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ZFH
FLAVEL

THE
FOUNTAIN OF LIFE;

OR,

A DISPLAY OF CHRIST

IN

HIS ESSENTIAL AND MEDIATORIAL GLORY.

BY REV. JOHN FLAVEL.

A. D. 1671.

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with some changes of obsolete words.

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THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE SUBJECT.

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."—1 Cor. 2:2.

The former verse contains an apology for the plain and familiar manner of the apostle's preaching, which was "not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom:" he studied not to gratify their curiosity with rhetorical strains, or philosophical niceties; for he says, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

"I determined not to know." The meaning is not, that he despised or contemned all other knowledge; but so far only as it might stand in competition with, or opposition to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. As if he had said, "It is my stated, settled judgment; not a hasty, inconsiderate censure, but the result of my most serious inquiries. After I have well weighed the case, viewed it exactly on every side, balanced all advantages and disadvantages, pondered all things that are fit to come into consideration about it; this is the issue and final determination, that all other knowledge, how profitable, how pleasant soever, is not worthy to be named in comparison with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This, therefore, I resolve to make the scope and end of my ministry, and the end regulates the means; such pedantic toys and airy notions as injudicious ears af-

fect, would rather obstruct than promote my grand design among you; therefore, wholly waving that way, I applied myself to a plain, popular, unaffected dialect, fitted rather to pierce the heart and convince the conscience, than to please the fancy.

“I determined not to know *any thing*,’—to study nothing myself, to teach nothing to you, but ‘Jesus Christ.’ Christ shall be the centre to which all the lines of my ministry shall be drawn. I have spoken and written of many other subjects in my sermons and epistles, but it is all as consequent upon preaching and making known Jesus Christ: of all the subjects in the world, this is the sweetest; if there be any thing, on this side heaven, worthy our time and studies, this is it.” Thus he magnifies his doctrine, from the excellency of its subject, accounting all other doctrines but airy things, compared with this.

“Jesus Christ and *him crucified*.” This topic he singled out from all the rest of the excellent truths of Christ, on which to spend the main strength of his ministry: Christ *as crucified*: and the rather, because hereby he would obviate the vulgar prejudice raised against him upon the account of his cross; for Christ crucified was “to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” 1 Cor. 1:23. This also best suited his end, to draw them on to Christ; as Christ above all other subjects, so Christ crucified above all things in Christ.

The manner in which he discoursed on this transcendent subject to them, is also remarkable; he not only preached Christ crucified, but he preached him assiduously and *plainly*. He preached Christ frequently; “and whenever he preached of Christ crucified, he preached him in a crucified style.” This is the sum of the words; to let them know that his spirit was intent upon this subject, as if he neither knew nor cared to

speak of any other. All his sermons were so full of Christ, that his hearers might have thought he was acquainted with no other doctrine. Hence,

No doctrine is more excellent, or necessary to be preached and studied, than Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

All other knowledge, how much soever it be magnified in the world, is, and ought to be, esteemed but dross, in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Phil. 3:8. "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. 2:3. Eudoxus was so affected with the glory of the sun, that he thought he was born only to behold it: much more should a christian judge himself born only to behold and delight in the glory of the Lord Jesus.

I. Consider the excellency of the knowledge of Christ *in itself*.

1. It is *the very marrow and kernel of all the Scriptures*; the scope and centre of all divine revelations. The ceremonial law is full of Christ, and all the Gospel is full of Christ: the blessed lines of both Testaments meet in him; and how they both harmonize, and sweetly concentre in Jesus Christ, it is the chief scope of the excellent epistle to the Hebrews to unfold; for we may call that epistle the sweet harmony of both Testaments. This argues the unspeakable excellency of this doctrine, the knowledge whereof must needs, therefore, be a key to unlock the greatest part of the sacred Scriptures. For it is in the understanding of Scripture, much as in the knowledge of logic and philosophy: if a scholar once come to understand the foundation-principle, upon which, as upon its hinge, the controversy turns, the true knowledge of that principle shall carry him through the whole controversy, and furnish him with a solution to every argument. Even so the right knowledge of Jesus Christ, like a clue, leads you through the whole labyrinth of the Scriptures.

2. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is a *fundamental knowledge*; and foundations are most useful, though least seen.

It is fundamental to all *graces*; they all begin in knowledge. "The new man is renewed in knowledge." Col. 3: 10. As the old, so the new creation begins in light; the opening of the eyes is the first work of the Spirit: and as the beginnings of grace, so all its growth depends upon this increasing knowledge; "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." 2 Pet. 3: 18. See how these two, grace and knowledge, keep equal pace in the soul of a christian; in what degree the one increases, the other increases also.

It is fundamental to all *duties*. The duties, as well as the graces of all christians, are all founded in the knowledge of Christ. Must a christian believe? that he can never do without the knowledge of Christ: faith is so much dependent on his knowledge, that it is denominated by it, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many," Isa. 53: 11; and hence, John, 6: 40, seeing and believing are made the same thing. Would a man exercise hope in God? that he can never do without the knowledge of Christ, for he is the author of that hope, 1 Pet. 1: 3; he is also its object, Heb. 6: 19, its groundwork and support. Col. 1: 27. And as you cannot believe or hope, so neither can you pray acceptably without a competent degree of this knowledge. The very heathen could say, "Men must not speak of God without light." The true way of conversing with, and enjoying God in prayer, is by acting faith on him through a Mediator. Oh, then, how indispensable is the knowledge of Christ to all who address themselves to God in any duty!

It is fundamental to all *comforts*: all the comforts of believers are streams from this fountain. Jesus Christ is the very object of a believer's joy; "We rejoice in

Christ Jesus." Phil. 3: 3. Take away the knowledge of Christ, and christians would be the most sad and melancholy beings in the world: again, let Christ but manifest himself, and dart the beams of his light into their souls, it will make them kiss the stake, sing in the flames, and shout in the pangs of death, as men that divide the spoil.

This knowledge is fundamental to the *eternal happiness* of souls: as we can perform no duty, enjoy no comfort, so neither can we be saved without it, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John, 17: 3. And if it be life eternal to know Christ, then it is eternal damnation to be ignorant of Christ: as Christ is the door that opens heaven, so knowledge is the key that opens Christ. The excellent gifts and renowned parts of the moral heathen, though they purchased to them great esteem and honor among men, yet left them in a state of perdition, because of this great defect, that they were ignorant of Christ. 1 Cor. 1: 21.

3. The knowledge of Christ is *profound and large*: all other sciences are but shadows; this is a boundless, bottomless ocean; no creature hath a line long enough to fathom the depth of it; there is height, length, depth, and breadth ascribed to it, Eph. 3: 18; yea, it passeth knowledge. There is a manifold wisdom of God in Christ. Eph. 3: 10. It is indeed simple, pure, and unmixed with any thing but itself, yet it is manifold in degrees, kinds, and administrations. Though something of Christ be unfolded in one age, and something in another, yet eternity itself cannot fully unfold him. I see something, said Luther, which blessed Augustine saw not; and those that come after me, will see that which I see not. It is in the studying of Christ, as in the planting of a new-discovered country; at first men sit down by the sea-side, upon the skirts and borders

of the land, and there they dwell; but by degrees they search further and further into the heart of the country. Ah, the best of us are yet but upon the borders of this vast continent!

4. The study of Jesus Christ is *the most noble subject* that ever a soul spent itself upon. The angels study this doctrine, and stoop down to look into this deep abyss. What are the truths discovered in Christ, but the very secrets that from eternity lay hid in the bosom of God? Eph. 3:8, 9. God's heart is opened to men in Christ, John, 1:18; this makes the Gospel such a glorious dispensation, because Christ is so gloriously revealed therein, 2 Cor. 3:9; and the studying of Christ in the Gospel, stamps such a heavenly glory upon the contemplating soul. Verse 18.

5. It is the most *sweet and comfortable knowledge*. To be studying Jesus Christ, what is it but to be digging among all the veins and springs of comfort? and the deeper you dig, the more do these springs flow upon you. How are hearts enraptured with the discoveries of Christ in the Gospel! what ecstasies, meltings, transports, do gracious souls meet there!

II. Let us *compare* this knowledge with all other knowledge.

1. All other knowledge is natural, but this wholly *supernatural*, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Matt. 11:27. The wisest heathen could never make a discovery of Christ by their deepest searches into nature; the most eagle-eyed philosophers were but children in knowledge, compared with the most illiterate christians.

2. Other knowledge is *unattainable by many*. All the helps and means in the world would never enable some christians to attain the learned arts and languages; men of the brightest parts are most excellent in these;

but here is the mystery and excellency of the knowledge of Christ, that men of most blunt, dull, and contemptible parts attain, through the teaching of the Spirit, to this knowledge, in which the more acute and ingenious are utterly blind: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Matt. 11:25. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." 1 Cor. 1:26, 27.

3. Other knowledge, though you should attain the highest degree of it, would *never bring you to heaven*, the principal thing, namely Christ, being wanting. Other knowledge is also defective, in the purity of its nature: the learned heathens grew vain in their imaginations, Rom. 1:21; and in its efficacy and influence on the heart and life: they held the truth in unrighteousness: their lusts were stronger than their light, Rom. 1:18. But this knowledge has most powerful influences, changing souls into its own image, 2 Cor. 3:18, and so proves a saving knowledge unto men. 1 Tim. 2:4.

INFERENCE 1. The sufficiency of the doctrine of Christ, to make men *wise unto salvation*. Paul desired to know nothing else; and, indeed, nothing else is of absolute necessity to be known. A little of this knowledge, if saving and effectual upon thy heart, will do the soul more service than all the vain speculation and profound parts in which others so much glory. Poor christian, be not dejected, because thou seest thyself outstript and excelled by so many in other parts of knowledge; if thou know Jesus Christ, thou knowest enough to comfort and save thy soul. Many learned philosophers are now in hell, and many illiterate christians in heaven.

2. If there be such excellency in the knowledge of Christ, *let it humble all*, both saints and sinners, that we have no more of this clear and effectual knowledge in us, notwithstanding the excellent advantages we have had for it. Sinners, concerning you I may sigh, and say with the apostle, "Some have not the knowledge of Christ; I speak this to your shame." 1 Cor. 15:34. This, oh! this is the condemnation. And even for you that are enlightened in this knowledge, how little do you know of Jesus Christ, in comparison of what you might have known of him! What a shame is it, that you should need to be taught the very first truths, "when for the time you might have been teachers of others!" Heb. 5:12-14. "That your ministers cannot speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." 1 Cor. 3:1, 2. Oh, how much time is spent in other studies, in frivolous reading, vain discourse, worldly employments! how little in the search and study of Jesus Christ!

3. *How sad is their condition* that have a knowledge of Christ, and yet as to themselves it had been better they had never had it! Many there be that content themselves with a merely speculative, ineffectual, knowledge of him: of such the apostle says, "It had been better for them not to have known." 2 Pet. 2:21. It serves only to aggravate their sin and misery; for though it be not enough to save them, yet it puts some weak restraints upon sin, which their impetuous lusts breaking down, they are thereby exposed to a greater damnation.

4. This may inform us *by what rule to judge* both ministers and doctrine. Certainly that is the highest commendation of a minister, to be "an able minister of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit." 2 Cor. 3:6. He is the best preacher, that can in the most lively and powerful manner display Jesus Christ

before the people, evidently setting him forth as crucified among them; and that is the best sermon which is most full of Christ, not of rhetorical art. I know that a holy dialect well becometh Christ's ministers; they should not be rude and careless in language or method; but surely the excellency of a sermon lies not in that, but in the plainest exhibition and liveliest application of Jesus Christ.

5. Let all that mind the honor of religion, or the peace and comfort of their own souls, wholly *apply themselves to the study* of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Wherefore spend we ourselves upon other studies, when all excellency, sweetness, and desirableness is centred in this one? Jesus Christ is fairer than the children of men, the chiefest among ten thousands, "as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood." Cant. 2:3. Those things which singly most delight the souls of men, are all found conjoined in Christ. Oh what a blessed Christ is this! whom to know is eternal life. From the knowledge of Jesus Christ do bud forth all the fruits of comfort, and that for all seasons and conditions. Hence he is represented by "the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." Rev. 22:2. In him souls have all necessaries for food and medicine; and all varieties of fruits,—twelve manner of fruits; a distinct sweetness in each and every attribute, promise, ordinance. In him are these fruits at all times, fruits every month; winter fruits as well as summer fruits. Oh then study Christ, study to know him more extensively. There are many excellent things in Christ, which the most eagle-eyed believer has not yet seen: ah! it is a pity that any thing of Christ should lie hid from his people. Study to know Christ more intensely, to get the experimental taste and lively power of his knowledge upon your heart and affections: this is

the knowledge that carries all the sweetness and comfort in it. Christian, I dare appeal to thy experience, whether the enjoyment of Jesus Christ, in ordinances and duties, has not a higher and sweeter relish than any created enjoyment thou didst ever taste in this world? Oh then separate, devote, and wholly give thyself, thy time, thy strength to this most sweet, transcendent study.

6. Let me close the whole with a double caution: one to ourselves, who by our calling and profession are the ministers of Christ; another to those that sit under the doctrine of Christ daily.

As to *ministers*: if this doctrine be the most excellent, necessary, fundamental, profound, noble, and comfortable doctrine, let us then take heed lest, while we study to be exact in other things, we be found ignorant in this. Ye know it is ignominious, by the common suffrage of the civilized world, for any man to be unacquainted with his own calling, or not attend to the proper business of it: it is our calling, as the Bridegroom's friends, to woo and win souls to Christ, to set him forth to the people as crucified among them, Gal. 3:1; to present him in all his attractive excellencies, that all hearts may be ravished with his beauty, and charmed into his arms by love: we must also be able to defend the truths of Christ against undermining heretics, to instil his knowledge into the ignorant, to answer the cases and scruples of poor doubting christians. How many intricate knots have we to untie! What pains, what skill is requisite for such as are employed about our work! And shall we spend our precious time in frivolous controversies, philosophical niceties, dry and barren scholastic notions? Shall we study every thing but Christ? revolve all volumes but the sacred one? What is observed even of Bellarmine, that he turned with loathing from school divinity, because it wanted the sweet savor of piety, may be a reproof to many among us, who are often too

much in love with worse employment than what he was said to loathe. Oh let the knowledge of Christ dwell in us richly.

Let us see that our knowledge of Christ is not a powerless, barren, ineffectual knowledge. Oh, that, in its passage from our understanding to our lips, it might powerfully melt, sweeten, and relish our hearts! Remember, brethren, a holy calling never saved any man, without a holy heart; if our tongues only be sanctified, our whole man must be condemned. Oh let the keepers of the vineyard look to, and keep their own vineyard! we have a heaven to win or lose, as well as others.

Let us take heed that we withhold not our knowledge of Christ in unrighteousness from the people. Oh that our lips may disperse knowledge and feed many. Remember, I beseech you, the relations wherein you stand, and the obligations resulting thence: remember the great Shepherd gave himself for, and gave you to the flock. Your time, your gifts, are not yours, but God's. Remember the pinching wants of souls who are perishing for want of Christ! Did Christ not think it too much to sweat blood, yea, to die for them? and shall we think it much to watch, study, preach, pray, and do what we can for their salvation? Oh let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ.

As to the *people* that sit under the doctrine of Christ daily, and have the light of his knowledge shining round about them: take heed ye do not reject and despise this light. This may be done by neglecting the means of knowledge. Surely, if you thus reject knowledge, God will reject you. Hos. 4 : 6. It is a despising of the richest gift that ever Christ gave to the church; and however it be a contempt and slight that begins low, and seems only to vent itself upon foibles, such as the artificial tones and gestures of speakers, yet, believe it, it is a daring sin, that flies higher than you are aware:

“He that despiseth you, despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me.” Luke, 10 : 16. You despise the knowledge of Christ when you despise the directions and loving constraints of that knowledge ; when you refuse to be guided by your knowledge. Your light and your lusts contest and struggle within you ; oh it is sad when your lusts master your light ! You sin not as the heathen sin, who know not God ; but when you sin, you wound your own consciences and offer violence to your own convictions. And what sad work will this make in your souls ! How soon will it lay your consciences waste !

Take heed also that you rest not satisfied with that knowledge of Christ you have attained, but *go on to perfection*. It is the pride and ignorance of many professors, when they have got a few raw and indigested notions, to swell with self-conceit of their excellent attainments. And it is the sin, even of the best of saints, when they see how deep the knowledge of Christ lies, and what pains they must take to dig for it, to throw by the shovel of duty, and cry, Dig we cannot. To your work, christians, to your work. Let not your candle go out : devote yourselves to this study ; cherish the blessed communications of light and grace from on high ; and count all things but dross in comparison with that excellency which is in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER II.

CHRIST IN HIS ESSENTIAL AND PRIMEVAL GLORY.

"Then I was by him, as one brought up with him : and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." —Prov. 8 : 30.

These words are a part of that excellent commendation of *Wisdom*, by which in this book Solomon intends two things : first, grace or holiness ; "Wisdom is the principal thing," Prov. 4 : 7 ; secondly, Jesus Christ the fountain of that grace : and, as the former is renowned for its excellency, Job, 28 : 14, 15, so is the latter, in this context, wherein the Spirit of God describes the most blessed state of Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, from those eternal delights he had with his Father before his assumption of our nature : "Then was I by him, as one brought up with him : and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." That eternity was wholly swallowed up in unspeakable delights and pleasures. The Father and Son delighted one in another (from which delights the Spirit is not here excluded) without communicating their joy to any other ; for no creature then existed, save in the mind of God. Verse 30.

"Then was I by him, as one brought up with him : " in his very bosom. "The only-begotten Son" was "in the bosom of the Father," John, 1 : 18 ; an expression of the greatest dearness and intimacy, as if he had said, wrapt up in the very soul of his Father—embosomed in God.

"I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." These delights of the Father and the Son one in the other, knew not a moment's interruption or diminu-

tion. Thus did these great and glorious persons mutually communicate their fullest pleasure and delight, each into the heart of the other: they lay, as it were, embosomed in one another, entertaining themselves with delights and pleasures ineffable and inconceivable. Hence we observe,

The state of Jesus Christ before his incarnation was that of the highest and most unspeakable delight and pleasure in the enjoyment of his Father.

As he was "in the bosom of the Father," John, 1 : 18, the posture of dearest love, John, 13 : 23; so in Isaiah, 42 : 1, the Father calls him "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth;" and he is said, in this state, to be rich, 2 Cor. 8 : 9; and to be "equal with God," and "in the form of God;" Phil. 2 : 6; that is, to have all the glory and ensigns of the majesty of God; and the riches which the apostle speaks of, was no less than all that God the Father hath; "All that the Father hath is mine," John, 16 : 15; and what he now hath in his exalted state is the same that he had before his humiliation. John, 17 : 5. Now to portray (as we are able) the unspeakable felicity of that original state of Christ:

I. Let us consider that state *negatively*, by removing from it all the degrees of debasement and sorrow involved in his incarnation.

1. He was not then abased to *the condition of a creature*, which was a low step indeed; for by this, saith the apostle, "he made himself of no reputation," Phil. 2 : 7; it emptied him of his glory. For God to be made man, is such an abasement as none can express; but not only to appear in true flesh, but also "in the likeness of sinful flesh," Rom. 8 : 3, oh, what is this!

2. Christ was *not under the law* in this state. It was no disparagement to Adam in the state of innocency, or to angels in their state of glory, to be under law to God; but it was an inconceivable abasement to the ab-

solute independent Being to come under law; yea, not only under the obedience, but also under the malediction and curse of the law: "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Gal. 4 : 4.

3. In this state he was not liable to any of those sorrowful *consequences and attendants* of that frail and feeble state of humanity which he afterwards assumed. There was no sorrowing or sighing in that bosom where he lay, though afterwards he became "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Isa. 53 : 3. "A man of sorrows," as if he had been constituted and made up of pure and unmixed sorrows; every day conversing with griefs, as with his intimate companions and acquaintance. He was never pinched with poverty and want while he continued in that bosom, as he was afterwards, when he said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Matt. 8 : 20. Ah! blessed Jesus! thou neededst not to have wanted a place to lay thy head, hadst thou not left that bosom for my sake. He never underwent reproach and shame in that bosom: there was nothing but glory and honor reflected upon him by his Father, though afterwards "he was despised and rejected of men." Isaiah, 53 : 3. His Father never looked upon him without smiles and love, delight and joy, though afterwards he became a reproach of men, and despised of the people. Psa. 22 : 6. While he lay in that bosom of peace and love, he never knew what it was to be assaulted with temptations, to be besieged by unclean spirits, as he did afterwards: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Matt. 4 : 1. It was for our sakes that he submitted to those exercises of spirit, to be "in all points tempted like as we are," Heb. 4 : 15, that he might be unto us "a merciful and faithful High Priest."

Heb. 2 : 17. He was never sensible of pains and tortures in soul or body, though afterwards he groaned and sweat under them. Isa. 53 : 5. The Lord embraced him from eternity, but never wounded him till he stood in our place and room. There were no hidings or withdrawings of his Father from him; there was not a cloud from eternity upon the face of God, till Jesus Christ had left that bosom. It was a new thing to Christ to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. 27 : 46. There were never any impressions of his Father's wrath upon him, as there were afterwards: God never delivered such a bitter cup into his hands before, as that. Matt. 26 : 39. There was no death, to which he was subject, in that bosom. All these things were new to Christ; he was above them all, till, for our sakes, he voluntarily subjected himself unto them.

II. Let us consider Christ's primeval state *positively*, and guess (for indeed we can but guess) at the glory of it.

1. We cannot but conceive it to be a state of *matchless happiness*, if we consider the persons enjoying and delighting in each other: he was with God, John, 1 : 1, God, the fountain, ocean, and centre of all delights and joys; "In thy presence is fulness of joy." Psa. 16 : 11. To be wrapt up in the soul and bosom of all delights, as Christ was, must needs be a state of bliss transcending apprehension.

2. Consider the intimacy, dearness, yea, *oneness of those great Persons*; and the nearer the union the sweeter the communion. Now Jesus Christ was not only near and dear to God, but one with him: "I and my Father are one," John, 10 : 30; one in nature, will, love, and delight. There is indeed a moral union of souls among men by love, but this was a natural oneness: no child is so one with his father, no husband so one with the wife of his bosom, no friend so one with

his friend, no soul so one with its body, as Jesus Christ and his Father were one. Oh what matchless delights must necessarily flow from such a blessed union!

3. Consider again *the purity of that delight* with which the blessed Father and Son embraced each other. The best of creature delights are mixed, debased, and alloyed; if there be something engaging and delightful, there is also something cloying and distasteful. The purer any delight is, the more excellent. Now, there are no crystal streams flowing so purely from the fountain, no beams of light so unmixed from the sun, as the loves and delights of these holy and glorious persons were: the holy, holy, holy Father embraced the thrice holy Son with a most holy delight and love.

4. Consider the *constancy* of this delight; it was from everlasting, as in verse 23, and from eternity; it never suffered one moment's interruption. The overflowing fountain of God's delight and love never stopped its course, never ebbed: "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."

III. Let us consider the glory of that state *comparatively* either with the choicest delights that one creature takes in another, or that God takes in the creature, or that the creatures take in God. Measure these immense delights, between the Father and his Son, by either of these lines, and you shall find them infinitely short.

1. The delight that creatures take in each other, is sometimes a great delight; such was Jacob's delight in Benjamin, whose life is said to be "bound up in the lad's life," Gen. 44: 30, a dear and high expression; such was that of Jonathan in David, whose soul was knit with his soul, "he loved him as his own soul," 1 Sam. 18: 1; and such is the delight of one friend in another; there is a friend that is as a man's own soul,

Deut. 13 : 6. Yet all this is but creature delight, and can in no particular equal the delights between the Father and the Son ; for this is but a finite delight, according to the measure and abilities of creatures, but that is infinite, suitable to the infinite perfection of the Divine Being. This is always mixed, that perfectly pure.

2. It is confessed that God takes great delight in some creatures. The Lord takes pleasure in his saints, he rejoices over them with singing ; and resteth in his love. Zeph. 3 : 17 ; Isa. 62 : 5. But yet there is a great difference between his delight in creatures, and his delights in Christ ; for all his delight in the saints is secondary, and for Christ's sake ; but his delights in Christ are primary, and for his own sake. We are accepted in the Beloved, Eph. 1 : 6 ; he is beloved, and accepted for himself.

3. The delight that the best of creatures take in God and Christ, it must be confessed, is a choice delight ; and that is a transcendent love, with which they love and delight in him ; "Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Psa. 73 : 25. But surely our delight in God is no perfect rule by which to measure his delight in Christ ; for our love to God, at best, is still imperfect : that is the burden and constant complaint of saints ; but this is perfect : ours is inconstant, ebbing and flowing, but this is constant. So then, the condition and state of Jesus Christ before his incarnation, was a state of the highest and matchless delight, in the enjoyment of his Father.

INFERENCE 1. What an astonishing act of love was this, for *the Father to give the delight of his soul*, out of his very bosom, for poor sinners ! All tongues must needs pause and falter, that attempt the expressions of his grace, expressions being here swallowed up : "God

so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." John, 3 : 16. *So loved them*: how did he love them? nay, here you must excuse the tongues of angels. Which of us would deliver a child, the child of our delights, an only child, to death, for the greatest inheritance in the world? what tender parent can endure parting with such a child? When Hagar was taking her last leave (as she thought) of her Ishmael, "she went and sat her down over against him, a good way off: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept." Gen. 21 : 16. Though she were none of the best of mothers, nor he the best of children, yet she could not give up the child. Oh it was hard to part! What an outcry did David make, even for an Absalom, wishing he had died for him! What a breach has the death of some children made in the hearts of some parents, which will never be closed up in this world! Yet surely, never did any child lie so close to a parent's heart, as Christ to his Father's; and yet he willingly parts with him, though his only one, the Son of his delights; and that to death, a cursed death; for sinners, for the worst of sinners. Oh the admirable love of God to men! matchless love! a love past finding out! Let all men, therefore, in the business of their redemption, give equal glory to the Father with the Son. John, 5 : 23. If the Father had not loved thee, he had never parted with such a Son for thee.

2. From one wonder let our souls turn to another, for they are now in the midst of wonders: adore, and be for ever astonished at the love of Jesus Christ to poor sinners, that ever *he should consent to leave* such a bosom, and the ineffable delights that were there, for such poor worms as we are. Oh the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of unmeasurable love! See Rom. 5:6-8: read, and wonder. How is the love of Christ

commended to poor sinners! As the Father loved him; even so, believers, hath he loved you. John, 17 : 23. What manner of love is this! Who ever loved as Christ loves. Who ever denied himself for Christ, as Christ denied himself for us?

3. An interest in Jesus Christ is the true way to *all spiritual preferment* in heaven. Do you covet to be in the heart, in the favor and delight of God? Get interest in Jesus Christ, and you shall presently be there. In heaven, persons are preferred according to their interest in the Beloved. Eph. 1 : 6. Christ is the great favorite there: his image upon your souls, and his name in your prayers, makes both accepted with God.

How worthy is Jesus Christ of *all our love* and delights! You see how infinitely the Father delighteth in him; and shall not our hearts delight in him? Oh that you did but see this lovely Lord Jesus Christ! Why do ye lavish away your precious affections upon vanity? none but Christ is worthy of them. When you spend your precious affections upon other objects, what is it but to dig for dross with golden mattocks? The Lord direct our hearts into the love of Christ. Oh that our hearts, loves, and delights, did meet and centre with the heart of God in this most blessed object! Oh let him that left God's bosom for you, be embosomed by you, though your love be nothing to God's: he that left God's bosom for you, deserves yours.

If Christ be the beloved of the Father's soul, think what a grievous and insufferable thing it is to the heart of God, to see his dear Son despised, slighted, and rejected by sinners: how God will bear this, that parable, Matt. 21 : 33-41, will inform you: surely he will miserably destroy such wretched sinners. What a dismal word is that, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha," 1 Cor. 16 : 22; that is, let the great curse of God lie upon that man till the

Lord come. Oh sinners! you shall one day know the cost of this sin: you shall feel what it is to despise a Jesus that is able to compel love from the hardest heart. Oh that you would slight him no more! Oh that this day your hearts might fall in love with him! I tell you, if you would set your love to sale, none bids so fair for it as Christ.

If Christ lay eternally in this bosom of love, and yet was content to forsake and leave it for your sakes, then, christians, be you ready to *forsake all* the comforts you have on earth for Christ. Famous Galleacius left all for this enjoyment; Moses left all the glory of Egypt; Peter and the other apostles left all. Luke, 18 : 28. But what have we to leave for Christ in comparison with what he left for us? Surely Christ is the highest pattern of self-denial in the world. Let this confirm your *faith in prayer*. If he, that has such an interest in the heart of God, intercede with the Father for you, then never doubt of audience and acceptance with him; surely you shall be accepted through the Beloved. Christ was never denied any thing that he asked. The Father hears him always. John, 11 : 42. Though you are not worthy, Christ is, and he ever lives to make intercession for you. Heb. 7 : 25. Let this encourage thy heart, Oh saint, in a *dying hour*; and not only make thee patient in death, but in a holy manner impatient till thou be gone—for whither is thy soul now going, but to that bosom of love whence Christ came? "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, John, 17 : 24; and where is he but in that bosom of glory and love where he lay before the world was? verse 5. Oh then let every believer encourage his soul; comfort ye one another with these words, "I am leaving the bosom of a creature; I am going to the bosom of God."

Sinners, embrace the bosom-Son of God. Poor fellow-

mortals! whatever you are, or have been, under whatever guilt or discouragement you lie, embrace Christ, who is freely offered to you, and you shall be as dear to God as the holiest and most eminent believer in the world; but if you still continue to despise and neglect such a Saviour, sorer wrath is treasured up for you than other sinners. Heb. 10 : 28, 29. Oh that these discoveries and overtures of Christ may never come to such a fatal issue with any of your souls, before whom his glory has been thus opened!

CHAPTER III.

THE COVENANT OF REDEMPTION BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE REDEEMER.

“Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”—Isa. 53 : 12.

In the fifty-third of Isaiah, the Gospel seems to be epitomized: the subject is the death of Christ, and the glorious issue thereof. By reading it, the eunuch of old, and many Jews since, have been converted to Christ. Christ is here considered *absolutely*, and *relatively*. Absolutely, and thus his innocency is clearly vindicated, verse 9. Though he suffered grievous things, yet it was not for his own sins; for “he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” But, he is considered relatively, in the capacity of a Surety for us: thus the justice of God is fully vindicated in his

sufferings, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Verse 6. How he came to sustain this capacity and relation of a Surety for us, is in these verses plainly asserted to be by his *compact and agreement* with his Father, before the worlds were made. Verses 10-12.

In this verse we have, 1. His *work*, which was indeed a hard work, to pour out his soul unto death, aggravated by his being "numbered with the transgressors;" his "bearing the sins of many;" and by the manner of his bearing it, namely, meekly and forgivingly: "he made intercession for the transgressors:" this was his work.

2. The *reward* or fruit which is promised him for this work, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;" wherein is a plain allusion to conquerors in war, for whom are reserved the richest garments, and most honorable captives to follow the conqueror, as an addition to his magnificence and triumph; these were wont to come after them in chains, Isa. 45:14; see Judg. 5:30.

3. The *relation* between that work and this triumph. Some will have this work to hold no other relation to that glory, than a mere antecedent to a consequent; others give it the respect and relation of a meritorious cause to a reward. However, it is plain, that the Father here agrees and promises to give the elect to the Son, if he will undertake their redemption by pouring out his soul unto death; of all which this is the plain result:

The business of man's salvation was transacted upon covenant terms, between the Father and the Son, from all eternity.

I. Consider *the persons* transacting and dealing with each other in this covenant. And indeed they are great persons, God the Father and God the Son; the former as a Creditor, and the latter as a Surety. The Father claims satisfaction, the Son engages to give it.

II. *The business transacted* between them; and that

was the redemption and recovery of all God's people: our eternal happiness lay now before them, our dearest and everlasting concerns were now in their hands. The elect (though not yet in being) are here considered as existent, yea, and as fallen, miserable, forlorn creatures: how these may again be restored to happiness without prejudice to the honor, justice, and truth of God: this, this is the business that lay before them.

III. *The manner, or quality* of the transaction, was federal, or of the nature of a covenant; it was by mutual engagements and stipulations, each person undertaking to perform his part in order to our recovery.

IV. More particularly, we will next consider *the articles to which they do both agree*; or, what it is that each person doth for himself promise to the other. And, to let us see how much the Father's heart is engaged in the salvation of poor sinners, there are four things which he promiseth to do for Christ, if he will undertake that work.

1. He promiseth to invest him, and anoint him to a *threefold office*, answerable to the misery that lay upon the elect, as so many bars to all communion with and enjoyment of God; for, if ever man be restored to that happiness, the blindness of his mind must be cured, the guilt of sin expiated, and his captivity to sin led captive. Christ must, "of God, be made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. 1:30. And he is made so to us as our *Prophet, Priest, and King*; but he could not put himself into either of these; for if so, he had acted without commission, and consequently all he did had been invalid; "Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son." Heb. 5:5. A commission, therefore, to act authoritatively in these offices, being necessary to our recovery, the Father engages to him to seal him such a threefold commission.

He promiseth to invest him with an eternal and royal priesthood, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Psa. 110 : 4. This Melchisedec being king of righteousness, and king of Salem, that is, Peace, had a royal priesthood ; and his descent not being reckoned, it had an adumbration of eternity in it, and so was more fit to typify and shadow forth the priesthood of Christ than Aaron was. Heb. 7 : 17, 24, 25.

He promiseth moreover to make him a Prophet, and that an extraordinary one, even the Prince of prophets ; the chief Shepherd, as much superior to all others as the sun is to the lesser stars ; so it is said, "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes," &c. Isa. 42 : 6, 7.

And not only so, but to make him King also, and that of the whole empire of the world ; "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for thy possession." Psa. 2 : 8. Thus the Father promises to qualify and furnish the Son completely for the work, by his investiture with this threefold office.

2. He promiseth to *crown his work with success*, and bring it to a happy issue : "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Isa. 53 : 10. He shall not begin, and not finish ; he shall not shed his invaluable blood upon hazardous terms ; but shall see and reap the sweet fruits thereof ; as the joyful mother forgets her sorrows when she delightfully embraces her living child.

3. The Father promiseth to *accept him* in his work : "Surely," saith the Son, "my work is with my God." Isa. 49 : 4. And, "I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord." Verse 5. His faith hath therein respect to this compact and promise. Accordingly, the Father mani

feels the satisfaction he had in him, and in his work, even while he was about it upon the earth, "when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 2 Pet. 1 : 17.

4. He engaged to *reward him highly* for his work, by exalting him to singular and super-eminent glory and honor, when he should have despatched and finished it. So you read, "I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Psa. 2 : 7. It is spoken of the day of his resurrection, when he had just finished his sufferings. And so the apostle expounds and applies it. Acts, 13 : 32, 33. For then did the Lord wipe away the reproach of his cross. As if the Father had said, Now thou hast again recovered thy glory, and this day is to thee as a new birth-day.

These are the encouragements and rewards proposed and promised to him by the Father. This was the joy set before him, as the apostle expresses it in Heb. 12 : 2, which made him so patiently "endure the cross, and despise the shame."

And in like manner Jesus Christ gives his engagement to the Father; that, upon these terms, he is to be made flesh, to divest, as it were, himself of his glory, to come under the obedience and malediction of the law, and not to refuse any, the hardest sufferings it should please his Father to inflict on him. So much is implied in Isa. 50 : 5-7. "The Lord hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." And the sense of this place is well delivered to us in

other terms, "Then said I, Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart." Psa. 40: 6-10. Oh see with what a full consent the heart of Christ closeth with the Father's offers and proposals! like some echo that answers your voice twice or thrice over. So doth Christ here answer his Father's call, "I come; I delight to do thy will; yea, thy law is in my heart."

V. I will briefly show *how these articles and agreements were on the part of both performed*, and that precisely and punctually.

1. The *Son* having thus consented, accordingly he applies himself to the discharge of his work. He took a body, and in it fulfilled all righteousness, even to a tittle. Matt. 3: 15. And, at last, his soul was made an offering for sin, so that he could say, "Father, I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." John, 17: 4. He went through all the parts of his active and passive obedience, cheerfully and faithfully.

2. The *Father* made good his engagements to Christ, all along, with no less faithfulness than Christ did his. He promised to assist, and hold his hand, Isa. 42: 5, and so he did; "there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." Luke, 22: 43. In his agony in the garden, this was seasonable aid and succor. He promised to accept him in his work, and that he should be glorious in his eyes: so he did; for he not only declared it by a voice from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Luke, 3: 22; but it was fully declared in his resurrection and ascension, which were a full discharge and justification of him. He promised him that "He should see his seed," Isa. 53: 10, and so he did; for his very birth-dew was as the dew of the morning; and ever since his blood has been fruitful in the world. He promised gloriously to

reward and exalt him; and so he hath, and that highly and super-eminently, "giving him a name above every name in heaven and earth." Phil. 2: 9-11. Thus were the articles performed.

VI. *When was this compact made between the Father and the Son?* I answer, it bears date from eternity. Before this world was, then were his delights in us, while as yet we had no existence, but only in the infinite mind and purpose of God, who had decreed this for us in Christ Jesus, as the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. 1: 9. What grace was that which was given us in Christ before the world began, but this grace of redemption, which was from everlasting thus contrived and designed for us, in the way which has been here opened? Then was the counsel, or consultation of peace between them both, as some understand Zech. 6: 13.

INFERENCE 1. We see the abundant security God has given his people for their salvation, and that not only in respect of the covenant of grace made with them, but also of this covenant of redemption made with Christ for them; which is indeed the foundation of the covenant of grace. God's single promise is security enough to our faith, but his covenant of grace adds further security; both these, viewed as the effects and fruits of this covenant of redemption, make all fast and sure. Happy were it, if Christians, in perplexity and distress, would turn their eyes from the defects in their obedience, to the fulness of Christ, and see themselves complete in him.

2. Moreover, hence we infer the validity and unquestionable success of Christ's intercession in heaven for believers. You read, "that he ever liveth to make intercession," Heb. 7: 25, and, that his blood speaks good things for them. Heb. 12: 24. Now, that his blood shall obtain what it pleads for in heaven, is undoubted, and that from the consideration of this covenant of redemp-

tion. For here you see that the things he now asks of his Father, are the very same which his Father promised him, and covenanted to give him, before this world was. So that, besides the interest of the person, the very equity of the matter speaks its success, and requires performance. Whatever he asks for us, is as due to him as the wages of the hireling, when the work is ended. If the work be done, and done faithfully, as the Father hath acknowledged it is, then the reward is due, and due immediately; and no doubt but he shall receive it from the hands of a righteous God.

3. Hence, in like manner, you may be informed of the consistency of grace with full satisfaction to the justice of God. The apostle tells us, we are saved "according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began," 2 Tim. 1:9, that is, according to the gracious terms of this covenant of redemption; and yet you see, notwithstanding, how strictly God claims satisfaction from Christ. So then, grace to us, and satisfaction to justice, are not so inconsistent as some adversaries of the truth would make them: what was debt to Christ, is grace to us. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. 3:24.

4. Hence judge of the antiquity of the love of God to believers; what an ancient Friend he hath been to us; who loved us, provided for us, and contrived all our happiness, before we were, yea, before the world was. We reap the fruits of this covenant now, the seed whereof was sown from eternity; yea, it is not only ancient, but also most free: no excellences of ours could engage the love of God; for as yet we were not.

5. Hence judge how reasonable it is that believers should embrace the hardest terms of obedience unto Christ, who complied with such hard terms for their salvation. They were hard and difficult terms indeed,

on which Christ received you from the Father's hand ; it was, as you have heard, to pour out his soul unto death ; " Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." 2 Cor. 8 : 9. Blush, ungrateful believers ; oh, let shame cover your faces ; judge in yourselves now, hath Christ deserved that you should hesitate at trifles, that you should shrink at a few petty difficulties, and complain, this is hard, and that is severe ? Oh, if you knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in this his wonderful condescension for you, you could not do it.

6. How greatly are we all concerned to make it sure to ourselves, that we are of this number which the Father and the Son agreed for before the world was ; that we were comprehended in Christ's engagement and compact with the Father ! But some one will say, who can know that ? I answer, you may know, without ascending into heaven, or prying into unrevealed secrets, that your names were in that covenant, if, (1.) You are believers indeed ; for all such the Father then gave to Christ : " The men that thou gavest me, (for of them he spake immediately before,) they have believed that thou didst send me." John, 17 : 6, 8. (2.) If you savingly know God in Jesus Christ. Such were given him by the Father : " I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me." Verse 6. By this they are discriminated from the rest : " The world hath not known thee, but these have known." Verse 25. (3.) If you are men of another world : " They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Verse 16. May it be said of you, as of dying men, that you are not men for this world, that you are crucified and dead to it, Gal. 6 : 14, that you are strangers in it ! Heb. 11 : 13, 14. (4.) If you keep Christ's word : " Thine they were, and thou gavest them me ; and they have kept thy word." John, 17 : 6. By keeping his word, understand the re-

ceiving of the word, in its sanctifying effects and influences, into your hearts, and your perseverance in the profession and practice of it to the end: "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." Verse 17. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will." John, 15 : 7. Blessed and happy is that soul upon which these blessed characters appear, which our Lord Jesus has laid so close together, within the compass of a few verses, in the 17th chapter of John. These are the persons the Father delivered unto Christ, and Christ accepted from the Father, in this blessed covenant.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ADMIRABLE LOVE OF GOD IN GIVING HIS OWN SON FOR US.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." John, 3 : 16.

In these words are to be considered,

1. The original spring or fountain of our best mercies—The love of God.

2. The mercy flowing out of this fountain, and that is Christ, The Mercy, as he is emphatically called, Luke, 1 : 72 ; the marrow, kernel, and substance of all other mercies. "He gave his only begotten Son."

3. The objects of this love, or the persons for whom the eternal Lord delivered Christ, namely, "the world." This must respect the elect of God in the world ; such as do, or shall actually believe, as it is exegetically expressed in the next words, "That whosoever believeth

in him should not perish." Those whom he calls the world in that, he styles believers in this expression; these are the objects of this love. It is not angels, but men, that were so loved.

