii. 47.) What a motive is this to search into the depth of corruption, that we may feel ourselves more constrainedly the debt of gratitude !

2. If such is our nature as hath been described, how absolutely necessary does it appear, and how little need we marvel at what Christ said, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ;" (*John* iii.) These cannot be the tempers which make us "meet for an inheritance among the saints in light." Whilst they are undiscovered and unsubdued, "what communion can there be between righteousness and unrighteousness, Christ and Belial ?" The necessity of the new-birth, of a real participation of a divine nature, of a change, not of names or opinions or outsides, but of heart, is indeed at present strangely unknown or derided ; whilst one part think their nature good enough, and regeneration no better than mystic Enthusiasm ; and the other, that if we have been baptized in the church, have partaken of her ordinances, led a decent life, and shewn a zeal for the externals of religion, that then we have all the regeneration which the scripture exhorts us to look for. But alas ! the superficial religion of the latter is as far from real conversion of heart, as the blindness or infidelity of the former. We must be born again ; we must experimentally know a transition "from death unto life, (*John* v. 24,)

and from the power of Satan unto God." (*Acts* xxvi. 18.) We must be "renewed in the spirit of our minds; (*Eph.* iv. 23.) we must put off the old man, (*Eph.* iv. 22.) and put on the Lord Jesus Christ; (*Rom.* xiii. 14.) we must be transformed into his image and likeness," (*2 Cor.* iii. 18.) before we can ever hope to "see him face to face." And how earnestly will they seek it, who feel how deeply they need it; and know that except the holy Ghost work this effectual change in us, "that which is born of the flesh is and must be for ever flesh?" (*John* iii. 6.) Happy is the man who, taught in any measure to know himself, flies to the throne of grace, and, according to his necessities, pleads with importunity for an abundant supply of the spirit of Christ to lighten his darkness, help his weakness, discover the deceitfulness, change the corruption of his nature, and to "make him a new heart, and create a right spirit within him." Such a one shall be rescued from his native misery, and "grow up into him, who is the head, even Christ," till in heaven "he comes to the measure of the stature of his fulness," and everlasting victory over a desperately wicked heart shall crown his happy labour.

SERMON V.

THE DECEITFULNESS AND CORRUPTION OF THE HEART;

JEREMIAH XVII. 9.

THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS, AND DESPERATELY WICKED, WHO CAN KNOW IT.

WHYY is dust and ashes proud? Who can solve the question, or shew satisfactorily wherein we can justly glory? Surely the more we examine, the more we shall be convinced, that "Pride was never made for man;" for man, a creature so fallen; so polluted in his nature; so desperately wicked in heart; so corrupt in all his ways. Yet dust and ashes, sinful dust and ashes, will be proud notwithstanding; and vaunt itself "as though it were some great thing;" will tell of its dignity; glory in its rectitude; admire its own excellencies; extol its goodness; and boast almost its divinity, "as God knowing good and evil;" as self-taught to decide on every instance of right and wrong; and naturally charmed with Virtue's beauty, disposed with faithfulness to embrace it. Strange ignorance! Infatuation lamentable! and claiming much more justly our pity, than the poor lunatic that struts a King in his iron-fenced cell, with his crown of straw and tattered robes of fancied majesty. "Know thyself," vain man! thou mass of corruption; thou polluted both in flesh and spirit; thou abomination of the most-Holy; know thyself and be confounded. "The crown

is fallen from thy head ; thy glory is departed from thee ;” thy all is lost : arise then, and take to thee thy proper garments ; clothe thyself in sackcloth, confess “ thou art vile, abhor thyself in dust and ashes.” (*Job* xl. 4—xlii. 6.)

Happy will it be for us, my friends, when the discovery of our hearts has laid us thus low. “ Before honour is humility,” (*Prov.* xv. 33.) By “ pride the angels fell from heaven ;” (*Tim.* iii. 6.) by pride man also fell on earth ; by pride we sink deeper still in the abyss of sin ; and by pride obstinately persisted in, with them we must for ever be cast into the bottomless pit.

Humility and lowliness of mind are the only ways by which we can ascend from the depths of corruption. By humility alone we can be led to seek the restoration of the image we have lost upon earth ; and by * humility we shall mount, as on the steps of Jacob’s ladder, to the heaven for which we were originally designed. O precious humility, what a friend art thou to fallen man ! But how may we obtain this virtue of humility ? Here is the question ; and what answer can be given ? Know thyself. So far as we see the truth of our state ; so far as we really inquire into the mystery of iniquity within ; so far as we are convinced of the deep and utter apostasy of our nature ; so far, and no farther, shall we be humbled. Now to effect this hath been my purpose in the preceding discourses on these words, which subject will be concluded in the present. O that the truths they contain may, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, be made the means, if but to any one soul, of true humility ; and consequently, of leading it to him who promises “ to

* What is here spoken of humility, must be understood to imply no more than that the sense of our guilt alone can make the gospel welcome to us. For it is this humbling discovery of our own hearts, which convinces us that Christ must be to us all and in all.

revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite!" (*Isai.* lvii. 15.)

That the heart of man is desperately wicked I have attempted to shew, from the consideration of some of the chief tempers of his soul : from whence it hath appeared, that he is by nature unbelieving, proud, self-willed, disobedient, impatient, angry, envious, full of hatred, malicious, revengeful. I shall farther pursue this mortifying subject in the consideration of his earthly-mindedness and vile affections.

We are fallen under the dominion of flesh and sense. Every object from without tends to ensnare us, and to draw forth the worldliness and lust which is within us. All our wisdom is chiefly employed in contriving to make provision for these ; whilst the lusts themselves, "the lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh," insatiate as the grave, are daily crying, Give, Give.

1. The lust of the eye, or the love of money, is naturally fixed in our hearts ; and how deeply you may easily see, if you will consider the manner of getting or using the unrighteous mammon.

It must be observed, before I enter particularly into the workings of this temper, that covetousness sometimes reigns alone or chief in the heart, sometimes it is accompanied with other interfering vices ; alone, when the covetous man is merely intent upon heaping up, longs to see so much in his bags ; goes and counts over his sums with secret delight ; marks every piece ; and worships with most unfeigned affection his golden god. Sometimes accompanied, when other vicious passions also call for their gratification. And here the greatest profusion of money may be consistent with the most covetous desire of it. The statesman, whose love of the unrighteous mam-

mon shall make him infamously to fleece the public, may yet spend his thousands of that ill-gotten treasure in bribery and luxury. The tradesman, whose attention to enrich himself makes him wear out his life in almost sleepless industry and care, may yet be a squanderer of those very riches in a tavern or bagnio. The highwayman, whose love of filthy lucre tempts him daily to hazard his neck at the gallows, may yet be found bestowing that very idol on his mistress in a brothel. These may all be just as strong instances of this temper as the miser. The only difference is, their other vices at times are more predominant, and they clash with each other. Pride, lust and vanity, take the ascendancy, and then the fruits of covetousness are dispersed, and new calls arise to exercise it. Hence a young person may be as covetous as an old one, though the former never kept five guineas long at a time in his possession, and the other never spent five shillings out of his thousands but in absolute necessities. I note this, because few persons imagine that covetousness and prodigality can be so nearly allied.

Having premised this, I say, the love of money is naturally fixed in our hearts. This will be evident in the desires of the heart after it. Now examine yourselves whether some or other, more or fewer, of the following symptoms have not appeared in you. When you have seen another's affluence, have you never felt the secret wish, "O that it were mine?" When alone, hath not your mind been running out in imaginary prospects? grasping at the distant hope of affluence? and pleased with the shadow, though every appearance of actual success was wanting in your views? Hath not this principle set you on contriving how to abound? Yea, hath it not been

In your imagination the chief good, and infinitely superior to "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness?" You at least must be convinced of this, who will consider the anxiety which habitually you shew after the world; the vexations when things favour not your gains; the delight when the unrighteous mammon flows in upon you; and the uniform plan you keep in view, of securing and increasing your store. The world wakes with you early in the morning, and the thoughts of gain prevent the thoughts of God: you go forth into the world engaged in the pursuit of gold, not godliness: you weary yourself, it may be, till night; and late lie down with this upon your heart. Thus it is the first thing with you when you awake, and the last before you sleep: nay, your very dreams, it may be, are tingured with the same, and place you still amidst the business, merchandise and labour of the world; and your fancy imagines a new scene of hopes and fears and joys. Nay, even your very prayers (if time be spared for what you call your prayers) are interrupted by the same lucrative thoughts. The sabbath is polluted by them; the holy table of the Lord, which you presume to approach, is defiled with them; your "heart is full, and out of its abundance" the streams flow uninterrupted.

I would observe, that whilst the constant prevalence of this temper, in a greater or less degree, is the sure mark of the bondage of corruption in the worldling; the renewed heart will find great cause to mourn over the remainders of the same inordinate concupiscence, and to condemn those idolatrous desires which would intrude themselves even into their most solemn services.

From this source a correspondent conversation naturally flows. Men feel themselves in

their element when the discourse turns upon matters suited to make them worldly-wise. They will take pleasure in recounting their advantages: "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he goeth away, then he boasteth." (*Prov.* xx. 14.) The lips of such persons will be open to flattery and fawning toward their patron or their customers: they will be very ready to reflect on a tradesman that undersells them; they will studiously avoid, as painful and interruptive of their views, whatever is "for the use of edifying, which might minister grace to the hearers;" and be silent when such discourse is started; but when the world and the things thereof is the topic, their tongues will be let loose, and their attention fixed; these are the symptoms of earthly-mindedness; and where circumstances give them scope for appearing they never fail, though in different measures, to discover the power of this corruption in the heart. And this will be farther evident in their manner of getting money, which will ever be, more or less, by acts of fraud and injustice; by unreasonable profits, by adulterating their goods, or being scanty in their measures; by lending at unlawful advantage; by making the necessities or ignorance of others a handle to oppress them; by borrowing or running into debt, when they have no real intention or prospect of repaying; by making the Lord's day a day of merchandise; by withholding restitution of ill-gotten gain: so true it will appear that the love of money is the root of all evil; and that wherever it is men's grand aim to "abound, and they make haste to be rich, they cannot be innocent." (*Prov.* xxviii. 20.)

There is no wickedness of the heart more flagrant it may be, or less taken notice of than this.

“The god of this world” hath closed the eyes of his votaries, yea, hath gilded with every specious name the most abominable of our corrupt tempers : we call our covetousness a proper regard for our families ; our slavery to mammon, honest industry ; our love of the world, prudence ; and our rapaciousness, minding the main chance. And thus whilst this maxim is received, “Get as much as you can in an honest way ;” that is to say, without risking your neck at the gallows, we see men, the slaves of this abominable temper, quiet and easy, without any apprehensions of their sin or danger ; yea, rather blessing themselves in having cared for their own houses, and acted the part of a good relation in accumulating for them so genteel a portion.

The use of money, as well as the manner of getting it, shews the covetousness of the heart. By natural obligation, as well as by the positive law of God, we are bound “to do justice, and to love mercy :” (*Micah* vi. 8.) and in this chiefly consists our duty towards our neighbour : but to both of these covetousness opposes itself more or less ; and makes us unjust and unmerciful towards our fellow-creatures. A faithful examination of our hearts will shew us quickly in what measure this spirit hath reigned in us.

Justice is “the rendering unto all their dues, “and owing no man any thing :” but covetousness hath harpy talons, and is too ready to hold fast whatever it hath grasped. Hence money is parted with as so many drops of blood by the avaricious : and the most feel too great an attachment to self in the matter. In worldly dealings we may observe it, in people’s backwardness to pay the debts they have contracted ; by their endeavours to beat down the price of any thing and save a trifle, it may be, at the expence of

many lies; their great partiality to self in their bargains and contracts; their grudging the necessary demands of the state, and readiness to defraud it in customs and taxes; their robbing God's altar of the portion his service demands; counting lightly of his ministers, and thinking it no duty to communicate to them of their worldly things. These, among innumerable other instances of injustice, are the evidences of a covetous heart.

Mercy is "the regard we show to objects in distress." Covetousness makes a man selfish, and unfeeling to the wants of others. Though many a one thinks himself enough exempt from covetousness, if he can say he is punctually honest, and pays every one his due. But alas! "If our brother stand in need, and we shut up our bowels of compassion from him," how little will our honesty excuse us from the charge of being uncharitable? The subsistence and working of this selfishness you must needs have observed, by the most transient glance on the world or your own heart. When an object of distress hath fallen in your way, have you never avoided it; and, "like the priest and levite, passed by on the other side?" (*Luke* x. 31, 32.) When that could not be done, and the importunity of want was clamorous, how surly have you spoken to hide your covetousness, and added unjust reproach to their necessities? How little have you made it your care to inquire for the needy, and to relieve them? Where and when have the hungry been fed, the thirsty drank of your cup, or the naked been clothed by you? The sick visited, the aged, the widow and the orphan relieved by your kind hand? And this, when it was in the power of your hand to give, without distressing yourself, or violating any duty you owe to others. Though it may

be on such occasions you have a ready excuse. You were greatly afraid of encouraging idleness, you have a family of your own ; you do not abound yourself : but are not these vain pretexts to cover the selfishness of your heart ? I mean not to countenance every idle vagrant ; but where you know there is need, is your hand open ? Your care for your family is laudable, but it shews the covetousness of your heart, when it makes you insensible to others, wants. You may be low yourself ; but though you labour with your hands for a maintenance, you may still have two mites to spare to the greater indigence of others ; and whenever, according to your ability, you are not “ ready to distribute, willing to communicate,” (1 *Tim.* vi. 18.) you are certainly under the influence of covetousness.

It must be remarked indeed, that there are many, whose splendid appearance of benevolence would seem to exempt them from uncharitableness : but it must be observed also, that a tender constitution may not be able to withstand the cries of an object in distress ; that the affectation of liberality may overcome the sordidness of our temper ; that the hope of “ hiding a multitude of sins,”* (*James* v. 20. 1 *Pet.* iv. 8.) by such (ignorantly esteemed) commutative acts of goodness ; that the importunity of a friend whom we would not disoblige, and many other sinful principles, not the true love of mercy, may be the motives to our charity. And this is always evident, if the pittance from your abundance goes from you with reluctance ; if you are afterwards commending yourself for your generosity ; or if,

* A greatly mistaken text as to me it seems ; *hiding the multitude of sins*, refers to the sins of the converted person in one place, and in the other intimates the charitable care to conceal them, as opposed to reporting them.

while you are not wholly destitute of deeds of almsgiving, you seek not to be in a capacity to abound in them, as you might and ought. If it be not in your heart to deny yourself many things, that you may have the more to bestow; if you have not the wants of your brethren habitually as your concern; you may see the want of mercy, and consequently the influence of selfishness.

I might further observe the same respecting lending, for a small sum lent is often a great charity. Covetousness hates to hazard a penny: the payment must be secured before the purse-strings open, whatever be the call: "go and come again, and to-morrow I will lend," says thy selfish heart, "when thou hast it by thee." The tricks, evasions, and castings-about of the covetous are indeed endless; and oftentimes the greatest oppressions are countenanced under the shew of friendship and kindness. But what hath been said will serve to shew what our hearts naturally are, and what in too many they continue to be; and must be in all, if preventing, restraining, converting grace doth not keep within bounds the stream of corruption, or dry up its fountain.

II. The fleshly lusts which dwell within us, shew the "desperate wickedness of our hearts." Lawless appetite hath now seized the reins, and hurries on the body to sensual gratifications. By indolence and excess provision is made for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; and as the effect, impurity follows in thought, in word and actions.

1. Indolence the flesh delights in. Labour and diligence iare ts aversion; though since the fall expressly enjoined us. But in general labour we must. The world produces nought but briars and thorns till subdued by the sweat of the brow. Though a few by the possession of affluence be-

come in some measure exempted from labour, the far greater part must work before they eat : yet the love of idolence will appear the same in the one as in the other. The morning comes, with what reluctance do you rise ? It is too soon, it is too cold, saith every man's natural sloth. "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep ;" (*Prov.* xxiv. 33.) necessity urges you to rise : but the same temper follows you ; "the fool foldeth his hands together :" (*Eccles.* iv. 5.) any little excuse is easily seized to suspend your diligence, and trifle away your time. And when you do work, you often feel the thought, "what a weariness is it ?" "I wish I had enough to live upon, I would then sit down at my ease." If you have seen others, whose affluence hath been construed into a prescription for idleness, have you not envied them as more happy than yourself ? And in other points you will find the sluggard still in your work, not doing it with all your might ; an eye-servant, a loiterer ; lengthening the intervals of leisure allowed you, or returning with reluctance to your task. Or if every nerve is straining, and you are labouring night and day to gain ; pray what is at the bottom of all this ? Why usually an intention to be idle at the last, and spend the end of your life in pleasing indolence, when you can say to your soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease ; eat, drink and be merry." (*Luke* xii. 19.)

In the superior rank of life this temper seems uncontroled, except where ambition interferes. What is usually the life of the great and the affluent, but varied scenes of pleasure, calculated merely to gratify indolence ? Amusements, cards, &c. visits, sleep, sauntering, eating or drinking, or some insignificant work (which may be bet-

ter called play) these take up all their time ; and to morrow is only a repetition of the sloth of to day. The rich cannot be at the pains to superintend their own accounts. The Dignitary in the church fills his stall at his ease, and devolves the drudgery of prayer and preaching to some needy substitute. Labour is the general aversion ; whilst every thing that can gratify indolence is contrived and purchased at any expence.

It is from this temper that, though we so often hear every body complaining of the badness of the times, we can find so few willing to exert themselves to restrain it. The magistrate, the minister, the people, care not to trouble themselves ; the law lies dormant, zeal is extinguished, and sloth sheds its soporiferous influences all around.

2. Excess follows close on the heels of indolence. They mutually minister to each other. Meat, drink and sleep are what the natural man lusts after, not merely to sustain nature, but to pamper it : not to satisfy its just demands, but to gratify its inordinate appetites.

The niceness and curiousness of the affluent, where eating is among the grand concerns of life, is pretty evident. The high sauces, ragouts, and strange inventions of the pimps of luxury, to provoke the desire of eating beyond the demands of hunger, and the universal readiness of all to partake of such incentives, shew by what beastial appetites we are governed. Thus on one table the four quarters of the globe shall be ransacked for turtle, and ortolans, and spices and desert, at an expence that would have provided for an hundred families of the needy ; and, where circumstances forbid such daily indulgence, yet the same temper shews itself. Hath not a feast pleased you ; and the prospect of its approach

been dwelt upon with delight? When some nice dish was brought on, was not your before palled-appetite whetted anew? or did you not regret that it came in so late? Did you never take a pleasure in talking of the good eating you partook of or were going to? Have you never oppressed nature till she sunk under the load? You will need only observe a Sunday evening's congregation to discover in it the gluttony of the poor, as much as in the habitual snoring on the soft couch after dinner of such as are daily more luxurious.

The desire of drinking, though perhaps not more common, is yet more taken notice of: What a thirst is there after liquor! The brute beast quenches his drought at the river, and is satisfied; whilst the man who leads him thither drinks beyond reason when nature is no longer thirsty! Hence, at the expence of health and strength and fortune, and every consideration that can be near or dear, we still see the drunkard "filling himself with strong drink;" pouring in liquid fire, that he may thirst and drink, and thirst and drink again. But when men proceed not to these grosser excesses, and fashion or decency, or some such like motive withholds them, the heart still shews its disposition, by the pleasure felt "when the liquor sparkles in the glass and moveth itself aright;" (*Prov. xxiii. 31.*) by sitting long at the cups;" by taking what is called a cheerful glass; by customary indulgence after meals, through pretence of I know not what advantage to digestion, &c. and by frequenting needlessly places of public entertainment through pleas. of business or company.

These symptoms shew the tendency of the heart

where grosser excesses may have been avoided.

Inordinate love of sleep comes under the head of sloth ; long continuance of it belongs to excess. When a third part of your time or more is spent on your pillow ; when a great deal of the day as well as the night is wasted on your bed ; when you rise heavy, and not refreshed from your morning or mid-day slumbering ; it can hardly be but that irregular appetite must have dominion over you. The body thus indulged is filled with the fuel of lust ; and no marvel that it makes so many to be “ like fed horses in the morning ; every one neighing after his neighbour’s wife.” (*Jer.* v. 8.)

3. Impurity is strongly the bent of man’s natural heart. I will not enter into the grosser indulgences of it, which modesty bids rather to conceal than mention ; but only hint at some of those more unnoticed instances of it, in which many lie the slaves of their vile and wicked hearts, without suspecting the dreadfulfulness of their state. Our fallen nature is full of lewdness : we need no other temptation but from within. “ Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own heart’s lusts and enticed.” (*James* i. 14.) What corrupt imaginations rise up in the hearts of all from the days of their youth ? How readily are they entertained, indulged, delighted in ? especially when alone and on the bed of sloth ? And where this is the case, how ready are you to please your eyes with some inflaming object ? How prone to seek the snare, where you have felt evil desires excited ? and to pursue, instead of avoiding the persons and pleasures whence Satan hath taken occasion to entangle you ? These are the beginnings of lust : “ Out of the heart proceed evil thought, & thence adulteries.” (*Matt.* xv. 19)

The tongue will partake of the defilement that

is within. Gross indecencies in conversation are indeed at present in general remitted to the vulgar; but the delicate lasciviousness of the more refined shews the same abominable temper in the secret inuendo; the double entendre; and the thin veil of a witty expression suited more surely to insinuate into and fix the vile idea more firmly upon the memory. These "unclean spirits have gone forth out of your mouth," (*Rev. xvi. 13.*) or your fancy hath been entertained with them, you have either smiled approbation, or seemed only pleasingly to frown in silence; at least have not testified your abhorrence of them. Whilst too often, what openly-corrupt conversation goes forward? and, shameful to tell! even the old make the young to blush with their obscenities. The conduct under such an influence must be conformed to the temper.

I will not speak of the more criminal indulgencies of the flesh, of the grossest nature; but would have every one of you call to mind the many undue liberties you have taken with any person, because you were alone; the dishonour of God's temple, your own body; the satisfaction and pleasure enjoyed in a loose book of amours or plays; or the like obscenities more strikingly expressed on the stage: the feasting your eyes with an indecent picture; the allowed, though sinful freedoms so common at balls and in other mixed companies; and the innumerable ways which the flesh contrives decently to gratify its corrupt desires. Whilst, as the effect of such indulgences, your minds feel the continued impression of them, and your senses, even when locked up in sleep, are still haunted with the image and impure fancies, which were entertained when you were waking.

These are the dire marks of our desperately

wicked hearts. Corrupt indeed are we, and become abominable: "from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in us, but the whole is wounds and bruises and putrifying sores." (*Isai. i. 6.*) The more we are attentive to what hath passed in us, the more we shall discover this vile nature of ours, and feel the need of crying, "Purge me with hyssop, that I may be clean; wash me, that I may be whiter than snow." (*Psal. li. 7.*) Yea, and when we have begun to be made whole, "this war in our members, this flesh that lusteth against the spirit," (*Gal. v. 17.*) will require all our labour, watchfulness and prayer, to "keep it under and bring it into subjection." (*1 Cor. ix. 27.*)

I shall conclude the subject with this one observation.

That the knowledge of this desperate wickedness of our hearts can only come from the Spirit of God, by his word enlightning our minds to understand our errors: for those who are evidently under the grossest influence of the foregoing evils, and one should think, must be unavoidably convinced of them, are quite insensible of it. The most worldly hearts are usually the most regardless of their wretched state: and they who are "following all uncleanness with greediness," are led blindfold to their ruin, as the adulteress, "who eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith I have done no wickedness." (*Prov. xxx. 20.*) But when God's light shineth into our hearts, then is our darkness revealed to us; conviction of sin flashes like lightning on our consciences: and the more of this light we obtain, the more humbling are our reflections.

I have pitied the ignorance of a decent formalist, whose astonishment hath been raised when an experienced christian hath expressed his deep

apprehensions of his own vileness; and the un-awakened devotee hath suspected, from his confessions of the “remembrance of his sins being grievous to him, and the burden of them really intolerable,”* that he must needs have been a peculiarly bad man in his time, and committed some atrocious wickedness: whereas the only difference between them is, that the one is enlightened to see and quickened to attend to those workings of natural corruption in his heart and actions; whilst, however more evident they appear in the conduct of the other, yet the “darkness hath blinded his eyes” that he cannot see them. And this it is that makes every true believer really write down under his own name “of sinners I am chief;” because the views he hath of his own fallen nature can be equalled by nothing which he discovers in the conduct of others.

If what you have heard hath this blessed humbling effect upon any of your hearts, my brethren, one great end of my speaking will be answered, and “the revelation of the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ,” will indeed appear precious unto you, concerning which I purpose to speak more fully in the ensuing discourses.

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* Confession in the Communion Service.

SERMON VI.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD'S LAW.

GALATIANS III. 10.

CURSED IS EVERY ONE THAT CONTINUETH NOT IN ALL THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW TO DO THEM.

THE immortality of the soul hath been a truth received in all nations and all ages. The light of the Gospel hath infallibly confirmed it. Man therefore is a creature, whose present existence must be considered as bearing a necessary connexion with futurity ; and his eternal state, as being so infinitely more durable, must be regarded by him as unspeakably more important than his temporal.

That he is a dependent creature, and, as endued with conscience, accountable to some superior being for his conduct in this life, hath been also universally received, and cannot now be reasonably disputed ; since Revelation hath laid it down among its most evident truths, that "God will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained ; of which he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (*Acts xvii. 31.*) That then the actions of men shall be laid in the balance of justice, and a suitable sentence follow the inquiry.

If man be thus accountable for his actions, it must arise from some rule of duty prescribed and known : what that rule is, as well as the

sanctions annexed to it, will deserve our attentive consideration.

We are in nothing more liable to mistake than concerning the law of God, and the penalties annexed to it. Every man naturally desires to be happy. Every one is willing to persuade himself he shall be so. Every man therefore would have such a rule as shall certainly comprehend himself within it. Hence all the vain labours to lower down the true standard from the perfection of obedience to sincerity; and then establishing such measures of sincerity, as vary according to the corrupt taste of those who thus exalt themselves into legislators.

On the other hand, the sanctions have suffered the same violence as the law. The dread of eternal misery is terrible indeed. Nature shrinks from it. The language therefore of holy scripture must be explained in some milder sense. Hence the duration, the place, the intensesness, the universality of the torments of the wicked, have been respectively and strenuously controverted by those who had too much reason to apprehend the weight of them: whilst from self-wrought notions of God, and leaving the scriptures to wander after airy speculations, others have invented for themselves a wrathless deity, either too indulgent to punish at all, or inflicting merely to purify, and with a view to bring the whole race of mankind finally and happily from the furnace, when their dross hath been consumed, and the divine principle purged and extricated from the intanglements with which flesh and sense have surrounded it.

Now the only way we can shun the rocks of error is by keeping a constant eye upon the chart of divine truth. The God who alone hath a right to our service, hath fully revealed his mind

and will relative to these matters in the scriptures, has prescribed the rule and declared the sanction, "To the word therefore, and the testimony."

The Apostle, in the epistle from which the words in the text are taken, is writing to the church of the Galatians, on a matter then greatly controverted; namely, "whether it was necessary for the Gentile converts to be circumcised, and to keep the law of Moses?" (*Acts xv. 1—6.*) The Judaizing teachers among them had sapped the very foundation of the believer's hope, by setting up the law as a covenant of life, and pleading for obedience to it as the intitling ground of their acceptance with God: whilst St. Paul in every place resolutely set himself to oppose an opinion so dishonourable to his Master, so contradictory to the gospel, and so destructive to men's souls. In this epistle and another to the Romans, he expressly and formally enters into the question, and confutes the pretences of his adversaries, from the consideration of the spirituality, extent and perfection of the law; the impossibility in the present state of human nature of satisfying its demands, and the design and end of it, both as moral and ceremonial; which was not to furnish any with a title to life, but "to lead all to Christ, that they might be justified by faith." (*Gal. iii. 24.*)

So far therefore from being capable of saving, it served only to condemn as many as trusted to it; since "as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; as it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." (*Gal. iii. 10.*)

And this reasoning of the apostle with the people of that day is left on record "for our admonition," that we like them might not "be turned

aside from the hope of the gospel," to depend on any broken reed which can only run into and pierce the hand that leans upon it. And it is with this view, that I purpose to open the words read to you, that when we see the perfections of obedience which God's law, the rule of our duty, indispensibly requires, and the tremendous curse which it denounces against every transgression we may be the more solicitous to "fly from the sword of the avenger to the city of refuge," the cross of him "who hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us." (*Gal. iii. 13.*) In speaking to the words read at present, I shall endeavour to shew the following particulars:

I. What law the Apostle here refers to.

II. What the demands of that law contain.

III. The impossibility of our compliance therewith.

I. The law the Apostle here refers to, is peculiarly the moral law. He declares it to be that law "which concluded Jews and Gentiles both under sin:" (*Rom. iii. 9.*) that law, by which all the world was found guilty and stood condemned before God: (*Rom. iii. 19.*) that law the offence against which produced death before Moses' days; (*Rom. v. 14.*) and that law, by obedience to which, wherever it could be found, life would be certainly attained. (*Gal. iii. 21.*) These are characters which alone suit the moral law.

Some indeed refer all that the apostle says to the ceremonial law, or at least to that dispensation under which the Jews were, considered purely as it was Judaical; and thereby make it a private controversy in which the world at present is no ways concerned. But it is evident that the mat-

ter in dispute touches the very nerves of the gospel ; namely, whether faith or works justify us before God ; and we have full as much concern in it as the Galatians themselves. There was a law from the beginning which man was bound to obey. It was like its author perfect ; coming from God it could not but be so : and it was to be suitably observed, he can receive from his creatures no service but such as becomes their dependence upon him ; and this must be absolute and intire. This is the eternal and unalterable rule of duty. The traces of this obligation through man's corruptions were become grievously obscured, yet in the worst times "God was not without a witness" in the conscience. Men at all times and in all places knew that they who did things contrary to that law were worthy of death. (*Rom. 1. 32.*) The Jews had one advantage over others : God committed to them his lively oracles. He wrote with his own finger on tables of stone this eternal law of obedience : and in typical institutions of his own appointment shewed them deliverance from its condemnation. It never was designed to save them. It was given that "sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful ;" (*Rom. vii. 13.*) that it might be "a schoolmaster to them ;" (*Gal. iii. 24.*) that they might turn their eyes from this law of works to a gospel of grace, continually held forth in every bleeding victim. The moral law delivered to Moses on mount Sinai was not a new law, peculiarly framed for and appropriated to them ; it was the old commandment which had been from the beginning ; a law by which all mankind was to be judged, and be justified or condemned, according to their obedience to or transgression of it. The peculiar advantages they enjoyed by the law, were a

clearer and deeper conviction of their impotency to keep it, and their misery under the failure; and fuller discoveries of God's gracious designs of relief from it in the promised seed.

When therefore the law is spoken of, we must not conceive that the mosaical law, contained in the ten commandments, is another law distinct from the moral, by which Jews or Gentiles were otherwise equally bound. There never was but one moral law from God: there cannot be: it is unalterable. However, in sundry times and divers manners the promulgation of it may be made. All men are and must be under it to the end of the world. God must cease to be, before his law can vary or cease to bind men's consciences.

II. The demands of this law come next to be considered. And these are obedience in every view and instance absolute and compleat; doing God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. "A continuance in all things written in the book of the law." Our rule of duty is perfect and intire; nor may one jot or tittle of it be broken. "Give me thine heart" (*Prov.* xxiii. 26.) in the utmost simplicity and sincerity, is its first injunction; for "God requireth truth in the inward parts." (*Psal.* li. 6.) The principle must be pure. This is essential to all obedience. It is the rectitude of the temper which constitutes the acceptableness of the service. The extent too of our obedience must be as large as our rule. All God's commandments, the least as well as the greatest of them, demand our submission: and this with the highest intenseness of affection. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might, and with thy strength." (*Matt.* xxii. 37.) Imperfection is transgression. If the least measure of love be wanting, the obedience under the law is

not absolutely perfect. God will have an intire service or none. One defect as effectually destroys all title to life by the law as a thousand transgressions : and the whole must be perpetual ; continuance in all these things to do them being the unalterable prescription. The longest course of obedience, once interrupted, ceases directly to be a legal righteousness. The curse enters the moment that sin enters. A life of a thousand years, spent like an angel of God, would, according to the covenant of works, lose all its reward, if but in the dying moments a vain thought or an idle word escaped us. The law is inexorable : “ The man that doth those things, he and he only shall live by them.” (*Rom. x. 5.*) It makes no provision for failure : “ The wages of sin, of every sin, is death.” (*Rom. vi. 23.*) Now “ if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by this law.” (*Gal. iii. 21.*) Such obedience as this would have given a legal claim to life : we should have stood before God “ righteous, as he is righteous.” The favour of God, not by grace but by right, would have been necessarily connected with this : God must have been delighted with his own image. But,

III. No man hath ever thus conformed to the rule of duty. “ The scripture hath concluded all under sin.” The law could not be fulfilled through the weakness of the flesh : “ All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (*Rom. iii. 23.*) The moment any person truly begins to consider his state, and to bring forth his heart and life before the law of this holy Lord God, conviction must seal up his lips in silence. Many indeed there are, whose ignorance and unhumbed pride lead them to claim the reward of obedience : and many more hope to deserve it before they die,

though the one and the other are under the most fatal delusion. But this will be disputed by the good livers, as they think themselves, who trust that they are righteous. It may not therefore be amiss to manifest a little more explicitly the fact of disobedience, and shew you, that so far from keeping all the commandments in the highest measure continually, you never for one day truly kept any of the commandments in the lowest measure : but having been a transgressor from the womb, you continue so to this hour.

I have indeed already at large laid open to you the "carnal mind which is enmity against God ; and shewn you that it neither is subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." (*Rom. viii. 7.*) I have proved that every living soul is thus carnal ; and as a consequence thereof, that he is essentially a sinner, wanting that principle without which there can be no obedience.

This alone might be sufficient ; but because the matter is of such importance, I pass on to a review of our evident transgressions against the law, in order more fully to support the charge just laid against us. Though it may startle some to be accused of idolatry, profaneness, sabbath-breaking, murder, adultery, theft and perjury ; it is a fact, that you are guilty of all. I might indeed plead your own petitions for mercy, after the rehearsal of each commandment,* and the acknowledgments you are continually making to the same purpose in many others places of our Liturgy : for surely you are not allowing yourselves thus deliberately, solemnly and repeatedly to utter what you deem only so many falsehoods. But I would rather wave this proof, to

* Rubric before the commandments in the communion service.

enter more intimately into the subject, and shew you the ground of such acknowledgments.

It must be observed that "the law of God is spiritual." (*Rom. vii. 14.*) Our Saviour's comment upon it declares how far it reaches. Each command comprehends under it not only outward acts but inward, yea, and every intention or thought that hath either a more immediate or distant tendency to violate it.

The law begins with the object of worship and the nature of it : who is the true God, and how he must be served. God alone must be the object of our worship. We are called upon to have no other ; and to worship him, is to pay to him that supreme regard, that faith and fear and love which we may not give to any other. Now who hath thus sanctified the Lord God in his heart ? What have we been doing but setting up against him so many idols of jealousy ? It matters not whether we have made to us "gods of wood and stone, which are no gods ;" or put in the fine gold, with Cæsar's image upon it, our confidence : whether we have worshipped at the shrine of a deceased or perhaps imaginary Venus, or supremely fixed our affections upon some living object ; whether we have cried "Baal, help us ;" or fled to creature-dependencies : whether we have with the Americans sacrificed to devils, or feared the faces of men ; wherever or in whatever we have loved, feared and trusted upon the creature more than the Creator, there we have had other gods beside him.

As God alone must be worshipped, the nature of that worship next claims our attention. He must be worshipped in spirit and in truth ; and in ways only of his own appointment. We are equally guilty of idolatry in worshipping the true God after a wrong manner, as if we worship-

ped a false god. When the Israelites "proclaimed a feast unto the Lord" before the golden calf, they were as much idolaters as when "they erected the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of their god Remphan." Images with us are no longer the mediums of worship. I will suppose you never bowed to them, nor have been tempted to do so; but are you therefore wholly free from idolatry? Can we find no idolaters but in the deserts of Africa, among those who prostrate themselves before the rising moon? or must we travel to the distant East to behold the bending votaries of a Chinese pagod? Are they alone in this respect culpable, who in the country of grossly idolatrous Romanism bow the knee to a god which the baker hath made, or adore the dead bones of a man? Alas! I fear there is not a protestant church in the world where as great idolatry almost is not in the worshippers; not to mention the misconceptions which are usually entertained of God, and that aptness to frame corporeal ideas of the infinitely incomprehensible nature; I would only beg you to observe the temper and manner in which God's worship is performed among us; and you will needs confess, that it better suits a dumb idol, that "having eyes seeth not, and having ears heareth not;" than the all-seeing, heart-searching Jehovah. Some indeed there are who are worse than idolaters: they worshipped some god, though a false one; but your neglect of God's worship in public, in your families, and in private, testifies with what contempt you treat the great God and Saviour, "in whom you live, and move, and have your being." (*Acts xvii. 28.*) You have risen up, and he hath sustained you; you have lain down in peace, because he has preserved you; but hath he seen a bended knee, a grateful acknowledg-

ment of his care, or a petition for its continuance? Not a word. You have left him "far above out of your sight;" you "restrained prayer before him." (*Job* xv. 4.) Is he a God, or is he not, that you have treated him with such neglect?

But you daily worship him. How? "in spirit and in truth?" What, when so many vain thoughts, so many worldly thoughts, so many wicked thoughts, lodge within you? Is this a worship in spirit and in truth? What, when you are so unsuitably affected with his glory, so irreverent, cold, unmeaning and hypocritical, "drawing near to him with your lips, when your heart is far from him?" (*Isai.* xxix. 13. *Matt.* xv. 8.) Is this the worship he demands? Go wait upon the meanest person you would ask a favour of; you dare not treat such, as you have many a time treated the eternal Majesty.

You are commanded to "sanctify that great and terrible name, The Lord thy God." (*Isai.* viii. 13.) But how often hath this tremendous name been in your mouth vainly, wantonly, thoughtlessly, profanely, or passionately? Were the charge only brought against you for your mentioning it so often in your prayers, when your heart hath felt no awe of his presence and glory, you would see a catalogue of sins that would increase beyond the number of the hairs of your head.

Your sabbaths have been greatly polluted.—That holy day hath been sometimes a burden to you. You have said, "When will it be gone?" (*Amos* viii. 5.) Yea, you have not waited for its end. You have thought your own thoughts, "spoke your own words, and done your own pleasure in it." (*Isai.* lviii. 13.) You have neglected the public worship often on the most

frivolous pretexts. You have attended, but without any reverential sense of him whose throne is in heaven, and his footstool the earth. You have gone away, but not in a sabbatical temper. Indulgence, idleness, dress, visitings or worse, have profaned that perhaps more than any common days. Your man-servant or maid-servant have been detained from the service of God : you have sacrilegiously converted God's right in them on that day to your own secular purposes.

Upon these facts I appeal to your respective consciences, who is guiltless in any instance of the breach of his duty towards God? Nor shall we be able to give a better account of our obedience to the duties of the second table.

The proud and naturally independent heart of man will not, as hath been shewn before, easily bend to "give honour to whom honour is due." (*Rom. xiii. 7.*) Contempt of authority, disobedience to superiors, ingratitude to parents, exalting ourselves above our equals, and haughtiness towards inferiors, have in innumerable instances appeared.

But murder you never committed, no not in thought. Do not be too confident: somebody perhaps is now alive, whom you have wished to be dead ; or some one hath died, whose death rejoiced you. Was not this murder, think ye?— Suppose you have not proceeded to the act of imbruing your hands in innocent blood (yet perhaps you may have contributed to this, and been a party if not a principal many ways in bringing on the untimely end) have you never been "angry without a cause?" Never been heated to say, "Raca, or thou fool?" Never "hated your brother?" He who knows best his own commands, expressly charges these things to

the account of murder. (*Matt.* v. 22. *1 John* iii. 15.)

Adultery also you will not confess. Why? because you were never taken, as the woman brought to our blessed Lord, "in the very act." (*John* viii. 4.) What of that? Say you have been really innocent of the grosser crime, have you never "looked upon a woman to lust after her?" Hath your hand, your tongue, your eye, never betrayed the unhallowed passion? Hath not your heart entertained contrivances to effect your gratification? or indulged desires of doing it, if in your power? Then you have certainly been an adulterer. (*Matt.* v. 21, 22.) Add the instances noted before under the temper of impurity, and tell me if you can say, "I am pure from this sin?"

It is ignominious to be a thief: you will not acknowledge yourself to be subject to that imputation. But then hath not pride rather than duty kept you within bounds? And hath not self often passed the line of justice, and adjudged to you what was not properly your own? Have you always "done unto others as you would in a change of circumstances have expected from them?" The love of gain, hath it not often blinded your eyes, and covetousness laid a bias on your integrity? In your dealings, labour, service, or whatever your respective employments may have been, when you begin to place things in the true point of view, you will see how swerving your walk hath been from the rule of right. Unjust gains, exorbitant profits, faulty or eye-service, impositions in merchandise, advantages taken of others' easiness, ignorance or necessities, with a thousand means which worldly wisdom hath devised to carry on its grand design of getting and thriving, testify

the thief in the heart. Besides the numberless acts of injustice to God, the king, and the necessitous, which have not, it may be, ever come under your own cognisance or consideration, or been a subject of the least concern.

I will suppose you never to have perjured yourself before a magistrate, nor to have suborned others; but you may be "a false witness against your neighbour" notwithstanding. The tongue that never told a lie, would be a wonder which this world never produced: he only excepted "in whose mouth there was no guile." (*1 Pet. ii. 22.*) The designing lie, the pernicious, the exculpativè, the marvellous, or the jocular, hath often, I fear, found a place in all our conversations. Who is wholly guiltless of slander, passing rash judgment upon others, of misrepresentation or of mis-report? "The tongue is a world of iniquity." (*James iii. 6.*) He would be a "perfect man indeed who could bridle it." (*James iii. 2.*)

The concupiscence forbidden in the last place goes to the bottom of the heart, reaching the very first motions of sinful inclination towards the things of others. If we have offended in the rest but little, we shall be found herein to have offended much. For who hath not been conscious to numberless motions of concupiscence, which have scarce been formed into desire, and have never been brought into act?

These are the "transgressions and disobedience," which are threatened with a "just recompence of reward." (*Heb. ii. 2.*) The rule is before you. Try your conduct: can it stand this test? Guilty or not guilty, is the question.—Who must not lay their hand upon their mouth? We have sinned. The fact is undeniable. Indeed what else have we done but sinned? What

one of the commandments have we kept? And so far from continuance in them all, what one day, yea, what one hour of our lives ever passed, without some deviation from them? What then can the law do? it must condemn us; it must "conclude all under sin, and the sentence of death eternal pass upon them, forasmuch as all have sinned." (*Gal. iii. 22. Rom. v. 12.*) But is every man under this state of condemnation? Yes; "the whole world is guilty before God." (*Rom. iii. 19.*) Is there then no plea? Yes, Guilty. But can we not escape the curse? No, not by the law. Must we then lie down despairing? Certainly: for any thing we can do to help ourselves. "The law is the ministration of death." (*2 Cor. iii. 7.*) It is and can be in its nature no other. It is our only and eternal rule of duty, and we must keep it or perish, for any relief we can obtain from ourselves. I rest here to intimate,

First, the deplorable state of fallen man under a covenant of works. He is rolling up a stone which above his strength, and continually returns and crushes him. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." (*Rom. iii. 20.*) Yea, "the strength of sin is the law." (*1 Cor. xv. 56.*) And yet we are so strangely wedded to it, that we are continuing our impotent attempts to keep it, though the seamless garment of righteousness once rent can never be renewed by us, so as to cover our nakedness. It was the old leaven the devil infused and it is still working to make man seek his salvation by the works of the law. He knows his power is never so triumphant, and his captive so secure, as when this is the case. It was, I doubt not, on this very account that our Lord said, that "publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven," whilst the apparent "children of the

kingdom," the devout, regular, self-justifying dependers on the exactness of their conformity to the rule of duty, "were cast out." (*Matt.* xxi. 31.—viii. 12.) Let us know ourselves, and lie down under our condemnation. To feel our misery, and to be reduced to self-despair, is to be at the gate of mercy.