4. The manner in which this never-enough celebrated mercy flows to us, from the fountain of Divine love, and that is most freely and spontaneously. "He gave," not he sold, or barely parted with, but gave. Nor yet doth the Father's giving imply Christ to be merely passive; for as the Father is here said to give him, so the apostle tells us, that he gave himself: "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20. The Father gave him out of good will to men, and he as willingly bestowed himself on that service. Hence we learn, that *The gift of Christ is the highest and fullest manifestation of the love of God to sinners, ever made from eternity.*

How is this gift of God to sinners signalized in that sentence of the apostle, "*Herein* is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins!" 1 John, 4:10. Why doth the apostle so magnify this gift in saying, "*Herein* is love," as if there were love in nothing else? May we not say, that to have a being, a being among rational creatures, therein is love? To have our life carried so many years, like a taper in the hand of Providence, through so many dangers, and not yet put out in obscurity, therein is love? To have food and raiment convenient for us, beds to lie on, relations to comfort us, in all these is love? Yea; but in all these there is no love, *in comparison* with the love in sending or giving Christ for us: these are great mercies in themselves; but compared to this mercy, they are all swallowed up, as the light of candles when brought out to the sun. No, no, *herein* is love, that God gave Christ for us. When the apostle would show, Rom. 5:8, what is the noblest fruit, that most commends to men the

root of Divine love that bears it, he shows us this very fruit of it, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us:" this is the very essence of that love.

In expounding this precious point, we will show,

I. How Jesus Christ was *given by the Father*, and what is implied therein.

1. His *designation and appointment unto death* for us; for you read that it was done "according to the determinate counsel of God." Acts, 2 : 23. As the lamb under the law was separated from the flock, and set apart for a sacrifice; and though still living, was intentionally and preparatively given, and consecrated to the Lord; so Jesus Christ was, by the counsel and purpose of God, thus chosen, and set apart for his service: and therefore, in Isa. 42 : 1, God calls him his Elect, or chosen One.

2. His giving Christ, implies a parting with him, or setting him (as the French version hath it) at some distance from himself for a time. There was a kind of parting between the Father and the Son, when he came to tabernacle in our flesh: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." John, 16 : 28. This distance, occasioned by his incarnation and humiliation, was properly as to his humanity, which was really distant from the glory into which it is now taken up; and in withholding the manifestation of delight and love, the Lord seemed to treat him as one at a distance from him. Oh! this was it that so deeply pierced and wounded his soul, as is evident from that complaint, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not," &c. Psa. 22 : 1, 2.

3. God's giving of Christ, implies his *delivering him into the hands of justice*; even as condemned persons

are, by sentence of law, given or delivered into the hands of executioners. So Acts, 2 : 23, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;" and so he is said "to deliver him up to death for us all." Rom. 8 : 32.

4. God's giving of Christ, implies his application of him, with all the purchase of his blood, and *settling all this upon us* as an inheritance and portion. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." John, 6 : 32, 33. God hath given him as bread to poor starving creatures, that by faith they might eat and live. And so he told the Samaritan woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." John, 4 : 10. Bread and water are the two necessaries for the support of natural life; God hath given Christ, you see, to be all that, and more, to the spiritual life.

II. This gift of Christ was *the highest and fullest manifestation of the love of God* that ever the world saw.

1. Consider how *near and dear Jesus Christ was to the Father*: he was his Son, "his only Son;" the Son of his love, yea, one with himself; the express image of his person; the brightness of his Father's glory: "Unto us a Son is given," Isa. 9 : 6, and such a Son as he calls "his dear Son." Col. 1 : 13. A late writer tells us, that in the famine in Germany, a poor family being ready to perish, the husband proposed to the wife to sell one of the children for bread to relieve themselves and the rest. The wife at last consented it should be so; but then they began to think which of the four should be sold; and when the eldest was named, they both refused to part with that, being their first-born, and the begin-

ning of their strength. Well, then they came to the second, but could not yield that he should be sold, being the very picture and lively image of his father. The third was named, but that also was a child that best resembled the mother. And when the youngest was thought of, that was the Benjamin, the child of their old age; and so they determined rather to perish in the famine than part with a child for relief. And you know how Jacob mourned when his Joseph and Benjamin were rent from him. What is a child but a piece of the parent wrapt up in another skin? And yet our dearest children are but as strangers to us in comparison of the unspeakable dearness betwixt the Father and Christ. Now that he should ever thus part with his Son, his only Son, is such a manifestation of love as will be admired to all eternity. And then,

2. Let it be considered to what he gave him, even to death, and that of the cross; to be made a curse for us; to be the scorn and contempt of men; to the most unparalleled sufferings that ever were inflicted or borne by any. It breaks our heart to behold our children struggling in the pangs of death; but the Lord beheld his Son struggling under agonies that never any felt before him. He saw him falling to the ground, groveling in the dust, sweating blood, and amidst those agonies turning himself to his Father, and, with a heart-rending cry, beseeching him, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass." Luke, 22 : 42. To wrath, to the wrath of an infinite God, was Christ delivered, and that by the hand of his own Father. Sure, then, that love must needs want a name, which made the Father of mercies deliver his only Son to such miseries for us.

3. It is a special consideration to enhance the love of God in giving Christ, that in giving him he gave *the richest* jewel in his cabinet, a mercy of the greatest

worth and most inestimable value. Heaven itself is not so valuable and precious as Christ is: "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" Psa. 73:25. Oh what a fair One! what an only One! what an excellent, lovely One is Christ! Put the beauty of ten thousand paradises, like the garden of Eden, into one; put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colors, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness in one; oh what a fair and excellent thing would that be! And yet it should be less to that fair and dearest well-beloved Christ, than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths. Now, for God to bestow the mercy of mercies, the most precious thing in heaven or earth, upon poor sinners; and, as great, as lovely, as excellent as his Son was, yet not to account him too good to bestow upon us, what manner of love is this!

4. Once more let it be considered *on whom* the Lord bestowed his Son: upon angels? No; but upon men. Upon men, his friends? No; but upon his enemies. This is love; and on this consideration the apostle lays a mighty weight. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. When we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Rom. 5:8-10. Who would part with a son for the sake of his dearest friends? but God gave him to, and delivered him for enemies: Oh love unspeakable!

5. Let us consider how *freely* this gift came from him. It was not wrested out of his hand by our importunity; for we as little desired as deserved it. It was surprising, self moved, eternal love, that delivered him to us. "Not that we loved him, but he first loved us." 1 John, 4:19. Thus, as when you weigh a thing, you cast in weight after weight, till the scales break; so doth God, one consideration upon another, to overcome our hearts, and make us admiringly to cry, "What manner of love"

is this! Thus I have showed you what God's giving of Christ is, and what matchless love is manifested in that incomparable gift.

INFERENCE 1. Learn hence the exceeding *preciousness of souls*, and at what a high rate God values them, that he gave his Son, his only Son out of his bosom, as a ransom for them. Surely this speaks their preciousness: all the world could not redeem them; gold and silver could not be their ransom; so speaks the apostle, "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." 1 Pet. 1: 18. Such an esteem God had for them, that rather than they should perish, Jesus Christ shall be made a man, yea, a curse for them. Oh, then, learn to put a due value upon your own souls: do not sell that cheap for which God hath paid so dear: remember what a treasure you carry about you; the glory that you see in this world is not equivalent in worth to it." "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. 16: 26.

2. If God has given his own Son for the world, then it follows, that those for whom God gave his own Son, may warrantably expect any other *temporal mercies* from him. This is the apostle's inference, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, freely give us all things?" Rom. 8: 32. And so, 1 Cor. 3: 21-23, "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's:" that is, they hold all other things in Christ, who is the capital and most comprehensive mercy.

No other mercy you need or desire, is or *can be so dear to God* as Jesus Christ is. As for the world, and the comforts of it, it is the dust of his feet; he values it not, as you see by his providential disposals of it, having given it to the worst of men. "All the Turkish empire," saith Luther, "as great and glorious as it is, is but a crumb which the Master of the family throws

to the dogs." Think upon any other outward enjoyment that is valuable in your eyes, and there is not so much comparison between it and Christ, in the esteem of God, as between your dear children and the lumber of your houses, in your esteem. If then God has parted so freely with that which was infinitely dearer to him than these, how shall he deny these when they may promote his glory and your good ?

As Jesus Christ was nearer the heart of God than all these, so Christ is, in himself, much greater and more excellent than all of them. Ten thousand worlds, and the glory of them all, is but the dust of the balance if weighed with Christ. These things are but poor creatures, but he is "over all, God blessed for ever." Rom. 9 : 5. They are common gifts, but he is the gift of God. John, 4 : 10. They are ordinary mercies, but he is The Mercy, Luke, 1 : 72, as one pearl or precious stone is greater in value than ten thousand pebbles. Now, if God has so freely given the greater, how can you suppose he should deny the lesser mercies ? Will a man give to another a large inheritance, and grudge him a trifle ? How can it be ?

There is no other mercy you need, but you are entitled to it by the gift of Christ ; it is, as to right, conveyed to you with Christ. So, in the fore-cited 1 Cor. 3 : 21-23, the world is yours, yea, all is yours, for ye are Christ's. So 2 Cor. 1 : 20, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen." With him he hath given you all things richly to enjoy. 1 Tim. 6 : 17,

If God has given you this nearer, greater, and all-comprehending mercy, when you were enemies to him, and alienated from him, it is not imaginable he should deny you any inferior mercy, when you are come into a state of reconciliation and amity with him. So the apostle reasons, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ; much

more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. 5 : 8-10.

3. If the greatest love hath been manifested in giving Christ to the world, then it follows, that the greatest evil and wickedness is manifested in despising, *slighting, and rejecting Christ*. It is sad to abuse the love of God manifested in the least gift of providence ; but, to slight the richest displays of it, even that peerless gift, wherein God commends his love in the most astonishing manner, this is sin beyond description. Blush, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth ! yea, be ye horribly afraid ! No guilt like this. But, are there any such in the world ? Dare any slight this gift of God ? Indeed, if men's words might be taken, there are few or none that dare do so ; but if their lives and practices may be believed, this, this is the sin of the far greater part of the christianized world. Witness the lamentable stupidity and supineness ; witness the contempt of the Gospel ; witness the hatred and persecution of his image, laws, and people. What is the language of all this, but a vile esteem of Jesus Christ ?

And now let me a little expostulate with those ungrateful souls that trample under foot the Son of God ; that value not this love that gave him up to die. What is that mercy which you so contemn and undervalue ? is it so vile and cheap a thing as your conduct speaks it to be ? is it indeed worth no more than this in your eyes ! Surely you will not be long of that opinion ! Will you be of that mind, think you, when death and judgment shall have thoroughly awakened you ? Oh, no : then a thousand worlds for Christ ! Or, think ye, that any besides you in the world are of your mind ? You are deceived if you think so ; " To them that believe he is precious," 1 Pet. 2 : 7, through all the world. And in the other world they are of a quite contrary mind. Could you but hear what is said of him in hea-

ven, in what a dialect the saved of the Lord extol their Saviour; or could you but imagine the self-revenges, the self-torments, which the damned suffer for their folly, and what a value they would set upon one tender of Christ, if it might but again be hoped for; you would see that such as you are the only despisers of Christ. Besides, methinks it is astonishing that you should despise a mercy in which your own souls are so dearly, so deeply, so everlastingly concerned, as they are in this gift of God. If it were but the soul of another, nay, less, if but the body of another, and yet less than that, if but another's beast, whose life you could preserve, you are obliged to do it; but when it is thyself, yea, the best part of thyself, thine own invaluable soul, that thou ruinst and destroyest thereby, oh, what a monster art thou to cast it away thus! What! will you slight your own souls? care you not whether they be saved, or whether they be damned? is it indeed an indifferent thing with you which way they fall at death? have you imagined a tolerable hell? is it easy to perish? are you not only turned God's enemies, but your own too? Oh, see what monsters sin can turn men into! Oh the stupifying, besotting, intoxicating power of sin!

But perhaps you think that all these are but uncertain sounds with which we alarm you; it may be thine own heart will preach such doctrine as this to thee: "Who can assure me of the reality of these things? why should I trouble myself with an invisible world, or be so much concerned for what my eyes never saw, nor did I ever receive the report from any that have seen them?" Well, though we cannot now show you these things, yet shortly they shall be shown you, and your own eyes shall behold them. You are convinced and satisfied that many other things are real which you never saw; but be assured, that "if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and dis-

obedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken to us by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness?" Heb. 2 : 2-4. But, perhaps you say, if they be certain, yet they are not near ; it will be a long time before they come. Poor soul ! how dost thou cheat thyself ! It may be not one twentieth part so long a time as thy own fancy paints for thee ; thou art not certain of the next moment.

And suppose what thou imaginest ; what are twenty or forty years when they are past ? yea, what are a thousand years to vast eternity ? Go, trifle away a few days more ; sleep out a few nights more, and then lie down in the dust ; it will not be long ere the trump of God shall awaken thee, and thine eyes shall behold Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, and then you will know the price of this sin. Oh, therefore, if there be any sense of eternity upon you, any pity or love for yourself in you ; if you have any interests more than the beasts that perish, despise not your own offered mercies, slight not the richest gift that ever was yet opened to the world ; and a sweeter cannot be opened to all eternity.

CHAPTER V.

OF CHRIST'S WONDERFUL PERSON.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John, 1 : 14.

We have contemplated the covenant of redemption. It is such as infinitely exceeds the power of any mere

creature to perform. He that undertakes to satisfy God by obedience for man's sin, must himself be God; and he that performs such a perfect obedience, by doing and suffering all that the law required, in our room, must be man. These two natures must be united in one person, else there could not be a co-operation of each nature in his mediatorial work. How these natures are united, in the wonderful person of our Immanuel, is the first part of the great mystery of godliness: a subject studied and adored by angels! and the mystery thereof is wrapped up in the passage before us. Wherein we have,

1. The *Person assuming*, $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\omicron\varsigma$, the Word, that is, the second Person or Subsistent in the most glorious Godhead; called the Word, either because he is the scope or principal matter, both of the prophetic and promissory word; or because he expounds and reveals the mind and will of God to men, as verse 18: "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared" or expounded "him."

2. The *nature assumed*, $\sigma\alpha\rho\acute{\xi}$, flesh, that is, the entire human nature, consisting of a true human soul and body. For so this word $\sigma\alpha\rho\acute{\xi}$, in Rom. 3: 20, and the Hebrew word *Basar*, which answers to it, by a usual metonymy of a part for the whole, is used, Gen. 6: 12. The word *flesh*, rather than *man*, is doubtless used here to enhance the admirable condescension and abasement of Christ; implying man's vileness, weakness, and opposition to spirit. Hence the whole nature is denominated by that part, and called flesh.

3. The *assumption itself*, $\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\kappa\epsilon\tau\omicron$, he was made; not *fruit*, he was, (as Socinus would render it, designing thereby to overthrow the existence of Christ's glorified body now in heaven,) but *factus est*, he was made, that is, he took or assumed the true human nature into the unity of his Divine person, with all its integral parts

and essential properties; and so was made, or became a true and real man, by that assumption. The apostle speaking of the same act, Heb. 2 : 16, uses another word, He "took on him," or he assumed. And when it is said, he was made flesh, misconceive not, as if there was a mutation of the Godhead into flesh; for this was performed, "not by changing what he was, but by assuming what he was not," as Augustine well expresses it. As when the Scripture, in a like expression, says, "He was made sin," 2 Cor. 5 : 21, and made a curse, Gal. 3 : 13, the meaning is not, that he was turned into sin, or into a curse; no more may we think here the Godhead was turned into flesh, and lost its own being and nature, because it is said he was made flesh.

This assertion "that the Word was made flesh," is also here *strongly confirmed*. He "dwelt among us," and we saw his glory. This was no phantasm, but a most real and indubitable thing. For, *εσκηνωσεν εν ημιν*, he pitched his tent, or tabernacled with us. And we are eye-witnesses of it. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, declare we unto you." 1 John, 1 : 1-3. Hence,

Jesus Christ did really assume the true and perfect nature of man, into a personal union with his Divine nature, and still remains true God, and true man, in one person, for ever.

The proposition contains one of the deepest mysteries of godliness, 1 Tim. 3 : 16. A mystery, by which apprehension is dazzled, invention astonished, and all expression swallowed up. If ever the tongues of angels were desirable to explicate any word of God, they are so here. The proper use of words is of great importance in this doctrine. We walk upon the brink of danger. The least tread awry may engulf us in the

bogs of error. Arius would have been content, if the council of Nice would but have gratified him in a letter, *ομοουσιος*, for *ομοουσιος*.* The Nestorians also desired but a letter, *θειοδοχος*, instead of *θειοτοκος*. These seemed but small and modest requests, but, if granted, had proved no small prejudice to the truth. I desire therefore the reader would, with greatest attention of mind, apply himself to these truths. It is a doctrine hard to understand, and dangerous to mistake. As Prosper has well said, "It is better not touch the bottom, than not keep within the circle." Christ did assume a true human body; that is plainly asserted, Phil. 2 : 7, 8, &c. Heb. 2 : 14, 16. In one place it is called taking on him the seed of Abraham, and in the text, flesh. He did also assume a true human soul; this is undeniable by its operations, passions, and expiration at last, Matt. 26 : 38, and 27 : 50. And that both these natures make but one person, is as evident from Rom. 1 : 3, 4, "Jesus Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." So Rom. 9 : 5, "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Let us then consider the nature; the effects; and the reasons or ends of this wonderful union.

I. The *nature* of this union. The assumption of which I speak, is that whereby the Second Person in the Godhead did take the human nature into a personal union with himself, by virtue whereof the manhood subsists in the Second Person, yet without confusion, both making but one person, Immanuel, God with us.

† So that though we truly ascribe a twofold nature to Christ, yet not a double person; for the human nature of Christ never subsisted separately and distinctly, by

* Of a like substance, for, of the same substance.

any personal subsistence of its own, as it doth in all other men, but, from the first moment of conception, subsisted in union with the Second Person.

To explicate this mystery more particularly, let it be considered:

1. The human nature was united to the Second Person *miraculously and extraordinarily*, being supernaturally framed in the womb of the virgin, by the overshadowing power of the Highest. Luke, 1: 34, 35. And this was necessary to exempt the assumed nature from the stain and pollution of Adam's sin, which it wholly escaped; inasmuch as he received it not, as all others do, in the way of ordinary generation, wherein original sin is propagated; but this being extraordinarily produced, was a most pure and holy thing. Luke, 1: 35. And indeed this perfect shining holiness, in which it was produced, was absolutely necessary, both in order to its union with the Divine Person, and the design of that union; which was both to satisfy for, and to sanctify us. The two natures could not be conjoined in the person of Christ, had there been the least taint of sin upon the human nature. For God can have no fellowship with sin, much less be united to it. Or, supposing such a conjunction with our sinful nature, he being thus a sinner himself, could never satisfy for the sins of others; nor could any unholy thing ever make us holy. "Such an High Priest therefore became us as is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Heb. 7: 26. And such a one he must needs be, whom the Holy Ghost produced in such a peculiar way, *το αγιον*, "that holy thing."

2. As it was produced miraculously, so it was *assumed integrally*; that is to say, Christ took a complete and perfect human soul and body, with all and every faculty and member pertaining to it. And this was necessary, (as both Augustin and Fulgentius have well

observed,) that thereby he might heal the whole nature of that leprosy of sin which hath seized and infected every member and faculty. "He assumed all to sanctify all;" as Damascen expresses it. He designed a perfect recovery, by sanctifying us wholly in soul, body, and spirit; and therefore assumed the whole in order to it.

3. He assumed our nature, as with all its integral parts, so with all *its sinless infirmities*. And therefore it is said of him, "That it behoved him," *κατα παντα ομοιωθηναι*, "in all things" (that is, all things natural, not formally sinful, as it is limited by the same apostle, Heb. 4 : 15) "to be made like unto his brethren," Heb. 2 : 17. But here divines carefully distinguish infirmities into personal and natural. Personal infirmities are such as befall particular persons from particular causes, such as dumbness, blindness, lameness, leprosy, monstrosities, and other deformities. These it was no way necessary that Christ should, nor did he at all assume; but the natural ones, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, sweating, bleeding, mortality, &c. which though they are not in themselves formally and intrinsically sinful, yet are they the effects and consequents of sin. They are so many marks, that sin has left of itself upon our natures. And on that account Christ is said to be sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Rom. 8 : 3. Wherein the gracious condescension of Christ for us is marvelously signalized, that he would not assume our innocent nature, as it was in Adam before the fall, while it stood in all its primitive glory and perfection; but after sin had quite defaced, ruined, and spoiled it.

4. The human nature is so united with the Divine, as that each nature still retains its own essential properties *distinct*. And this distinction is not, and cannot be lost by that union.

II. The *effects, or immediate results* of this marvellous union.

1. The two natures being thus united in the person of the Mediator, by virtue thereof *the properties of each nature are attributed, and do truly agree in the whole person*; so that it is proper to say, the Lord of glory was crucified, 1 Cor. 2 : 8, and the blood of God redeemed the church, Acts, 20 : 28, that Christ was both in heaven and in the earth at the same time, John, 3 : 13. Yet we do not believe that one nature doth transfuse or impart its properties to the other, or that it is proper to say the Divine nature suffered, bled, or died; or the human is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent; but that the properties of both natures are so ascribed to the person, that it is proper to affirm any of them of him in the concrete, though not abstractly. The right understanding of this would greatly assist in teaching the true sense of the fore-named, and many other dark passages in the Scriptures.

2. Another fruit of this union, is the singular *advancement of the human nature in Christ*, far beyond and above what it is capable of in any other person, it being hereby replenished and filled with an unparalleled measure of Divine graces and excellencies; in which respect he is said to be "anointed above his fellows," Psa. 45 : 7, and so becomes the object of adoration and divine worship, Acts, 7 : 59.

3. Hence follows, as another excellent fruit of this union, the concourse and *co-operation* of each nature in his mediatorial works; for in them he acts according to both natures: the human nature doing what is human, namely, suffering, sweating, bleeding, dying; and his Divine nature stamping all these with infinite value; and so both sweetly concur unto one glorious work and design of mediation. Papists generally deny that he performs any of these mediatorial works as God, but only as man; but how boldly do they therein contradict the Scriptures! See 2 Cor. 5 : 10; Heb. 9 : 14, 15.

III. The *grounds and reasons* of this assumption. The Divine did not assume the human nature necessarily, but voluntarily; not out of indigence, but bounty; not because it was to be perfected by it, but to perfect it, that so Christ might be prepared for the full discharge of his mediatorship, in the offices of our Prophet, Priest, and King.

Had he not possessed this double nature in the unity of his person, he could not have been our Prophet: for, as God, he knows the mind and will of God, John, 1 : 18, and 3 : 13; and as man he is fitted to impart it suitably to us, Deut. 18 : 15–18, compared with Acts, 20 : 22. As Priest, had he not been man, he could have shed no blood; and if not God, it had been of no adequate value for us, Heb. 2 : 17; Acts, 3 : 28. As King, had he not been man, he had been of a different nature, and so no fit head for us; and if not God, he could neither rule nor defend his body the church. These then were the designs and ends of that assumption.

INFERENCE 1. Let all christians rightly inform their minds in this truth of so great moment in religion, and *hold it fast* against all subtle adversaries that would wrest it from them. The learned Hooker observes, that the *dividing of Christ's person*, which is but one, and the *confounding of his natures*, which are two, has been the occasion of those errors which have so greatly disturbed the peace of the church. The Arians denied his Deity, levelling him with other created beings. The Apollinarians maimed his humanity. The Sabellians affirmed, that the Father and Holy Ghost were incarnated as well as the Son; and were forced upon that absurdity by another error, namely, denying the three distinct persons in the Godhead, and affirming they were but three names. The Eutychians confounded both natures in Christ, denying any distinction of them. The Seleusians affirmed that he unclothed himself of

his humanity when he ascended, and has no human body in heaven. The Nestorians so rent the two names of Christ asunder, as to make two distinct persons of them.

But ye, beloved, have not so learned Christ. Ye know he is, 1. True and very God; 2. True and very man; that, 3. These two natures make but one person, being united inseparably; 4. That they are not confounded or swallowed up one in another, but remain still distinct in the person of Christ. Hold ye the sound words which cannot be condemned. Great things hang upon all these truths. O suffer not a stone to be loosed out of the foundation.

2. *Adore the love of the Father and the Son*, who valued your souls so highly, and were willing to save you at such a cost.

The love of the Father is herein admirably conspicuous, who so vehemently willed our salvation, that he could degrade the beloved of his soul to so vile and contemptible a state.

And how astonishing is the love of Christ, that would make such a stoop as this to exalt us! Oh that you would get your hearts suitably impressed and affected with this love both of the Father and the Son! How is the courage of some noble Romans celebrated in history, for the brave adventures they made for the commonwealth; but they could never stoop as Christ did, being so infinitely below him in personal dignity.

3. And here *infinite wisdom* has also left a famous and everlasting mark of itself, which invites, yea, even chains the eyes of angels and men to itself. Had there been a general council of angels to devise a way of recovering poor sinners, they would all have been at an everlasting demur and loss about it. It could not have entered their thoughts, (though they are most intelligent and sagacious,) that ever mercy, pardon, and

grace, should find such a way as this to issue forth from the heart of God to the hearts of sinners. Oh, how wisely is the method of our recovery laid! so that Christ may be well called "the power and wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 1 : 24; forasmuch as in him the Divine wisdom is more glorified than in all the other works of God upon which he has impressed it.

4. Hence also we infer the incomparable *excellency of the christian religion*, that shows poor sinners such a sure foundation on which the trembling conscience may rest. While poor distressed souls look to themselves, they are perpetually in darkness. The cry of the distressed natural conscience is, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" Conscience sees God arming himself with wrath, to avenge himself for sin, and cries out, Oh, how shall I prevent him; if he would accept the fruit of my body (those dear pledges of nature) for the sin of my soul, he should have them! But now we see God coming down in flesh, and so intimately uniting our nature to himself, that it had properly no personal separate subsistence, but is united with the Divine person: hence it is easy to imagine what worth and value must be in that blood; and how eternal love, springing forth triumphantly from it, flourishes into pardon, grace, and peace. Here is a way in which the sinner may see justice and mercy kissing each other, and the latter exercised freely without prejudice to the former. All other consciences, through the world, lie either in a deep sleep in the devil's arms, or else are rolling, sea-sick, upon the waves of their own fears and dismal presages. Oh, happy are they that have dropped anchor on this ground, and not only know they have peace, but why they have it.

5. Of how great moment is it, that Christ should have union with *our particular persons*, as well as with our common nature! For, by this union with our na-

ture alone, never any man was, or can be saved. Yea, let me add, that this union with our natures is utterly in vain to you, and will do you no good, except he have union with your persons by faith also. It is indeed infinite mercy that God is come so near you as to dwell in your flesh ; and that he has fixed upon such an excellent method to save poor sinners. And has he done all this ? Is he indeed come home, even to your own doors, to seek peace ? Does he veil his insupportable glory under flesh, that he may treat the more familiarly ? and yet do you refuse him, and shut your heart against him ? Then hear one word, and let thine ears tingle at the sound of it : thy sin is thereby aggravated beyond the sin of devils, who never sinned against a mediator in their own nature ; who never despised, or refused, because, indeed, they were never offered terms of mercy, as you are. And I doubt not but the devils themselves, who now tempt you to reject, will, to all eternity, upbraid your folly for rejecting this great salvation, which in this excellent way is brought down even to your own doors.

6. If Jesus Christ has assumed our nature, then he is sensibly touched with the infirmities that attend it, and so hath pity and *compassion for us* under all our burdens. And indeed this was one end of his assuming it, that he might be able to have compassion on us : "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Heb. 2 : 17, 18. Oh what a comfort is this to us, that he who is our High Priest in heaven, has our nature to enable him to take compassion on us !

7. Hence we see to what a height God intends to

build up *the happiness of man*, in that he hath laid the foundation thereof so deep, in the incarnation of his Son. They that intend to build high, lay the foundation low. The happiness and glory of our bodies, as well as our souls, are founded in Christ's taking our flesh upon him ; for therein, as in a model or pattern, God intended to show what in time he resolves to make of our bodies ; for he will transform our vile bodies, and make them one day conformable to the glorious body of Jesus Christ. Phil. 3 : 21. This flesh was therefore assumed by Christ, that in it might be shown, as in a pattern, how God intends to honor and exalt it. And, indeed, a greater honor cannot be done to the nature of man, than what is already done by this grace of union ; nor are our persons capable of higher glory than what consists in their conformity to this glorious Head.

8. How wonderful a comfort is it, that *he who dwells in our flesh is God!* What joy may not a poor believer make out of this ! God and man in one person ! Oh ! thrice happy conjunction ! As man, he is full of experimental sense of our infirmities, wants, and burdens ; and, as God, he can support and supply them all. The aspect of faith upon this wonderful Person, how relieving, how reviving, how abundantly satisfying is it ! God will never divorce the believing soul and its comfort, after he hath married our nature to his own Son, by the hypostatical, and our persons also, by the blessed mystical union.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE AUTHORITY BY WHICH CHRIST, AS MEDIATOR, ACTED.

"For him hath God the Father sealed."—John, 6 : 27.

This Scripture is a part of Christ's excellent reply to an earthly-minded multitude, who followed him, not for any spiritual excellencies that they saw in him, or soul-advantages they expected by him, but for bread. Instead of making his service their meat and drink, they only served him that they might eat and drink. Self may creep into the best hearts and actions ; but it only predominates in the hypocrite. These people had sought Christ from place to place, and having at last found him, they salute him with the question, " Rabbi, whence camest thou hither ?" verse 25. Christ's reply is partly dissuasive, and partly directive. He dissuades them from putting the secondary and subordinate in the place of the principal and ultimate end ; from preferring their bodies to their souls, their fleshly accommodations to the glory of God. " Labor not for the meat that perisheth : " by which he does not take them off from their lawful labors and callings, but dissuades them from minding those things too intently ; and from the odious sin of making religion but a pretence for sensual gratification. " But labor for that meat which endureth to eternal life : " to get bread for your souls to live by eternally. And, that he might engage their diligence in seeking it to purpose, he shows them not only where they may have it,—*" which the Son of man shall give you,"*—but also how they may be fully satisfied that he hath it for them, *" For him hath God the Father sealed."* In these words are three parts observable.

1. The Person sealing or investing Christ with au-

thority and power ; which is said to be God the Father. Though all the persons in the Godhead are equal in nature, dignity, and power, yet in their operation there is an order observed among them : the Father sends the Son, the Son is sent by the Father, the Holy Ghost is sent by both.

2. The subject in which God the Father lodges this authority, "Him," that is, the Son of man. God the Father hath so sealed him, as he never sealed any other before him, or that shall arise after him. No name is given in heaven, or earth, but this name, by which we are saved. Acts, 4 : 12. "The government is upon his shoulder." Isa. 9 : 6.

3. The way and manner of the Father's delegating and committing this authority to Christ ; and that is, by sealing him. Where we have both a metonymy, the symbol of authority being put for the authority itself ; and a metaphor, sealing, which is a human act for ratifying and confirming an instrument or grant, being here applied to God. Like as princes, by sealed credentials, confirm the authority of those they send. Hence, *Jesus Christ did not of himself undertake the work of our redemption, but was solemnly sealed unto it by God the Father.*

When I say he did not of himself undertake this work, I mean not that he was unwilling, for his heart was as fully and ardently engaged in it as the Father's : so he tells us, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God ; thy law is in my heart." Psa. 40 : 7, 8. But the meaning is, he came not without a due call, and full commission from his Father. And this is the meaning of that scripture, "I proceeded and came from God ; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." John, 8 : 42. And this the apostle plainly expresses, "No man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron : so also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High

Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son." Heb. 5:4, 5. And on account of these sealed credentials which he received from the Father, he is called "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession," Heb. 3:1, that is, one called and sent forth by the Father's authority. Our present business, then, is to open Christ's commission, and to view the great seal of heaven by which it was ratified.

I. *What was that office, or work, to which his Father sealed him?* I answer, more generally, he was sealed to the whole work of mediation for us, thereby to recover and save all whom the Father had given him: so John, 17:2; it was to "give eternal life to as many as were given him:" it was "to bring Jacob again to him," Isa. 49:5, or, as the apostle expresses it, "that he might bring us to God." 1 Pet. 3:18. More particularly, in order to the sure and full effecting of this most glorious design, he was sealed to the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, that so he might bring about and compass this work.

1. God sealed him a commission to *preach the glad tidings* of salvation to sinners. This commission Christ opened and read in the audience of the people; "And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, &c. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Luke, 4:17-21.

2. He also sealed him to *the priesthood*, and that the most excellent; authorizing him to execute both the parts of it, namely, expiatory and intercessory. He call-

ed him to offer up himself a sacrifice for us: "I have power (saith he) to lay down my life; this commandment have I received of my Father." John, 10: 18. And upon that account, his offering up of his blood is, by the apostle, styled an act of obedience: "He became obedient unto death." Phil. 2: 8. He also called him to intercede for us. "Those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever," Heb. 7: 21, 24, 25: his sacrifice is virtually continued, in his living for ever to make intercession, as verse 24.

3. He called him to his *regal office*; he was set upon the highest throne of authority by his Father's commission: "All power in heaven and earth is given to me." Matt. 28: 18. To all this was Christ sealed and authorized by his Father.

II. What doth *the Father's sealing of Christ to this work and office imply?*

1. The *validity and efficacy* of all his mediatorial acts. For by virtue of this his sealing, whatever he did was fully ratified. And in this very thing lies much of a believer's comfort and security; forasmuch as all acts done without commission and authority, how great or able soever the person that performs them, are in themselves null and void. But what is done by commission and authority, is authentic, and valid among men.

2. It imports the great obligation lying upon Jesus Christ to be *faithful in the work* to which he was sealed: for the Father, in this commission, devolves a great trust upon him, and relies upon him for his most faithful discharge of it. And, indeed, upon this very account Christ reckons himself specially obliged to pursue the Father's design and end: "I must work the works of him that sent me." John, 9: 4. And, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

John, 5 : 30. His eye is still upon that work and will of his Father. He reckons himself under a necessity of punctual and precise obedience to it ; and, as a faithful servant, will have his own will swallowed up in his Father's will.

3. It imports Christ's complete *qualification and fitness* to serve the Father's design and end of our recovery. Had not God known him to be every way fit and qualified for the work, he would never have sealed him a commission for it. Men may, but God will not seal an unfit or incapable person for his work. And, indeed, whatever is desirable in a servant, was eminently found in Christ. For *faithfulness*, none like him. Moses, indeed, was faithful in every point, but still as a servant ; but Christ as a Son. Heb. 3 : 6. He is " the faithful and true witness." Rev. 1 : 5. For *zeal*, none like him. The zeal of God's house did eat him up. John, 2 : 16, 17. He was so intent upon his Father's work that he forgot to eat bread, counting his work his meat and drink. John, 4 : 32. Yea, love to his Father carried him on through all his work, and made him delight in the hardest piece of his service ; for he served him as a Son. Heb. 3 : 5, 6. All that ever he did was done in love. For *wisdom*, none like him. The Father knew him to be most wise, and said of him before he was employed, " Behold, my Servant shall deal prudently." Isa. 52 : 13. For *self-denial*, never any like him ; he sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him. John, 8 : 50. Had he not been thus faithful, zealous, full of love, prudent, and self-denying, he had never been employed in this great affair.

4. It implies Christ's *sole authority in the church*, to appoint and enjoin what he pleaseth ; and this is his peculiar prerogative. God's sealing him is a single, not a joint commission ; he hath sealed him, and none beside him. Indeed there were some that pretended a call and

commission from God; but all that came before him, giving themselves out for the Messiah, were "thieves and robbers," that came not in at the door, as he did. John, 10:8. And he himself foretells, that after him some should arise, and labor to deceive the world with a feigned commission, and a counterfeit seal: "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch, that if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." Matt. 24:24. But God never commissioned any besides him, neither is there any other name under heaven. Acts, 4:12.

III. Let us inquire *how God the Father sealed Jesus Christ to this work.*

1. By *solemn designation* to this work. He singled him out and set him apart for it: and therefore the prophet Isaiah calls him God's elect, chap. 42:1; and the apostle Peter, Chosen of God. 1 Pet. 2:4. This word which we render elect, not only signifies one that in himself is surpassing, worthy, and excellent, but also one that is set apart and designed, as Christ was, for the work of mediation. And so much is included in John, 10:36, where the Father is said to sanctify him, that is, to separate and devote him to this service.

2. He was sealed, not only by solemn designation, but also by supereminent and unparalleled *sanctification*. He was anointed, as well as appointed to it. The Lord filled him with the Spirit, and that without measure, to qualify him for this service. So Isa. 61:1-3, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach," &c. Yea, the Spirit of the Lord was not only upon him, but he was full of the Spirit, Luke, 4:1, and so full as was never any beside him; for God "anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows." Psa. 45:7. Believers are his fellows, or co-partners of this Spirit; they have an anointing also, but not as Christ had:

in him it dwelt in its fullness, in them according to measure. It was poured out on Christ, our Head, abundantly, and ran down to the hem of his garment. "God gave not the Spirit to him by measure." John, 3 : 34. God filled Christ's human nature, to the utmost capacity, with all fullness of the Spirit of knowledge, wisdom, love, &c. beyond all creatures, for the plenary and more effectual administration of his mediatorship. He was full extensively, with all kinds of grace ; and full, intensively, with all degrees of grace. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell," Col. 1 : 19, as light in the sun, or water in a fountain ; so that the holy oil that was poured out upon the head of kings and priests, whereby they were consecrated to their offices, was but typical of the Spirit by which Christ was consecrated or sealed to his offices. Exod. 30 : 23-25 ; 30-32.

3. Christ was sealed by the Father's immediate *testimony from heaven*, whereby he was declared to be the person whom the Father had solemnly designed and appointed to this work. And God gave this extraordinary testimony of him at two remarkable seasons : the one was just at his entrance on his public ministry, Matt. 3 : 17 ; the other but a little before his sufferings. Matt. 17 : 5. By this God owned, approved, and, as by a seal, ratified his work.

4. Christ was sealed by the Father, in all those extraordinary *miraculous works* wrought by him, by which the Father gave yet more full and convincing testimonies to the world, that this was he whom he had appointed to be our Mediator. These proved to the world that God had sent him, and that his doctrine was of God. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil ; for God was with him." Acts, 10 ; 38. And so, John, 5 : 36, "I have

a greater witness than that of John ; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." Therefore he still referred those that doubted of him, or of his doctrine, to the seal of his Father, even the miraculous works he wrought in the power of God. Matt. 9 : 3-5.

IV. We will inquire *why it was necessary* Christ should be sealed by his Father to this work.

1. He had not otherwise *corresponded with the types* which prefigured him ; and in him it was necessary that they should be all accomplished. Under the law, the kings and high priests had their inauguration by solemn unctions, in all which this consecration, or sealing of Christ to his work, was shadowed out : and therefore you find, Heb. 5 : 4, 5, " No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also," (mark the necessary correspondence between Christ and them,) " Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest ; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son."

2. Hereby *the hearts of believers* are the more engaged to love the Father, inasmuch as the Father's love and good will to them was the origin and spring of their redemption. For had not the Father sealed him such a commission, he had not come ; but now he comes in the Father's name, and in the Father's love as well as his name ; and so all men are bound to ascribe equal glory and honor to them both, as John, 5 : 23.

3. Christ would not come without a commission, because we should have had no *ground for our faith in him*. How should we have been satisfied that this is indeed the true Messiah, except he had opened his commission to the world, and showed his Father's seal annexed to it ? If he had come without his credentials from heaven, and only told the world that God had sent

him, and that they must take his bare word for it, who could have rested his faith on that testimony? This is the true meaning of John, 5 : 31, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." How so? you will say, does not this contradict what he says, John, 8 : 14, "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true?" I answer: You must understand the word *truth* here, not as opposed to reality; but the meaning is, If I had only given you my bare word for it, and not brought other evidence from my Father, my testimony had not been authentic and valid according to human laws; but now all doubting is precluded.

INFERENCE 1. The *unreasonableness of infidelity*, and how inexcusable are those who reject Christ. You see he hath opened his commission in the Gospel, shown the world his Father's hand and seal to it, given as ample satisfaction as reason itself could desire or expect; yet even his own received him not. John, 1 : 11. And he knew it beforehand, and therefore complained by the prophet, "Who hath believed our report?" &c. Isaiah, 53 : 1. Yea, and that he is believed on in the world, is by the apostle put among the great mysteries of godliness. 1 Tim. 3 : 16. A man that well considers with what convincing evidence Christ comes, would rather think it a mystery that any should *not* believe. And it is equally wonderful to see the facility with which men embrace the most foolish imposture. Let a false Christ arise, and he shall deceive many. Matt. 24 : 24. Of this Christ complains, and not without great reason; "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another come in his own name, him will ye receive." John, 5 : 43. As if he had said, You are incredulous to none but me: every deceiver, every pitiful cheat that has but wit, or rather wickedness enough to tell you the Lord hath sent him, though you must take his own single word for it, he shall obtain and get disciples; but

though I come in my Father's name, showing you a commission signed and sealed by him, doing those works which none but God can do; yet ye receive me not. But in all this we must adore the justice of God in permitting it to be so, giving men up to such unreasonable obstinacy and hardness. It is a sore plague that lies upon the world, and a wonder that we all are not ingulfed in the same infidelity.

2. If Christ was sealed to his work by his Father, how great the sin of *rejecting and despising such as are sent* and sealed by Jesus Christ. As he came to us in his Father's name, so he hath sent forth, by the same authority, ministers in his name; and as he acts in his Father's, so they in his authority. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." John, 17 : 18. "As my Father hath sent me, even so have I sent you." 20 : 21. You may think it a small matter to reject a minister of Christ; but in so doing you despise and slight both the Father who sent his Son, and Christ who sent his minister to you. This reverence and submission are not due to them as men, but as Christ's ambassadors. And by the way, this may instruct ministers, that the way to maintain that veneration and respect that is due to them, in the consciences of their hearers, is to keep close to their commission.