Secondly, What an act of astonishing grace is it, that God hath made another covenant with us, "established on better promises;" (*Heb.* viii. 6.) wherein whilst the law is magnified by the obedience unto death of God's own Son, pardon and grace are purchased for us, and eternal redemption secured from all the destructive evils which a broken law denounces. A covenant of grace will be indeed "as fountains of waters, and streams from Lebanon," to every soul that sees his natural obligations, and his violation of them. I hope we shall ever keep this covenant in our view; by and by, through grace, I may be enabled to open to you its riches and fulness.

SERMON VII.

THE PENALTY OF DISOBEDIENCE.

GALATIANS III. 10.

CURSED IS EVERY ONE THAT CONTINUETH NOT IN ALL THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW TO DO THEM.

THE sanctions of the divine law succeeded in order to the law itself. Unless enforced by penalties it would be like a beardless arrow. The great Legislator hath therefore solemnly denounced them : His power is all-sufficient to fulfil them : His holiness requires it : His truth obliges him. The account given of the rule of our obedience is such as may justly alarm us. Our transgressions of it are numberless, great and aggravated. The law hath found us guilty. Justice must take its course. "Every transgression and disobedience must receive a just recompence of reward : Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

There is nothing we are more averse to receive than God's declared determinations to punish sin. As every man wishes for happiness, he would quiet his fears with promises of peace, "though God hath said, there is no peace." (*Isai. xlviii. 22.*) The curse of God is ever-terrifying thunder in a sinner's ears. He turns away from it. He would soften the tone of vengeance. He would make a new Deity, all mercy, to overlook the dishonour cast upon his holy law, and out of

complaisance to him sullyng the beauty of his holiness, and falsifying his truth. But "let God be true, and every man a liar." (*Rom.* iii. 4.) He hath spoken, and who shall disannul it? He is in one mind, and who shall turn him back?" (*Isai.* xiv. 27. *Job* xxiii. 13.) Better, far better, is it for us to bow at present before his unchangeable law, and trembling at the sanction, fly to the only door of hope, than, trusting on lying vanities, be covered with confusion, "when the devouring storm shall come, and sweep away every refuge of lies; (*Isai.* xxviii. 17.) when he shall rain upon the ungodly, snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest, this shall be their portion to drink." (*Psal.* xi. 6.)

I am about to open to you, my brethren, the curse and "wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." (*Rom.* i. 18.) A subject we are most interestedly concerned in; forasmuch as this unrighteousness is found in every soul of us; before God's bar can "no man living be justified." (*Psal.* cxliii. 2.) May the awful terror of God's judgments force us to take refuge in the arms of his grace, under the shadow of whose wings we may be safe; where no deluge of wrath, no devouring scourge, no curse can reach us.

I shall endeavour to shew,

I. That in the natural course of things the curse of God's broken law must fall upon every sinner's head.

II. The dreadfulness of that curse: and,

III. Add a word of application.

I. In the primary natural course of things, the curse of a broken law must fall upon every sinner's head. That we are all sinners is proved. As sinners, wrath is due to us and pronounced against us. Can we escape it, is the question.

By no powers of our own is it possible : sin once committed cannot be undone. By two ways men usually seek to escape the wages of sin. "By sorrow for the past, and doing better for the time to come." But neither of these can heal the breach.

(1.) Sorrow for the past will not cancel the obligation to suffer the punishment of transgression. This is the first refuge of lies to which proud man betakes himself. But what will this avail? Will fountains of tears, day and night, wash out the stains from our conscience, or blot out our sin from God's book? They can no more stop the course of God's law than the cries of the criminal who is convicted for murder, or the tears of the debtor who is arrested for his extravagancies, can stay the execution of human justice. Besides, what is the cause of most of this sorrow? Is it any thing more than a selfish fear of deserved punishment? And can this be any compensation for the dishonour shewn to God's Laws? But be it what it will, the divine Law knows no language, but "pay me what thou owest;" and in default thereof, delivers over to the tormentors. God's word is, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." (*Ezek. xviii. 4.*) Every sinner is a convict in law. The sentence only remains to be passed, and then execution will be made upon every attainted soul.

But, (2.) We generally place greater hopes on our doing better for the time to come. This usually goes by the name of true repentance; a little sorrow for the past, and a good resolution for the future: but alas! this is as vain and fruitless as the other.

Suppose yourself as good as your word. Suppose you really could do what you say, could turn from every evil way, and live henceforth as pure as an

angel? Would that secure you? Alas! your present and future obedience would be no more than the Law required. You would be "an unprofitable servant, doing no more than was your duty to do." (*Luke xvii. 10.*) You would have nothing over. Your past offence must remain as before: and it must therefore render all your subsequent services in vain. You would not, it is true, be condemned for present iniquity; but what would that avail, if still you must answer for the past? Tell your creditor, you are determined to run no more in arrear, will he give you a receipt in full on that condition? You see then, even on this supposition, sin once committed becomes indelible by you.

But the supposition you can thus do better, and the promise of doing so are chimerical. Were you to hear a man, who after repeated essays never yet was able to finish one wheel or part of one, engaging to complete some grand and curious machine, on any penalty which might be inflicted; I know not whether you would blame most his ignorance or his arrogance: yet not so great as yours, who resolve upon perfect obedience to God, after such frequent experience of inability to keep one of his commandments. Until you can cease to be a corrupted creature, you cannot cease to transgress; and if so, what I pray you, can your future conduct be but a sequel to the past, adding sin unto sin? and will a corrupt walk now atone for the same before?

But will not both these together, sorrow for the past, and sincere though imperfect obedience for the time to come, avail for me with God? Will he not be pleased if I do my best? I answer,

You neither do the best you can, and that best is bad too.

You do not the best you can. Who will dare to say that he doth really keep every one of God's commandments to the uttermost of what he might have done? Let any man but reflect upon his conduct one day, and see whether he hath not done things which he ought and might not have done; and left undone what he might have accomplished, for the glory of God and for the good of his neighbour. We could no more stand the plea of doing our best, than of obeying in perfection.

But after we had really done our best we should only have increased our condemnation: for what is our best, our very righteousnesses? Are they capable to stand the severity of God's judgments? Can they appear before the holy law of God? Will they challenge the rewards of obedience? So far from it, that the very iniquity of our holiest things must have one to bear it, or we are undone. And why? because the corruption of our nature defileth all we do. The best deeds of the natural man are wholly unclean, have not a spark of spiritual goodness in them. "For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (*Job* xiv. 4.) whilst the heart of a renewed man being so but in part, enough of defilement mixes in his best duties, to render them incapable of bearing the scrutiny of the Law of God.*

The consequence then is, that if we stand on the footing of our own obedience to the rule of our duty, we fall inevitably under the curse; nor can any method we can devise or make use of enable us to escape its execution. We must suffer or perform. The latter is impossible, therefore the former must be our portion. Which leads me,

* See Article XII. and XIII.

II. To consider what is the import of the threatening God hath declared against the transgressor, or the dreadfulness of the curse denounced. The security of sinners arises from a disbelief or misapprehension of the real wages of sin. Nor is there a soul who is saved from the curse of the Law, but would look upon sin in a more hateful light, if he really and fully apprehended the wrath revealed against it.

I will wave at this time the numberless evils that are the present wages of sin ; though these might fill volumes. The pains, the diseases, the calamities, the afflictions, the misery and distresses, which in this present time are the portion of the sinner ; and death itself, the last and most dreaded of all. We may be assured from what we already see and feel, that “ it is a fearful thing indeed to fall finally into the hands of the living God.” (*Heb. x. 31.*) If these are but “ the beginning of sorrows,” what must the fulness and completion of them be ?

I would pause a moment, that solemn awe might fix upon every mind, when we are entering on a subject so tremendous. It is what you and I, my brethren, have the most deep and intimate concern in. We are the sinners to whom the wages of sin are due. One transgression only deserves this wrath ; what will it then be, when sinners have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and as the sand of the sea their transgressions are numberless ? O ! for a heart of flesh to tremble for others and for ourselves.

If any scorers hear or peruse these lines, I shall expect to be called uncharitable, or a melancholy enthusiast, and they will feel their heart provoked “ to kick against the pricks.” But, sinner, know that these are the true sayings of God. Thou must deny his word before thou

canst reject these terrors. They are now declared with the kindest intention to thy soul, to press thee to "fly from the wrath to come." And fly thou must or perish in the flames. O that thou mightest feel, before it is too late to flee ! and that all would hasten their pace to the mountain of refuge, lest the storm overtake them.

"God will visit for these things." He hath solemnly warned us that sin shall not go unpunished. And a punishment he hath assigned adequate to its high demerit ; becoming the Majesty offended by it.

God himself will punish. "And who can stand when he is angry ? If his wrath be kindled, yea, but for a moment, who may abide it ? (*Heb. x. 31. Psal. lxxvi. 7.—ii. 12. Nahum i. 6.*) He is a consuming fire" able to punish as well as to bless to the uttermost. And what a fearful state must that be, when he arises to vindicate the honour of his broken Law, and to pour out the vials of "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul that doth evil ?" (*Rom. ii. 9.*)

The scripture hath briefly informed us concerning the nature, place and endurance of the curse of sin. Not the fulness ; for who but they that feel can tell the fierceness of the fire, or the intolerableness of the pains ; And yet, the very sound is enough to make the heart of every one that heareth it to tremble.

"Tophet is ordained of old." (*Isai. xxx. 33.*) The place originally designed for the devil and his angels, is now become the habitation of sinful men ; even thine, O sinner. "God hath prepared it." (*Matt. xxv. 41.*) It is "a place of torment." (*Luke xvi. 28.*) They that dwell there "have no rest day nor night." (*Rev. xiv. 11.*) The chains of darkness surround them. They

dwell in the shadow of death. "A furnace of of unquenchable fire; a lake which burneth with sulphur; a stream of living flames fed by the breath of the Almighty." (*Isai. xxx. 33.*) These are the dreadful images under which God's word reveals to us the prison of hell.

The nature of the torments inflicted therein is, according to our nature, twofold. He that taketh vengeance, punisheth "soul and body in hell." (*Matt. x. 28.*)

The soul in every faculty will feel the tormenting plague. The curse of God will fasten upon it, and it will be "a worm that never dies." Every reflection on the past will be like a scorpion's sting that striketh to the heart. Every thought sent out to take a survey of the future, will return filled with black despair, overwhelming with anguish. The consciousness of the immediate displeasure of the eternal God, will be "a poisoned arrow that drinketh up the spirit;" and the storms of wrath continually apprehended will fill the soul with terrors unspeakable: whilst all the furious passions let loose upon the poor distracted sinner; anger, malice, impatience, rage, like so many boisterous winds upon the sea, contend and toss the soul from one abyss of woe unto another.

The body, a principal in sin, will also share in the curse. It will lie weltering in flames consuming, yet unconsumed: tormented, without "one drop of water to cool the raging fire." (*Luke xvi. 24.*) For that the fire shall be real and eternal, the scripture seems abundantly to affirm. Nor do I see why it should be incredible, that he who raises the body, should be able to preserve it unconsumed in such a kind of suffering: or that it would at all suit the frequent assertion of the body's being "cast into hell," if the soul alone

was the sufferer. That our bodies will be spiritual is certain; but he that inflicts the punishment can prepare a fire, whose subtilty shall affect not our natures only, but also the angelical. And I doubt not but "the fire prepared for the devil and his angels," to which the accursed sinner will be condemned, will torment them as well as him.

Moreover, that the anguish will be intolerable, very fully appears from those dismal expressions of it, which fill the horrid caverns of Tophet.—There ceaseless weeping, remediless sorrows, revengeful but impotent blasphemies, "gnashing of teeth, and gnawing their tongues for pain," are heard on every side. "Filled with the fury of the Lord, as a wild bull in the net," (*Isai.* li. 20.) they roar out in their pangs; and shriek echoes to shriek around. Then shall the most dreaded of all present evils be courted as a friend; "men shall seek death, and shall not find it.—They shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." (*Rev.* ix. 6.) O fearful state of wretchedness, where the very arms of death are pleasant! With what horror then should we regard each sin, that bringeth down both body and soul to such intolerable woe?

No mitigation or relief is there known or may be hoped for. Every object that could soothe the pains is removed. The voice of mirth, the songs of vanity, the business, the companions, the amusements, that often here lulled to sleep the awakened conscience, are no more found. Sinners are left naked to their sorrows; and these roll on like billow upon billow without ceasing: "They have no rest day nor night:" (*Rev.* xiv. 11.) nay, they do not hope for any. No gleam of that sweet comforter ever breaks through the outer darkness. The hell of hells is this; that what

the sinner is, he must for ever be. Until God ceases to be, he cannot cease to hate sin, nor hating to punish it.

Eternity is the only measure of suffering the wages of sin. Could any message reach the damned, that after millions of ages, more than are drops in the ocean, sands on the shore, stars in the firmament, atoms in the universe, or numbers in calculation, that then their torment should cease; surely they would in their chains leap for joy, and endure because there was hope in the end. But alas! when all these ages shall be at an end, their torments are as new as ever; it is still "but the beginning of sorrows." What an alarming thought! when one spark from the furnace, one pang of remorse is now so painful, so grievous; what must eternity be in never-ending torment!

No marvel the sinner's heart rises against so fearful an expectation, and fain would soften down and explain away the duration of eternal misery: but it stands on the firm basis of eternal truth. We must believe this or believe nothing: All God's word sinks with it.

It is allowed indeed, the word for ever implies sometimes in scripture only a limited duration, which is always determined by the nature of the subject, or something connected immediately with it; but here it is so determined by its very connexion as to be incapable of such a sense.—The punishment of the sinner is expressive as of the same duration as the "life of the righteous." (*Matt.* xxv. 46.) The torments of wicked men are declared to be as enduring as those of the devils themselves; and I conceive it could never be said of any sinner, "it was good for him never to have been born;" (*Mark* xiv. 21.) if after any continuance of suffering, there should finally

remain for him an eternity of bliss ; seeing all the possible computations of time vanish into nothing when placed against eternity, and are lost as a drop in the ocean. Nor is there the least intimation given throughout the whole book of God, that the wages of sin shall ever be paid but by the infliction and continuance of the punishment.

Such is the curse of God revealed against sin. Would God it might so deeply affect our hearts, as really to beget in us the most awakened concern about our sins. For which end,

III. I shall endeavour to enforce the matter still farther upon every man's conscience for conviction and humiliation.

First, Tell me, daring sinner, can thy heart endure, and thy hands be strong, when God shall thus deal with thee ? What rock or mountain shall cover thee from this curse of sin, when the great day of God's wrath is come ? Perhaps thou hast often despised these terrors of the Lord, and hast been of those "fools who make a mock at sin ;" (*Prov.* xiv. 9.) but know assuredly thy shadow, when the sun shines on thee, doth not follow thee so close as the curse of God perpetually doth. It is upon thee rising up and lying down, going out and coming in ; and thou art living, thou art dying under it : and dying, it may be, utterly unconcerned about it. Hadst thou been by when Shadrach and his brethren were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, would not the sight have dismayed thee ? Hadst thou had the power to rescue them, what would not humanity have caused thee to attempt ? Yet they were safe in the protection of their God. If the fire had not been restrained, their bodies only for a moment could endure the pain, and then an eternity of bliss had received them. But

thou art on the brink of a fiercer furnace of fire: and God thy enemy, and an eternity of misery before thee; and art thou not concerned about thine own life, thy eternal life? What infatuation hath seized thee, that thou art so insensible?—Canst thou contend with the Almighty Jehovah? “Hast thou an arm like God?” (*Job* xl. 9.)—Canst thou resist his determinations, or elude his judgment? Dost thou fear when the forked lightning’s glare flashes into thy chamber, or tremble when the thunder of God’s power bursts from the cloud and rocks the ground? And how canst thou then look forward, so unconcerned, to that dread hour when the Judge “shall be revealed in flaming fire;” (*2 Thess.* i. 7, 8.) when the heavens shall “be wrapped together as a scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat;” (*Isai.* xxxiv. 4.—*2 Pet.* iii. 10.) the earth be shook from its foundations, and be dissolved; and all created nature sink around thee in one promiscuous ruin?

Or wilt thou make him a liar, and his speech of none effect? “Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (*Numb.* xxiii. 19.) To indulge thee in thy sins, will he dishonour his faithfulness, forfeit his justice, and deny himself? Surely “the hope of the sinner is as the spider’s web.” (*Job* viii. 14.) But are not these, say you, the phantoms which priestcraft hath invented to overawe the minds of the superstitious? No, sinner; thou wilt find these are dreadful realities; too true for thee: and if not believed in time, thou wilt be made to feel what now thou affectest to despise. But the curse delays. The up-lifted arm of vengeance is suspended. The collected wrath yet waits a moment. The warning voice is heard.

Sinner, arise, tremble ; look upwards. See with an eye of faith that sign, that bloody sign. Pardon and peace await thee beneath the banner of the cross. O that thy heart felt thy sin and ruin inevitable ; and sought, whilst yet he might be found, that Jesus who can alone deliver from the wrath to come. Under his shadow thou mayst be safe. He will interpose his own body between thee and the curse of God : and there thou mayst yet be hid in the day of God's fierce anger. His deep wounds afford a safe retreat ; his heart is opened for thee, that there thou mayst be covered from the descending storm. O that under his wings thou mayst be gathered before the trump of judgment awakes, and Time is no longer !

Secondly, Beware of seeking help from the destroyer. "The strength of sin is the law." (1 Cor. xv. 56.) Seek not to this for healing. More perish not by negligence than by error. We naturally seek to fly the curse by flying to the law. Pride ever weds us to it. We think still to make our foe our friend : but ever must the curse remain, whilst by the works of the law we seek acceptance with God : yea, never so sure remain as when we fancy it is removed thereby. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." (1 John i. 8.) If we say, "by works of righteousness which I have done," I shall be saved, verily we have "a lie in our right hand." We must be dead to the law. We must expect no more to escape wrath by it, than by rushing upon the sword of our enemy. We have not kept it. We cannot keep it. We are cursed by it. We are undone by it for ever. We must know ourselves to be so. We must feel ourselves ungodly. We must know that we have no strength to be otherwise. We must lie down and say that we have

sinned. We must despair for ever of ourselves. One sin brings us to this state. But whose sins are not innumerable? Beware of all dependence then on your own doings. Your sorrow, your amendment, your promises, your endeavours, your sincerity, or whatever else; these cannot save you. They must be utterly renounced; they are incapable of removing your guilt, or obtaining God's favour. Your case for any thing you can do is helpless and hopeless; to see it to be so is the very way to help and hope. For then,

Thirdly, There is deliverance at hand. The lost and the desperate need never perish for want of help. The Son of God is come on purpose to seek them. "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us." (*Gal. iii. 13.*) What we could never do he hath done for us. He hath become the sinner's surety. The law hath been put in force against him. He hath stood trial in our name and character. "He hath taken away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (*Heb. ix. 26.*) Sin is everlastingly "condemned in the flesh," (*Rom. viii. 3.*) by the sufferings of the Son of God. The law hath no more demands upon Christ. He died for sin once. The curse is endured. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" (*Rom. viii. 1.*) for he is risen again; it is plain thereby he hath obtained a legal discharge. Death hath no more dominion over him, for he hath put an end to wrath: All is finished. What a hope is this! A door of mercy is opened for sinners! O who will not croud into it? With what urgency should we press to him? Guilt is confessed; the law hath decided; the executioner is at our heels. O! blessed Jesus, hear, help, save us, dying sinners! We fly to thee, for elsewhere help and hope we find not! Open to us; Lord, open to us the

door of safety ! Open thy heart which once bled for us. Hide us in the cleft of this rock ! Then shall we at a distance only hear the thunder's roll, safe from fear of evil. Where no law reaches, no wrath descends, no curse seizes the helpless criminal : but pardon, peace, redemption, glory, are the blessings freely bestowed upon the chief of sinners !

SERMON VIII.

REDEMPTION BY JESUS CHRIST.

GALATIANS III. 13.

CHRIST HATH REDEEMED US FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW,
BEING MADE A CURSE FOR US.

WHILST man affects to be "wise above what is written," the gospel of Jesus must expect an unfavourable reception. At reason's tribunal, truths, because incomprehensible, are counted absurd; and it is sufficient to stamp them as folly, because they cannot be fully understood. Yet such are the grand truths of christianity: too deep for this shallow line to fathom; and simply resolvable into the authority and veracity of him who hath revealed them. "Whoever therefore will be truly wise, must become a fool that he may be wise." (1 Cor. iii. 18.)

That the eternal God should stoop to be incarnate; that he, whom the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain, should lie, hid in the womb of a Virgin; that he, "who bindeth the deep in swaddling bands." (*Job xxxviii. 9.*) should himself be wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger; that he, who is the ancient of days, should be born an infant; that he, who is "the everlasting Father," should be a Virgin's Child; that he, who is in

himself "exalted above all blessing and praise," should become "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" that he, whose nature is impassive, should agonize in the garden and bleed under the scourge; that he, "who only hath immortality," should "become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" that he, who is the most high and most holy, should be made an accursed thing, suffering as the vilest of malefactors, and the most infamous of mankind: these are mysteries, after which reason gropes in vain whilst faith assents, admires and adores. Mysteries, which to dispute were the same as to disbelieve, and to disbelieve is to be undone: for "he that believeth not shall be damned." (*Mark* xvi. 16.)

The arguments proposed in the foregoing discourses, have, I trust, served to convince as many as have seriously weighed their force, that our state at present, by nature and practice, is desperate; that we are corrupt in our original, sinful in all our ways, incapable of helping ourselves, concluded under the curse, the wages of sin.—"Wretched man, that I am," must every soul needs cry, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (*Rom.* vii. 24.) And the answer to this question is the highest glory of the gospel: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

This delightful subject, my brethren, it is always the very joy of my heart to set before you. It is the foundation of all my own happiness; it must be so too of yours, if you would be ever happy. It is here alone we can truly find deliverance from our fears, peace from the accusations of conscience, comfort in death, and after death life everlasting. If we think we have any of these on any other grounds, the thought is at

present delusive, and in the end will be fatal. O that God would assist me worthily to speak of the revelation of his grace in Jesus Christ, and to shew the fulness that is in him ! The words read will afford these three considerations :

I. The person who hath redeemed us, Christ.

II. The manner in which he redeemed us, by being made a curse for us.

III. The benefits which we receive by his redemption of us.

I. The person who hath redeemed us is Christ. The comfort and relief of the sinner depends on the all-sufficiency of the Redeemer: the all-sufficiency of the Redeemer must arise from his qualifications for the work he undertakes. Christ is thus all-sufficient from the dignity of his divine, and the excellence of his human nature. He is both "God and man, very God and very man; and yet not two, but one Christ."*

First, Our Redeemer is *very* God. This is the corner-stone of our salvation. If Christ be not *very* God, "our hopes are vain, we are yet in our sins." This however is opposed by many, who deny the "Lord that bought them." They blaspheme that holy Name whereby we are called: they degrade him to a dependent, some farther, to a mere human creature. They thus "live without the true God in the world;" (*Eph. ii. 12.*) by such denial of the faith they raze the foundations of christianity, though they pretend to espouse it, and are worse than the open infidel.

Let us hear the word of God. There we shall find that either there is no God, or Christ is that God: for all his names, his attributes, his works and worship are ascribed to him. These are honours God cannot give unto another. The possessor of them must share in the essence of the

* Athanasian Creed.

divine nature, or we must sink once more into idolatrous polytheism. This truth hath been evidently proved at large by many zealous "contenders for the faith once delivered unto the saints;" and therefore I shall only leave with you the scriptures which chiefly speak to the point, with a short observation or two upon them.

That Christ is *very* God, the *titles* variously ascribed to him declare. Sometimes absolutely he is called God, (*Acts* xx. 28.) sometimes *the* Lord; (*Colos.* iii. 24.) distinguished too with the peculiar properties of Deity, "the Lord of Hosts and of Glory;" (*James* ii. 1. *Isa.* vi. 3.) sometimes by that incommunicable name Jehovah. (*Isai.* vi. 1.) And these titles so especially his own, that he is said to be "the true God, (*1 John* v. 20.) the only wise God; (*Jude* 25.) the "God over all, (*Rom.* ix. 5.) blessed for ever." Could such names be attributed to any creature, we must for ever be at a loss to know the peculiar name of HIM, to whom we owe our adorations. But these are the distinguishing titles of the Deity, therefore he who possesses them is *very* God.

His *attributes* are as decisive a proof of his divinity as his names. They are the incommunicable glories of the most High. If to be "almighty, (*Rev.* i. 8.) heart-searching, (*Acts* i. 24.) omnipresent, (*Matt.* xviii. 20.) eternal, (*1 Tim.* i. 17.) incomprehensible, (*Matt.* xi. 27.) independent, (*John* x. 18.) immutable;" (*Heb.* 1. 12.) if this is to be *very* God, then Christ our Redeemer hath the most undoubted claim to it.

His works also proclaim his eternal power and godhead. If "the heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work;" (*Psal.* xix. 1) if on the vast creation the stamp of the Almighty appears; if the bright

sun or twinkling stars, or all the brighter suns, cherubs and seraphs, which burn before the throne of God, proclaim the hand that made them to be divine; then Christ challenges this honour. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (*John* i. 3.) He spake and it was done." (*Psal.* xxxiii. 9.) And he still "upholdeth them all: (*Heb.* i. 3.) for his pleasure they are and were created, (*Rev.* iv. 11.) by whom and for whom are all things." (*1 Cor.* viii. 6.) And as he is the Creator, he is also the Governor and Judge of all. To him it appertaineth to exercise every act of divine power; to "forgive sins; (*Matt.* ix. 2.) to quicken whom he will; (*John* v. 21.) to send the Spirit; (*John* xv. 26.) to raise the dead;" (*John* xi. 43.) to execute the final judgment; (*Rom.* xiv. 11.) to determine the eternal state of men and angels. (*Matt.* xxv. 31—46.) Well might we charge, as the Jews did, (*Matt.* ix. 3.) any the highest created Being with blasphemy who should presume thus to exalt himself. He that doth these things is God alone.

Worship is solely due to the one eternal God. "To him every knee must bow, every tongue must confess." (*Rom.* xiv. 11.) But this is paid in the highest manner to the Lord Christ; is claimed by him as his prerogative; and offered by saints on earth and angels in heaven. Jealous for the honour of his Father, so as to be incapable of suffering the least profanation in the farthest courts of his house, he yet received and vindicated the hosannas of the multitude "in the midst of the temple." (*Matt.* xxi. 15.) These hymns of praise to the most High were no more than his due, "who, being in the form of God, counted it no robbery to be equal with God."

(*Phil. ii. 6.*) We must honour the Son as we honour the Father." (*John v. 23.*) He that would not from those who regarded him as a man, (*Matt. xix, 17.*) receive the least mark of divine honour, most willingly admits an Apostle at his feet worshipping him as his "Lord and his God." (*John xx. 28.*) And they indeed are so fully assured of his eternal power and godhead, that in the deepest seasons of distress and difficulty they call upon him, and resign "their dying souls" (*Acts vii, 59.*) into his hands. Nor is he God on earth alone adored, the hosts of heaven bow down before his footstool. "The angels of God worship him," (*Heb. i, 6.*) One of the most glorious visions of the upper world was this King upon his throne, surrounded with his Seraphim; their faces veiled with reverential awe, and pouring forth their sacred homage and highest adoration: "they cried one to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory," (*Isa. vi. 1.—12.*) And when this present scene shall be no more, this still shall be the service of eternity, when "every creature day and night shall never rest saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. (*Rev. iv. 8.*) Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, and blessing!" (*Rev. iv, 11.*) Can higher worship be offered? If this belong to our Redeemer, surely he is very God.

2. Christ is as truly man as he is God. Since redemption was to be obtained in and by the nature which had sinned, "it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, sin only excepted," (*Heb. ii. 17.*) This must have been excepted, else he had not been "a Lamb without spot or blemish;" nor could he otherwise have "taken away the sin of the world;" for had he

been himself a sinner, he should have died under his own iniquity. Now that he is very man, and such a sinless man, the scriptures fully assure us. As man he is formed of the substance of his mother, "partaker of flesh and blood," as other children are, and born in the same way: yet "sanctified in the womb, that he might not partake of that corruption, which by natural generation descends to every son of fallen Adam. He was a "holy thing, undefiled and separate from sinners;" (*Heb. vii. 26.*) and for that purpose "the power of the Highest overshadowed her." (*Luke i. 35.*) As we are, he had the constituent parts of human nature, a reasonable soul and human flesh. As other children "he increased in wisdom as in stature." (*Luke ii. 52.*) He was one with us in all the human wants and sinless infirmities: his soul deficient in knowledge, affected with grief, vexed with indignation, sensible of reproaches, choosing to avoid sufferings, exceeding sorrowful under them: (*Mark xiii. 32. Mark iii. 5. Matt. xxvi. 38, 39.*) his body subject to weariness, hunger, thirst, pain and death. (*John iv. 6. Mark xi. 12. John xix. 28. Psal. cxvi. 3. Mark xv. 37.*) Thus he lived, thus he died as a man: yet was he not merely man, but God-man; possessing both natures in all their plenitude in one Christ.

II. The manner in which Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, must be observed; namely, "by being made a curse for us." Where we must remark,

First, His substitution for us. *Secondly*, What he bore as our substitute.

1. Christ, both God and man, was the sinner's substitute. "He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows." (*Isa. liii. 4.*) Our state was desperate, you have heard. Nor was there found a remedy,

until God, from the abyss of his wisdom, declared the counsel of peace which was betwixt the Sacred Three. That one of them should take the sinful nature, and suffer the curse, that justice might be glorified in the punishment, and mercy be exalted in the pardon of sin. The Son consents to be the person. The covenant runs, "If he will make his soul a sacrifice for sin, he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied:" freely he complies. "Lo! I come to do thy will. (*Heb. x. 7.*) A body is prepared for him. (*Heb. x. 5.*) God lays on him the iniquity of us all. (*Isa. liii. 6.*) He is made sin for us, who knew no sin." [*2 Cor. v. 21.*] He suffers, the "just for the unjust." (*1 Pet. iii. 18.*) He offers himself to bear the sins of many, yea in his own body on the tree, to bring in for sinners by his own blood-shedding "eternal redemption." [*Heb. ix. 12.*] Here then behold the second Adam: a new covenant-head and representative, bearing the persons and characters of his people, communicating with them in all things: being what they are, and so making them one with him, that all his transactions are their own. He a sin offering, a curse, a sufferer for them; they crucified, dead, buried, rising, living in and with him. [*2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. iii. 13. Gal. ii. 20. Rom. vi. 8. Coloss. iii. 1.*]

2. As our substitute, he underwent all that the law demanded from sinners. The curse in all its extent and bitterness he endured from the cradle to the grave, the award of sin was executed upon him. And how heavily executed, a short review of his sufferings will tell. See the Redeemer entering the lists, sin and hell and death, yea God himself against him. On him the poisoned arrows of vengeance are to be expended. An outcast from the womb! Sought for by the sword

soon as he drew his breath, a fugitive, a forlorn ; “a worm and no man, despised and rejected of men. Having no place to lay his head.” [*Isa.* liii. 3. *Mat.* viii. 20.] His whole life a series of labours, wants, temptations, reproaches, persecutions, until the hour came when peculiarly the curse descended, and “the powers of darkness” [*Luke* xxii. 53.] prevailed. When given into the hands of the devil, who is the executioner of divine vengeance, and “hath the power of death,” [*Heb.* ii. 14.] the wages of sin ; he endured that fearful baptism of blood and sweat, and tears extorted by the pains of hell which came about him ; and then finished on a cross the great expiation, having “destroyed thereby death, and him that had the power of it.” Would you be a witness of the conflict, and see the burden of your weighty guilt, go then to the garden of Gethsemane ; and in the silent darkness of that dreadful night, the groans of Jesus at a distance will direct thy footsteps to that scene of his sufferings. What a sight of horror ! What agonizing pangs are these ! Why this strong crying and tears ! And lo ! he falls, he lies along the ground : from every pore, the sweat and blood mingled start in great drops and trickle down ; the cold ground streams with the purple gore : weltering he lies. O Jesus, Saviour, what hath thus laid thee low ? What extorts from thee these bitter cries ? Thy deserts, thy curse, poor sinner. But dost thou stand aghast at this ? O couldst thou see my unknown pangs ! my soul’s exceeding sorrows even unto death : my sore amazement ; my heaviness past utterance ; these blasts of the breath of my Father’s displeasure ; “this, this is the bitter cup” my soul cries to remove ; but, “Father, thy will be done.” [*Matt.* xxvi. 39—46.] The

angels minister to him." [*Luke* xxii. 43.] The dreadful storm abates : he rises : he seeks his friends, his friends "asleep through sorrow." But his enemies are waking : the traitor comes. Betrayed and sold by one disciple ; denied by another ; forsaken by all ; arrested as a thief, and delivered into the hands of the wicked.

Follow him to the tribunal, and hear the cries of a blood-thirsty people, and the sentence of an unjust judge. See the insult, the mockery and cruelty added to reproach. The scourges that tear his sacred body, and open again the bloody fountain ; the thorns pressed hard upon his temples ; new wounds to "mar his visage more than any man's;" [*Isa.* lii. 14.] a visage already deformed with buffetings, and defiled with spitting. What torments he endured ! condemned to the cross, it is bound upon him. He groans, he sinks under the load. Yet "as a lamb led to the slaughter, he openeth not his mouth:" [*Isa.* liii. 7.] to Calvary he goes, there to be fastened on it. O ! fearful curse, "If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" [*Luke* xxiii. 31.] The cross is fixed in the ground : Jesus is stretched upon it : stripped, to endure the shame of our nakedness ; covered with clotted gore ; a spectacle of woe ! Stretched are his sacred arms ; O why ! these nails will tell. To be fixed fast upon that tree ; in shame and torture to expire, to endure the death, the accursed death of the cross. They pierce his hands, they pierce his feet ; the wounds are torn wide by the suspended body. He is lifted up. O sinner, look upon him ! lifted up he is to take away thy sins. He bears them all on this accursed tree. Stay yet a while. Behold the "man of sorrows truly, sorrows like unto whose have never sorrows been !" [*Lam.* i. 12.] These sufferings for thee

he willingly endures. He refuses the wine mingled with myrrh, that he may "drink the dregs of the cup of trembling." Creation beholds astonished the Lord of Life expiring. The sun grows dark; the heavens lour; the earth trembles; the rocks rend: whilst tears of blood descend; and in the pangs of death and dereliction the Redeemer cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [*Matt.* xxvii. 46.] Then finishes transgression, proclaims it, and expires. He dies: the soldier's spear opens his heart that beats no more: the blood and water flow; still warm, though life is gone. Thus dies on the accursed tree the sinners substitute. Sin is atoned for, justice is satisfied, the prisoner must be discharged. His soul is not left in hell, nor doth this Holy One of God see corruption. The grave may not cover her slain. He bursts the bands of death in token of his victory, and leads captivity captive. Death hath "no more dominion over him:" as "he was delivered for our offences, he is raised again for our justification." [*Rom.* iv. 25.] A pardoning God is found: A pardoning God proclaimed. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." [*Psal.* lxxxv. 10.] The bright perfections of the eternal God here unite and form a new discovery of the Deity; the milder beams of mercy gild the throne; and that once consuming fire becomes approachable even by sinners. Glorious is Jehovah now in pardoning, and righteous in mercy. Which leads me,

III. To the benefits which by his blood-shedding Christ has purchased for us: and these are chiefly,

1. Pardon of our sins and peace with God. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of

his grace. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. God is now righteous and just to forgive us our sins." [*Rom.* v. 1. *Eph.* i. 7. *Rom.* iii. 26.] He hath exacted the penalty from our surety: the debt is paid: the bond is cancelled. Jesus "hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. Who is he that condemneth, "since Christ hath died?" [*Rom.* viii. 34.] This is our prevailing plea. This is a sufficient answer to all the accusations of the law, and the fears of a guilty conscience. The more we consider the fulness of the surety, the more shall we be confirmed in the safety of those who trust in him: He cannot fail us. "In him there is plenteous redemption." [*Psal.* cxxx. 7.] All fulness; yea, "all and more than all that we can ask or think." [*Coloss.* i. 19. *Eph.* iii. 20.] The chief of sinners need not fear. "He can save to the uttermost:" He came into the world for this very purpose. "Where sin abounded, there shall pardoning grace abound." [*Rom.* v. 20.] God hath no quarrel with the greatest sinner returning through Christ. "He will be merciful to his unrighteousness; his sins and iniquities will he remember no more." (*Heb.* viii. 12.) His justice and truth are now as much engaged to receive us graciously, as before they were engaged to punish us rigorously. He cannot but abundantly pardon. His glory now is this; "Peace proclaimed on earth, good-will towards men. (*Luke* ii. 14.) The wall of separation is broken down." The veil of sin is taken away. God stretches out the sceptre of his grace; commands us to touch it and live. "Let him take hold on my strength, and make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." (*Isa.* xxvii. 5.) See it fully demonstrated in this blessed scripture. "God was in Christ recon-

ciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Cor. v. 20.)

2. By Christ's redemption of us from the curse, we obtain all the promises of the Spirit. Until this was removed there could be no intercourse between the holy God and sinful man; and if this intercourse were not restored on earth, man must be for ever excluded from the presence of God: "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." (Heb. xii. 14.) But no such could be found, unless the Spirit of holiness "created us anew." Our corruption and weakness qualified us for any work of goodness. Vile we were, and vile we must for ever have remained, if not "renewed in the spirit of our minds." Christ therefore in delivering us from the curse hath obtained the Spirit also to deliver us from the power of our sins. "He hath led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, (Psal. lxxviii. 18.) even for the rebellious; and he is now exalted at the right hand of God," in virtue of his obedience unto death, "to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to his people." (Acts v. 31.) From him all power is derived: "Without him we can do nothing: (John xv. 9.) but all things through him strengthening us." (Phil. iv. 13.) All the graces of God's Spirit to enlighten, enliven, comfort and sanctify our souls, he hath the dispensation of; and sheds them abroad in the hearts of those whom by his preventing grace he stirreth up to seek him. Helping their infirmities in prayer, and blessing them with an answer of peace, and "an abundant supply of the Spirit," according to their necessities. We

have now a throne of grace open, and are bid “to come boldly to it, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.” (*Heb.* iv. 16.) And whilst his blood is sprinkled on our consciences, we may “draw near in full assurance of faith,” and the most confident persuasion, that “whatsoever we shall ask in his name, God will it give us. And that thus growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, he will, having conducted us by his counsel here, at last bring us to his glory.” (*Psal.* lxxiii. 24.) For this also,

3. He hath by his blood-shedding obtained for us not only present but eternal redemption. (*Heb.* ix. 12.) He hath removed the flaming sword that guarded the tree of life. He hath opened the everlasting doors. “He, as our forerunner, is for us entered; we are already set down with him in heavenly places.” (*Eph.* ii. 6.) As members of his body, we must follow our head. “Where he is, there must we be also.” The promise is sure to all the seed. Though we have a “meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light” wrought in us, our title to it stands on the everlasting righteousness finished upon the cross. That Jesus was obedient unto death, is all our plea: and at the last day we shall see our obligations above all to the Redeemer, when we shall receive “eternal life as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (*Rom.* vi. 23.) He that endured the cross must have the glory of his purchase. No desert of ours “lifts us from the dunghill to set us among the princes.” We shall then see it wholly obtained for us by his merits, when “with his ransomed people we shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon our heads.” (*Isa.* xxxv. 10.) They that surround his throne, all cast their crowns at

his feet : they ascribe to him alone their mighty bliss : “ For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.” (*Rev.* v. 10.) Who wishes not to join their praises ? And do we wish it indeed ? Let us then learn them here below. If now we find in him redemption ; if now we believe in him as our deliverer from the curse of the law ; if now we trust in him alone for grace in time, and glory in eternity ; then will he finish his new creation in us ; perfect what he hath begun, and bring us where neither sin nor death are known, but He, the once suffering, now exalted Redeemer reigns, and all his saints adore him, yea shall reign with him in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

SERMON IX.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

EPHESIANS II. 8.

FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED, THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.

NO mistakes are so dangerous as those which relate to our eternal salvation: yet through the blindness of our own hearts, and wickedness of others, who would “pervert the right ways of the Lord,” we had need take great heed to our feet, that they turn not out of the way. Our only sure direction is the word of God. This is appointed to be “a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths” (*Psalms* cxix, 105.) He that walketh after this rule, peace will be unto him. As it is the universal guide, it is open for every man’s perusal, and plain to every man’s understanding. Many things in it indeed, through a variety of circumstances, are dark and hard to be understood, but they are not points essential to our salvation. These will afford matter to the end of the world for such as prefer knowledge to practice, and choose to dispute rather than obey. The things of most importance and necessary to be known are easy to be understood: “He that runs may read them.” No comment is wanting, but a desire to know the truth, with a disposition to follow it. Thus “the Bereans sought and found.” (*Acts* xvii. 11.)

And so to the end of the world, "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." (*John* vii. 17.) He that is faithful to the little light he hath, shall find it "shine more and more unto the perfect day."

Let us beware then of calling any man master. One is our Master, even Christ. (*Matt.* xxiii. 8.) "Search the scriptures." (*John* v. 39.) It is his command. Therein is contained all we need to know. We have his promise to assist our humble enquiries. "They shall all be taught of God." (*John* vi. 45.) Then the salvation by grace, which the words in the text speak of, will be discovered, embraced and delighted in. "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual," we shall have our hearts daily more confirmed "in the truth as it is in Jesus." And if we persist "to follow on to know the Lord," we shall find the salvation by grace to issue shortly in a salvation of glory.

The grand dispute that in St. Paul's day rent the church was, "Whether faith or works justified the sinner; whether man's desert or God's free grace were the cause of salvation?" He was the strenuous asserter of the sovereignty of grace and the freedom of justification. Yea, he reckons these such essential truths, that he calls the opposite doctrines another gospel. (*Gal.* i. 6.) Yet those who have agreed to receive his writings as given by the inspiration of God, have nevertheless revived the errors he condemned, and still seek justification by the law, and salvation by works and not by grace. The following plain truths are submitted to every man's consideration, who will be at the pains of comparing them with the fountain from whence to me they appear to be derived. May they be the blessed means of enlightening any heart in the knowl-

edge of the truth, or of confirming the faith of those who are seeking the salvation by grace revealed in the gospel.

I shall endeavour to shew from these words,

I. What is the salvation here spoken of.

II. Prove that it is wholly of grace.

III. Shew the necessity of its being of faith, that it might be by grace.

IV. Make some suitable application.

I. The salvation here spoken of, is our final salvation ; including all the various steps which lead to it. This is evident from the preceding verses, where St. Paul mentions not only our resurrection together with Christ, but also “our sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;” (*Eph. 2. 6.*) that is, by virtue of that union which subsists between the head and the members. His exaltation we are already interested in. Our salvation is as much secured for us in Christ, as it will be at the last day : for “by grace we are saved.” He hath wrought out the salvation for us in all its extent, of pardon from the guilt of sin, deliverance from the dominion of sin, and as “our forerunner is for us entered” to take possession of the inheritance he hath purchased by virtue of his obedience unto death, and to bestow it on them who “shall be heirs of salvation.” We must take the whole salvation together. We must not separate the links of this chain of grace. Though Christ is the author of eternal salvation, it is only to those who here below know him as their Saviour, freely discharging them from the guilt ; and, together with the punishment, by his Spirit delivering them from the power of their sins.