3. How great an evil is it to *intrude into the office of the ministry* without a due call. It is more than Christ himself would do; he glorified not himself; the honors and advantages attending that office have invited many to run before they were sent. But, surely this is an insufferable violation of Christ's order.

4. The *blessing there may be in all gospel ordinances* duly administered. Christ having received full commission from his Father, and by virtue thereof having instituted and appointed these ordinances in the church,

all the power in heaven is engaged to make them good, to confirm and ratify them. Hence in the censures of the church, you have that great expression, "Whatsoever ye bind or loose on earth, shall be bound or loosed in heaven." Matt. 18 : 18. And so for the word and ordinances, "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me. Go therefore," &c. Matt. 28 : 18-20. These are not the appointments of men ; your faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. That very power which God the Father committed to Christ, is the fountain whence all Gospel institutions flow. And he hath promised to be with his officers, not only the extraordinary officers of that age, but with his ministers in succeeding ages to the end of the world. Oh therefore, when ye come to an ordinance, come not with slight thoughts, but with great reverence, and great expectations, remembering Christ is there to make all good.

5. Again, here you have another call to *admire the grace and love* both of the Father and Son to your souls: it is not lawful to compare them, but it is duty to admire them. Was it not wonderful grace in the Father to seal a commission for the death of his Son, for humbling him as low as hell, and in that method to save you, when you might have expected he should have sealed your doom to hell, rather than a commission for your salvation ? He might rather have set his irreversible seal to the sentence of your damnation, than to a commission for his Son's humiliation for you. And no less is the love of Christ to be wondered at, that would accept such a commission as this for us, and receive this seal, understanding fully, as he did, what were the contents of that commission: that the Father delivered him thus sealed, and knowing that there could be no reversing of it afterwards.

Oh, then, love the Lord Jesus, all ye his saints, for still you see more and more of his love breaking forth

for you. I commend to you a sealed Saviour ; oh that every one that reads these lines might, in a pang of love, cry out with the enamored spouse, "Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm ; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave ; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame." Cant. 8 : 6.

6. Hath God sealed Christ for you, then draw forth *the comfort* of his sealing for you, and rest not till ye also be *sealed by him*.

Remember, that hereby God stands engaged, even by his own seal, to allow and confirm whatever Christ hath done in the business of our salvation. And on this ground you may thus plead with God : Lord, thou hast sealed Christ to this office, and therefore I depend upon it, that thou allowest all that he hath done, and all that he hath suffered for me, and wilt make good all that he hath promised me. If men will not deny their own seals, much less wilt thou.

Get your interest in Christ *sealed to you by the Spirit*, else you cannot have the comfort of Christ's being sealed for you. Now the Spirit seals by working those graces in us which are the conditions of the promises ; and also by shining upon his own work, and helping the soul to discern it ; which follows the other both in order of nature and of time. The person sealed is the true believer, Eph. 1 : 13 ; and the comfort and aid imparted are ever consonant to the written word. Isaiah, 8 : 20. The Spirit produces in the sealed soul, great care and caution to avoid sin. Eph. 4 : 30. Great love to God. 1 John, 2 : 5. Readiness to suffer any thing for Christ. Rom. 5 : 3-5. Confidence in addresses to God. 1 John, 5 : 13, 14 ; and great humility and self-abasement, as in Abraham, who lay on his face when God sealed the covenant to him. Gen. 17 : 1-3. This, oh this brings home the sweet and good of all, when the peace and comfort of all graces of the Spirit are sealed upon the soul.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE SOLEMN CONSECRATION OF THE MEDIATOR.

“*And for their sakes I sanctify myself.*”—*John*, 17 : 19.

Jesus Christ being fitted with a body, and authorized by a commission from the Father, now actually devotes, and sets himself apart to his work : the further advancement of the glorious design of our salvation. He sanctified himself for our sakes. Wherein observe,

1. Christ's sanctifying of himself. The word *sanctify* is not here to be understood for the cleansing, purifying, or making holy that which was before unclean and unholy, either in a moral sense, as we are cleansed from sin by sanctification ; or in a ceremonial sense, as persons and things were sanctified under the law ; though here is a plain allusion to those legal rites : but Christ's sanctifying himself imports, his separation, or being set apart as an oblation or sacrifice. So Beza explains it, *nempe ut sacerdos et victima*, as the priest and sacrifice. It imports, also, his consecration, or dedication of himself to this holy use and service. So the Dutch annotators, I sanctify myself, that is, I give up myself for a holy sacrifice : I sanctify, that is, I consecrate and voluntarily offer myself a holy and unblemished sacrifice to thee for their redemption. Thus under the law, when any day, person, or vessel, was consecrated and dedicated to the Lord, it was so entirely for his use and service, that to use it afterwards in any common service, was to profane and pollute it. *Dan.* 5 : 3.

2. The end of his so sanctifying himself : “for their sakes,” that they might be sanctified. Where you see that the death of Christ wholly respects us ; he offered not for himself as other priests did, but for us, that we may be sanctified. Christ is so in love with holiness,

that at the price of his blood he will buy it for us. Hence,

Jesus Christ dedicated, and wholly set himself apart to the work of a Mediator, for the elect's sake.

This point is a glass, wherein the eye of your faith may see Jesus Christ preparing himself to be offered up to God for us, fitting himself to die. We shall consider what his sanctifying himself implies, and how it respects us.

I. What is implied in the phrase, "*I sanctify myself.*"

1. It implies the personal *union of the two natures* in Christ; for what is that which he here calls himself, but the same that was consecrated to be a sacrifice, even his human nature? This was the sacrifice. And this also was himself: so the apostle speaks, "He through the eternal Spirit offered up himself to God without spot." Heb. 9:14. So that our nature, by that assumption, is become himself. Greater honor cannot be done it, or greater ground of comfort proposed to us, as has been already shown.

2. This sanctifying, or consecrating himself to be a sacrifice for us, implies the greatness and dreadfulness of that *breach which sin made* between God and us. You see no less a sacrifice than Christ himself must be sanctified to make atonement. Judge of the greatness of the wound by the magnitude of the remedy. "Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offering for sin, thou wouldest not; but a body hast thou prepared me." Heb. 10:5. All our repentance, could we shed as many tears for sin as there have fallen drops of rain since the creation, could not be our atonement: "But God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." And had he not sanctified Christ to this end, he would have sanctified himself upon us, in judgment and fury for ever.

3. This sanctifying himself, implies his free and *voluntary undertaking of the work*. It is not, "I am sanc-

tified," as if he had been merely passive in it, as the lambs that typified him were, when plucked from the fold; but, "I sanctify myself." He would have none think that he died out of a necessity of compulsion, but out of choice: therefore he is said to "offer up himself to God." Heb. 10:14. And he says, "I lay down my life of myself; no man taketh it from me." John, 10:18. Though it is often said his Father sent him, and gave him; yet his heart was as much set on that work as if there had been nothing but glory, ease, and comfort in it; he was under no constraint but that of his own love. Therefore, as when the Scripture would set forth the willingness of the Father to this work, it saith, God sent his Son, and God gave his Son; so when it would set forth Christ's willingness to it, it saith, He offered up himself, gave himself, and, here in the text, sanctified himself. A sacrifice that struggled, and came not without force to the altar, was reckoned ominous and unlucky by the heathen: our Sacrifice dedicated himself; he died out of choice, and was a free-will offering.

4. His sanctifying himself implies his pure and *perfect holiness*: that he had no spot or blemish in him. Those beasts that prefigured him, were to be without blemish, and none else were consecrated to that service. So, and more than so, it behoved Christ to be: "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Heb. 7:26. And what it became him to be, he was. Therefore, in allusion to the lambs offered under the law, the apostle calls him a Lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Pet. 1:19. Every other man hath a double spot on him, the heart spot and the life spot; the spot of original, and the spots of actual sins. But Christ was without either: he had not the spot of original sin, for he was not by man; he came in a peculiar way into the world, and so escaped that: nor yet of actual sins; for, as his nature, so his life was

spotless and pure; "He did no iniquity." Isa. 53:9. And though tempted to sin externally, yet he was never defiled in heart or practice.

5. His sanctifying himself for our sakes, speaks the *strength of his love* and largeness of his heart to poor sinners, thus to set himself wholly and entirely apart for us: so that what he did and suffered must all of it have a respect and relation to us. He did not (when consecrated for us) live a moment, do an act, or speak a word, but had some tendency to promote the great design of our salvation. His incarnation respects you; "for to us a child is born, to us a son is given." Isa. 9:6. And he would never have been the Son of man, but to make you the sons and daughters of God. God would not have come down in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the habit of a man, but to raise up sinful man unto the likeness of God. All the miracles he wrought were for you, to confirm your faith. When he raised up Lazarus, "Because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." John, 11:42. While he lived on earth, he lived as one wholly set apart for us: and when he died, he died for us; "he was made a curse for us." Gal. 3:13. When he hung upon that cursed tree, he hung there in our room, and did but fill our place. When he was buried, he was buried for us; for the end of it was, to perfume our graves, against we come to lie down in them. And when he rose again, it was, as the apostle says, "for our justification." Rom. 4:25. When he ascended into glory, he said it was to prepare a place for us. John, 14:2. And now he is there, it is for us that he there lives; for he "ever liveth to make intercession for us." Heb. 7:25. And when he shall return again to judge the world, he will come for us too. He comes (when ever it be) "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe." 2 Thess. 1:10. He comes to ga-

ther his saints home to himself, that where he is, there they all may be in soul and body with him for ever.

6. His sanctifying himself for us plainly speaks the *vicarious* nature of his death: that it was in our room or stead. When the priest consecrated the sacrifice, it was set apart for the people. So it is said of the scape-goat, "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness." Lev. 16 : 21. Thus, Isa. 53 : 6, 7, he stood in our room, to bear our burden. And as Aaron laid the iniquities of the people upon the goat, so were ours laid on Christ. His death was in our stead, as well as for our good. So much his sanctifying himself "for us" imports.

7. His sanctifying himself imports the *extraordinariness of his person*; for it speaks him to be both Priest, Sacrifice, and Altar, all in one: a thing unheard of in the world before. So that his name might well be called "Wonderful." I sanctify myself: I sanctify, according to both natures; myself, that is, my human nature, which was the sacrifice, upon the altar of my Divine nature; for it is the altar that sanctifies the gift. As the three offices never met in one person before, so these three things never met in one priest before. The priests, indeed, consecrated the bodies of beasts for sacrifices, but never offered up their own souls and bodies as a whole burnt-offering, as Christ did.

II. I shall show you briefly the *relation that all this has to us*: for unto us the Scriptures every where refer it. So in 1 Cor. 5 : 7, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Eph. 5 : 25, "He loved the church, and gave himself for it." See Tit. 2 : 14.

1. Let it be considered, that he was not offered up to

God for *his own* sins; for he was most holy. No iniquity was found in him. Isa. 53 : 9. Indeed the priests under the law offered for themselves, as well as the people; but Christ did not so, "He needed not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's," Heb. 7 : 27. And indeed had he been a sinner, what value or efficacy could have been in his sacrifice? He could not have been the sacrifice, but would have needed one. Now, if Christ were most holy, and yet put to death and cruel sufferings, either his death and sufferings must be an act of injustice and cruelty, or must respect others, whose persons and cause he sustained in that suffering capacity. He could never have suffered or died by the Father's hand, had not our sins been imputed to him. As the prophet Isaiah speaks, all our sins were made to meet upon him; and as the Apostle, "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin." 2 Cor. 5 : 21.

2. It is not to be forgotten here, that the Scriptures frequently call the death of Christ a *price*, 1 Cor. 6 : 20, and a *ransom*, Matt. 20 : 28, or counter-price. To whom then does it relate, but to them that were and are in bondage and captivity? If it was to redeem any, it must be captives: but Christ himself was never in captivity; he was always in his Father's bosom; but we were in cruel bondage and thralldom, under the tyranny of sin and Satan; and it is we only that have the benefit of this ransom.

3. Either the death of Christ must relate to *believers*, or else he must die in vain. As for the angels, those that stood in their integrity needed no sacrifice, and those that fell are totally excluded from any benefit by it: he is not a Mediator for them. And among men that have need of it, unbelievers have no share in it, they reject it; such have no part in it. If, then, he neither died for himself, nor for angels nor unbelievers; either

his blood must be shed with respect to believers, or, which is most absurd, and never to be imagined, shed as water upon the ground, and totally cast away: so that you see by all this, it was for our sakes, as the text speaks, that he sanctified himself. And now we may say, "Lord, the condemnation was thine, that the justification might be mine; the agony thine, that the victory might be mine; the pain was thine, and the ease is mine; the stripes thine, and the healing balm issuing from them mine; the vinegar and gall were thine, that the honey and sweet might be mine; the curse was thine, that the blessing might be mine; the crown of thorns was thine, that the crown of glory might be mine; the death was thine, the life purchased by it mine; thou paidst the price that I might enjoy the inheritance."

INFERENCE 1. If Jesus Christ wholly set himself apart for believers, how reasonable is it that believers should *consecrate and set themselves apart* wholly for Christ! Is he all for us, and shall we be nothing for him? What he was, he was for you. Whatever he did, was done for you; and all that he suffered, was suffered for you. Oh then, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, present your bodies," that is, your whole selves, "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Rom. 12 : 1. As your good was Christ's end, so let his glory be your end. Let Christ be the "end of your conversation." Heb. 13 : 7. Oh, that all who profess faith in Christ, could subscribe cordially to that profession, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; but whether we live, we live to the Lord; and whether we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." Rom. 14 : 8. 'This is to be a christian indeed. What is a christian, but a holy dedicated thing to the Lord? And what greater evidence can there be, that Christ set

himself apart for you, than your setting yourself apart for him?

This is the marriage covenant, "Thou shalt be for me, and not for another; so will I be for thee." Hos. 3: 3. Ah, what a life is the life of a christian; Christ all for you, and you all for him. Blessed exchange! "Soul," saith Christ, "all I have is thine." "Lord," saith the soul, "and all I have is thine." "Soul," saith Christ, "my person is wonderful, but what I am, I am for thee: my life was spent in labor and travail, but it was for thee." "And, Lord," saith the believer, "my person is vile, and not worth thy accepting; but such as it is, it is thine; my soul, with all and every faculty; my body, and every member of it; my gifts, time, and all my talents, are thine."

And see that as Christ bequeathed and made over himself to you, so ye, in like manner, bestow and make over yourself to him. He lived not, neither died for himself, but you. Oh that you, in like manner, would down with self, and exalt Christ in the room of it. "Wo, wo is me," saith one, "that the holy profession of Christ is made a showy garment by many to bring home a vain fame; and Christ is made to serve men's ends. This is to heat an oven with a king's robes. Except men martyr and slay the body of sin, in holy self-denial, they shall never be Christ's martyrs and faithful witnesses. Oh if I could be master of that house-idol, myself, mine own, mine own wit, will, credit, and ease, how blessed were I! We have need to be redeemed from ourselves, as much as from the devil and the world. Learn to put out yourselves, and to put in Christ for yourselves. I should make a good bargain, and give old for new, if I could turn out self, and substitute Christ my Lord in place of myself; to say, 'Not I, but Christ; not my will, but Christ's; not my ease, not my lusts, not my credit, but Christ, Christ.'—O wretched

idol, myself, when shall I see thee wholly expelled, and Christ wholly put in thy room?"

He set himself apart for you, believers, and no others; no, not for angels, but for you. Will ye also set yourselves apart peculiarly for Christ? be his and no other's? Let not Christ and the world share and divide your hearts between them: let not the world come in and say, Half mine. You will never fulfil your obligations to Christ, nor answer this grace, till you can say, as Psa. 73: 25, "whom have I in heaven but thee? and on earth there is none that I desire in comparison of thee." "None but Christ, none but Christ," is a proper motto for a christian.

He left the highest and best enjoyments, even those in his Father's bosom, to set himself apart for death and suffering for you. Are you ready to leave the bosom of the best and sweetest enjoyments you have in this world, to serve him? If you stand not habitually ready to leave father, mother, wife, children, lands, yea, and life too, to serve him, you are not worthy of him. Matt. 10: 37. He was so wholly given up to your service, that he refused not the worst and hardest part of it, even bleeding, groaning, dying work; his love to you sweetened all this to him. Can you say so too? do you "account the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," as Moses did? Heb. 11: 26. He so entirely devoted himself to your work, that he could not be at rest till it was finished: he was so intent upon it, that he "forgot to eat bread." John, 4: 31, 32. So it should be with you; his service should be meat and drink to you. He was so wholly given up to your work and service, that he would not suffer himself to be in the least diverted, or taken off from it; and if Peter himself counsel him to favor himself, he shall hear, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Oh happy were it if our hearts were but so engaged for Christ! In Galen's time it was a proverb,

when they would express the impossibility of a thing, "You may as soon take off a christian from Christ."

2. If Christ hath sanctified or consecrated himself for us, what a horrid evil it is, to use Christ or his blood as *a common and unsanctified thing*. Yet so some do, as the apostle speaks, Heb. 10 : 29. The apostate is said to "tread under foot the Son of God," and to "count his blood an unholy (or common) thing." But wo to them that do so; they shall be counted worthy of something worse than "dying without mercy," as the apostle there speaks.

And as this is the sin of the apostate, so it is also the sin of all those that without faith approach, and so profane *the table of the Lord*, unbelievingly and unworthily handling those awful things. Such "eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body." 1 Cor. 11 : 29. Whereas the body of Christ was a thing of the deepest sanctification that ever God created, sanctified, as the text tells us, to a far more excellent and glorious purpose than ever any creature in heaven or earth was sanctified. It was therefore the great sin of those Corinthians, not to discern it, and not to behave themselves towards it, when they saw and handled the signs of it, as became so holy a thing. And as it was their great sin, so God declared his just indignation against it, in those sore strokes inflicted for it. As they discerned not the Lord's body, so neither did the Lord discern them from others in the judgments that were inflicted. And, as one well observes, God drew the model and platform of their punishment from the structure and proportion of their sin. And truly, if the moral and spiritual seeds and originals of many of our outward afflictions and sicknesses were but duly sifted out, possibly we might find a great part of them in this sin. Oh then, when you draw nigh to God in that ordinance, take heed to sanctify his name, by a spiritual discerning of

this most holy and most deeply sanctified body of the Lord; sanctified beyond all creatures, angels or men, not only in respect of the Spirit which filled him, without measure, with inherent holiness, but also in respect of its dedication to such a service as this, it being set apart by him to such holy, solemn ends and uses.

And let it, for ever, be a warning to such as have lifted up their hands to Christ in a holy profession, that they never lift up their heel against him afterwards by apostasy. The apostate treads on God's dear Son, and God will tread upon him for it. "Thou hast trodden down all that err from thy statutes." Psa. 119 : 118.

3. What a choice *pattern of love to saints* have we here before us? Calling all that are in Christ to an imitation of him, even to give up ourselves to their service, as Christ did; not in the same kind, for so none can give himself for them, but as we are capable. You see here how his heart was affected towards them, that he would sanctify himself as a sacrifice for them. See to what a height of duty the apostle improves this example of Christ; "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John, 3 : 16. Some christians came up fairly to this pattern in primitive times; Priscilla and Aquila laid down their necks for Paul, Rom. 16 : 4; that is, eminently hazarded their lives for him; and he himself could "rejoice, if he were offered up upon the sacrifice and service of their faith." Phil. 2 : 17. And in the next times, what was more known, even to the enemies of christianity, than their fervent love one to another? *Ecce quam mutuo se diligunt, et mori volunt pro alterutris!* See how they love one another, and are willing to die one for another!

But alas! the primitive spirit is almost lost in this degenerate age: instead of laying down life, how few will lay down twelve-pence for them? I remember it is

the observation of a late worthy, upon Matt. 5 : 44, that he is persuaded there is hardly that man to be found this day alive, that fully understands and fully believes that scripture. Oh, did men think that what they do for Christ's followers is done for Christ himself, it would produce other effects than are yet visible.

4. If Christ sanctified himself, that we might be sanctified by (or in) the truth; then it will follow, that *true sanctification is the best evidence* of our interest in his blood. In vain (as to you) did he sanctify himself unless you be sanctified. Holy souls only can claim the benefit of the great Sacrifice. Oh try then, whether true holiness, which is only to be judged by its conformity to its pattern, "As he that called you is holy, so be ye holy," 1 Pet. 1 : 15, and which is, and acts, according to its measure, like God's holiness, be found in you.

God is *universally* holy in all his ways; and "his works are holy," Psa. 145 : 17; whatever he doeth, is still done as becomes a holy God: he is not only holy in all things, but at all times unchangeably holy. Be ye therefore holy in all things, and at all times too, if ever you expect the benefit of Christ's sanctifying himself to die for you. Oh brethren, let not the feet of your conversation be as the feet of a lame man, which are unequal. Prov. 26 : 7. Be not sometimes hot, and sometimes cold; at one time careful, at another time careless; one day in a spiritual rapture, and the next in a fleshly frolic: but be ye holy "in all manner of conversation," 1 Pet. 1 : 15, in every crook and turning of your lives; and let your holiness hold out to the end.

God is *exemplarily* holy, and Jesus Christ is the great pattern of holiness. Be ye examples of holiness too, unto all that are about you. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works." Matt. 5 : 16. As wicked men infect one another by their examples, and diffuse their poison and malignity wherever

they come; so do ye disseminate godliness in all places and companies; and let those that frequently converse with you, especially those of your own families, receive a deeper dye and tincture of heavenliness every time they come nigh you.

God *delights in nothing but holiness*, and holy ones; he hath set all his pleasure in the saints. Be ye holy herein, as God is holy. Indeed, there is this difference between God's choice and yours; he chooses not men because they are holy, but that they may be so; you are to choose them for your delightful companions, that God hath chosen and made holy. "Let all your delights be in the saints, even them that excel in virtue." Psa. 16 : 3.

God abhors and *hates all unholiness*; do ye so likewise, that ye may be like your Father which is in heaven. And when the Spirit of holiness bestows this upon you, a sweeter evidence you cannot have, that Christ was sanctified for you. Holy ones may confidently lay the hand of their faith on the head of this great sacrifice, and say, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S MEDIATION.

"And one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

1 Tim. 2 : 5.

Great and long preparations bespeak the solemnity and greatness of the work for which they are designed. A man that had seen the heaps of gold, silver, and brass which David amassed in his time for the building of the temple, might easily conclude before one stone of it was laid, that it would be a magnificent structure. But lo, here is a design of God as far transcending that as the

substance doth the shadow. For, indeed, that glorious temple was but the type and figure of Jesus Christ, John, 2 : 19, 21, and a weak adumbration of that living, spiritual temple which he was to build, that the great God might dwell and walk in it. 2 Cor. 6 : 16. The preparations for that temple were for a few years, but the consultations and preparations for this were from eternity. Prov. 8 : 31. And as there were preparations for this work before the world began; so it will be a matter of eternal admiration and praise when this world shall be dissolved. What this astonishing glorious work is, this text informs you; it is the work of mediation between God and man; and you have here a description of Jesus the Mediator.

1. He is described by his *work or office*: *Μεσιτης*, a Mediator, a middle person. The word imports a fit and equal person, who comes between two persons that are at variance, to compose the difference and make peace. Such a person is Christ; a day's man, to lay his hand upon both.

2. He is described by the singularity of his mediation, *one Mediator*, and but one. There are many mediators of reconciliation among men, but there is one only Mediator of reconciliation between God and man; and it is as needless and impious to make more mediators than one, as to make more gods than one. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men."

3. He is described by the nature and quality of his person, *the man* Christ Jesus. He is described by his human nature in this place, not only because in this nature he paid the ransom spoken of in the words immediately following; but especially for the drawing of sinners to him, as one who clothed himself in their own flesh; and, for encouraging the faith of believers, by reminding them that he tenderly regards all their wants and miseries, and that they may safely trust him

with all their concerns, as one that will be for them a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God.

4. He is described by *his names*; by his appellative name, *Christ*, and his proper name, *Jesus*. The name *Jesus* notes his work about which he came; and *Christ*, the offices to which he was anointed, and in the execution of which he is our *Jesus*. "In the name *Jesus*," says Glassius, "the whole Gospel is contained; it is the light, the food, the medicine of the soul." Hence,

*Jesus Christ is the true and only Mediator between
God and men.*

"Ye are come to *Jesus the Mediator* of the new covenant." Heb. 12 : 24. "And for this cause he is *the Mediator* of the new testament," &c. Heb. 9 : 15. I shall endeavor to show what is the sense of this word mediator; what it implies, as applied to *Christ*; how it appears that he is the true and only Mediator between God and men; and in what capacity he performed his mediatorial work.

I. What is the sense and import of this word *μεσιτης*, a mediator? The true sense and import of it, is a middle person, or one that interposes between two parties at variance, to make peace between them. *Christ* is such a Mediator, both in respect to his person and office: in respect to his *person*, he is a Mediator; that is, one that has the same nature both with God and us, true God and true man; and in respect to his *office* or work, which is to interpose, to transact the business of reconciliation between us and God. His being a middle person, fits and capacitates him to stand in the midst between God and us. This, I say, is the proper sense of the word; though *μεσιτης*, a mediator, is rendered variously; sometimes an umpire or arbitrator; sometimes a messenger that goes between two persons; sometimes an interpreter, imparting the mind of one to another; some-

times a reconciler or peace-maker. And in all these senses Christ is the *MEDIATOR*, the middle person in his mediation of reconciliation or intercession; that is, either in his mediating, by suffering to make peace, as he did on earth; or his continuing and maintaining peace, as he doth in heaven, by meritorious intercession. In both these respects he is the only Mediator. But let us inquire,

II. What it is for Christ to be a Mediator Between God and us.

1. At the first sight it implies a most dreadful *breach between God and men*; else no need of a mediator of reconciliation. There was indeed a sweet league of amity once between them, but it was quickly dissolved by sin; the wrath of the Lord was kindled against man, pursuing him to destruction, "Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." *Psa. 5 : 5.* And man was filled with unnatural enmity against his God; "haters of God." *Rom. 1 : 30.* This put an end to all friendly intercourse between him and God.

Reader, say not in thy heart, that it cannot be, that one sin, and that seemingly so small, should make such a breach as this, and cause the God of mercy and goodness so to abhor the work of his hands, and that as soon as he had made man; for it was a heinous and aggravated evil. It was upright, perfect man, created in the image of God, that thus sinned: he sinned when his mind was most bright, clear, and apprehensive; his conscience pure and active; his will free, and able to withstand any temptation; his conscience pure and undefiled: he was a public as well as a perfect man, and well knew that the happiness or misery of his numberless offspring was involved in him. The condition he was placed in was exceedingly happy: no necessity or want could arm and edge temptation: he lived amidst all natural and spiritual pleasures and delights, the Lord most

delightfully conversing with him; yea, he sinned while as yet his creation-mercy was fresh upon him: and in this sin was most horrible ingratitude; yea, a casting off the yoke of obedience almost as soon as God had put it on.

2. It implies a *necessity of satisfaction to the justice of God*. For the very design and end of this mediation was to make peace, by giving full satisfaction to the party that was wronged. The Photinians, and some others, have dreamed of a reconciliation with God, founded not upon satisfaction, but upon the absolute mercy, goodness, and free-will of God. But, as one has well said, "concerning that absolute goodness and mercy of God, reconciling sinners to himself, there is a deep silence throughout the Scriptures:" and whatever is spoken of it, upon that account, is as it comes to us through Christ. Eph. 1:3-5; Acts, 4:12; John, 6:40. And we cannot imagine, either how God could exercise mercy to the prejudice of his justice, which must be, if we must be reconciled without full satisfaction; or how such a full satisfaction should be made by any other than Christ. Mercy, indeed, moved in the heart of God to wretched man; but from his heart it found no way to vent itself for us, but through the heart-blood of Jesus Christ; and in him the justice of God was fully satisfied, and the misery of the creature fully cured. And so, as Augustine speaks, "God neither lost the severity of his justice in the goodness of mercy, nor the goodness of his mercy in the exactness of his severity."

But if it had been possible that God could have found out a way to reconcile us without satisfaction, yet it is past doubt now, that he has determined and fixed on this way. And for any now to imagine to reconcile themselves to God by any thing but faith in the blood of this Mediator, is not only most vain in itself, and destructive to the soul, but most derogatory to the wisdom

and grace of God. And to such I would say, as Tertulian to Marcion, whom he calls the murderer of truth, "Spare the only hope of the whole world, O thou who destroyest the most necessary glory of our faith!" All that we hope for is but a phantasm without this. Peace of conscience can be rationally settled on no other foundation but this; for God having made a law to govern man, and this law being violated by man, either the penalty must be levied on the delinquent, or satisfaction made by his surety. As well no law, as no penalty for disobedience; and as well no penalty, as no execution. He, therefore, that is to be a mediator of reconciliation between God and man, must pay a price adequate to the offence and wrong; and so did our Mediator.

3. Christ being a Mediator of reconciliation and intercession, implies *the infinite value of his blood and sufferings*, as that which in itself was sufficient to stop the course of God's justice, and render him not only placable, but abundantly satisfied and well pleased, even with those that before were enemies: as Col. 1: 21, 22, "And ye that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight." Surely, that which can cause the holy God, justly incensed against sinners, to lay aside all his wrath, and take an enemy into his bosom, and establish such an amity as can never more be broken, and joy over him with singing, as Zeph. 3: 17, must be a most excellent and efficacious thing.

4. Christ's being a Mediator of reconciliation, implies the *ardent tender love* and large pity that filled his heart towards poor sinners. For he not only mediates by way of entreaty, going between both, and persuading and begging peace; but he mediates, as already shown, in the capacity of a surety, by putting himself under an

obligation to satisfy our debts. Oh how compassionately did his heart work towards us, that when he saw the arm of justice lifted up to destroy us, he would interpose himself, and receive the stroke, though he knew it would sink him to the grave! Our Mediator, like Jonah, his type, seeing the stormy sea of God's wrath working tempestuously, and ready to swallow us up, cast in himself to appease the storm. I remember how much that noble act of Marcus Curtius is celebrated in the Roman history, who being informed by the oracle, that the great breach made by the earthquake could not be closed except something of worth were cast into it, heated with love to the commonwealth, went and cast in himself. This was looked upon as a bold and brave adventure. But what was this to Christ?

5. Christ being a Mediator between God and man, implies, as the fitness of his person, so his *authoritative call* to undertake it. But having already discussed this more largely, let us proceed to inquire,

III. How it appears that Jesus Christ is *the true and only* Mediator between God and men. I reply,

1. Because he, and no other, is *revealed to us* by God. And if God reveal him, and no other, we must receive him, and no other as such. Take but two Scriptures at present, that in 1 Cor. 8:5, The heathen have "gods many and lords many," that is, many supreme powers and ultimate objects of their worship: and lest these great gods should be defiled by their immediate and unhallowed approaches to them, they invented heroes, demi-gods, and intermediate powers, as agents, or lord mediators between the gods and them, to convey their prayers to the gods, and the blessings of the gods back again to them: "But unto us," says the apostle, "there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by him," that is, one supreme essence, the first spring and fountain of blessings, "one Lord, Jesus

Christ," that is, one Mediator, "by whom are all things, and we by him." By whom are all things which come from the Father to us, and by whom are all our addresses to the Father. So Acts, 4 : 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "None other name," that is, no other authority, or rather, no other person authorized under heaven : for heaven is not here opposed to earth, as though there were other intercessors in heaven besides Christ : no, no, in heaven and earth God hath given him, and none but him, to be our Mediator. One sun is sufficient for the whole world ; and one Mediator for all men in the world. Thus the Scriptures affirm that this is he, and exclude all others.

2. Because he, and no other, is fit for, and *capable of this office*. Who but he that hath the Divine and human nature united in his single person, can be a fit days-man to lay his hand upon both ? Who but he that was God, could sustain such sufferings as were, by Divine justice, exacted for satisfaction ? Take a person of the greatest spirit, and lay upon him for an hour the sorrows of Christ, when he sweat blood in the garden, or uttered that heart-rending cry upon the cross, and he must melt under it as a moth.

3. Because he is *alone sufficient* to reconcile the world to God by his blood, without accessions from any other. The virtue of his blood reached back as far as Adam, and reaches forward to the end of the world ; and will be as fresh, vigorous, and efficacious then, as the first moment it was shed. The sun makes day before it actually rises, and continues day some time after it is set : so doth Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. So that he is the true and only Mediator between God and men : no other is revealed in Scripture ; no other is sufficient for it ; no other needed beside him.

IV. The last thing to be explained is, *in what capacity* he executed his mediatorial work; and we affirm, according to Scripture, that he performs that work as God-man, in both natures. Papists, in denying Christ to act as Mediator, according to his Divine nature, at once despoil the whole mediation of Christ of all its efficacy, dignity, and value, which arise from that nature. They say, the apostle in my text distinguishes the Mediator from God, in saying, "there is one God and one Mediator." We reply, that the same apostle distinguishes Christ from man, in Gal. 1 : 1, "Not by man, but by Jesus Christ." Doth it thence follow that Christ is not true man? or that, according to his Divine nature only, he called Paul? But what need I stay my reader here? Had not Christ, as Mediator, power to lay down his life, and power to take it again? John, 10 : 17, 18. Had he not, as Mediator, all power in heaven and earth to institute ordinances and appoint offices? Matt. 28 : 18; to baptize men with the Holy Ghost and fire? Matt. 3 : 11; to keep those whom his Father gave him in this world? John, 17 : 12; to raise up the saints again in the last day? John, 6 : 54. Are these, with many more I might name, the effects of the mere human nature? Or, were they not performed by him as God-man? And besides, how could he, as Mediator, be the object of our faith and religious adoration, if we are not to respect him as God-man?

INFERENCE 1. It is *dangerous to reject* Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man. Alas! there is no other to interpose and screen thee from the devouring fire, the everlasting burnings! Oh "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" And into his hands you must fall, without an interest in the only Mediator. Which of us can dwell with devouring fire? Who can endure everlasting burnings? Isa. 33 : 14. You know how they scorched the green tree, but what

would they do in the dry tree? Luke, 23:31. Indeed, if there were another plank to save after the shipwreck, any other way to be reconciled to God, besides Jesus the Mediator, somewhat might be said to excuse this folly; but you are shut up to the faith of Christ, as to your last remedy. Gal. 3:23. Oh take heed of despising, or neglecting Christ! if so, there is none to intercede with God for you: the breach between him and you can never be composed. I remember, here, the words of Eli to his profane sons, who caused men to abhor the offerings of the Lord; "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" 1 Sam. 2:25. The meaning is, that of common trespasses between men, the civil magistrate takes cognizance and decides the controversy by his authority, so that there is an end of that strife; but if man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat and arbitrate in that case? Eli's sons had despised the Lord's sacrifices, which were sacred types of Christ, and the appointed way that men had then of exercising faith in the Mediator. Now, saith he, if a man thus sin against the Lord, by despising the Saviour shadowed out in that way, who shall entreat for him? what hope, what remedy remains? It was a saying of Luther, *Nolo Deum absolutum*, "I cannot meet an absolute God;" that is, God without a Mediator. Thus the devils have to do with God; but will ye, in whose nature Christ is come, put yourselves into their state, and case? God forbid!

2. Hence also be informed, *how great an evil it is to join any other mediators*, either of reconciliation, or meritorious intercession, with Jesus Christ. Oh, this is a horrid sin, which both pours the greatest contempt upon Christ, and brings the surest and sorest destruction upon the sinner! I am ashamed my pen should write what mine eyes have seen in the writings of papists, ascribing

as much, yea, more to the mediation of Mary than to Christ, with no less than blasphemous impudence. How do they stamp their own sordid works with the peculiar dignity and value of Christ's blood; and therein seek to enter at the gate which God hath shut to all the world, because Jesus Christ the Prince entered in thereby. Ezek. 44 : 2, 3. He entered into heaven in a direct, immediate way, even in his own name, and for his own sake; this gate, saith the Lord, shall be shut to all others; and I wish men would consider it, and fear, lest while they seek entrance into heaven at the wrong door, they for ever shut against themselves the true and only door of happiness.

3. If Jesus Christ be the only Mediator of reconciliation between God and men, then reconciled souls should thankfully *ascribe all* the peace, favors, and comforts they have from God, *to their Lord Jesus Christ*. Whenever you have had free admission, and sweet entertainment with God in the more public ordinances or private duties of his worship; when you have had his smiles, his seals, and with hearts warmed with comfort, are returning from those duties, say, O my soul, thou mayest thank thy Lord Jesus Christ for all this! had not he interposed as a Mediator of reconciliation I could never have had access to, or friendly communion with God to all eternity.

Immediately upon Adam's sin, the door of communion with God was shut: there was no more coming nigh the Lord: not a soul could have any access to him, either in a way of communion in this world, or of enjoyment in that to come. It was Jesus the Mediator that opened that door again, and in him it is that we have boldness, and access with confidence. Eph. 3 : 12. We can now come to God "by a new and living way, consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh." Heb. 10 : 20. The vail had a double use, as Christ's flesh like-

wise hath; it hid the glory of the holy of holies, and also gave entrance into it. Christ's incarnation so obscures the splendor of the Divine glory and brightness, that we may be able to bear it and converse with it; and it also gives us admission into it. Oh thank your dear Lord Jesus for your present and future heaven! Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

4. If Jesus Christ be the true and only Mediator, both of reconciliation and meritorious intercession between God and men, how *safe* is the condition and state of believers! Surely, as his mediation, by sufferings, has fully reconciled, so his mediation, by intercession, will everlastingly maintain that state of peace between them and God, and prevent all future breaches. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5 : 1. It is a firm and lasting peace, and the Mediator that made it, is now in heaven to maintain it for ever, "there to appear in the presence of God for us." Heb. 9 : 24.

5. Did Jesus Christ interpose between us and the wrath of God, as a Mediator of reconciliation? did he rather choose to receive the stroke upon himself, than to see us ruined by it? How well then doth it become the people of God, in a thankful sense of this grace, to *interpose themselves* between Jesus Christ and the evils they see likely to fall upon his name and interest in the world! Oh that there were but such a heart in the people of God! I remember it is a saying of Jerome, when he heard the revilings and blasphemings of many against Christ and his precious truths, "Oh that they would turn their weapons from Christ to me, and be satisfied with my blood!" And much to the same sense is that sweet saying of Bernard, "Happy were I, if God would condescend to use me as a shield." And David could say, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me." Psa. 69 : 9. Ten thousand of our names are

nothing to Christ's name: his name is a worthy name; and there is no man that gives up his name as a shield to Christ, but shall thereby secure and increase its true honor.

CHAPTER IX.

FIRST BRANCH OF CHRIST'S PROPHETICAL OFFICE.

REVELATION OF THE WILL OF GOD.

"A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you."—Acts, 3: 22.

Having shown the solemn preparations, both by the Father and the Son, for the blessed design of reconciling us by the meritorious mediation of Christ, and taken a general view of the nature of his mediation, I proceed to show how he executes it in the discharge of his blessed offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.

His prophetic office consists of two parts: one external, consisting in a true and full *revelation* of the will of God to men, according to John, 17: 6, "I have manifested thy name to the men thou gavest me." The other in *illuminating the mind*, and opening the heart to receive and embrace that doctrine. The first part is contained in the words before us: "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up," &c.

These are the words of Moses, recorded Deut. 18: 15, and here, by Peter, pertinently applied to Christ, to convince the incredulous Jews that he is the true and only Messiah, and the great prophet of the church, whose doctrine it was highly dangerous to contemn, though uttered by such humble individuals as were himself and

John. And it is well observed by Calvin, he singles out this testimony of Moses, rather than any other, because of the great esteem they had for Moses, and his writings, beyond any others. In these words Christ, in his prophetic office, is described; and obedience to him, as such a Prophet, is strictly enjoined.

1. We have *a description of Christ* in his prophetic office; "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me."

"*A Prophet*," the Prince of the prophets, or the great and chief Shepherd, as he is styled, Heb. 13: 20; 1 Peter, 5: 4. It belongs to a prophet to expound the law, declare the will of God, and foretell things to come. All these meet, and that in a singular and eminent manner, in Christ our Prophet. Matt. 5: 21, &c.; John, 1: 18; 1 Peter, 1: 11.

"A Prophet *like unto Moses*," who typified and prefigured him. But is it not said of Moses, in Deut. 34: 10, "that there arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face?" True, of mere men there never arose so great a prophet in Israel as Moses, either in respect to his familiarity with God, or his miracles which he wrought in the power of God: but Moses himself was but a star to this sun. However, in these following particulars Christ was like him: He was a prophet that *went between God and the people*, carried God's mind to them, and returned theirs to God, they not being able to hear the voice of God immediately: "According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not again hear the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not." Deut. 18: 16. And upon this their request, God makes the promise which is cited in the text; "They have well spoken that which they have spoken: I will raise them up a Prophet like unto thee," &c. ver.

17, 18. Moses was a very *faithful* prophet, precisely faithful, and exact in all things that God gave him in charge, even to a pin of the tabernacle. "Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over his own house." Heb. 3 : 5, 6. Again, Moses confirmed his doctrine by *miracles*, which he wrought in the presence, and to the conviction of gainsayers. Herein Christ our Prophet is also like unto Moses, who wrought many mighty miracles, which could not be denied, and by them confirmed the Gospel which he preached. Lastly, Moses was that prophet which brought God's Israel out of literal Egypt, and Christ his out of spiritual Egypt, whereof that bondage was a figure.

He is also described by the stock and original, from which, *according to his flesh, he sprang*: "I will raise him up from among thy brethren. Of Israel, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." Rom. 9 : 5. And "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah." Heb. 7 : 14. He honored that nation by his nativity. Thus the great Prophet is described.

2. Here is a strict *injunction of obedience* to this Prophet, "Him shall ye hear in all things." By hearing, understand obedience. So words of sense are frequently used in Scripture to signify those affections that are awakened through the senses. This obedience is required to be yielded to this Prophet only, and universally, and under great penalties. It is true, we are commanded to obey the voice of his ministers. Heb. 13 : 17. But still it is Christ speaking by them whom we obey: "He that heareth you, heareth me." We obey them in the Lord, that is, as commanding or forbidding in Christ's name and authority. So when God said, "Thou shalt serve him," Deut. 6 : 13; Christ expounds it exclusively, "Him only shalt thou serve." Matt. 4 : 10.

He is the only Lord, Jude 4, and therefore to him only our obedience is required. And as it is due to him only, so to him universally ; " Him shall ye hear in all things : " his commands are to be obeyed, not disputed. Christians are indeed to judge whether what is spoken be the will of Christ. We must " prove what is that holy, good, and acceptable will." Rom. 12 : 2. " His sheep hear his voice, and a stranger they will not follow : they know his voice, but know not the voice of strangers." John, 10 : 4, 5. But when his will is understood and known, we have no liberty of choice, but are bound by it, be the duty commanded ever so difficult, or the sin forbidden ever so tempting : and this is also required under penalty of being destroyed from among the people, and of God's requiring it at our hands, Deut. 18, that is, avenging himself in the destruction of the disobedient. Hence, *Jesus Christ is called and appointed by God to be the great Prophet and Teacher of the Church.*

He is " anointed to preach good tidings to the meek," and " sent to bind up the broken-hearted." Isa. 61 : 1. When he came to preach the Gospel among the people, then was this Scripture fulfilled, " Yea, all things are delivered him of his Father ; so that no man knoweth who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Matt. 11 : 27. All light is now collected into one body of light, the Sun of righteousness ; and he " enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." John, 1 : 9. And though he dispensed knowledge variously, in times past, speaking in many ways and divers manners to the fathers, yet now the method and way of revealing the will of God to us is fixed and settled in Christ : in these last times he " hath spoken to us by his Son." Twice hath the Lord solemnly sealed him to this office, or approved and owned him in it by a miraculous voice from the most excellent glory. Matt. 3 : 17, and Matt. 17 : 5

Here we are called to consider what Christ's being a Prophet to the church implies, and how he executes and discharges this his office.

I. *What is implied in Christ's being a Prophet to the church.*

1. The natural *ignorance and blindness of men* in the things of God. The world is involved in darkness: the people sit as in the region and shadow of death till Christ arise upon their souls. Matt. 4 : 15-17. It is true, in the state of innocency man had a clear apprehension of the will of God without a Mediator; but now that light is quenched in the corruption of nature, "and the natural man receiveth not the things of God." 1 Cor. 2 : 14. These things of God are not only contrary to corrupt and carnal reason, but they are also *above* right reason. Grace indeed useth nature, but nature can do nothing without grace. The mind of a natural man has not only a native blindness, by reason whereof it cannot discern the things of the Spirit, but also a natural enmity, Rom. 8 : 7, and it hates the light, John, 3 : 19, 20. So that until the mind be healed and enlightened by Jesus Christ, the natural faculties can no more discern the things of the Spirit, than the sensitive faculty can discern the things of reason. The mysteries of nature may be discovered by the light of nature; but when it comes to supernatural mysteries, there, as Cyprian somewhere speaks, the most subtle, searching, penetrating reason is at a loss.

2. It implies *the Divinity of Christ*, and proves him to be true God; forasmuch as no other can reveal to the world, in all ages, the secrets that lay hid in the heart of God, and that with such convincing evidence and authority. He brought his doctrine from the bosom of his Father; "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him." John, 1 : 18. The same words which his Father gave him he hath

given us. John, 17 : 8. He spake to us that which he had seen with his Father. John, 8 : 38. What man can tell the bosom counsels and secrets of God? Who but he that eternally lay in that bosom can expound them? Besides, other prophets had their times assigned them to rise, shine, and set again by death; "Your fathers, where are they? And do the prophets live for ever?" Zech. 1 : 5. But Christ is a fixed and perpetual sun that gives light in all ages of the world; for he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Heb. 13 : 8. Yea, and the very beams of his Divinity shone with awfulness upon the hearts of them that heard him; so that his very enemies were forced to acknowledge, that "never man spake like him." John, 7 : 46.

3. It implies that Christ is *the original and fountain* of all the light which is ministerially diffused by men. Ministers are but stars which shine with a borrowed light from the sun: so speaks the apostle, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 4 : 6. Those that teach men, must be first taught by Christ. What Paul received from the Lord, he delivered to the church. 1 Cor. 11 : 23. Jesus Christ is the chief Shepherd, 1 Pet. 5 : 4; and all the under shepherds receive their gifts and commissions from him. These things are manifestly implied in Christ's prophetic office.

II. We shall next inquire *how he executes* and discharges this his office, or how he enlightens and teaches men the will of God.

1. Our great Prophet hath revealed unto men the will of God *variously*; not holding one uniform and constant tenor in the manifestations of the Father's will, but "at sundry times, and in divers manners." Heb. 1 : 1. Sometimes he taught the church immediately, and in

his own person. John, 18 : 20. He declared God's righteousness in the great congregation. Psal. 22 : 22. And sometimes mediately by his ministers and officers, deputed to that service by him. So he dispensed the knowledge of God to the church before his incarnation : it was Christ that in the time, and by the ministry of Noah, "went and preached to the spirits in prison." 1 Pet. 3 : 19 ; that is, to men and women then alive, but now separated from the body, and imprisoned in hell for their disobedience. And it was Christ that was with the church in the wilderness, instructing and guiding them by the ministry of Moses and Aaron, Acts, 7 : 37, 38 ; and so he has taught the church since his ascension. He is not now personally with us, yet he still teaches us by his officers, whom, for that end, he has set and appointed in the church. Eph. 4 : 11, 12.

2. He has dispensed his blessed light to the church *gradually*. The discoveries of light have been *πολυμερως*, that is, in many parts or parcels ; sometimes more obscure and cloudy ; as to the Old Testament believers, by visions, dreams, Urim, Thummim, vocal oracles, types, sacrifices, &c. which, though they were comparatively but a weak, glimmering light, and had no glory compared to that which now shines, 2 Cor. 3 : 7-11, yet were sufficient for the instruction and salvation of the elect in those times ; but now is light sprung up gloriously in the Gospel dispensation : "And we all, with open face, behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." It is to us not a twilight, but the light of a perfect day ; and still is advancing in the several ages of the world. I know more, saith Luther, than blessed Austin knew ; and they that come after me, will know more than I know.

3. Jesus Christ, our great Prophet, has manifested to us the will of God *plainly and perspicuously*. When he was on earth he taught the people by parables, and

"without a parable he spake nothing." Matt. 13 : 34. He clothed sublime and spiritual mysteries in earthly metaphors, bringing them thereby to the low and dull capacities of men, speaking so familiarly to the people about them, as if he had been speaking earthly things to them. John, 3 : 12. And so, according to his own example, would he have his ministers preach, "using great plainness of speech," 2 Cor. 3 : 12, and by manifestation of the truth, "commending themselves to every man's conscience." 2 Cor. 4 : 2. Yet he does not allow them to be rude and careless in expression, pouring out indigested, crude, immethodical words: no, a holy, serious, strict, and grave expression befits the lips of his ambassadors; and who ever spake more weightily, more logically, or persuasively, than that apostle, by whose pen Christ has admonished us to beware of vain affections and swelling words of vanity? But he would have us stoop to the understanding of the meanest, and not give the people a comment darker than the text: he would have us rather pierce their ears than amuse their fancies; and break their hearts, than please their ears. Christ was a very plain preacher.

4. Jesus Christ dispensed truth *powerfully*; speaking "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Matt. 7 : 29. They were cold and dull preachers, their words did even freeze between their lips; but Christ spake with power; there was heat as well as light in his doctrine: and so there is still, though it be in the mouth of poor, contemptible men. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds." 2 Cor. 10 : 4. His word is still "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword; and piercing, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." Heb. 4 : 12. The blessed apostle imitated Christ; and being filled with his Spirit, spake home and freely to the hearts of men: so

many words, so many claps of thunder, (as Augustine said of him,) which made the hearts of sinners shake and tremble. All faithful and able ministers are not alike gifted in this particular; but, surely, there is a holy seriousness and spiritual grace and majesty in their doctrine, commanding reverence from their hearers.

5. This Prophet, Jesus Christ, taught the people the mind of God in a *sweet, affectionate, and persuasive manner*: his words made their hearts burn within them. Luke, 24 : 32. It was prophesied of him, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard on high. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." Isa. 42 : 2, 3. He knew how to speak a word in season to the weary soul. Isa. 50 : 4. He gathered the lambs with his arms, and gently led those that were with young. Isa. 40 : 11. How sweetly did his words fall on the melting hearts about him! he drew with cords of love, and with the bands of a man: he discouraged none, upbraided none that were willing to come to him; his familiarity and free condescensions to the most vile and despicable sinners, were often made a matter of reproach to him. Such is his gentle and sweet carriage to his people, that the church is called the Lamb's wife. Rev. 19 : 7.

6. He revealed the mind of God *purely* to men: his doctrine had not the least mixture of error to debase it; his most enviously observant hearers could find nothing to charge him with: he is "the faithful and true witness," Rev. 1 : 5; and he has commanded his ministers to preserve the simplicity and purity of the Gospel, and not to blend and sophisticate it. 2 Cor. 4 : 2.

7. He revealed the will of God *perfectly and fully*, keeping back nothing needful to salvation. So he tells his disciples, "All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." John, 15 : 15. He was faithful, as a Son, over his own house." Heb. 3 : 6.

INFERENCE 1. If Jesus Christ, who is now passed into the heavens, be the great Prophet and Teacher of the church, we may justly infer the continual *necessity of the Gospel ministry*; for by his ministers he now teaches us, and to that intent has fixed them in the church, by a firm constitution, there to remain to the end of the world. Matt. 28 : 20. "We pray you in Christ's stead," 2 Cor. 5 : 20. These officers he gave the church at his ascension, that is, when he ceased to teach them any longer with his own lips; and so set them in the church, that their succession shall never totally fail: for so the word *εθετο*, he hath set, 1 Cor. 12 : 28, plainly implies. They are set by a sure establishment, a firm and unalterable constitution; and it is well they are; for how many adversaries in all ages have endeavored to shake the very office itself, pretending that it is needless to be taught by men, and wresting such a scripture as this to countenance their error: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophesy," &c. Joel, 2 : 28, 29. But if an Old Testament prophecy may be understood according to a New Testament interpretation, that prophecy no way opposes, but actually confirms the Gospel ministry. How the apostle understood the prophecy, may be seen in Acts, 2 : 17, where he applies it to the Spirit that was poured out on the day of Pentecost *upon the apostles*.

God has given ministers to the church for the work of conversion and edification, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, unto a perfect man." Eph. 4 : 11-13. So that when all the elect are converted, and all those converts become perfect men; when there is no error in judgment or practice, and no seducer to cause it, then, and not till then, will a Gospel ministry be useless. Indeed, as one has well observed, there is not a man that opposes a Gospel ministry, but the very being of that man is a sufficient argument for the continuance of it.

2. If Christ be the great Prophet of the church, *the weakest christians need not be discouraged* at the dulness and incapacity they find in themselves: for Christ is not only a patient and condescending Teacher, but he can also, as he has often done, reveal that to babes which is hid from the wise and learned. Matt. 11 : 25. "The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple." Psa. 19 : 7. Yea, and such as you are, the Lord delights to choose, that his grace may be the more conspicuous in your weakness. 1 Cor. 1 : 26, 27. Well then, be not discouraged; others may know more in other things than you, but you are not incapable of knowing so much as shall save your souls, if Christ be your teacher: in other knowledge they excel you; but if ye know Jesus Christ, and the truth as it is in him, one drop of your knowledge is worth a whole sea of their gifts. It is better in kind, the one being but natural, the other supernatural, from the saving illuminations and inward teachings of the Spirit: and so is one of those "better things" that accompany salvation. It is better in respect to its effects: other knowledge leaves the heart dry, barren, and unaffected; but that little you have been taught of Christ, sheds down its gracious influences upon your affections, and slides sweetly to your melting hearts. So that as one "preferred the most despicable work of a plain rustic christian before all the triumphs of Alexander and Cesar," much more ought you to prefer one saving manifestation of the Spirit, to all the powerless illuminations of natural men.

3. If Christ be the great Prophet and Teacher of the church, *prayer is a proper means* for the increase of knowledge. Prayer is the golden key that unlocks that treasure. When Daniel was to expound the secret contained in the king's dream, about which the Chaldean magicians had racked their brains to no purpose; what course did Daniel take? "He went to his house," Dan.

2 : 17, 18, "and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mi-shael, and Azariah, his companions; that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning his secret." And then was the secret revealed to Daniel. Luther was wont to say, "Three things made a divine; meditation, temptation, and prayer." Holy Mr. Bradford was wont to study upon his knees. Those truths that are learned by prayer, leave an unusual sweetness upon the heart. If Christ be our Teacher, it becomes all his saints to be at his feet.

4. If Christ be the great Prophet and Teacher of the church, we may thence discern and *judge of doctrines*, and it may serve us as a test by which to try them. For such as Christ is, such are the doctrines that flow from him. Every error pretends to derive itself from him; but as Christ was holy, humble, heavenly, meek, peaceful, plain, and simple, and in all things alien, yea, contrary to the wisdom of the world and the gratifications of the flesh; such are the truths which he teaches. They have his character and image engraven on them. Would you know then whether this or that doctrine be from the Spirit of Christ? Examine the doctrine itself by this rule. And whatsoever doctrine you find to encourage and countenance sin, to exalt self, to be accommodated to earthly designs and interests, to warp and bend to the humors and lusts of men: in a word, what doctrine soever makes them that profess it carnal, turbulent, proud, sensual, you may safely reject it, and conclude this never came from Jesus Christ. The doctrine of Christ is after godliness; his truth sanctifies. There is a spiritual taste, by which those that have their senses exercised can distinguish things that differ. "The spiritual man judgeth all things." 1 Cor. 2 : 15. His ear trieth " words, as the mouth tasteth meats." Job, 34 : 3. Receive nothing, let it come never so speciously, that hath not some relish of Christ and holiness

in it. Be sure, Christ never revealed any thing to men that derogates from his own glory, or prejudices and obstructs the ends of his own death.

5. And as it will serve us for a test of doctrines, so it serves for *a test of ministers*; and hence you may judge who are authorized and sent by Christ the great Prophet, to declare his will to men. Surely those whom he sends have his Spirit in their hearts, as well as his words in their mouths. And according to the measures of grace received, they faithfully endeavor to fulfil their ministry for Christ, as Christ did for his Father: "As my Father hath sent me," says Christ, "so send I you." John, 20:21. They take Christ for their pattern in the whole course of their ministration, and are such as sincerely endeavor to imitate the great Shepherd, in the following respects:

Jesus Christ was a *faithful* minister, the "faithful and true witness." Rev. 1:5. He declared the whole mind of God to men. Of him it was prophetically said, "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness, and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation." Psa. 40:10. To the same sense, and almost in the same words, the apostle Paul professed, "I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you," "I have showed you all things." Acts, 20:20, 35. Not that every faithful minister, in course of his ministry, anatomizes the whole body of truth, and fully expounds and applies each particular to the people; but with respect to those doctrines which they have opportunity of opening, they do not, out of fear, or to accommodate and secure base, low ends, withhold the mind of God, or so corrupt and abuse his words as to subject truth to their own, or other men's lusts: "They preach not as pleasing men, but God." 1 Thess. 2:4. "For if we yet please men, we cannot be the servants of Christ."

Gal. 1 : 10. Truth must be spoken, though the greatest on earth be offended.

Jesus Christ was a *tender-hearted* minister, full of compassion to souls. He was sent to bind up the broken in heart. Isa. 61 : 1. He grieved at the hardness of men's hearts. Mark, 3 : 5. He mourned over Jerusalem, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how oft would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings!" Matt. 23 : 37. His bowels yearned when he saw the multitude as sheep having no shepherd. Matt. 9 : 36. This tender compassion of Christ must be in all the under shepherds. "God is my witness," says one of them, "how greatly I long after you all, in (or after the pattern of) the bowels of Christ Jesus." Phil. 1 : 8. He that shows a hard heart, unaffected by the dangers and miseries of souls, can never show a commission from Christ to authorize him for ministerial work.

Jesus Christ was a *laborious, self-denying* minister: he put a necessity on himself to finish his work in his day; a work infinitely great, in a very little time; "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." John, 9 : 4. O how much work did Christ do in a little time on earth! "He went about doing good." Acts, 10 : 38. He was never idle. When he sits down at Jacob's well, to rest him, being weary, presently he falls into his work, preaching the Gospel to the Samaritan woman. In this must his ministers resemble him; "striving according to his working, that worketh in them mightily." Col. 1 : 28, 29.

Jesus Christ *delighted in nothing more than the success* of his ministry; to see the work of the Lord prosper in his hand, this was meat and drink to him. When the seventy returned, and reported the success of their first embassy, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us

through thy name!" he said unto them, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." As if he had said, You tell me no news, I saw it when I sent you at first: I knew the Gospel would succeed where it came; "and in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." Luke, 10:17, 18, 21. And is it not so with those sent by him? do not they value the success of their ministry? "My little children," saith Paul, "of whom I travail again in birth, till Christ be formed in you." Gal. 4:19.

Jesus Christ was a minister that *lived up to his doctrine*. His life and doctrine harmonized in all things. He urged to holiness in his doctrine, and was the great pattern of holiness in his life; "Learn of me, I am meek and lowly." Matt. 11:29. And such his ministers desire to approve themselves; "What ye have heard and seen in me, do." Phil. 4:9. He preached to their eyes as well as ears. His life was a comment on his doctrine. They might see holiness acted in his life, as well as hear it sounded by his lips. He preached the doctrine, and lived the application.

Jesus Christ was a minister that maintained sweet, *secret communion with God* in all his constant public labors. If he had been preaching and healing all the day, yet he would redeem time from his very sleep to spend in secret prayer; "When he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and was there alone. Matt. 14:23. O blessed pattern! Let the keepers of the vineyards remember they have a vineyard of their own to keep, a soul of their own that must be looked after as well as other men's. Those that, in these things, imitate Christ, are surely sent to us from him, and are worthy of double honor: they are a choice blessing to the people.

CHAPTER X.

SECOND BRANCH OF CHRIST'S PROPHETICAL OFFICE.

ILLUMINATION OF THE UNDERSTANDING.

"Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures."—Luke, 24 : 45.

Knowledge of spiritual things is well distinguished as intellectual and practical: the first has its seat in the mind, the latter in the heart. This latter, divines call a knowledge peculiar to saints; and, in the apostle's language, Phil. 3 : 8, it is, "The excellency of the knowledge of Christ." And indeed there is but little excellency in all those petty notions which furnish the lips with discourse, unless by a sweet and powerful influence they draw the conscience and will to the obedience of Christ. Light in the mind is necessarily antecedent to the sweet and heavenly exercise of the affections: for the further any man stands from the light of truth, the further he must needs be from the warmth of devotion. Heavenly quickenings are begotten in the heart, while the Sun of righteousness sheds the beams of truth into the understanding; yet all the light of the Gospel spreading and diffusing itself in the mind, can never savingly open and change the heart, without another act of Christ upon it described in the text: "Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures." In which words we have,

1. Christ's act upon their understandings: He "opened their understandings." By understanding is not here meant the mind only, in opposition to the heart, will, and affections, but these were opened by and with the mind. The mind is to the heart, as the door to the

house : what comes into the heart, comes in through the understanding ; and although truths sometimes go no further than the entry, and never penetrate the heart, yet, here, this effect is undoubtedly included.

Expositors consider this expression as parallel to that in Acts, 16 : 14, " Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened." And it is well observed, that it is one thing to open the Scriptures, that is, to expound them, and give the meaning of them, as Paul is said to do, Acts, 28 : 23, and another thing to open the mind, or heart. There are, as a learned man truly observes, two doors of the soul barred against Christ ; the understanding, by ignorance ; and the heart, by hardness : both these are opened by Christ. The former is opened by the preaching of the Gospel, the other by the internal operation of the Spirit. The former belongs to the first part of Christ's prophetic office, opened in the foregoing discourse ; the latter, to that special internal part of his prophetic office, which is to be opened in this.

That it was not a naked act upon their intellect, but that both their minds and hearts were touched by this act of Christ, is evident by the effects mentioned, ver. 52, 53, " They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." It is confessed, that before this time Christ had opened their hearts by conversion ; and this opening is therefore to be understood in reference to those particular truths, in which, till now, they were not sufficiently informed, and so their hearts could not be duly affected with them. They were very dark in their apprehensions of the death and resurrection of Christ, and consequently their hearts were sad and dejected about that which had befallen him, verse 17. But when he opened the Scriptures and their understandings and hearts together, things appeared with another face, and they returned, blessing and praising God.

2. Here is further to be considered the design and end of this act upon their understandings, "That they might understand the Scriptures:" where let it be marked, reader, that the teachings of Christ and his Spirit were never designed to take men off from reading, and studying, and searching the Scriptures, as some have vainly pretended. God never intended to abolish his word by giving his Spirit; and they are true fanatics (as Calvin upon this place calls them) that think or pretend so. Hence we observe,

The opening of the mind and heart, effectually to receive the truths of God, is the peculiar prerogative and office of Jesus Christ.

One of the great miseries under which fallen nature labors, is spiritual blindness. Jesus Christ brings that eye-salve which only can cure it. "I counsel thee to buy of me eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Rev. 3: 18. Those to whom the Spirit hath applied it, can say, as 1 John, 5: 20, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God and eternal life."

"For the spiritual illumination of a soul, it is not sufficient (says Reynolds) that the object be revealed, nor yet that man, the subject of this knowledge, have a due use of his own reason; but it is further necessary that the grace and special assistance of the Holy Spirit be superadded, to open and mollify the heart, and so give it a due taste and relish of the sweetness of spiritual truth."

In explaining this part of Christ's prophetic office, I shall, as in the former, show what is included in the opening of their understanding, and by what acts Christ performs it.

I. *What is included in this act of Christ?*

1. It implies the *transcendant nature of spiritual things*, far exceeding the highest flight and reach of natural reason. Jesus Christ must, by his Spirit, open the understandings of men, or they can never comprehend such mysteries. Some men have strong natural parts, and by improvement of them are become eagle-eyed in the mysteries of nature. Who more acute than the heathen sages? Yet, to them, the Gospel seemed foolishness. 1 Cor. 1 : 18. Austin confesses, that before his conversion he often felt his spirit swell with offence and contempt of the Gospel; and despising it, said, *Dedignabar esse parvulus*; "I scorned to become a child again." Bradwardine professes, that when he read Paul's Epistles he contemned them, because he found not in them metaphysical subtleties. Surely it is possible a man may, with Berengarius, be able to dispute on every point of knowledge; to unravel nature, "from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall," and yet be blind in the knowledge of Christ. Yes, it is possible a man's understanding may be improved by the Gospel to a great ability in the literal knowledge of it, so as to be able to expound the Scriptures correctly, and enlighten others by them, as we find, Matt. 7 : 22, that the scribes and pharisees were well acquainted with the Scriptures of the Old Testament; and yet, notwithstanding, Christ truly calls them "blind guides." Matt. 23 : 16. Till Christ open the heart, we can know nothing of him, or of his will, as we ought to know it. So experimentally true is it, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual, judgeth all things; yet he himself is judged of no man." 1 Cor. 2 : 14, 15. The spiritual man can judge and discern the carnal man, but the carnal man wants a faculty to judge of the spiritual man: as a man that

carries a dark lantern can see another by its light, but the other cannot discern him. Such is the difference between persons whose hearts Christ hath or hath not opened.

2. Christ's opening the understanding, implies *the insufficiency of all external means*, how excellent soever they are in themselves, to operate savingly upon men, till Christ by his power opens the soul, and so makes them effectual. What excellent preachers were Isaiah and Jeremiah to the Jews! The former spake of Christ more like an evangelist of the New than a prophet of the Old Testament: the latter was a most convincing and pathetic preacher: yet the one complains, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isa. 53: 1. The other laments the ill success of his ministry: "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain." Jer. 6: 29. Under the New Testament, what people ever enjoyed such choice helps and means as those that lived under the ministry of Christ and the apostles? Yet how many remained still in darkness! "We have piped to you, but ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented." Matt. 11: 17. Neither the delightful airs of mercy, nor the doleful tones of judgment, could affect or move their hearts.

And indeed if you search into the reason of it, you will be satisfied that the choicest of means can do nothing upon the heart, until Christ by his Spirit open it, because ordinances work not as natural causes do: for then the effect would always follow unless miraculously hindered; and it would be as wonderful that all who hear should not be converted, as that the three children should be in the fiery furnace so long, and yet not be burned: no, it works not as a natural, but as a moral cause, whose efficacy depends on the gracious concur-

rence of the Spirit. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." John, 3 : 8. The ordinances are like the pool of Bethesda. John, 5 : 4. At a certain time an angel came down and troubled the waters, and then they had a healing virtue in them. So the Spirit comes down at certain times in the word, and opens the heart ; and then it becomes the power of God to salvation. So that when you see souls daily sitting under excellent means of grace, and still remaining dead, you may say as Martha did to Christ of her brother Lazarus, "Lord, if thou hadst been here," they had not remained dead. If thou hadst been in this sermon, it had not been so ineffectual to them.

3. It implies *the utter impotency of man*, unaided, to open his own heart, and thereby make the word effectual to his own conversion and salvation. He that at first said, "Let there be light—and it was so," must shine into our hearts, or they will never be savingly enlightened, 2 Cor. 4 : 4, 6. Fallen man, so far from opening his own heart, without aid from on high, cannot know the things of the Spirit, 1 Cor. 2 : 14, believe, John, 6 : 44, obey, Rom. 8 : 7, do a good act, John, 15 : 5, speak a good word, Matt. 12 : 34, or think a good thought, 2 Cor. 3 : 5. Hence, conversion is in Scripture called regeneration, John, 3 : 3, a resurrection from the dead, Eph. 2 : 5, a creation, Eph. 2 : 10, a victory, 2 Cor. 10 : 5.

4. Christ's opening the understanding imports *his Divine power*, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. Who but God knows the heart ? Who but God can unlock and open it at pleasure ? No mere creature, no, not the angels themselves can command or open the heart. We may stand and knock at men's hearts till our own ache, but no opening till Christ come. He can fit a key to all the cross wards of the will, and with sweet efficacy open it, and that without any force or violence to it.

II. In the next place, let us see *by what acts* Jesus Christ performs this work, and what way and method he takes to open the hearts of sinners.

1. He does so by his *word*: to this end was Paul commissioned and sent to preach the Gospel, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Acts, 26 : 18. The Lord can, if he pleases, accomplish this immediately; but though he can do it, he will not do it ordinarily without means, because he will honor his own institutions. You may observe, that when Lydia's heart was to be opened, "there appeared unto Paul a man of Macedonia, who prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Acts, 16 : 9. God will keep up his ordinances among men; and though he hath not bound himself, yet he hath bound us to them. Cornelius must send for Peter. God can make the earth produce corn, as it did at first, without cultivation and labor; but he that shall now expect it in the neglect of means, may perish for want of bread.

2. But the ordinances in themselves cannot do it; and therefore Jesus Christ hath sent forth *the Spirit*, who is his vicegerent, to carry on this work in the hearts of his people. And when the Spirit comes down upon men in the administration of the ordinances, he effectually opens the heart to receive the Lord Jesus, by the hearing of faith. He breaks in upon the understanding and conscience by powerful convictions and compunctions; as those words, John, 16 : 8, import, "He shall convince the world of sin:" convince by clear demonstration, such as enforces assent, so that the soul cannot but yield it to be so; and yet the door of the heart is not opened till he has also put forth his power upon the will, and, by a sweet and secret efficacy, overcome all its reluctance, and the soul is made willing in the day of his power. When this is done, the heart is opened; saving light now shines in it; and the Spirit in the soul is,

A *new* light, in which things appear far otherwise than they did before. The names Christ and sin, the words heaven and hell, have another sound in that man's ears, than formerly they had. When he comes to read the same Scriptures, which possibly he had read a hundred times before, he wonders he should be so blind as he was, to overlook such great, weighty, and interesting things as he now beholds in them; and saith, where were mine eyes, that I could never see these things before?

It is a very *affecting* light; a light that hath heat and powerful influences with it, which makes deep impressions on the heart. Hence they whose eyes the great Prophet opens, are said to be "brought out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Pet. 2:9. The soul is greatly affected with what it sees. "Did not our hearts burn within us whilst he talked with us, and opened to us the Scriptures?"

And it is a *growing* light, like the light of the morning, which "shines more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. 4:18. When the Spirit first opens the understanding, he doth not give it at once a full sight of all truth, or a full sense of the power, sweetness, and goodness of any truth; but the soul in the use of means grows up to a greater clearness day by day: its knowledge grows extensively in measure, and intensively in power and efficacy. Thus the Lord Jesus by his Spirit opens the understanding.

INFERENCE 1. If it be the work and office of Jesus Christ to open the understandings of men; hence we infer *the misery of those men*, whose understandings Jesus Christ hath not opened; of whom we may say, as Deut. 29:4; To this day Christ hath not given them eyes to see. Natural blindness, whereby we are deprived of the light of this world, is sad; but spiritual blindness is much more so. See how dolefully their case is represented; "But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," 2 Cor. 4 : 3, 4 ; he means a total and final concealment of the saving power of the word from them. What is their condition ? Truly no better than lost men. It is hid *τοις απολλυμενοις*, from them that are to perish, or be destroyed. More particularly, because the point is of deep concern, let us consider,

The judgment inflicted—spiritual blindness. A sore misery indeed ! Not a universal ignorance of all truths ; O no ! in natural and moral truths they are oftentimes acute and sharp-sighted men ; but in that part of knowledge which leads to eternal life, John, 17 : 2, they are utterly blinded : as it is said of the Jews, upon whom this misery lies, that blindness in part is happened to Israel. Again, consider

The subject of this judgment—the mind. If it fell upon the body, it would not be so considerable ; it falls immediately upon the soul, the noblest part of man, and upon the mind, the intellectual, rational faculty, which is to the soul what the natural eye is to the body. Now the soul being ever active and restless, always working ; and its leading, directive power blind : judge what a sad and dangerous state such a soul is in ; just like a fiery high-mettled horse, whose eyes are out, furiously carrying his rider upon rocks, pits, and precipices. I remember Chrysostom, speaking of the loss of a soul, says, if a man lose an eye, ear, hand, or foot, there is another to supply its want : " God hath given us those members double ; but he hath not given us two souls," that if one be lost, yet the other may be saved. Surely it were better for thee, reader, to have every member of thy body made the subject of the most exquisite racking torments, than for spiritual blindness to befall thy soul. Moreover,

Consider that this judgment is *unperceived* by those

on whom it lies : they know it not, more than a man knows that he is asleep. Indeed it is "the spirit of a deep sleep." Isa. 29 : 10. This renders their misery the more remediless : Because you say, "We see, therefore your sin remaineth." John, 9 : 41. Once more,

Consider *the tendency* and effects of it. What doth this tend to but eternal ruin ? for hereby we are cut off from the only remedy. The soul that is so blinded can never see sin, nor a Saviour ; but, like the Egyptians during the palpable darkness, sits still, and moves not after its own recovery. And as ruin is that to which it tends, so in order thereto, it renders all the ordinances and duties under which the soul comes altogether useless and ineffectual to its salvation. He comes to the word, and sees others melted by it, but to him it signifies nothing. Did you but understand the misery of such a state, if Christ should say to you, as he did to the blind man, "What wilt thou that I should do for thee ?" you would reply as he did, "Lord, that my eyes may be opened." Matt. 20 : 32, 33.

2. If Jesus Christ be the great Prophet of the church, then surely he will take special *care both of the church and the under shepherds* appointed by him to feed them ; else both the objects and instruments upon and by which he executes his office must fail, and consequently this glorious office be in vain. Hence he is said "to walk among the golden candlesticks," Rev. 1 : 13, and "to hold the stars in his right hand," Rev. 2 : 1. Jesus Christ instrumentally opens the understandings of men by the preaching of the Gospel ; and whilst there is an elect soul to be converted, or a convert to be further illuminated, means shall not fail by which to accomplish it.

3. Hence you that are yet in darkness, may be directed to whom to apply yourselves for saving knowledge. It is Christ that hath the sovereign eye-salve that can

cure your blindness ; he only hath the key of the house of David ; he openeth, and no man shutteth. Oh that I might persuade you to set yourselves in his way, under the ordinances, and cry to him, " Lord, that my eyes may be opened." Three things are exceedingly encouraging to you so to do :

God the Father hath put him into this office *for the cure of such as you are* : " I will give thee for a light to the gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Isa. 49 : 6. This may furnish you with an argument to plead for a cure. Why do you not go to God, and say, " Lord, didst thou give Jesus Christ a commission to open the blind eyes ? Behold me, Lord ; such a one am I, a poor, dark, ignorant soul. Didst thou give him to be thy salvation to the ends of the earth ? Are no place nor people excluded from the benefit of that light ; and shall I still remain in the shadow of death ? Oh that unto me he might be a saving light also !"

It is encouraging to think, that Jesus Christ *has actually opened* the eyes of them that were as dark and ignorant as you are. He has revealed to babes those things that have been hid from the wise and prudent. Matt. 11 : 25. " The law of the Lord is perfect, making wise the simple." Psa. 19 : 7. And if you look among those whom Christ hath enlightened, you will not find " many wise after the flesh, many mighty or noble ; but the foolish, weak, base, and despised ;" these are they on whom he hath glorified the riches of his grace. 1 Cor. 1 : 26, 27.

And is it not yet further encouraging to you that hitherto he hath *mercifully continued you* under the means of light ? Why is not the light of the Gospel put out ? Why are times and seasons of grace continued to you if God have no further design of good to your soul ? Be not therefore discouraged, but wait on the Lord in the use of means, that you may be healed.

If you ask, WHAT CAN WE DO to put ourselves into the way of the Spirit, in order to such a cure ? I say, though you cannot make the Gospel effectual, yet the Spirit of God can make the means you are capable of using effectual. And it is certain that your inability to do what is above your power, in no way excuses you from doing what is within your power. Let me therefore advise,

That you diligently *attend upon an able, faithful, and searching ministry*. Neglect no opportunity God affords you ; for how know you but *that* may be the time of mercy to your soul ?

Satisfy not yourselves with hearing, but *consider* what you hear. Allow time to reflect upon what God has spoken to you. What power is there in man more excellent, or more appropriate to the reasonable nature, than its reflective and self-considering power ? There is little hope of any good to be done upon your soul, till you begin to go alone and reflect : here all conversion begins. I know, a severer task can hardly be imposed upon a carnal heart. It is a hard thing to bring a man and himself together upon this subject ; but this must be, if ever the Lord do your souls good. "Commune with your own hearts." Psa. 4 : 4.

Labor to see, and ingenuously *confess the insufficiency of all your other knowledge* to do you good. What if you had never so much skill and knowledge in other mysteries ? What if you be never so well acquainted with the letter of the Scripture ? What if you had an angelical illumination ? This can never save thy soul. No, all thy knowledge avails nothing till the Lord show thee, by special light, the deplorable sight, of thy own heart, and a saving sight of Jesus Christ, thy only remedy.

4. Since then there is a common light, and special saving light, which none but Christ can give, it is the concern of every one of you to *try what your light is*. "We know (saith the apostle, 1 Cor. 8 : 1) that we all

have knowledge." O but what, and whence is it? Is it the light of life springing from Jesus Christ, that bright and morning star, or only such as the devils and damned have?

These lights differ in their very *kind* and nature. The one is heavenly, supernatural, and spiritual; the other earthly and natural, the effect of a better constitution or education. James, 3 : 15, 17.

They differ most apparently in their *effects* and operations. The light that comes in a special way from Christ, is humbling and self-abasing; by it a man sees the vileness of his own nature and practice, which begets self-loathing; but natural light, on the contrary, puffs up, exalts, and makes the heart swell with self-conceit. 1 Cor. 8 : 1. The light of Christ is practical and operative, still urging the soul, yet lovingly constraining it to obedience. No sooner did it shine into Paul's heart, but presently he asks, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts, 9 : 6. It brought forth fruit in the Colossians from the first day it came to them, Col. 1 : 6; but the other spends itself in intellectual dreams, and is detained in unrighteousness. Rom. 1 : 18. The light of Christ powerfully transforms its subjects, changing the man "into the same image, from glory to glory." 2 Cor. 3 : 18. But common light leaves the heart as dead, as carnal and sensual, as if no light at all were in it. In a word, all saving light endears Jesus Christ to the soul; and as it could not value him before it saw him, so when once he appears to the soul in his own light, he is appreciated and endeared unspeakably: then its language is, "None but Christ; all is but dross that I may win Christ: none in heaven but him, nor in earth desirable in comparison of him." But no such effect flows from natural, common knowledge.

These lights differ in their *results*. Natural, common knowledge vanishes, as the apostle speaks. 1 Cor. 13 : 8.

It is but a May-flower, and dies in its month. "Doth not their excellency that is in them go away?" Job, 4 : 21. But this that springs from Christ is perfected, not destroyed by death: it "springs up into everlasting life." The soul in which it is subjected, carries it away with it into glory. This light is life eternal. John, 17 : 3. Now turn in, and compare yourselves with these rules; let not false light deceive you.

5. Lastly, *How ought they to love, serve, and honor Jesus Christ, whom he hath enlightened with the saving knowledge of himself!* Oh that with hands and hearts lifted up to heaven, ye would adore the free grace of Jesus Christ to your souls! How many round about you have their eyes closed, and their hearts shut up! How many are in darkness, and likely to remain so till they come to the blackness of darkness, which is reserved for them. Oh what a pleasant thing is it for your eyes to see the light of this world! But what is it for the eye of your mind to see God in Christ? to see such ravishing sights as the objects of faith? and to have such a pledge as this given you of the blessed visions of glory? for in this light you shall see light. Bless God, and boast not: rejoice in your light, but be not proud of it; and beware ye sin not against the best and highest light in the world. If God were so incensed against the heathen for disobeying the light of nature, what is it in you to sin with eyes clearly illuminated with the purest light that shines in this world! You know, God charges it upon Solomon, 1 Kings, 11 : 9, that he turned from the way of obedience after the Lord had appeared to him twice. Jesus Christ intended, when he opened your eyes, that your eyes should direct your feet. Light is a special help to obedience, and obedience is a singular help to increase your light.

CHAPTER XI.

NATURE AND NECESSITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these ; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."—Hebrews, 9 : 23.

Salvation, as to the actual dispensation of it, is revealed by Christ as a Prophet, procured by him as a Priest, applied by him as a King. In vain it is revealed, if not purchased ; in vain revealed and purchased, if not applied. How it is revealed, both to us, and in us, by our great Prophet, has been shown. And now, from the prophetic office, we pass on to the priestly office of Jesus Christ, who as our Priest, purchased our salvation. In this office is contained the grand relief for a soul distressed by the guilt of sin. When all other reliefs have been tried, it is the blood of this great Sacrifice, sprinkled by faith upon the trembling conscience, that must cool, refresh, and sweetly compose and settle it. Now, seeing so great a weight hangs upon this office, the apostle industriously confirms and commends it in this Epistle, and more especially in this ninth chapter ; showing how it was prefigured to the world by the typical blood of the sacrifices, but infinitely excels them all : and as in many other most weighty respects, so principally in this, that the blood of these sacrifices did but purify the types or patterns of the heavenly things ; but the blood of this Sacrifice purified or consecrated the heavenly things themselves, signified by those types.

These words contain an argument to prove the necessity of the offering of Christ, the great Sacrifice, drawn from the proportion betwixt the types and the things typified. If the sanctuary, mercy-seat, and all things pertaining to the service of the tabernacle, were to be consecrated by blood ; those earthly, but sacred types, by the

blood of bulls and lambs; much more the heavenly things shadowed by them, ought to be purified or consecrated by better blood than the blood of beasts. The blood consecrating these, should as much excel the blood that consecrated those, as the heavenly things themselves do, in their own nature, excel those earthly shadows of them. Mark what proportion there is between the type and anti-type: such also is the proportion between the blood that consecrates them: earthly things with common, heavenly things with the most excellent blood.

So, then, there are two things to be especially observed here: 1. The nature of Christ's death and sufferings: it had the nature, use, and end of a sacrifice; and it was of all sacrifices the most excellent. 2. The necessity of his offering it: it was necessary to correspond with all the types and prefigurations of it under the law; but especially it was necessary for the expiating of sin, propitiating a justly incensed God, and opening a way for us to come to him. Hence,

The sacrifice of Christ, our High Priest, is most excellent in itself, and most necessary for us.

Sacrifices are of two kinds; eucharistical, or thank-offerings, in testimony of homage, duty, and service, and in token of gratitude for mercies freely received; and ilastical, or expiatory, for satisfaction to justice, and thereby reconciling God. Of this last kind was the sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ for us: to this office he was called by God. Heb. 5: 5. In it he was confirmed by the unchangeable oath of God, Psa. 110: 4; for it he was singularly qualified by his incarnation, Heb. 10: 6, 7; and all the ends of it he has fully answered. Heb. 9: 11, 12.

My present design is, to show the general nature, and the absolute necessity of the priesthood of Christ in order to our recovery from our deplorable state of sin and misery.

I. We will consider what *it supposes and implies*, and wherein it consists.

1. It supposes *man's revolt and fall from God*, and a dreadful breach made thereby between God and him; else no need of an atoning sacrifice. "If one died for all, then were all dead," 2 Cor. 5 : 14, dead in law, under sentence to die, and that eternally. In all the sacrifices, from Adam to Christ, this was still preached to the world, that there was a fearful breach between God and man; and therefore, that justice required our blood should be shed. And the fire flaming on the altar, which wholly burnt up the sacrifice, was a lively emblem of that fiery indignation that should devour the adversaries. But above all, when Christ, the true and great Sacrifice, was offered up to God, the clearest mirror was set before us, in which to see our sin and misery by the fall.

2. His priesthood supposes the unalterable purpose of God to *take vengeance for sin*; he will not let it pass. I will not pretend to say what God could do in this case, but I think it is generally yielded, that he must punish it in the person of the sinner, or in his surety. Those that contend for such a forgiveness, as is an act of charity, like that whereby private persons forgive one another, must at once suppose God to part with his right, and also render the satisfaction of Christ altogether useless, as to the procurement of forgiveness; yea, rather an obstacle, than a means to it. Surely, the nature and truth of God oblige him to punish sin. "He is of purer eyes than to look on iniquity." Hab. 1 : 13. And besides, the word is gone out of his mouth, that the sinner shall die.