II. This Salvation is wholly of grace. The word grace has several meanings in scripture. But here and in many other places its significa-

tion is clear from the context. It is the gift or an act of the mere favour of God. And to this the whole of our salvation must be ascribed, whether in the contrivance and execution or communication of it : Salvation is wholly of grace.

1. The contrivance of it was of grace. " The things which are not," as much subsist in the divine mind as if they were. God foresaw the fall of man, and provided a remedy for it ere it came to pass. His own glory is the end of all his actions. In this " he would glorify the riches of his grace." (*Ephes. i. 6.*) This is the good pleasure of his will : fallen man hath nothing but misery to present. God will therefore have mercy, because he will have mercy : He worketh after the counsel of his own will. " He hath saved us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (*2 Tim. i. 9.*) This is the origin of our salvation from eternity ; the mere pleasure and grace of God. Nothing foreseen in us, either done or to be done by us, but the purpose of his own will is the first cause.

2. The execution of this scheme of salvation, planned out in the divine mind from eternity, is wholly of God's grace : That God should " not spare his own Son, but freely give him up for us all : " (*Rom. viii. 32.*) That the Son should become man, " for us men and our salvation : " That he should " by one oblation of himself once offered obtain eternal redemption for us ; " (*Heb. ix. 12.*) was what we could no more have conceived than we could deserve : yea it was contrary to all our deserts, and above all our thoughts. The angels themselves could not fathom this abyss of love. This " mystery hid from

ages and generations" he hath revealed to us in the gospel.

God knew full well what his Son must endure : Christ saw for what end he came into the world ; for he was in the divine purpose " the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (*Rev.* xiii. 8.) The obstinacy of men and their rejection of him was foretold : yet he gave himself a propitiation for our sins ; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." (*1 John* ii. 2.) It was an act of such astonishing mercy and rich grace as passed all understanding. " God commendeth his love towards us, in that whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly." (*Rom.* v. 6,8.) Every demerit of ours is disregarded, or rather sovereign grace triumphs in giving the greatest gift imaginable to the most undeserving.

III. The communication of this salvation to every individual who shall finally partake of it, is purely of grace. Consider it as implying present salvation from guilt and from corruption ; or the eternal salvation in heaven.

1. Salvation from guilt is wholly by grace. We are considered in scripture " as enemies, as ungodly, unjust, and dead in trespasses and sins." (*Rom.* v. 6—10. *Eph.* ii. 1) There is nothing in any man, which seems in the most distant manner to give him a claim to the divine mercy. Our case is, as hath been shewn, utterly desperate. God finds nothing in us but sin, and the disposition of the heart continually towards it. Whoever is truly brought to God through Christ, knows this to have been his very case, until " God called him by his grace." The King upon his throne issues the undeserved pardon. " He justifies the ungodly ;" (*Rom.* iv. 5.) and this, " according to his good pleasure, which

he hath purposed in himself." (*Eph. i. 9.*) He doth not find us just, but makes us so. It is an act of his mere grace and mercy; without the shadow of desert on our part. Yea when we had all the demerit that the enmity of our hearts, the ungodliness of our lives, and our deadly state of trespasses and sins could give us. It is true, it is on account of Christ; "we have redemption through his blood:" (*Eph. i. 7.*) but the pardon of sin comes not to us as the less a matter of favour, because "he gave himself a ransom for all." (*1 Tim. ii. 6.*) Christ's death and obedience alter not our state of demerit: besides the very gift of Christ, who purchased this great mercy, is in the highest degree of grace.

2. Salvation from the power of sin is wholly of grace: whilst guilt remained the throne of grace was guarded by a flaming cherub. It is by the removal of this, that God doth return to visit us, and send the Spirit into our hearts.—Without this we must for ever remain the bondsmen of corruption: "They who are in the flesh cannot please God," (*Rom. viii. 8.*) And in this state we remain until Christ delivers us through faith in his atonement. Then our persons "become accepted in the beloved:" (*Eph. i. 6.*) He takes possession of us for his own: "He worketh then mightily all our works in us." (*Isa. xxvi. 12.*) We have nothing we have not received" (*1 Cor. iv. 7.*) All our sanctification is as much the gift of God, as our justification. We offer him only his own. "By the grace of God we are what we are." (*1 Cor. xv. 10.*) Boasting is utterly excluded. We are not only pardoned as rebels, but of mere bounty fed every day, and the life which is given us is maintained from the King's table. "The life which

I will give them shall be in them, a well of water springing up to everlasting life." (*John* iv. 14.) All is of grace. Faith, repentance, love, obedience, perseverance in well-doing, are all expressly declared to be "the gifts of God," (*Eph.* ii. 8. *Acts* v. 31. *Gal.* v. 6. *Heb.* viii. 10. *John* x. 28.) or the effects immediately produced by those gifts.

It must not be inferred from hence, that we are machines, actuated merely by impulses from without or within ourselves. By no means. The first of God's gifts in sanctification is "the restoration of our will to its right choice of God as our Master." He calls upon us daily to make use of the measure of grace which he hath given us, with the promise of the increase of it. We choose what God approves. The choice and work consequent thereupon is not the less our own, because "his grace prevents us that we may have a good-will, and worketh with us when we have that good-will." (*Article X.*)

3. The eternal salvation of our souls is also of grace. It is certain that God hath promised to reward us "according to our works." (*Rev.* xxii. 12. *1 Cor.* xv. 41.) And that there will be in the day of judgment a proportion between the work and the reward. Some will "shine as stars" of greater magnitude than others: but eternal life will not cease nevertheless to be the gift of God through Jesus Christ; and we shall, "as many as are saved, look for eternal life as the mercy of the Lord." (*Jude* 21.) For not only have we obtained the first step of admission into the kingdom of heaven by grace; and the subsequent ones, which in God's appointed way of holiness we have taken through the same, but also our inheritance is still "a purchased possession." (*Eph.* i. 14.) Christ's perfect obedi-

ence affords the only legal claim to life eternal. We receive it therefore as of promise through him. There will be in us "a meetness indeed for the inheritance amongst the saints in light;" (*Coloss. i. 12.*) and this greater in one than in another; but no meritorious claim. No man will then say, "I am worthy." No, he will be surprised even at what Christ adjudges to him, as conscious how unworthy he is: if he must enter into the kingdom, it will be for ever to proclaim, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive glory, and honour, and praise, and blessing." (*Rev. iv. 11.*)

III. It is of faith that it might be by grace. (*Rom. iv. 16.*) It could be of grace no other way than by faith. Faith stands opposed to works in the next verse: "Not of works lest any man should boast." (*Eph. ii. 9.*) If works of any kind preceded our acceptance with God, it would be no more of faith; nor consequently by grace. This is the alone medium by which the gift of God can be conveyed to us to secure the whole glory to himself. Those who know not the necessity of thus receiving the gift of God, from a deep conviction of the impossibility of doing any work pleasing to God until their attainder is reversed, ever oppose this method of salvation as too abasing. And they who object to it, as having an unfavourable influence on morality, shew evidently their utter unacquaintedness both with the nature of true faith and the effects of it.

"Faith is a divine conviction of the veracity of God in his word." The general object of it is the word of God: the effect wrought by that word is conviction of the truth. The agent is God: "It is the gift of God." A man can no more reason himself into true faith, than he can

create a world: all external evidence is of itself incapable of producing it. The head may have nothing to object, when the heart is as far as ever from "believing unto righteousness," nor feels any of the constrainings of divine energetic faith. Though the external evidence be from God, there must be an internal divine conviction also. It is the work of the Holy Ghost "to convince of righteousness, (*John* xvi. 8.) and enable us to believe." (*Phil.* i. 29. *1 Cor.* ii. 14.)

The great object of faith in the word is Jesus Christ, and all the promises which are in him; these revealed by the faithful God, faith acquiesces in and embraces. And in this submission to the righteousness of God, and acceptance of salvation by faith, there is implied,

First—An acknowledgment of a state of absolute helplessness and guilt: whilst we imagine we have any thing of our own to commend us to God, faith is made void. The salvation by grace proposed to faith is only for the lost and desperate; for those who are convinced they are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing pleasing to God. Until the soul be brought to this state of self-emptiness, a man cannot "believe to salvation:" He must be going about to establish his own righteousness. He will ever be thinking that he hath or ought to have some claim to the divine favour above another man. He will be trusting, in whole or in part, on something done or to be done by him, instead of what has been done for him seventeen hundred years ago: but when any soul is taught his real state, then he is assured he must be saved by grace, or not at all. The grand mistake is here. Men know not the depth of their natural corruption, wickedness and weakness. This dis-

covered, salvation by grace through faith will meet no more objections.

Secondly, In receiving this salvation, faith simply submits to the truth declared. It receives the "record of God, that he hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." (1 *John* v. 11.) It doth nothing to merit salvation, nor does the possessor of it see any desert in himself more than in the vilest of sinners. Faith freely takes what God freely gives: the sinner's heart, as the beggar's hand, readily receives the gift of grace.

Thus it is, that through faith at first we are brought into a state of reconciliation with God; and "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord:" (*Rom.* v. 1.) and ever after it is the support of our soul, or rather the channel of conveying to us the supplies of grace for all our life of holiness: "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." (*Gal.* ii. 20,) Believing the certainty of the promises in him, "we draw water out of these wells of salvation:" (*Isai.* xii. 3.) and our final perseverance and eternal happiness come in the same way; "being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (1 *Pet.* 1. 5.) He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." (*Matt.* x. 22.) We shall endure if our faith fail not. From the whole, I trust the salvation by grace through faith hath appeared to you plainly to be the word of God; and have nothing more to add than a short application from what has been said.

1. What encouragement doth the gospel give to every sinner who sees his guilt and misery? "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all ac-

ception, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners ; yea, the chief of sinners." (1 *Tim.* i. 15.) No man need despair because he is a poor and miserable wretch that hath no works to plead ; nothing " but evil, and that continually." Salvation is of grace, " without money and without price ;" (*Isai.* lv. 1.) and therefore free for every guilty soul. Think not that because sin hath abounded, that therefore you are far from hope. By no means : " where sin hath abounded, there shall grace much more abound." (*Rom.* v. 20.) God's salvation is one. Whatever degrees of guilt men may have contracted, it bears the same favourable aspect to all. They who have the least sin must be damned if they do not plead it ; and they who have the greatest are sure of pardon and acceptance if they do. It is not suspended on any conditions of previous endeavours and labours, and resolutions of amendment ; for that were to destroy the riches of the grace, and to counteract the very designs of God. You are no more required to do any thing to merit it, than you are to pluck the sun from the heavens, or stay the current of the seas. Indeed you might as easily do the one as the other. You are undone and lost ; your case is desperate : God will glorify his grace in pardoning you. He sends his Son : he declares " he is well-pleased in him," and with all that come to God by him ; here is the gift. It is as free as the light of the sun : " Look to him and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." (*Isai.* xlv. 22.) He wants no good thing of you. He asks for no such thing from you : " Believe, and be saved," (*Acts* xvi. 31.) is the gospel word. In self-despair thus to be found at the foot of the cross is salvation begun ; and that life derived from a be-

lieving view of Jesus delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," (*Rom. iv. 25.*) will carry on this salvation until grace shall have accomplished it, and "we shall see him face to face." (*1 Cor. xiii. 12.*)

2. The sin and danger of seeking salvation in any other way than by grace, is exceeding great. I speak now particularly of our present acceptance with God, which many are continually going about to obtain "by works of righteousness which they have done," or by blending faith and works together, as concurring causes of their acceptance. Nothing reflects such dishonour upon God, nothing can be so surely fatal to ourselves as such an attempt.

It reflects such high dishonour on God and his Son. It saith, "Salvation is no more of grace:" for is any thing besides "Christ's one oblation once offered" needful to merit your acceptance? Then you associate yourself with him, become a partner of his undertaking, and rob him of that peculiar glory of which he is so jealous. But he wants nothing of you: he can receive nothing from you; because indeed you can offer nothing which must not still offend. Which of your good deeds will you bring to the cross as auxiliary to the Saviour's atonement? With what abhorrence must it be rejected by him, "who by the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God?" Surely had any such spot been found in him, as is in every work of yours, he had died in vain. Besides, where were the riches of grace if you contributed ever so little to the purchase? "If it be of works, it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." (*Rom. xi. 6.*) God's glory in pardoning is utterly obscured, and it is no longer the gift of God.

And what can be so fatal to yourself? You

thus cut yourself off from the only method of salvation; you counteract the designs of God. You put it out of his power to save you, for he cannot deny himself. If you will lay any "other foundation than he hath laid, you are fallen from grace:" (*Gal. v. 4.*) you must abide that devouring storm which will sweep away your vain deceitful hopes. And wo unto those works that stand up to plead for your acceptance. Unable to bear the severity of God's justice, "this broken reed you have leaned upon will run into your soul and pierce it." (*Isai. xxxvi. 6.*) You will then too late discover, that those who would not plead a salvation by grace will never be able to escape the damnation of hell.

3. How glorious to God, how honourable to the Redeemer, how safe for the undone sinner, how effectual to engage his heart to God, must this method of gospel-grace appear? God is acknowledged to be all majesty and all mercy; Christ all-glorious and all-sufficient. We have grounds of confidence the most enduring and satisfying; and for all the grace we receive feel the constrainings of the debt of gratitude immense as the gift bestowed on us.

To love God cannot but be the immediate effect of faith in this salvation: and obedience will then become our delight as well as duty. For "faith worketh by love; and this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are no longer counted grievous." (*1 John v. 3.*) O with what delight does a sinner saved by grace "run the way of God's commandments, for he hath set his heart at liberty." (*Psalms cxix. 32.*) What attainments in holiness must not he be advancing towards when "this love constraineth him?" (*2 Cor. v. 14.*) And thus what all the impotent endeav-

ours of man by his own powers could never effect, the faith of God's elect doth work : not "making void the law, but establishing it ;" (*Rom. iii. 31.*) establishing it on a basis which nothing can move ; enabling us to obey it on principles that powerfully influence ; and urging us on in the pursuit of perfection absolute and intire as the summit of our hopes and the consummation of our felicity.

SERMON X.

ON THE NATURE OF TRUE HOLINESS.

EPHESIANS II. 10.

FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS UNTO GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD HATH BEFORE ORDAINED THAT WE SHOULD WALK IN THEM.

THE great Apostle Paul knew best the tendency of the principles he preached. He was not afraid that the doctrines of free grace would lead men to licentiousness. He had happily experienced the contrary in his own soul, and seen the blessed effects of them on thousands of others. He knew "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," (*Rom. viii. 3.*) the gospel, "which is the power of God unto salvation," could effect. The discovery of the amazing grace of God in Jesus Christ laid a constraining influence upon the soul, which the brightest displays of the beauty of virtue, or the clearest convictions of moral obligation, never could produce. Many have thought that the Apostle was a dangerous guide, and needed the correction of his brother James; as well as all the fine comments which they have since invented for maintaining the honour of religion, and securing the interests of morality. But James, as well as Paul, if they were alive, would disclaim the vain efforts of these reconcilers. St. Paul was as zealous an advocate for true holiness as St. James; and St. James as true an advocate for faith, and one who expected salvation by

grace, as much as St. Paul. They laid the same foundation, and built with the same materials. "Jesus Christ was their chief corner-stone." (*Eph. ii. 20.*) By faith in him they expected "justification to life;" and they raised the superstructure of real holiness thereon. The "purification of the heart," St. James as much ascribed to the efficacy of faith (*Acts xv. 9—14.*) as St. Paul. But amidst the cry which is made about the interests of morality, what is become of the practice of it? Where is that to be found? I am afraid the self-seeking, pleasure-loving, honour-loving, money-loving conversation of our boasted champions for morality, will prove a bad comment upon their doctrine. The fine-spun reasonings on the beauty, fitness, and intrinsic excellence of virtue, look indeed pretty enough upon paper; but I cannot in the view of them help thinking of what was said of the mask in the fable, *O lepidum caput, sed cerebrum non habet.* Alas! The vain precepts of heathen philosophers, or the modern improvements of them under their christian disciples, are alike impotent to restrain the power of a corrupted nature. They have no influence to produce what they enjoin: they leave us, just as they found us, admiring and transgressing them.

Let us see then whether the gospel of Jesus hath not more amply provided for the honour of God, and the obedience of his people; and, with the richest grace bestowed, demands and produces the most exemplary conversation. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

These words afford us a view of the state and conduct of every real christian.

I. The principle of his spiritual life.

II. The power communicated to him to enable him to walk and please God ; and,

III. The way in which in heart and life he continually advances ; namely, the “good works which God hath before ordained that he should walk in them.”

I. The principle of all spiritual life is Christ. Until we are joined to the Lord “the motions of sin which are in our members do work to bring forth fruit unto death.” (*Rom. vii. 6.*) Our nature, with all the labour and pains which may be bestowed on it, will never cease to be a nature “dead in trespasses and sins.” (*Eph. ii. 1.*) We must be quickened before we can live ; and live before we can “walk and please God. Christ is this quickening spirit.” (*1 Cor. xv. 45.*) Spiritual life is a new creation in him : therefore we are said to be “begotten, born again, made partakers of a divine nature, one Spirit with the Lord, members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (*2 Pet. i. 4. John iii. 3. 1 Cor. vi. 17. Eph. v. 30.*) As really as “in Adam we have died,” so really “in Christ must we be made alive.” (*1 Cor. xv. 22.*) Until we are so, it is impossible to do any good work : for “as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” (*John xv. 4.*) There must be as real a union betwixt Christ and us, as between the members and the head, or between the root and the branches : “Without Christ we can do nothing.” (*John xv. 6.*) Until he dwell in us and we in him we cannot live unto God, no more than a limb can live separate from the body, or a branch bear fruit when severed from the tree. This is God’s work. In the second creation we are as much his workmanship, as matter was in the first. He must give the life he commands :

“ I passed by thee in thy blood, and said unto thee, Live.” (*Ezek.* xvi. 6.) There is no more power in a natural man to do good works, than for “Ezekiel’s dry bones” (*Ezek.* xxxvii. 3.) to arise and stand upon their feet. God’s Spirit must breathe ere we can live: this Spirit is in its fulness resident in Christ. “ He quickeneth whom he will: (*John* v. 21.) He is at the right hand of God exalted, to give repentance unto his people.” (*Acts* v. 31.) His first act of grace towards us is his choice of us, then he draws us that we may follow him: “That I may apprehend that for which I am also apprehended in Christ Jesus.” (*Phil.* iii. 12.) And in order hereunto his first work in us is the enlightening our minds by his word to know him as our Redeemer and Saviour. He that “caused the light to shine out of darkness,” doth as sovereignly shine into us “to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” (*2 Cor.* iv. 6.) Faith then, the bond of union on our part, embraces the promises in him; for the divine truth, when accompanied with divine light, brings its own evidence along with it: “We know and believe the love that God hath unto us.” By this faith we live, or rather, as the Apostle expresses it, “Christ liveth in us:” for he is our life: “All our fresh springs are in him.” From hence arises a wonderful difference in our state. “We are passed from death unto life.” All our views, desires, dispositions, designs, are altered; and this will be confirmed by those effects which naturally now flow from the new creation in Christ Jesus.

This deserves especial notice. It is men’s folly, that they are for attempting the practice without knowing the principle of holiness. Wash the

Ethiopian's skin with all the water of the sea, and you will see the black unchanged. It is his nature. So is corruption yours. It is deeper rooted than the tawny hue of the Ethiopian, or the spots of the Leopard. Take this one scripture: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" (*2 Cor. v. 17.*) and there your way is open. You must be created anew in him, and then your heart will have the true and genuine image. You will "put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." (*Eph. iv. 24.*)

II. The power to put forth into act the life we receive, is derived from the same source. He not only prevents but follows us; "worketh in us that we may have a good will, and worketh with us when we have the good will." (*Art. X.*)

The peculiar office of the Holy Ghost is said by our church to be "sanctifying the elect people of God." (*Catechism.*) And this he doth by representing to us in his word the obligations we lie under to obey, and communicating power to enable us for obedience.

1. The Holy Ghost represents to us in the word the obligations we are under to walk and please God. He shews us how much we are in duty bound to do so: "For we are bought with a price, that we may glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits which are God's." (*1 Cor. vi. 20.*) He hath the most undoubted right in and over us, who hath paid so dearly for us, as to give "his own blood" to redeem us.

This view of our state most powerfully engages us to answer the end of his purchase, by "yielding ourselves, body, soul and spirit, a living sacrifice to him, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service." (*Rom. xii. 1.*) Indeed, what can be so reasonable, and therefore so ob-

ligatory, as that "he who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people," (*Titus* ii. 14.) should see in us "the travail of his soul, and be satisfied?" (*Isa.* liii. 11.)

2. It not only appears so reasonable, but there is a "constraining power of love shed abroad in our hearts," inclining us to and enabling us for the practice of the things which are excellent. The Holy Ghost in the scripture so represents the love of Christ in his salvation to our hearts, that it constraineth us, *συνεχει*, carrieth us along with it as a mighty stream. For when this love is known and believed, its "breadth and length, and depth and height," ever fixed upon our hearts, then we cannot but love God again and walk before him in all holy obedience. The influence of this principle of love to produce holiness in us is evident: it is itself "the fulfilling of the law." (*Rom.* xiii. 10.) But we can never reason ourselves into this love. It is the office of the Spirit not only to set before us the grounds of it in the character of a pardoning God, but to "direct our hearts into the love of God." (*2 Thess.* iii. 5.) The gospel becomes effectual, not merely by moral suasion, but by divine operation. This power habitually is ministered to us from Christ for the work of sanctification. "Out of his fulness we receive." (*John* i. 16.) Our works are begun, continued and ended in him. Christ (in whose hands the ministration of the Spirit is lodged) as the life of our souls, communicates to us light and love; and these dispose us to and enable us for the practice of "righteousness and true holiness."

I would wish you never to lose sight of this source of our obedience. All our holiness is derived from above. If we see not this, our mis-

take will be endless ; and our labour after holiness only the more estrange us from it. We shall be building a Babel to confound ourselves : and if hereafter we should be undeceived, shall have our work not only to begin, but our wall built with untempered mortar to pull down also.

Which brings me,

III. To consider that practice of true holiness, which the soul “ created in Christ Jesus is ordained to walk in.”

Holiness is “ the conformity of the heart to God.” It is having our will like God’s will, and our ways directed by the rule of our duty. It is the answer of that emphatical petition, “ Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” (*Matt.* vi. 10.) As the proof of it goes through every the minutest action of our lives, the time would fail me to enumerate all the particulars wherein in heart and life it appears ; in all holy desires and dispositions towards God, and in those works of righteousness “ which are good and profitable unto men.” But it will be necessary to set before you some of its most striking parts, and beg you to judge yourselves thereby.

Let me only observe in what followeth, I would not be understood to affirm, that every true believer hath this state of perfect conformity unto God. I will not say, that any ever did on earth attain to “ be perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.” But this I may venture to assert, that wherever a soul doth not watch and labour, and pray, and “ press towards the mark, to be holy as God is holy, in all manner of conversation,” (*1 Pet.* i. 15.) he can have very little reason to imagine himself one with Christ, or a real partaker in the blessings of the gospel.

The following instances of a right spirit will,

wherever they are found, be gracious evidences that you are not christians "in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth." For if you are such,

(1.) You will have a hearty approbation of the holy law of God. Though it cannot be a covenant of life to you, it ceases not to be a rule of obedience, and you will acknowledge it to be "holy and just and good," however contrary to your "carnal mind, and the law of your members which warreth against it." (*Rom. vii. 23.*) Far therefore from esteeming its prohibitions arbitrary, its commands severe, or its sanctions rigorous, you will say with the Psalmist, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right." (*Psalm cxix. 128.*) And this view will make you "delight in the law of God after the inner man." (*Rom. vii. 22.*) so as to count it your greatest joy could you wholly be conformed to its blessed precepts. Your language will be, "O that my ways were made so direct, that I may keep thy statutes." (*Psalm cxix. 5.*)

(2.) You will have a single eye to please God in all you do. This shews there is written upon your heart, "Holiness unto the Lord." If you are Christ's, you will have the simplicity which is in Christ." An eye directed straight forwards, and examining, "what will the Lord have me to do?" A sincere desire to please him in all things : a constant regard to the prints of his feet, and a purpose of soul to follow him in the narrow path of strict universal obedience. For "he that saith he abideth in him, must himself walk as Christ also walked." (*1 John ii. 6.*) And where this is the case, you will find a daily increasing victory over the world ; and a growing purpose never to turn to the right hand or to

the left after any of the golden baits, which pleasure, gain or honour may strew around you, in order to catch your eye and ensnare your heart. And hereby you “will keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man ;” (*Acts* xxiv. 16.) at least it will be your daily study to do so. In order to which you can allow yourself in the commission of no known sin, or the omission of any known duty, but inquiring “what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God ;” [*Rom.* xii. 2.] you will be not only ‘a hearer, but a doer of it.’ [*James* i. 25.] You will be able to appeal to the heart-searching God, that ‘his law is your delight.’ [*Psal.* cxix. 70.] You will have confidence towards him, in the consciousness of an unfeigned intention to please him ; and it will give you habitual satisfiedness that your soul is right with him, whilst you can thus say, “Search me, O Lord, and try the ground of my heart ; prove me and examine my thoughts : look well if there be any way of wickedness in me ; and lead me in the way everlasting.” [*Psal.* cxxxix. 23, 24.] Yea it will be the very “joy and rejoicing of your heart,” to be assured, “that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, you have your conversation in the world.” [*2 Cor.* i. 12.]

(3.) If holiness be in your heart, then you will feel with a most tender sensibility the least thing which would grieve God’s holy spirit in you. Your conscience will be as the apple of your eye. Have you never felt the acute pain that but a particle of dust occasions, when irritating the coats of that tender organ, and observed the carefulness you used to prevent such an accident, or your solicitude to remove it ? Such is the sensibility in the soul of a believer

with regard to sin : the eye of his spiritual mind cannot suffer beams there ; it must destroy his faculty of vision soon : no outward notorious sins can possibly be indulged. If a “ presumptuous sin ever gets dominion over him,” it darkens all his hopes towards God, and its dire effects within are too sadly evident. It usually for the time blinds the eyes and hardens the heart : but a mote will be grievous to the holy soul. He counts nothing little which is offensive to the pure “ eyes of that God with whom he hath to do.” Hence the very thoughts of his heart are under restraint. A sudden evil imagination afflicts him : “ If,” says he, “ I regard iniquity within, shall not God search it out ? For he knoweth the very secrets of the heart.” [*Psal.* xliv. 21.] He fain would keep himself pure in heart, and have “ a house swept and garnished,” continually to welcome the divine inhabitant of his soul.

(4.) This will make you, if you are true-hearted, very careful to “ abstain from all approaches to evil. [*1 Thess.* v. 22.] Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned ?” [*Prov.* vi. 27.] No more may you presume to put yourself into the way of temptation. The vices themselves may shock you, when the steps which lead to them appear innocent. It is often said, “ What harm can there be in this ?” When, in fact, all the harm which usually overwhelms us comes from small and unperceived beginnings. “ The beginning of sin is as the breaking out of water.” [*Prov.* xvii. 14.] If once a small breach is made, every drop which passes through widens it. The innocent amusements, as they are called, the necessary business of the world, and customary civilities of it, seem very allowable, nay laudable ; and yet I may venture to affirm,

that more souls perish by what appears to be lawful, than by what is acknowledged to be vicious. If you would be pure in heart, therefore, the pleasures of sense, however innocent; the things of the world, however needful; and the respect of it, however desirable, must be regarded with a jealous eye. We may not "go out of the world;" but we can be scarcely too sparing of the pleasures of it; too careful over the engagements of it; and too much weaned from its regards. We must be in the world;" but the believing soul will not "be of the world."

(5.) Where true holiness is in the heart, there will be an abiding desire after its increase and perfection. Wherever a soul begins truly to love God, he will desire to love him more; and as he advances, his longings increase. A heart united to Jesus never thinks he can love him too much, or serve him too well: but he pants after higher degrees day by day; "forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forward to those that are before." (*Phil. iii. 13.*) It is true, that "through the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright;" "we know but in part;" (*1 Cor. xiii. 9.*) we love but in part; we obey but in part; but this our state of imperfection is our grief. We would be like God. We would be no longer ungrateful to him. We would be 'holy as he is holy in all manner of conversation.' This is the spring of all those ardent prayers, that jealous self-examination, that desire of reproof, that serious inquiry into God's mind and will, which is the christian's daily walk. And so doing he doth "increase with the increase of God, going on unto perfection." (*Coloss. ii. 19.*)

(6.) The soul renewed in holiness aspires after its absolute and intire completion in heaven.

Heaven is the place of holiness : it is the essence of that happy state, that there all "that is in part is done away, and that which is perfect is come." (1 *Cor.* xiii. 10.) We therefore that are in this tabernacle do groan earnestly, desiring to be absent from the body, that we may be present with the Lord. [2 *Cor.* v. 4, 5, 6.] For then seeing him as he is, we shall be like him. (1 *John*, iii. 2.) The man after God's own heart, shews how he was, and we ought to be affected : "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God ; when shall I come to appear in the presence of God ?" [*Psal.* xliii. 2.] The chased roe, panting before its pursuers, and parched with heat and thirst, longed not more for the cooling stream, than his soul longed for this blessed state of happiness. All besides was little in his eye ; his crown, his victories, his wealth, his fame, his honours, were trifles compared to this ; he was content to part with them ; he found no satisfaction in them ; they were not his portion ; one mighty longing filled his soul ; and it was this, to "awake up in the fulness of God's likeness, and then he knew he should be satisfied with it." (*Psal.* xvii. 15.)

Happy will it be for you, brethren, if such as I have described be the temper of your soul. You may then be assured you are alive to God ; or in the language of St. Paul, "you live, yet not you, but Christ liveth in you." (*Gal.* ii. 20.) This is true holiness, and as distinct from all the daubings of Pharisaical outside, or hypocritical delusion, as the genuine brilliant differs from imitative paste. These are the works which "God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

I would conclude at present with these two cautions,

1. Beware of mistaking mere external works for true holiness. Holiness is seated in the heart; every act receives its goodness from the principle from which it flows, and the end to which it is directed. The external works of the generally esteemed devout, decent and charitable, are usually as far from being acts of real holiness as any of the works of the openly children of disobedience: they proceed from as unrenewed hearts, from as unchristian tempers, and are directed to as unsanctified ends.

You may attend your church twice on a Sunday. You may go on week-days too. You may frequent the sacrament. You may say prayers in your house and alone. You may read the psalms and lessons for the day. You may be "no extortioner or unjust." You may be in many things unlike other men; neither given to swear, nor drink, nor lewdness, nor extravagance. You may be a tender parent, a careful master, and what the world calls an honest man: yea, you may withal be very liberal to the poor; be regarded in the world as a pattern of piety and charity, and respected as one of the best sort of people in it; and yet, with all this, be the very character which, "though highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God." (*Luke xvi. 15.*)

For if you have never seen your "desperately wicked heart," been united to Christ by faith, and received from him newness of life; if you know not experimentally what is meant by "fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ;" if your devotion hath not been inspired "by faith which worketh by love;" if your worship hath not been "in spirit and in truth;" from a real sense of your wants, and an earnest desire and expectation of receiving from him "in whom

all fulness dwells :” if this hath not been your case, your devotions have been unmeaning ceremony ; your book not your heart hath spoken ; and the tinkling cymbal of sound, not the fervent effectual desire of prayer, hath come from your lips. “ Bring no more vain oblations.” (*Isa. i. 13.*) Though you should thus read and kneel, and pray all the days of your life, you will never have offered one spiritual service. These your very attendances on forms and ordinances are your delusion and condemnation.

Your decent conduct proceeds not from a sense of “ the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.” You have never felt any thing of its constraining influence ; nor have you a heart really hating iniquity as such. But open vices may be inconvenient to you, may blast your reputation, affect your business, or hurt your pride, (for pride is at the bottom of all self-made holiness) and therefore you abstain from them. While these two things you do, you love this present world, desire its esteem, its gain or its gratifications ; and you hate the image of God in the children of his grace. You dislike their self-denied conduct : you cannot bear the light of their holy lives ; you are provoked when they would unsettle you from your false bottom of formality. You think you are good enough already. You seem to fear being over-righteous more than the “ blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.” And if this be so, believe it, you are an utter stranger to vital godliness. Your heart is unhumbléd and unholy ; and all your ornamental shew is but gilding the coffin of a corpse, or whitening your sepulchre. “ You must be born again,” (*John iii. 7.*) if you would “ bring forth fruit unto God.”

Nor think that you are charitable, if the love

of Jesus and his brethren be not purely the motive of your gifts. A naturally generous heart, a tenderness of constitution, a desire of being thought well of, or rather the fear of being thought niggardly, may draw from you a pittance of your store, or some more considerable benefaction in your life; or at your death may be dispensed as you hope “to cover the multitude of sins.”* But is this charity? Alas! you might not only give your superfluities, but ‘bestow all your goods to feed the poor,’ you might even ‘give your body to be burned for them;’ and yet be utterly destitute of charity. (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) If self-seeking, self-pleasing, or self-ends guide you, (and guide you they must, until ‘the love of God be by the Holy Ghost shed abroad in your heart.’)—(*Rom.* v. 5.) Though you had defrauded others of the money you have given, you had not more effectually transgressed against the law of love.

Let every soul look well within. It is easy to be deceived; thousands are so. ‘The form of godliness’ many hold; ‘the power of it’ few. Be ye of those few.

2. As far removed from real holiness are they who have only learnt right notions of religion, but whose hearts have not yet been influenced by them. It is a very common case this. By education we may have had true principles instilled into our understandings: or afterwards by our connections, acquaintance and attachment to those who profess godliness, we may have learnt their mode of speaking, and adopted their sentiments; and this too from a speculative conviction of the truth. Hence we may run to hear the gospel, contend for the ministers of it, know how duties should be performed, discover the vanity

* See the note in the fifth Sermon.

of formality, be ready to rebuke the Pharisee, yea have a zeal for the truth, even to suffer for it persecution and loss. And all this may be accompanied with the appearance of spirituality, with fervors of devotion, a readiness to pray with others, and various gifts of knowledge and utterance. Withal, the conduct may be reformed, outwardly irreproachable; and yet the heart be neither truly for nor with God. Yea, farther, it is certainly more than possible even to have been the means of saving others souls and to lose our own: and after all, to be only near the kingdom of God and never enter into it; 'almost but not altogether christians.'

We may not have hated sin as sin, and because God hates it; nor loved holiness as holiness, and because God delights in it: our views may have been merely to our own advantage, to avoid hell or to gain heaven; (views right enough in their proper place) whilst at the bottom of our hearts we have not been actuated by a desire of God's glory; influenced by virtue derived from the living head; nor been constrained in the beginning, continuance and end of our conduct, by the real experience of our Saviour's love.

Self-deceit is deeply rooted in our hearts. We cannot be too jealous over them. The most holy will be the most inquisitive; most careful to fix their eye 'on Jesus the author and finisher of his salvation' in them; and then to be bringing forth 'those works of faith and labours of love' which He will remember in the day of his appearance and glory.

SERMON XI.

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT.

EPHESIANS V. 9.

FOR THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, IS IN ALL GOODNESS AND
RIGHTEOUSNESS.

WHEN we were infants, we were by baptism admitted into the family of God : we were received into the bosom of the church, and were regarded as disciples of the religion of Jesus. We then partook of the seals of the covenant, and engaged by the mouths of our sponsors, as soon as we came to years of discretion, ‘to walk worthy of our high vocation and calling.’ It was prayed for us, ‘that all carnal affections might die in us ; and that all things belonging to the spirit might live and grow in us.’ (*Baptismal Service.*) The continued assistance of the Holy Ghost was implored to enable us to be faithful to the vows we had made ; and we were solemnly admonished to remember our promise and profession, which was to ‘follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him.’ (*Baptismal exhortation.*) As we come to years of discretion, it becomes us seriously to examine, whether we are walking according to these engagements ; since it is on this depends the final accomplishment of the promises then on God’s part made to us. Else if we break our vows, ‘our circumcision becomes uncircumcision ;’ our baptism can profit us nothing, we

shall continue, as we were born, 'children of wrath,' (*Ephes. ii. 3.*) and, inherit the curse instead of the blessing. Here then is the question; Am I now a child of God? and is it resolvable by another, 'Am I led by the spirit of God?' For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' (*Rom. viii. 14*) And these leadings are evident by the fruits. 'The fruit of the spirit is in 'all goodness and righteousness.' If this be our state, well; else we are like the ingrafted branch which never incorporated with the tree, 'dried up and withered, whose only use is to be gathered and cast into the fire and burned.' [*John xv. 6.*]

Let every man try what spirit he is of. 'Many false spirits are gone forth into the world.' [*1 John iv. 1.*] There is a fallen spirit, boasting of its virtues, which is 'enmity against God.' [*Rom. viii. 7.*] There is 'a spirit of the world,' [*1 Cor. ii. 12.*] well received and generally well spoken of, which is contrary to Christ. And there is a spirit of darkness, who assumes 'the garb of light,' [*2 Cor. xi. 14.*] and fathers his impositions on those 'who have no pleasure in the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.' (*2 Thess. ii. 12.*) Hence, some have pretended to the guidance of the spirit of God, whose lives were 'earthly, sensual, devilish;' and others, whilst they have boasted of extraordinary impulses and communications, have departed from their profession, and 'ended in the flesh. We must try the spirits whether they are of God. [*1 John iv. 1.*] By their fruits ye shall know them. [*Matt. vii. 20.*] The fruits of the spirit are these, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' (*Gal. v. 21, 22, 23.*) These none but God's

spirit ever did or can produce : these, wherever they are, radically overturn the powers of darkness, and bring with them the full evidence of their divine origin. ‘ This hath God done.’ (*Psal.* lxiv. 9.)

We will examine these fruits a little distinctly, for in them goodness and righteousness consist.

1. Love. The ‘ first and great commandment of the law is, ‘ The love of God ; (*Matt.* xxii. 37.) and the next and like unto it is, ‘ To love our neighbour as ourselves : ’ (*Matt.* xxii. 39.) both these manifest themselves to be in the hearts of the children of God. Love appears in the regard shewn to the object on which it fixes. These are esteem of, desire after, delight in, and conformity with it. In the real christian these are supremely fixed ‘ on God in Christ.’ His esteem of God will be most exalted and reverential : ‘ Whom have I in heaven but thee?’ His desires after him ardent. ‘ There is nothing upon earth I desire in comparison with thee.’ (*Psal.* lxxiii. 25.) This is daily manifested by his diligence to maintain communion with him in prayer, meditation, the word and sacraments. His delight in God is above all things else his chief joy. ‘ My soul shall be joyful in the Lord : (*Psal.* xxxv. 9.) yea I will greatly rejoice in the Lord ; my soul shall be joyful in my God.’ (*Isai.* lxi. 10.) His conformity to him is universal and daily increases ; whilst in every good word and work it is his labour ‘ to grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ.’ (*Ephes.* iv. 15.) Doth this character suit you ? Thus the spirit works in every believer. And to his neighbour the same spirit begets love unfeigned ; evident in the kindest expressions of it towards his soul and body. ‘ Rejoicing with those that rejoice,

and weeping with those that weep ; (*Rom. xii. 15.*) ready to distribute, willing to communicate (*1 Tim. vi. 18.*) to the necessities of the indigent : consulting all their wants and seeking to relieve them ; and by instruction, admonition, reproof, consolation, chiefly diligent to advance their most important interest, that of their immortal souls. This is love.

But can no man be under the guidance of God's Spirit, who habitually affects other things more than God in Christ, and who seeks not to walk in the exercise of fervent charity ? Certainly no. Christ saith, ' He that loveth any thing more than me is not worthy of me. (*Matt. x. 37.*) And we are commanded to be always ready, if need be, to lay down even our lives for the brethren.' (*1 John iii. 16.*) So that the matter comes to a short issue. What hath God's word determined ? But who doth thus love God and his brother ? Is not this reducing the children of God within a very narrow compass ? True. But it reduces them only to the scripture declarations. Nominally the children of God are numerous enough, really they are few. Be assured if a man have not this spirit of love, he belongs not to Christ.

2. Joy. They have very mistaken notions of the gospel, who think the religion of it a melancholy service. It is found to be perfect freedom from every slavish and distressing fear, by such as enter into the true spirit of it. Other joys are vain or wicked or transitory : yea, all the joys of earth and sense, when sought as a portion, quickly change into ceaseless and remediless sorrows ; but the fruit of righteousness is true joy. It is a ' joy in the Holy Ghost.' It flows immediately from the fountain of all blessing. It is

an holy joy, tending to promote the purity of our souls: yea it is a joy 'unspeakable and full of glory.' (1 *Pet.* i. 8.) We 'rejoice in the Lord, for he is become our salvation.' (*Isa.* xii. 2.) In ourselves, whilst proving our own work, we see the evident effects of divine agency in every present state: 'For all things work together for good to us:' (*Rom.* viii. 28.) in every future prospect; 'Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.' (*Rom.* v. 2.) What a joy is this? subject to none of the interruptions of other joys, but possessed independent of the world. A joy that even in afflictions, in temptations, in sorrows, in reproaches, (2 *Cor.* vii. 4. *James* i. 2. 2 *Cor.* vi. 10. *Acts* v. 41.) burns with an unextinguished flame.

Nor must I omit the peculiarity of it as it regards our brethren. Their prosperity brings in fresh fuel to it, as 'one member of the body shares in the honour put on another.' (1 *Cor.* xii. 26.) The envious, selfish dispositions of the natural mind are mortified, and we regard their happiness as our own. Thus joy abounds, and still the Comforter enlarges the measure of it by increasing the grounds of it.

3. Peace. It is the Spirit's work to 'create peace.' And this he doth by 'shining into our hearts through the word, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' (2 *Cor.* iv. 6.) He testifies of Christ, brings home the record to our souls, that God in him is reconciled, and 'gives us peace in believing;' (*Rom.* xv. 13.) paying us, as it were, the legacy our dying Master left us. 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.' (*John* xiv. 27.) This 'peace passeth all understanding;' (*Phil.* iv. 7.) and the possession of it keeps our souls serene amidst all the changes

of this mortal life. Thus entered into 'that kingdom which is righteousness and peace,' (*Rom.* xiv. 17.) the mild dispositions of the Prince of Peace appear in our conduct. Peace is our labour here upon earth; yea, though we often dwell with those 'who, when we speak for peace, make them ready to battle.' (*Psal.* cxx. 7.) We would maintain it with the whole world, by avoiding every occasion of dispute, 'giving no offence in any thing; (*1 Cor.* x. 32.) as far as lieth in us, living peaceably with all men: ' (*Rom.* xii. 18.) receding in many instances from our right, rather than break this bond of unity, and often quietly suffering rather than seek a litigious redress. We would restore it where lost, by being the first to seek reconciliation; by reuniting those who are at enmity; by 'speaking those soft words which turn away wrath;' (*Prov.* xv. 1.) by every kind office which can sweeten the hearts embittered with variance. Thus the Holy Ghost leads. What a different spirit from that which is in the world? There hatred, variance, strife, emulation reign; and slander, detraction and malice cast about the firebrands of dissension, seeking to 'separate very friends.' Return, O Prince of Peace, return. Diffuse this gracious spirit in the midst of us; teach us to copy thy good-will towards men.