3. The priesthood of Christ pre-supposes the utter *impotency of man to appease God*, and recover his favor, by any thing he could do or suffer. Surely God would not come down to assume a body to die, and be offered for us, if at any cheaper rate it could have been accomplished; there was no other way to recover man and

satisfy God. Those that deny the satisfaction of Christ, and talk of his dying to confirm the truth, and give us an example of meekness, patience, and self-denial; affirming these to be the sole ends of his death, do not only therein root up the foundations of their own comfort, peace, and pardon, but most boldly impeach infinite wisdom. God could have done all this at a cheaper rate: the sufferings of a mere creature are able to attain these ends: the deaths of the martyrs did it. But who by dying can satisfy and reconcile God? what creature can bring him an adequate and proportionable value for sin? yea, for all the sin of all the redeemed, from Adam to the last that shall be found alive at the Lord's coming? Surely, none but Christ can do this.

4. Christ's priesthood implies the *necessity of his being God-man*. It was necessary he should be a man, in order to his suffering, his compassion, and the application of his righteousness and holiness to men. Had he not been man, he had no sacrifice to offer, no soul or body in which to suffer. The Godhead is immortal, and above all those sufferings and miseries which Christ felt for us. Besides, his being man fills him with bowels of compassion, and a tender sense of our miseries: this makes him a merciful and faithful High Priest, Heb. 4 : 15, and not only fits him to pity, but to sanctify us also; for "he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are both of one." Heb. 2 : 11, 14, 17. And equally necessary was it that our High Priest should be God, since the value and efficacy of his sacrifice results from thence.

5. The priesthood of Christ implies the *extremity of his sufferings*. In sacrifices, you know there was a destruction, a kind of annihilation of the creature to the glory of God. The shedding of the creature's blood, and burning its flesh with fire, was but an umbrage, or faint resemblance of what Christ endured when he made his soul an offering for sin.

6. It implies *the gracious design* of God to reconcile us at a dear rate to himself, in that he called and confirmed Christ in his priesthood by an oath, and thereby provided a sacrifice, of infinite value, for the world. Sins, for which no sacrifice is allowed, are desperate sins; and the case of such sinners is helpless: but if God allow, yea, and provide a sacrifice himself, how plainly doth it speak his intentions of peace and mercy! These things are manifestly pre-supposed, or implied in Christ's priesthood.

This priesthood of Christ is that function wherein he comes before God, in our name and place, to fulfill the law, and offer up himself to him a sacrifice of reconciliation for our sins; and by his intercession to continue and apply the purchase of his blood to them for whom he shed it: all this is contained in that important Scripture. Heb. 10: 7-14. Or, more briefly, the priesthood of Christ is that whereby he expiated the sins of men, and obtained the favor of God for them. Col. 1: 20, 22; Rom. 5: 10. But because I shall insist more largely upon the several parts and fruits of this office, it shall here suffice to speak this much as to its general nature; which was the first thing proposed for explication.

II. The *necessity* of Christ's priesthood comes next to be considered. It was, according to the Scriptures, necessary, in order to our salvation, that such a Priest should, by such a sacrifice, appear before God for us. This appears from two principles, which are evident in Scripture: that God required full satisfaction, and that fallen man is totally incapable of tendering him any such satisfaction; therefore Christ, who only could, must do it, or we perish.

1. God *required full satisfaction*, and would not remit one sin without it. This will be clearly proved from the nature of sin, and from the veracity and wisdom of God.

Such is the nature of sin that the sinner deserves to

suffer for it. Penal evil, in a course of justice, follows moral evil. Sin and sorrow ought to go together; there is between these a necessary connection. "The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6 : 23.

The *veracity of God* requires it. The word is gone out of his mouth; "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Gen. 2 : 17. From that time man was instantly and certainly obnoxious and liable to the death of soul and body. The law pronounces him cursed "that continues not in all things written therein to do them." Gal. 3 : 10. Now, though man's threatenings are often vain and insignificant, God's shall surely take place; "not one tittle of the law shall fail, till all be fulfilled." Matt. 5 : 18. God will be true in his threatenings, though thousands and millions perish.

The *wisdom of God*, by which he governs the rational world, admits not of a dispensation or relaxation of the threatenings without satisfaction: for, as well no king, as no laws for government; as well no law, as no penalty; and as well no penalty, as no execution. To this purpose one observes, "It is altogether unfitting, especially to the wisdom and righteousness of God, that that which provoketh the execution, should procure the abrogation of his law; that that should supplant and undermine the law, for preventing of which alone the law was before established." How could it be expected that men should fear and tremble before God, when they should find that his threats against sin were vain? So then God required satisfaction, and would admit no treaty of peace on any other ground.

Let none here object, that reconciliation upon this only ground of satisfaction, is derogatory to the riches of grace; or that we allow not God what we do men, namely, to forgive an injury freely, without satisfaction. Free forgiveness to us, and full satisfaction made to God by Jesus Christ for us, are not things inconsistent with

each other, as in its proper place shall be more fully shown. And as for denying that to God which we allow to men; you must know, that man and man stand on even ground: man is not capable of being wronged and injured by man, as God is by man: there is no comparison between the nature of the offences. Besides, man only can freely forgive man, in a private capacity, so far as the wrong concerns himself; but he ought not to do so in a public capacity, as he is judge, and bound to execute justice impartially. God is our Law-giver and Judge; he will not dispense with violations of the law, but strictly demands complete satisfaction.

2. Man can render to God *no satisfaction of his own*, for the wrong done by his sin. He finds no way to compensate and make God amends, either by doing, or by suffering his will.

Not by *doing*: this way is shut up to all the world; none can satisfy God, or reconcile himself to him in this way; for it is evident our best works are sinful; "All our righteousness is as filthy rags." Isa. 64:6. And it is strange any should imagine that one sin should make satisfaction for another. If it be said, that not what is sinful in our duties, but what is spiritual, pure, and good, may ingratiate us with God;—it is obvious to reply, that what is good in any of our duties, is a debt we owe to God, yea, we owe him perfect obedience; and it is not imaginable how we should pay one debt by another—cancel a former by contracting a new engagement. If we do any thing that is good, we are indebted to grace for it. John, 15:5; 2 Cor. 3:5; 1 Cor. 15:10. In a word, those that have had as much to plead as any now living, have utterly given up all hope of appeasing and satisfying the justice of God. It is likely that holy Job feared God and eschewed evil as much as any of you; yet he saith, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove

me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul; I would despise my life." Job, 9:20, 21. It is probable that David was a man as much after the heart of God as you; yet he said, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man be justified." Ps. 143:2. It is likely that Paul lived as holy, heavenly, and fruitful a life as the best of you, and far, far beyond you; yet he saith, "I know (or am conscious to myself of) nothing, yet am I not hereby justified." 1 Cor. 4:4. His sincerity might comfort him, but could not justify him. And what need I say more? The Lord hath shut up this way to all the world; and the Scriptures speak it plainly: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. Rom. 3:20. Compare Gal. 3:21; Rom. 8:3.

And as man can never reconcile himself to God by doing, so neither by *suffering*: this is equally impossible; for no sufferings can satisfy God, but such as are proportionable to the offence we suffer for. And if so, infinite suffering must be borne: I say infinite, for sin is an infinite evil, as it wrongs an infinite God. Now sufferings may be said to be infinite, either in respect to their weight, exceeding all bounds and limits; the letting out of the wrath and fury of an infinite God: or in respect to duration, being endless and everlasting. In the first sense, no creature can bear infinite wrath, it would swallow us up. In the second, it may be borne as the damned do; but then, ever to be suffering, is never to have satisfied. So that no man can be his own priest, to reconcile himself to God by what he can do or suffer. And therefore, one that is able, by doing and suffering, to reconcile him, must undertake it, or we perish. Thus you see plainly and briefly the general nature and necessity of Christ's priesthood.

INFERENCE 1. This shows the incomparable *excellency*

of the christian religion. What other religions seek, the christian religion alone finds, even a solid foundation for true peace of conscience. While the Jew seeks it in vain in the law, the Mohammedan in his external and ridiculous observances, and the papist in his own merits, the believer only finds it in the blood of this great Sacrifice; this, and nothing less than this, can give peace to a distressed conscience, laboring under the weight of its own guilt. Conscience demands no less to satisfy it, than God demands to satisfy him. The grand inquest of conscience is, Is God satisfied? If he be satisfied, I am satisfied. Woful is the state of that man that feels the worm of conscience gnawing the most tender part of the soul, and hath no relief against it; that feels the intolerable scalding wrath of God burning within, and hath nothing to cool it. Hear me, you that slight the troubles of conscience, that call them fancies and melancholy; if you had but one sick night for sin—if you had ever felt that shame, fear, horror, and despair, which are the effects of an accusing and condemning conscience, you would account it an unspeakable mercy to hear of a way for the discharge of a poor sinner from that guilt: you would kiss the feet of the messenger that could bring you tidings of peace: you would call him blessed, that should direct you to an effectual remedy. Now, whoever thou art, that pinest away in thine iniquities, that droopest from day to day under the present wounds and the dismal presages of conscience, know that thy soul and peace can never meet, till thou art persuaded to come to this blood of sprinkling.

The blood of this sacrifice speaks better things than the blood of Abel. The blood of this sacrifice is the blood of God, Acts, 20 : 28; invaluable precious blood. 1 Pet. 1 : 19. One drop of it infinitely excels the blood of all mere creatures. Heb. 10 : 4–6. Such is the blood

that must do thee good. Lord, I must have such blood (saith conscience) as is capable of giving thee full satisfaction, or it can give me no peace. The blood of "the cattle upon a thousand hills" cannot do this. What is the blood of beasts to God? The blood of all the men in the world can do nothing in this case. What is our polluted blood worth?

Yea, Christ's blood is not only the blood of God, but it is blood shed in thy stead, and in thy place and room. "He was made a curse for us," Gal. 3 : 13. And so it becomes sin-pardoning blood, Heb. 9 : 22; Eph. 1 : 7; Col. 1 : 14; Rom. 3 : 26; and consequently conscience-pacifying and soul-quieting blood, Col. 1 : 20; Eph. 2 : 13, 14; Rom. 3 : 25. O bless God that ever the news of this blood came to thine ears. With hands and eyes lifted up to heaven, admire that grace that cast thy lot in a place where this joyful sound rings in the ears of poor sinners. Surely the pure light of the Gospel shining upon this generation, is a mercy never to be enough prized.

2. Hence also learn *the necessity of faith*, in order to a state and sense of peace with God : for to what purpose is the blood of Christ our sacrifice shed, unless it be actually and personally applied, and appropriated by faith? You know, when a sacrifice under the law was brought to be slain, he that brought it was to put his hand upon the head of the sacrifice, and so it was accepted for him, to make an atonement, Lev. 1 : 4 : not only to signify, that now it was no more his, but God's, the property being transferred by a kind of manumission; nor yet merely that he voluntarily gave it to the Lord as his own free act; but principally it signified the putting off his sins, and the penalty due to him for them, upon the head of the sacrifice: and so it implied in it an execration, as if he had said, Upon thy head be the evil. So the learned observe, the ancient Egyptians

were wont expressly to imprecate when they sacrificed, "If any evil be coming upon us or upon Egypt, let it turn and rest upon this head," laying their hand, at these words, on the sacrifice's head. And upon that ground, says Herodotus the historian, none of them would eat of the head of any living creature. You must also lay the hand of faith upon Christ your sacrifice, not to imprecate, but to apply and appropriate him to your own souls, he having been made a curse for you.

To this the whole Gospel tends, even to *persuade sinners to apply Christ and his blood to their own souls*. 'To this he invites us, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11 : 28. For this end our sacrifice was lifted up upon the altar ; "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John, 3 : 14, 15. The effects of the law, not only upon the conscience, filling it with torment, but upon the whole person, bringing death upon it, are here shadowed out by the stings of fiery serpents ; and Christ by the brazen serpent, which Moses exalted for the Israelites, that were stung, to look unto. And as by looking to it they were healed ; so by believing, or looking to Christ in faith, our souls are healed. Those that looked not to the brazen serpent died infallibly ; so must all that look not by faith to Jesus our sacrifice. It is true, the death of Christ is the meritorious cause of remission, but faith is the instrumental, applying cause ; and as Christ's blood is necessary in its place, so is our faith also in its place. The death of Christ, the offer and tender of Christ, never in themselves saved one soul without being received by faith. But alas ! how do I see sinners, either not at all touched with the sense of sin, and so feeling that they are whole and need not the physician ; or if any be stung and wounded with guilt, how

do they lick themselves whole with their own duties and reformations! Physicians say of wounds, let them be kept clean, and nature will find balsam of its own to heal them. If it were so in spiritual wounds, what need Christ to have left the Father's bosom, and come down to die as a sacrifice for us? Oh, if men can but have health, pleasure, riches, honor, and any way still a disturbing conscience, that it may not check or interrupt them in these enjoyments, they care nothing for Christ. And I am assured, till God show you the face of sin in the glass of the law; make the scorpions and fiery serpents, that lurk in the law and in your own consciences, come hissing about you, and smiting you with their deadly stings; till you have had some sick nights and sorrowful days for sin, you will never go up and down seeking an interest in the blood of his sacrifice with tears. But, reader, if ever this be thy condition, then wilt thou know the worth of a Saviour, then wilt thou value the blood of sprinkling.

3. Is Christ your High Priest, and is his priesthood so indispensably necessary to our salvation? Then freely acknowledge your utter impotency to reconcile yourselves to God by any thing you can do or suffer; and let *the whole glory of your recovery* be ascribed to Christ. It is highly reasonable that he that laid down the whole price, should have the whole praise. If any man say or think he could have made an atonement for himself, he doth therein cast no light reproach upon that profound wisdom which laid the design of our redemption in the death of Christ. But of this I have spoken elsewhere. And therefore,

4. In the last place, I rather choose to persuade you to *see your necessity* of this High Priest, and his most excellent sacrifice; and accordingly to make use of it. The best of you have polluted natures, poisoned with sin; those natures have need of this sacrifice, they must

have the benefit of this blood to pardon and cleanse them, or else be eternally damned. Hear me, ye that never spent a tear for the sin of your nature; if the blood of Christ be not sprinkled upon your natures, it had been better for you that you had been the offspring of beasts or of dragons. They have a mean, but not a vitiated, sinful nature as you have.

Your actual sins have need of the great High Priest and his sacrifice to procure remission for them. If he take them not away by the blood of his cross, they can never be taken away; they will lie down with you in the dust; they will rise with you, and follow you to the judgment-seat, crying, We are thy works, and we will follow thee. All thy repentance and tears, couldst thou weep as many as there be drops in the ocean, can never take away sin. Thy duties, even the best of them, need this sacrifice. It is in virtue thereof that they are accepted of God. And were it not that God had respect to Christ's offering, he would not regard thee, nor any of thy duties. Thou couldst no more come near to God, than thou couldst approach a devouring fire, or dwell with everlasting burnings. Well, then say, I need such a price every way. Love him in all his offices. See the goodness of God in providing such a Sacrifice for thee. Meat, drink, and air are not more necessary to maintain thy natural life, than the death of Christ is to give and maintain thy spiritual life.

Oh, then, let thy soul expand whilst meditating on the grace and excellency of Christ, which is thus displayed and unfolded in every branch of the Gospel: and with a deep sense upon thy heart, let thy lips say, Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XII.

EXCELLENCY OF OUR HIGH PRIEST'S OBLATION.

THE FIRST PART OF HIS PRIESTLY OFFICE.

"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Hebrews, 10: 14.

After this more general view of the priesthood of Christ, we come to a nearer and more particular consideration of the parts thereof; which are his oblation and intercession, answerable to the double office of the High Priest, offering the blood of the sacrifices without the holy place, which typified Christ's oblation; and then once a year bringing the blood before the Lord into the most holy place, presenting it before God, and with it sprinkling the mercy-seat, wherein the intercession of Christ (the other part or act of his priesthood) was in a lively manner typified to us.

My present business is to consider the oblation of Christ; the efficacy and excellency of which are illustrated in the context, by a comparison with all other oblations; and are with a singular encomium commended to us in the words "by one offering." It is but one offering; but once offered, and never more to be repeated: for Christ dieth no more. Rom. 6: 9. He also commends it from its efficacy; he "hath perfected" it, that is, not only purchased a possibility of salvation, but all that we need to our full perfection. It brings in a most entire, complete, and perfect righteousness: all that remains to make us perfectly happy, is but the full application of the benefits procured by this oblation for us. Moreover, it is here commended from the extensiveness of it; not being restrained to a few, but applicable to all the saints, in all ages and places of the world. Lastly, He commends it from its perpetuity; it "per-

fects for ever ;” that is, it is of everlasting efficacy : it shall abide as fresh, vigorous, and powerful to the end of the world, as it was the first moment it was offered. All of which affords us this sweet truth :

The oblation made unto God by Jesus Christ is of unspeakable value, and everlasting efficacy, to perfect all them that are or shall be sanctified, to the end of the world :

Out of this fountain flow all the blessings that believers either have, or hope for. Had it not been for this, there had been no such thing as justification, adoption, salvation, peace with God and hope of glory, pardon of sin, and Divine acceptance : these and all our best mercies had never been. A man, as one saith, might have happily imagined such things as these, as he may golden mountains, and rivers of liquid gold, and rocks of diamonds : but these things could never have had any real existence, had not Christ offered up himself a sacrifice to God for us. It is “the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered up himself without spot to God, that purges the conscience from dead works,” Heb. 9 : 14, that is, from the sentence of condemnation and death, inflicted by conscience, for our sins.

His appearing before God as our Priest, with such an offering for us, is that which removes our guilt and fear together : “He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Heb. 9 : 26. Now, as the point before us is of so great weight, and so fundamental to our safety and comfort, I shall endeavor to give you as distinct and clear an account of it as can consist with that brevity which I must necessarily use. And therefore, reader, apply thy mind attentively to the consideration of this excellent Priest that appears before God ; the sacrifice he offers ; the Person before whom he brings, and to whom he offers it ; the persons for whom he offers ; and the end for which this oblation is made.

I. *The Priest that appears before God* with an oblation for us, is Jesus Christ, God-man; the dignity of whose person gave an inestimable worth to the offering he made. There were many priests before him, but none like unto him, either for the purity of his person or the perpetuity of his priesthood: they were sinful men, and offered for their own sins, as well as the sins of the people, Heb. 5: 3; but he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Heb. 7: 26. He could stand before God, even in the eye of his justice, as a lamb without spot. Though he made his soul an offering for sin, yet he had done no iniquity, nor was any guile found in his mouth, Isa. 53: 9; and indeed his offering had done us no good, if the least taint of sin had been found on him. The Jewish priests were mortal men, that "continued not by reason of death," Heb. 7: 23, but Christ is "a Priest for ever." Psa. 110: 4.

II. *The oblation for offering he made*, was not the blood of beasts, but his own blood. Heb. 9: 12. And herein he transcended all other priests, that he had something of his own to offer; he had a body given him to be at his own disposal: to this use and purpose he offered his body, Heb. 10: 10; yea, not only his body, but his "soul" was made "an offering for sin." Isa. 53: 10. We had made a forfeiture of our souls and bodies by sin, and it was necessary the sacrifice of Christ should be answerable to the debt we owed. And when Christ came to offer his sacrifice, he stood not only in the capacity of a priest, but also in that of a surety; and so his soul stood in the stead of ours, and his body in the stead of our bodies. Now the excellency of this oblation will appear in the following adjuncts and properties of it. This oblation being the soul and body of Jesus Christ, is therefore,

1. *Invaluably precious.* So the apostle styles it, "Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of the Son of

God," 1 Pet. 1 : 19 : and such it behooved him to offer. For it being offered as an expiatory sacrifice, it ought to be equivalent, in its own intrinsic value, to all the souls and bodies that were to be redeemed by it. And so it was, and more also. But surely as none but God can estimate the weight and evil of sin, so none but he can comprehend the worth and preciousness of the blood of Christ, shed to expiate it. And being so infinitely precious a thing which was offered up to God, it must needs be,

2. A most *complete and all-sufficient* oblation, fully to expiate the sins of all for whom it was offered, in all ages of the world. The virtue of this sacrifice reacheth backward as far as Adam, and reacheth forward to the last person springing from him who shall ever believe. That the efficacy of it thus reacheth back to Adam, is plain : for, on account thereof, he is styled, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. 13 : 8. And in the same sense Calvin understands those words of Christ, "Before Abraham was, I am." John, 8 : 58. It is therefore but a vain cavil that some make against the satisfaction of Christ, when they say many are saved without it, even as many as were saved before the death of Christ. For they say the effect cannot be before the cause, which is true of physical, but not of moral causes ; and such was Christ's satisfaction. As for example, a captive is freed out of prison from the time that his surety undertakes for him and promises his ransom ; here the captive is actually delivered, though the ransom that delivered him be not yet actually paid. So it was in this case ; Christ had engaged to the Father to satisfy for them, and upon that security they were delivered.

And the virtue of this oblation not only reaches those believers that lived and died before Christ's day, but it extends itself forward to the end of the world. Hence

Christ is said to be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Heb. 13:8.

To the same sense are those words, Heb. 11:40, rightly paraphrased; "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." As if the apostle had said, "God hath appointed the accomplishment of the promise of sending the Messiah, to be in the last times, that they (namely, that lived before Christ) should not be perfected, that is, justified and saved by any thing done in their time, but by looking to our time, and Christ's satisfaction made therein; whereby they and we are perfected together." No length of time can wear out the virtue of this eternal sacrifice. It is as fresh, vigorous, and potent now, as the first hour it was offered. And though he actually offer it no more, yet he virtually continues it by his intercession now in heaven; for there he is still a Priest. And therefore, about sixty years after his ascension, when he gave the Revelation to John, he appears to him in his priestly garment; "Clothed in a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle," Rev. 1:13; in allusion to the priestly ephod and curious girdle.

And as the virtue of this oblation reaches backward and forward, to all ages, and to all believers, so to all the sins of all believers, which are fully purged and expiated by it: this no other oblation could do. The legal sacrifices were no real expiations, but rather remembrances of sins. Heb. 9:9, 12; 10:3. And all the virtue they had, consisted in their typical relation to this sacrifice. Gal. 3:23; Heb. 9:13. Separate from it, they were altogether weak, unprofitable, and insignificant. Heb. 7:18. But this blood cleanseth from all sins. 1 John, 1:7. It expiates all fully, without exception, and finally, without revocation. So that by his being made sin for us, we are made not only righteous,

but "the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. 5:21.

3. Being so precious in itself, and so efficacious to expiate sin, it must needs be *a most grateful oblation to the Lord*, highly pleasing and delightful in his eyes. And so indeed it is said, "He gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor." Eph. 5:2. Not that God took any delight in the bitter sufferings of Christ, simply and in themselves considered; but with relation to the end for which he was offered, even our redemption and salvation. Hence arose the delight and pleasure God had in it; this made him take pleasure in bruising him. Isa. 53:10. His offering was "a sweet-smelling savor" unto God. The meaning is, that as men are offended with a nauseous smell, and on the contrary delighted with sweet odors and fragrance, so the blessed God, speaking after the manner of men, is offended, and filled with loathing and abhorrence by our sins; but infinitely pleased and delighted in the offering of Christ for them, which came up as an odor of sweet-smelling savor to him, whereof the costly perfumes under the law were types and shadows. This was the oblation.

III. This oblation he brings *before God, and to him* he offers it up: so speaks the apostle, "Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God." Heb. 9:14. As Christ sustained the capacity of a surety, so God of a creditor, who exacted satisfaction from him; that is, he required from him, as our surety, the penalty due to us for our sin. And so Christ had to do immediately with God, yea, with a God infinitely wronged, and incensed by sin against us. To this incensed Majesty, Christ our High Priest approached, as to a devouring fire, with his sacrifice.

IV. *The persons for whom*, and in whose stead he offered himself to God, were the whole number given him of the Father; all who should believe in him. He laid

down his life for the sheep, John, 10:15; for the church, Acts, 20:28; for the children of God, John, 11:50-52. It is confessed, there is sufficiency of virtue in this sacrifice to redeem the whole world; and on that account some divines affirm he is called the "Saviour of the world." John, 4:42, &c. But that the efficacy and saving virtue of this all-sufficient sacrifice is applied only to believers, is too clear in the Scriptures to be denied. Eph. 5:23; John, 17:2, 9, 19, 20; John, 10:26-28; 1 Tim. 4:10.

V. *The design and end* of this oblation was to render to God a full satisfaction for our sins: so speaks the apostle, "And having made peace, through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Col. 1:20. So "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." 2 Cor. 5:19. Reconciliation is the making up of that breach, caused by sin, between us and God, and restoring us again to his favor and friendship. For this end Christ offered up himself to God.

INFERENCE 1. Hence it follows that actual believers are fully freed from the guilt of their sins, and shall *never more come under condemnation*. The debt of sin is perfectly abolished by the virtue of this sacrifice. When Christ became our sacrifice, he both bare and bare away our sins. They were laid upon him, and then expiated by him: so much is implied in the words, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Heb. 9:28. *To bear*, is a full and emphatical word, signifying not only to bear, but to bear away. So John, 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world;" not only declaratively, or by way of manifestation to the conscience; but really, "by himself purging our sins." Hebrews, 1:3. Now, how great a mercy is this, "that, by him, all that believe

should be justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts, 13: 39. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Ps. 32. Who can express the mercy, comfort, happiness of such a state as this? Reader, let me beg thee, if thou be one of this pardoned number, to look over the cancelled bonds, and see what vast sums are remitted to thee. Remember what thou wast in thy natural state: possibly thou wast in that black list. 1 Cor. 6: 9, 10. What, and yet pardoned! fully and finally pardoned, and that freely, as to any hand that thou hadst in the procurement of it! What canst thou do less than fall down at the feet of free grace, and kiss those feet that moved so freely towards so vile a sinner? It is not long since thy iniquities were upon thee, and thou pinedst away in them. Their guilt could by no creature-power be separated from thy soul. Now they are removed from thee, as far as the east from the west. Ps. 103: 12.

2. From this oblation Christ made of himself to God for our sins, we infer the inflexible *severity of Divine justice*, which could be no other way diverted from us, and appeased, but by the blood of Christ. If Christ had not presented himself to God for us, justice would not have spared us: and if he do appear before God as our surety, it will not spare him; "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to death for us all." Rom. 8: 32. If forbearance might have been expected from any, surely it might from God, "who is very pitiful, and full of tender mercy," James, 5: 11; yet God in this case spared not. If one might have expected sparing mercy from any, surely Christ might most of all expect it from his own Father; yet you read, God spared not his own Son. Sparing mercy is the lowest degree of mercy, yet it was denied to Christ; though in the garden Christ fell upon the ground, and sweat great

drops of blood, and in that unparalleled agony cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass;" and though he brake out upon the cross, in that heart-rending complaint, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" yet there is no abatement; justice will not bend; but having to do with him on this account, resolves upon satisfaction from his blood.

If this be so, what is the case of thy soul, reader, if thou hast no interest in this sacrifice? For if these things be done in (Christ) the green tree, what will be done to (thee) the dry tree? Luke, 23: 31. Thus Theophylact beautifully paraphrases that passage: "That is, if God so deal with me, that am not only innocent, but like a green and fruitful tree, full of all delectable fruits of holiness; yet if the fire of his indignation thus seize upon me, what will be your condition, that are both barren and guilty, void of all good fruit, and full of all unrighteousness," and so like dry, sear wood, fitted as fuel to the fire? Consider with thyself, how canst thou imagine thou canst support that infinite wrath that Christ bore in the room of his people! He had the strength of Deity to support him, "Behold my Servant whom I uphold." Isa. 42: 1. He had the fulness of his Spirit to prepare him. Isa. 61: 1. He had the ministry of an angel, who came down from heaven to relieve him in his agony. Luke, 22: 43. He had the ear of his Father to hear him, for he cried, "and was heard in that he feared." Heb. 5: 7. He was assured of the victory before the combat; he knew he should be justified, Isa. 50: 8; and yet for all this he was sore amazed, and sorrowful even to death, and his heart was melted like wax. If Christ thus sunk under the wrath of God, how dost thou think, a poor worm as thou art, to dwell with everlasting burnings, or contend with devouring fire? Luther saw ground enough for what he said, when he cried out, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute

God," that is, with a God out of Christ: for, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Wo and alas for evermore to that man who meets a just and righteous God without a Mediator!

Whoever thou art that readest these lines, I beseech thee, by the mercies of God, by all the regard and love thou hast to thy own soul, lose no time, but make quick and sure work of it. Get an interest in this sacrifice quickly; what else will be thy state when vast eternity opens to swallow thee up? what wilt thou do, when thine heart-strings are breaking? Oh, what a fearful shriek will thy conscience utter when thou art presented before the dreadful God, and no Christ to screen thee from his indignation! Happy is that man who can say in a dying hour, as William Lyford did, who being desired, a little before his dissolution, to give his friends a little taste of his present hopes, and the grounds of them, cheerfully answered, I will let you know how it is with me: then stretching forth his hand, said, "Here is the grave, the wrath of God, and devouring flame, the just punishment of sin, on the one side; and here am I, a poor sinful soul, on the other side: but this is my comfort, the covenant of grace, which is established upon so many sure promises, hath saved all. There is an act of oblivion passed in heaven: 'I will forgive their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more.' This is the blessed privilege of all within the covenant, among whom I am one." Oh, it is sweet at all times, especially at such a time, to see the reconciled face of God through Jesus Christ, and hear the voice of peace through the blood of the cross.

3. Hath Christ offered up himself a sacrifice to God for us? Then let us improve, in every condition, this sacrifice, and labor to *get our hearts duly affected with such a sight of it as faith can give.* Whatever the condition or complaint of any christian is, a beholding the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world,

may give him strong support and sweet relief. Do you complain of the hardness of your hearts, and want of love to Christ? behold him as offered up to God for you; and such a sight (if any in the world will do it) will melt your hard hearts. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn." Zech. 12: 10. It is reported of Johannes Milius, that he was never observed to speak of Christ and his sufferings but his eyes would drop tears. Art thou too little touched and unaffected with the evil of sin? Is it thy complaint, christian, that thou canst not make sin bear so hard upon thy heart as thou wouldst? Consider but what thou hast now read; realize this sacrifice by faith, and try what efficacy there is in it to make sin for ever bitter as death to thy soul. Suppose thine own father had been stabbed to the heart with a certain knife, and his blood were upon it, wouldst thou delight to see, or endure to use that knife any more? Sin is the knife that stabbed Christ to the heart; this shed his blood. Surely you can never make light of that which lay so heavy upon the soul and body of Jesus Christ.

Or is your heart pressed down even to despondency, under the guilt of sin, so that you cry, How can such a sinner as I be pardoned? my sin is greater than can be forgiven. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Remember that no sin can stand before the efficacy of his blood." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." 1 John, 1: 7. This sacrifice makes full satisfaction to God.

Are you at any time staggering through unbelief; filled with unbelieving suspicion of the promises? Look hither, and you shall see them all ratified and established in the blood of the cross, so that hills and mountains shall sooner start from their own bases and foundations, than one tittle of the promise fail. Heb. 6: 17—19.

Do you at any time find your hearts fretting, dis-

quieted, and impatient under every petty cross and trial? See how quietly Christ your sacrifice came to the altar, how meekly and patiently he endured all the wrath of God and men together. This will silence, convince, and shame you.

In a word, here you will see so much of the grace of God in providing, and the love of Christ in becoming a sacrifice for you; God taking vengeance against sin, but sparing the sinner; Christ standing as the body of sin alone; for "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:" that whatever corruption burdens, this, in the believing application, will support; whatever grace is defective, this will revive it.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XIII.

INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

THE SECOND PART OF HIS PRIESTLY OFFICE.

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. 7:25.

Having considered the first part or act of Christ's priesthood, consisting in his oblation; we come to the other branch of it, consisting in his intercession, which is but the virtual continuation of his offering once made on earth.

This second part or branch of his priesthood was typified by the high priest's entering with the blood of the sacrifice and sweet incense into the holy place: "And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of

sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail : and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not : and he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat," &c. Lev. 16 : 12-14. Christ's offering himself on earth, answered to the killing of the sacrifice without ; and his entering into heaven, there to intercede, answered to the priest's going with blood and his hands full of incense within the vail. So that this is a part, yea, a special part of Christ's priesthood ; and so necessary to it, that if he had not done this, all his work on earth had been ineffectual ; nor had he been a priest, that is, a complete and perfect priest, if he had remained on earth, Heb. 8 : 4, because the very design and end of shedding his blood on earth had been frustrated, which was to present it before the Lord, in heaven. So that this is the perfective part of the priesthood : he acted the first part on earth, in a state of deep abasement, in the form of a servant ; but he acts this in glory, whereto he is taken up, that he may fulfil his design in dying, and give the work of our salvation its last completing act. So much is contained in this scripture, which tells us, that by reason hereof he "is able to save to the uttermost."

These words contain an encouragement to believers to come to God by faith, drawn from the intercession of Christ in heaven for them. In which notice,

1. The character of the persons here encouraged, who are described as going to God by faith, conscious of great unworthiness in themselves.

2. The encouragement to such believers, drawn from the ability of Jesus Christ, in whose name they go to the Father, to save them "to the uttermost:" that is, fully, perfectly, completely ; for so this emphatical word, *ως το πανταλεις*, signifies.

3. The ground or reason of this his ability to save: "Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession;" that is, he hath not only offered up his blood to God upon the cross, as a full price to purchase pardon and grace for believers; but lives in heaven, and that for ever, to apply unto us, in the way of intercession, all the fruits, blessings, and benefits that this precious blood hath procured. Hence, among other instructions, we learn that

Jesus our High Priest lives for ever, in the capacity of a potent Intercessor in heaven, for believers.

Here we will inquire, what it is for Christ to be an Intercessor; by what acts he performs that work in heaven; and in what consists the potency and prevalency of his intercession.

1. *What it is* for Christ to be an intercessor for us. To intercede, in general, is to go between two parties, to entreat, argue, and plead with one for the other. There is the intercession whereby one christian prays and pleads with God for another, 1 Tim. 2 : 1; and that whereby Christ, as an act of office, presents himself before God to plead for us. Between these two is this difference, that the former is performed not in our own, but in another's name; we can tender no request to God immediately, or for our own sake, either for ourselves or for others: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." John, 16 : 23. But the latter, which is peculiar to Christ, is an intercession with God for us, in his own name, on account of his own merit. The one is a private act of charity, the other a public act of office; and so he is our Advocate or court Friend, as Satan is our accuser or court adversary. Satan is ο αντιδικος, one that charges us before God, 1 Pet. 5 : 8, and continually endeavors to make breaches between us and God. Christ is ο παρακλητος, our Advocate, that pleads for us, and continues peace and friendship

between us and God; "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John, 2: 1.

Thus to make intercession is the peculiar and incommunicable prerogative of Jesus Christ; none but he can go in his own name to God. And in this sense we may understand the passage, "Then said the Lord unto me, This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it, because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. It is for the prince, the prince he shall sit in it, to eat bread before the Lord," &c. Ezek. 44: 2, 3. The great broad gate, called here the prince's gate, signifies the abundant and direct entrance of Christ into heaven by his own merits, and in his own name; this, saith the Lord, shall be shut, no man shall enter in by it; all other men must come thither, as it were, by side doors, which looked all towards the altar, namely, by virtue of the Mediator, and through the benefit of his death, imputed to them.

And yet, though God hath for ever shut up and barred this way to all the children of men, telling us that no man shall ever have access to him in his own name, as Christ the Prince had; how do some, notwithstanding, strive to force open the Prince's gate? They do so, who found the intercession of saints upon their own works and merits, thereby robbing Christ of his peculiar glory; but all that so approach God, approach a consuming fire; Christ only, in the virtue of his own blood, thus comes before him, to make intercession for us.

II. We will inquire wherein the intercession of Christ in heaven *consists*, or *by what acts* he performs his glorious office there. And the Scriptures place it in three things:

1. In his presenting himself before the Lord *in our names*, and upon our account. So we read, Heb. 9: 24,

"Christ is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." The apostle manifestly alludes to the high priest's appearing in the holy of holies, which was the figure of heaven, presenting to the Lord the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, which were on his breast and shoulders, Exod. 28 : 9, 12, 28, 29. To which the church is supposed to allude in that request, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm." Cant. 8 : 6. Now the very sight of Christ our High Priest in heaven prevails exceedingly with God, and turns away his displeasure from us. As when God looks upon the rainbow, which is the sign of the covenant, he remembers the earth in mercy: so when he looks on Christ, he remembers us upon his account.

2. Christ performs his intercession-work in heaven, not only by appearing in the presence of God, but also by *presenting his blood and all his sufferings* to God, as a moving plea on our account. Whether he makes any proper oral intercession there, as he did on earth, is not so clear. But sure I am, an interceding voice is by a usual *prosopopeia* (or figure) attributed to his blood; which in Heb. 12 : 24, is said "to speak better things than that of Abel." Now Abel's blood, and so Christ's, do cry unto God, as the hire of the laborers unjustly detained, James, 5 : 4; or as the whole creation, which is in bondage through our sins, is said to cry and groan in the ears of the Lord, Rom. 8 : 22, not vocally, but efficaciously. A rare illustration of this efficacious intercession of Christ in heaven, we have in the story of Amintas, who appeared as an advocate for his brother Æchylus, who was accused, and likely to be condemned to die. Amintas, having performed great services, and merited highly of the commonwealth, in whose service one of his hands was cut off in the field, came into the court in his brother's behalf, and said nothing, but only

lifted up the stump of his arm, the sight of which so moved them, that, without a word said, they freed his brother immediately. Thus in Rev. 5 : 6, Christ is represented as standing between God and us: "I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain;" that is, bearing in his glorified body the marks of death and sacrifice. The wounds he received for our sins on earth, are, as it were, still fresh bleeding in heaven: a moving and prevailing argument with the Father, to give us the mercies for which he pleads.

3. And he *presents the prayers of his saints* to God, with his merits; and desires that they may for his sake be granted. He causes a cloud of incense to ascend before God with them. Rev. 8 : 3. All these were excellently typified by the going in of the high priest before the Lord, with the names of the children of Israel on his breast, with the blood of the sacrifice, and his hands full of incense, as the apostle explains them in Heb. 7 and Hebrews, 9.

III. That this intercession of Christ is most potent, successful, and *prevalent* with God, will be evinced from the qualification of this our Advocate, from his great interest in the Father, from the nature of the pleas he uses with God, and from the relation and interest believers have, both in the Father to whom and the Son by whom this intercession is made.

1. Our Intercessor in the heavens is *every way able and fit* for the work he is engaged in there. Whatever is desirable in an advocate, is in him eminently. It is necessary that he who undertakes to plead the cause of another, especially if it be weighty and intricate, should be wise, faithful, tender-hearted, and resolved on success. Our Advocate Christ wants no wisdom to conduct his work; he is "the wisdom of God," yea, "only wise." Jude, 25. And he is no less faithful than wise;

therefore he is called "a faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God." Heb. 2 : 17. He assures us we may safely trust our concerns with him, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you." John, 14 : 2. As if he had said, Do you think I could deceive you? Men may deceive you; your own hearts may and daily do deceive you, but so will not I. And for tender-heartedness, and sympathy with your condition, there is none like him: "For we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4 : 15. That he might the better sympathize with us, he came as near to our condition as the holiness of his nature could permit. He suffered himself to be in all points tempted like as we are, sin only excepted. And as to his interest in the success of his suit, he has really made it his own interest, for by reason of our union with him all our wants and troubles are his. Eph. 1 : 23. Yea, his own glory as Mediator is deeply interested in it; and therefore we need not doubt but he will use all care and diligence in that work. But further,

2. Consider the great *interest he hath in the Father*, with whom he intercedes. Christ is his dear Son. Col. 1 : 13. The beloved of his soul. Eph. 1 : 6. Between him and the Father there is a unity, not only of nature but of will; and so he always hears him. John, 11 : 42. Yea, he said to his dear Son, "Ask of me, and I will give thee." Psa. 2 : 8. Moreover,

3. Consider *the nature of his intercession*, which is just and reasonable, and likewise urgent and continual. What he desires, it is becoming the holiness and righteousness of God to grant. And so the justice of God not only does not oppose, but furthers and pleads for the granting and fulfilling of his requests. Here you must remember that the Father is under a covenant to

do what he asks ; for Christ having fully performed the work on his part, the mercies he intercedes for are as due as the hire of the laborer when the work is faithfully done. And as the matter is just, so the manner of his intercession is urgent and continual. How importunate a suitor he is, may be gathered from that specimen given of his intercession in John, 17 ; and for the constancy of it, my text tells us, " he ever lives to make intercession." And to close all,

4. Consider *who they are* for whom he makes intercession : the friends of God, the children of God ; those that the Father himself loves, and to whom his heart is inclined and ready enough to grant the best and greatest of mercies : which is the meaning of John, 16 : 27, " The Father himself loveth you." The first cornerstone of all these mercies was laid by the Father himself in his own purposes of grace. He also delivered his Son for us : and " how shall he not with him freely give us all things ?" Rom. 8 : 32. So then there can remain no doubt but that Christ is a prevalent and successful Intercessor in heaven.

INFERENCE 1. Doth Christ live for ever in heaven to present his blood to God in the way of intercession for believers ? How sad then is the case of those that *have no interest in Christ's blood* ; but instead of pleading for them, it cries to God against them, as its despisers and abusers ! Every unbeliever despises it : the apostate treads it under foot. To be guilty of a man's blood is sad ; but to have the blood of Jesus accusing and crying to God against a soul, is unspeakably terrible. Surely when he shall make inquisition for blood, when the day of his vengeance is come, he will make it appear by the judgments he will execute, that this is a sin to be expiated, but vengeance shall pursue the sinner to the lowest hell. Ah ! what do men do, in rejecting the gracious offer of Christ ! Alas for

that man, against whom this blood cries in heaven!