4. Long-suffering. A gracious fruit of righteousness. It is the very character of God. It is a part of the divine nature. Where it dwells, there God's Spirit dwells. And how greatly shall we need to exercise it? 'In the world we shall have tribulation.' (*John* xvi. 33.) It cannot be otherwise, whilst here we dwell among lions; 'among men, whose lips are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword,' (*Psal.* lvii. 4.) Injuries, unkind-

ness and provocations will daily beset us. Our nature on this would swell and rage, 'returning evil for evil, and railing for railing.' But the soul taught of God hath learnt a different lesson; 'forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us;' (*Eph. iv. 32.*) and this 'not until seven times, but until seventy times seven.' (*Matt. xviii. 22.*) It is true, we shall find a corrupted heart rising up and saying, 'Do I not well to be angry?' But we shall be enabled to suppress these perverse 'motions of sin in our members;' and set a guard, not only on the words of our tongue, or the features of our countenance, but on the very thoughts of our heart; that so, 'not only evil speaking, but all inward bitterness and anger and wrath may be put away from us, as becometh saints.' (*Eph. iv. 31.—v. 3.*) If we meet with ill usage from men without, we shall forgive, pity and pray for them. We shall not so much as wish their hurt. We shall remember 'Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.' (*Rom. xii. 19.*) If we are crossed at home; (and in our own families usually lies the chief exercise of our long-suffering) if we find those who are under us perverse, self-willed, stubborn, undutiful; or those set over us imperious, haughty, and capriciously out of humour; we shall seek to overcome the one by patience, forbearance and kindness towards them; and the other, by that 'yielding which pacifieth wrath;' (*Ecc. x. 4.*) by that submissiveness, that silence which extinguishes the coals of anger. 'Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath;' (*Eph. vi. 4.*) servants 'obey your masters, not answering again;' (*Titus ii. 9.*) are the express marks St. Paul instances of the exercise of this blessed temper.—To walk thus will shew that we have 'received

the grace of God in truth,' and drank into his Spirit, 'who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, (*Heb.* xii. 3.) yet opened not his mouth,' except in pity and prayer for his murderers. Need I remark how little this spirit is seen in the world, where rage, impatience and self-will disturb the earth, and raise perpetual storms?

But are none who pretend to I know not what goodness and the spirit, as impatient and fretful as those whom they pharisaically stile their carnal neighbours? Perhaps they are. But their calling themselves christians will not prove them to be such; if they have not the spirit of long-suffering, they are not of Christ. Their professions are but delusions, and their hope 'the hope of the hypocrite which perisheth.' (*Job* viii. 13.]

5. Meekness, gentleness; these are parts of righteousness nearly allied. If they be considered separately, meekness may intimate the temper, and gentleness the expression of it in the conduct. This was what the blessed Jesus recommended so strongly to his disciples imitation, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart; (*Matt.* xi. 29.) and all who are his sheep hear his voice and follow him;" (*John* x. 27.) and where the temper is thus kind and softened, gentleness will speak in every word and action. No bitterness, or clamour, or fierce disputes will be in our lips, the law of kindness will dwell there; and words, soft as descending snows, drop from the good treasure of the heart. And in the life it will be seen; not in the ceremonious compliments of the lip and knee, not in the mere sounding professions of respect, not in the false civilities which have no meaning or a bad one; but in the ingenuous openness of the

countenance; the simplicity and sincerity of the conduct; and the unaffected benevolence towards those who we know dislike and injure us. And at home especially it will make us kind and courteous to all about us, tender over them, assiduous to serve them, and pleased with the task. I know no part of a christian's conduct which makes him appear more amiable than the exercise of these graces, and which so effectually disarms the malice of those who cruelly, disdainfully and spitefully speak against him.' (*Psal.* xxxi. 18.) Nor is the absence of this spirit but among the sad proofs of an unrenewed heart; and to be a lion in our house, and frantic among our servants, is as much an evidence of sin's dominion, as to swear or lie.

6. Goodness. To this word many lay pretensions, but its meaning few understand and fewer practise. Were you to hear a man of this world describe the character of goodness, he would represent it as consisting in taking care of what is called the main chance; advancing somewhat in the world; paying every man his due; doing no harm; and being an honest man. And so good he flatters himself he is. Again, the goodness of pharisaical formality consists in an exterior of decency, devotion and charity. The regular appearance at church, or the daily service at home, with something bestowed to the relief of the necessitous, afford a righteousness, which, from the concurring testimony of the world, it would seem almost presumption to question. But I have before laboured to expose the folly of these pretences. The honesty of the worldling, and the forms of the devotee, have just as much genuine goodness in them, as the love of the world hath of heavenly-mindedness, and ignorance and pride of humility and spiritual under-

standing. But there is a real goodness which the spirit of God works in the heart, which it becomes each soul to prove in himself. A goodness, not wrought by and out of ourselves ; (for 'in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing ;') [*Rom.* vii. 18.] but the emanation of that divine nature of which, through the Holy Ghost, we have been made partakers. It consists in the approbation and conformity of the heart to that law of God which is holy and just and good.' [*Rom.* vii. 12.] It appears in an uniform practice of 'whatsoever things are excellent and of good report ;' it makes us patterns of self-denial, spirituality, and close walking with God. It urges us to seek the salvation of all men, and prompts us to every labour of love for their souls or bodies. It acts from a principle of pure love, and simply regards the honour of Jesus, and the good of mankind. A goodness, which outside religion hath nothing to do with ; and the world cannot receive ; but in which the soul that is in Christ must be daily exhorted to abide and abound.

7. Faith. This is 'the fruit of the spirit.' The word faith in scripture admits of different interpretations. Here it stands for veracity and fidelity : veracity in all our words and promises. So far as we are in him who is the faithful and true witness, we shall seek to speak the truth from our heart.' (*Psal.* xv. 2.) We shall abhor 'lying lips and a deceitful tongue.' (*Psal.* cxx. 2.) We shall use "no flattering speeches ; (*1 Thess.* ii. 5. no cloke of guile ; but speak the truth as in his presence, 'who searchest the heart and the reins.' A christian's word is sacred : the spirit of truth guides him. Need I observe then whose spirit they follow, who think good breeding binds them to hypocrisy, or who pretend the

business of the world could never be carried on without dissimulation ; That to ask more than they intend to take, to commend their merchandise above its real value, is allowable in trade. So true is the son of Sirach's observation, 'as the nail sticketh fast between the joining of the stones, so doth lying between buying and selling. (*Ecclus. xiii. 8.*) These are of their father the devil, and the works of their father they will do. He was a liar from the beginning.' (*John viii. 44.*)

Fidelity in our engagements is here included in faith. We shall be true and just in all our dealings ; 'not slothful in business ;' (*Rom. xii. 11.*) not needing another's eye to quicken our diligence ; but conformable to the confidence reposed in us, fulfilling punctually whatever we have engaged for, though we are losers by the bargain ; ready to pay what we owe at the time stipulated, and acting with men as we would do with the Lord himself if he were upon earth. Why are there so many complaints of knavery, idleness, and imposition ? Why can you scarcely go into a shop where you must not guard against being cheated ? or employ a workman who will not neglect your business unless your eye is over him ? It is because the heart is a stranger to the grace of God, and has none of that 'fruit of the spirit, which is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.'

8. Temperance. 'If you walk after the spirit, you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' (*Gal. v. 16.*) As 'your conversation will be in heaven,' you will be very temperate in the use of all things upon earth. If you possess abundance, you will 'use this world as not abusing it.' [*1 Cor. vii. 31.*] If your station be distinguished in life, you will not be conformed to the vain

customs and fashions of it. 'The pride of life, you know, is not of the father, but is of the world.' (1 *John* ii. 16.) You will not measure your temperance by what others do, but by what your bible marks out to you. If you do not abound in this world's goods, your desires will be moderate. Having 'food and raiment you will be therewith content.' A little will serve a pilgrim on his travels: our treasure is reserved for us in heaven. The cravings of corrupt appetite you will daily learn to mortify. You will not only abhor that 'surfeiting and drunkenness, that chambering and wantonness,' which debases men into brutes; but you will set a guard over the first motions of those 'fleshly lusts which war against the soul.' (1 *Pet.* ii. 11.) When you eat it will be for nourishment, not for indulgence; and you will drink to quench your thirst, not to gratify and inflame your appetite; 'making no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' [*Rom.* xiii. 14.] You will keep yourself pure; not only abstaining from forbidden gratifications, but using those that are lawful with a holy moderation; not going so far as you might, lest you should be led to exceed the boundary prescribed and fall into intemperance. Knowing how corrupt your nature is; how prone to lust; how riveted to the world; how fond of vanities; jealousy will be ever on the watch, and taking the alarm on the approach or appearance of excess. Thus you will walk circumspectly, 'not as fools, but as wise.' (*Ephes.* v. 15.)

Let me just hint, that to have the heart fixed on the vanities and fashions of the world, to be anxiously engaged in the pursuit of gain, to indulge the flesh in its cravings after meat or

drink or sleep or apparel ; to be at no pains to remove every provocation to excess, and to pamper, instead of beating down the body ; these are the sure proofs of a soul which 'is sensual, not having the spirit.' (*Jude* 19.)

These now are the tempers, and this the conduct, where 'the fruit of the spirit in all goodness and righteousness' appears. And you are just so far the servant of our Saviour, and no farther, than these fruits manifest themselves in you. Many, even of those who profess a spiritual walk, deceive themselves with the vainest hopes ; and though they continue under the influence of worldliness, selfishness, fretfulness and indulgence, will not be persuaded that they have neither 'been baptised into Christ, nor put on Christ.'

May the spirit of grace be to them a spirit of conviction, whilst they see the unsuitableness of their hearts and lives to the fruits of genuine righteousness !

And should not you and I, brethren, be much humbled, that these fruits, though really possessed, abound no more in us ? Surely they who have the tenderest and most awakened consciences will be most affected with the view of their imperfections, and stirred up importunately to cry for fresh communications of power and grace to bring forth more fruit. If this effect be wrought in you, such fervent effectual prayer will be a present evidence to you, that 'the spirit of God, who helpeth our infirmities,' is with you as a spirit of supplication ; and an earnest that he will be in you as a 'spirit of righteousness, strengthening you with all might in the inner man.' (*Ephes.* iii. 16.) to bring forth those fruits unto holiness, the end of which is everlasting life.' [*Rom.* vi. 22.]

SERMON XII.

THE NECESSITY OF PERSONAL HOLINESS.

HEBREWS XII. 14.

WITHOUT HOLINESS NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD.

AMONG the various sects which have arisen, disturbing the peace of the church, and debasing the purity of the gospel, no error hath more effectually struck at the root than theirs who pervert the most glorious truths of God to establish a system of lewdness and licentiousness. Antinomians enow in practice there have been in every age ; in none, I fear, more than the present : and it is no wonder therefore that a corrupted heart hath perverted many ; and brought their sentiments into a conformity with their conduct. We naturally believe what we desire. The merest shadow of an argument will pass when prejudice hath blinded the eyes. Hence, because such as I am speaking of ' have no pleasure in the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, God hath given them over to strong delusions to believe a lie.' [2 *Thess.* ii. 11.] The most life-giving promises prove their snare, and the sure foundations of grace in the Redeemer become to them an occasion of falling. In the mean time they avow a confidence of safety greater than that of other men. Their danger therefore is more imminent, and their damnation less evitable. If any such should hear these words, or cast their eyes on these lines, I would beg them not to be hasty in their censures, but

simply weigh the following arguments for personal holiness, and not reject them if they are conclusive.

I have endeavoured to shew you in some measure the nature of holiness, its principles and practice, and the particular fruits which grow and flourish wherever the heart is vitally united to Christ the living vine. Let no man accuse of a dangerous tendency principles which lead to such a conversation. If the enemies of the gospel will effectually confute it, as they pretend to do, let them produce from other principles a practice that will bear this test, and hath such marks of divinity stamped upon it. It were enough to make a man smile (if the subject was not too serious) to hear the jealousy of those who have not experimentally 'so much as known if there be any Holy Ghost;' and whose lives are wholly governed by the interests of flesh and sense, testifying their apprehensions about the decay of morality, and their fears lest these doctrines of grace, which enable a man to 'walk as Christ also walked,' and actually are seen to have this tendency universally on those who truly embrace them, should make good works to be neglected, or considered as unnecessary. Should the moralist, whether Deist, Arian, Socinian or Orthodox, consider the truths which have been laid down, he will perhaps be found, with all his zeal for works, to have exceeded the professed Antinomian in true holiness hardly so much as one Ethiopean exceeds his fellow in complexion. Whilst, sure I am, as many as are believers indeed will always be so powerfully wrought upon by the force of the obligations lying upon them, as by their conduct to shew forth a spirituality of temper and holiness of life, that may con-

found at least, if it doth not convince those who speak evil of their good conversation in Christ.

I am to shew you the absolute necessity of personal holiness. And I shall endeavour to do it from the following arguments. May the Spirit of holiness make them effectual to the edification of all who hear them !

First. It is one great design of God's eternal purpose and choice that we should be holy.— There are innumerable disputes about the deep things of God's election and fore-knowledge, which, through the heat and bitterness wherewith they have been managed, seem to have afforded rather 'matter for questions, than to have ministred godly edifying. Secret things belong unto God.' (*Deut.* xxix. 29.) We had best leave these deep points in silence; and beginning with what is plainer, advance by degrees. When we come to heaven, the scheme of God's eternal counsels will be better known to us. But whatever predestination or election there be, or be not, this is certainly God's eternal decree; that the people of his grace should 'be holy as he is holy. For this he hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.' (*Eph.* i. 4.) This at least is his predestination, that 'we should be conformed to the image of his Son.' (*Rom.* viii. 29.) And 'whoever are elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, are so through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.' (*1 Peter* i. 2.) It is no essential requisite to salvation, that a man believe any absolute irrespective decrees of God; it is no exclusion from it that he utterly rejects them: but it is essentially necessary that he finds this decree of holiness fulfilled in him, and that where-

unto he is appointed actually taking place. Without this the decree of God is certainly against him, and he hath no part nor lot in the salvation that is in Jesus.

Secondly. It is among the chief ends of Christ's death, 'to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (*Titus* ii. 14.) For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' (*1 John* iii. 8.) His chief work was sin. By this his dominion was upheld. Jesus, the name of our deliverer, expresses his office: 'He shall save his people from their sins.' (*Matt.* i. 21.) He doth it by dying: thus purchasing anew a property in us, and 'redeeming us from the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. (*Luke* i. 75.) When he gave himself for us,' it was with this very view, 'that he might sanctify and cleanse us.' (*Eph.* v. 26.) And this he actually works in all his people: they are saints, holy brethren, conformed to their head, 'a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices.' [*1 Pet.* ii. 5.] It is then as much as all our hopes are worth, that we see this great end of Christ's death answered in us. 'He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure. [*1 John* iii. 3.] If any man saith he hath fellowship with him, and walketh in darkness, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' [*1 John* i. 6.] Let no man dream of any benefit from Christ's death in eternity, who doth not experience the quickening, sanctifying efficacy of it in time. 'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' [*Rom.* vi. 2.] Every real believer is crucified with Christ; is dead with him unto sin, that like as Christ was raised

from the dead by the glory of the Father, he also should walk in newness of life.' [Rom. vi. 4.] How blasphemously then do they speak, who, whilst by their wickedness they are 'crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame,' plead his death as the prescription for their iniquities, and make the holy One of God a minister of sin?

Thirdly. The justification of a sinner by faith in Jesus Christ, necessarily binds and leads him to the practice of holiness. It is allowed that the hatred of sin and the love of God, are the grand roots of all true holiness; whatever therefore most powerfully produces the one, will most effectually secure the other. But this is peculiarly the property of faith. For when can sin ever appear to us so exceeding sinful, as when faith leads us to the accursed tree, and bids us 'look upon him whom we have pierced?' (*Zech. xii. 10.*) Where can God's displeasure against sin so affect our hearts, as when we see in the strong lines of the Redeemer's blood, what 'an evil and bitter thing it is?' And where are we so bound, so forced to lothe ourselves and sin, as when we eye his bloody sacrifice and hear his groans, and see his mangled body, and look into the prints of the nails; and, as it were with Thomas, 'thrust our hand into his side?' Must we not then 'count ourselves dead indeed unto sin, (*Rom. vi. 11.*) and henceforth live unto God, servants of righteousness unto holiness?' (*Rom. vi. 13.*) or where can God's love so mightily constrain us, as when faith represents him in the glorious character of a pardoning God in Christ? What can engage our hearts to him if this doth not? What can bind us to walk before him and please him, if not this 'love for him who hath thus so loved us?' (*1 John iv. 19.*) God then hath bound us

to holiness by these strongest ties. He appoints faith as the means, and holiness as the end; he knew that true holiness could be no other way produced. The appointment therefore of the former, as the medium of conveying his salvation to us, is the proof of the necessity of the latter. And if this effect be not wrought, our faith is delusion.

Fourthly. All the means of grace imply the necessity of holiness, as this is their very use, that by them 'we may grow up into him in all things, who is our head, even Christ.' (*Eph.* iv. 15.) Are we to 'desire the sincere milk of the word?' It is that 'as new-born babes we may grow thereby;' (*1 Peter* ii. 2.) that we may be 'sanctified through the truth.' (*John* xvii. 17.) Are we called upon to 'pray without ceasing?' (*1 Thess.* v. 17.) It is in order to receive the supply of the Spirit of holiness for our growth in grace, and advancement 'towards the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' Are we exhorted to christian fellowship? It is that we may 'watch over one another to provoke unto love and to good works.' (*Heb.* x. 24.) This is the point ever aimed at, that we 'may increase with the increase of God, (*Coloss.* ii. 19.) and be going on unto perfection.' (*Heb.* vi. 1.)

Fifthly. We are constantly in scripture pressed to holiness, as the issue and due improvement of all its doctrines. Whoever reads but with a cursory eye the epistles, particularly of St. Paul, will see how he not only intersperses occasional reflections in a way of moral inference, but always sums them up in a point, as a ground from whence to urge those practical duties which conclude all his writings. Having first established the great truth of redemption through the blood of the Lamb, in its variety of connections and

different respects with regard to God and us, this is his deduction; 'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' (2 Cor. vii. 1.) Hence all the pressing exhortations that we should 'walk worthy of our high vocation and calling; (Eph. iv. 1.) that we should adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; (Titus ii. 10.) that we should maintain those works which are good and profitable unto men;' (Titus iii. 8.) and especially in our stations and relative capacities behave ourselves 'as persons professing godliness;' with the most solemn injunctions on the faithful, that if any man be disobedient, if any man defile the temple of God, if any man turn back to the love of the world, if any man walk dishonourably to this holy profession; they are 'to note that man, to have no company with him, no not so much as to eat, but to regard him as a denier of the faith, and worse than the infidels' (2 Thess. iii. 14. 1 Tim. v. 8.) around them. Let any man seriously read this, and say whether St. Paul, though eminently an asserter of salvation by grace, was not as strenuous an advocate for holiness as the foremost of his colleagues.

Sixthly. That we should be holy, is the design of all the dispensations of God in his Providence. If he gives prosperity, it is that his goodness should engage our hearts to love and serve him. If he chastises, it is to purge and refine us. This is his view in the more general judgments he sends upon the nations of the world, 'that the inhabitants thereof may learn righteousness.' (Isa. xxvi. 9.) This is his purpose with regard to individuals. 'He chasteneth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.' (Heb. xii. 10.) The dross of base affections is designed to

be consumed in the furnace of affliction, and 'the peaceable fruits of righteousness are actually brought forth by those who are duly exercised thereby.' (*Heb. xii. 11.*) You see it is God's uniform design in all he doth, by his Providence as well as by his grace, that this great effect may be produced, of being 'holy in all manner of conversation.' And how are we then bound to correspond with him herein, and to improve our situation, whatever it be, to the attainment of this gracious purpose and design of God?

Seventhly. Holiness is of absolute necessity in order to admission into the presence of God. Except a man be 'meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,' he cannot partake in it. Glory and grace only differ in degree. We have 'an earnest of our inheritance' in the blessed communications and consolations which the spirit ministers unto us. When heaven comes the full harvest only comes of what on earth we had already the first-fruits. 'The pure in heart shall see God.' (*Matt. v. 8.*) Whilst nothing can enter the sanctuary where his honour dwelleth, 'which defileth or worketh abomination.' (*Rev. xxi. 27.*) It is a strange mistake with which 'the god of this world blinds the minds of those who believe not,' that they may get 'to heaven at last, though their heart and lives should not be so strict and holy as the scriptures enjoin them to be.' But suppose it possible: What would an unholy soul do in heaven? What happiness could he taste from the glory and service of that blessed place, whilst under a total incapacity to relish the least measure of their joys? To be ever loving, admiring, praising the blessed God, to be following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, to be employed day and night without ceasing, in his temple, to be in the nearest and tenderest

communion of soul with him, and with the adoring saints and angels, our brethren and companions ; what happiness can you possibly have in these exercises, if now they are irksome, your aversion, and your burden ? If now your conversation be on earth, not in heaven, if now you are living in the enjoyment of the pleasures of sense, and not by faith ; if now you are ‘ serving foolish and hurtful lusts,’ instead of ‘ presenting your body, soul and spirit a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God ;’ (*Rom. xii. 1.*) if now you are seeking happiness in the vanities of time, instead of looking forward to the riches of eternity ; if now the company of God’s people and their employments you disrelish and avoid ; if here you are content to take up your abode, and cannot say, that ‘ to depart and to be with Christ is far better ;’ (*Phil. i. 23.*) if earthly, sensual, devilish tempers now reign in you, instead of the pure, peaceable, holy, heavenly, Christ-like dispositions of the child of God ; you may be assured there is no entrance for you into the presence of God ; you are under an absolute incapacity of drawing near to him ; you have, you can have no idea of or relish for the happiness of the saints ; you can be no more sensible to it than the blind to the beauties of vision, or the deaf to the powers of harmony. But,

Eighthly. Without holiness you are not only incapable of seeing God and enjoying him, but you are actually and by express sentence excluded from it. ‘ When the Son of a man shall come, he shall send forth his holy angels, and gather out of his kingdom all things which offend, and which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire.’ [*Matt. xiii. 42.*] ‘ No evil shall dwell with him.’ [*Psal. v. 4.*] Sin and exclusion from his presence, are necessarily con-

nected. 'They who obey not his gospel must be destroyed with the brightness of his coming.' [2 *Thess.* ii. 8.] 'He that committeth sin, is of the devil.' (1 *John* iii. 8.) By such disobedience against God he testifies what master he hath chosen to serve ; and his wages will be as his work. 'The wages of sin is death.' (*Rom.* vi. 23.) They who join with God's enemies will have their portion with them, in the 'everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' (*Matt.* xxv. 41.) All pleas in the great day of the Lord will be fruitless, if the heart hath been the servant of sin. To have cried, Lord, Lord, in his temple ; to have heard the voice of Christ in our streets ; yea, to have prophesied in his name, and done many wonderful works, will avail nothing, if holiness hath not been our temper and practice. He will say to every unholy soul in that day, 'Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity.' (*Luke* xiii. 27.)

These are clear and convincing proofs of the absolute necessity of being holy here, in order to be happy hereafter : and should lead every man into the most serious inquiries into his state and temper. 'The righteous scarcely are saved ; and where then shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?' (1 *Pet.* iv. 18.)

I shall conclude with these observations.

1. If personal holiness be so absolutely necessary, 'how few will be saved ? Strait indeed is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' (*Matt.* vii. 14.) It is often charged as a matter of great uncharitableness, but to confess your faith in what God hath thus so solemnly declared. Every one hopes to be saved at last ; and that, at least, those are safe who are not worse than themselves. But this is the blindness of the

unholy, and the false 'hope of the hypocrite which perisheth.' God's word is the only standard. To this must each man's state be referred. He requires of all real holiness, 'out of a pure heart, and good conscience, and faith unfeigned.' (1 *Tim.* i. 5.) And to this, it is evident, few can make any just pretensions. '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.' (1 *Cor.* vi. 9.) Now were but these alone excluded, (and excluded they must be, as God is true) I fear the remainder who walk not in any of these things will be but few. More especially if we add unto them, 'all who walk in hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, revelings and such like : ' (*Gal.* v. 20.) we shall still reduce the number less. But there are other express exclusions from God set upon 'the fearful and unbelieving and abominable, and all liars.' (*Rev.* xxi. 8.) Nor are they less removed from him, 'who are lovers of their own selves, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.' (2 *Tim.* iii. 4.) In short, the profaners of God's sabbath, the dishonourers of his name, the neglectors of his worship,' (*Exod.* xx. 7—10.) come under the same condemnation. Nor must we forget that numerous generation, 'who are pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their filthiness ;' (*Prov.* xxx. 12.) who have the form of godliness, but deny the power of it.'

(2 *Tim.* iii. 5.) I might add, lastly, the unfaithful to their convictions, those 'who love the praise of men more than the praise of God;' (*John* xii 43.) those 'who put their trust in man, and their heart departeth from the Lord.' (*Jer.* xvii. 5.) The lukewarm 'neither hot nor cold,' (*Rev.* iii. 16.) that halt between God and Baal; and every man who hath not learned 'to deny himself, to take up his cross and follow Christ,' (*Matt.* x. 38.) in all that holy conversation and godliness which you have heard described. And will not the conclusion from these premises be, that they are 'few which shall be saved?' (*Luke* xiii. 23.) A remnant, indeed, like that in the ark, or those plucked out of Sodom.

Let no man be offended at this truth, and attend to the infidel reasonings of his corrupt heart about unpromised mercy; but simply regard these express scriptures. They are God's word. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle of his word shall never pass away until the whole be fulfilled.' (*Matt.* xxiv. 35.) There are no secret exceptions. 'God cannot alter the thing which is gone out of his mouth.' [*Psal.* lxxxix. 34.] He must deny himself, if any soul, continuing and dying in any of these things, be ever finally saved. But 'God cannot lie.' (*Titus* i. 2.) 'His truth abideth for ever in heaven.' (*Psal.* cxix. 89.) The unholy must be eternally unhappy. 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' What an awakening admonition!

2. What reason then hath every man to look well to his heart? 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' (*Gal.* vi. 7.) It is requisite that we strive for the mastery, that we 'press to-

wards the mark,' that we 'be temperate in all things,' that 'we work out our salvation with fear and trembling,' that we 'bring forth daily fruits meet for repentance, and make our profiting appear,' if we mean to come into the presence of the most High and most Holy. It is not a hasty resolution, a warm impression, a partial reformation, a round of duties, or a name of godliness, which will bring us thither. 'God requireth truth in our inward parts;' (*Psal.* li. 6.) he calls for our heart; [*Prov.* xxiii. 26.] and that cheerful, universal, abiding continuance in well-doing, which shews 'his service to be perfect freedom;' and obedience our choice and delight.

And here, if we are sincere with God, we shall have abundant cause to humble ourselves, 'to strengthen the things which remain,' to examine ourselves closely, to watch against 'a deceitful and desperately wicked heart,' and to be looking up for continual supplies of grace, to 'perfect in us that which is lacking,' and to finish the new creation, until the Lord of our life 'shall present us before the presence of his glory, with exceeding great joy, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, in perfect conformity to his own blessed image.'

3. As many as have any attainments in Holiness should, with humble acknowledgments of his grace to whom they are indebted for all, walk by the same rule, and mind the same things. (*Phil.* iii. 16.) 'For we have not yet attained, or are already perfect.' (*Phil.* iii. 12.)

Whilst we are on our pilgrimage, two things especially we need to abound in, humility and zeal.

First, Humility. 'For what have we that we have not received? and if we have received it, why should we glory as though we had not re-

ceived it ?' [1 Cor. iv. 7.] Whatever we are, 'it is by the grace of God we are what we are. [1 Cor. xv. 10.] We are his workmanship.' The whole is from him, by him, and must be ascribed to him. Besides, the remainders of our old nature afford us daily cause of abasement before God, and call upon us to say continually, even in our highest attainments, 'I am nothing.'

Secondly, Zeal. For when holiness is the aim, we cannot be too zealously affected. We need not fear excess here. We cannot love God too much, or serve him beyond the bounds of duty. An unbounded field is before us. 'God's commandments are exceeding broad.' [Psal. cxix. 96.] Blessed are they who keep them with their whole heart, [Psal. cxix. 2.] and labour for this as the 'one thing needful,' that every hour they advance towards the kingdom, they may grow into a greater meetness for it ; until all their fervent effectual prayers and labours are answered, 'the kingdom comes ;' and perfect holiness and perfect happiness, in God and with God, become their everlasting portion.

SERMON XIII.

THE MEANS OF HOLINESS.

2 PETER I. 10.

GIVE DILIGENCE TO MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.

I HAVE been endeavouring to set before you the nature, and to convince you of the necessity of holiness. A task in these days the more needful, when by some persons vice is called virtue; when in others Satan is 'transformed into an angel of light;' and when most people act as if indeed 'heaven was open for all men,' and 'the gate no longer strait or the way narrow.— Beware that ye also be not led away by the error of the wicked. (2 *Pet.* iii. 17.) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.' (*Col.* iii. 16.) Bring every assertion to be proved thereby; every doctrine to its test; every prescription for your conduct to its commands. 'If any speak not according to this rule there is no light in them.' (*Isa.* viii. 20.) You will then find that the great end God proposes is, 'that the man of God should be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work;' (2 *Tim.* iii. 17.) and you will receive kindly the exhortation and set diligently about the practice of his commandments; and earnestly endeavour to 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; [*Phil.* ii. 12.] giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' (2 *Pet.* i. 10.) The means and the end are

inseparably connected. Though 'God worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, [*Phil.* ii. 13.] and every good and every perfect gift cometh from above;' [*James* i. 17.] yet must we 'be workers together with God.' He does not act upon us as machines, but as men stirs us up to labour, strive, wrestle, press towards the mark. Our diligence must not be the less, because it is his power alone which can strengthen our weakness; but the greater, because he will give more grace to those who improve the measure he hath bestowed on them. 'Be strong therefore in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' [*Eph.* vi. 10.] God hath himself pointed out the way wherein we should go, and promised his blessing upon the diligent use of the means. Our business therefore is to be found waiting upon God in his instituted way. And so doing we shall not fail to 'grow in grace, through the more abundant supply of the Spirit of Christ ministered unto us,' [*Phil.* i. 19.]

Whoever then would increase in holiness, and be growing up into his image in all things, 'who is our head, even Christ,' [*Eph.* iv. 15.] must be found in the use of the following means of grace; namely, diligent attention to God's word, meditation upon it, examination by it, prayer, mutual communication, and solemn covenanting with Christ at his table.

First. A chief means of grace is the word of God heard or read. Its promises must constrain us, its threatenings over-awe us, its commands direct, its prohibitions restrain us. But this effect cannot be produced farther than our hearts are attentive to it. If then we know not the scriptures, we must err from the way, and our conduct be guided by other maxims than the truth of God. And this is indeed the ground of

all our sin and misery, that we have left the oracles of divine revelation, to follow the devices of our corrupted hearts. 'To the word therefore, and to the testimony. Search the scriptures.' (*John* v. 39.) 'This is the way to eternal life — And this must be done diligently. The matters they contain are infinitely important to us, and deserve our deepest attention. When you read the scriptures therefore, you must 'seek for the truth as for silver, and search for it as for hid treasures.' (*Prov.* ii. 4.) Your eyes 'must prevent the night-watches' to be occupied in the blessed work; that you may know God's will and walk in it. You should do it thoroughly. — 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God.' — From the Alpha to the Omega we are to consider the precious truths, as all of them 'profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. (*2 Tim.* iii. 16) And to compare spiritual things with spiritual.' (*1 Cor.* ii. 13.) And this daily. The word of God must be our continual study. 'O how I love thy law, all the day long is my study in it.' (*Psal.* cxix. 97.) For this the Bereans were so highly commended, that 'they searched the scriptures daily.' (*Acts* xvii. 11.) Indeed what is so proper, what so needful for us as this, that we should begin our days with inquiring at God's mouth, and conclude them with his counsel? For 'when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee.' (*Prov.* vi. 22.) Add also, seriously. The matter is weighty; eternity depends upon it. It is God's voice is heard. — Let the heart stand in awe of him. Mr. Boyle had so great a reverence for God's word, that he used to read it upon his knees. We should at least feel a temper as deeply serious as that posture implied; and withal humbly. 'Speak, Lord,

for thy servant heareth,' must be our language. Not caviling, but obeying; not curious, but submissive: then shall we find the power of God present in his word, and its effects upon our hearts weighty and influential. We shall daily be cast into its mould; and God's holy word will produce holy tempers in us.

Secondly. Let your meditations thereon be sweet and frequent, if you would grow thereby. It is having the truth rooted in our hearts, (as the seed covered up fixes in the ground) that makes it bring forth fruit unto holiness. Many hearers of the word, 'like men beholding their natural face in the glass, go away straight and forget what manner of persons they were.' (*James* i. 24.) But we are charged 'to keep these words in our hearts, to talk of them when we sit in our house, and when we walk by the way, and when we lie down, and when we rise up.' (*Deut.* vi. 7.) It is by 'setting God in his word always before us, that we shall not be moved.' It is for want of this that the devil so often cometh and taketh the word, 'like the seed which fell by the way side, (*Matt.* xiii. 4.) out of our hearts.' Treasure up the truths you read and hear. Go forth with this for your meditation through the day. See whether you can say with the Prophet, 'Thy words were found by me, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.' (*Jer.* xv. 16.) What digestion is to our food, that is meditation to the word; it makes it incorporate into our substance, and minister nourishment, strength and consolation to us.

Thirdly, Call your heart often to deep and serious examination by it. 'Prove your own-selves, know your own-selves,' (*2 Cor.* xiii. 5.) is the apostolic injunction, and most highly ne-

ecessary if you would 'increase with the increase of God.' Our corrupt and deceitful hearts have need of the most jealous eye over them, lest they turn aside from the path of holiness. We thus discover the beginnings of sin, and detect the insinuations of error ; and ' by searching and trying our ways we return unto the Lord.' (*Lam.* iii. 40.) Hereby we see where our hearts are weakest, that we may put an especial guard on that side ; what graces we most need to exercise ; what are the dangers of our place, temper and stations ; what ' the sins that most easily beset us,' and what requests we have particularly to make unto him, ' out of whose fulness we may receive power and grace.'

This business should be done at least once in the day, and the most suitable time is at even, when we review the transactions that have past. We should blame the merchant or considerable tradesman, whose negligence deferred to keep account daily of his profit and loss : nor could we think, without fair and regular reckonings, his business likely to flourish. No more can our souls grow in grace, without the like diligence in our spiritual concerns ; which, as they are of so much greater moment to us, deserve so much greater inspection and inquiry into them. I cannot wonder that many professors so decline, ' that grey hairs are upon them and they know it not,' (*Hosea* vii. 9.) when they are so negligent about this matter, so superficial in their inquiries about their progress, and so easily satisfied with themselves, though their profiting appeareth not. Yea, when most they need to look into themselves for humiliation and conviction, like men in debt, they decline the search, because they are afraid to know the reality of their state. It is a bad sign, when we want not to

go to the bottom of our hearts, to know the very truth of our case, that we may present it before the Lord. Like the spreading cancer, such declensions threaten apostacy throughout. '*Principiis obsta ; Resist the beginnings :*' is a maxim as applicable to our souls as to our bodies. Whilst they will be most alive to God, and walk nearest with him, who bring their hearts closest to be tried by his word, and most carefully remark every deviation from it.

Fourthly, Prayer is an especial means of growing in holiness. I may call it indeed the chief. It is, as it were, the key of heaven which unlocks the treasures of grace. All holiness is derived from the Spirit of God. This spirit is promised 'to those that ask.' [*Luke xi. 13.*] Our fruit therefore unto holiness being according to the measure of the grace bestowed upon us, it will chiefly depend on the diligence of our application to him, who hath the fulness of it to bestow.

Prayer is the desire of the heart after God. It arises from a sense of want, acts in dependence on the promise, and expects an answer according to its necessities. 'For they who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled.' [*Matt. v. 6.*] Holiness of heart and life is prayer carried into practice. As we are diligent in the one, we shall find correspondent effects in the other. The soul that goes continually to the throne of grace, and lives through the day in the spirit of prayer and supplication, cannot but feel a determination of heart against sin ; a labour 'to perfect holiness in the fear of God,' and such a sense of the divine presence as is at once restraining and transforming.

Whoever hath read the histories of the holiest men will find them to be remarked, as peculiarly

men of prayer. Whilst on the other hand, no sooner doth any man begin to turn back, than his first declensions are usually most visible in his *closet* ; until, the dominion of sin returning, prayer is totally laid aside. For if prayer does not make us leave sin, sin will soon make us leave prayer. At least if the form be observed, all the power of prayer will be gone. The lips and not the heart will be found speaking before God.

Our blessed Lord himself, as man, thus obtained the power of submitting wholly to his father's will. He 'was heard, when with strong crying and tears he made supplications.' [*Heb.* v. 7.] And if He was thus made perfect and obtained grace, how much more have we need to redouble our requests, and seek herein especially to copy his example ?

Prayer is of various kinds, public, family and private. He who would have his fruit unto holiness must abound in all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watch thereunto with all perseverance.' [*Ephes.* vi. 18.] Public worship is a most blessed exercise, and most influential on the practice of holiness. They who heartily join in it, will necessarily feel their hearts quickened to every good word and work, towards those with whom they have united their voices in these solemn exercises. 'Where two or three only have consented together to ask any thing,' God hath assured us he will give it. [*Matt.* xviii. 19.] And how much more may we be confident, that our mutual supplications and intercessions shall find an answer of peace, when in the great congregation, with one mind and one mouth, we consent to pour out our desires before the throne of grace ? Family worship is also most requisite in order to holiness. As the Prophet, di-

rected by the Spirit, calls upon God 'to pour out his fury upon the families which call not on his name : ' [*Jer. x. 25.*] so we may be assured that God's peculiar blessing will rest upon the houses where his honour dwelleth. What can be imagined so effectual to restrain ourselves and all under our roof from offending ? What so powerful to quicken our concern about pleasing and serving the Lord, as the sense of his nearness to us, and our dependence upon him ? And what will so effectually tend to beget this, as a constant, open joint-acknowledgment of his goodness, and supplication for his grace ? What can lay upon ourselves more striking obligations to go in and out before our households, examples of faith and godliness, than the remembrance of our prayers with them and for them ? And what so likely to be influential on their hearts, as joining with us in ardent petitions for grace, hearing their case importunately spread before God, and the solemn engagement repeated, 'that we and our house will serve the Lord ? ' [*Joshua xxiv. 15.*] Let the masters of prayerless families tremble. Ungodliness must be in their dwellings. Their children's, their servants' blood, as well as their own, is upon their heads. But especially must private prayer be exercised. We 'must speak to our father which is in secret ; ' (*Matt. vi. 6.*) must speak to him with the confidence and humble freedom of children ; telling him the very secrets of our souls, humbling our hearts for our very thoughts before him, and beseeching him, that knoweth what we need, to supply abundantly our wants in Jesus Christ. And this must be done with that importunity and perseverance which our Lord recommends by the parable of the unjust judge, and enjoins, when he bids us 'always pray and not faint.'

How often we should be in secret prayer, it is impossible to determine. Every man's circumstances must be considered, and the peculiar situation he is in. David prayed 'seven times a day; (*Psal.* cxix. 164.) Daniel thrice.' [*Dan.* vi. 10.) But at least morning and evening are naturally suggested unto as the most proper seasons, that we may begin and end the day with God. Whilst throughout the day, whoever are panting after nearness to and communion with God, will send forth many an ardent desire from their hearts in the intervals of leisure; and oftentimes in the midst of business, company or labour, a warm ejaculation will dart upwards, that in silence pierces the clouds, and 'ascends as incense before the throne.' In this way we may be assured the works of holiness will advance in our hearts. And when we have endured a little while, all our prayers shall be changed into praises.

Fifthly, To prayer I add mutual converse, as very helpful to the work of grace. As we are travelling the same road, the experience of others will be the more useful to us. We have the same enemies, the same cause, the same corruptions, the same path of duty to follow, and the same hope of glory in the end: and to secure this it is our wisdom to consult together; 'in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.' [*Prov.* xi. 14.] We shall need therefore speak often one to another; whether to encourage the feeble-minded, warn the unruly, admonish the rash, or counsel the distressed; and shall find the greatest profit by 'confessing our faults one to another, as well as by praying for each other.' In all other things frequent conversation is thought most useful to accomplish any species of instruction, and why not here also? Indeed we shall

know little of the way to heaven, nor shall we walk in it, if we satisfy ourselves, as the many do, with hearing, it may be, a sermon on a Sunday. We must have these great truths in our mouths on other days, delight to speak of our eternal concerns, and count the blessings of the communion of saints, in all the branches of it, among our chief enjoyments upon earth. It is impossible for any minister in the world to take the full and particular care of each individual of his flock : his work is rather ‘ to preach the word.’ It is every man’s business ‘ to exhort his brother daily.’ [*Heb.* iii. 13.] And wherever there is any spiritual life among us, there will necessarily arise a desire to converse together about the things of God ; to ‘ watch over one another with a godly jealousy ;’ [*2 Cor.* xi. 2.] to open our hearts freely ; to speak our suspicions ; to rebuke with freedom and tenderness, and to ‘ build up each other in our most holy faith.’ The practice of true holiness is never so conspicuous as where this genuine simplicity of heart, and enlarged charity to the brethren, shew themselves by a free and heart searching conversation together. Self-deceit is then more detected, the principles more sifted, mistakes discovered, backslidings reprov’d, and if a man sin, he is ‘ restored in the spirit of meekness.’ If I was to ascribe the lukewarm and unornamental walk of those who make a profession of religion to any one cause, perhaps it is as much owing to this as any, that they want the true simplicity of heart which would lead them to more experimental conversation ; instead of that trifling, general, unedifying discourse which usually prevails amongst them : A religious kind of gossiping, and justly censured by those who are without, as a prying into other’s faults, in-

stead of discovering and amending their own.

Sixthly, I would conclude with recommending a serious and devout attendance at the Lord's table. Nothing can have a more direct tendency to quicken us in the good ways of the Lord, than that ordinance in which our Saviour makes all his love to pass before us. What can kindle in our hearts such a flame of love, so greatly confirm our faith, enliven our zeal, increase our hatred of sin, or urge us to copy his example, as when we are remembering the Lord's death, when we are commemorating his blood-shedding for us, reflect upon the evil of sin, and see that holy Lamb of God leading the way before us in the path of righteousness? Hither therefore should we often repair, to renew our solemn surrender of ourselves to him, and to receive the pledges of his everlasting love to us. Whenever we have opportunity with delight approaching his table, and eating and drinking his body and blood, with true discernment, to the strengthening and refreshing our souls. This will continually serve to bind our hearts in bonds of nearer union to our holy Head, and oblige us to walk worthy these solemn engagements 'in all holy conversation and godliness; adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour;' and convincing the world, that the religion of Jesus hath a power and efficacy to cast the whole man into its mould: not merely to distinguish us from others by a christian name, but by a divine nature: so that we become 'one with him, and he with us.'

Happy are they who in these things seek daily to abide and abound. They cannot fail of success. Holiness thus will become more our habit and disposition; 'continually exercising ourselves unto godliness,' we shall strengthen ourselves day by day mightily; until all our ene-

mies being put under our feet, our warfare will be finally ended, and we shall go where there is no more corruption, no more sin, no more enemies, no more danger, no more need of wrestling, watching, praying, labouring ; but that which is perfect, being come, our work of holiness will be accomplished, and an eternity of happiness shall receive us. There we shall see God ; shall be with him, and be like him, and 'enter into that rest,' which no tongue can describe nor heart conceive, nobly called in our liturgy, "our final consummation in bliss, both in body and soul, in his eternal glory.'

I have only to add my ardent prayers and wishes, that every one of you may be using these means, that you may come to this happy end. And if but one soul only be influenced thereby, I shall think all my pains amply repaid, when I shall meet you in the great day of our Redeemer, and this labour of love, among others be laid at his feet, to your joy, as well as my own. May his grace bless what his grace hath helped me to speak, and to Him shall all the praise and glory be ascribed for ever and ever.

SERMON XIV.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

PROVERBS XII. 28.

IN THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS LIFE, AND IN THE
PATH-WAY THEREOF THERE IS NO DEATH.