2. Doth Christ live for ever to make intercession? Hence let believers draw relief and encouragement *against all the causes and grounds of their fears and troubles*; for surely this answers them all.

Let them be encouraged against all their sinful *infirmities* and lamented weaknesses. It is confessed these are sore evils; they grieve the Spirit of God, sadden your own hearts, cloud your evidences; but having such a High Priest in heaven, you must never despair. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not: and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John, 2: 1, 2. Children when first beginning to walk are apt to stumble at every straw; so are young and unexperienced christians: but, though it must be far from them to take encouragement so to do from Christ and his intercession, yet if by surprisal they do sin, let them not be utterly discouraged; for we have an advocate; he stops whatever plea may be brought in against us by the devil, or the law, and answers all by his satisfaction: he gets out fresh pardons for new sins. And this advocate is "with the Father." He doth not say with *his* Father, though that had been a singular support in itself; nor yet with *our* Father, which is a sweet encouragement singly considered, but with *the* Father, which takes in both, to make the encouragement full. Remember you that are cast down under the sense of sin, that Jesus, your friend in the court above, "is able to save to the uttermost." Which is, as one calls it, a reaching word, and extends itself so far that thou canst not look beyond it. "Let thy soul be set on the highest mount that any creature ever attained, and enlarged to take into view the most spacious prospect both of sin and misery, and the difficulties of being saved, that ever yet oppressed any poor humble soul; yea, join to these

all the hinderances and objections that the heart of man can invent against itself and salvation: lift up thine eyes, and look to the utmost thou canst see—and Christ, by his intercession, is able to save thee beyond the horizon and largest compass of thy thoughts, even to the utmost.”—Goodwin’s Triumph.

Hence draw abundant encouragement against *deadness of spirit in prayer*. Thou complainest thy heart is dead, wandering, and contracted in duty: oh, but remember Christ’s blood speaks, when thou canst not; it can plead for thee, when thou art not able to speak a word for thyself. “Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?” Cant. 3: 6. The prayers of christians often go up before God sullied with their offensive corruptions; but, remember, Christ “perfumes them with myrrh,” by his intercession he gives them a sweet perfume.

Christ’s intercession is a singular relief to all that come unto God by him, against all *sinful and slavish fears* from the justice of God. Nothing more promotes the fear of reverence; nothing more suppresses unbelieving despondence, and destroys the spirit of bondage. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.” Heb. 10: 19–21.

The intercession of Christ gives admirable satisfaction and encouragement to all that come to God, against *the fears of deserting him* by apostasy. This, my friends, this is your principal security. With this he relieved Peter. “Simon, (saith Christ,) Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” Luke, 22: 31,

32. As if he had said, Satan will fan thee, not to get out thy chaff, but bolt out thy flour; his temptations are levelled against thy faith; but fear not, my prayer shall break his designs, and secure thy faith against all his attempts upon it. Upon this powerful intercession of Christ, the apostle builds his triumph against all that threatens to bring him, or any of the saints, again into a state of condemnation. And see how he urges on that triumph, from the resurrection, and session of Christ at the Father's right hand; and especially from the work of intercession, which he lives there to perform. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Rom. 8 : 34.

It gives sweet relief when we are conscious of being sanctified but in part. We want a great deal of faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, mortification, knowledge. We are short and wanting in all. These are deficiencies, or things wanting, as the apostle calls them. 1 Thess. 3 : 10. Well, if grace be but yet in its weak beginnings and infancy in thy soul, this may encourage you, that by reason of Christ's intercession, it shall live, grow, and increase in thine heart. He is not only the author, but the finisher of it. Heb. 12 : 2. He is ever begging new and fresh mercies for you in heaven; and will never cease till all your wants be supplied. He saves to the uttermost, to the last, perfective, completing act of salvation.

3. Doth Christ live for ever to make intercession? Then let those who reap on earth the fruits of his work in heaven, draw instruction thence about the following *duties*.

Do not *forget Christ in his exalted state*. You see, though he be in glory above, at God's right hand, and enthroned King, he does not forget you: he, like Joseph,

remembers his brethren in all his glory. But, alas, how oft doth advancement make us forget him ! As the Lord complains, Hosea, 13 : 5, 6, " I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought : but when they came into Canaan, according to their pastures, so were they filled : they were filled, and their heart was exalted : therefore have they forgotten me." As if he had said, O my people, you and I were better acquainted in the wilderness, when you were in a low condition, left to my immediate care, living by daily faith ; then you gave me many a sweet visit ; but now you are filled, I hear no more of you. Good had it been for some saints if they had never known prosperity.

Let the intercession of Christ in heaven for you encourage you to *constancy* in the good ways of God. " Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Heb. 4 : 14. Here is encouragement to perseverance on a double account. One is, that Jesus, our Head, is already in heaven ; and if the head be above water, the body cannot drown. The other is from the work he is there performing—his priesthood ; he is passed into the heavens, as our great High Priest, to intercede, and therefore we cannot miscarry.

Let it encourage you to constancy in *prayer* : Oh do not neglect that excellent duty, seeing Christ is there to present all your petitions to God ; yea, to perfume as well as present them. So the apostle infers from Christ's intercession ; " Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4 : 16.

Hence be encouraged to plead *for Christ* on earth, who continually pleads for you in heaven. If any accuse you, he is there to plead for you : and if any dishonor him on earth, see that you plead his interest,

and defend his honor. Thus you have heard what his intercession is, and what benefits we receive by it. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST.

THE FIRST EFFECT OF HIS PRIESTHOOD.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” Gal. 3: 13.

You have seen the general nature, necessity, and parts of Christ's priesthood, namely, oblation and intercession. Before you leave this office it is necessary you should further take into consideration the principal fruits and effects of his priesthood; which are complete satisfaction, and the acquisition or purchase of an eternal inheritance. The satisfaction made by his blood is manifestly contained in the excellent scripture before us, wherein the apostle (having shown before, at verse 10, that whosoever “continueth not in all things written in the law, to do them,” is “cursed”) declares how, notwithstanding the threats of the law, a believer comes to be freed from its curse, by Christ's bearing that curse for him, and so satisfying God's justice, and discharging the believer from all obligations to punishment.

More particularly, in these words you have the believer's discharge from the curse of the law, and the way and manner thereof displayed.

1. The believer's discharge; “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.” The law of God hath three parts—commands, promises, and threatenings or curses. The curse of the law is its condemning sentence, whereby a sinner is bound over to death, even

the death of soul and body. The chain, by which it binds him, is the guilt of sin; and from which none can loose the soul but Christ. This curse of the law is the most dreadful thing imaginable; it strikes at the life of a sinner, yea, his best life, the eternal life of the soul: and when it hath condemned, it is inexorable, no cries nor tears, no reformation nor repentance can loose the guilty sinner; for it requires that which no mere creature can give, even an infinite satisfaction. Now from this curse Christ frees the believer; that is, he dissolves the obligation to punishment, cancels the hand-writing, looses all the bonds and chains of guilt, so that the curse of the law hath nothing to do with him for ever.

2. We have here the way and manner by which this is done; and that is by a full price paid, and paid in the room of the sinner, making a complete and full satisfaction. He pays a full price, every way adequate and proportionable to the wrong. So much this word, ἐξήγορασεν, which we translate *redeemed*, imports; he hath bought us out, or fully bought us; that is, by a full price. And as the price or ransom paid was full, perfect, and sufficient in itself; so it was paid in our room, and upon our account: so saith the text, "Being made a curse for us;" the meaning is not, that Christ was made the very curse itself, changed into a curse; any more than when the Word is said to be made flesh, the Divine nature was converted into flesh. The Divine nature assumed or took flesh; and so Christ took the curse upon himself; therefore it is said, "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin," 2 Cor. 5: 21, that is, our sin was imputed to our Surety, and laid upon him for satisfaction. And so this word *υπερ* [for] implies a substitution of one in the place and stead of another. Now the price being full, and paid in lieu of our sins, and thereupon we fully redeemed or delivered from the curse, it follows, as a fair and just deduction, that,

The death of Christ hath made a full satisfaction to God for all the sins of believers.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted," saith the prophet, Isa. 53 : 7 ; or the words might be fitly rendered, it was exacted, and answered. So Col. 1 : 14, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin." Here we have the benefit, namely redemption, interpreted by the phrase, "even the forgiveness of sins;" and we have also the matchless price that was laid down to purchase it, the blood of Christ. So again, "By his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Heb. 9 : 12. Here is eternal redemption, the mercy purchased : his own blood the price that procured it.

Now as this doctrine of Christ's satisfaction is so necessary, weighty, and comfortable in itself, and yet so much opposed and obscured by enemies of the truth, I shall show the nature of Christ's satisfaction, or what it is ; then establish the truth of it, and prove that he made full satisfaction to God for our sins ; and then apply it.

I. *What is the satisfaction of Christ*, and what doth it imply ? I answer, satisfaction is the act of Christ, God-man, presenting himself as our surety, in obedience to God and love to us, to do and to suffer all that the law required of us : thereby freeing us from the wrath and curse due to us for sins.

1. It is *the act of God-man* ; no other was capable of giving satisfaction for an infinite wrong done to God. But by reason of the union of the two natures in his wonderful person, he could do it, and hath done it for us. The human nature supplied what was necessary in its kind ; it gave the matter of the sacrifice : the Divine nature stamped the dignity and value upon it, which made it an adequate compensation : so that it was the act of God-man ; yet so that each nature retained its

own properties, notwithstanding their joint influence in producing the effect. If the angels in heaven had laid down their lives, or if the blood of all the men in the world had been shed by justice, this could never have satisfied: the worth and value of this sacrifice would still have been wanting. It was God that redeemed the church "with his own blood." Acts, 20 : 28. If God redeem with his own blood, he redeems as God-man, without any dispute.

2. If he satisfy God for us, he must present himself before God, *as our surety, in our stead*, as well as for our good; else his obedience had availed nothing for us; to this end he was "made under the law," Gal. 4 : 4, came under the same obligation with us, and that as a surety, for so he is called. Heb. 7 : 22. Indeed his obedience and sufferings could be exacted from him upon no other account. It was not for any thing he had done that he became a curse. It was prophesied of him, "The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself," Daniel, 9 : 26; and being dead, the Scriptures plainly assert it was for our sins, and upon our account: so "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor. 15 : 3.

And it is well observed by divines, who vindicate the vicariousness and substitution of Christ in his sufferings, that all those Greek particles which we translate *for*, when applied to the sufferings of Christ, imply the meritorious, deserving, procuring cause of those sufferings. So you find, "He offered one sacrifice, *υπερ* *αμαρτιων*, for sins." Heb. 10 : 12. "Christ once suffered, *περι*, for sins." 1 Peter, 3 : 18. "He was delivered, *δι*, for our offences." Rom. 4 : 25. "He gave his life a ransom, *αυτι*, for many." Matt. 20 : 28. And some confidently affirm that this last particle is never used in any other sense in the whole book of God; as "an eye *for* an eye, a tooth *for* a tooth," that is, one in lieu of

another. And indeed, this very consideration is that which supports the doctrine of the imputation of our sins to Christ, and of Christ's righteousness to us. Rom. 5 : 19. For how could our sins be laid on him, but as he stood in our stead? or his righteousness be imputed to us, but as he was our surety, performing it in our place? So that to deny Christ's sufferings in our stead, is to lose the corner-stone of our justification, and overthrow the very pillar which supports our faith, comfort, and salvation. Indeed if this had not been, he would have been the righteous Lord, but not "the Lord our righteousness," as he is styled, Jer. 33 : 16. So that it were but a vain distinction, to say it was for our good, but not in our stead; for had he not been in our stead, we could not have had the benefit.

3. The internal moving cause of Christ's satisfaction for us, was *his obedience to God, and love to us*. That it was an act of obedience is plain from Phil. 2 : 8, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now obedience respects a command, and such a command Christ received to die for us, as himself tells us, "I lay down my life of myself; I have power to lay it down, and power to take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father." John, 10 : 18. So that it was an act of obedience with respect to God, and yet a most free and spontaneous act with respect to himself. And that he was moved to it out of pity and love to us, we are assured: "Christ loved us, and gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God." Eph. 5 : 2. Upon this Paul sweetly reflected, "Who loved me and gave himself for me." Gal. 2 : 20. As the external moving cause was our misery, so the internal was his own love and pity for us.

4. The matter of Christ's satisfaction was his *active and passive obedience* to all the law of God required. I know there are some that doubt whether Christ's active

obedience has any place here, and so whether it be imputed as any part of our righteousness. It is confessed that Scripture most frequently mentions his passive obedience (or sufferings) as that which made the atonement, and procures our redemption, Matthew, 20 : 28, and 26 : 28, Romans, 3 : 24, 25, and elsewhere ; but his passive obedience is never mentioned exclusively, as the sole cause, or matter of satisfaction. But in those places where it is mentioned by itself, it is put for his whole obedience, both active and passive, by a usual figure of speech ; and in other scriptures it is ascribed to both, as Gal. 4 : 4, 5, he is said " to be made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Now his being " made under the law " to this end, implies not only his subjection to the curse of the law, but also to its commands. So Rom. 5 : 19, " As by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners ; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." It were a manifest injury to this text also, to limit it to the passive obedience of Christ. To be short, this twofold obedience of Christ stands opposed to a twofold obligation that fallen man is under ; the one to do what God requires, the other to suffer what he has threatened for disobedience. Suitably to this double obligation, Christ comes under the commandment of the law, to fulfil it actively, Matt. 3 : 15 ; and under the malediction of the law, to satisfy it passively. And whereas it is objected by some, If he fulfilled the whole law for us by his active, what need then of his passive obedience ? We reply, great need ; because both these make up that one, entire, and complete obedience by which God is satisfied, and we justified. The whole obedience of Christ, both active and passive, make up one entire perfect obedience ; and therefore there is no reason why one particle, either of the one or of the other should be excluded.

5. The effect and fruit of this his satisfaction, is our freedom, ransom, or *deliverance from the wrath and curse* due to us for our sins. Such was the dignity, value, and completeness of Christ's satisfaction, that in strict justice it merited our redemption and full deliverance; not only a possibility that we might be redeemed and pardoned, but a right whereby to be so. If he be made a curse for us, we must then be redeemed from the curse; so the apostle argues, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3: 25, 26. Mark the design and end of God in exacting satisfaction from Christ; it was to declare his righteousness in the remission of sin to believers; and lest we should lose the emphatical word, he repeats it, "to declare, I say, his righteousness." Every one can see how his mercy is declared in remission: but he would have us take notice, that his righteousness and justice are vindicated in the justification of believers. Oh how comfortable a text is this! Doth Satan or conscience set forth thy sin in all its discouraging circumstances and aggravations? God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation. Must justice be manifested, satisfied, and glorified? So it is in the death of Christ, ten thousand times more than ever it could be in thy damnation. Thus you have a brief account of the satisfaction made by Jesus Christ.

II. We might repeat all that has been said, to establish the *truth or fact* of Christ's satisfaction; proving its reality; that it is not an improper, fictitious satisfaction, as some have called it; but real, proper, and full, and as such accepted of God. For his blood is the blood of a Surety, Heb. 7: 22, who came under the

same obligations of the law with us, Gal. 4 : 4 ; and though he had no sin of his own, yet standing before God as our surety, the iniquities of us all were laid upon him, Isa. 53 : 6 ; and from him did the Lord exact satisfaction for our sins, Rom. 8 : 32, in the sufferings of his soul, Matt. 27 : 46, and his body, Acts, 2 : 23 ; and with this obedience of his Son he is fully pleased and satisfied, Eph. 5 : 2, and hath in token thereof raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, Eph. 1 : 20, and for his righteousness' sake acquitted and discharged believers, who shall never more come into condemnation, Rom. 8 : 1, 34. All this is plain in Scripture : our faith in the satisfaction of Christ is not built on the wisdom of man, but the everlasting sealed truth of God ; yet such is the perverse nature of man, and the pride of his heart, that whilst he should be humbly adoring the grace of God, in providing such a surety for us, he is found accusing the justice and diminishing the mercy of God, and raising all the objections which Satan and his own heart can invent, to overturn that blessed foundation upon which God hath built his own honor and his people's salvation.

INFERENCE 1. If the death of Christ was that which satisfied God for our sins, there is infinite evil in sin, since it could not be expiated but by an infinite satisfaction. Fools make a mock at sin, and there are few in the world who are duly sensible of its evil ; but certainly, if God should exact of thee the full penalty, thy eternal sufferings could not satisfy for the evil there is in one vain thought. You may think it severe, that God should subject his creatures to everlasting sufferings for sin, and never be satisfied with them any more. But when you have well considered, that the Being against whom you sin is the infinitely blessed God, and how God dealt with the angels that fell, you will change your mind. Oh the depth of the evil of sin ! If ever

you wish to see how great and horrid an evil sin is, measure it in your thoughts, either by the infinite holiness and excellency of God, who is wronged by it; or by the infinite sufferings of Christ, who died to satisfy for it; and then you will have deeper apprehensions of its enormity.

2. If the death of Christ satisfied God, and thereby redeemed us from the curse; then the redemption of souls is costly; *souls are precious* and of great value with God. "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition; but with the precious blood of the Son of God, as of a lamb without spot." 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19. Only the blood of God is an equivalent for the redemption of souls. Gold and silver may redeem from human, but not from hellish bondage. The whole creation is not a value for the redemption of one soul. Souls are very dear; he that paid for them found them so: yet how cheaply do sinners sell their souls! But you that sell your souls cheap, will buy repentance dear.

3. If Christ's death satisfied God for our sins, how unparalleled is *the love of Christ* to poor sinners! It is much to pay a pecuniary debt to free another, but who will pay his own blood for another? We have a noted instance of Zaleucus, who decreed, that whoever was convicted of adultery should have both his eyes put out. But his own son was brought before him for that crime; and the people interposing, made suit for his pardon. At length the father, partly overcome by their importunities, and not unwilling to show what lawful favor he might to his son, first put out one of his own eyes, and then one of his son's; thus showing himself both a merciful father and a just lawgiver; so tempering mercy with justice, that both the law was satisfied, and his son spared. This is written by the historian as

an instance of singular love in his father, to pay one half of the penalty for his son. But Christ did not divide and share the penalty with us, he bare it all. Zaleucus did it for his son, who was dear to him; Christ did it for enemies that were fighting and rebelling against him: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5 : 8.

4. If Christ, by dying, has made full satisfaction, then God can consistently pardon the greatest of sinners that believe in Jesus; and consequently *his justice can be no bar* to their justification and salvation. He is "just to forgive us our sins." 1 John, 1 : 9. What an argument is here for a poor believer to plead with God! Lord, if thou save me by Jesus Christ, thy justice will be fully satisfied; but if thou damn me, and require satisfaction at my hands, thou canst never receive it: I can never make payment, though I lie in hell to eternity. One drop of his blood is more worth than all my polluted blood. Oh how satisfying is this to the conscience of a poor sinner who feels that the multitude, aggravations, and amazing circumstances of his sins, prevent the possibility of their being pardoned! Can such a sinner as I be forgiven? Yes, if thou believest in Jesus, thou mayest; for in him God can pardon the greatest transgressors: "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plentiful redemption." Psalm 130 : 7.

5. If Christ has made such full satisfaction, how much is it the concern of every soul to abandon all thoughts of satisfying God for his own sins, and *betake himself to the blood of Christ*, the ransom, by faith, that in that blood they may be pardoned? It would grieve one's heart to see how many poor creatures are drudging and toiling at a task of repentance, and revenge upon themselves, and reformation, and obedience, to satisfy God for what they have done against him: and alas! it can-

not be : they do but lose their labor ; could they swelter their very hearts out, weep till they can weep no more, cry till their throats be parched, alas, they can never recompense God for one vain thought ; for such is the severity of the law, that when it is once offended, all we can do to make amends is vain ; it will not discharge the sinner for all the sorrow in the world. Indeed, if a man be in Christ, sorrow for sin is something, and renewed obedience is something : God looks upon them favorably, and accepts them graciously in Christ : but out of him they avail no more than the entreaties and cries of a condemned malefactor to reverse the legal sentence of the judge. Reader, be convinced that one act of faith in the Lord Jesus pleases God more than all thy strivings to meet the claims of his law, through thy whole life, can do.

CHAPTER XV.

THE INHERITANCE PURCHASED BY THE OBLATION OF CHRIST.

THE SECOND EFFECT OF HIS PRIESTHOOD.

“ But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”
Gal. 4 : 4, 5.

The payment of our debt, expressed by our redemption, or buying us out from the obligation and curse of the law, was considered in the last discourse.

The purchase of an inheritance for the redeemed, expressed here by their “ receiving the adoption of sons,” is our present subject. Adoption, according to the civil law, has been defined as “ a lawful act, an imitation of nature, invented for the comfort of them that have no children of their own.” “ Divine adoption is that spe-

cial benefit whereby God, for Christ's sake, accepteth us as sons, and makes us heirs of eternal life with him."

Between this civil and sacred adoption there is a two-fold agreement, and disagreement. They agree in this, that both flow from the pleasure and good-will of him who adopts; and in this, that both confer a right to privileges which we have not by nature: but in this they differ, one is an act imitating nature, the other transcends nature; the one was found out for the comfort of them that had no children; the other for the comfort of them that had no father. This divine adoption is, in Scripture, either taken properly for that act or sentence of God by which we are made sons, or for the privileges with which the adopted are invested: and so it is used Rom. 8: 23, and in the passage now before us. We lost our inheritance by the fall of Adam; we receive it, as the text speaks, by the death of Christ, which restores it again to us by a new and better title. The doctrine hence is, that

The death of Jesus Christ has not only satisfied for our debts, but purchased a rich inheritance for the children of God.

"For this end he is the Mediator of the new testament, that, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." Heb. 9: 15.

We will here see what Christ paid; what he purchased; and for whom.

I. *What Christ paid.* Divines comprise the virtue and fruits of the priesthood of Christ in these two things, *Solutio debiti, et acquisitio hæreditatis, payment and purchase.* Accordingly the obedience of Christ has a double relation, the relation of a legal righteousness, and of a merit over and beyond the law.

Here divines rightly distinguish between the sub-

stance and circumstances of Christ's death and obedience. Christ's suffering, as to the substance of it, was no more than what the law required; for, neither the justice nor love of the Father would permit that Christ should suffer more than was necessary for him to bear, as our Surety; but, as to the circumstances, the person of the sufferer, the efficacy of his sufferings, &c. it was much more than sufficient, a merit above and beyond what the law required; for, though the law required the death of the sinner, who is but a poor contemptible creature, it did not require that one perfectly innocent should die; it did not require that God should shed his blood; it did not require blood of such value and worth as Christ's. I say, the law did not require this, though God was pleased, for the advancement and manifestation of his justice and mercy in the highest, to allow and order this by way of commutation, admitting him to be our ransom, by dying for us. And, indeed, it was a most gracious relaxation of the law that admitted such a commutation; for hereby justice is fully satisfied, and yet we live and are saved; which, before, was a thing that could not be imagined. Yea, now we are not only redeemed from wrath, by the adequate compensation made for our sins by Christ's blood and sufferings substantially considered; but entitled to a most glorious inheritance, purchased by his blood, considered as the blood of an innocent, as the blood of God, and therefore as most excellent and efficacious blood, above what the law demanded. By this you see how rich a treasure lies in Christ, to bestow in a purchase for us, above what he paid to redeem us; even as much as his soul and body were more worth than ours, for whom it was sacrificed; which is so great a sum, that all the angels in heaven, and men on earth, can never compute and show us the total of it. This was the inexhaustible treasure that Christ expended to pro-

cure and purchase the fairest inheritance for believers. Having seen the treasure that purchased, let us next inquire into the inheritance purchased by it.

II. *This inheritance* is so large that it cannot be surveyed by creatures; nor can the boundaries and limits thereof be described, for it comprehends all things; "All is yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3:22, 23. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." Rev. 21:7. But to be more particular,

1. All *temporal* good things are purchased by Christ. "He hath given us all things richly to enjoy." 1 Tim. 6:17. Not that they have the possession, but the comfort and benefit of all things: others have the sting, gall, wormwood, baits and snares of the creature; saints only have the blessing and comfort of it. So that "the little that a righteous man hath, is (in this among other respects) better than the treasures of many wicked:" which is the true key to open that dark saying of the apostle, "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." 2 Cor. 6:10. They only possess, others are possessed by the world. The saints "use the world, and enjoy God" in the use of it. Others are deceived, defiled, and destroyed by the world; but these are refreshed and furthered by it.

2. All *spiritual* good things are purchased by the blood of Christ for them; as *justification*, which comprises remission of sins and acceptance of our persons by God: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ." Rom. 3:24. *Sanctification* is also purchased for them; for of God, he is made unto us, not only "wisdom and righteousness," but "sanctification" also. 1 Cor. 1:30. These two, our justification and sanctification, are among the most rich and shining robes in the wardrobe of free grace. How glorious and lovely do they render the soul that wears them! These are like the bracelets and jewels Isaac

sent to Rebecca. *Adoption* into the family of God is purchased for us by his blood; "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." Gal. 3: 26. Christ, as he is the Son, is *hæres natus*, "the heir by nature;" as he is Mediator, he is *hæres constitutus*, "the heir by appointment," appointed heir of all things. Heb. 1: 2. By the sonship of Christ, we, being united to him by faith, become sons; and if sons, then heirs. O "what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!" 1 John, 3: 1: that a poor beggar should be made an heir, yea, an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ! Yea, that very *faith*, which is the bond of union, and consequently the ground of all our communion with Christ, is the purchase of his blood also: "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. 1: 1. This most precious grace is the dear purchase of our Lord Jesus Christ; yea, all that peace, joy, and spiritual comfort, which are sweet fruits of faith, are with it purchased for us by this blood. So speaks the apostle in Rom. 5: 1-3. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Moreover *the Spirit* himself, who is the author, fountain, and spring of all graces and comforts, is procured for us by his death and resurrection: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Gal. 3: 13, 14. That Spirit that first sanctified, and since hath so often sealed, comforted, directed, resolved, guided, and quickened your souls, had not come to perform any of these blessed offices upon your hearts, if Christ had not died.

3. All *eternal* good things are the purchase of his

blood. Heaven, and all the glory thereof, is purchased for believers with this price. Hence that glory is called "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you;" to the lively hope whereof you are begotten again "by the resurrection of Christ from the dead." 1 Pet. 1:3. Not only present mercies are purchased for us, but things to come also, as 1 Cor. 3:22.

III. All this is *purchased for believers*: hence it is called, "the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. 1:12. "All is yours, for ye are Christ's;" that is the tenure, 1 Cor. 3:22, 23. So Rom. 8:30, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Only those that are sons, are heirs. Rom. 8:17. The unrighteous shall not inherit. 1 Cor. 6:9. To the "little flock" "it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom." Luke, 12:32.

INFERENCE 1. Hath Christ not only redeemed you from wrath, but purchased such an eternal inheritance for you? Oh how *content* should believers be with the allotments of providence in this life, whatever they may be! Content did I say? I speak too low; they should be overcome, ravished, filled with praises and thanksgivings; how low, how poor, how afflicted soever for the present they are. Oh let not such a thing as grumbling, repining, fretting at providence, be found, or once named among the expectants of this inheritance! Suppose you had taken a beggar from your door, and adopted him to be your son, and made him heir of a large inheritance, and after this he should contest and quarrel with you for a trifle; could you bear it? How to bring the spirit of a saint into contentment with a low condition here, I have laid down several rules in another discourse, (A Saint Indeed) to which, for the present, I refer the reader.

2. With what *weaned affections* should the people of God walk up and down this world, content to live, and willing to die ! For things present are theirs if they live, and things to come are theirs if they die. Paul expresses himself in a state of holy indifference ; " What I shall choose I know not." Phil. 1 : 22. Many of them that are now in fruition of their inheritance above, had " life in patience, and death in desire," while they tabernacled with us.

And truly the wisdom of God is specially remarkable, in giving the new creature such an even temper as expressed 2 Thess. 3 : 5, " The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and patient waiting for Christ." Love inflames with desire, patience allays that fervor. So that fervent desires (as one happily expresses it) are allayed with meek submission ; mighty love with strong patience. And had not God united these two principles in the christian's constitution, he had framed a creature to be a torment to itself, to live upon the rack.

3. Hence we infer the *impossibility of their salvation* that know not Christ, nor have interest in his blood. There is but one way to glory for all the world, " No man cometh to the Father but by me." John, 14 : 6. " The blessing of Abraham " comes on the gentiles " through faith." Gal. 3 : 14. Scripture asserts the impossibility of being or doing any thing that is evangelically good, out of Christ : " Without me ye can do nothing." John, 15 : 5. And, " without faith it is impossible to please God." Heb. 11 : 6. Scripture every where connects salvation with vocation, Rom. 8 : 30 ; and vocation with the Gospel. Rom. 10 : 14. To those that plead for the salvation of heathen and profane christians, we may apply the keen rebuke of Bernard, that while some labored to make Plato a christian, he feared they therein proved themselves to be heathens.

4. How greatly are we all concerned that our title

to the heavenly inheritance be clear! It is horrible to see how industrious many are for an inheritance on earth, and how careless for heaven. By which we may plainly see how vilely the noble soul is depressed by sin, and sunk down into flesh, minding only the things of the flesh. Hear me, ye that labor for the world, as if heaven were in it; what will you do when at death you shall look back and see all that for which you have spent your time and strength shrinking and vanishing away from you? When you shall look forward and see vast eternity opening to swallow you up; oh then what would you give for a well-grounded assurance of an eternal inheritance!

Oh, therefore, if you have any regard for your poor soul; if it be not indifferent to you whether it be saved or be damned, "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Pet. 1:10. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Phil. 2:12, 13. Remember it is *salvation* you work for, and that is no trifle—*your own* salvation. It is for thy own poor soul that thou art striving; and what hast thou more?

Remember God now offers you his help; now the Spirit waits upon you; but of its continuance you have no assurance; for it is of his own good pleasure, and not at yours. To your work, souls, to your work. Ah, strive as men that know what an inheritance in heaven is worth.

And, as for you that have solid evidence that it is yours; oh, that with hands and eyes lifted up to heaven you would adore that free grace that hath entitled a child of wrath to a heavenly inheritance! Walk as become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Be often looking heaven-ward when wants pinch here. Oh look to that fair estate you have reserved in heaven for

you, and say, I am hastening home ; and when I come thither, all my wants shall be supplied. Consider what it cost Christ to purchase it for thee ; and with a deep sense of what he hath done for thee, let thy soul say, Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XVI.

KINGLY OFFICE OF CHRIST, AS EXECUTED SPIRITUALLY UPON THE SOULS OF THE REDEEMED.

" Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalleth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. 10 : 5.

We now come to the regal office, by which our glorious Mediator executes the design of our redemption. Had he not, as our Prophet, opened the way of life and salvation to the children of men, they could never have known it ; and if they had clearly known it, yet except, as their Priest, he had offered up himself to obtain redemption for them, they could not have been redeemed virtually by his blood ; and if they had been so redeemed, yet had he not lived in the capacity of a King, to apply this purchase of his blood to them, they could have had no actual, personal benefit by his death ; for what he revealed as a Prophet, he purchased as a Priest ; and what he so revealed and purchased as a Prophet and Priest, he applies as a King ; first subduing the souls of his people to his spiritual government, then ruling them as his subjects, and ordering all things in the kingdom of Providence for their good. So that Christ has a twofold kingdom, the one spiritual and internal, by which he subdues and rules the hearts of his people ;

the other providential and external, whereby he guides, rules, and orders all things in the world, in a blessed subordination to their eternal salvation. I am to speak from this text of his spiritual and internal kingdom.

These words hold forth the efficacy of the Gospel, in its plainness and simplicity for subduing rebellious sinners to Christ : in them we have,

1. The oppositions made by sinners against the assaults of the Gospel, namely, imaginations, or reasonings, as the word *λογισμους*, may be fitly rendered : the subtleties, excuses, subterfuges, and arguings of fleshly-minded men ; in which they fortify and intrench themselves against the convictions of the word : yea, and there are not only such carnal reasonings, but many proud, high conceits, with which poor creatures swell, and scorn to submit to the abasing, humble, self-denying way of the Gospel. These are the fortifications erected against Christ by the carnal mind.

2. We have here the conquest which the Gospel obtains over sinners, thus fortified against it ; it casts down and overthrows these strong holds. Thus Christ spoils Satan of his armor in which he trusted, by showing the sinner that all this can be no defence to his soul against the wrath of God. And more,

3. You have here the improvement of the victory. Christ not only leads away these enemies spoiled, but brings them into obedience to himself, that is, makes them, after conversion, subjects of his own kingdom, obedient, useful, and serviceable to himself ; and so is more than a conqueror. They not only lay down their arms, and fight no more against Christ, but repair to his camp, and fight for Christ with those weapons before employed against him : as it is said of Jerome, Origen, and Tertullian, that they came into Canaan laden with Egyptian gold ; that is, they came into the church full of excellent learning and abilities,

with which they eminently served Jesus Christ. "Oh blessed victory, (says Meyer,) where the conqueror and conquered both triumph together!" And thus enemies and rebels are subdued, and made subjects of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Hence,

Jesus Christ exercises a kingly power over the souls of all whom the Gospel subdues to his obedience.

No sooner were the Colossians delivered out of the power of darkness, than they were translated into the kingdom of Christ, the Son. Col. 1 : 13. This kingdom of Christ, which is our present subject, is the internal spiritual kingdom, said to be within the saints: "The kingdom of God is within you." Luke, 17 : 20, 21. Christ sits as an enthroned King in the hearts, consciences, and affections of his willing people. Psalm 110 : 3. And his kingdom consists in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. 14 : 17.

In the prosecution of this point, I will show how Christ obtains the throne in the hearts of men; how he rules in it and by what acts he exercises his kingly authority; and what are the privileges of those over whom he reigns.

I. We will show how *Christ obtains a throne in the hearts of men*, and that is by conquest: for though the souls of the redeemed are his by donation and right of redemption, the Father having given them to him, and he died for them; yet Satan has the first possession. As it was with Abraham, to whom God gave the land of Canaan by promise and covenant, yet the Canaanites, Perizzites, and sons of Anak, had the actual possession of it, and Abraham's posterity must fight for it, and win it before they enjoy it. The house is conveyed to Christ by him that built it, but the strong man armed keeps possession of it, till a stronger than he comes and casts him out. Luke, 11 : 20-22. Christ must fight his way into the soul, though he have a right to enter, as

into his dearly purchased possession. And so he does ; for when the time of recovering them is come, he sends forth his armies to subdue them ; as Psalm 110 : 3, " Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The Hebrew may as fitly be rendered, and so is by some, " in the day of thine armies ;" when the Lord Jesus sent forth his armies of prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, under the conduct of his Spirit, armed with that two-edged sword, the word of God, which is sharp and powerful. Heb. 4 : 12. But that is not all : he causes armies of convictions and spiritual troubles to begird and straiten them on every side, so that they know not what to do. These convictions, like a shower of arrows, strike into their consciences ; " When they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and said, " Men and brethren, what shall we do ?" Acts, 2 : 37. Christ's arrows are sharp in the hearts of his enemies, whereby the people fall under him. Psalm 45 : 5, 6. By these convictions he batters down all their vain hopes, and levels them with the earth. Now all their weak pleas and defences, from the general mercy of God, the example of others, &c. prove but as paper walls. These shake their hearts, even to the very foundation, and overturn every high thought that exalts itself against the Lord.

The day in which Christ summons the soul by such messengers as these, is a day of distress within ; yea, such a day of trouble, that none is like it. But though it be so, yet Satan hath so deeply intrenched himself in the mind and will, that the soul yields not at the first summons, till its provisions within are spent, and all its towers of pride and walls of vain confidence be undermined by the Gospel, and shaken down ; and then the soul sees its need of Christ. Oh, now it would be glad of terms, any terms, if it may but save its life ; let all go as a prey to the conqueror. Now it sends many

such messages as these to Christ, who is come now to the very gates of the soul; Mercy, Lord, mercy; oh were I but assured thou wouldst receive, spare, and pardon me, I would open to thee the next moment! Thus the soul is "shut up to the faith of Christ," Gal. 3: 23, reduced to the greatest strait and loss; and now the merciful King, whose only design is to conquer the heart, hangs forth the white flag of mercy before the soul, giving hope that it shall be spared, pitied, and pardoned, though so long in rebellion against him, if yet it will yield itself to Christ.

Many doubts, fears, half-resolves, reasonings for and against, there are at the council-table of man's own heart at this time. Sometimes there is no hope; Christ will slay me, if I go forth to him; and then it trembles. But then, who ever found him so that tried him? Other souls have yielded, and found mercy beyond all their expectations. Oh, but I have been a desperate enemy against him. Admit it, yet thou hast the word of the King for it: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. 55: 7. But the time of mercy is past, I have stood out too long. Yet if it were so, how is it that Christ has not made short work, and sunk me into the flames of hell? Still he waits that he may be gracious, and is exalted that he may have compassion.

A thousand such debates arise, till at last, the soul considering, if it abide in rebellion, it must perish; if it go forth to Christ, it can but perish: and being encouraged by the messages of grace sent into the soul at this time, such as Heb. 7: 25, "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him;" and John, 6: 37, "He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out;" and Matt. 11: 28, "Come unto me, all ye

that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" it is, at last, resolved to open to Christ. Now, the will spontaneously receives Christ; that royal fort submits and yields; all the affections open to him. Concerning the triumphant entrance of Christ into the soul, we may say, as the psalmist rhetorically speaks concerning the triumphant entrance of Israel into Canaan, "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? Thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back!" Psa. 114: 5, 6. So here, in the like rhetorical triumph, we may say, the mountains and hills skipped like rams: the fixed and obstinate will starts from its own basis and centre; the rocky heart rends in twain. A poor soul comes into the world, full of ignorance, pride, self-love, desperate hardness, and fixed resolutions to go on in its way; and, by an hour's discourse, the tide turns, Jordan is driven back. What ailed thee, thou stout will, that thou surrenderest to Christ! thou hard heart, that thou relenest, and the waters gush out? And thus the soul is won to Christ; he writes down his terms, and the soul willingly subscribes them. Thus it comes to Christ by free and hearty submission, desiring nothing more than to live under the government of Christ for the time to come.

II. Let us see *how Christ rules* in the souls of such as submit to him. There are six things in which he exerts his kingly authority over them.

1. He imposes *a new law* upon them, and enjoins the strictest obedience. The soul before could endure no restraint; its lusts gave it laws. "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures." Tit. 3: 3. Whatever the flesh craved, and the sensual appetite longed after, it must have, cost what it would; even if damnation were the price of it. Now, it must not be any longer "without law to God; but under law to Christ." These are the articles of peace

which the soul willingly subscribes in the day of its admission to mercy, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." Matt. 11:29. This "law of the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, makes them free from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8:2. Here is much strictness, but no bondage; for the law is not only written in Christ's statute-book, the Bible, but copied out by his Spirit upon the hearts of his subjects, in correspondent principles; which makes obedience a pleasure, and self-denial easy. Christ's "yoke is easy." "His commandments are not grievous." 1 John, 5:3. The soul that comes under Christ's government must receive law from Christ; and under law every thought of the heart must come.

2. He *rebukes and chastises* souls for the violation and transgression of his law. That is another act of Christ's regal authority: "Whom he loves he rebukes and chastens." Heb. 12:6, 7. These chastisements of Christ are either upon their bodies and outward comforts by the rod of providence, or upon their spirits and inward comforts. Sometimes his rebukes are smart upon the outward man. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." 1 Cor. 11:30. They had not that due regard to his body that became them, and he will make their bodies to smart for it. And he had rather their flesh should smart, than their souls should perish. Sometimes he spares their outward, and afflicts their inner man, which is a much smarter rod. He withdraws peace, and takes away joy from the spirits of his people. The hidings of his face are sore rebukes. However, all is for their benefit, not their destruction. And it is not the least privilege of Christ's subjects to have a seasonable and sanctified rod to restore them from the ways of sin, Psalm 23:3; while others are suffered to go on stubbornly in the way of their own hearts.

3. Another regal act of Christ is the *restraining of his servants from iniquity*, and withholding them from those courses to which their own hearts would lead them; for even in them there is a spirit bent to backsliding; but the Lord in tenderness keeps back their souls from iniquity, and that when they are upon the very brink of sin. "My feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped." Psalm 73:2. Then doth the Lord prevent sin, by removing the occasion providentially, or by helping them to resist the temptation, graciously assisting their spirits in the trial, so that no temptation shall befall them, but a way of escape shall be opened, that they may be able to bear it. 1 Cor. 10:13. Thus his people have frequent occasion to bless his name for his preventing goodness, when they are almost in the midst of all evil. And this I take to be the meaning of Gal. 5:16; "This I say, then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh:" tempted by them you may be, but fulfil them ye shall not; my Spirit shall cause the temptation to die and wither away in the embryo of it, so that it shall not come to a full birth.

4. He *protects them in his ways*, and suffers them not to relapse from him into a state of sin and bondage to Satan any more. Indeed, Satan is restless in his endeavors to reduce them again to his obedience; he never leaves tempting and soliciting for their return; and where he finds a false professor he prevails; but Christ keeps his own, that they depart not again. "All that thou hast given me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." John, 17:12. They are "kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet. 1:5; kept as in a garrison, according to the import of that word. None more assaulted, yet none more safe than the people of God. They are "preserved in Christ Jesus." Jude, 1. It is not their

own grace that secures them, but Christ's care and continual watchfulness. This is his covenant with them, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jer. 32:40. Thus, as a King, he preserves them.

5. As a King he *rewards their obedience*, and encourages their sincere service. Though all they do for Christ be duty, yet he has united their comfort with their duty. "This I had, because I kept thy precepts." Psalm 119:56. They take this encouragement with them to every duty, that he whom they seek "is a bountiful rewarder of such as diligently seek him." Heb. 11:6. O what a good Master do the saints serve! Hear how the King expostulates with his subjects: "Have I been a barren wilderness, or a land of darkness to you?" Jer. 2:31. Have I been such a hard master to you? Have you any reason to complain of my service? You have not found the ways or wages of sin like mine.