IT is a common and dangerous prejudice which is entertained against the ways of true religion, that they are dull, forbidding and melancholy: and hence young people especially are discouraged by the gloomy prospect; and regard a life of holiness as obliging them to part with every present enjoyment for austerities and mortifications, little less than a cell and sackcloth. And perhaps the mistakes of some professors of godliness have not a little contributed to confirm these prejudices: who, whilst they have substituted moroseness for gravity, and reckoned a downcast look and darkened brow the proper index of a serious mind, have put fresh stumbling-blocks in the way of those who judge chiefly by appearances. But there is no real cause for this in the nature of the religion of Jesus. Just the contrary. As none enjoy so much inward peace and serenity, none can have so much cause for cheerfulness as they who, 'walking humbly with God, (*Micah* vi. 8.) seek in the first place his kingdom and righteousness.' (*Matt.* vi. 33.) The sons of God, like Isaac, are truly 'sons of laughter;' not the boisterous mirth of fools, or the intemperate sallies of wantonness, but an habitual

composure and delightful calm, are the privileges of the souls of those who have an interest in everlasting promises, and 'are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.' (2 Cor. vi. 18.) It is the interest indeed of the grand enemy of souls to misrepresent the paths of duty, to frighten us from pursuing them by lying suggestions; and, like the spies who went up to view the promised Canaan, to 'bring an evil report on the good land:' (Numb. xiii. 32.) thus he discourages the hearts of those who are willing to enter. But 'let no man's heart fail:' (1 Sam. xvii. 32.) can it be imagined that God ever intended religion should lessen our happiness below? and that he should leave to a 'world lying in wickedness,' enjoyments greater than his own children possess? 'that be far from him.' He hath provided for them upon earth the chief portion, and intends the comforts of their faithful service in this life shall be the foretastes of their eternal blessedness in a better. For 'in the way of righteousness,' and in this alone, 'is life,' the truly happy life; and 'in the path way thereof,' to all who abide in it, 'there is no death;' but glory, honour and immortality, await them in the mansions of bliss above.

To enter more explicitly into the proof of this, I would observe, that happiness is to be obtained either from the gratifications of sense, and the enjoyments of the world, or from the denial of these in a life of faith and holiness: which two are contrary the one to the other; and as far as the soul is engaged in the pursuit of the one, it will despise or disrelish the other. Now if it can be proved that the world, and the things of it cannot afford us the happiness we want, and that the service of the Lord, and the consciousness of his favour, can 'give us ex-

ceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think; (*Ephes.* iii. 20.) then surely we shall act as foolishly as sinfully, to seek 'from broken cisterns, which can hold no water,' (*Jer.* ii. 13.) those draughts of happiness, which the living waters that flow from the rock Christ can only minister to the soul.

The world promises happiness from three great sources; Pleasure, Riches, and Honour. But neither of these fulfil their promises to us either in life or death. The 'god of this world, who was a liar from the beginning,' (*John* viii. 44.) doth ever prove so to those who, deceived by his offers, pursue as their happiness 'the things which are seen and temporal, instead of the things which are not seen and are eternal.' (*2 Cor.* iv. 18.)

I. The world promises us happiness from the enjoyment of Pleasure. Decked in the attire of fashion, this smiling Delilah 'sitteth in the high places of the city;' and with inviting tongue deludes the young and thoughtless into her snare, with assurances of every bliss. 'I have perfumed my bed with myrrh and cinnamon; come, let us take our fill of love until the morning, let us solace ourselves with loves.' (*Prov.* vii. 18.) But how are these promises fulfilled? Scripture and experience will quickly determine.

Who of all men under the sun ever more diligently sought happiness from indulgence than Solomon? or who had such opportunities of boundless gratification? A king, absolute in his government, flowing with abundance, blest with the most refined taste, and endued with the tenderest sensibility: see him eager in the pursuit, and determined to spare no pains or cost to taste the sweetest draughts of that Circean cup. 'I said in my heart, go to now, I will prove thee

with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure.' (*Eccles.* ii. 1.) Straight pleasure and mirth rang through his palaces; luxury crowned the board, wine sparkled in the flowing bowl, harmony charmed the ear, and passion rioted in the arms of beauty: thus for a while the court of Comus was in Zion. I withheld not, 'says Solomon, my heart from any joy.' (*Eccles.* ii. 10.) But after trial did it recommend the experiment? No; 'Behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it?' (*Eccles.* ii. 2.) These poor unsatisfying delights entirely disappointed his appetite; an immortal soul could taste no real joy from the low gratifications of a beast, however refined.

And saith not every day's experience the same? Look into your own heart, and say, what happiness have all your pleasures brought you? Have you not ever been disappointed in their possession, and grasped a shadow where you thought to embrace a substance? Your heart hath beat high in the prospect of some delightful scene; but when it came, it palled upon the taste; was rather tiresome than pleasing, and disgusted more than it delighted you. And in an hour of retirement, when reflection returned, and the delusions of imagination gave way to the just remonstrances of conscience; how sensibly and painfully have you felt, that you chased a phantom of happiness, which proved to be real 'vanity and vexation of spirit?' You beat the dull round of pleasure, not so much for any real joy you tasted in it, as because you knew not how otherwise to employ yourself; and took refuge in this course of studied forgetfulness, to avoid the disagreeable task of looking inward, and to silence the secret discontent of an unsatisfied mind. The absence of God, the fountain of all

consolation, hath left a void which nothing but himself can fill.

This is all the happiness of the young, the gay, and the admired : yea, too often (shameful to tell) of those also, whose desires of pleasure have outlived their power of enjoyment ; and wrinkles and gray hairs proclaim their folly as great as their sin. And is it for this that religion is neglected, and all the pleasures of Christ's delightful service scorned and rejected !

But there are delights to be found in the ways of Christ which a pleasure-loving world ' knoweth not of. Not as the world giveth, says he, give I unto you.' (*John* xiv. 27.) No : his ' joy is such as strangers to him intermeddle not with ;' (*Prov.* xiv. 10.) it is a pleasure suited to the state of an immortal soul ; a pleasure arising from the sense of the favour and love of the ever-blessed God ; a pleasure which immediately flows from the service we are engaged in, and accompanies the soul in every reflection upon it ; a pleasure that rising within in the heart, bursts forth in streams of peace and joy, and continues increasing to eternity, ' as a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' (*John* iv. 14.) The earthly vanities you pursue, estrange your hearts farther from God than they are by nature. These carnal delights debase the soul, and forge new chains to keep you eternal prisoners under the bondage of corruption : for his servants ye are to whom ' you obey.' And how can there be pleasure in slavery, or happiness in chains ? But when you return to Christ as your portion, tired with the fruitless pursuits of the past, mourning over so much time abused, so many talents squandered, so much forgetfulness of God ; then you begin to enter into rest. Christ shews you in his blood the pur-

chase he hath made for you of present happiness and future glory : and invites you to come to 'fountains of living waters, instead of the broken cisterns' at which you have toiled so long in vain to draw. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.' (*Rom. v. 1.*) And these are among the first-fruits of the Spirit, which they who believe in him do receive, 'peace and joy.' (*Gal. v. 22.*) It is true, to a pleasure-loving soul, these, like objects seen by a jaundiced eye, are ever misrepresented. 'The way to them thro' the valley of humiliation looks forbidding ; and a life of self-denial and 'mortification of our members upon earth,' necessary to our continuance in his love, seems to promise nothing but wretchedness. But they who make the trial find the difference, and are ready to set their seal to God's truth, and to declare, that they have not been, as before, disappointed of their hopes. Each step taken in Christ's ways brings pleasantness and peace: 'The very mournings of the soul returning to its rest in him are delightful ; and none know the joy of the tears of penitence but those who drop them. Rough as the way appears, it is but as the gloomy avenue (not in itself destitute of pleasure) which opens to some delightful prospect : and these sweet sorrows are quickly followed by 'peace and joy in believing.' (*Rom. xv. 13.*) Nor for a time only, but all life through the prospect brightens, the pleasure is heightened. 'The intercourse of the believing soul with God in secret meditation ; the communion maintained with him in acts of prayer, and silent aspirations to him ; the growing conformity of our hearts to his image, who is 'glorious in holiness ;' the different joy that christian fellowship brings from any of the friendships of this world ; together with the reviving

hope of, and eager looking for, 'that glory which shall be revealed in us,' (*Rom. viii. 18.*) when from drinking of the streams below we shall go to drink at the fountain-head above; these are sources of solid, substantial, rational pleasures, as much superior to the poor joys of sense, as the mild sunshine and genial warmth of a long and temperate summer, exceed the suddenly expiring and crackling blaze of thorns.

II. The world proposes happiness to others in affluence. Money is counted 'the one thing needful:' Money is supposed to bring all the other blessings of this life with it. Under this persuasion, like the horse-leach's two daughters, the worldly mind cries, 'Give, give; (*Prov. xxx. 15.*) joining house to house, and field to field;' (*Isai. v. 8.*) and herein seeks its felicity. But of this it may be said, happiness is not here. The world cannot give it; its abundance usually removes us farther from it; will not permit us to know rest or peace. On principles of reason it should seem evident, that all the treasures upon earth can never satisfy a soul that is immortal; and scripture fully assures us of it. "A man's life (meaning the comfort of it) 'consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth.' (*Luke xii. 15.*) St. Paul, describing those who substitute gain for godliness, informs us, 'that they who will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition and destruction.' (*1 Tim. vi. 9.*) And our blessed Lord hath left us this awful declaration, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' (*Matt. xix. 24.*) Surely then such acquisitions

are little suited to administer the joy they promise. And whose experience doth not witness it? we foolishly call the rich happy. But could we see their anxious care, their inward restlessness, the misery of desires delayed or disappointed, which sometimes attends even the most fortunate; could we know their constant fears of losing, and thirst for more, which suffers them not to enjoy their present gains; could we follow one 'making haste to be rich,' through all his toils and labours, his weary days and sleepless nights, and all his various vexations; we should be fully convinced of the truth of this, that he who increaseth riches increaseth sorrow. I may appeal to every man's heart who hath sought happiness from this quarter, if this hath not been his case. You promised yourself you should by and by be happy, when the other thousand was added to your stock, or the next purchase enlarged your estate: you had your wish, and yet you still wanted; something was lacking. You proposed new additions, and waited for your happiness again. But a new thirst urged you again to new toils: and if the time should ever come that you shall think you have enough, and, like the rich man in the gospel, 'begin to pull down your barns and build greater; and are ready to say to your soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry:' (*Luke xii. 18.*) then expect the final disappointment, in that alarming message, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.' (*Luke xii. 20.*)

Such is all the happiness of those who love this present world, and 'trust in uncertain riches more than in the living God.' (*1 Tim. vi. 17.*)

But hath not Christ something more satisfying to bestow; something more durable to give to

those who seek their happiness in him? Yes, verily. 'I counsel thee, says he, to buy of me fine gold, that thou mayst be rich.' (*Rev.* iii. 18.) Christ is a portion, adequate to the boundless desires of the soul; and 'the unsearchable riches of his grace' make the possessor at once affluent and happy. What are beds of sapphires, or rocks of diamonds, compared with that blood which sprinkles us from our sins; the pardon of the least of which the universe cannot purchase? Is not the gift of faith 'more precious than gold which is tried in the fire?' (*1 Peter* i. 7.) and every divine temper better than 'clothing of wrought gold?' These are present possessions, more substantial goods than the treasures of both the Indies. Yet 'here is not our abiding city:' this is not our inheritance, our home. We look for 'an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, which fadeth not away. (*1 Peter* i. 4.) Treasures laid up for us in a kingdom, where moth doth not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. (*Matt.* vi. 20.) A mansion prepared for us in the city of our God; a city, whose streets are gold, whose gates are pearl, and whose foundations are precious stones.' (*Rev.* xxi. 10—19.) The moment therefore we begin to find our All in Christ, tormenting care and restless anxiety no longer disturb our repose: we 'rise up in peace, for the Lord sustaineth us;' we lie down without a fear of losing what we have laid up with him 'who is able to keep that good thing we have committed to him against that day.' (*2 Tim.* i. 12.) Thus we can always say, with the blessed Apostle, 'I possess all things, and abound.' (*Phil.* iv. 18.) We have learnt that great lesson, 'in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content; (*Phil.* iv. 11.)

and find that godliness with contentment is great gain.' [1 *Tim.* vi. 6.]

Let any man compare this state of a soul walking in the way of righteousness with the former ; and say, if such an one hath not chosen the better part. And this is not an ideal character : it is, blessed be God ! the experience of thousands, who every day ' go on their way rejoicing ;' and of many too, who, under the severest pressures of poverty and want, find in Jesus Christ that hid treasure [*Matt.* xiii. 44.] they would not exchange for ' thousands of gold and silver. For God hath chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to those that love him.' [*James* ii. 5.] It is true, the present comfort which the riches of Christ administer above the vain fashion of a world which ' perisheth in the using,' may hardly be made evident to the worldly-minded, ' the god of this world having blinded their eyes ;' [2 *Cor.* iv. 4.] yet it is experimentally known by those who possess it ; and rejoiced in, as the most enduring substance, the most satisfying reality.

III. The world seeks to ensnare men's souls, and promises them happiness in the possession of honor. And indeed, to be distinguished in the world, treated with respect, spoken of with admiration, caressed by superiors, and imitated and admired by equals as a pattern : these are things exceeding pleasing to the heart of a natural man, and engage many far above the vanities of pleasure or the scordidness of gain. Yet doth the desire of worldly esteem remove the soul as much from true happiness as either of the former. The enjoyment arising from the honour which cometh from man stands continually on a precarious foundation ; it totters before every blast of dis-

respect, and ever rumour of malevolence. Even here below, like 'grass on the house-top, it often withereth before it is plucked up.' For what can stand before envy? The hopes of men, like bubbles in the air, usually burst as they expand. The labours of ambition are disappointed, the pride of honour mortified, the idol of reputation broken to pieces, and the friendships of the world generally faithless. Would a man who hath made this his road to happiness but reflect, he would be obliged to confess, that he had been torturing himself to conform to the humours and fashions of the world, seeking a phantom of reputation light as a shadow, grasping after a distinction vain and insignificant, making his happiness depend on the beck or breath of a worm like himself, and storing up for himself many sorrows, which in the present chagrin he must be often exposed to, or (if he should be happily brought to a sense of this folly and sin) in breaking those bands of esteem, and getting rid of the connections which were before the business and desire of his life. Indeed, it is not in man to create a happiness from himself; it is not in man to communicate it to others. It were absurd indeed to suppose, that God would suffer any of his creatures to enjoy a happiness independent of himself. And more so, that sinful men, whom misery follows as their shadow, should be able thus to make each other happy.

But what shall we say when we consider farther, what God hath declared of such lovers of human honour: 'Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm. [*Jer.* xvii. 5.] The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God. (*James* iv. 4.) How can you believe who seek honour one of another? (*John*

v. 44.) If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. (*Gal. i. 10.*) Go then, and with these express declarations of God against you, dare to be happy. O wretched happiness of the world, that hath the curse of God resting upon it for ever.

But in the ways of righteousness is true happiness arising from true honour, 'the honour which cometh from God.' An honour that depends not on the breath of man to give or take away. An honour the highest any mortal is capable of conceiving or enjoying. 'Behold, says St. John, what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God.' (*1 John iii. 1.*) What dignity like this, to be 'the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ?' (*Rom. viii. 17.*) The highest pinnacle of human glory is infinitely more beneath it, than earth is distant from the remotest star. What connections can be so great and honourable as 'fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ?' (*1 John i. 3.*) No favour here will be denied us. 'Ask, and ye shall receive.' (*John xvi. 24.*) For he 'hath never said to any of the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain.' (*Isai. xlv. 19.*) What honour can be equal to that which the God of glory bestows on his favourite children? 'Those that honour me I will honour.' (*1 Sam. ii. 30.*) Or what regard so desirable as his? 'If a man keep my commandments, my Father and I will love him, and come unto him, and make our abode with him.' (*John xiv. 23.*) And their 'favour is better than the life itself.' (*Psal. lxxiii. 3.*) A favour more enduring than the foundations of the earth; not like the precarious esteem of man, but arising from the everlasting love and faithfulness of God. A favour, which secures our

happiness when all below threatens to destroy it. A favour, that makes the possessor of it superior to all human disgrace, unmoved at reproach, satisfied under oppression, and welcoming the cross of Christ with all its ignominy. A due sense of the nature of this favour it was which wrought in Moses to 'count the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; (*Heb.* xi. 26.) greater honor than to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.' (*Heb.* xi. 24.) This made the disciples of Jesus come from stripes and imprisonment, 'rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name sake.' (*Acts* v. 41.) Now surely these must be paths of true happiness, that can thus make the soul to cease from man, to rejoice in tribulation, to enjoy itself independent of the world; honoured of God when most despised of man, and peaceful and easy, even when 'cast out as the filth and offscouring of all things.'

Thus here below, the soul which makes Christ its portion, his word its guide, his will its pleasure, his grace its riches, his honour its ambition, his service its delight, 'holds on its way and waxes stronger and stronger;' enjoying the present sense of the divine favour, and happy in the assured hope of the 'glory, honour and immortality prepared for him in heaven. (*Rom.* ii. 7.)

The happiness of the way of righteousness is yet more convincingly felt when death comes to put a final period to this mortal scene. This awful hour, that strips off the tinsel coverings of folly, stamps vanity on all beneath the sun, and shews the insignificance of time, and the importance of eternity, displays peculiarly the delights of the religion of Jesus. What can the

world in that day offer its foolish votaries? Will a party of pleasure suit the chamber of disease? or the songs of folly any more delight the ear that listens with restless impatience to the striking hour? What music will harmonize with dying groans? or what enjoyment can the brilliant or brocade afford, when the shroud is ready to supplant them? Will the sparkling bowl revive any longer, when the parched tongue begins to falter? or beauty kindle the unhallowed fire when death sits on the eye-lids, and chilling coldness begins to creep over the heart? Alas! too late! 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' (*Eccles. i. 2.*) is now seen in characters too legible to be overlooked. The retrospect on a life spent in pleasure, in plays, and operas, and drums, and routs, and balls, and cards, and idle visitings, or those lower scenes of vanity which equally engage the vulgar mind; even these (supposing we are free from the grosser pollutions of the world) will fill the soul with pangs of remorse and foreboding fears. Then shall we know what we have lost by neglecting Jesus and the ways of righteousness; and be made to feel, what before we would not attend to, that these were not the paths of real pleasure; were miserable comforts; unable to abide the test of a dying hour. 'Ah pleasure, pleasure, (will such an one say) thou sorceress! thou destroyer of my soul! Thou once smiledst as with the charms of innocence, now I feel thee 'sting as a viper.' (*Prov. xxiii. 32.*) 'Where are thy promises of delight? Fool that I was to believe thee; and for the unsatisfying gratifications of sense, to reject the real joy which Jesus, that neglected Saviour, offered to give me at this hour. Now I am comfortless; I have trifled away my golden sands; I have forgotten God, and he hath forsaken me. How dearly have I

bought my vanities? 'The pleasures of sin were but momentary, but the pains of it are eternal.' Such reflections will often arise, and close the scene of vanity. And the dying hour will extort those confessions of truth from the conscience, in spite of the cruel kindness of friends and physicians, labouring to amuse and divert from these racking thoughts the soul which stands upon the verge of eternity.

But will riches bear that day's trial better? Ah! they who have 'put in the fine gold their confidence,' will find that 'it profits not in a day of wrath.' (*Prov. xi. 4.*) When death lifts his arm, and, swift as lightning, his winged messengers, disease and pain, enter the heart, vain is the hoarded treasure. See that generally esteemed happy man, who trusted in riches, stretched upon the bed of languishing; his body is panting for breath; his throat is parched; his heart flutters; his eyes grow dim; restless he turns, and turns again; sleep hath forsook his eyelids, pain tortures him every moment, and life's silver cord is loosing. What joy now can riches bring? Surround his dying bed with bags of gold, will they alleviate the pains of the body, purchase a moment's respite from death, or silence the agonizing remonstrances of conscience? Alas! a golden god is a dumb idol, neither 'able to kill nor make alive.' Then, where earth and only earth hath been the pursuit, what a wretched state must it needs be, to be torn from all men counted happiness, to leave this dear world behind them for ever, to go—ah, whither? not to 'treasures laid up for them in heaven,' not to the place, 'where they have made themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;' but where that rich man went, who 'lift up his eyes in torment,' (*Luke xvi. 23.*) because in this life he had received

“his good things, and was rich in this world, but was not rich towards God.” (*Luke* xii. 21.)

Now this is the boasted happiness of numbers ; this the unutterable pleasure of dying worth so many thousand pounds. O the strange stupidity of man !

Nor will honour or esteem make our departure at all more satisfactory. What will it then avail you, that you have been caressed in the world when you are ready to leave it ? If you have made distinction your joy, how will your pride be mortified when you go to the grave and mix with common dust, where no crouded levee attends you, unless the worms which cover you ?

If learning hath been your idol, you will find no difference in death ; ‘the wise man dieth as the fool, and then all his thoughts perish.’ (*Eccl.* ii. 16.) Nor will any of your attainments in science, your skill in languages, the refinedness of your taste, or depth of your penetration, in that day profit you more than they did the great Grotius, who with his dying lips is reported to have complained, *Heu vitam perdidit operose nihil agente* ; ‘I have wasted my life in incessant toil, and have done nothing.’

What satisfaction will it be to you, that, after you are dead, your name should be engraved in the annals of fame, if it be not found ‘written in the Lamb’s book of life ?’ All your honours then will be as insignificant as the escutcheons on your coffin ; and stand you in no more stead either to comfort your poor soul, or to acquit you before the God ‘who is no respecter of persons.’ (*Acts* x. 34.)

Such thoughts perhaps may find their way to you at last, and cannot but produce self-condemnation and heart-rending anguish : proofs too pregnant, that the ways which brought you hith-

er, though strewed with flowers, were neither the paths of life below, nor of hope above.

But in that awful season, when all human comforts fail, the ways of righteousness, that were ever life and happiness, then peculiarly are endeared to us ; for ‘in the path-way thereof there is no death.’ The living image of God, the real christian sets like the western sun after its shining course, not lost in the ocean of the grave, but onward moves to illumine a new horizon.— His pleasures upon earth were all spiritual ; his chief joy was ‘a reconciled God in Christ,’ apprehended by faith as his covenant God, his everlasting portion : ‘for this God, he says, is my God for ever and ever, he shall be my guide even unto death.’ (*Psal.* xlviii. 14.) What wonder then, if, when he knows he is hasting to his blissful presence, ‘to see him as he is, (1 *John* iii. 2.) face to face,’ (1 *Cor.* xiii. 12.) his heart exults in the expectation ? His highest joys here on earth were still imperfect ; and, though infinitely superior to the poor joys of sense, unspeakably below what he hopes for in that kingdom, “where God hath prepared for those that love him such good things as pass man’s understanding.” (1 *Cor.* ii. 9.) He looks back on the past ; (for the reflection is pleasing) and whilst with thankfulness he traces the evidences of God’s love, adores the grace which he hath tasted ; disclaims all merit, yet confident “in hope of the glory which shall be revealed, expects eternal life the gift of God in Jesus Christ.” (*Rom.* vi. 23.) His present peaceful state amply repays all the labours of a life of righteousness ; and if, instead of the comforts which have followed him all the days of his pilgrimage, he had never tasted ease before, he would confess that the paths which led him to such happiness in the pangs of death,

must needs be paths of life and peace. Eternity now opens its unbounded prospect; "the crown of glory, which fadeth not away," shines before him. Angels surround his bed, ready to receive his departing soul, and bear it on their wings to the paradise of God. Hark! how they shout through the skies! "Lift up your heads, ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the Heir of glory may come in;" Jesus, the God of Angels, stands ready to welcome him to his bosom, and place him at his right hand on a throne of glory. 'They shall sit down with me, says he, on my throne, as I am set down with my Father on his throne.' (*Rev. iii. 21.*) Far therefore from trembling at the thoughts of parting from the body, as the pleasure-loving, the rich, the esteemed of this world, who have received their consolation; far from the desire to stay, or casting longing, lingering looks behind on a world he knows not how to part with; the believing soul stretches forth itself to heaven, looks upwards and forwards with delight, nor dreads the dark valley of the shadow of death; for there stand the golden gates of life and immortality. Big with the expectations of eternal glory, ravished with the foretastes of his mighty bliss, the soul burns with the very fervent desire it hath 'to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.' (*Phil. i. 23.*) And in a moment all its desires are accomplished; "Mortality is swallowed up of life." (*2 Cor. v. 4.*)

These are glorious and reviving truths; not the flights of fancy, but the declarations of God, and witnessed to by the death of thousands, who, with good old Simeon, have cried, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation:" (*Luke ii. 29.*) and triumphed in the jaws of death: "O death,

where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!" (1 *Cor.* xv. 55.)

Such are the issues of the paths of righteousness. Enough indeed to make the wicked say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his." (*Numb.* xxiii. 10.) But we must first be found in the way of holiness, if we would partake in the comforts of it. My brethren, if you approve the character as excellent, and would enjoy this blessedness, then "go and do likewise."

The Communicant's Spiritual Companion.

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INTRODUCTION.

NO Ordinance more peculiarly merits the regard of all professors of the religion of Jesus, than that which seals to them the blessings of the covenant of grace. The decay of vital and spiritual religion is evident in nothing more than the general neglect of these holy mysteries : and a revival of it can never be hoped for, till a serious concern about eternity awakens the soul to enquire about the nature of the gospel salvation, and the means of grace which lead to it : to effect this, is the design of the following pages. The careless professor will here find, I trust, alarming notices of his danger, and calls to consideration ; the ignorant, instruction ; the fearful, solution of their doubts ; the sincere, assistance ; the strong, increasing light, support and encouragement.

May the great Master of assemblies fix the following truths deeply and abidingly in the heart of every one who reads them.

CHAP. I.

Of the Nature of a Sacrament.

A SACRAMENT is defined by the church, in our excellent though concise Catechism, to be " the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same,

and as a pledge to assure us thereof." In this sacrament of the Lord's supper, the bread and wine are the outward signs, signifying that body and blood of Christ which is received into the heart by faith. The sign of the bread signifies Christ's broken body, the wine his blood shed for our sins; and the sign is mutual, for it represents also our dependence upon and esteem of him, whose body and blood under these signs we spiritually partake of.

The original meaning of the word sacrament signifies the oath by which the Roman soldiers bound themselves to their general. Thus it is our oath of allegiance, wherein we swear fidelity to Jesus the captain of our salvation; as they swore that they would never desert their colours in the day of battle, we also herein solemnly engage to maintain irreconcilable war against all the enemies of Christ without and within us, fighting manfully under his banner against sin, the world and the devil, and this at the peril of our eternal damnation. So that whenever we presume to come to Christ's table, without this war against sin maintained in our conversation, we become guilty of the body and blood of Christ; we incur the awful guilt of perjury; and "eat and drink our own damnation, not discerning the Lord's body."

This sacrament hath in scripture several particular names, which are expressive of the nature and design of it.

1. The Lord's supper. It is a spiritual repast for the soul, as meat is for the body; and as our bodies are refreshed by the bread and wine, so much more is the believing soul by the body and blood of Christ therein shewn forth. It is a chief banquet in the family of Christ, as supper was

among the ancients ; and therefore none of the children should be absent, unless upon very urgent occasions, lest they not only lose their food, but incur the displeasure of their Father for their neglect and irregularities. And it is emphatically stiled the Lord's supper, forasmuch as it was instituted by him at supper time, the same night in which he was betrayed, and then a constant memorial of it commanded by him ; and herein it is so highly distinguished from all common food, whether you consider the Master of the feast the Lord of glory, or the spiritual nourishment contained under these consecrated elements.

2. It is called the communion of the blood of Christ. It represents the intercourse there is between Christ the head, and the members of his body, called in the prayer after the communion, "the company of all faithful people." He communicates to them herein his favour and grace, his blood and righteousness ; and they communicate their thanksgiving, acceptance, love and gratitude : so that no persons can at all partake in it, till they have a living union with him, and are a part of his mystical body ; for then only the nourishment and support can be communicated to them. All who are not thus united to Christ, are as branches cut off and withered, and can receive no more benefit by coming to the Lord's table, than a dead body can from meat and drink. It is also a communion with the members themselves, as well as with their head Jesus Christ, *For we being many, are but one body* ; and we eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup, in token that we derive our life from one common fountain, that we are all actuated by the same spirit, and have as near an interest in, and affection for one a-

nother, as the members of the same body have, *For we are the body of Christ, and members in particular.* What a strange absurdity then would it be for an uncharitable soul, for one who is not influenced by brotherly love, to approach Christ's table, who would be there only as a mortified limb cut off from all living communication with the rest, and full of putrefaction?

3. It is called the New-Testament in Christ's blood. *Where a testament is, there must of necessity, saith St. Paul, be the death of the testator; for a testament or will is only in force after men are dead.* In the sacrament this testament is opened: the blood of Christ, here emblematically poured out of his heart, shews it is valid by his death: and all the legacies therein contained are to be applied for and paid down, according to the purport of the will of the deceased; and it is sealed with blood, as, on the renovation of the old covenant on Sinai, Moses sprinkled the blood of calves and goats with scarlet wool and hyssop on the book of the law, signifying thereby the sealing of the covenant; so here God condescends by this continual sign to seal to us visibly, for the assistance of our faith, all the blessings of the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus. Assuring us by such an ordinance of his own appointment, that this shall be, as the rainbow in the clouds, the sure sign to us that no deluge of wrath shall ever again sweep away those who come to him by Jesus Christ.

The design then of the Lord's supper may be partly seen from these names, and is fully expressed in one of our answers in the catechism; it was ordained "for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." To both of which points I shall speak a little.

1. It was ordained "for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ." Here we are taught to look upon him as bleeding for us upon the accursed tree. Here the Lamb of God, as if he had been newly slain, is in the ordinance set forth as crucified among us. Here the broken bread represents his mangled body, torn with scourgings and buffetings, pierced by the thorns, the nails and the spear. Here we may see his agonies, remember his mockery, reproach, insults, and all the complicated miseries, which made his sufferings the most afflictive that ever earth beheld; *Behold and see, all ye that pass by, was there any sorrow like unto his sorrow!* Here also we see his blood gushing as from his side, when the soldier's spear entered his heart, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. This his bitter death we are to remember; and that it was a sacrifice for our sins. As under the law, the sinner laid his hand upon the victim's head, in token of transferring the guilt of all his sins upon him; so here we must especially remember that the transaction before us is sacrificial and vicarious. That Christ gave *himself an offering for sin, made himself a curse for us*, as it is written, *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*; so that we are to look upon him herein as "taking away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and bearing the burden of your and my iniquities in particular. And in this sacrifice of the death of Christ many things are represented to us, as included in the transaction, and which we are called at the same time to remember. Such as,

1. The great love of Christ towards us sinners. Was ever love indeed like his? well may it be called *love which passeth knowledge*. Angels are lost in wonder, whilst they look into the mystery of redeeming love; and how then should we, to

whom this love is shewn, be astonished whilst we are called to partake of it? He died not for angels, but for men; and when? was it when we were faithful, affectionate and obedient, that we gained his heart to such an expensive manifestation of his love? no; when *we were enemies by wicked works*, when we were without strength or power to love or obey him, even then, *in due time did Christ die for the ungodly*; in us there was nothing but misery, we were lost in sin, wilfully lost by our disobedience, without power or inclination to seek for any favour at God's hands: and he wanted not our services, his glory would have been unsullied, if he had given us up to the fruit of our folly, and left us to our deserved ruin; neither can he receive any addition to his happiness by us, who is in himself all-sufficient, and in his nature infinitely happy, exalted above all blessing and praise. But, freely moved by the mere benignity of his heart, and out of pure compassion to us, Jesus offered to stand in our stead; and since to save us, he must be made man, his love stooped to every meanness of our condition, to the form of a servant, to the death of a slave. Love brought him down from the throne of glory, love clothed him with a body like our own, love urged him on through all the painful steps of his afflicted life; the waters of trouble were never able to quench it, nor the floods of persecution to drown it. Love put the cup of trembling into his hand, love bid him drink the last drop of all its dregs; *For having loved his own, he loved them unto the end*; his love abode till he cried, *It is finished*; when, having sealed with blood the sure and well ordered covenant, his soul was dismissed, and he went to begin his triumphs over death,

hell and the grave; and when he arose again, love was his first expression, *Go to my brethren and say, I ascend to my Father and your Father.* Love carried him to the right hand of God, and there he is this moment shewing forth the unchangeableness of his affection, by *ever living to make intercession for us*, and pleading before the throne the marks of love so deeply engraven in his hands and in his side. And when can we then be called so feelingly to remember this love, as at an ordinance, where all its glory is made to pass before us?

2. We are here to call to mind the great evil of sin. Never was it seen in such glaring colours, as when it was written in a Saviour's sweat, and tears and blood. Here sin indeed appears exceeding sinful. Its horrid nature and deep malignity are seen throughout the whole transaction, beyond what all the miseries which ever attended it before could possibly lead us to conceive. The cries of infants, the pains of sickness, the groans of wretchedness, the agonies of the expiring, and all the awful horrors of death, serve in some measure to tell us what an evil and bitter thing sin is, which could have occasioned such dire effects; and yet one glance at the glass of the sufferings of Jesus, will reflect the horrid image of sin, in colours infinitely darker and deeper. There we see it black indeed, when an incarnate God agonizes under its load, when horror and darkness filled his soul with intolerable anguish, and pain tortured his body till the sweat, as great drops of blood, fell down to the ground. Was this for sin? yes, brethren, it was sin which made Jesus *exceeding sorrowful even unto death*; it was sin which made him *sore amazed and very heavy*; it was sin which extorted from him that piercing cry, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken*

me? Behold and tremble then, whilst you look upon this awful sight. Look in, and let these sufferings cast a light upon your vile hearts; and learn to lothe and abhor yourselves and sin, whilst here you are taught to see its inexpressibly abominable nature.

3. Herein remember also the inexorable justice of God. Though love would pardon, yet must it be in a way wherein justice should be satisfied. Sin required an expiation equivalent to its high demerit; neither earth nor heaven afforded any such; *I looked and there was none to help*. Justice demanded righteous judgment, such as had been poured upon rebel angels cast down into hell on their first transgression; the thunderbolt of wrath was lifted up to smite us sinners to the lowest pit; Jesus steps between, and cries, *Stay them from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom*; receives the deadly shafts in his own body on the tree, and manifests the justice of God more gloriously than could have been done by the destruction of the whole human race.—For who is this? This is Jesus the Son of God, *the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person*; this is the Father's equal, the man *that is his fellow*; this is the eternal God, come to expiate his creatures' crimes. Satisfaction was demanded; he offers to pay, to overpay every demand. The price agreed, the judge executes his claim, *Awake my sword*, he cries, *against the shepherd*; the sword awoke to smite to the uttermost, and take full vengeance for the sins of a fallen world. *It pleased the Lord to put him to grief; he laid upon him the iniquities of us all*; and what would have utterly crushed us into hell, bruised to death the only Son of God. Behold the severity of God, *He spared not his own Son*; see herein what a flaming sword justice

holds, and how it is honoured by such a sacrifice ; see from hence what a fearful thing it is *to fall into the hands of the living God* ; and in this ordinance learn to tremble whilst you see nothing but the blood of God himself capable of expiating your guilt, and satisfying the demands of his own inexorable law.

4. This sacrifice calls upon you to remember the conquest made by it. You, a child of wrath, an heir of hell, a slave of Satan, here see your liberty proclaimed, your tyrant destroyed, your misery done away. A dying Jesus on the accursed tree conquers for you ; death, hell and sin, fall before him. Strong in weakness, *he triumphed on the cross, spoiling the principalities and powers of darkness, and making a shew of them openly. By death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil* : as a sweet singer of Israel expresses it :

“ And when I bled, and groan'd and dy'd,
 “ I ruin'd Satan's throne ;
 “ High on my cross I hung, and spy'd
 “ The monster tumbling down.”

Thus he hath vanquished all our enemies for us, hath bound Satan from hurting us, plucked out the sting of death, and sealed up the bottomless pit. His death is our life, his fall our victory, his cross our triumph ; well then may we glory in it, and determine to know nothing else but Jesus, and him crucified, since hereby we become more than conquerors, and are enabled daily to tread down Satan under our feet. And in this ordinance, peculiarly designed to strengthen our souls, this glorious victory should never be forgotten, no less for the honour of Jesus, than the comfort to be derived from it to our own souls.

5. It should always remind us of his coming

again. It is as the pledge of our friend, put into our hands to remember him in his absence, and to assure us he intends us another visit. This is to be a continual remembrance, *to shew forth the Lord's death till he come.* Though he is gone to heaven now, yet he hath promised us he will return. and take his humble followers home with him ; *I go,* says he, *to prepare a mansion for you.* When we see him present with us in the symbols of bread and wine, we should think how quickly we shall see the sign of the Son of Man in the clouds ; how soon we shall in our flesh see God, and with our eyes behold him, even that very body which the nails tore, and the spear pierced ; shall see him, but now brighter than the sun when it shineth in its strength, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, accompanied by hosts of heaven which no man can number ; *coming to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired of all that believe.* And this will be a remembrance most comforting to those, who, by the present ordinance sealing to them all the promises of God, are assured that when *he shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory.*

Such are the views which are included under the remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ ; which leads,

2. To the consideration of the benefits we receive thereby. These are great and manifold. In general, Jesus Christ makes over his whole self to every believer, and therewith all the blessings of grace and glory, which by his obedience unto death he hath purchased for us. God, in giving us his Son, *doth also with him freely give us all things ;* and of these the following are the most remarkable.

1. The pardon of sin. This is the first and

grand purchase of the sacrifice of Christ ; his blood was shed for the remission of sins. Sin made the great breach between God and us ; its guilt condemned, whilst its power enslaved us ; we lay under a curse, which we could neither remove nor endure : but Christ, by his undertaking for us, hath opened to us a door of hope, *a way in which God is righteous and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ;* whilst he accepts our surety, and exacts from him the immense debts with which we stood chargeable.

In the gospel the glad tidings of free salvation are brought to us, and we are called to embrace them ; and here, for the confirmation of our faith, God condescends to put his seal to his covenant of grace, ratifying to us the purchased pardon, and assuring us thereby, that he will *be merciful to our unrighteousness, and will remember our sins and iniquities no more ;* and we testify our consent and hearty desire of its accomplishment, by coming to receive the free gift of God in Jesus Christ, and casting our souls upon the promise. How high the gift ! how great the benefit ! pardon of sin ! a free pardon, without money and without price ; a pardon for the chief of sinners, for a world of sinners ; though dearly purchased by Christ, freely given to us ; a pardon that silences condemnation, removes fear, begets boldness. Doth the law accuse ? we point to this sacrifice, and say, There is my satisfaction. Doth conscience tremble ? looking to Jesus how can we fear ? Are we weighed down with our guilt peculiarly heavy, bound as under an ephah of lead, or lying under a burthen as the sand of the sea ; this blood cleanseth from all sin, unbinds every heavy burden, sets the prisoner free, sends him forth from the pit of sin and

death, to partake in the glorious liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Come then, ye guilty sinners, whose black crimes cover you with confusion; come, ye leprous souls, who want to wash and be clean; come, ye burdened consciences, and lay down your load at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ. He hath purchased all your want, and invites you to come and take of the water of life freely, to wash your crimson sins away in the fountain of his blood, and to be restored to the full enjoyment of God's favour, just as if you had never sinned. Here is a pardon for you, written in blood, and sealed in blood, confirmed by the word and oath of God, that *by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us.*

2. Adoption of children is another benefit of Christ's passion. We who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the promises, are brought nigh through the blood of Christ, and made fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. His obedience to death not only removes guilt, but confers favour upon us. We are hereby reinstated in all the forfeited rights of children, which by our fall we had lost, and receive the adoption of sons, as well as are delivered from the curse of the law. In this ordinance God the Father promises to be a father to all those who come unto him by Jesus Christ; that he will give them a place in his family upon earth, and an inheritance among the joint-heirs with Christ in heaven. That he will take greater care of them than the most tender parent, and love them with an everlasting love. He gives them this pledge, as the father gave the prodigal son the ring, whereby they are seal-

ed to the day of redemption ; and withal sheds abroad in their hearts his love begetting theirs : *because we are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry Abba, Father.* Thus the children, coming to their Father at the table where their elder brother hath provided a feast of love for them, receive increase in every filial temper and disposition, and grow up into him in all things, who is their head, even Christ. Here then behold the precious purchase of a Saviour's blood ; that we, the heirs of wrath and children of darkness, that we, dust of the earth, vile as men, abominable as sinners, that we, aliens and enemies in our minds by wicked works, should be brought nigh, not merely permitted, as the prodigal asked, to be put among the hired servants, but robed in the Saviour's righteousness, placed among his children, seated at his table, blessed with his favour, partakers of the provisions of his house below, and looking for *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, which fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven.* Well may we cry out with astonishment, *Behold, what manner of love is this which the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God !*

3. Another benefit is the consolation and joy which are herein dispensed. To rejoice in Christ Jesus, to have peace with God through faith, to be filled with comfort and joy of the Holy Ghost, in the present earnest and sure prospects of glory to come, is in a peculiar measure the case in this ordinance, where all things visibly tend to beget confidence in God. Here we often get Pisgah-views of the promised land ; here the mourning saint finds joy, the weary rest, the dejected encouragement, the strong increasing confidence ; here the spirit of faith applies the atonement,

and the sense of reconciliation often fills our souls with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and Christ intends his people should comfort themselves, should abound in all spiritual joy, and come as to a feast where gladness is sown for the upright in heart. Here we should dry our tears, at least if they fall, they should be tears of joy; we should put on the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and not sit mournfully before the Lord of hosts, nor cloud the joy of the festivity with sorrow on our brow, unless such a sorrow as St. Paul mentions, *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*. Whilst thou mourning for our sins, we believe the greatness of the gift herein bestowed on us; and the Spirit witnesses with our spirit to the work he hath wrought in us, and gives us a present taste of our inheritance, before we are actually put in possession of the purchased glory in heaven.

What a delightful ordinance! How many thousands of real christians have experienced the comforts of it, and daily continue to do so?—Real christians! I say not mere ceremonial visitors: they feel, taste and handle nothing of the word of life; the bread and wine are to them barren elements, dry breasts which afford no consolation; but the soul vitally united to Christ can say, *I sat under his shadow with great delight. He brought me to his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love*. He tastes the joy therein dispensed, and goes away rejoicing because he hath seen the Lord.

4. In this ordinance also there is a free distribution according to every man's necessities of strength and power from Jesus Christ, for all the work a christian is called to; it is one instituted means of conveying to believers the supplies of

the spirit for their wilderness-state, both to subdue their corruptions, and strengthen their graces. Here we draw water out of the wells of salvation, and, like Elijah traveling to the mount of Horeb, receive from time to time our provision, in the refreshment of which we may hold on our way, and wax stronger and stronger, till we come to the heavenly Horeb, the mount Zion, the Jerusalem which is above. If our corruptions are strong, here is grace to mortify them; here we are taught and do receive humility to supplant pride, heavenly-mindedness instead of worldliness and purity instead of pollution. The example before us, as well as the grace ministered powerfully calls upon us to learn of him to be meek and lowly of heart; not to be of the world, even as he was not of the world; to walk in holiness, as he also walked. Are our graces all feeble and weak? where shall we blow the smoking flax into a flame, if not here, where every thing conspires to confirm our faith, to enliven our hopes, to kindle our warmest affections, to enlarge our charity, to inspire our zeal, to teach us meekness, to quicken our languor, to encourage our perseverance, to excite our thankfulness; in short, to work in us every divine temper and disposition? This blessed ordinance is designed to strengthen us mightily in the inner man, to support us under all discouragements without, and fears within, that we might go on from strength to strength, from grace to grace, till we come to the blessed place where we shall go from glory to glory.

Here then are great and glorious privileges obtained by the precious blood of the Son of God, and we are called upon to come and partake in all of them; and what excuse can we make? Do not we want a pardon? is adoption a despicable

blessing? is spiritual joy an insipid pleasure? or the gift of God's Spirit an unnecessary assistance? Why then do so many slight the ordinance of the Lord, and neglect this great salvation? Do you disclaim any relation to Jesus Christ, and renounce his religion, that you decline making this profession, and have no desires after the benefits of his death and passion? Surely they who never think of remembering the Lord's death till he come, will be most unprepared to meet him on a dying bed, or in a day of judgment.— I beseech you to consider this, you that forget God, lest, by your slight of him, he be provoked to give you up to your own inventions, and you die in your sins, neither sprinkled with his blood, nor clothed with his righteousness, nor partakers of his Spirit: be assured, they who forget Christ now, will be disowned by him in the day of his appearing and glory.

CHAP. II.

An Invitation to the Communion.

WHEN in the parable the table for the marriage-feast was spread, the oxen and fatlings killed, the servants in waiting, the royal bridegroom seated, a message was sent to hasten the guests, *Come now, for all things are ready.* With this message, brethren, am I sent to every one of you, beseeching and intreating you for Christ's sake, that ye would be reconciled to God, and as a token thereof to come unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. But as their message of old was rejected, so too frequently is ours. The most of you agree with one consent to excuse yourselves, the farms and the merchandise, the cares and pleasures of this life

so engross your time, that you have neither inclination nor leisure to attend the call ; and of those who do come, how many forget the wedding garment, and thrust themselves in unwelcome guests, who, after having eaten and drank in Christ's presence, will be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. To the one and to the other of these, I will address the following words, before I enter upon the consideration of the temper necessary for the profitable partaking of the Lord's Supper. And here I intend to shew you,

I. The great danger of neglecting this ordinance.

II. The great guilt of coming to it unworthily.

I. The great danger of neglecting this ordinance. And this will appear,

1. If we consider it as the breach of the express commandment of Jesus Christ. It was among his last words the night before he was betrayed, that his disciples should *do this in remembrance of him*. The words of a friend are always dear, but his dying words especially apt to dwell upon the mind ; and to neglect his last commands would be then a sure mark of having no friendship for him. Now this is evidently the case with those who wait not upon the Lord at his table to remember his death till he come. They confess that they have no friendship for him, by their disobedience to the things which he hath commanded them. They live in the allowed neglect of a positive precept, and thereby bring down upon themselves the reward of transgressors, who have despised his counsels. And that you may see it is no small offence this, I wish you to observe the heavy wrath of God

denounced against those who neglected to celebrate the passover (to which our communion answers, representing to us a deliverance from sin and hell, infinitely greater than that from Egyptian bondage) *that soul was to be cut off from his people. Now if they who despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall we be thought worthy, if we neglect so great salvation?* Careless sinners, who turn their backs on the Lord's table, think little of the guilt this adds to their state, and how severely every such neglected opportunity will be answered for, when this Jesus shall come to execute judgment on all the despisers of his name and ordinances.

2. The great danger of neglect herein is evident, in that by so doing we continue dead in trespasses and sins, *Except, says Christ himself, ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* Now though this primarily refers to the reception of the gospel, and doth not exclude those from eternal life, who, having received the gospel, are waiting upon God, with a purpose of heart of soon devoting their souls to him in this solemn ordinance; it evidently excludes all those, who have neither received Christ into their hearts by faith, nor desire to be partakers of the seals of his covenant; it is not possible for such to have any spiritual life in them; they are dead in trespasses and sins; and they declare hereby their abiding indisposition for, and disinclination to all the exercises of a spiritual life. The soul whom Christ hath quickened, delights to be maintaining daily communion with him, to wait

in his house, and at his table, whenever he hath opportunity ; but you have no such desires, no such disposition, because you have chosen death rather than life, and are daily pursuing a course, the end of which must be everlasting destruction. Ask yourself this plain question, Why do not I come to the communion ? and what can you answer, but that I am living in the pursuit of iniquities, which I have no inclination to forsake ; and what is this but a plain acknowledgment of the dreadful misery in which you are lying every day, liable to the wrath of God, and assuredly ready to receive it, if you die as you live, without a new birth, from the death of sin, unto the life of righteousness.

3. The danger of neglecting the Lord's table is evident, as it includes the renunciation of our covenant with God. There are but two sorts of people in the world, believers and unbelievers ; those who are within the covenant, and those who are out of it. When we were infants, the charitable act done for us in baptism, and the conditional engagement then entered into, can profit us nothing, unless we are putting in our own claim to the blessings then promised ; and by partaking in the other sacrament, when we are come to the years of discretion, declare we thankfully embrace the covenant of grace, and receive the signs and seals thereof, in token both of our dependence upon Christ, and renewed dedication to him : where this is not done, we deny in fact our baptismal engagements, break the covenant we have entered into, and declare our disavowal of all the promises then made for us. Hence we can claim nothing under it, and are left, though we may be professing members of Christ outwardly, *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the promises ;*

without Christ, without God, without the covenant, and consequently without hope, without grace, and without heaven.

4. The great danger of neglecting it is evident from the great wrath and indignation God hath revealed against the despisers of his covenant. It is said in Romans i. 18. *That the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.* Here then you may read your own condemnation; who of you, that is come to years of discretion, doth not know the great duty lying upon you to remember the death of Christ? Do not you condemn others that live in neglect of the Lord's supper, and what is this but condemning yourself? You have excuses, I know, but I warn you there will none of them be taken in the day of judgment; and your own consciences will tell you so, if you will but give them time to speak. You know your breaking the commands of God is what nothing can excuse, and therefore you may be fully assured that the wrath of God lieth upon you. O that from each of these considerations, I knew how to reach your hearts with such an awful, with such a tender expostulation, as might at once alarm and constrain you; and what urgent cause have I to speak whilst I see the dreadful neglect of many of you who never come, and of others who come so seldom, that the same condemnation lieth at their door. Are all such flagrant transgressors? Are all such dead in trespasses and sins? Are all such out of the church of God? Are all such under the wrath of God? In what a fearful state then, brethren, are the most of you living? In what an ungrateful state, where you make Christ's blood to be shed in vain for you? Have you no sensibility

of the amazing love of Jesus, of him who lived, who bled, who groaned, who wept, who suffered, who died for you? Hath he undergone so many things for you in vain? And surely it is as yet in vain: for do not you slight all his mercies, despise his salvation, count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and do despite to the spirit of grace, whilst you quench all his strivings? But if love will not move, at least let fear dismay you; consider what it is to be an outcast of heaven, to be a stranger to God's covenant, to be an enemy to Christ, to be marked out for the divine vengeance, to be without a Saviour in the day of judgment, to be exposed to the storms of eternal wrath, to be banished from God's presence, to be cast into hell, and have your portion with unbelievers; yet all this, fearful and tremendous as it is, lieth against your soul. Thou, even thou art the man. Not having communion with Christ, you are as a branch dried up and withered, which men gather and cast into the fire, and they are burned. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to consider these awful truths, and begin to examine your souls, lest, with the thousands that have gone before you, you should perish after the same example of unbelief.

But I mean not herein that, with all your sins and carelessness about you, you should approach the sacred place where Christ spreads his table. No. There is a serious inquiry necessary before you presume to *eat of that bread and drink of that cup*, which too many rashly and unadvisedly thrust themselves to partake of, who have no discernment of the Lord's body. This therefore,

II. I address to you who come not, and all others who come with an undue disposition, that

they consider the aggravated guilt of "eating and drinking their own damnation, not discerning the Lord's body." A fearful and a common case. *To discern the Lord's body*, seems to be a phrase taken from the use of the senses in bodily objects; as the eye discerns a prospect, the palate discerns its food, and the hand discerns what it handles; such spiritual discernment must the soul have of Jesus Christ in this ordinance, it must see him by the eye of faith, it must verily and indeed receive him as actually to nourish the soul, as the bread and wine to strengthen and refresh the body; it must so *handle the word of life*, as to apply the blood of Christ, and his saving benefits. All which necessary presupposes a new life, a living principle implanted in the soul, a resurrection from the death of sin, and a desire of growth in grace; concerning which I shall speak more particularly in the next chapter, only from hence it may be easily apprehended.

1. Who they are that, "not discerning the Lord's Body," eat and drink unworthily.

2. What is meant by "eating and drinking their own damnation."

1. Who they are that do not discern the Lord's Body, and eat and drink unworthily: And here I beg your serious attention; the matter is deeply interesting to you. I suppose our eternal salvation is in nothing more nearly concerned, than in a right approach to the Lord's table, and therefore the following persons cannot possibly have any call to appear there.

(1.) Such as are without the knowledge of Christ, the nature of his salvation, their own wants, or the benefits they are to expect. As our food does not profit us, when we have no appetite or digestion; so where knowledge is

wanting, the sacrament is mere bread and wine, and can in no wise minister to the soul strength or refreshment. Indeed, how is it possible they should remember Christ to any saving purpose, who are unacquainted with his nature as God and Man in mysterious union ; with his offices, as a Prophet to teach, a Priest to atone and intercede for, a King to protect and rule over and in his people ; and who have not so learned Christ out of the scriptures, as to know why he saves, or how he saves ? Here ignorance is a total bar ; it is the darkness which cannot comprehend him. And the case is the same where the nature of his salvation is mistaken ; when any come to the Lord's table, without seeing the intire freedom of the salvation ; when they bring their works and good life to make them accepted, instead of laying down their sins at the foot of his cross ; when they lean either in whole or in part upon their own righteousness, instead of seeing him to be their alone righteousness before God ; when they think the doing their duty is to save them, instead of renouncing that, as well as every thing else, to plead only Christ's merit before God, then spiritual discernment must needs be wanting. Again, when there is no knowledge of our own sinfulness, when we are ignorant of the miseries of our state by nature, and feel no burden under its present corruption ; when we have no sense of the perverseness of our hearts, and the guiltiness of our lives ; when we have never felt the desert of sin in the consciousness we have provoked God to cast us into hell ; what should such do at a table, where a Saviour only stands for sinners' sakes ? Or, in fine, if there be no knowledge nor expectation of the benefits procured by Christ, no desire of pardon, adoption, grace, or consolation, it is impossible we would

have spiritual discernment, which consists in the apprehension and application of these to the soul. How stands your knowledge then? what know you of Christ? what of his salvation? what of your sins? what of the benefits you are to expect? are these dark and unknown? is your understanding blind and ignorant? then you are certainly unfit to come to his table, and are in the nature of things excluded from all the blessings of the communion; for the sacraments do not of themselves work necessarily, but only according to our discernment, according to the exercise of our spiritual senses.

(2.) Those are evidently excluded from the Lord's table, who live in any known sin, or the allowed and habitual neglect of any known duty. It were a horrid insult on the blessed Jesus, to come with a conscience still defiled, or with hands still unwashen from our iniquities, to touch his sacred sacramental body; and therefore all who live in the open breach of his commandments, should be utterly cast out. And it were much to be wished the ancient discipline were restored, and all scandalous sinners cut off visibly, as they are spiritually from the communion of Christ. Our church addresses, in her exhortation, a most solemn admonition by name to all such: "Therefore if any of you be a blasphemer of God, (profane in any measure in your conversation) an hinderer or slanderer of his word, an adulterer, or be in malice, envy, or any other grievous crime, (such as drunkenness, or sabbath-breaking, and the like) repent, or come not, lest the devil enter into you, as he did into Judas, and fill you full of all iniquities." A wise admonition indeed! for *what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?* And how can it ever be supposed that God would have res-

pect to any offering, when he sees our hearts going a whoring from him, after the abominable thing which he hates? If you can see in your soul that there is one allowed sin, which you are unwilling to part with, and for which your conscience condemns you, be assured that God is greater than your heart, and must much more condemn you. Whilst this is kept back, you can have no part nor lot in the matter. The mists of sin will hinder you from discerning Christ, and your very appearance among his people will be but profane mockery. And yet how many dare come, whose conversations testify against them that they are yet unwashen from their iniquities? How many, who live habitually in pride and passion, pretend to drink into a meek and humble Jesus? How many, whose superficial inquiries into their hearts shew they are afraid to go deeply to work? How many in the interval of the seasons let loose the reins to worldliness and gratification? And some I have heard of, horrid to think it! who suppose the mere act of communicating is, the cancelling of the past offences, and a licence to sin again.— Surely such must be *in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity*. The cup of blessing is to them a cup of trembling, and the bread of life a savour of death unto death. And the like may be said of those who live in the neglect of any known duty, such as private prayer, prayer in their families, reading the scriptures, mutual exhortation, and all other helps appointed for our increase in grace; to neglect these, except once a month, or once a quarter, for a dull week it may be, by way of formal preparation for the sacrament, whilst all the interval hath been spent in forgetfulness of God, and disregard of his service, or in some course of vanity, care or indulgence:

this, I say, is a direct proof of unsuitableness for the ordinance : such an one can never discern the Lord's body.

(3.) They are excluded from any spiritual partaking of the Lord's supper, who come merely to qualify themselves for an office. The impiety and profaneness of which is indeed past the power of words to express. What ! can worms of the earth dare trifle with the blood of the Son of God ! and, merely to serve their own secular concerns, pollute the altar of the Lord ? Can any thing be so horridly insolent as to come evidently with this thought ? " Lord, I am not come here with any view to thy glory ; I am not come here as an undone sinner, penitent and believing, to receive the pardon of my sins ; I am not come to remember thy death, nor expecting any benefits from it ; or at least these are not my chief aim, I am come only to qualify myself for an office, a mere temporal business ; and were it not for this, I should gladly stay away." What a language this ! What spots are these at our feasts ? What a hardness and stupidity of conscience is such communicating disposed to beget ? This is making the blood of the covenant common indeed. I tremble for the consequences. Knowing very well, that though we may be deceived, God will not be mocked. To have eaten and drank in his presence thus, will doubtless send us away at the last day, with a *Depart from me, I never knew you.* And they who now thus drink of the cup of the Lord, will be found among those who shall then *drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.*

(4.) They partake unworthily who only come at particular seasons, and, instead of having an

habitual fitness, make all the work of the communion to consist in a week's preparation ; as if the Lord's supper was a mere slavish duty, and a week's cleansing was all that is necessary to approach it. These mistake the very nature of the ordinance, and put their one week's preparation, instead of all those tempers and dispositions which are required to be abidingly in the soul. For it is not cleansing the outside of the cup and platter, it is not the abstaining from gross sin, it is not saying so many prayers extraordinary, or not going into company, or being strictly regularly for one week, that can shew us to be faithful people. This is the strangest farce of devotion that can be conceived, and can neither be pleasing in the eyes of an heart-searching God, nor at all answer the end designed of preparing us for a suitable approach to the Lord's table. The work to be done is heart-work, not of the lip and knee ; and the preparation is the inward trimming of our graces, not the outward form of a round of extraordinary duties. None are meet to approach the Lord's table, who are not every day maintaining spiritual communion with Christ, and always ready for his table, whenever a call invites them thither. There must be a daily sacramental vowing fidelity to him, and an exercise of faith in his death and the benefits of it, wherever Christ had real communion with the soul. Hence you may see the absurdity of putting on religion, only as our best cloaths, once a month, or a quarter ; and that such persons as these, instead of being the friends of Christ, are no better than ceremonious visitors, whose room would be more welcome than their company. Christ, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who searcheth the heart and the reins, sees nothing but

spiritual ignorance, under the mask of devotion, and no inward sense exercised to discern him, consequently not the least meetness for an approach to his table ; needs must he address such with *how camest thou in hither ?*

(5.) To conclude : None can partake profitably, who have not found acceptance with God, through the righteousness of the Saviour, and in consequence experience the mighty power of his grace on their souls. By the mighty power of his grace, I mean that virtue derived from Christ, whereby a dead sinner is quickened to spiritual life, and endued with spiritual sensibility. If in this ordinance, the exercise of repentance, faith, charity, thankfulness, humility, and of all the other graces, is necessarily required, in order to a discerning the Lord's body; then it is evident that they who are without these can never partake spiritually. Now we are all destitute of these, till the spirit of God, making the gospel of Jesus effectual to us, enlightens our minds to see the fulness which is in Christ, and inspires these holy dispositions into our souls. We cannot repent and believe, and love and be thankful, or humble, when we will, or by our own power, in our natural state ; we might as soon think of plucking the sun from the firmament, as of exercising one of these graces. They are all the work of God, the parts of the divine nature communicated to the children who are begotten, *not after the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God.* Therefore if you do not know any such change wrought in you, any such new creation, any mighty working, like unto that which raised up Jesus from the dead ; if you have not an experimental sense of the quickening influence of the spirit of God upon your soul, and have not begun to see that

you have passed from death unto life, from darkness unto light, from the power of Satan unto God, it is plain you cannot possibly partake discerningly in this ordinance. Should you give ever so much meat and drink to a dead man, it would neither bring him to life, nor nourish the carcase. The case is the same, if there be no spiritual life in the soul, there can be no strengthening and refreshing by the body and blood of Christ.

2. These persons therefore, one and another, must needs be excluded from all the saving benefits of Christ's death and passion; and if thus careless, ignorant, sinful, and unconverted, they approach the Lord's table, they must needs eat and drink their own damnation. A fearful word indeed! enough to make the ears of every one that heareth it to tingle; and which our church well explains thus, "We kindle God's wrath against us, we provoke him to plague us with divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death; judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord." Here you see that present judgments, and the wrath to come, are the wages of such, as by a rash, unadvised, and unsuitable approach to the Lord's table, are guilty of the body and blood of Christ our Saviour. And shall we provoke God's wrath against us? Are we stronger than he? Forgive my tender concern for you—I am not speaking these things to grieve or disturb you, but as beloved children I warn you. You must be freely dealt with; you will not forgive me else at the day of judgment, if I should now be unfaithful to your souls. I press, I invite you, yea, I command you, in the name of Jesus Christ, not to slight his table, as you do. But then judge yourselves whether ye are in the faith, for if ye are amongst

those I have described, you cannot be welcome guests, if you live in ignorance or sin, if you respect merely a temporal convenience, if you make it a matter of form, and have not a living principle of grace in your souls, abstain at present, as you would not imbrue your hands in Christ's blood, and crucify him afresh. Yet abstain not altogether. As you value your everlasting salvation; do not lie down in this state, but hear the present call of Jesus; look at his sacrifice that still bleeds for you; call upon him whilst yet he is near, to prepare your heart according to the preparation of the sanctuary. Let your past forgetfulness, neglect and dishonor of him, lie deep upon your minds, and be among those things which especially humble you before him.—And then arise, as perishing sinners, to lay yourselves at the foot of his cross, to look to him whom you have pierced, till faith in his blood produces love in your souls towards him, and a willing heart leads you to his table, to present yourselves a living sacrifice unto him. Then shall the ordinance be as much to his glory, as your comfort; and you shall find by blessed experience, that you do not only come, but are welcome.

CHAP. III.

Self-Examination, a necessary duty before we come to the Lord's Supper.

AS the profiting in the blessed ordinance of the Lord's supper, depends chiefly upon the disposition of mind in which we approach it, it will become all, as St. Paul advises, who would come with spiritual discernment, and return with a blessing, seriously to examine themselves be-

fore they presume to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. To comfort the afflicted, encourage the doubting, and to help the sincere in this behalf, will be the design of the present chapter, as well as to quicken every soul to the too-neglected work of communing with his own heart. Our church catechism will supply us with the four principal and essential points of inquiry; which, if we understand thoroughly, and answer faithfully, we may come to the knowledge of our state respecting God, and consequently our fitness or unfitness for the Lord's supper. And these are,

- I. Whether we "repent truly of our former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life."
- II. Whether we "have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ."
- III. Whether we "have a thankful remembrance of his death."
- IV. Whether "we are in charity with all men."

Points, each of which deserve a larger treatment than this short exercise; and yet you may come to some safe determination about them, if you will attend to what is now to be set before you.

I. Then, to examine whether you "repent truly of your former sins, stedfastly proposing to lead a new life," you must understand what is meant by evangelical repentance and newness of life. I shall describe them as including,

1. A sorrow for sin.
 2. Hatred of sin.
 3. Forsaking of sin.
 4. An evident change wrought upon your heart and life.
1. Evangelical repentance includes sorrow for

sin. *They who sow in tears, shall reap in joy.* And when we have so much cause to be exercising sorrow for our sins, and to mourn, as when we are coming to *look upon him whom we have pierced*—here the foundation of repentance must be laid—we must lay to heart the great dishonor we have done to God by our sins, how many and great they have been, how vile our nature and hearts are, as well as how perverse our ways have been. We must reflect upon the ingratitude of sin, and how every act, every thought of it, has added a pang to the Saviour's agony. We must consider it as the grieving of the spirit, the defilement of his temple our bodies, and the abominable thing which he hateth. We should reflect on the wages of sin, even death eternal, and that of but one sin; how deeply then are we in arrear to the divine justice, when heart and life have been nothing but sin? Thus its evil nature and heavy guilt should both conspire to beget in us the deepest sorrow and remorse that ever we should dare transgress against the Majesty of heaven and the Father of mercy; that ever we should be ungrateful to a dying Jesus; that ever we should provoke the patient Spirit; that ever we should madly trifle with our souls, and plunge them into such awful condemnation. But have such thoughts ever been harboured in your hearts? Are you now desiring to mourn for your iniquities; and do they, in these views, dwell upon your hearts as a sore burden, too heavy for you to bear? Are you sore smitten on the grievous remembrance, and ready, like the prophet, to wish for a head of waters, and eyes like a fountain of tears, to run down day and night, for iniquities, which a sea of your own tears would never wash away? Do you know any such sorrow, and is the grief

for your sins the bitterest cup you have ever drank of? This is a gracious disposition; *for true godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, never to be repented of.*

2. Repentance implies an abhorrence of sin and ourselves. *Behold, says Job, I am vile, therefore I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes.* It is impossible, where a true sense of sin is upon the heart, this should be wanting; the heart then rises up with indignation; with revenge against itself, as St. Paul expresses it, and cannot bear the view of the past without self-loathing. To think how vilely we have acted, how insolently we have returned all God's kindness with abuse, how we have turned all his blessings into a curse, how we have slighted the love of Christ, how we have resisted the Holy Ghost in his word, in his providences, in all the methods of grace he hath used with us; in short how we have sold ourselves, as it were, to work wickedness; and now to think of returning to the bosom of our God thus polluted and defiled, what vile wretches must we be in our own eyes? and to see ourselves such, is absolutely necessary before we can return. *Then, saith the Lord, they shall return and remember their own evil ways, and their doings which were not good, and shall loathe themselves for all their iniquities and for all their abominations.* Are you conscious of any such self-abhorrence? can you adopt the language of Job's self-loathing, and in the view of your sins find the inward risings of disgust and displeasure against yourself and them? do you appear in your own eyes a monster of ingratitude, and feel your heart detesting sin, which hath made you so, more than you detest the vilest objects in nature? at least is it your

desire to hate it more than you do? This is the work of true repentance.

3. Repentance implies a forsaking of sin. We cannot indeed but forsake it, if we have groaned under its burden, and felt its odious ingratitude. How shall we think of continuing a moment longer in a state so displeasing to God, so grievous to ourselves? Here the sword of the Spirit is lifted up against every darling idol. Repenting, we renounce our covenant with sin, and our allegiance to Satan, and burst his bands, and break his cords off from us. No known sin can be any longer habitually indulged; not only the outward sins, whose open nature was more flagrantly rebellious, such as profaneness, passion, lewdness, drunkenness, lying, sabbath-breaking, covetousness, and the like; but the more secret heart-sins will be renounced; vain thoughts, and vile affections, as well as actions, must be forsaken; no little sins any longer plead the privilege of custom or necessity. If we are sincere in our repentance, without pitying or sparing, our eye will search every corner of our heart; and wherever we find the traitor, we shall bring him forth and slay him before the Lord; and our darling sin will meet with the severest treatments; that we shall lay most violent hands upon, whilst repentance cries, Down with it, down with it, even to the ground; a right eye, a right hand, any thing, however near and dear to us, away it goes. Repentance makes thorough work. It is not a partial reformation, this is in many where repentance hath never wrought its effectual work; and thousands have been undone by the mistake, whilst conscience hath made them part from some sins, and be more restrained and decent than before; but they have still dealt deceitfully with the Lord, their hearts have

not been whole with him, and so they have gone no farther than Ahab's humiliation, or Herod's doing many things at John's preaching to him repentance; of whom the one still continued idolatrous, and the other kept his brother Philip's wife. A person may be very nigh the kingdom of God, and yet never enter it; be almost, without being altogether a christian; look therefore to your hearts herein, there is no deceiving God: and what a crying sin would it be to come to Christ's table without a purpose of forsaking whatever is displeasing to him? Do you repent? is it evident from your conduct? Doth not your heart condemn you for any reserve made? Can you appeal to God for your sincerity, that you desire to indulge yourself in nothing you know or suspect to be sinful? Particularly, do you heartily resist and seek to mortify the sin which most easily besets you? And is your repentance for it proved to be real from this, that your sorrow for it is not only your heaviest grief, but that your heart is set most steadily against it, and follows it close, desiring to destroy it root and branch; lest it should make you false to your vows, and like the worm at Jonah's gourd, make your fair blossoms of repentance wither, and bring forth no fruit? This will be comfortable, if, in the presence of God, you can claim the proof of such a sincere, universal renunciation of sin. It will be then indeed *a repentance never to be repented of.*

4. Repentance implies a change of mind; this is the exact meaning of the Greek word *μετάνοια*: for every real penitent is brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace; and all his aims, apprehensions, views, and principles of action, are as different as you can suppose those of any two different persons ever to have been, so that

he is well said in scripture *to be born again ; old things are passed away, and all things are become new ; he is brought out of darkness into marvellous light ; he walks not after the fashion of the world, but after Christ ; he looks not as before to the things that are seen and are temporal, but to the things that are not seen and are eternal ; in short, he is changed into another man, a new man, created after Christ Jesus in righteousness and true holiness.* Here then is a wide field for enquiry, and most essential to our profitable partaking at the Lord's table, since none but those who have begun to lead a new life, can receive any benefit from attending on the ordinance. You must therefore herein closely examine yourselves. What do you know of this inward change ?—Is your understanding changed ? *whereas you were blind, do you now see ? you were once darkness, are you now light in the Lord ?* Have you a sight of yourself, of God, of Christ, of all the things of the Spirit, different from what you had before, so that your judgment is altered ? Do you now discover the misery of your state and nature, the vanity of earth and time, the bondage of corruption, the great need of salvation, the unspeakable patience of God, the amazing love of Christ, the greatness of the invisible realities, and the importance of only making one thing needful, even the securing an interest in the kingdom of God and his righteousness ?—Is your will also altered in its choice ? Have you begun to chuse Christ for a portion, instead of the world ? do you prefer his service to the service of sin ? and, instead of the pursuits of this world, the pleasures of sense and the vanities of time, rejecting these, are you embracing the ways of peace, and the paths of holiness, which lead through faith to glory ?—

And are your affections changed? Do you love what you hated, and hate what you loved? Is Christ now the object of your affection, more than ever your favourite sin hath been? at least is it your desire and prayer that he may be so? Is it your delight to be found engaged in the exercises of devotion? or do you chide your sluggish heart when it goes heavily to the blessed work? Are you become more afraid of offending God, than the whole world beside? and are your hopes chiefly fixed on the promises of his word, and the expectations he bids you look to in eternity, instead of this present evil world? Is it your joy to see his interest flourish in the world? and is it a more sincere satisfaction to you to help to turn one sinner from the evil of his ways, than to partake in the greatest worldly advantages? In short, is it now become in a measure your meat and drink to do the will of God, and is that which you before loathed, namely, the denial of your own vile heart, and the keeping God's commandments, now become the constant desire of your soul, and the thing that you long for? and doth your whole conversation witness to this change, and prove that you are indeed passed from death into life? that you walk no more as other unconverted men, *in the vanity of their minds, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*, but, as a child of light, reprove the works of darkness, and testify against the world that its deeds are evil? And do you purpose to hold on thus doing, walking daily more circumspectly, redeeming the time, and stedfastly pursuing this course of newness of life which God's holy word prescribes to you, whatever difficulties may befall you, and whatever more than you yet see may be your portion, whether

of reproach, loss or persecution, for your fidelity in Christ's service? This is that evangelical repentance you are called to. This must be the matter of your examination. If you can see no such change, if you are as you ever used to be, and never knew any time in your life when you were convinced by the Spirit of sin, led to him who giveth repentance, converted unto God and born again, (a change in its effects as evident and clear as to rise from the dead, or between a dry tree and one full of leaves, blossoms and fruit) then I say, you have not yet this newness of life, you are still in a natural state, and ought not to think of approaching the Lord's table, till matters are altered with you, and till the great change is begun, and is manifesting itself in your heart and life.

II. You must examine yourself whether you have "a lively faith in God's mercies through Christ." Observe a lively faith, not a dead faith; not a mere speculative assent of the head to the truth of religion, but a quickening, powerful principle in the heart, a faith energetic, that worketh in us mightily. And this lively faith shews itself in the following ways.

1. In directing us to Christ, as our alone propitiation. It brings us, burdened as we are with our sins, to the foot of the cross, and there bidding us lay them down, points to the blood shed for us, and pleads that propitiation with which God is well pleased. In this way, and this only, we must look for salvation before God; renouncing our own righteousness, emptied of all self-sufficiency, confessing our guilt, and only resting on him, who is our atonement and our righteousness before God. Into Christ's hands, as our advocate, we commit our cause, that he may

plead it effectually before the throne of God ; and this with such satisfiedness in the availability of his intercession, as gives us confidence towards God, and such a persuasion of Christ's love, as that we can cheerfully and contentedly leave our salvation in his hands, assured that he is more willing to help us, than we to desire it ; yea, that he was pleading with his Father for us before we began to look to him. This is the lively faith which embraces the promises afar off, and enables us to say, *In the Lord have I righteousness* : through his blood have I the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace. The strength and confidence of our faith may be different in degree, but in all Christ's people it must be the same in nature. Some poor mourning soul, discouraged with doubts, though deeply renouncing all hope in himself, can only feebly cast his soul upon promises which he holds as it were with a trembling hand ; yet this is that good hope through grace, which, though far removed from the full assurance of faith, is the sound evidence of a believing soul, and exercise and experience will confirm it. Others can, by the Spirit, with humble confidence claim the salvation, rest satisfied in the sure and certain covenant, and rejoice in that *perfect love which casteth out fear*, persuaded that Christ hath loved them, and given himself for them. Inquire then, Do you possess any measure of this temper ? Have you a lively faith ? Do you come with the empty hand and a beggar's heart, to receive a free salvation ; renouncing your own righteousness, and disclaiming your duties as heartily as your sins in the matter of acceptance with God ? Do you see enough in Christ to convince you he is able to save such a sinner as you, vile and sinful as you are ? That *his blood cleanseth from all sin,*

and that his righteousness imputed to you, will make you pleasing in the eyes of the God of purity? And are you satisfied in his willingness to save you, from all the free declarations he hath made, and all the mighty and gracious instances of that willingness and ability he hath given you? Do these (his power and willingness to save) beget in your mind a determined affiance in him, so that you can say, *Here shall be my rest forever; this is all my salvation and all my desire;* then you have the discerning eye that sees Christ at his table; the discerning taste that feeds upon him, the discerning ear that hears his voice, the discerning hand that receives out of his fulness, that wraps the robe of righteousness around you, and makes you complete in him.

2. A lively faith lays hold of the strength of Christ, as well as his atonement and righteousness. Unable to do any thing of himself, the believer, coming to him, can *do all things through Christ strengthening him.* Faith brings us to him as the repairer of the breach, as the healer of the deadly wound which sin hath given us, and which made us insufficient to think or do any thing pleasing to God. A lively faith seeks grace as well as pardon, and assures us it is to be had in Christ. It tells us, that though without him we can do nothing, yet in him, when we are weak, we shall be made strong, *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;* hence in the communion, the believer applies to him, and rests all the wants and necessities of his soul upon Jesus, the Saviour. To enter into the covenant, to abide in it, faith takes the grace of Christ, makes him the surety to undertake for us; while we despair of our own power and might, and draw from him all our sufficiency. And, satisfied that his power and might shall be

exercised for us, we rejoice in this confidence, that mighty as our enemies are, and weak and helpless as we are, yet that we shall be *more than conquerors through him that hath loved us*. Are you going to Christ with such application for strength, and from him do you find strength communicated to you? Do you see that without this grace you can do nothing? Do you sincerely renounce all hope in yourself, and make him your rock, his everlasting arms your support, his grace the ground of all your confidence? This is to believe; “to have a lively sense of God’s mercy in Christ;” for hereby this mercy comes home to our souls, we live upon it and by it; faith in Christ enabling us continually to apprehend it, so as to bring peace and pardon, and from it to derive strength and power against sin.

III. We must inquire into our thankfulness in “the remembrance of Christ’s death,” and the great and precious privileges purchased by his blood-shedding for us. If we are really sensible of our fallen state, and have faith in the transaction here represented to us, it is not possible but our hearts should indeed be filled with gratitude and thankfulness to him who hath thus *loved us, and given himself for us*. And in proportion as we gain a clearer understanding of our own misery, and the condescension and love of Jesus Christ, our hearts will be more affected, and we shall come overflowing with praises to him, who hath died for us, and rose again. This thankfulness hath a thousand different points of view, from whence it takes occasion to admire and adore the grace of the Redeemer. Its most lively exercise arises from himself, and next to that from all the blessings given in and with him. We are filled with thankfulness that we

have ever heard the sound of his name in our ears, or tasted the power of his grace in our hearts; that we have been made already partakers of so many blessings, and have so many greater ones in store; that not only the end is so great and glorious, but that in the way we have so many delightful seasons of refreshment, where we may find rest unto our souls. Christ living, dying, rising, ascending, sitting at the right hand of God, each of these affords new matter for thankfulness. This must be expressed by our lips, in hearty, humble acknowledgements of his love and kindness towards us; and not by our lips only, "but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days." Have you any experience of such thankfulness in your heart? Do not you see when any person does you a great and unexpected favour, in any temporal things, how your heart rises towards them, and labours for expressions to testify the gratitude you feel? and how careful you are to please so generous a benefactor, if he is making you daily to partake of his bounty and munificence? Now if these trifles so affect you, and to be ungrateful and unthankful to man is looked upon as brutish and savage, how should these great things, that in Christ are given you, dwell upon your hearts? How should you be impressed and influenced by them? Are you so? Is your heart rising up in the remembrance of that greatest of all gifts, God's own Son, with thanks too big for utterance? Are you praising him with joyful lips? or mourning at least over the coldness of your heart that loves and praises him no more? Doth your life testify the gratitude of your heart, by your carefulness to con-

form to his will and pleasure ; never to offend him, or grieving if you do ; in every thing desiring to shew yourself no longer as your own, but his, who hath purchased you at so dear a price as his own blood, and called you to shew forth his praise, by yielding yourselves to him as alive from the dead, and your *members instruments of righteousness unto holiness* ? at least, is this your daily study, desire and prayer, that you may be enabled more and more to serve and please him ? This is to be thankful, this is the proof that we have not received the grace of God in vain.

IV. We must examine whether “we are in charity with all men.” The religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of universal love ; and especially it is needful that when we come to remember him who died for his enemies, we should partake in the like temper of charity. And herein you should examine yourselves.

First, Negatively. You must not entertain any hatred or malice against any of your brethren. The hands that are to be lifted up, and the hearts to be brought to Christ's table, must be *without malicious wrath*, as well as *doubting*. If therefore any soul of you is living in anger, implacable and unmerciful, proud and resentful, unwilling to ask forgiveness, or hard to grant it, if there be one person breathing, whose offences you do not from your heart give up all desire and thoughts of revenging ; if you are not ready on the first evidence of repentance to forgive ; and if you do not compassionate their perverseness, where you may not be permitted farther to shew the exercise of love, you may be assured you can have no portion nor lot in the matter ; your temper utterly excludes you ; it can never be a feast of love to a revengeful

spirit : and though you may pretend forgiveness, and seem reconciled, yet if the venom of malice rankle in your heart, and you want there the true spirit of charity, you are but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal ; you cannot eat of the Lord's body, nor have communion at his feast, nor partake of his benefits. Not that this merely is sufficient.—I only mention it to shew the glaring impiety of many who dare come with hearts full of uncharitableness, that probably the week before had been venting their undue anger, resentment and wrath, against those who have offended them, and have not mourned over and carried these hateful tempers to Jesus to subdue them. What a horrid profanation for such to pretend to a communion of saints, or to belong to that body, where every part hath the most tender care for its fellow-members ? These surely are under wrath. These must repent and have their hearts changed, or wrath will shortly come upon them to the uttermost.

Secondly, Positively. We must be found in the exercise of charity ; that is, we must have a tender feeling for the bodies and souls of men, whether believers or unbelievers ; and this expressed in all proper acts of kindness and love towards them, according to their several states.

1. To unbelievers, those that are not in a state of reconciliation with God ; who, though they may be professors in the church, evidence in their lives the unrenewed state of their hearts ; these we must pity and pray for, must never be provoked to hatred with their wickedness, must bear with their opposition, abuse or reviling, must labour to return them good for evil, and blessing for cursing ; must be ready to shew our affection, by helping their bodies in any time of want,

and readily ministering to their necessities out of our abundance, and especially desiring to help their souls, to seize any convenient occasion of conversing with them on their state, to apprise them of their danger, to improve any impressions which God's grace or providence may have made; and labour in every way to pluck such brands from the burning, whether by undeceiving them if they rest on a form of godliness, or warning them if careless and utterly negligent. Are you shewing forth any such exercise of love? Have you ever thus tenderly rebuked sin upon your brother? Have you pitied the misery of sinners? Have you borne with meekness and long-suffering their provocations? Are you gentle towards all men; not easily provoked; ready to pass by a transgression; and never avenging yourself, by withholding assistance from your greatest enemy, in his necessities? Are you ready to every good word and work for him, heaping coals of fire upon his head, to melt him down if possible to a sense of his ingratitude? Or whatever reluctance to it you find, in your remaining corrupt nature, is it your burden, and resolutely opposed? Can you pray affectionately for your bitterest enemy, and long for his conversion, that God may pardon him, as you are willing to do? This is a small, very small part of the exercise of this extensive grace; but I fear enough to condemn us, who are ready to kindle at every affront, to be impatient under provocation, to want compassion, to be destitute of those bowels of mercies which were in Jesus Christ, to forget how much God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. Yet to this we must seek to come, after this we must press, or we can never come to Christ's table acceptably, for he cannot bear to be approached by any

heart, where love unfeigned hath not wrought this powerful work.

2. We must shew our love especially to believers. To those who are of the same body, whose conversation testifies the truth of the grace which is in them; over these we must delight, with these especially associate, at Christ's table, or elsewhere; their bodies must be dear to us; whilst we do good to all, we must particularly regard the household of faith. But their souls especially we must watch for, mutually jealous over, and caring for each other, bearing with each other's infirmities, desiring each other's growth in grace, contributing to it by conversation, by example, by prayer, and every other means in our power; exhorting and admonishing one another, praying for, and with each other, as brethren of the same family, as children of the same Father, as partakers of the same table, as hoping for the same inheritance; we must love as brethren. A love which hath been declared by many, to be equal, I might say, to exceed that which nature implants in the dearest relations of life. The true believer can say, as Jesus Christ did of those who told him of his mother and his brethren, *he that heareth Christ's word, and doth it, the same is my brother, my sister and mother.* Have you such affection towards the children of God? Do you delight in those who love God, and keep his commandments? Are you seeking to approve yourself in every labour of love toward them, and receiving with thankfulness their labours of love toward you? Have you the same regard for their welfare, that your body hath for the several members of it? and do you feel for them and with them, in their trials, and alleviate their burdens by partaking of them? I have not space

to enlarge the inquiry ; but these may serve as short hints for your instruction, from whence you may draw a conclusion concerning your state and temper, how far you are really found in the exercise of these dispositions.

Blessed are they who have obtained any measure of these graces, blessed are they who are seeking after them. The sincere desire after an increase of grace, is true grace, and shall have a growing accomplishment. “ Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord ; repent you truly for your sins past ; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour ; be thankful ; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men ;” and this not superficially, but from the heart, in simplicity and godly sincerity, and “ so shall ye be meet partakers of those holy mysteries.”

CHAP. IV.

Considerations proper at the time of the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

HAVING in the last chapter set before you what was necessary to be examined into, in order to come to a right judgment of our state, and to approach with suitable dispositions the table of our Lord, I come now particularly to enter into the consideration of that frame of spirit which we should be in at the solemnity itself. Having the general requisites for the feast, there is also required a particular exercise of these graces, like trimming our lamps to go forth to meet the bridegroom. For this end, when we are purposing to renew our approach to the Lord's table, it will be useful at some season of leisure to inquire particularly how we stand, what progress we make in each of the afore-

mentioned tempers, and that we spend some time in meditation and prayer with a view to the ordinance. Not that I mean to tie down any believer to a regular form which he may not omit, or drive him from the table because the ordinance was unexpected, or some peculiar calls prevented him from particular previous exercises of retirement, examination, meditation and prayer: No; though it were desirable to be thus employed before, and in general such preparation will greatly conduce to the enlivening our hearts, and be a mean of leading us in a more sacramental frame to the table, yet he that hath the Lord Jesus formed in him, is always called upon to come and receive the tokens of his love.

At the celebration of the feast itself, the following observations will deserve our attention; and, I trust, minister to our edification.

I. How we should improve the time before we come to the Lord's table.

II. How to demean ourselves at the table.

III. The use we should make of what time remains when we return from the table.

I. At the celebration of the Lord's supper, we should approach the table with a frame of mind suited to the particular occasion. As,

1. With a deep sense of our own unworthiness. The service ended, when communicating begins, some short time for recollection is afforded us; our first thoughts then should always be of the great condescension of Christ, that suffers such rebellious, such sinful dust and ashes as we are, to approach his table; the deeper sense we have of our vileness, the more shall we admire the grace of a dying Saviour; and we can never enough abase ourselves, the lowest we can think of ourselves will be less than the truth of our state. If the holy Patriarch could say, *he was less*

than the least of all God's mercies, what may we? Indeed the confession put into our mouths, that "we are not worthy of so much as the crumbs that fall from Christ's table," should now be deep upon our hearts in some such thoughts as these, "What am I, Lord God, that I should approach thy table? What am I, who am unworthy to be put among the dogs of the flock, that I should be fed with children's bread? What am I, that I should see the King at his table, who have so dishonoured him as I have done? What am I, that I should come to claim such inexpressible privileges? I; who deserve nothing but death, nothing but hell?" As Mephibosheth said to David, *What am I, that the king should look upon such a dead dog as I am? God, to use the language of the Psalmist, loves to take us from the dunghill, before he sets us among the princes. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

2. We should draw near with reverence and godly fear, remembering with whom we are transacting, even with the God of glory, before whom ten thousand times ten thousand burning seraphs minister, and whom angels adore; remembering what an awful work we are calling to mind, even that scene which the earth trembled, and the sun grew dark to behold; remembering how great an affair is now in hand, no less than the sealing to us the eternal redemption of our souls; these views will shew us, that the frame of our minds cannot be enough serious and reverential. *If God is always to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him, when ought our exercise of this temper to be so deep and solemn, as in this most holy and sacred assembly? If the angels themselves approaching his throne, are repre-*

sented as veiling their faces with their wings, how ought awe to spread its silent dread upon our souls and our countenance to receive the sacred impression when we are approaching his table? Dare we rush into the presence of an earthly monarch without veneration and respect? and shall we not be much more careful how we draw near to him, whose throne is in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all? That great Jehovah, that eternal God, who humbleth himself when he beholds the things in heaven; and how much more when he stoops to treat and commune with poor dying sinful worms of the earth?