6. He pacifies *all inward troubles*, and commands peace when their spirits are tumultuous. This "peace of God rules in their hearts." Col. 3:15. When the tumultuous affections are excited; when anger, hatred, and revenge begin to rise in the soul, this hushes and stills all. "I will hearken (saith the church) what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, and to his saints." Psalm 85:8. He that saith to the raging sea, Be still, and it obeys him, he only can pacify the disquieted spirit. These are Christ's regal acts. And he exercises them upon the souls of his people, powerfully, sweetly, suitably.

Powerfully: whether he restrains from sin, or impels to duty, he does it with a soul-determining efficacy; for "his kingdom is not in word, but in power." 1 Cor. 4:20. And yet,

He rules not by compulsion, but *most sweetly*. His

law is a law of love, written upon their hearts. The church is the Lamb's wife. Rev. 19:7. "A bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench." Isa. 43:3. "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," saith the apostle. 2 Cor. 10:1. For he delights in free, not in forced obedience. He rules children, not slaves; and so his kingly power is mixed with fatherly love.

He rules them *suitably* to their natures; "I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love," Hos. 11:4; that is, in a way proper to convince their reason and move their affections. And thus his eternal kingdom is administered by his Spirit, who is his vicegerent in our hearts.

III. The *privileges* pertaining to all the subjects of this spiritual kingdom.

1. Those over whom Christ reigns, are certainly and fully *set free from the curse of the law*. "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed." John, 8:36. I say not, they are free from the law as a rule of life; such a freedom were no privilege: but free from the rigorous exactions and terrible maledictions of it; to hear our liberty proclaimed from this bondage, is the joyful sound indeed, the most blessed voice that ever our ears heard. And this all that are in Christ shall hear: "If we be led by the Spirit, we are not under the law." Gal. 5:18. "Blessed are the people that hear this joyful sound." Psalm, 89:15.

2. Another privilege of Christ's subjects, is freedom from the *dominion of sin*; "Sin shall not reign over them; for they are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. 6:14. One heaven cannot bear two suns; nor one soul two kings: when Christ takes the throne, sin quits it. It is true, sin exists there still; its defiling and troubling power remains; but its dominion is abolished. O joyful tidings! O welcome day!

3. Another privilege of Christ's subjects, is *protection* in all the troubles and dangers to which their souls or bodies are exposed. "This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces." Mic. 5 : 5. Kings owe protection to their subjects : none so able, so faithful in that work as Christ ; all "thou gavest me I have kept, and none is lost." John, 17 : 12.

4. Another privilege of Christ's subjects, is a merciful and tender *bearing of their burdens and infirmities*. They have a meek and patient King ; "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, thy King cometh unto thee, meek." Matt. 21 : 5. "Take my yoke, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." Matt. 11 : 29. The meek Moses could not bear the provocations of the people, Numb. 11 : 12 ; but Christ bears them all : "He carries the lambs in his arms, and gently leads those that are with young." Isa. 40 : 11. He can have compassion upon the ignorant, and them that are out of the way.

5. Again, sweet *peace and tranquillity of soul* is the privilege of the subjects of this kingdom : for this kingdom consists in "peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. 14 : 17. And till souls come under his sceptre, they shall never find peace : "Come unto me," ye that are weary, "I will give you rest." Yet do not mistake ; I say not, they have all actual peace, at all times ; no, they often break that peace by sin ; but they have the root of peace, the ground-work and cause of peace. If they have not peace, yet they have that which is convertible into peace at any time. They also are in a state of peace ; "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Rom. 5 : 10. This is a feast every day, a mercy which they only can duly value that are in the depths of trouble for sin.

6. *Everlasting salvation* is the privilege of all over whom Christ reigns. Prince and Saviour are joined to-

gether. Acts, 5 : 31. He that can say, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel," may add, "and afterwards bring me to glory." Psa. 73 : 24. Indeed, the kingdom of grace doth but raise up children for the kingdom of glory. It in fact is the kingdom of heaven here begun ; and therefore this, as well as that, bears the name of the kingdom of heaven. The King is the same, and the subjects the same. The subjects of this are shortly to be translated to that kingdom. Thus have I glanced at a few of the inestimable privileges of Christ's subjects.

INFERENCE 1. How great is *the misery of those who continue in bondage to sin and Satan*, and refuse the government of Christ ! Satan writes his laws in the blood of his subjects, grinds them with cruel oppression, wears them out with bondage to divers lusts, and rewards their service with everlasting misery. And yet how few are weary of it, and willing to come over to Christ ! "Behold, (says Gurnal, in his *Christian Armor*,) Christ is in the field, sent of God to recover his right and your liberty. His royal standard is pitched in the Gospel, and proclamation made, that if any poor sinner, weary of the devil's government, and laden with the miserable chains of his spiritual bondage, shall thus come and repair to Christ, he shall have protection from God's justice, the devil's wrath, and sin's dominion ; in a word, he shall have rest, and that glorious." Isa. 11 : 10.

And yet how few stir a foot towards Christ, but are willing to have their ears bored, and be perpetual slaves to that cruel tyrant ! Oh when will sinners be weary of their bondage, and sigh after deliverance ! If any such poor soul shall read these lines, let him know, and I do proclaim it in the name of my royal Master, and give him the word of a King for it, he shall not be rejected by Christ. John, 6 : 37. Come, poor sinners, come, the Lord Jesus is a merciful King, and never will condemn the poor penitent that submits to mercy.

2. How much doth it concern us to inquire and know whose government we are under, and *who is king over our souls*; whether Christ or Satan be in the throne, and sway the sceptre over our souls! Reader, the work in which I would now engage thy soul, is the same that Jesus Christ will thoroughly and effectually do in the great day. Then he will gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends, separate the tares and the wheat, divide the whole world into two ranks or grand divisions, how many divisions and subdivisions soever there be in it now. It nearly concerns thee therefore to know who is Lord and King in thy soul. To help thee in this great work, make use of the following hints:

To whom do you *yield your obedience*? His subjects and servants ye are whom ye obey. Rom. 6:16. It is but a mockery to give Christ the empty titles of Lord and King, whilst ye give your real service to sin and Satan. What is this but like the Jews, to bow the knee, and say, Hail, Master, and crucify him? "Then are ye his disciples, if ye do whatsoever he commands you." John, 15:14. Christ doth not deceive you; his pardons, promises, and salvation are real; Oh let your obedience be so too! Let it be sincere and universal obedience; this will evidence your unfeigned subjection to Christ. Do not dare to enterprise any thing, till you know Christ's pleasure and will. Rom. 12:2. Inquire of Christ as David did of the Lord. 1 Sam. 23:9-11. Lord, may I do this or that? or shall I forbear? I beseech thee, tell thy servant.

Have you *the power of godliness*, or a form of it only? There be many that do but trifle in religion, and play about the skirts and borders of it; spending their time about barren controversies: but as to the power of religion, and the life of godliness, which consist in communion with God, and as to duties and ordinances, which promote holiness and mortify their lusts, they concern

not themselves. But surely "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." 1 Cor. 4:20. It is not meat and drink, (that is, dry disputes about meats and drinks,) "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; for he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men." Rom. 14:17, 18. Oh I am afraid that, when the great host of professors shall be tried by these rules, they will shrink up into a little handful, as Gideon's host did.

Have you the special *saving knowledge* of Christ? All his subjects are translated out of the kingdom of darkness. Col. 1:13. The devil is called the ruler of the darkness of this world; his subjects are all blind, else he could never rule them. As soon as their eyes are opened they flee from his kingdom, and there is no retaining them in subjection to him any longer. Oh inquire, then, whether you are brought out of darkness into this marvellous light! Do you see your condition, how sad, miserable, wretched it is by nature? do you see your remedy, as it lies only in Christ and his precious blood? Do you see the true way of obtaining an interest in that blood by faith? Does this knowledge show itself in your life; lamenting heartily your misery by sin, thirsting vehemently after Christ and his righteousness, striving continually after a stronger faith and a more intimate union with Christ? This will indeed show that you are translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ.

With whom do you delightfully *associate*? Who are your chosen companions? You may see to whom you belong by the company you join. What have the subjects of Christ to do among the slaves of Satan? If the subjects of one kingdom be in another king's dominion, they love to be with their own countrymen, rather than the natives of the place; so do the servants of Christ. They are a company of themselves, as it is said, "They

went to their own company." Acts, 4 : 23. I know the subjects of both kingdoms are here mingled, and we cannot avoid the company of sinners except we go out of the world, 1 Cor. 5 : 10 ; but yet all your delights should be in the saints, the excellent of the earth. Psalm 16 : 3.

Do you *live holy and righteous lives*? If not, you may claim interest in Christ as your King, but he will never allow your claim. "The sceptre of his kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness." Psalm 45 : 6. If ye oppress and defraud your brethren, and yet call yourselves Christ's subjects, what greater reproach can ye cast upon him? What, is Christ the King of fraud? No, no, renounce your false profession, and fall into your own place; you belong to another prince, and not to Christ.

3. Doth Christ exercise such a kingly power over the souls of all them that are subdued by the Gospel to him? Oh then let all that are under Christ's government *walk as the subjects of such a King*. Imitate your King; the example of kings is very influential upon their subjects. Your King hath commanded you not only to take his yoke upon you, but also to learn of him. Matt. 11 : 29. Yea, and "if any man say that he is Christ's, let him walk even as Christ walked." 1 John, 2 : 6. Your king is meek and patient, Isa. 53 : 7; as a lamb for meekness: shall his subjects be lions for fierceness? Your King was humble and lowly. Matt. 21 : 5. Will you be proud and lofty? doth this become the kingdom of Christ? Your King was a self-denying King; he could deny his comforts, ease, honor, life, to serve his Father's design and accomplish your salvation. 2 Cor. 8 : 9; Phil. 2 : 1-8. Shall his servants be selfish and self-seeking persons, that will expose his honor and hazard their own souls for the trifles of time? God forbid! Your King was laborious, and diligent in fulfilling his work. John, 9 : 4. Let not his servants be slothful

Oh imitate your King, follow his pattern : this will give you comfort now, and "boldness in the day of judgment ; because as he is, so shall ye be in this world." 1 John, 4 : 17.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE KINGLY OFFICE OF CHRIST, AS PROVIDENTIALLY EXECUTED FOR THE REDEEMED.

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." Eph. 1 : 22.

The foregoing verses are thankful and humble adoration of the grace of God, in bringing the Ephesians to believe in Christ. This effect of his power is compared with that other glorious effect of it, the raising of Christ himself from the dead ; both are from the same efficient cause. It raised Christ from a low estate, even from the dead, to a high, a very high and glorious state ; to be the head both of the world and of the church ; the head of the world by way of dominion, the head of the church by way of union and special influence, ruling the world for the good of his people in it. "He gave him to be the head over all things to the church." And here let these four things be seriously regarded.

1. The dignity and authority committed to Christ : "He hath put all things under his feet ;" which implies full, ample, and absolute dominion in him, and subjection in them over whom he reigns. This power is delegated to him by the Father : for besides the essential, native power and dominion over all, which he hath as God, Psalm 22 : 28, there is a dispensed authority, which is proper to him as Mediator, which he receives as the reward or fruit of his suffering. Phil. 2 : 8.

2. The recipient of this authority is Christ, and Christ primarily and only : he is the first receptacle of all authority and power. Whatever authority any creature is clothed with, is but ministerial and derivative. Christ is the only Lord, Jude, 4, the fountain of all power.

3. The object of this authority is the whole creation ; "all things" are put under his feet : he rules from sea to sea, even to the utmost bounds of God's creation. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh," John, 17 : 2 ; all creatures, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate, angels, devils, men, winds, seas, all obey him.

4. And especially notice the end for which he governs and rules the universal empire ; it is for the church, that is, for the advantage, comfort, and salvation of those for whom he died. He purchased the church ; and that he might have the highest security that his blood should not be lost, God the Father hath put all things into his hand, to order and dispose all as he pleaseth. Hence,

All the affairs of the kingdom of providence are ordered and determined by Jesus Christ, for the special advantage and everlasting good of his redeemed people.

"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." John, 17 : 2. Hence it comes to pass that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." Rom. 8 : 28.

That Jesus Christ providentially controls all the affairs of this world, is evident both from scripture assertion, and from the observation of events.

The first chapter of Ezekiel contains an admirable scheme or draught of providence. There you see how all the wheels, that is, the motions and revolutions here on earth, are guided by the spirit that is in them. And,

verse 26, it is all resolved into the supreme cause ; there you find one like the Son of man, which is Jesus Christ, sitting upon the throne, and giving forth orders for the government of all : and if it were not so, how is it that all events conspire to the fulfilment of his designs ; as in Israel's deliverance out of Egypt and other innumerable instances ? Certainly, if ten men, from different directions, should all meet at one place, and about one business, without any previous arrangement, it would argue that their motions were secretly overruled by some invisible agent. How is it that such marvellous effects are produced in the world by causes apparently so feeble ? Amos, 5 : 9, and 1 Cor. 1 : 27 ; and that as often the most apt and likely means are rendered wholly ineffectual ? Psalm 33 : 16. In a word, if Christ hath no such providential influence, how are his people in all ages preserved in the midst of so many millions of potent and malicious enemies, amongst whom they live as sheep in the midst of wolves ? Luke, 10 : 3. How is it that the bush burns, and yet is not consumed ? Exod. 3 : 2.

But my business, in this discourse, is not to prove that there is a Providence, which none but atheists deny. I shall rather show by what acts Jesus Christ administers this kingdom, and in what manner ; and what use may be made of this subject.

I. He *rules and orders* the Kingdom of Providence, by supporting, permitting, restraining, limiting, protecting, punishing, and rewarding those over whom he reigns providentially.

1. He *supports* the world, and all creatures in it, by his power. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." John, 5 : 17. "By him all things consist." Col. 1 : 17. It is a considerable part of Christ's glory to have a whole world of creatures owing their being and hourly preservation to him. He is "given for a covenant to the people, to establish the earth." Isa. 49 : 8.

2. He *permits* and suffers the worst of creatures in his dominion to be and act as they do. "The deceived and the deceiver are his." Job, 12 : 16. Even those that fight against Christ and his people receive both power and permission from him. Say not that it is unbecoming the Most Holy to permit such evils, which he could prevent if he pleased. For as he permits no more than he will overrule to his praise, so that very permission of his is holy and just. Christ's working is not confounded with the creature's. Pure sun-beams are not tainted by the noisome vapors on which they shine. His holiness hath no fellowship with their iniquities; nor are their transgressions at all excused by his permission. "He is a rock, his work is perfect," but "they have corrupted themselves." Deut. 32 : 4, 5. And yet should he permit sinful creatures to act out all the wickedness in their hearts, there would neither remain peace nor order in the world. Therefore,

3. He powerfully *restrains* creatures, by the bridle of providence, from the commission of those things to which their hearts are inclined: "The remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain," Ps. 76 : 10; allowing just so much as shall serve his holy ends, and no more. And truly this is one of the glorious mysteries of Providence, which amazes the serious and considerate soul; to see the spirit of a creature fully set to do mischief; power enough, as one would think, in his hand to do it, and a door of opportunity standing open for it; and yet the effect wonderfully hindered. The strong propensities of the will are inwardly checked, as in the case of Laban, Gen. 31 : 24; or a diversion is strangely cast in their way, as in the case of Sennacherib, 2 Kings, 19 : 7, 8, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprises. Julian had two great designs before him; one was to conquer the Persians, the other to root out the Galileans, as he, by way of contempt, called the christians; but

he would begin with the Persians; and then make a sacrifice of all the christians to his idols. He did so, and perished in the first attempt. Oh the wisdom of Divine Providence!

4. Jesus Christ *limits* the creatures in their acting, assigning them their boundaries and lines of liberty; to which they may, but beyond it cannot, go. "Fear none of these things that ye shall suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, and ye shall have tribulation ten days." Rev. 2:10. Their enemies would have cast them into their graves, but it shall only be into prison: they would have stretched out their hands upon them all; no, but only some of them shall be exposed: they would have kept them there perpetually; no, it must be but for ten days. Four hundred and thirty years were determined upon the people of God in Egypt; and then, even in that very night, God brought them forth; for then "the time of the promise was come." Acts, 7:17.

5. The Lord Jesus providentially *protects* his people amidst a world of enemies and danger. It was Christ that appeared unto Moses in the flaming bush, and preserved it from being consumed. The bush signified the people of God in Egypt; the fire flaming in it the exquisite sufferings they there endured; the safety of the bush amidst the flames, the Lord's admirable care and protection of his poor suffering ones. None so tenderly careful as Christ. "As birds flying, so he defends Jerusalem," Isa. 31:5, that is, as they fly swiftly towards their nests, crying, when their young are in danger, so will the Lord preserve his. They are "preserved in Christ Jesus," Jude 1, as Noah and his family were in the ark. Hear how a worthy of our own (Dr. Owen on Indwelling Sin) expresses himself on this point:

"That we are at peace in our houses, at rest in our beds; that we have any quiet in our enjoyments, is

from hence alone. Whose person would not be defiled or destroyed; whose habitation would not be ruined; whose blood almost would not be shed, if wicked men had power to perpetrate all their conceived sin? It may be, the ruin of some of us hath been conceived a thousand times. To this providence we owe the preservation of our lives, our families, our estates, our liberties, and whatsoever is dear to us. For may we not say sometimes with the psalmist, 'My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears, and their tongue a sharp sword?' Psalm 57:4. And how is the deliverance of men from such persons contrived? God breaks their teeth in their mouths, even the great teeth of the young lions. Psalm 58:6. He keeps this fire from burning,—some he cuts off and destroys: some he cuts short in their power: some he deprives of the instruments whereby alone they can work: some he prevents from their desired opportunities; the attention of some is diverted to other objects; and oftentimes he causeth them to spend their force upon one another. We may say, therefore, with the Psalmist, 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches.' Psalm 104:24."

6. He *punishes evil doers*, and repays, by his providence, into their own lap, the mischiefs they intend for those that fear him. Pharaoh, Sennacherib, both the Julians, and innumerable more, are the lasting monuments of his righteous retribution. It is true, a sinner may do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged; but oftentimes God hangs up some eminent sinners in chains, as spectacles and warnings to others. Many a heavy blow hath Providence given to the enemies of God, from which they were never able to recover. Christ rules, and that with a rod of iron, in the midst of his enemies. Psalm 110:2.

7. And lastly, he *rewards* the services done to him and his people. Out of this treasure of Providence God often repays those that serve him, and that with a hundred-fold reward now in this life. Matt. 19:29. This active, vigilant Providence hath its eye upon all the wants, straits, and troubles of creatures; but especially of his people. What volumes of experience might the people of God write upon this subject! and what a pleasant history would it be, to read the strange, constant, wonderful, and unexpected actings of Providence, for those who have committed themselves to its care!

II. We shall next inquire *how Jesus Christ administers* this providential kingdom.

Both angels and men are his instruments: the angels are "ministering spirits" sent forth by him for the good of them that shall be heirs of salvation. Heb. 1:14. Luther tells us they have two offices, *superius canere et inferius vigilare*, "to sing above, and watch beneath." These do us many invisible offices of love. They have dear and tender regard and love for the saints. To them, God, as it were, puts forth his children to nurse, and they are tenderly careful of them whilst they live, and bring them home in their arms to their Father when they die. And as angels, so men are the servants of Providence; yea, bad men as well as good. Cyrus, on that account, is called God's servant. They fulfil his will, whilst they are prosecuting their own lusts. "The earth shall help the woman." Rev. 12:16. But good men delight to serve Providence; they and the angels are fellow-servants in one house, and to one Master. Rev. 19:10. Yea, there is not a creature in heaven, earth, or hell, but Jesus Christ can providentially use to serve his ends, and promote his designs. But whatever the instrument be which Christ uses, of this we may be certain, that his providential working is holy,

wise, sovereign, profound, irresistible, harmonious, and for the peculiar good of the saints.

1. It is *holy*. Though he permits, limits, orders, and overrules many unholy persons and actions, yet he still works like himself, most holily and purely throughout. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." Psalm 145 : 17. It is easier to separate light from a sun-beam, than holiness from the works of God. The best of men cannot escape sin in their most holy actions. But no sin cleaves to God in whatever he doeth.

2. Christ's providential working is also most *wise* and *judicious*. "The wheels are full of eyes." Ezek. 1 : 18. They are not moved by a blind impetus, but in deep counsel and wisdom. And, indeed, the wisdom of Providence manifests itself principally in the choice of such states for the people of God, as shall most effectually promote their eternal happiness. And herein it goes quite beyond our understanding and comprehension. It makes that medicinal and salutary which we judge destructive to our comfort and good. Suarez, speaking of the felicity of the other world, says, "Then the blessed shall see in God all things and circumstances pertaining to them, excellently accommodated and attempered;" then shall they see that the crossing of their desires was the saving of their souls; and that otherwise they had perished. The most wise Providence looks beyond us. It eyes the end, and suits all things thereto, and not to our fond desires.

3. The providence of Christ is most *supreme* and *sovereign*. Whatsoever he pleaseth, that he doeth in heaven and in earth, and in all places. Psalm 135 : 6. "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings." Rev. 19 : 16. The greatest monarchs are but as the worms of the earth to him: they all depend on him, "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice; by me princes rule,

and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." Prov. 8 : 15, 16.

4. Divine Providence is *profound* and inscrutable. The judgments of Christ are "a great deep, and his footsteps are not known." Psalm 36 : 6. There are hard texts in the works as well as in the words of Christ. The wisest heads have been at a loss in interpreting some events. Jer. 12 : 1, 2 ; Job, 21 : 7. The angels had the hands of a man under their wings, Ezek. 1 : 8 ; that is, they wrought secretly and mysteriously.

5. Divine Providence is *irresistible* in its designs and motions ; for all providences are but fulfillings and accomplishments of God's immutable decrees. "He works all things according to the counsel of his own will." Eph. 1 : 11. Hence the instruments by which God executed his wrath are called "chariots coming from between two mountains of brass," Zech. 6 : 1 ; that is, "the firm and immutable decrees of God." When the Jews put Christ to death, they did only what "the hand and counsel of God had before determined to be done." Acts, 4 : 28. None can oppose or resist providence. "I will work, and who shall let it ?" Isaiah, 43 : 13.

6. The providences of Christ are *harmonious*. There are secret chains and invisible connections between the works of Christ. We know not how to reconcile promises and providences together, nor yet providences one with another ; but certainly they all work together, Rom. 8 : 28, by the influence of the first cause. He doth not do, and undo ; destroy by one providence, what he built by another. But, just as all seasons of the year, the nipping frosts, as well as the halcyon days of summer, conspire and conduce to the harvest ; so it is in providence.

7. The providences of Christ work in a special and peculiar way for *the good of the saints*. His providential is subordinated to his spiritual kingdom. "He is

the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe." 1 Tim. 4:10. Things are so laid and ordered, as that their eternal good shall be promoted and secured by all that Christ doeth.

INFERENCE 1. If so, see then *to whom you are indebted* for your lives, liberty, comforts, and all that you enjoy in this world. Is it not Christ that orders all for you? He is, indeed, in heaven, out of your sight; but though you see him not, he sees you, and takes care of all your concerns. When one was told of a plot laid to take away his life, he answered, "If God take no care of me, how do I live?" how have I escaped hitherto? "In all thy ways acknowledge him." Prov. 3:6. It is he that hath appointed the state thou art in, as most proper for thee. It is Christ that doeth all for you that is done. He looks down from heaven upon all that fear him; he sees when you are in danger by temptation, and interposes something, you know not how, to hinder it. He sees when you are sad, and orders reviving providences to refresh you. He sees when corruptions prevail, and orders humbling events to purge them. Whatever mercies you have received, all along the way you have gone hitherto, are the orderings of Christ for you. And you should carefully observe how the promises and providences have kept equal pace with one another, and both gone step by step with you until now.

2. Hath God committed the government of the world to Christ, and trusted him over all? Then do you also *leave all your particular concerns in the hands of Christ*, and know that the infinite wisdom and love which rules the world, manages every thing that relates to you. It is in good hands, infinitely better than if it were in your own. I remember when Melancthon was under some despondency of spirit about the situation of God's people in Germany, Luther chides him thus for it, "Let Philip cease to rule the world." It is not ours to guide

the course of providence, or direct its motions, but to submit quietly to God. Yet how apt are we to regret providences, as if they had no tendency at all to the glory of God, or to our good, Exod. 5 : 22 ; yea, to limit the Almighty to our way and time ! Thus, the " Israelites tempted God, and limited the holy One." Psalm 78 : 18, 41. How often also do we, unbelievably, distrust God, as though he could never accomplish what we profess to expect and believe ! " Our bones are dry, our hope is lost ; we are cut off." Ezek. 37 : 11. So Gen. 18 : 13, 14 ; Isa. 40 : 17. There are but few Abrahams among believers, who " against hope believe in hope," " giving glory to God." Rom. 4 : 20. And it is but too common for good men to repine and fret at providences, when their wills are crossed : this was the great sin of Jonah. Brethren, these things ought not to be so : did you but seriously consider, either the design of these providential dealings, which is to bring about the gracious purposes of God towards you, formed before the world was, Eph. 1 : 4 ; or that it is opposing your wisdom to his, as if you could better order affairs ; or that you have to do herein with a great and dreadful God, in whose hands you are, who may do what he will with you, and all that is yours, without giving you an account of any of his matters, Job, 33 : 13 ; I say, if such considerations as these could but have place with you in troubles and temptations, they would quickly mould your hearts into a better and more quiet frame.

Oh that I could but persuade you to resign all to Christ. He is a skilful workman, Prov. 8 : 25-30, and can effect what he pleaseth. It is a good rule, *De operibus Dei non est judicandum, ante quintum actum*. " Let God work out all that he intends, but have patience till he hath accomplished his design, and then find fault with it, if you can." " Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." James, 5 : 11.

3. If Christ be Lord over the providential kingdom, and that for the good of his people, let none that are Christ's henceforth indulge *a slavish fear of creatures*. "It is a great consolation" says Grotius on my text "that Christ hath so great an empire, and that he governs it for the good of his people, as a head consulting the good of the body." Our Head and Husband is Lord of all the hosts of heaven and earth; no creature can move hand or tongue without him: the power that any have is given them from above. John, 19 : 11, 12. 'The serious consideration of this truth will make the feeblest spirit cease trembling, and cause it to shout, "The Lord is King of all the earth, sing ye praises with understanding." Psalm 47 : 7. Has he not given you abundant security in many express promises, that all shall issue well for you that fear him? "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." Rom. 8 : 28. Verily "it shall be well with them that fear God," even with them that fear before him. Eccl. 8 : 12. And suppose he had not, yet the very understanding of our relation to such a King should, in itself, be sufficient security: for he is the universal, supreme, absolute, meek, merciful, victorious, and immortal King. He sits in glory, at the Father's right hand; and his enemies are a footstool for him.* His love to his people is unspeakably tender and fervent, he that touches them, "touches the apple of his eye." Zech. 2 : 8. Till this be forgotten, the wrath of man is not feared; he that fears a man that shall die, forgets the Lord his Maker. Isa. 51 : 12, 13.

4. If the government of the world be in the hands of Christ, then to acknowledge Christ and engage his blessing in all our affairs and business, is the *true and ready way to success*. If all depend upon his pleasure, surely

* See my Saint Indeed.

it is our wisdom to attempt nothing without him ; it is no lost time that is spent in prayer, wherein we ask his direction, and beg his presence with us : and, rely upon it, that which is not prefaced with prayer will be followed with trouble. How easily can Jesus Christ dash all your designs, and frustrate, in a moment, all the purposes of your hearts ! The Turks will pray five times a day, how urgent soever their business be. Blush, you that enterprise your affairs without God.

5. Lastly, *Eye Christ* in all the events of providence ; see his hand in all that befalls you, whether it be evil or good. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." Psa. 111 : 2. How much good might we get by observation of the good or evil that befalls us throughout our course !

(1.) In all the *troubles and afflictions* that befall you, eye Jesus Christ : and set your hearts to the study of these four things in affliction :

Study his *sovereignty and dominion* ; these afflictions rise not out of the dust, nor do they befall you casually ; but he raises them up, and gives them their commission ; "Behold, I create evil, and devise a device against you." Jer. 18 : 11. He selects the instrument of your trouble ; he makes the rod as afflictive as he pleaseth ; he orders the continuance and end of your troubles ; and they will not cease to be afflictive to you, till Christ say, Leave off, it is enough. The centurion wisely considered this, when he argued, "I have soldiers under me, and I say to one, Go, and he goeth ; to another, Come, and he cometh," Luke, 7 : 8 ; meaning, that as his soldiers were at his command, so diseases were at Christ's, to come and go as he ordered them.

Study the *wisdom* of Christ in the contrivance of your troubles. His wisdom shines out many ways in them. It is evident in choosing such kinds of trouble for you as are best adapted to purge out the corruption that pre-

dominates in you: in the degree of your troubles, suffering them to work to such a height as to reach their end; but no higher, lest they overwhelm you.

Study the *tenderness and compassion* of Christ over his afflicted people. Oh think, If the devil had the mixing of my cup, how much more bitter would he make it! There would not be one drop of mercy in it: but here is much mercy mixed with my troubles. There is mercy in this, that it is no worse. Am I afflicted? "It is of the Lord's mercy I am not consumed," Lam. 3: 22; it might have been hell instead of this chastisement. There is mercy in his supports under it; I might have been left, as others have been, to sink and perish under my burdens. Mercy, in deliverance out of it; this might have been everlasting darkness, that should never have had a morning. Oh the tenderness of Christ to his afflicted!

Study the *love of Christ to thy soul* in affliction. "Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten." Rev. 3: 19. This is the device of love, to recover thee to thy God, and prevent thy ruin. Oh what an advantage would it be thus to study Christ in all the evils that befall you!

(2.) Eye and study Christ in all the *good* you receive from the hand of providence. View your mercies in all their lovely circumstances.

Eye them in their *suitableness*: how conveniently providence hath ordered all things for thee. Thou hast a narrow heart, and a small estate suitable to it: hadst thou more of the world, it would be like a large sail to a little boat, which would quickly pull thee under water: thou hast that which is most suitable to thee. Eye the *seasonableness* of thy mercies, how they are fitted to thy wants. Providence brings forth all its fruits in due season. Eye the *peculiar nature* of thy mercies. Others have common, thou special ones; others have but a single, thou a double sweetness in thy enjoyments, one natural from the matter of it, another spiritual from the

way in which, and end for which it comes. Observe the *order* in which Providence sends your mercies. See how one is linked strangely to another, and is a door to let in many. Sometimes one mercy is introductive to a thousand. And lastly, observe the *constancy* of them, "they are new every morning." Lam. 3 : 23. How assiduously doth God visit thy soul and body! Think with thyself, if there were but a suspension of the care of Christ for one hour, that hour would be thy ruin.

Could we thus study the providence of Christ in all the good and evil that befalls us in the world, we should be in every state content. Phil. 4 : 11. Then we should never be stopped, but furthered in our way by all that occurs; then would our experience swell to great volumes, which we might carry to heaven with us; and then should we answer all Christ's ends in every state he brings us into. Do this, and say, Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHRIST'S HUMILIATION—IN HIS INCARNATION.

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2 : 8.

You have seen how Christ was invested with the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, for effecting the blessed design of our redemption; the execution of these offices necessarily required that he should be both deeply abased and highly exalted. He cannot, as our Priest, offer up himself a sacrifice to God for us, except he be humbled, and humbled to death. He cannot, as a King,

powerfully apply the virtue of that his sacrifice, except he be exalted, yea, highly exalted. Had he not stooped to the low estate of a man, he had not, as a Priest, had a sacrifice of his own to offer; he had not been fit, as a Prophet, to teach us the will of God, so as that we should be able to bear it; he had not been, as a King, a suitable head to the church: and, had he not been highly exalted, that sacrifice had not been carried within the vail before the Lord. Those discoveries of God could not have been universal, effectual, and abiding. The government of Christ could not have secured, protected, and defended the subjects of his kingdom.

The infinite wisdom foreseeing all this, ordered that Christ should first be deeply humbled, then highly exalted: both which states are presented to us by the apostle in the context.

He that intends to build high, lays the foundation deep and low. Christ must have a glory in heaven, infinitely transcending that of angels and men. And, as he must be exalted infinitely above them, so he must first, in order thereunto, be humbled and abased as much below them: "His form was marred more than any man's; and his visage more than the sons of men." The ground colors are dark, but the picture is filled with all the splendor and glory of heaven.

Method requires that we first speak of his state of humiliation; and

The scripture I have now selected presents you the sun almost under a total eclipse. He that was beautiful and glorious, Isa. 4: 2, yea, glorious as the only begotten of the Father, John 1: 14, yea, the glory, James 2: 1, yea, the splendor and "brightness of the Father's glory," Heb. 1: 3, was so veiled, clouded, and debased, that he looked not like himself, a God; no, nor scarcely as a man; for, with reference to this humbled state, it is said, "I am a worm, and no man," Psa. 22: 6; I am become

an abject among men, as the language, Isa. 53 : 3, signifies. This humiliation of Christ we have here expressed in the nature, degrees, and duration of it.

1. The nature of it, "he humbled himself." The word imports both a real and voluntary abasement. It is not said, he was humbled, but, he humbled himself; he was willing to stoop to this low and abject state for us. And, indeed, the voluntariness of his humiliation made it most acceptable to God, and singularly commends the love of Christ to us: that he would choose to stoop to all this ignominy, suffering, and abasement for us.

2. The degrees of his humiliation: it was not only so low as to become a man, a man under law; but he humbled himself to become "obedient to death, even the death of the cross." Here you see the depth of Christ's humiliation, it was unto death, even the death of the cross, the death of a malefactor.

3. The duration, or continuance of his humiliation: it continued from the first moment of his incarnation to the moment of his resurrection from the grave; so long his humiliation lasted. Hence we derive this proposition: *The state of Christ, from his conception to his resurrection, was a state of deep abasement and humiliation.*

We are now entering upon Christ's humbled state, which I shall describe under three general heads, namely, his humiliation in his incarnation, in his life, and in his death. We now consider his humiliation in his *incarnation*, implied in the words, "Being found in fashion as a man." By which you are to understand, not that he merely assumed a body, to appear transiently to us in it, and so lay it down again; but his true and real assumption of our nature, which was a special part of his humiliation; as will appear by the following particulars:

1. The incarnation of Christ was a most wonderful humiliation, inasmuch as thereby he, who is "over all, God blessed for ever," is *brought into the rank and order of*

creatures. This is the astonishing mystery, that God should be manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3 : 16, that the eternal God should truly and properly be called the **MAN** Christ Jesus. 1 Tim. 2 : 5. It was a wonder to Solomon, that God would dwell in the stately and magnificent temple at Jerusalem : "But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth ? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee ; how much less this house which I have built !" 2 Chron. 6 : 18. But it is a far greater wonder that God should dwell in a body of flesh, and pitch his tabernacle with us. John, 1 : 14.

The heathen Chaldeans told the king of Babel, that the "dwelling of the gods is not with flesh." Dan. 2 : 11. But now God not only dwells with flesh, but dwells in flesh ; yea, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

For the sun to fall from its sphere, and be degraded into a wandering atom ; for an angel to be turned out of heaven, and be converted into a fly or a worm, had not been such abasement ; for they were but creatures before, and so they would abide still, though in an inferior rank. The distance between the highest and lowest species of creatures is but a finite distance. The angel and the worm dwell not so far asunder. But for the infinite glorious Creator of all things to become a creature, is a mystery exceeding all human understanding. The distance between God and the highest order of creatures is an infinite distance. He is said to humble himself to behold the things that are done in heaven. What a humiliation then is it, to behold the things in the lower world ! but to be born into it, and become a man ! great indeed is the mystery of godliness. "Behold, (saith the prophet, Isa. 40 : 15, 17,) the nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance ; he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are accounted to him less than nothing, and

vanity." If, indeed, this great and incomprehensible Majesty will himself stoop to the state and condition of a creature, we may easily believe that, being once a creature, he would expose himself to hunger, thirst, shame, spitting, death, or any thing but sin. For that once being a man, he should endure any of these things, is not so wonderful, as that he should become a man. This was the low step, a deep abasement indeed!

2. It was a marvellous humiliation to the Son of God, not only to become a creature, but *an inferior creature*, a man, and not an angel. Had he taken the angelic nature, though it had been a wonderful abasement to him, yet he had staid, if I may so speak, nearer his own home, and been somewhat more like to a God than now he appeared, when he dwelt with us; for angels are the highest and most excellent of all created beings. For their nature, they are pure spirits; for their wisdom, intelligences; for their dignity, they are called principalities and powers; for their habitations, they are styled the heavenly host; and for their employment, it is to behold the face of God in heaven. One description both of our holiness and happiness in the coming world is this, we shall be "equal to the angels." Luke, 20:36. As man is nothing to God, so he is much inferior to the angels; so much below them, that he is not able to bear the sight of an angel, though in a human shape. Judges, 13:22. When the psalmist had contemplated the heavens, and viewed the celestial bodies, the glorious luminaries, the moon and stars which God had made, he cries out, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him! thou hast made him a little lower than the angels." Psalm 8:5, 6. Take man at his best, when he came perfect and pure from his Maker's hand, in the state of innocency; yet he was inferior to angels. They always bore the image of God in a more eminent degree than man, as being

wholly spiritual, and so a more lively representation of God than man could be, whose noble soul is immersed in matter, and enclosed in flesh and blood. Yet Christ chooseth this inferior order of creatures, and passeth by the angelic nature ; " He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." Heb. 2 : 16.

3. Moreover, Jesus Christ did not only assume the human nature ; but he also assumed its nature, *after sin had blotted its original glory*, and withered its beauty and excellency. For he came not in our nature before the fall, whilst as yet its glory was fresh in it ; but he came, as the apostle speaks, " in the likeness of *sinful* flesh," Rom. 8 : 3, that is, in flesh that had the marks, and miserable effects, and consequents of sin upon it. I say not that Christ assumed sinful flesh, or flesh really defiled by sin. That which was born of the virgin was holy. By the power of the Highest it was so sanctified that no taint of original pollution remained in it. But yet, though it had not intrinsic native uncleanness in it, it had the effects of sin upon it ; yea, it was attended with the whole troop of human infirmities that sin at first brought into our common nature, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, pain, mortality, and these natural weaknesses and evils that clog our miserable natures, and under which they groan from day to day.

Though he was not a sinner, yet he appeared like a sinful man, and they that saw and conversed with him took him for a sinner, seeing all these effects of sin upon him. In these things he came as near to sin as his holiness could admit. O what a stoop was this ! To be made in the likeness of flesh, though the *innocent* flesh of Adam, had been much ; but to be made in the likeness of *sinful* flesh, the flesh of sinners, rebels ; Oh what is this ! and who can declare it ! And indeed, if he were to be a Mediator of reconciliation, it was necessary it should be so. It behoved him to assume the

same nature that sinned : to make satisfaction in it. Yea, these sinless infirmities were necessary to be assumed with the nature, as his bearing them was a part of his humiliation, and went to make up satisfaction for us. Moreover, by them our High Priest was qualified from his own experience, and filled with tender compassion to us. Oh the admirable condescension of a Saviour, to take such a nature ! to put on such a garment when so very mean and ragged ! Did this become such a Saviour ? Oh grace unsearchable !

4. And yet more, by this his incarnation he was greatly humbled, inasmuch as this so veiled, clouded, and disguised him, that during the time he lived here he *looked not like himself as God*. Hereby "he made himself of no reputation." Phil. 2 : 7. By reason hercof he lost all esteem and honor from those that saw him, "Is not this the carpenter's son ?" Matt. 13 : 55. To see a poor man traveling up and down the country, in hunger, thirst, weariness, attended with a company of poor men ; one of his company bearing the bag, and that which was put therein, John, 13 : 29 ; who that saw him, would ever have thought this had been the Creator of the world, the Prince of the kings of the earth ? "He was despised, and we esteemed him not." Who of you would not rather endure much misery as a man, than be degraded into a contemptible worm ? Yet Christ stooped to an infinitely deeper degradation.

And think with yourselves now, was not this astonishing self-denial ? It was a black cloud that for so many years darkened and shut up his glory, that it could not shine out to the world ; only some weak rays of the Godhead shone to some few eyes, through the chinks of his humanity ; as the clouded sun sometimes breaks forth a little, and casts some faint beams, and is hid again. "We saw his glory," says the beloved apostle, "as of the only begotten Son," John, 1 : 14 ; but the world

knew him not. If a prince walk up and down in disguise, he must expect no more honor than a mean subject. This was the case of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Again, Christ was greatly humbled by his incarnation, inasmuch as thereby he was *put at a distance from the Father*, and that ineffable joy and pleasure he eternally had with him. Think not, reader, but the Lord Jesus had high and inimitable communion with God while he walked here in the flesh; but yet to live by faith, as Christ here did, is one thing; and to be in the bosom of God, as he was before, is another. To cry, and God not hear, as he complains, Ps. 32: 3, nay, to be reduced to such distress as to be forced to cry out so bitterly as he did, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Ps. 22: 1; this was a thing Christ was utterly unacquainted with till he was found in fashion as a man.

6. And lastly, It was a great stoop and condescension of Christ if he would become a man, to take his nature from such obscure parents, and choose such a low and contemptible *state in this world* as he did. He is born, not of the blood of nobles, but of a poor woman in Israel, espoused to a carpenter: yea, and that, too, under all the disadvantages imaginable; not in his mother's house; but an inn; yea, a stable. He suited all to that abased state he was designed for; and came among us under all the humbling circumstances imaginable: "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." 2 Cor. 8: 9. Thus I have shown you some few particulars of Christ's humiliation in his incarnation.

INFERENCE 1. Hence we gather *the fulness and completeness of Christ's satisfaction*, as the sweet first-fruits of his incarnation. Did man offend and violate the law of God? Behold, God himself is become man to repair that breach, and satisfy for the wrong done. The highest honor that ever the law of God received, was to

have such a person as the man Christ Jesus stand before its bar and make reparation to it. This is more than if it had poured out all our blood, and built up its honor upon the ruins of the whole creation.

It is not so much to see all the stars in heaven overcast, as to see one sun eclipsed. The greater Christ was, the greater was his humiliation; and the greater his humiliation was, the more full and complete was his satisfaction; and the more complete his satisfaction, the more perfect and steady is the believer's consolation. If he had not stooped so low, our joy and comfort could not be exalted so high. The depth of the foundation is the strength of the superstructure.