3. We should approach without distraction. The sense of God should banish every other thought. We should leave the world behind us, and for the time seek to disengage ourselves from every care or concern about it; lifting up our hearts to him to restrain our wanderings, and fixed on the point before us, as much as may be, without diverting from it, to the right hand or the left. And in order hereto, it will be profitable to keep our eyes from looking round us, to have so settled our worldly affairs before as to prevent their intrusion, and to keep our thoughts recollected, that we may feel ourselves standing as it were, naked and open before him with whom we have to do, seeing him that is invisible; the tempers of our minds calm and serene, and all our thoughts fixed, sedate and attentive.

4. We should come with cheerful confidence in God, as our reconciled Father in Christ. As we are not going to hear our condemnation, but to receive our renewed acquittance and assurance of favour, we should approach in the character

of children, should possess the confidence of children, with gladness and singleness of heart, coming to the table where our Father gives the testimony of his regard to us. To come with slavish trembling and confusion to a feast of love, is utterly unseemly ; and shews either that we are unacquainted with the nature of the ordinance, or have not that faith which embraces the promises, and realizes the sign. We must remember we are approaching a table which love, eternal love, hath spread for sinners. That we have such a powerful advocate for us entered into the heavens ; that we may come boldly to the throne of grace, and not fear a disappointment. And that therefore in the strength of all this, we may without presumption, if we are really children of God, draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. This disposition is as honourable to God, as comfortable to ourselves, and most needful now to be exercised, when every soul should rejoice, and be exceeding glad, and triumph in the God of his salvation. When people come to the communion, as criminals to the bar, it plainly shews, they are still under the law, and are in bondage unto fear ; that they have been resting on their own preparation, and their own worthiness, as though they must be in such a measure good, and they were afraid they had not arrived at the measure they proposed to themselves ; thus making faith void, and the promise of none effect. But believing souls, (unless *for a season, if need be, they be in heaviness through manifold temptations*) will be cheerful ones ; they become humble, yet confident : serious, yet cheerful.

5. We should draw near with hunger and thirst after righteousness. Just as at our meals

appetite makes the feast, so it is here; *He filleth the hungry with good things, and sendeth the rich empty away.* Such earnest cravings then as your body hath after food, such your soul should have after Christ, and his righteousness, that you may be found in him. Consider what you would feel if you travelled through a barren and dry land, would you not say, Hungry and thirsty your soul fainted? Would not you cry, Water, water, to cool the burning tongue?—would not you drink deep into the stream, when from the rock the river issued forth at your cry, and refreshed your parched throat? This world is that barren land, your soul that parched traveller, Christ the living rock, the ordinances the pools of water, to which if any man thirst, let him come and drink, yea, come and take of the water of life freely. See then that your hunger and thirst be felt; see that you relish and find such expressions as these, agreeable to your frame and temper: *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God; when shall I come to appear in the presence of God!* Then you will find your heart drawn up to greater nearness to God; your affections will be more united to him; and, as the refreshments of food to a hungry man, this feast will be *a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.*

6. We should come with enlivened expectations of receiving according to the necessities of our souls. Having before examined our state in order to discover what graces we most stood in need of, what corruptions called for mortification, what trying circumstances have most endangered us, here we must look upon ourselves as sure to receive grace and strength proportion-

ed to our wants. God, who calls upon us, is the Lord of all grace, and he gives, like a King, liberally to every one that asketh, and this too usually *exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think*; all that Christ has purchased, and that is no less than all the blessings of time and eternity, we may put in our request for; and, instead of being thought unreasonable in our desires, the more enlarged they are, the more pleasing will they be to God. We cannot expect to receive so much as he is willing to give; full measure heaped up and running over, will he pour into the bosom of those who come to him with enlivened faith, and big with expectation of receiving, not for our deserts indeed, but for his righteousness sake.

7. We should approach with fervent charity. This is commanded us above all things, and most needful when we are celebrating together this visible communion of saints; where we join in one body, to eat the same bread, and drink the same cup. Before you come here, you will have taken care to purge out the old leaven of malice and wickedness, that as the elect of God, you might put on bowels of mercies, kindness, long-suffering, and, with a peculiar affection, love the brethren: here this love will have a lively exercise on the objects before you; you will find your heart ascending up in prayer over them, thankful for them, delighting in them, regarding them as dear unto you as your own soul, at least desiring to be so affected, and chiding your heart for the deadness which at any time you experience. Then, whilst the minister of the Lord is praying over them, that "the body and blood of Christ would keep their bodies and souls unto everlasting life," you will be wrestling in prayer together for them, that they may not go away

without a blessing; according to the promise, that *where two or three are agreed together concerning any thing they should ask in Christ's name, it should be given them.*

8. We should approach with a lively sense of the transaction itself. Christ, crucified before our eyes, should pierce our hearts with shame for our sins. His love should awaken our most lively affections; his unspeakable gift draw out our warmest gratitude; and all our souls, melted into self-loathing, humble joy, and holy delight, should testify how highly we esteem this most solemn ordinance. These views dwelling upon our minds, will greatly contribute to render our devotions before we communicate, fervent, humble and joyous; (and surely our hearts must be hard indeed, if on our knees there before the Lord we find not some gracious relentings, some delightful enlargements of soul towards Jesus Christ) nor is a lively, sensible experience of these things, at any time more desirable or more proper than now, considering where we are, what we remember, and how we are interested in it.

These are the things which will shew our frame of spirit to be sacramental. Not that I would mean to say, that though we should come short in one or other or all of these, we should therefore be unfit for the ordinance; no: but we should labour after these, be humbled for our great defectiveness and low advancements, whilst the higher measures we attain of these things, the more comfortable will the communion be, as well as more profitable.

II. Having thus improved the short time before the Lord's supper, when we come to the table, we must mind the grand business we have to do there, which is to receive Christ's pledge,

in token that he hath received us, and to make a solemn surrender of our souls to him ; so that henceforth *our Maker is our husband*, and we are no longer *our own*, but his. Whilst the minister then is about to put the elements into our hands and to make his prayer over us, this surrender should be made in the following way.

1. Deliberately. Having counted the cost, on one hand we see a merciful and all-sufficient Saviour, who hath all grace to pardon, and all power to renew, promising us to undertake for us, to bless, preserve and comfort us ; yet withal, we being corrupt and fallen creatures, this cannot be done without a course of self-denial and mortification of our members upon earth, though to encourage us to it, this be most intimately connected with eternal glory. On the other hand, we see the indulgences of flesh and sense, the pleasures of sin for a season, but withal the curse of God in time and in eternity : we are therefore through grace fully disposed to renounce the one, and chuse the other. This cannot be done too clearly and coolly. Before at our devotions, we cannot be too lively and fervent in spirit, here we cannot be too deliberate. Chusing Christ as our best portion, whatever mortification and self-denial, whatever reproach, whatever difficulties may attend his service, that so we may not in a fit of devotion swear we will *go with him to prison and to death* ; and then by and by, when corruptions strive, and Satan tempts, or tribulation comes, be offended, and go back from our engagements ; but so simply and steadily set our hands to the plough, as never to look back, but *be faithful unto death, that we may receive the crown of life*.

2. Humbly. We may not be confident, but *in the Lord and the power of his might*. We

are promising things, the least of which is above our strength. God must *work in us to do*, as he hath *wrought in us to will* ; and it is with this view we must surrender up ourselves to him, humbly sensible that we are not in any wise *sufficient of ourselves*, but we *commit our souls into his hands as a faithful Creator*. The sense of our own nothingness should especially lie upon our hearts, when we are admitted to this awful covenant, and receive the seals of it into our hands. All is from the Lord ; he alone that hath begun his work in us can perfect the same, and enable us to abide faithful to the vows which are upon us.

3. *Cheerfully*. We are a willing people ; we give up our souls to Christ, and all we have, and are to be for ever his ; not so much because we are bound to do it, as because we delight to do it. We are a free-will offering ; drawn, not driven ; hearty not reserved ; love fixes our choice, and Christ is to us all in all. We wish we had a thousand hearts to give him, we would not hesitate to part with any thing he calls for, we would delight in that which he commands. With a willing mind we take his easy yoke and light burden, and are pleased with every opportunity of renewing our bonds, that we may thereby be united closer to the Lord our head.

4 *Sincerely*. This indeed is the life of the whole. A double heart, a reserved surrender, is an abomination before God. If our eye pities, or our hearts spare one evil temper, one sin, if we should *dissemble with our lips, and flatter him with our tongue*, wo unto us ; he that seeth our thoughts afar off, would condemn us even on our knees at the table. Though we should deceive ourselves by our hypocrisy, God cannot be mocked. We must be sincere before him, our

naked souls should be exposed to his view, and an honest appeal to our hearts, that God himself knows we desire to make no reserve. See to this, that you make no partial surrender; God must have all our hearts, or none; if we divide them, by fixing one part on the world, if we would plead for ever so little of its sinful indulgencies, if we want to reconcile the services of God and mammon, allowing part of our affections to the pleasures, vanities, interests, or gain of this present evil world, and think God will be satisfied with the remainder, we are utterly mistaken. The true surrender is to give up all, and to take Christ as Lord of all, our King to reign over us, as well as our propitiation and atonement. This is sincerity, much talked of, little known. See that it be your own case; without it the strongest promises, the greatest outward reformation, the most lively pangs of devotion, a torrent of tears, or the most solemn remorse, will but deceive you. Coolly, humbly, cheerfully and wholly, without partiality and without hypocrisy, desire to give up your soul to Christ; that so you may be able to adopt the words of an excellent christian, and testify as he did :

“ But if I might make some reserve,

“ And duty did not call;

“ I love my Lord with such a love,

“ That I would give him all.”

It will be a blessed ordinance indeed, if you can see such to be the frame of your heart at Christ's table, and seal it by the solemn pledges of the body and blood of Christ, which are put into your hands. Here then you will see, at the first view, the absurdity and ignorance it betrays, to be coming up to the Lord's table reading some book of devotion, and in a formal dull

way to be supplying the want of spirituality by such a lifeless repetition of a number of words. Surely if you come to give up your heart to Christ, if you feel the obligations lying upon you to do so, you can never need to read it out of a book; your eye should be on your heart, not the paper; and you should be looking to the dear Saviour, whom you are remembering, and calling forth this heartiness, simplicity, and sincerity of soul, with which you chuse the Lord for your portion.

Thus you may know how to behave at the Lord's table. And then,

III. When you depart from thence, I suppose the following things will be a proper exercise for you.

1. You should retire to your place, and there begin with an Amen to all that hath passed; renewing before God the solemn renunciation of sin, and choice of Christ, which you have made, and the hearty purpose you have of abiding by it. You should there offer again your earnest supplications for grace to be faithful, and that you may really be enabled to receive the Lord Jesus, as a master to serve, as well as a portion to enjoy; that so this God may be your God for ever and ever, and you may be his even unto death.

2. You should depart with admiration of the condescension and grace you have experienced. That ever the God of glory should stoop to look upon you; that ever Jesus Christ should admit you to his table; that ever the Holy Ghost should make your heart his dwelling; that ever such great and precious promises should be made to you; that ever you should be permitted to receive the seals of the covenant, established with the high and holy One that inhabiteth e-

ternity ; that ever he should institute such an ordinance, to confirm your faith in his purposes of mercy towards you. How astonishing is all this, enough almost to surpass belief, did not God himself assure us that all this is his will concerning us ! Yet still be more amazed, when you consider what you are, a creature in the lowest rank of rational beings, a poor worm whose breath is in his nostrils, a dying man, sprung from the dust, and returning to the dust again ; and more than all, a sinful, a corrupted creature by nature, by practice become the abomination of that God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ; but now pardoned, adopted, counted righteous, sanctified, exalted to the most amazing privileges, even to be the heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ. Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth ! Admire, ye angels that surround his throne, whilst ye minister to us below ! What tongue can tell the wonders of redeeming grace ! who can help breaking forth in astonishment. What manner of love is this ! whilst overwhelmed with wonder too big for utterance, in silence we believe, admire and adore ? Such sensibility will shew a right apprehension of the greatness of the grace bestowed on us. And,

3. We should be filled with thankfulness.— Such a frame is the consequence of the former ; admiring the grace our hearts cry out, *What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all his benefits bestowed upon me ? Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name ; praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. I will praise him with joyful lips, yea, as long as I have any being, will I sing praises to my God.* These are the out-breathings of the soul who hath tasted that the Lord is gracious ; not the formal thanks of pha-

ritual ceremony, but the inward, deep, heartfelt expressions of a soul, that labours to tell the Lord Jesus how deeply he admires the grace in which he hath partaken ; and a blessed frame this is. The comfort of it to the soul is as great as the honour done to God thereby ; *for whoso offereth me praise, saith he, he glorifieth me.*

4. We should depart with a sense of our great imperfection in all our services. This is needful, lest, if we have received much spiritual consolation, we should be exalted above measure ; and truly cause enough there is for it, seeing in our best attendances upon God, there is much lacking, and when we have done all, may justly say, we are unprofitable servants. And who that knows his own heart, will not have cause to mourn over some unbelief, some coldness, some deadness, some wandering, some indisposition, some want of a lively exercise of grace, some undue affections ? This all must be laid to our corruptions, whilst all that is good in us, should be ascribed to God's free grace, and the praise given to him to whom alone praise is due. Our very communicatings indeed would be our confusion and condemnation, yea, even of the best of us, if we had not one in heaven to bear the iniquity of our holy things, and to pardon the imperfection of our services, as well as the guilt of our sins ; and therefore always to be clothed with humility ; and to stand before God in the perfect righteousness of Christ, is the way to be always acceptable of God.

5. We should rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in these fresh testimonies of his love towards us. To be abased for what we see amiss in ourselves, and yet happy in Christ Jesus, explains that strange, but blessed paradox of St. Paul, *though sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.* Indeed our

sorrows are a part of our joy ; and that we can feel or mourn over our imperfections, is no slight testimony of Christ's love towards us : and when shall we rejoice, if not now, when we have seen the Lord, have found a welcome, and received refreshment at his table : have joined ourselves to him in bonds of an everlasting covenant, having espoused our souls to him in truth and in righteousness, and put on the seal of our adoption, the ring of our contract, and enjoyed spiritual communion with him, and obtained new supplies of grace from him ? Surely may we say, *I will rejoice and be glad in thee, I will remember thy love more than wine. I will make mention of the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord; according to all the great goodness that the Lord hath bestowed upon me.* Happy, holy joy ! how different from the mirth of vanity, which makes the heart sad ! how different from the short-lived joys of this world, which are but as the suddenly expiring blaze of thorns. This is the foretaste of eternal bliss, a drop of those everlasting pleasures out of the ocean, from which we shall shortly be replenished at God's right hand for evermore.

6. We should depart with fresh courage to fight the Lord's battles against the world, the flesh, and the devil. It was said of the primitive christians, when they met for these holy purposes, that "they went in as lambs, but came out as lions." So should it be said of us. Receiving strength from the Lord, we should depart with full purpose of heart to cleave unto and labour for the Lord ; to shew forth all holy zeal and boldness, and never to be ashamed of our profession, or act unsuitably to it. This ordinance should mightily confirm, strengthen and establish us : so that our souls, manifestly

refreshed by it, may be pressing forwards, amidst surrounding enemies, with renewed vigour, *towards the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.*

7. Lastly, We should depart with increasing desires after the kingdom of heaven. If in these lower courts, the glimpse of glory be so delightful, what must the full blaze of that beatific vision be, when we shall no longer through the the dark glass of faith, but face to face, behold Jesus as he is? When we shall see him with our mortal eye enthroned, to bless and glorify his people; and find all our souls infinitely more happy in the intimate union to, and communion with him, than now it is possible for us to conceive. Here our joys are at best imperfect, and some tears of sorrow for what remains of darkness and sin, still steal down our cheeks; but there every tear shall be wiped from our eyes, there imperfection will be no more, we shall be like him, as he is, *perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.* Hath our faith then entered into that within the veil, have we seen Jesus sitting on the right hand of God, how can we but *desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better?* How can we but long for the wings of a dove, that we may fly away, and be at rest in this dear Saviour's bosom? Is faith at present so comfortable? is hope only so pleasing? what must it then be when faith is lost in sight, and hope in enjoyment? See then that your souls pant high for glory, and that you go away from this table with such a heavenly mind, as both brings down a taste of heaven below, and sharpens the desire after the full enjoyment of everlasting rest. This will be a profitable use of the ordinance. I can pray for nothing more

conducive to your eternal salvation, than that such may be abidingly and increasingly the holy frame of your mind. Then you will know the blessing of discerning the Lord's body; and find, by delightful experience, that the body and blood of Christ, thus received, will keep your body and soul unto everlasting life.

CHAP. V.

Directions for the Communicant's daily Walk with God, after receiving the Lord's Supper.

HAVING hitherto led you on from the nature of the ordinance to the dispositions necessary for partaking of it, and the frame wherein we should approach the Lord's table, I would conclude the whole with some considerations of what sort our after-consideration should be, and by what means we may be enabled so to walk, as becomes our profession. This being the great end of the ordinance, that its influence may abide with us, and that it be not looked upon as a ceremonious visit, which we may forget till the time returns again. And here I solemnly admonish all you, who have partaken in these holy mysteries, *to take heed to yourselves, lest you lose the things you have wrought.* Remember Judas, who no sooner received the sop, but Satan entered into him; and, though he so often had eat and drank at Christ's table, was a son of perdition, and betrayed his Master. And therefore if, as we have engaged, we would take Christ for our Master, and live as his faithful and covenant-servants, or rather brethren and friends, then must we shew forth the following conversation.

I. We should go forth into the world professing his name. We must not be ashamed of

Christ, nor his cause; we should speak for his honour, and glory in his cross. Profession now becomes peculiarly demanded from us as communicants; and whilst in these evil days, vital christianity and real religion is branded with every opprobrious name that an ungodly world, who know not the truth, can invent; we must heartily welcome these reproaches, and walk so as to deserve them; not silent, hiding our heads, sealing up our lips, and leaving the world to their own ways, but by an open declaration at every proper season bearing testimony against them, that their works are evil; boldly rebuking vice by word as well as practice; having *no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*, but separating ourselves from all intimate society with every brother who walketh disorderly, whose conversation agrees not with the simplicity of the gospel. This will make us singular, it is true; we shall be unlike the world, and displease the world; but wherefore did we meet at Christ's table, but to make our solemn declaration to him, that *we are not of the world, even as he is not of the world?* and how shall we dare be so unfaithful, as to go forth and mix again familiarly, and as bosom friends, with those who are *enemies to the cross of Christ, who glory in their shame, who mind earthly things?* To take up our cross, and follow Christ, was our sacramental vow.—But how unfaithfully have many of you hitherto performed it? How utterly strangers are you this day to any reproach or shame for Christ's sake? Where is your cross that you have borne in the world? Alas! you go from the Lord's table and return again to the world just as before, lost in its cares, pleasures and vanities; and how then should the world possibly have any quarrel with you? *ye are of the world, and there-*

fore the world loves its own. You never by your professions disturb the slumbers or security of the unawakened souls around you; the form of a ceremonious duty will reprove nobody, unless there be afterwards something more of profession than this mere act of communicating. But be sincere, and then you cannot escape; go into the world, speak as a christian, profess your views, live for Christ, and then the world and you will have no longer fellowship; for if you are thus chosen out of the world, the world cannot but hate you. Let this, brethren, comfort you who bear forth Christ's name in the world, as well as at his table; the cross is an honourable badge, to be reproached for righteousness sake is happiness. The remembrance of our surrender to Christ, will make us count all things light and easy; and suffering as a christian, we need not be ashamed; *we know in whom we have believed*; we know under whose banners we have taken the sacrament to fight; and God forbid we should quit our colours for shame, reproach, evil report, dishonour or reviling, yea, though we were called for his sake to prison or to death.

2. We must practice as we profess. Going forth to give up our whole bodies, souls and spirits to Christ, and to walk worthy the high vocation wherewith we are called, we should carry away with us impressed upon our hearts the vows we have made, that so whenever sin would tempt us, we may have this answer to make, *How shall I do this wicked thing, and sin against God, who have but lately so solemnly given up myself to him?* If Christ hath been pleased to take us for his own, shall we rob him of the purchase of his blood, and dishonour him who hath so highly exalted us? surely this would be as ungrateful as guilty. The eyes of the world will be upon

us, and they are piercing and quick ; if they see our conversation to be nothing different from their own, they will say, *What do ye more than others ?* and what advantage will this give to the adversaries of the Lord to blaspheme?— ‘These,’ say they, ‘are your communicants ; here they are all devotion, but go home with them from church, and you see them as passionate and proud, as covetous and worldly, as vain and trifling, as false and deceitful, as any of their neighbours.’ And if this be the case with any of you, brethren, what a curse will it bring upon you ? what a disgrace will it be to your profession ! and how will religion be wounded, even in the house of its friends, by your unbecoming conversation ? May not the adversaries of the Lord then be hardened in their sins, and confirmed in their prejudices, whilst they see under the outward cloke of profession, that rank hypocrisy lurks within ; and saving outward appearance, that you are neither more humble, more holy, more mortified, more heavenly-minded than themselves ? Surely it were better for such an one, unless mercy restore him, *that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the midst of the sea,* than that ever he approached the table of the Lord. But if you would not have this heavy guilt lying upon your souls, then you must labour to *adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things,* by such an unblamable conduct, that they who seek occasion against you may be disappointed, and find no evil thing justly to say of you.— Your lives should be as the light of the morning, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day, and your works such as may glorify your Father which is in heaven. Then, if men speak evil of your good conversation in Christ, these

adversaries of the Lord should be found liars ; and all who will inquire even here, will detect their malice ; and *in the great day of the Lord*, they shall be covered with confusion, and receive the reward of *lying lips and a deceitful tongue, in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

3. We must go forth particularly to exercise the duties of our respective stations and relations in life. Herein especially the power of religion is shewn forth ; a passionate master, a fretful mistress, a haughty husband, a self-willed wife, a cruel father, an undutiful son, a slothful servant, or a false friend, none of these can possibly have any pretensions to real christianity. To suppose it possible, would be supposing a contradiction possible, that light and darkness, Christ and Belial could agree. Particular watchfulness will be needful. In every family lies the greatest proof of the sincerity of the members of it ; they will prove their fidelity to Christ by their love one towards another, shewn in the conscientious discharge of their several relations ; the master ruling with gentleness, the servant labouring with cheerfulness and fidelity ; the husband kind and tender, the wife meek and obedient ; the father mixing parental affection with correction, the son manifesting filial love with dutiful submission, and so in every other case.— This will make our houses temples ; and the charity, forbearance, patience and submission, shewn one to another in such families, will be the most convincing proof that Christ really dwells under that roof ; and such it is required of communicants to be : and towards those who are without, the same spirit must shew itself.

(1.) In the uprightness of all our dealings, in our intercourse with the world : *We shall not go.*

beyond, or defraud our brother in any matter, but rendering to every man their dues, shall owe no man any thing. We shall do our work as under the bonds of the covenant, *not with eye-service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of the Lord, doing the will of God from the heart* — We shall deal with each other in the simplicity which is in Christ, renouncing every hidden work of dishonesty, and abhorring the appearances of fraud and injustice. And thus walking under an higher principle than the world is ever acquainted with, even under the eye, and as in the presence of a heart-searching God, shall convince even those we cannot convert, that there is a power in the religion of Jesus Christ to do that which nothing upon earth can do besides.

(2.) We must shew it in the meekness of our conversations. The power of religion is glorious, when it tames the impetuosity of our passions, softens our severity into mildness, and puts a bridle both on our hearts and tongues. Coming from the table of a meek and lowly Jesus, we must needs learn of him to be meek and lowly of heart, if we would find rest unto our souls. It is strange hypocrisy to come with pretence of seeking *the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated*, and going home to disturb all around us by our passions and perverseness; instead of gentleness, to be a lion in our house, and frantic among our servants; instead of easiness to be intreated, implacable and unmerciful; this is not to partake of the table of the Lord, but the table of devils, for these are the dispositions of Satan. Let this thing, brethren, be seriously attended to, let it appear what Christ at his table hath done for you, by the change wrought in your tempers, by the mildness, sweetness, com-

passion, forbearance, and gentleness of your conversation.

(3.) Be temperate in all things. In the world, that its anxious cares and concerns do not engage you immoderately. In your body, that you deny its cravings, *making no provision for the flesh*, by sloth, drunkenness, gluttony or pleasure, *to fulfil the lusts thereof*: *They that are Christ's, have both crucified the world and the flesh with its affections and lusts.* A worldly covetous communicant, a drunken intemperate communicant, a lewd and carnal communicant, what can be so monstrous a thing? Can we receive the body of Christ in one hand, whilst we grasp the world in the other? Can the same eyes that have looked upon a crucified Saviour, indulge wantonness or be greedy of gain? Can these hearts that have been made the temples of the Holy Ghost, erect the altar of Mammon there, or entertain those vile affections which must defile the sacred place? Let it appear then that you are now no longer debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh; that *the world is crucified unto you, and you unto the world*; that you have higher enjoyments than flesh or sense, and nobler prospects than earth can give you; and this may well make you dead to the love of worldly things, and temperate in the use of them.

(4.) Shew forth your love to your brethren. *As good stewards of the manifold gifts of God, according as God hath given to every one, let him minister the same to him that lacketh.* Do we abound in riches, let us abound also in liberality? have we but little, let us *shew our diligence to give of that little*? The trifle we contribute at the table, should be as the first-fruits, to sanctify our other gifts, in token that we do them all in Christ's name, and for his sake. But

there are other and far greater demonstrations of love, which we are called to exercise towards our brethren, than the relief of their poverty, such as bearing the infirmities of the weak, condescending to the meanest, ready to help them with our presence, advice or influence, where any or all of these may be necessary ; counting none beneath our notice or regard ; seeing the unspeakable condescensions of Christ to us, who, *though he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.* Have we really seen him come *not to be ministered unto, but to minister ?* have we seen his love in *giving his life a ransom for us ?* how ought we then to love one another, yea, to be ready to lay down, if need be, our lives for the brethren ? for how dear ought those bodies to be to us, for which Christ's body was given ? how precious ought those souls to be in our eyes, for which Christ's soul *was sorrowful, even unto death ?* This universal love to all, but especially to those *who are of the household of faith,* we must go forth to exercise, that so all men may know we are Christ's disciples, by that unfeigned affection we bear one towards another.

(5.) Our conversation after this ordinance should be more heavenly. What hath a christian any longer to do among the tombs of this world, who is come from remembering a living, dying, risen and ascended Saviour ? *Our conversation,* says St. Paul, *is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.* Have we there remembered his coming again ? what have we then to do but to make ready for it, that our affections being set on things in heaven, not on things on earth, we may wel-

come the day of his appearance and glory.— Here is the grand evidence of a christian. Others direct all their aims, pursuits and designs after the things which are seen, and are temporal; he seeks always the things above, the things which are unseen to others, but realized by faith to him, and most important, because eternal. See that this be your experience, that every time you communicate, you find the effects of it thus evident, in lifting up your hearts after Christ in the heavens; in quickening your preparation to meet him in the clouds, and continually making you more ready and disposed for that inheritance among the saints in light, which in the ordinance was sealed to you, and to which you were called.

Such should be our conversation after every sacramental occasion, that all who see us may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus; and behold from our walk the brightness of the grace communicated to us, making us shine as lights in the world, like Moses' face when he came down from the mount of vision. I would to God this was more the case; and that all that were joined to the Lord in bonds of outward communion with him, were thus one spirit with him; walked more as Christ walked. I am very sure it is the great grief of every truly christian heart, whenever they behold the contrary, and see these spots at our feasts *feasting themselves without fear, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.* May you and I fear for ourselves, and give greater *diligence to make our calling and election sure*, continuing to walk thus as persons professing godliness. In order to which, we shall find the following means most highly conducive; and I pray God you may have such desires thus to give up your hearts to

God, as heartily to exercise yourselves unto godliness in all the ways the Spirit points out to you; and these are chiefly,

1. Watchfulness.
2. Prayer.
3. The word.
4. The company of lively christians.

1. To walk as becometh your christian profession, you must be watchful. The enemies whom you renounce are mightier than you, wise, watchful and ensnaring. The devil continually spreads his toils, and is never perhaps busier with us than after such a season, when the fervour of devotion being somewhat abated, our hearts are more exposed to his attacks; then he would step in, tempt us to return unto folly, follow his insinuations with some bait laid in our way, and so work upon the remainder of corruption within us, in order to betray us into his hands. Thus after the sop, Satan entered into Judas. As not ignorant therefore of his devices, we should especially beware of security. *Let not him that putteth on the armour, boast as he who taketh it off.* When the cold turf covers our head, *then the wicked will cease from troubling, and the weary have perfect rest*; but here every step we take we are among lions, and must stand on our watch-tower, fearing always, and working out our salvation with that trembling and care which can only secure it. A holy jealousy is the great preservative against falling away. The moment we begin to slumber, our watchful adversary is ready to take advantage against us: but *blessed is the man whom his Lord when he cometh shall find watching.*

2. Prayer is the greatest means of preserving the influence of this ordinance upon our hearts. This is closely connected with the former, watch-

fulness and prayer go together ; we must pray that we may watch, and continue watching unto prayer. It is not enough once to draw nigh unto God, but we should daily be keeping near to him, and upon our knees in our closets acting over again that surrender which we have made at the table. Prayer is the breath of the divine nature, of the new creation begun in us, and by it we should be offering up our souls daily to him, from whom cometh our salvation. By prayer we should seek to maintain an holy frame of spirit, appearing solemnly and frequently in secret in God's presence, that we may habitually walk under the sense of it. Whoever hath any experience of divine things, will find his constant need, and the gracious influence of earnest and importunate prayer ; such an one cannot but pray, all his soul depends upon it, he knows he shall quickly grow careless the moment he becomes prayerless ; and therefore he remarks the smallest decays in private prayer, stirs up his soul to the lively exercise of it, and pleads for the Spirit to blow up the fire of all holy graces in his heart. To neglect prayer, or to perform it with an habitual negligence and formality, is a most suspicious sign that all approaches to God at his table were mere matters of form, the work of a day, not the spiritual exercises of the heart, desiring nearness to and communion with God ; for where this is the case in one ordinance, it must be so in another : they who long to see Christ at his table, are daily setting him before them, when they bow their knees at his footstool ; and this both prepares the way before, and keeps alive the sense of what they have found at Christ's communion afterwards. Pray therefore, I beseech you, without ceasing, as you hope to stand fast, as you would be true to your en-

gagements, as you profess the name of christian, as you would walk as becometh your profession, as you would shew forth the sincerity of your surrender to Christ by the discharge of your several relations in life, as you would have your conversation in heaven, I beseech you be diligent in private prayer ; else you will dishonour your vocation, you will walk in disobedience, as do others, you will have your conversation upon earth, you will be a slave to the world ; and notwithstanding all you may do besides, your fall will be more dreadful, and your ruin most inevitable. You must pray or perish.

3. The word of God is another great means to keep us from falling. Herein we must exercise ourselves day and night. Out of it we must be taught the way wherein we must go. This must be *the guide to our feet, and the lanthorn to our paths* ; and in our course to glory, be our map and chart. Communion seasons are places of refreshment in the way, to strengthen us for our journey : Christ in the word is the way itself, in which after such refreshment we are to walk. To the word therefore you must apply, to know more perfectly the mind of God, that you may follow it more faithfully ; and if you have been sincere with Christ, you will do so ; *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments* ; you will keep the scriptures upon your heart, rising up and lying down ; they will be daily in your hands at any season of leisure, and particularly before you set yourself to the exercise of prayer. This is the way to be taught of God, and instructed in the way that you should go. You will find thus your heart built up, more determined for Christ, and more stedfast in his service ; having set his commandments

ever before you, and being stedfastly purposed through grace not to sin against them.

4. Lastly. The company of lively christians is a choice means and wonderous help to keep alive the serious impressions made upon the soul. *As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend.* Experience will best confirm the truth of this observation. Man is by nature social, needing the help one of another; and christians more so than other men, who have new and stronger bands than nature to unite them, and have many enemies that none others know. To associate therefore for the purposes of religious improvement, is not more comfortable than necessary; *How can one be warm alone?* says the Prophet. But when we join to exhort, reprove, rebuke, and admonish one another, then the fire catches from heart to heart, each receives some quickening, or consolation, or correction from the other's experience and conversation; and thus the communion of saints before the Lord is still maintained, till the season returns when we shall come together again in God's house, and renew the bonds of union and fellowship one with another. Let me therefore recommend it to you to seek the company of those, whose course and conduct is most holy, heavenly, and zealous; to be free one with another; to open your hearts, as christians, in that mutual confidence, which none but real christians have any experience of, to delight in social prayer, and be desirous to join in it whenever you have opportunity. A conduct indeed, which, to those who know nothing of heart-religion, is always offensive and disliked; but which all, who have seriously set their souls to seek the kingdom of God in the first place, have found both most necessary to keep alive their holy purposes, and most

conducive to the comfort as well as edification of their souls.

In this way you will always be going forward, and be growing in grace as in days, riper for glory as you advance towards it. You will be walking in an holy conformity to your profession, and approving your fidelity to Christ your Master. And thus from eating and drinking at Christ's table below, you will shortly go to drink with him the new wine of eternal consolation in the kingdom of your Father.

CHAP. VI.

Directions for Prayer.

PRAYER is the desire of the soul after God, arising from a sense of want, and expressing a dependance on his promises for a supply according to our necessities.

It is evident that the heart must be engaged, or there can be no prayer. The words of the lip, or the bending of the knee, are hypocrisy without this. The finest produce of the understanding, whether the composition of others or our own, is no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, if the spirit of prayer be wanting. Whilst, on the other hand, the simplest expressions, yea perhaps the most ungrammatical language, may convey the fervent desires of effectual prayer most acceptably, before the God *who trieth the heart and the reins.*

The most natural method of prayer is the artless language of the soul, dictated by want, and warmed with desire; and I suppose every soul, really awakened to feel his necessities, will be able, for the most part, to speak what he feels, without any assistance.

I commend extempore prayer, because I have not only my own experience, the experience of all living christians, but the very reason of the thing to plead for it. Yet there are cases and circumstances wherein we may, no doubt, receive assistance from the labours of others; as Aaron was a mouth to Moses, so there may be helps to such as are slow of speech.

In secret we should not exclude forms of prayer, though for the most part they are rather a clog than a help to devotion, when solely made use of. They seem useful,

1. When used as a directory we place it before us, having first considered it as applicable to our state, and, in the exercise of prayer, enlarge upon the particular circumstances we are in.

2. At times we may find such a want of expression, as to need assistance of that kind, and may experience our hearts more quickened by it. Here the end of prayer being considered, what most promotes that is certainly best.

3. At first, having never been used at all to pray before, we may make use of the mouth of our neighbours to express our own case, and teach our lips a language, which the heart wants to utter.

But the great use of forms of prayer seems to be in social worship.

As prayer is the duty of every individual for himself in secret, so is it also enjoined on all christians in their social relations. The master of every family is bound by the religion of Jesus to make his house a house of prayer. When christians meet together in private as well as in the congregation, prayer is the most proper and natural employment. Abundant evidence of this occurs in the New Testament.

The gifts of God are variously dispensed.—

Some have a facility of expression, and readiness of elocution, which is denied to others. Hence some can speak for others, without the assistance of a form of prayer, and this is undoubtedly the most profitable; for in this case, the knowledge of the peoples' state gives the person who prays an opportunity of adapting his requests more exactly to the case of those who join with him; besides, that there is something much more enlivening to devotion in such exercises, when done with propriety and judgment, than in the best composed forms.

But as these gifts of knowledge and utterance may not be possessed by many, who yet desire to pray with and for each other, there the spiritual assistance of some experimental christian's prayer may be of the most abundant usefulness.* I confess I cannot but wish that some who take upon them to be mouths of others, had greater diffidence of themselves. To hear a man before others praying absurdly, improperly and incoherently, is as offensive to men, as it must be displeasing to God; and can serve only to shew the pride, not the humility of the speaker, and the folly, not the teachableness of the hearers. Prayer must be ever a reasonable service, it ceases to be so when in such hands.

But the sloth of some, and too great concern of others, about the manner of acquitting themselves in prayer, are equally sinful. Instead of improving their gifts and graces, they continue servilely bound to a form, however in itself good.

* As many sincere people, who stand in need of helps, either for private or social prayer, may be at a loss for proper forms, I would therefore recommend Mr. Jeus's Devotions, as by far the most animated and spiritual of any I ever met with, and best suited both for families and the states and exigencies of particular christians. There are also in that Manual some excellent prayers and meditations for the assistance of pious communicants, and a very sweet and devout paraphrase upon the creed.

They, to whom it is given, should use to the honour of the giver, the gift he bestows; but if we make not the trial, we cannot tell what our gifts are.

As every gift improves by exercise, so does the gift of prayer particularly. We know not what we can do till we try, and it is a certain fact that persons of very slender abilities, and who could scarce express themselves clearly on any other subject, having obtained, by exercise in prayer, not only method, but propriety; and many a heart hath been warmed with the prayers of those whom the world hath accounted weak as well as illiterate. Every person therefore should make the attempt.

There is a shame and diffidence which usually attends the first essays, which may for a little while distract the attention, and make us too solicitous about the persons with whom we are, instead of being wholly taken up with the consideration of him to whom we speak; but this in general is soon got over by use. Mean time, I suppose it would be very profitable for such as begin the worship of God in their houses, or with their friends, to have before them some evangelical book of devotions, that if they found themselves confused, or barren of thought, they might recur to it, till they had attained greater ease, and overcome that bashfulness which hurried them.

Where there is really not a gift of prayer, where persons are conscious that they cannot so profitably perform the exercise of devotion without the help of a composed prayer, there it would be sinful in them not to make use of it. I have heard of some, that because they could not pray extempore in their families, would not pray at all with them; which seems as absurd as to say,

because I cannot feed my family with delicacies of my own providing, they shall starve; though I might have made use of my neighbour's offers, who had broken his bread on purpose for my use.

It must be observed that there are persons who have much of the gift of prayer, who have not the spirit of prayer; these, like the ravens who fed Elijah, bring good food to those who join with them, whilst their own pride and vanity of their abilities is the carrion on which they feed themselves. Their prayers may be blessed unto others, but they are an abomination to God, and bring a curse upon their own souls.

It will be needless to say many things in commendation of prayer, either respecting its necessity or excellence. The soul, who is brought to a sensibility about his real state, feels both with an evidence which is beyond all that we can speak; and the soul who is yet dead in trespasses and sins cannot pray, though we should write volumes to persuade him to it. *For he that cometh to God must first believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.* All the miscalled prayers of unbelievers have no more of a spiritual service in them, than howling hath of harmony.

For the sake of those who have need of assistance, I have subjoined some few helps to prayer which may be enlarged upon, and made particularly applicable to the case of those who use them; intimating by the way, that the more we unbosom the very thoughts and secrets of our souls to God, the more profitable will be the service.

Praying that a spirit of prayer and supplication may be poured out upon every soul into whose hands this book may fall, I commend them and it to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As no communicant can live without daily application to a throne of grace, the hints about prayer above given have an evident connection with the subject of the foregoing chapters. I have only to observe farther, that in the specimen of a prayer which follows, I have descended from general confession to particular, from general wants to particular ones.—Persons must examine themselves where their bosom sin lies, what graces they most need, what temptations they most labour under, and adapt any portion of what follows to their own state and circumstances; it being designed not so much as a form, as to assist the infirmities of the weak.

¶ *If the following be used as an assistance for social worship, then the alteration of we for I, us for me, our for my or mine, is easily made; and in this case all the mention of particulars should be omitted, and the prayer confined to the general confessions and requests, omitting the particular ones where the blank spaces stand within hooks thus [].*

¶ *You may observe several breaks, which may be considered as containing so many new heads of prayer. Thus you are to connect any parts of it, or omit as you see occasion.*

O THOU most High and most Holy, whose name is Jehovah, the all-seeing and heart-searching God over all blessed for ever; look down in mercy on a poor unworthy sinner, desiring to draw near the throne of grace in the name of the incarnate Saviour, and making mention of his righteousness only. * [No other hope hath my sinful soul, no other help I find but in him;

* Whatever is between hooks thus [] may be omitted without any hurt of the sense or connection; or if you chuse to use any part of it, you may, as shall appear proper to your case.

for his dear sake regard my cries, and let my prayer enter into thine ears, O Lord my God.]

[I come before thee acknowledging my sin; and my iniquities, Lord, would I not hide from thee. Indeed they cannot be hid, for from thee nothing is hid, nothing is secret. Yet, Lord, I have too long and too often covered myself with thick darkness, and neither saw nor desired to see the evil which was in me. Blessed be thy name, that thou hast caused the light to shine into my heart, and hast given me any knowledge of the hidden mystery of iniquity there.]

Behold, Lord, *I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me*; yet how little did I know of the evil of such a corrupted nature, and its exceeding sinfulness? It was hid from my eyes; but now I acknowledge I am vile, and abhor myself: I am altogether become abominable, there is no health in me; evil, and that continually and universally, hath reigned in me: my transgressions are many, mine iniquities testifying also against me: when I reflect upon the days that are past, confusion covereth me; the flagrant violations of thy holy law in many instances witness against me; my sins in number exceed the hairs of my head; and yet, Lord, how small a part of them do I see? whilst in thy book they have been written, and not a word hath been in my tongue, but thou, Lord, knowest it altogether, [I remember, Lord, with particular condemnation my—*. And O that I might go down mourning to my grave under it, and abhor myself ever for it, even when thou art pacified towards me for it.]

Enter not into judgment with me, lest I be

* Here any particular sin which afflicts your conscience, or which you desire may more affect it, should be mentioned, and the particulars opened, that your heart may be more struck with the mention.

utterly confounded. Shouldst thou try me, I must plead guilty before thee, and acknowledge my just desert to be the worm which dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched. Yea, Lord, thou wouldst be clear in thy uttermost condemnation, for thou dost righteously, but I have rebelled against thee.

Yet glorify thy name in mercy upon me, and according to those gracious promises in which thou hast caused me to put my trust, glorify thy Son in pardoning and saving such a wretch as I am. [Let it now appear, Lord, that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin by its cleansing me; and, sprinkled therewith, may my poor soul be presented before thy throne with kind acceptance! This is all my salvation; I plead nothing but this, that Jesus died for me. In his blood, in his righteousness only dare I approach unto thee, O thou most worthy Judge eternal.]

[Blessed be the name of my God for his unspeakable gift. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ! O strengthen my faith in his all sufficiency, and let not the number or aggravations of my sins discourage me; but, Lord, make his glory, his obedience unto death, his cross, his crown, to pass before me, that I may without all doubt believe in the satisfaction of my Saviour, and find redemption in him.]

And thou, Lord of life and glory, come and take possession of my heart, take the purchase of thy blood, set up within me thy kingdom, and turn thou me, that so I may be turned. An helpless worm, the servant of sin, the sport of temptation, the bond slave of corruption, thou seest me. O break this yoke from off my neck, and bring me, Lord, into the liberty of the children of God. [Hast thou not redeemed us from all iniquity, to purify to thyself a peculiar peo-

ple? Art thou not come to bend our hearts in submission to thy will, as well as to ransom us from death and hell? Here is my heart, Lord, take and fashion it to thy holy will.]

Behold, Lord, I groan being burdened. Since thou hast called, I want to follow thee. But, O, I find that sin hangs heavy on my soul, my corruptions war against me, and trouble me; and my strength is as weakness before them. Help, Lord, or I perish! Come, exert thy power, and set the captive free! Enable me to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset me!

¶ *Here follows three of the great enemies of our souls, Pride, Lust, and Worldliness; no soul but hath need to cry mightily for power against them: though, according to our several tempers and states, some one of them will most especially endanger us; accordingly, that part may be made use of, and the others shortened or passed over.*

Against Pride.

MY Pride thrusts hard against me that I should fall. [I find within me such high imaginations, such a readiness to resent, such warmth and hastiness of temper.] [I found this day my spirit hurt by the reflections of —, by the obstinacy of —, by the conduct of —, I murmured as if my lot was hard. I regarded with envy—greater success, abilities and advancement.*] Lord, cast down every imagination which exalteth itself, and bring my thoughts into the obedience of Christ; make me content to be the last and the least. Bow me to submission to every dis-

* These are some of the particular, yet universal workings of Pride. The specifying the time and place, and persons, brings the remembrance of it more lively upon us, begets deeper humility, and awakens greater earnestness.

penation, and keep me quiet under every provocation. [Make me ever to know myself to be vile earth, and a miserable sinner; that I may find my temper really corresponding with my words, when I confess myself to be nothing, and less than nothing and vanity; content to be as low in others' eyes as I acknowledge myself to be in thine, and profess to be in my own.]

Against Lust.

SUBDUE the hateful lusts which war against my soul. Thou seest, Lord, how this flesh striveth against the spirit, and how impotent I am to resist [*Thou knowest how my heart departed from thee after—, how my eye wandered with unhallowed looks—, how my folly wrought in secret—, to bring forth fruit unto death] O save me, Lord, from my sinful self: give me strength to restrain the wanderings of my desires; enable me to make a covenant with mine eyes; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, rather than speak unhallowed words of lewdness and my hand cut off ere it be reached out to sin. [It were better for me to die, Lord, than to dishonor thee and my own body.] O make me a clean heart! [Purify my desires, teach me to possess my vessel in sanctification and honour; and may my body, as well as my soul, be for thee, O Lord, presented unto thee as a living sacrifice, which is my reasonable service.]

Against Worldliness.

DELIVER me from the love of this present evil world. Lord, my heart is naturally earthly and sensual. [Thou knowest what a slave I have been to the unrighteous mammon, O wean

* What follows between [] will afford place for any particularly humbling reflections.

me from the love of it ; may I be crucified unto the world, and the world unto me.] [In my transactions with —, I found covetousness ready to make me unjust ; in looking upon —, I felt the workings of concupiscence ; my backwardness to give to —, who needed, condemns my worldliness ; in my bargain with —, I did not enough consider him as myself.] Lord, enable me daily to resist all anxious cares and disquieting fears ; subdue every covetous desire in my soul ; make me more circumspect and conscientious in all my dealings, and may my daily care be not to lay up my treasure upon earth, but in heaven ; by such an improvement of the talent which thou hast intrusted with me, as may be most to thy glory, and the relief and comfort of my distressed fellow creatures and fellow christians.

O Lord, my strength as well as righteousness, enable me to walk before thee, and please thee ; may I not only cease to do evil, but learn to do good ; write thy laws in my mind, and put them into my heart. [Constrained by the views of thy amazing grace, may I cheerfully surrender my whole self to thee, to be employed in thy work, and devoted to thy service. Yea, Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant, since thou hast loosed my bands ; as bought with a price, may I glorify thee in my body and in my spirit which are thine, and] daily let the fruits of righteousness appear more abundantly in me, which are through me, my Lord and Saviour, to the praise and glory of God. [Thou knowest my wants and my barrenness, how weak and feeble are my graces, how cold my love, how doubting my faith, how lukewarm my zeal, how negligent my fear, and how imperfect all. Lord, strengthen

me with might in the inner man, fashion my soul after thine own blessed image, and daily out of thy fulness give me to partake of the abundance of grace.]

¶ *Here follows petitions for particular graces.*

I. For Faith 1. *Under the accusations of guilt.* 2. *Under the workings of corruptions.* 3. *Under temptations.* 4. *Under afflictions.*

As you most need to exercise it under either of these views, you will find here assistance.

I. A PRAYER FOR FAITH.

1. Under a sense of guilt.

O Most merciful and gracious God, strengthen my faith in thy promises, that I may, without all doubt, cast my care upon thee, assured that thou carest for me. The remembrance of my past sins is grievous, [particularly—, and my heart sometimes is ready to fail.] Lord, enable me to believe that thou dost in Jesus abundantly pardon. May I see more of his all-sufficiency, that fear may be cast out, and that I may rejoice in the assurance that thou hast received me, and cast all my sins behind thy back. Yes, Lord and Saviour, I dare not dishonour thee more than I have already done, by distrusting thee. I know thou art able to save to the uttermost, thy blood can atone for all; I believe, help thou mine unbelief.

2. Under the workings of corruption.

I am oppressed with corruption, a body of sin and death compasses me round about. [Deep calleth unto deep, and I am ready to say I am cast out of thy sight, particularly—, against which I have strove and prayed, and over which I have mourned, returns with new violence, and brings me almost to despair.] See, Saviour, my helpless soul at thy feet; O raise me up, support me, enable me to lay hold of thy strength, and

to trust, that I may not be confounded. O give me faith, that I may overcome. Lord, I know it is my unbelief which makes my bondage; break thou the chain, and set my soul at liberty.

3. *Under temptations.*

Temptations beset me sore; they thrust at me, that I should fall; but in thee is my help. [Thou seest, Lord, how my path is compassed about; and how, through the violence of the attack, the corruption of my own vile heart, and my unbelief, iniquity prevails against me.]— [* It did so at such a time —, in such a place —, in such company —, under such circumstances —: and though, Lord, from the bottom of my soul thou knowest it is my burden, yet how shall I stand?] Let thine everlasting arms be under me, lift up these hands which hang down, let my eye be fixed on thee, strengthen me, fulfil thy promises, confirm my heart to trust that thou wilt support me under my temptations, or make a way for me to escape from them.

4. *Under afflictions.*

My worldly trials are heavy, [I am afflicted in my person by —, sickness in my family —, injuries from others —, loss or reproach —, unkindness from those who are so near and dear —, disappointments, &c.†] Lord, thou canst make them work together for my good; may my heart stand fast in thee; enable me to believe thy kind intentions towards me, that I may not only submit with patience, but rejoice in hope.

.....
* I mention here the prevalence of temptation, because I fear there are few real christians who have not cause to lament their falls, as well as to ask strength to keep them from falling. Spreading our temptations openly before the Lord, and expressly mentioning the circumstances of them, is of especial use to the tempted.

† Particulars must be mentioned.

II. *A Prayer for the Love of God.*

ENLARGE my affections towards thee, O thou chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely. What hast thou not done to engage my heart? ungrateful as I have been, may I be so no more. May my soul be enflamed with love unfeigned towards thee, beholding thy love, may it kindle mine; and daily as I receive fresh instances of it from thee, may my returns of gratitude be more abundant. [Open my eyes to see more and more the love wherewith thou hast loved me; make me to know more of its height and length, and breadth and depth: make me to see more of my own baseness and vileness, that thy dealings with me may more abundantly impress and constrain my heart.] O that I might love thee with a perfect heart. Lord, may I be increasing in love, till seeing thee as thou art, I shall love thee as I ought.

III. *A Prayer for Fear.*

LORD, put thy fear into my soul; be thou ever sanctified in me; let me ever tremble before, and dread to offend thee. May the sense of thy omniscience and nearness ever overawe my soul; when sin would tempt, may I remember that thou art present; may my fear be as my love, filial; may thy displeasure be more grievous to me than the punishment; and may I hate to offend thee, because thou art my good and gracious Father, more than because thou art withal the just and righteous Judge.

IV. *A Prayer for Charity.*

GOD of all mercy, whose nature and name is love, and who has taught, in amazing manifestations of it in thy Son, what are thy regards towards the children of men, teach me to love others, as thou hast loved me. O give me bow-

els of mercies, kindness, gentleness, meekness. Alas, for this selfish heart of mine! it is so ready to kindle under provocation, to resent unkindness, and to be unfeeling towards others' weakness and wants. [Such a person particularly my vile heart is ready to dislike —, &c. * Lord, take this uncharitable spirit from me.] Enable me to forgive, as thou for Christ's sake hath forgiven me: [May my censures all fall upon myself, where they are most due, that I may have none to cast on others.] Incline my heart to excuse the faults of others, to think no evil, and to hope all things favourable for them. According to the ability thou hast given me; may I readily communicate thy gifts according to the necessities of my brethren. [Make my heart more tender to them, and sympathizing with their distresses, whether of body or soul.†] May their sins grieve me more deeply, and call forth my prayers and my tears over them. Lord, give them repentance who know thee not, [particularly —‡ who are so near and dear to me:] [May I not suffer sin upon them unrebuked; and may my conduct as well as my conversation be reproving and exemplary.] Give me a mouth to comfort the afflicted. May whatever talents, thou hast lent me of knowledge or utterance, be employed, so as may be most subservient to the good of mens' souls, and particularly of those with whom I am more immediately concerned. May my hand be § opened to relieve the indigent:

* Nothing serves more effectually to subdue our resentment against any particular person, than praying for them by name.

† Mens' souls are the greatest objects of charity.

‡ Unconverted friends and relations should never be forgotten by us.

§ Though almsgiving be but a branch of charity, we must see that we abound in the exercise of it, if we are indeed in the faith; and by the way it must be observed, that as it will require some pains to enquire out the truly necessitous, this is as much a part of the duty as the gift itself; many, for want of being at the pains of this, often encourage idleness, instead of being great objects of charity, and thus do the needy of the world.

according to my power : and as a good steward of thy gifts, enable me conscientiously to be concerned not only to give, but to bestow it in such a way as may be most to thy glory, the relief of real indigence, and the support of the helpless. Make me not only liberal, but glad to give, and ready to distribute, that the blessing of a chearful giver may be through thy grace upon me. [And accept, O Lord, these small returns of humble acknowledgment, as offered in my dear Redeemer, in whose name alone is my hope, and in whose blood I desire my best offerings to be washed, and in whose righteousness I desire my best services to be arrayed, that they may come up with acceptance on thine altar, O God.]

V. *A Prayer for Humility.*

GIVE me, O Lord, the genuine humility which thou delightest in. Let an abiding sense of my vile self and sinful services be ever on my heart. When the deceiver would cause me to compare myself with myself or others, O may my soul still turn to thy holy law, and be confounded before thee in dust. And when the gifts thou hast bestowed on me would puff me up, let me remember not only that they are received, but what an abuse hath been made of them, and how much cause I have for confusion, instead of glorying before thee.

VI. *A Prayer for Zeal.*

AWAKEN greater zeal for thy glory in my heart ; how lukewarm and insensible to thy interests in the world have I been, and am I still ? Lord, give me a deeper sense of thy majesty, and a more enlarged knowledge of the value of immortal souls, that I may rise up against the evil doers, grieving to see thee dishonoured, and deep-

ly concerned to pluck those brands from the burning. [Lord, may I cheerfully suffer, count no cross grievous; and where duty calls, boldly rebuke vice, whatever danger be incurred. Arise, O Lord God, and vindicate thine own cause; where is thy zeal and the soundings of thy bowels, are they restrained? See our desolations, and come with great might and succour us.]

Intercessions general and particular.

AND, Lord, hear my poor supplications for others as well as for myself. Thou seest what desolations are wrought in the earth, how sin covers the face of the world, and gross darkness the people; O send out thy light and thy truth, that the ends of the earth may remember themselves, and be turned unto thee, O Lord. Especially visit our land with thy salvation; we have the form of godliness, and the profession of thy gospel, but, O how far removed from the practice and the power of it! Return, O God of hosts, return, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us. [Remove not our candlestick away, as by our manifold iniquities we have most justly provoked thee to do, but remember thy mercy which hath been to a thousand generations, and hear the prayers of thy people who cry day and night before thee.] Raise up thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us. Send out, we pray thee, labourers into thine harvest; the land mourneth, the people perish for lack of knowledge; give them pastors after thy own mind, who may exalt the cross of the Redeemer, and be successful preachers of his righteousness: bless the few who truly labour in the word and ministry; may thy grace make thy word in their mouths effectual for the conviction, conversion, and consolation of mens'

souls; particularly bless him who ministers to my soul, and may he see of the fruit of his labour in me, and multitudes be brought by his teaching to the knowledge of the salvation which is in Jesus Christ. Lord, make us more diligent, that our profiting may appear under the blessed means of grace which we enjoy. Bless all those who are especially near to me under any ties of relations; may all my friends be thine; my benefactors find in thy favour an abundant return, and those of this house and family be the objects of thy peculiar regard.*

And now, Lord, accept my humble praise for all the mercies I have tasted, from the first day even until now; unworthy indeed, utterly unworthy of the least of them I confess myself to be. Blessed be thy name for the being I enjoy, and for all the blessings of time which accompany it; but above all, blessed be the name of my God for his redeeming love, for Jesus the fountain of grace, and for the great and precious promises, given freely in him to me a sinner.—Blessed be thy name for the knowledge of him, whom to know is everlasting life; for all the means of growth in grace, and all the hopes of the glory purchased, taken possession of, and to be revealed by and in the Lord Jesus my Saviour; whose righteousness is my title, whose blood is my plea, and who is to me all and in all. In his name and words I would, since he hath commanded it, sum up all my imperfect prayers, saying, *Our Father, &c.*

You have here a long prayer, which may be easily shortened and adapted to your state, whatever it be: remember only that your eye in all your prayers never lose sight of the Advocate,

* The particular states of husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, will afford opportunity for more particular enlargement.

Jesus Christ the righteous, in and through whom alone any answer of peace can be given to your requests. All blessings in time and eternity are the purchase of his blood on the cross ; they are given into his power, as the peculiar head of the mediatorial kingdom ; and are to be obtained by that intercession, which he ever liveth to make for his people.

As the foregoing prayer is intended as a help to the sincere in general, it may be useful to add something particular of the same kind respecting the Lord's Supper, which, with some Meditations on select passages of scripture, may serve to enliven our souls before and at this ordinance.

A Prayer before the Lord's Supper.

DEAR Saviour of my soul, look upon the sinner thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood. I come because thou hast bidden me, and my soul needeth the refreshment thou hast provided. Never do I draw near, but I bring with me fresh cause of humiliation, and carry new burdens to thee, my Lord, from which I need relief. Look upon me in thy wonted compassion, and pity and pardon all the faithlessness with which I stand chargeable before thee. Jesus, my hope is in thee. Ten thousand times have I forfeited all the mercies of my God, but thou hast been my advocate, thy blood hath spoken for me ; still, Lord, let it speak, and sprinkled on me, purge my heart from dead works to serve the living God. Bleeding Lamb of God, thy open wounds afford a safe retreat to my poor soul. I fly to thee to hide me. Let my iniquities be covered, let my backslidings be healed. My deep complaints come up before thee ; this body of sin, when shall my soul be delivered from it ? Lord, mine eyes are unto thee. I have found

renewed attacks from my corrupt and vile affections ;* to the blessed fountain opened for sin and uncleanness I fly ; O wash this spotted soul, and heal the leprosy within. When now again I am drawing near to thee, draw near to my sinful soul. Strengthen my confidence in thy love, when I partake of the instituted pledges thou hast left me. O comfort me with the assurance that thou art mine. Teach these eyes with tears of penitence and joy to look upon thy broken body ; give me thus that repentance unto salvation never to be repented of. O, my Lord, conquered by thy dying love, may every lust be offered up a willing sacrifice at thy cross ; take them, Lord, slay them before thee ; consume the dross of base affections, purify my soul, and with this sacred fire refine it like thine own.

Anointed Jesus, save me from every sin ; set up within my soul thy kingdom of righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost ; reign over a willing subject, and let thy service be ever the happy freedom of my soul. O what bondage, Lord, like the bondage of corruption ; what liberty so sweet as that which they enjoy, who take up thy light burden, thy easy yoke.—Thou askest nothing from me which is not my happiness to renounce ; thou commandest nothing wherein it is not my happiness to obey thee. O then let me count nothing grievous which thou dost enjoin ; anew I would make my surrender unto thee ; again would I solemnly seal my soul for thine own ; enable me to approve myself more faithful to the vows which are upon me, and live more devoted to thee who hast died for me.

Thou knowest, Lord, my simpleness, and my

* Particulars must be enlarged upon, according to your latest temptations and most besetting corruptions.

faults are not hid from thee ; thou knowest it is the desire of my soul to love and please thee ; it is my bitterness that ever I offended thee ; O when shall I have done with sin ? when shall I grieve no more thy Spirit in me ? O Lord when shall it yet be ? Continue to be gracious ; draw me nearer to thy blessed self, that I may run more eagerly after thee ; shew me more of thy beauty, that sin may grow more hateful in my eyes ; lay thy hand upon me, and fashion me ; O fashion me, dear Redeemer, in thy own blessed image, and make me wholly such as thou wouldst have me to be. Make thyself known unto me in the breaking of bread ; reveal thyself to my poor soul as thou dost not to the world ; make me to taste the comforts of thy regard, that I may be enabled for all thy service : and open my eyes to heavenly things ; when I remember thee on the cross, may I look to thee also on the throne, and feel the weight of thy expected appearance continually influential over me. O Saviour, that I may then be found of thee in peace, and meet thee on thy throne of judgment with kind acceptance and regard ! Thou wilt come, I know thou wilt, and wilt not tarry. O Lord Jesus, may I be ever looking for, and hastening unto the day of thine appearing, and be found watching, when thou shalt stand at the door and knock.

Receive my thanks, dear suffering Saviour, thou compassionate High-priest, who canst be touched with the feeling of thy people's infirmities, blessing and praise be ever thine. Help me daily to be telling of thy salvation, till thou shalt give me a place with those blessed spirits of the just made perfect, whose happy labour is everlasting songs of thanksgiving to thee, who wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy

Blood, and made us kings and priests, that we might reign with thee in thy kingdom for ever.
Amen.

IT is supposed that every communicant walks in a continual course of self-examination. The temper described in chapter III. will afford the most interesting points of inquiry. As we shall ever find how short we come of that blessed disposition there described, we shall have continual need for new confessions of sin and unfaithfulness, with renewed purposes of heart of cleaving to the Lord. If any thing particularly humbling hath befallen us, or any new temptation beset us, we must spread it before the Redeemer, and pour out our griefs into his compassionate bosom: he is a kind Saviour, we know little of the depths of his bowels and mercies, if we did, we should never dishonour him as we do with our distrusts, and should be more deeply melted down under the sense of his amazing patience and love. One view of Christ in his transcendently gracious character, as the dear Redeemer of lost souls, hath more power and efficacy to break the bonds of sin, and urge us to obedience, than all the vows, promises and resolutions, wherewith we can bind our souls.

CHAP. VII.

On Meditation.

AT the Lord's table, and before we go to it, a most profitable exercise is divine Meditation; nothing serves more to spiritualize and enliven the soul, than the consideration of some of the great and precious promises, that in Jesus Christ are made to us; or of those blessed portions of scripture that more immediately speak of him

whom our soul loveth; declare his offices, describe his sufferings, or point us to the glory which followed; they are too numerous to be collected: I will select a few as heads of Meditation, which I shall endeavour to enlarge upon, and refer you to many others, which will afford like profitable improvement.

The interval which we spend during the celebration of the Lord's supper, should be usually most employed in this way. By this means our devotion at the ordinance itself is kept from languishing, and we accustom ourselves more habitually to that communion with God, which should be our daily walk.

MEDITATION I.

GENESIS iii. 15.

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

HOW wonderful the compassions of God to fallen man! he left him not to despair; he slew him not in his sin: he pitied, he pardoned. See in this first promise, O my soul, how unwilling the Lord is that we should perish. A beam of light and hope breaks through the darkness, and revives the guilty soul of man; he saw and believed: and shall I be now faithless? The true light hath shined, the sun of righteousness is arisen with healing in his wings; I see him not through a glass darkly, but as it were face to face, beholding the promise fulfilled by his appearing in the fulness of time. What confidence then, my soul, should inspire thee, when here, before thine eyes, thou seest the serpent's

head bruised by the sacrifice of the woman's seed? O Saviour, let me adore thy grace, and rest satisfied in the glorious victory thou hast obtained. Thou wast manifest to destroy the works of the devil; O fulfil in me this great design of thy coming, bring near thy cross to my heart, and bruise at thy feet whatever is serpentine and diabolical in this fallen nature; make me to know by experience of the effectual working of thy mighty power, that thou art this promised seed. Let me stand a monument of thy grace on earth, and bring me as a trophy of thy victory to heaven.

MEDITATION II.

PSALM lv. 6.

And I said, O that I had wings like a dove : for then would I fly away, and be at rest.

WHAT a wearisome world is this! sin and sorrow compass me about; though some sweet drops of heavenly consolation at times revive my soul, yet how often hangs my harp on the willows, and how often is my head bowed down as the ears of corn with drops of dew? Lord, thou hast told me of a blessed rest which remaineth for the people of God; thou hast drawn me to look up to it, to pant after it; had my soul wings to fly to thy bosom, how swiftly would I pierce the skies? No timorous dove darting from the rapacious vulture, seeks so eagerly its covert, as my poor heart should fly from these sublunary evils, to that shadow of thy wings, where is everlasting rest. When shall it yet be, dear Lord, that my weary soul shall find in thee repose?—Hide me in the cleft of the rock, in thy bleeding side may my sinful soul now find a safe re-

treat : give me the wings of faith, that I may fly to this relief from the pursuit of divine justice and a consuming law ; and when this clog of earth that weigheth down my soul, shall be shook off in the dust, and my imprisoned spirit disentangled from the clay, then let the wings of love direct my flight to the heaven where thou art ; and, close sheltered by thy once bleeding side, let me bid an eternal adieu to sin and sorrow. Be patient, my soul, yet a little while, and hope unto the end ; he that is faithful and true, saith, *I will give thee rest.*

MEDITATION III.

PSALM cxix. 94.

I am thine, save me : for I have sought thy precepts.

YES, Lord, I am thine by every tie ;—thine by creation, thine by Providence, thine by redemption, thine by grace, thine by every obligation of love, thine by repeated and solemn surrenders of myself unto thee, wholly thine am I for ever bound to be : yet how sacrilegiously have I alienated from thee what was thine ; how often have I faithlessly dishonoured thee, and broken the vows which were upon me ; how like a broken bow have I started aside, and still, Lord, my vile heart, how prone is it to wander from thee ? How shall I render to thee thine own ? How shall I approve myself to thee ? Save me, it must be thine own work ; without thee I can do nothing to please thee : save me from myself, from my sins, from my corruptions, from my weakness, visit me with thy salvation.

If thou set my heart at liberty, then shall I run in the paths of thy commandments : Lord, they are righteous, just and good ; I delight in

them after the inner man. O that my ways were made so to direct, that I might walk in them for ever; O that I could do thy will on earth, as it is done in heaven. Prepare me for the blessed service above, by daily power communicated from thee, to walk in thy ways here below.

MEDITATION IV.

PSALM lxxiii. 25.

Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

LORD, what is heaven but thy favour and reviving presence? what is hell but thy absence and displeasure? the glory of thy sanctuary is thy blessed self, without thee those shining mansions would be desolate; thou art there, and there to bless thy people with the enjoyment of thyself; when shall I see thee face to face?—when shall my heaven come, to awaken up in thy likeness, to behold the transforming glory of thy countenance? O Lord, for thee my soul longeth, to be where thou art, and as thou art. O heaven, heaven, my God is there, he that is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever; if thou art mine, (and that thou art, thy promises have given me most reviving assurance) if thou art mine, what can I ask for more or wish beside? Lord, thou art all-sufficient. Whilst here I linger out the moment allotted me, though distant, too distant from thee, thou shalt be still my joy and my hope: What rival would steal away my affections from thee? what earthly object would intrude and rob thee of my love?—Lord, there is nothing upon earth I desire in comparison of thee; wealth, honour, and pleasure tempt me away, but what can they give me

in exchange for thee? are they not loss and dung? are they not on the balances lighter than vanity itself? Think, my foolish heart, when thou inclinest to listen to the syren's song, which on earth ensnares poor souls in perdition and destruction, think of thy better portion; live on him who is alone able to supply the void within, and from the never-failing streams which flow from the fountain of all consolation, will replenish thee day by day, till from the streams thou comest to the fountain-head, receivest the fulness of thy desires, and dwellest in God, and God in thee.

MEDITATION V.

CANTICLES viii. 14.

*Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe
or to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices.*

REMEMBERING here thy death till thy coming again, I wait for thy appearance. Lord, I know thou wilt come, and wilt not tarry. O that my soul may meet thee, as a bride adorned for the bridegroom. I call thee my beloved, and art thou not such to me? thy love to me constraineth my soul, thou chief of ten thousand, thou altogether lovely. Why are thy chariot-wheels so long a coming?—I look upwards, and start at my own desires: how shall I appear before him, how shall I be regarded of him? black as the tents of Kedar, defiled my garments, and false to my Lord, as I have been, can I wish for his arrival?—He hateth putting away; he is compassionate and kind; he pities, he pardons; he saith, Return unto me, and I will return unto you. Lord, I come to thee; array me in thy

comliness, remove my filthy garments, call me thine own, and take thy spotless robes of righteousness, and adorn my soul, and then hasten thy coming, my Beloved. Sweet are the mountains of spices, wherein thy ordinances thou hast left a savour of thy blessed self; sweet is the repast which here thou hast provided for my soul, but sweeter far will be the feast, when thou shalt favour the table with thy real presence; and, like the bounding hart that rushes from the mountains steep, come down to me, and catch me up to meet thee in the clouds; there better spices breathe their fragrance, for thou art there; and where thou art, all blessing must abound.—Haste then, and bring me to the holy hills, where thou my Lord dwellest, and fill me with the joy of thy everlasting love.

MEDITATION VI.

CANTICLES i. 3.

Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

THY name, dear Lord, is sweeter to my soul than fragrant ointment to the faint and weary. Jesus! what music to the sinner's ears! the dearest, greatest, sweetest name, that heaven or earth affords. What name like thine sheds joy and blessing on the holy souls above? what name like thine diffuses peace and hope on guilty souls below? thou art the all in all. Make me, Lord, to taste and see how gracious thou art; shed abroad in my heart a sweet savour of thy ointment; from thee, my glorious priest, let the precious balm run down on me the meanest of thy members; I am called by thy name, let me partake of thine anointing. I love thee, O Lord.

my Saviour, I wish to love thee more. My heart, O that it might be a chaste virgin's heart for thee, nor wander after other lovers : bind my affections to thee stronger than death ; one spirit with thee may I henceforth be : in mystic union join me to thyself, and in that train may I be found of virgin souls, that, separated from the defilements of the world, of flesh and sense, follow thee, thou Lamb of God, whithersoever thou leadest them.

MEDITATION VII.

PSALM LXXIV. 1. 2.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

YES, Lord, thy tabernacles are indeed amiable to my soul ; I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord. Thy servant David at a distance longed, yea, even fainted with desire for these gracious opportunities I enjoy : how thankful should I be, that I can thus draw near thee ; so often enjoy the welcome, returning sabbaths, and meet so often at thy table with my brethren and my companions. Lord, raise up then my longings after thee more fervently ; let my heart and flesh cry out more intensely for thee : thy tabernacles are only amiable when thou dost manifest thyself in the midst of us ; thy courts are then adorned, when thou, O King, appearest in thy galleries, *Cant. vii. 5.*—Thy table is a feast indeed, when thou comest in to see the guests, and givest the welcome benediction. To day, my Lord, draw near to bless me ; awaken my

thankfulness, open my lips, that my mouth may shew forth thy praise ; raise up my heart to thee in the heavens ; from the tabernacles of thy grace, may my ascending soul mount up to the tabernacles of thy glory. How amiable these, O Lord, when shall I come to appear among the shining host which dwell for ever there ! When shall my soul abide in this temple for ever, and go out no more ? Thou God of my life, who hast given me to desire to see thee, thou wilt not disappoint the desires thou hast kindled. In my flesh shall I see God. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

MEDITATION VIII.

LUKE xxiii. 33.

DRAW near, my soul, and see this great sight : this is thy God who bleeds for thy iniquities ; see him led like a malefactor through the streets of Jerusalem, and nailed like a murderer to expire on a tree ; because thou deservest all this shame, and pain and death, therefore he endures it for thee. Look into his wounded temples, and see how deep the thorns have pierced ; his face is marred more than any man's, black with buffetings, and foul with blood ; his weary head hangs down, and mingles tears with glotted gore : yet, thou dear Redeemer, thy beauty then is fairest, when thou appearest most defiled ; these tears, this blood, these sorrows, are my peace, my joy, my everlasting consolation. Look up, sinful soul, and love a dying Saviour ! See his hands extended wide, they open to embrace thee, I see them dropping down most precious streams of blood ; they are iron bound, but his love will break the chain, and

stretch them forth to lift me to his throne ! They now are cancelling my deadly debt, my bond of suffering is nailed with them, and torn ; I see in the deep wounds of his hands, graven as with an iron pen in a rock, a pardon written with blood. Yes, Lord, I believe the chastisement of my peace is upon thee, and that by these pains I shall be healed. I look upon thy feet, Lord ; they cannot as usual carry thee about doing good, but they tread now on their last weary step, and next will stand upon the everlasting hills ; tired with the way, mortality hath often longed for rest ; briars and thorns have torn them in the desert, and rugged paths afflicted them : but no thorns so sharp, no path so rugged as this, and no rest so needed as that sleep of death, when pain shall torment no more. How have I trod the dreadful paths of sin ? how have my feet carried me from God to every vile indulgence ? I see my punishment in thee ; and O that with tears I might bedew those deep and deadly nail-prints, that tell me at once my crime and my forgiveness. What ghastly wound gapes wide beneath the heart, and pours down this crimson torrent of mingled blood and water ! that bloody spear declares the cause ; how deep it hath gone ; indignity offends the corpse, when pain can do no more. It is well. It became him to suffer these things, but why ? my guilt had made it needful ; yes, my soul, thou mayest regard with astonishment the sufferer, and with detestation the authors of this black deed ; but if thou wilt see the origin, knock at thy breast, and there the murderers dwell ; this sinful nature, these vile affections, this deep rebellion against the Majesty of heaven, these brought the Lamb of God to such ignominy, torment, and death. Here then at his cross let my indig-

nation rise, here then let an holy revenge burn within my heart, here let not mine eye pity, nor my hand spare; these his enemies, his murderers, I will bring them forth, and slay them before him. Lord, let me keep back nothing from thee, who gavest thyself to such suffering for me.

MEDITATION IX.

HEBREWS vi. 18.

That we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

WHAT grounds of consolation doth the scripture propose to the afflicted soul? Hunted by the devouring law, trembling beneath the sword of justice, unable to escape the stroke I could not endure, mercy sets before me an open door, and like Jael to Sisera (but with a much more gracious intention!) invites me, faint and weary, to repose my soul under her shadow. The guilty soul, exposed to wrath eternal, here sees a beam of hope arising, and our fears, like morning clouds, pass away. Blessed be he, who hath opened and consecrated this new and living way for the despairing and desperate, through a Mediator's broken body; to this sure refuge will I fly: Lord, help me to enter in that I may dwell in safety; let pardoning love fast bar the gate against an accusing conscience and a condemning law; let thy faithfulness and truth be as a brazen wall around me, that none of my fears may break through, none of my sins destroy me. Let thy power keep the strong hold of my heart, that no son of violence may hurt me: thus let my city of refuge be kept from every avenger, and under thy shadow let me sit, not only with

safety, but great delight. Thou hast spoken, and who shall disannul it? Thou wilt me to be comforted, and why shall I refuse the consolation? Strengthen thou my faith, Lord, that my joy may abound.

MEDITATION X.

HEBREWS X. 38.

If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

THE scriptures are full of warning; take notice, my soul, and with holy jealousy work out thy salvation with fear and trembling. How dangerous to draw back! better never have known the way of righteousness. Yet how common these departures from the faith; how many have I known, who seemed to begin in the spirit, and have ended in the flesh? set up my soul, these pillars before thee in this our plain of Sodom. Lot's wife may be seen in every street: what is there to engage thee to turn back, or cast a lingering look behind? The world from which thou art called is a view shadow, it is unsatisfactory in the enjoyment, it perisheth in the using, and it stands only as some mighty pile of fewel to be destroyed by the fire. The creatures of it are vain; its indulgencies, what fruit do they bring? and how like husks do its most gilded baits disappoint our appetite? count then the cost. Lord, my soul looketh unto thee; hold me by my hand, that I may not depart from thee. I have such a foolish, such a back-sliding heart, that if left but a day to myself, I shall turn aside; but thou who hast led me so far, wilt not now let me go; by thee only can I be holden up; my heart is in thine hand, thou

shalt preserve me from the power of the enemy, thou shalt teach me the way wherein I should go, thou shalt guide me with thine eye. I know, Lord, none can pluck me out of thy hand ; I will trust therefore, and not be afraid ; though thousands fall on every side, thou art my shield and rock of defence. Much have I experienced of thy kindness and care, more I believe thou hast in store. I wait for thy salvation, and I have a good hope because of thy word ; here my anchor fixes. If thou say, I will put my fear into thine heart, and thou shalt not depart from me ; then may I with confidence rest upon thy grace and love.

MEDITATION XI.

1 COR. vi. 20.

For ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

IF any thing can engage my heart to the dear Redeemer, it must be the views of his amazing love and grace, and the sense of the deep obligations these lay upon me ; when I see the price he hath paid for me, how can I except to his claim ? It hath cost thee precious blood to redeem me from my state of endless misery, and now thou challengest the return of service. Lord, I am thy servant ; I am thy servant, for thou hast loosed my bands ; I will, through thy grace, make thy glory my great aim and end. I have lived long to dishonour thee, henceforth may thy name be exalted in me and by me ; my body is for thee, O Lord it hath served divers lusts and pleasures, but thou hast redeemed it from the guilty service. It shall serve no more ; every

sense, every member, let it be an instrument of righteousness unto God. My spirit is thine ; its passions, its vile affections, shall reign no more ; let purity be written on my inmost soul, and my thoughts be brought into obedience to thee, O Christ. Yet, Lord, after all, what glory can redound to thee from such worthless services as mine ? that thou condescendest to accept them, bring me in more thy debtor still. Well, Lord, I am more than content, I am happy thus to be rendering myself to thee, and increasing thereby my obligations ; glorify thyself in me in mercy, till thou glorify me with thyself in the kingdom of thy glory.

MEDITATION XII.

TITUS ii. 10.

That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

GOD is my Saviour ; that he is God, is my comfort, for now I know his all-sufficiency of power and love, able to save to the uttermost, and rich in mercy to all that call upon him. I am called to adorn that doctrine which bringeth salvation, and teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world ; and it is my serious purpose and desire to do so. My character in the world will call for my first regard, to walk in wisdom towards those who are without ; to shew an unblameableness of conversation, that they who are of a contrary part, may have no evil thing justly to say of me. I will labour to shew all good fidelity in my dealings, to pay a conscientious regard to truth in my

words, to provide things honest in the sight of all men, to be industrious in my calling, to owe no man any thing, to abstain from the appearances of evil, lest I make my brother to offend. My behaviour in my family, may it be ever such as becometh godliness ; I would go in and out before them, as an example unto the believers. I would watch particularly against self-will and anger : I would always speak at my meals something which should be for the use of edifying. I would be constant in prayer with them day and night, that the blessing of God may be in the midst of us. I would watch over all around me with a jealous eye, and above all, over myself, that I lay no stumbling-block in their way ; I would instruct them to the best of my abilities in the knowledge of the Redeemer of sinners, and seek that I and my house might serve the Lord. In my particular transactions with God in secret, I will endeavour to lay bare my heart before him ; I will take his holy word ; I will ask for his illuminating Spirit ; I will examine mine own self ; no bosom sin, I trust, shall find a hiding-place : my burdens of sin and sorrow will I lay at the feet of my Lord. I will plead with him his promises, and leave my case in my great Advocate's hand. In this way the desire of my soul will be answered, and my Redeemer honoured. Lord, adorn me with thy Spirit, that I may thus adorn thy gospel.

MEDITATION XIII.

HEBREWS vii. 25.

He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.

SALVATION is my great concern ; I am the creature of a day ; my body is of the dust, and

returning to the dust again ; I am in jeopardy every hour. Here I have no abiding city ; as a tenant at will, I may be dismissed at a minute's warning : but I have an immortal soul, a soul that must be happy or miserable to eternity ; a soul that must join angels in glory, or fiends in darkness. How weighty then is the concern of salvation ? and how important each moment that shortens the span allotted me below !

When I look within myself, how far from salvation doth my state appear ? A sinner I, vile and abominable ; in nature at enmity with God, in practice a transgressor times beyond number ; under guilt which I cannot remove, under corruption I cannot subdue, under wrath I cannot avert, and such wrath as is for ever wrath to come.

When I look to God, what can I expect ? holy in his nature, and therefore infinitely removed from sin ; just, and therefore bound to punish it ; unchangeable, and therefore punishing eternally ; omnipotent, there can be no resistance ; omniscient, and therefore no escape from his notice.

Who shall deliver me ? Behold me, saith the Saviour, I am he that bringeth salvation, salvation to the uttermost, mighty to save ; atoning blood shall sprinkle the throne of justice, eternal wisdom shall guide thy steps, and almighty power strengthen thee. My salvation is near, I bring it to thee in my word, I seal it to thee with my blood, and will accomplish it in thee by my Spirit for ever. Do so, Lord : if thou wilt save, none can destroy.

MEDITATION XIV.

EPHESIANS ii. 5.

By grace ye are saved.

TRUE, Lord, or such a wretch as I must despair; impotent and helpless to every thing which is good, and prone to every thing which is evil, what must become of me, if salvation was not free; it is of thy eternal purpose and grace that there is any hope for sinners; it is of thy grace, that I am called out of darkness into thy marvellous light; it is of rich grace, that when I was dead in sin, I was quickened together with Christ; it is by grace alone I stand; whatever attainments I reach unto, still it is by the grace of God I am what I am; without this grace I am nothing, have nothing, can do nothing, but sin. And in eternity, as well as time, the grace of my God will alone be exalted, when the topstone of the spiritual building is laid, it shall be with shouting, crying, grace, grace unto it. When eternal life is adjudged me in the last day, it will be the gift of God in Jesus Christ; and, through eternity, this will be the theme of all the saved by grace. Thou, Lord, alone, art worthy to receive blessing, and glory, and honour. If it be of grace then, it is no more of works; why is my foolish heart then continually going about to rob God of the glory of his grace? it is of my pride and unbelief; my unbelief that staggers at the promise, and will not suffer me to think God can be glorified more in the exercise of sovereign grace in the Redeemer, than in the execution of deserved vengeance on me, a sinner. My pride, that fain would sacrifice to its own drag, by offering something of my own to plead for my acceptance. Lord, give me

clearer views of the riches of thy grace, that my unbelief may be confounded : and deeper discoveries of the utter wretchedness of all I am and do, that my pride may be abased : and thus may I thankfully embrace this free salvation, and may be content to be saved from first to last as a sinner.

MEDITATION XV.

1 PETER iii. 22.

Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God ; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.

WHAT a glorious contrast are my Saviour's sufferings and exaltations ! He suffered, it became him. The cross was ignominious, but the crown he hath received exceeds in glory. He was crucified in weakness, but now all power is delivered to him in heaven and in earth. The scourges plowed up long furrows on his back ; his face was disfigured with buffetings, his head pierced with thorns ; but now he shineth as the sun goeth forth in his strength, glorious in holiness. The soldiers mocked, and nailed him to the tree ; but angels now bow down, and hail him over all God blessed for ever. He bowed his head, and died for sin once ; now death is swallowed up in victory ; the mount of Calvary is exchanged for the mount of God ; the reed for the sceptre of the universal kingdom : and the iron nails for that rod of dominion, which shall bruise his enemies to pieces, as the vessels of a potter are broken. What cause then have I to rejoice in my King, so great and glorious in himself, and exalted on my behalf, to reign

till he hath put all enemies under his feet ; if he take my cause in hand, who shall be able to harm me ? What are fiends of hell, or men on earth, that I should fear them ? Be strong then, my soul, in the Lord, and in the power of his might ; he will make thee more than conqueror on earth, till he shall take thee to reign with himself in heaven.

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THE following texts, as they stand ranged under different heads, will afford abundant matter of Meditation ; and as the Bible will be the best companion to the Altar, I would wish you ever to take it with you, and employ your leisure moments then, and indeed always, chiefly in considering its great and glorious truths, and meditating thereon.

HEADS OF MEDITATION.

I. LOVE OF GOD.

Romans v. 8. John iii. 16. Eph. ii. 4. 1 John iii. 1. Rev. i. 5. 6. Titus iii. 4. 2 Cor. v. 14.

II. FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

Heb. vi. 18. Deut. vii. 9. 1 Cor. i. 9. 1 Cor. x. 13. 1 Thess. iv. 24. 1 John i. 9. 1 Peter iv. 19. Lam. iii. 23.

III. PARDONING GRACE.

Isaiah i. 18. Psalm ciii. 8. Neh. ix. 17. Heb. viii. 12. Isaiah xliii. 25. Isaiah xlv. 22. Micah vii. 18. Isaiah lv. 7. 1 John ii. 1. Luke vii. 47. Psalm cxxx. 4. Eph. i. 7.

IV. STRENGTHENING GRACE.

2 Cor. xii. 9. Isaiah xli. 10. Psalm cxix. 28. Psalm cxxxviii. 3. Phil. iv. 13. Col. i. 11.

V. UNDER TEMPTATION.

1 Cor. x. 13. 2 Peter ii. 9. Heb. ii. 18. James i. 2. Heb. iv. 15. 2 Cor. i. 4. Psalm xlvi. 1. Psalm xci. 15. Jer. xiv. 8.

VI. DIVINE TEACHING.

Isaiah liv. 13. 1 John ii. 27. Psalm xxv. 8. Jer. xxxi. 34. John xiv. 16. Psalm xxxii. 8. 1 Cor. ii. 13.

VII. SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST'S ATONEMENT AND SATISFACTION.

Job xxxiii. 24. Heb. ix. 14. 1 Peter i. 19. 1 John i. 7. Rom. viii. 1. Acts xiii. 39. 1 Tim. i. 15. Heb. vii. 25. Rom. viii. 33.

VIII. IMPUTATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Rom. iv. 11. Rom. x. 4. Gal. ii. 9. Isaiah xlii. 21. Phil. iii. 9. 1 Cor. i. 30. Rom. iv. 6. Rom. v. 18. Isaiah lvi. 1.

IX. SANCTIFICATION.

Jer. xxxi. 33. Rom. viii. 4. Jude 1. 1 Cor. vi. 11. Rom. xv. 16. John xvii. 17. 1 Thess. v. 23. Exod. xxxi. 13. Heb. xii. 14. Luke i. 75.

X. PERSON OF CHRIST.

Cant. v. 16. Isaiah ix. 6. Psalm xlv. 8. Isaiah lxiii. 1. Cant. i. 3. Isaiah lii. 7.

XI. SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

Isaiah liii. 5. Isaiah lii. 14. Col. ii. 11. Luke ii. 7. Matt. ii. 13. Luke xiii. 31. Matt. xxvi. 37. Mark xiv. 44. Matt. xxvii. 30. John xix. 23. Matt. xxvii. 29. John xix. 34. Matt. xxvii. 60.

XII. GLORY OF CHRIST.

Acts v. 31. Mark xvi. 19. Acts vii. 55. Phil. ii. 10. Isaiah vi. 1—5. 1 Peter iii. 22. Rev. v. 8—14.

THE CONCLUSION.

AS the intention of the foregoing Treatise is, through the grace of God, to render communicating a spiritual service, it will be necessary to warn those into whose hands it may fall, to be peculiarly careful not to rest upon the ordinance itself, or the exactness of their preparation, according to any form which is prescribed to them, but to look chiefly to their profiting by it ; to observe whether their hearts are drawn near to God in Christ, and in the memorial of his death their expectation of his coming again more enlivened. Formality is the most dangerous of all states ; and outward religion, where the experimental knowledge of Christ is wanting, removes persons further from the kingdom of God, than outward vices ; the one puffing up the pride of vain man, whilst the other lays him open to conviction of his danger. Let it not be imagined that this is spoken to encourage outward vices, God forbid ; no, but as an awful warning to those, who, resting on the form of godliness, deny the power of it.

May you be not almost, but altogether Christians : and if the great Master of the feast bless these words to your illumination, instruction, edification, consolation or sanctification. His be the praise ; to Him alone the praise is due.

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