2. Did Christ for our sakes stoop from his majesty, glory, and dignity in heaven, to the mean and contemptible state of a man? What a *pattern of self-denial* is here presented to christians! What objection or excuses against this duty can remain, after such an example as is here given? Brethren, let me tell you, the pagan world was never acquainted with such an argument as this to press them to self-denial. Did Christ stoop, and cannot you stoop? did Christ stoop so much, and cannot you stoop the least? Was he willing to become any thing, a worm, a reproach, a curse; and cannot you bear any abasement? Does the least slight and neglect poison your heart with discontent, malice, and revenge? Oh, how unlike Christ are you! Hear, and blush in hearing, what your Lord saith in John, 13 : 14. "If I then, your Lord and Master, wash your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet." "The example does not oblige us (as a learned man well observes) to the same individual act, but it obliges us to follow the reason of the example;" that is, after Christ's example, we must be ready to perform the humblest offices of love and service to one another. And indeed to this it obliges most forcibly; for it is as if a master, seeing a proud

servant, that despises his work, as if it were too mean and base, should come and take it out of his hand; and when he has done it should say, Doth your lord and master think it not beneath him to do it, and is it beneath you?

“What more detestable,” says Bernard, “what more unworthy, or what deserves severer punishment, than for a poor man to magnify himself, after he hath seen the great and high God so humbled as to become a little child? It is intolerable impudence for a worm to swell with pride, after it hath seen majesty emptying itself; seen one so infinitely above us, stoop so far beneath us.” Ah, how opposite should pride and haughtiness be to the spirit of a christian! I am sure nothing is more so to the spirit of Christ. Your Saviour was lowly, meek, self-denying, and of a most condescending spirit; he looked not at his own things, but yours. Phil. 2: 4. And does it become you to be proud and selfish? Jerome, in his epistle to Pamachius, a godly young nobleman, advised him to be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame; yea, saith he, if need be, I would not have you refuse to cut wood and draw water for the saints; and what is this to buffeting and spitting, being crowned with thorns, scourging and dying! Yet Christ underwent all this, and that for the ungodly.

3. Did Christ stoop so low as to become a man to save us? Then those that perish under the Gospel, must *perish without excuse*. What would you have Christ do more? Lo, he hath laid aside the robes of majesty and glory, put on your own garments of flesh, come down from his throne, and brought salvation home to your own doors. Surely, the lower Christ stooped to save us, the lower those shall sink under wrath that neglect so great salvation. The Lord Jesus is brought low, but the unbeliever would lay him yet lower; he will tread under foot the Son of God. Heb. 10: 29. For such (as

the apostle there speaks) is reserved something worse than dying without mercy. What pleas and excuses others will make at the judgment-seat, I know not; but one thing is evident, such will be speechless. O poor sinners! your damnation is just, if you refuse grace brought home by Jesus Christ himself to your very doors. The Lord grant this may not be thy case who readeest these lines.

4. Moreover, hence it follows that none doth or can love like Christ: *His love to man is matchless*. Its freeness, strength, eternity, and immutability, give it a lustre beyond all examples. It was a strong love indeed, that made him lay aside his glory, to be found in fashion as a man, for our salvation. We read of Jonathan's love to David, which passed the love of women; of Jacob's love to Rachel, who for her sake endured the heat of summer and cold of winter; of David's love to Absalom; of the primitive christians' love, who could die one for another: but neither were they called to such self-denial as Christ, nor had he such inducements from the object of his love as they had. His love, like himself, is wonderful.

5. Did the Lord Jesus so deeply abase himself for us? What *claims has he on us to exalt and honor him*, who for our sakes was so abased! It was a good saying of Bernard, "By how much the viler he was made for me, by so much the dearer he shall be to me." And oh that all to whom Christ is dear, would study to exalt and honor him in these four ways:

By frequent and delightful *speaking of him and for him*. When Paul had once mentioned his name, he knows not how to part with it, but repeats it no less than ten times in the compass of ten verses. 1 Cor. 1: 1-10. It was Lambert's motto, "None but Christ, none but Christ." It is said of Johannes Milius, that after his conversion he was seldom or never observed to men-

tion the name of Jesus but tears would drop from his eyes ; so dear was Christ to him. Mr. Fox never denied any beggar that asked alms in Christ's name, or for Jesus' sake. Julius Palmer, when all concluded he was dead, being turned as black as a coal, at last moved his scorched lips, and was heard to say, "Sweet Jesus," and fell asleep.

Plutarch tells us, that when Titus Flaminius had freed the poor Grecians from the bondage with which they had been long ground by their oppressors, and the herald was to proclaim in their audience the articles of peace he had concluded for them, they so pressed upon him, (not being half of them able to hear,) that he was in great danger of losing his life in the press ; at last, reading them a second time, when they came to understand distinctly how their case stood, they shouted for joy, crying, *Σωτηρ, Σωτηρ*, "a Saviour, a Saviour," till the very heavens rung with their acclamations. And all that night the poor Grecians, with instruments of music and songs of praise, danced and sung about his tent, extolling him as a god that had delivered them. But surely you have more reason to be exalting the Author of your salvation, who, at a dearer rate, hath freed you from a more dreadful bondage. Oh ye that have escaped the eternal wrath of God, by the humiliation of his Son, extol your great Redeemer, and for ever celebrate his praises !

Honor him by exercising faith in him for whatsoever lies in the *promises yet unaccomplished*. In this you see the great and most difficult promise fulfilled, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," Gen. 3 : 15 ; and seeing that which was most improbable and difficult is fulfilled, even Christ come in the flesh, methinks our unbelief should be removed for ever, and all other promises the more easily believed. It seemed much more improbable and impossible to reason, that

God should become a man, and stoop to the condition of a creature, than that, being a man, he should perform all the good which his incarnation and death procured. Unbelief usually argues from one of these two grounds, Can God do this? or, Will God do it? It is questioning either his power or his will; but after this, let it cease for ever to cavil against either. His power to save should never be questioned by any that know what sufferings and infinite burdens he supported in our nature; and surely his willingness to save should never be put in question by any that consider how low he stooped for our sakes.

Honor him by drawing nigh to God with delight, "*through the veil of Christ's flesh.*" Heb. 10:20. God hath made this flesh of Christ a veil between the brightness of his glory and us; it serves to rebate the unsupportable glory, and also to give admission to it, as the veil did in the temple. Through this body of flesh, which Christ assumed, are all the outlets of grace from God to us; and through it, also, must be all our returns to God again. It is made the great medium of our communion with God.

Honor him also by applying yourselves to him, *under all temptations, wants, and troubles*, of what kind soever, as to one that is tenderly sensible of your case, and most willing and ready to relieve you. Oh remember, this was one of the inducements that persuaded him to take your nature, that he might be furnished abundantly with tender compassion for you, from the sense he should have of your infirmities in his own body: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Heb. 2:17. You know by this argument the Lord pressed the Israelites to be kind to strangers; for (saith he)

“you know the heart of a stranger.” Exod. 23 : 9. Christ, by being in our nature, knows experimentally what are our wants, fears, temptations, and distresses, and so is able to have compassion. Oh let your hearts dwell upon this admirable condescension, till they be filled with it, and your lips say, Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ !

CHAPTER XIX.

CHRIST'S HUMILIATION—IN HIS LIFE.

“ *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Phil. 2 : 8.* ”

This scripture was considered in the last discourse, and, indeed, can never be enough considered : it holds forth the humble state of the Lord Jesus during the time of his abode on earth. We have seen how he was humbled *by his incarnation* ; we are now to consider how he was humbled *in his life* : yet expect not that I should give you here an exact history of the life of Christ. The Scriptures speak but little of the private part of his life, and it is not my design to dilate upon all the memorable passages that the evangelists, those faithful narrators of the life of Christ, have preserved for us ; but only to notice and improve some more observable particulars in his life, wherein especially he was humbled.

I. The Lord Jesus was humbled in his very infancy, *by his circumcision according to the law*. For being of the stock of Israel, he was to undergo the ceremonies and submit to the ordinances belonging to that people, and thereby to put an end to them ; for so it became him to “ fulfil all righteousness.” “ And when eight days were

accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus." Luke, 2 : 21. Hereby the Son of God was greatly humbled, especially in these two respects :

1. In that hereby he obliged himself to *keep the whole law*, though he was the Law-maker ; " For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." Gal. 5 : 3. The apostle's meaning is, he is a debtor in respect to duty, because he that thinks himself bound to keep one part of the ceremonial law, doth thereby bind himself to keep it all ; for all the parts are inseparably united. And he that is a debtor in duty to keep the whole law, quickly becomes a debtor as to its penalty, not being able to keep any part of it. Christ therefore coming as our Surety by his circumcision, obliges himself to pay the whole debt of duty by fulfilling all righteousness : and though his obedience to the law was so exact and perfect that he contracted no debt of penalty for any transgression of his own ; yet he obliges himself to pay the debt of penalty which he had contracted, by suffering all the pains due to transgressors. This was that intolerable yoke that none were able to bear but Christ. Acts, 15 : 10. And it was no small thing in Christ to bind himself to the law, as a subject made under it ; for he was the Lawgiver, above all law : and herein the sovereignty of God (one of the choice flowers in the crown of heaven) was obscured and veiled by his subjection.

2. By his circumcision he was *represented* to the world not only as a subject, but *as a sinner* ; for though he was pure and holy, yet this ordinance passing upon him, seemed to imply as if corruption had indeed been in him, which must be cut off by mortification. For this was the mystery principally intended by circumcision : it served to admonish Abraham, and his seed, of the guiltiness, uncleanness, and corruption of their hearts

and nature. So Jer. 4:4. Hence the rebellious and unmortified are called "stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart." Acts, 7:51. And as it served to convince of natural uncleanness, so it signified and sealed "the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh," as the apostle expresses it. Col. 2:11.

II. Christ was humbled *by persecution*, and that in the very morning of his life; he was banished almost as soon as born. "Flee into Egypt," saith the angel to Joseph, "and be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." Matt. 2:13. Ungrateful Herod! was this entertainment for a Saviour? What! raise a country against him, as if a destroyer, rather than a Saviour, had landed upon the coast? But herein Herod fulfilled the Scriptures whilst venting his own rage; for so it was foretold. Jer. 31:15. And this early persecution was not obscurely hinted in the title of the 22d Psalm, a Psalm which looks rather like a history of the New, than a prophecy of the Old Testament.

III. Our Lord Jesus Christ was yet more humbled in his life, by that *poverty and outward meanness* which all along attended his condition: he lived poor and low all his days; so speaks the apostle, "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," 2 Cor. 8:9; so poor, that he was never owner of a house to dwell in, but lived all his days in other men's houses, or lay in the open air. His outward condition was more neglected and destitute than that of the birds of the air, or beasts of the earth; so he told the scribe, who professed such readiness to follow him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Matt. 8:20. Sometimes he feeds upon barley-bread and broiled fish; and sometimes he was hungry, and had nothing to eat. Mark, 11:12.

He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," Matt. 20 : 28 ; not to amass earthly treasures, but to bestow heavenly ones. His great and heavenly soul neglected and despised those things which too many of his followers too much admire and prosecute. He spent not a careful thought about those things that engross thousands and ten thousands of our thoughts. Indeed he came to be humbled, and to teach men by his example the vanity of this world, and pour contempt upon its insnaring glory ; and therefore went before us in a chosen and voluntary poverty.

IV. Our Lord Jesus was yet further humbled in his life, by the horrid *temptations* wherewith Satan assaulted him, than which nothing could be more grievous to his holy heart. The evangelist gives us an account of this, Luke, 4 : 1-13, in which context you find how the bold and envious spirit meets the Captain of our salvation in the field, comes up with him in the wilderness when he was solitary, keeps him fasting forty days and forty nights, and assaults him with a very plausible temptation at first, and afterwards with a variety, trying several weapons upon him. When he had made a thrust at him with the first weapon, in which he especially trusted, "Command that these stones be made bread," and saw how Christ put it by, he changes his position, and assaults him with temptations to blasphemy, even to fall down and worship the devil. But when he saw he could fasten nothing on him, that he was as pure fountain-water in a crystal phial, which how much soever agitated and shaken, produces no dregs or sediment, but remains pure still ; I say, seeing this, he makes a politic retreat, quits the field "for a season," yet leaves it with a resolution to return to him again. Thus was our blessed Lord Jesus humbled by the temptations of Satan : and what can you imagine more burdensome to him that was brought up from

eternity with God, delighting in the Holy Father, than to be now shut into a wilderness with the devil, there to be tempted so many days, and have his ears filled, though not defiled, with horrid blasphemy? How great a humiliation must this be to him who was truly God! To see a slave of his house setting upon himself the Lord! His jailer coming to take him prisoner, if he can! A base apostate spirit daring to attempt such things as these upon him! Surely this was a deep abasement to the Son of God.

V. Our blessed Lord Jesus was yet more humbled in his life than all this, and that by *his own sympathy with others*, under all the burdens that made him groan. For he, much more than Paul, could say, Who is afflicted, and I burn not? He lived all his time, as it were, in a hospital among the sick and wounded. And so tender was his heart, that every groan for sin, or under the effects of sin, pierced him so, that it was truly said, "himself bare our sicknesses, and took our infirmities." Matt. 8: 16, 17. This was spoken upon the occasion of some poor creatures that were possessed by the devil being brought to him to be dispossessed. It is said that when he saw Mary "weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." John, 11: 33. And "Jesus wept," v. 35. Yea, his heart flowed with pity for them that had not one drop of pity for themselves. Witness his tears wept over Jerusalem. Luke, 19: 41, 42. He foresaw the misery that was coming, though they neither foresaw nor feared it. Oh how it pierced him to think of the calamities hanging over that great city! Yea, he mourned for them that mourned not for their own sins. Therefore it is said, "He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Mark, 3: 5. So that the commendation of a good physician, that he doth as it were die with every patient, was most applicable to our tender-hearted Phy-

sician. This was one of those things that made him "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." For the more holy any one is, the more he is grieved and afflicted by the sin of others; and the more tender any man is, the more he is pierced with beholding the miseries that lie upon others. Certainly there was never any heart more holy, or more sensible, tender, and compassionate than Christ's.

VI. That which yet helped to humble him lower, was the ungrateful and most *base and unworthy reception given him*. He was not received or treated like a Saviour, but as the vilest of men. One would think that when he came from heaven "to give his life a ransom for many," Matt. 20 : 28; when he was "not sent to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved," John, 3 : 17; when he came to "destroy the works of the devil," 1 John, 3 : 8; "to open the prison-doors, and proclaim liberty to the captives," Isa. 61 : 1; I say, when such a Saviour arrived, Oh, with what acclamations of joy and demonstrations of thankfulness should he have been received! One would have thought they should even kiss the ground he trod upon: but instead of this, he was hated. John, 15 : 18. He was despised by them. Matt. 13 : 55. So reproached, that he became "the reproach of men." Ps. 22 : 6. Accused of working his miracles by the power of the devil. Matt. 12 : 24. He was trod upon as a worm. Ps. 22 : 6. They buffeted him, Matt. 26 : 67; smote him on the head, Matt. 27 : 30; arrayed him as a fool, verses 28, 29; spat in his face, verse 30. One of his own followers sold him, another forswore him, and all forsook him in his greatest troubles. All this was a great atasement to the Son of God, who was not thus treated for a day or in one place, but all his days, and in all places. "He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself." In these particulars I have pointed out to you

something of the humble life Christ lived in the world.

INFERENCE 1. From Christ's humiliation, in submitting to be circumcised, and thereby obliging himself to fulfill the whole law, it follows, that justice itself may set its hand and seal to *the acquittance and discharge of believers*. Christ hereby obliged himself to pay the utmost demand of the law ; to bear that yoke of obedience that never any before him could bear. And as his circumcision obliged him to keep the whole law ; so he was most precise and punctual in the observance of it : so exact that the sharp eye of Divine justice cannot espy the least flaw in it ; but acknowledges full payment, and stands ready to give the believer a full acquittance ; " that God may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3 : 26. Had not Christ been under this obligation, we had never been discharged. Had not his obedience been entire, complete, and perfect, our justification could not have been so. He that hath a precious treasure, will be loth to adventure it in a leaky vessel : wo to the holiest man on earth, if the safety of his precious soul were to be adventured on the ground of the best duty that ever he performed. But Christ's obedience and righteousness is firm and sound ; a foundation on which we may safely adventure all.

2. From the early flight of Christ into Egypt, we infer that *the greatest innocency and piety cannot exempt from persecution and injury*. Who more innocent than Christ ? and who more persecuted ? The world is the world still. " I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them." John, 17 : 14. The adversary lies in wait as a thief for them that carry this treasure ; they who are empty of it may sing before him, he never stops them : but persecution follows piety, as the shadow does the body. " All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3 : 12. Whosoever resolves to live holily, must never expect to live quietly.

All that will live godly, will exhibit holiness in their lives, which convinces and disturbs the consciences of the ungodly. It is this enrages, for there is an enmity and antipathy between them: and this enmity runs in the blood; and it is transmitted with it from generation to generation: "As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." Gal. 4:29. Mark, so it was, and so it is still. "Cain's club is still carried up and down crimsoned with the blood of Abel," said Bucholtzer; but thus it must be, to conform us unto Christ: and Oh that your spirit, as well as your condition, may better harmonize with Christ. He suffered meekly, quietly, and self-denyingly: be ye like him. Let it not be said of you, as it is of the hypocrite, whose lusts are only hid, but not mortified by his duties, that he is like a flint, which seems cold; but if you strike him, he is all fiery. To do well, and suffer ill, is Christ-like.

3. Such as are full of grace and holiness may be *destitute of earthly comforts*. What an overflowing fulness of grace was there in Christ! and yet how low did his outward comforts sometimes fall! And as it fared with him, so did it with many others now in glory, whilst they were on their way. "Even to this present hour, we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." 1 Cor. 4:11. Their souls were richly clothed with robes of righteousness, their bodies naked or meanly clad. Their souls fed on hidden manna, their bodies were hungry. Let us be content (saith Luther) with our hard fare; for do we not feast with angels upon the bread of life? Remember, when wants pinch hard, that these fix no mark of God's hatred upon you. He hath dealt no worse with you than he did with his own Son. Nay, which of you is not better accommodated than Christ was? If you be hungry or thirsty, you have some refreshments; you have beds to

lie on: the Son of man had not where to lay his head. And remember you are going to a plentiful country, where all your wants will be supplied; "poor in the world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised." James, 2: 5. The meanness of your present will add to the lustre of your future condition.

4. Those in whom Satan has no interest, may have *most trouble from him in this world*; "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." John, 14: 30. Where he knows he cannot be a conqueror, he will not cease to be a troubler. This bold and daring spirit ventured to assault Christ himself; for doubtless he was filled with envy at the sight of him, and would do what he could, though to no purpose, to obstruct his blessed design. And it was the wisdom and love of Christ to admit him to come as near him as might be, and try all his darts upon him; that by this experience he might himself be filled with pity to succor them that are tempted. And as he set on Christ, so much more will he attack us; and but too oft comes off a conqueror. Sometimes he shoots the fiery darts of blasphemous thoughts; and divers rules are prescribed in this case to relieve poor distressed ones. But the best rule, doubtless, is that of the apostle, "Above all, taking *the shield of faith*, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Eph. 6: 16. Act your faith, my friends, upon your tempted Saviour, who passed through temptations before you: and particularly exercise faith on three things in Christ's temptations:

Believingly consider how great *variety* of temptations were tried upon Christ; and of what a horrid blasphemous nature that was, "Fall down and worship me." Also that Christ came off *perfect conqueror* in the day of his trial, beat Satan out of the field. And more, believe that the benefits of those his victories and conquests are *for you*, and that for your sakes he permit-

ted the tempter to come so near him. Hebrews, 2 : 18.

If you say, " True, Christ was tempted as well as I ; but there is a vast difference between his temptations and mine ; for the prince of this world came, and found nothing in him. John, 14 : 30. He was not internally defiled, though externally assaulted ; but I am defiled by temptations as well as troubled."

To this I answer, True, it is so, and must be so ; for had Christ been internally defiled, he had not been a fit Mediator for you ; nor could you have had any benefit, either by his temptations or sufferings. But he being tempted, and yet still escaping the defilement of sin, has not only satisfied for the sins you commit when tempted, but also got an experimental sense of the misery of your condition, which is in him (though now in glory) as a spring of pity and tender compassion to you. Remember, poor tempted christian, " the God of peace shall shortly tread Satan under thy feet." Rom. 16 : 20. Thou shalt set thy foot on the neck of that enemy. Meanwhile, till thou be out of his reach, let me advise thee to go to Jesus Christ, and open the matter to him ; tell him how that base spirit falls upon thee, yea, sets upon thee, even in his presence : entreat him to rebuke and command him off : beg him to consider thy case, and say, Lord, dost thou remember how thy own heart was once grieved, though not defiled, by his assaults ? I have grief and guilt together upon me. Ah Lord, I expect pity and help from thee ; thou knowest the heart of a stranger, the heart of a poor and tempted one. This will give wonderful relief in this case. O try it !

5. Was Christ yet more humbled by his own sympathy with others in their distresses ? Hence we learn that a *compassionate spirit*, towards such as labor under burdens of sin or affliction, is Christ-like, and truly excellent : this was the Spirit of Christ : Oh be like him ! Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy. Col. 3 : 12.

"Weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice." Rom. 12 : 15. It was Cain that said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Blessed Paul was of a contrary temper; "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Cor. 11 : 29. Three things promote sympathy in christians: one is, the Lord's pity for them; he doth, as it were, suffer with them; "in all their afflictions he was afflicted." Isa. 63 : 9. Another is, the relation we sustain to God's afflicted people: they are members with us in one body, and the members should have the same care of one another. 1 Cor. 12 : 25. The last is, we know not how soon we ourselves may need from others what others now need from us. "Restore him with the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Gal. 6 : 1.

6. Did the world add to the humiliation of Christ by their base and vile usage of him? Learn hence, that *the judgment which the world gives of persons and their worth is little to be regarded.* Surely it dispenses its smiles and honors very preposterously and unduly. The saints are styled persons "of whom the world is not worthy," Heb. 11 : 38, that is, it does not deserve to have such choice spirits as these are left in it, since it knows not how to use or treat them. It was the complaint of Salvian, above eleven hundred years ago; "If any of the nobility do but begin to turn to God, presently he loses the honor of nobility! Oh in how little honor is Christ among (so called) christian people, when religion shall make a man ignoble! So that many are compelled to be evil, lest they should be esteemed vile." And indeed, if the world gives us any help to discover the true worth and excellency of men, it is for the most part by the rule of contraries. Where it fixes its marks of hatred, we may usually find that which deserves our respect and love. It should therefore trouble us the less to be under the slights and disrespect of a blind

world. "I could be even proud of it, (saith Luther,) that I see I have an ill name from the world." And Jerome "blessed God that counted him worthy to be hated of the world." Labor to stand right in the judgment of God, and trouble not thyself for the rash censures of men.

7. From the whole of Christ's humiliation in his life, learn to *pass through all the troubles of your life with a contented, composed spirit*, as Christ your forerunner did. He was persecuted, and bare it meekly; poor, and never murmured; tempted, and never yielded to the temptation; reviled, and reviled not again. When ye therefore pass through any of these trials, look to Jesus, and consider him. See how he that passed through these things before you, conducted himself in like circumstances; yea, not only beat the way by his pattern and example for you, but hath in every one of those conditions left a blessing behind him, for them that follow his steps. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XX.

CHRIST'S HUMILIATION UNTO DEATH.

HIS FIRST PREPARATIVE ACT.

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are"
John, 17: 11.

We now come to the last and lowest step of Christ's humiliation, his submitting to death, even the death of the cross. Out of this death springs the life of our souls. In the blood of Christ the believer sees multitudes of inestimable blessings. By this crimson fountain

I resolve to sit down: and concerning the death of Christ, I shall take distinctly into consideration the preparations made for it; the nature and quality of it; the deportment and conduct of Jesus when dying; the funeral solemnities with which he was buried; and lastly, the blessed designs and glorious ends of his death.

The preparatives for his death were six. Three on his own part, and three more by his enemies. The preparations made by himself for it were, the solemn recommendation of his friends to his Father; the institution of a commemorative sign, to perpetuate and refresh the memory of his death in the hearts of his people, till he come again; and his pouring out his soul to God by prayer in the garden, which was the posture he chose to be found in when they should apprehend him.

This scripture contains the first preparative of Christ for death, whereby he sets his house in order, prays for his people, and blesses them before he dies. The love of Christ was ever tender and strong to his people; but the greatest manifestation of it was at parting: especially in the singular supports and grounds of comfort left with them in his last heavenly sermon, chapp. 14, 15, 16, and in pouring out his soul most affectionately to the Father for them in the heavenly prayer, chap. 17. In this prayer he gives them a specimen of his glorious intercession-work, which he was then going to perform in heaven for them. Here his heart overflowed, for he was now leaving them, and going to the Father. The last words of a dying man are valued; how much more of a dying Saviour! I shall not launch out into the ocean of precious matter contained in this chapter, but take immediately into consideration the words of the text, wherein I find a weighty petition, strongly followed and set home with many mighty arguments.

1. We have here Christ's petition, or request in behalf of his people, not only those who were with him at the time, but all others that then did, or afterwards should believe on him. And the sum of what he here requests for them is, that his Father would keep them through his name.

Keeping implies danger. And there is a double danger contemplated in this request; danger of sin, and danger of ruin and destruction. To both these the people of God are liable in this world. The means of their preservation from both is the name, that is, the power of God. This name of the Lord is that "strong tower to which the righteous run, and are safe." Prov. 18: 10. Alas! it is not your own strength or wisdom that keeps you, but ye are kept by the mighty power of God. This protecting power of God does not, however, exclude our care and diligence, but implies it; therefore it is added, "Ye are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto salvation." 1 Pet. 1: 5. God keeps his people, and yet they are to keep themselves in the love of God, Jude 21, to keep their hearts with all diligence. Prov. 4: 23. This is the sum of the petition.

2. The arguments with which he urges and presses this request, are drawn partly from *his own* condition, "I am no more in the world:" I am going to die; within a very few hours I shall be separated from them. Partly from *their* condition: "but these are in the world:" I must leave them in the midst of danger. And partly from the joint interest his Father and himself had in them; "Keep those that thou hast given me:" with several other most prevalent pleas, which, in their proper places, shall be produced and displayed, to illustrate and confirm this precious truth:

The fatherly care and tender love of our Lord Jesus Christ was eminently displayed in the prayer he poured out for his people at his parting with them.

It pertained to the priest and father of the family to bless the rest, especially when he was to be separated from them by death. This was a right in Israel. When good Jacob was grown old, and the time had come that he should be gathered to his fathers, he blessed Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh, "saying, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Gen. 48: 15, 16. This was a prophetic and patriarchal blessing: not that Jacob could bless as God blesses; he could speak the words of blessing, but he knew the effect, the real blessing itself, depended upon God: he could, as the mouth of God, pronounce blessings, but could not confer them. Thus he blessed his children, as his father Isaac had also blessed him before he died, Gen. 28: 3; and all these blessings were delivered in the form of prayer.

Now when Jesus Christ comes to die, he also blesses his children, and therein shows how dear and tender love he has for them: "Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end." John, 13: 1. The last act of Christ in this world was an act of blessing. Luke, 24: 50, 51.

We will consider the mercies Christ requested of the Father for them; the arguments he used; why he thus pleaded for them when he was to die; and how all this gives full evidence of Christ's tender care and love to his people.

I. *What were those mercies and special favors which Christ begged for his people when he was to die.*

1. The mercy of *preservation both from sin and danger*: "Keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me:" which is explained, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." John, 17: 15. We,

in ours, and the saints that are gone, in their respective generations, have reaped the fruit of this prayer. How else comes it to pass, that our souls are preserved amidst such a world of temptations, and these assisted by our own corruptions? How else is it, that our persons are not ruined and destroyed amidst such multitudes of potent and malicious enemies, that "are set on fire of hell?" The preservation of the burning bush, of the three children amidst the flames, and of Daniel in the den of lions, are scarcely greater wonders than these which our eyes daily behold. As the fire would have certainly consumed, and the lions, without doubt, have rended and devoured, had not God, by the interposition of his own hand, stopped and hindered the effect; so would the sin in us, and the malice in others, quickly ruin our souls and bodies, were it not that the same hand guards and keeps us every moment. To that hand, into which this prayer of Christ delivered you, do you owe all your mercies and salvation, both temporal and spiritual.

2. Another mercy he prays for is the blessing of *union* among themselves. This he joins immediately with the first mercy of preservation, and prays for it in the same breath, "That they may be one, as we are." Ver. 11. And well might he join them; for this union is not only a choice mercy in itself, but a special means of that preservation he had prayed for before: their union with one another is a special means to preserve them all.

3. A third mercy that Christ earnestly prayed for, was that *his* "joy might be fulfilled in them." Ver. 13. He would provide for their joy, even when the hour of his greatest sorrow was at hand; yea, he would not only obtain joy for them, but a full joy: "that my joy might be fulfilled in them." It is as if he had said, Oh my Father, I am to leave these dear ones in a world

of trouble and perplexities ; I know their hearts will be subject to despond ; Oh let me obtain divine joy for them before I go : I would not only have them live, but live joyfully.

4. And as a continued spring to maintain all these mercies, he prays that "they all may be *sanctified through the truth*," ver. 17, that is, more abundantly sanctified than yet they were, by a deeper implanting of gracious habits and principles in their heart. This is a singular mercy, to have holiness spreading itself over and through their souls, as the light of the morning. Nothing is in itself more desirable. And it is also a great help to their perseverance, union, and spiritual joy, for which he had prayed, and which are all advanced by their increasing sanctification.

5. And as the completion and perfection of all mercies, he prays "that they may *be with him, where he is, to behold his glory*." Ver. 24. This is the best and highest privilege of which they were capable. The end of his coming down from heaven, and returning thither again, was to bring many sons and daughters unto glory. You see Christ asks no small thing for his people ; no mercies but the best that both worlds afford will suffice him on their behalf.

II. Let us see how he urges his requests, and *with what arguments he pleads* with the Father for these things.

1. The first argument is drawn from *the joint interest* that himself and his Father have in those for whom he prays, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." Verse 10. As if he had said, Father, behold and consider the persons I pray for, they are thy children as well as mine ; the very same whom thou hast embraced in thy eternal love, and in that love hast given them to me ; so that they are both thine and mine ; great is our interest in them. Oh therefore keep, comfort, sanctify,

and save them, for they are thine. What a mighty plea is this! Surely, christians, your Intercessor is skilful in his work, your Advocate wants no eloquence or ability to plead for you.

2. The second argument, and that a powerful one, treads, as I may say, upon the very heel of the former, in the next words, "And I am glorified in them:" My glory and honor are infinitely dear to thee; I know thy heart is entirely set upon the exalting and glorifying of thy Son. Now, what glory have I in the world, but what comes from my people? Others neither can nor will glorify me; nay, I am daily blasphemed and dishonored by them: these are they from whom my glory and praise in the world must rise. Should these then wander and perish, where shall my glory be? and from whom shall I expect it? So that here his property and glory are pleaded with the Father, to prevail for those mercies; and what is dearer, what nearer to the heart of God?

3. And yet to make all fast and sure, he adds a third argument, "And now I am no more in the world:" that is, as to his corporeal presence; this, which had been a sweet spring of comfort to them in all their troubles, was, in a little time, to be removed. It might now have been said to the pensive disciples, as the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, a little before Elijah's translation, "Know ye not that your Master shall be taken from your head to-day?" This comfortable enjoyment must be taken from them. And here lies the argument; Father, consider the sadness and trouble in which I leave my poor children. Whilst I was with them, I was a sweet relief to their souls, whatever troubles they met with; in all doubts, fears, and dangers, they could repair to me; and in their straits and wants I still supplied them: they had my counsels to direct them, my reproofs to restore them, and my comforts to support

them ; yea, the very sight of me was an unspeakable joy and refreshment to their souls ; but now the hour is come, and I must be gone. All the comfort and benefit they had from my presence among them is cut off : and, except thou make up all this to them another way, what will become of these children when their Father is gone ? what will be the case of the poor sheep and tender lambs when the Shepherd is smitten ?

4. And further, to move and engage the Father's care and love for them, he subjoins another great consideration, drawn from the danger in which he leaves them : " But these are in the world." The world is a sinful, infecting, and unquiet place ; it lies in wickedness : and a hard thing it will be for such poor, weak, imperfect creatures to escape the pollutions of it ; or, if they do, yet the troubles, persecutions, and strong opposition of it they cannot escape. Seeing therefore I must leave them in the midst of a sinful, troublesome, and dangerous world, where they can neither move backward nor forward without danger of sin or ruin ; Oh, provide for them, and take special care for them all. Consider who they are, and where I leave them. They are thy children, to be left in a strange country ; thy soldiers, in the enemies' quarters ; thy sheep, in the midst of wolves ; thy precious treasure, among thieves.

5. And yet he has not done, for he adds another argument, " And I come to thee." As his leaving them was an argument, so his coming to the Father is also a mighty argument. There is much in these words, " I come to thee." I thy beloved Son, in whom thy soul delighteth ; I to whom thou never deniedst any thing. I am now coming to thee, my Father. I come treading every step of my way to thee in blood and unspeakable sufferings ; and all this for the sake of those dear ones I now pray for ; yea, the design and end of my coming to thee is for them. I am coming to heaven in the ca-

capacity of an advocate, to plead with thee for them. And I come to my Father, and their Father; my God, and their God. Now then, since I come to thee through such bitter pangs; and all this on their account; since I do but now, as it were, begin that intercession-work, which I shall live for ever to perform for them in heaven; Father, hear, Father, grant what I request.

6. And, to close all, he tells the Father how careful he had been to observe and perform that trust which was committed to him; "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." Thou didst commit them to me to be redeemed; I undertook the trust, and said, If any of them be lost, at my hand let them be required. In pursuance of which trust, I am now here on the earth, in a body of flesh. I have been faithful in every point. I have redeemed them, (for he speaks of that as finished and done, which was now ready to be done,) I have kept them hitherto; and now, Father, I commit them to thy care. Lo, here they are, not one is lost but the son of perdition, who was never given. With how great care have I cared for them! Oh let them not fail now; let not one of them perish. Thus you see what a nervous, argumentative, pleading prayer Christ poured out to the Father for them at parting.

III. The next inquiry is, *why he thus prayed* and plead with God for them when he was to die? And certainly it was not because the Father was unwilling to grant the mercies he desired for them; for he tells us, "The Father himself loveth you," John, 16:27, that is, he is inclined enough of his own accord to do you good. But the reasons of this exceeding importunity we may suppose to have been,

1. He foresaw a great trial then at hand; yea, and all the after-trials of his people as well as that. He

knew how much they would be sifted and straitened in that hour and power of darkness. He knew their faith would be shaken and greatly staggered by the approaching difficulties, when they should see their Shepherd smitten, and themselves scattered, the Son of man delivered into the hands of sinners, and the Lord of life hang dead upon the cross, yea, sealed up in the grave. He foresaw into what straits his poor people would fall, between a busy tempter and an unbelieving heart; therefore he prays and pleads with such importunity for them, that they might not fail.

2. He was now entering upon his intercession-work in heaven, and he was desirous in this prayer to *give us a specimen of that part of his work* before he left us; that by this we might understand what he would do for us when he should be out of sight. For this being his last prayer on earth, it shows us what affections and dispositions he carried hence with him, and satisfies us, that he who was so earnest with God on our behalf, such a mighty pleader here, will not forget us, or neglect our concerns in the other world. Yet, reader, I would have thee always remember that the intercession of Christ in heaven is carried much higher than this; it is performed in a way more suitable to that state of honor to which he is now exalted. Here he used prostrations of body, cries and tears in his prayers: there, his intercession is carried in a more majestic way, becoming an exalted Saviour. But yet in this he hath left us a special assistance, to show the temper and working of his heart now in heaven towards us.

3. And lastly, he would leave this as *a standing monument of his care and love for his people* to the end of the world. And for this it is conceived Christ delivered this prayer so publicly, not withdrawing from the disciples to be private with God, as he did in the garden; but in their presence. And not only was it publicly de-

livered, but it was also, by a singular providence, recorded at large by John, though omitted by the other evangelists; that so it might stand to all generations.

IV. If you ask how this gives *evidence of Christ's tender care* and love to his people? I answer, it appears in these two particulars.

1. His love and care were manifested in *the choice of mercies for them*. He doth not pray for health, honor, long life, riches; but for their preservation from sin, spiritual joy in God, sanctification, and eternal glory. No mercies but the very best in God's treasury does he ask for his people; the rest he is content should be dispensed promiscuously by Providence; but these he will settle as a heritage upon his children. Oh see the love of Christ! look over all your spiritual inheritance in Christ, compare it with the richest, fairest, largest inheritance on earth; and see what poor things these are to yours. Oh the care of a dear Father! Oh the love of a tender Saviour!

2. Besides, what an evidence of his tenderness to you, and great care for you, was it, that he should so intently and so affectionately seek, and plead your concerns with God *at such a time*, even when a world of sorrow encompassed him on every side; a cup of wrath mixed, and ready to be put into his hand: at that very time when the clouds of wrath grew black, a storm was coming, and such as he never felt before; when one would have thought all his care, thoughts, and diligence should have been employed on his own account, his own sufferings. No, he doth, as it were, forget his own sorrows for our peace and comfort. O love unspeakable!

INFERENCE 1. Did Christ so eminently show his care and love for his people in this his parting hour; then he will keep them to the end. Do you hear how he pleads, how he fills his mouth with arguments, how he

chooses his words and sets them in order, how he winds up his spirit to the very highest pitch of zeal and fervency? and can you doubt of success? Can such a Father deny the importunity and pleading of such a Son? Oh, it can never be! he cannot deny him: Christ has the art and skill of prevailing with God. If the heart or hand of God were hard to be opened, yet this would open them; but when the Father himself loves us, and is inclined to do us good, who can doubt of Christ's success? "That which is in motion, is the more easily moved." The cause Christ manageth in heaven for us is just and righteous. The manner in which he pleads is powerful, and therefore the success of his suit is unquestionable. Oh think of this, when dangers surround your souls or bodies, when fears and doubts are multiplied within; when thou art ready to say in thy haste, All men are liars, I shall one day perish by the hand of sin or Satan; think on that encouragement Christ gave to Peter, "I have prayed for thee." Luke, 22: 32.

2. Again, hence we learn that *argumentative prayers* are excellent prayers. The strength of every thing is in its joints; there lies much of the strength of prayer also. How strongly jointed, how nervous and argumentative was this prayer of Christ! Some there are indeed, that think we need not argue and plead in prayer with God, but only present the matter of our prayers to him, and leave Christ (whose office it is) to plead with the Father; as if Christ did not present our pleas and arguments, as well as simple desires, to God; as if the choicest part of our prayers must be kept back, because Christ presents our prayers to God. No, no, Christ's pleading is one thing, ours another: "His and ours are not opposed, but subordinate; his pleading doth not destroy, but makes ours successful. God calls us to plead with him, "Come now, let us reason together." Isa.

1 : 18. "God (as one observes) reasons with us by his word and providences outwardly, and by the motions of his Spirit inwardly : and we reason with him by framing, through the help of his Spirit, certain holy arguments, grounded upon allowed principles, drawn from his nature, name, word, or works." And it is condemned as a very sinful defect in professors, that they did not plead the church's cause with God ; "There is none to plead thy cause that thou mayest be bound up." Jer. 30 : 13. What was Jacob's wrestling with the angel, but his holy pleading and importunity with God ? and how well it pleased God, let the event speak, "As a prince he prevailed, and had power with God." Gen. 32 : 24. Hos. 12 : 4. His name was no more called Jacob, but Israel, a prince with God.

By these holy pleadings "the King is held in his galleries." Cant. 7 : 5. I know we are not heard either for our much speaking, or our excellent speaking ; it is Christ's pleading in heaven that makes our pleading on earth available : but surely, when the Spirit of the Lord shall suggest proper arguments in prayer, and help the humble suppliant to press them home believingly and affectionately, when he helps us to weep and plead, to groan and plead, for, says one, "The heart cries to God more by groans than by words, and more by tears than by speaking," God is greatly delighted with such prayers. "Thou hast said, I will surely do thee good," said Jacob. Gen. 32 : 12. It is thine own free promise ; I did not go of myself, but thou badest me go, and encouragedst me with this promise. Oh this is pleasing to God, when by his Spirit of adoption we can come to him, crying, Abba, Father ; Father, hear, forgive, pity, and help me. Am I not thy child, thy son, or daughter ? To whom may a child be bold to go, with whom may a child have hope to prevail, if not with his father ? Father, hear me. The fathers of our flesh are full of compassion, and pity

their children, and know how to give good things to them when they ask. And is not the Father of spirits more full of compassion, more full of pity?

3. What an *excellent pattern* is here, for all that have the charge and government of others committed to them, whether magistrates, ministers, or parents, showing how to acquit themselves towards their relations when they come to die!

Look upon the dying Jesus, see how his care and love to his people broke out, when the time of his departure was at hand. Surely, as we are bound to remember our relatives every day, and to lay up prayers for them in the time of our health, so it becomes us to imitate Christ in our earnestness with God for them when we die. Though we die, our prayers do not die with us: they outlive us, and those we leave behind us in the world may reap the benefit of them when we are turned to dust.

For my own part, I must profess before the world that I have a high value for this mercy, and do, from the bottom of my heart, bless the Lord, who gave me a religious and tender father,* who often poured out his soul to God for me: he was one that was inwardly acquainted with God; and being full of love to his children, often carried them before the Lord, prayed and pleaded with God for them, wept and made supplications for them. The prayers and blessings left by him before the Lord, I esteem above the fairest inheritance on earth. Oh it is no small mercy to have thousands of fervent prayers lying before the Lord in heaven for us. And Oh that we would all be faithful to this duty! surely our love, especially to the souls of our relatives, should not grow cold. Oh that we would remember this duty in our lives, and, if God give opportunity and ability, discharge it fully when we die; considering, as Christ

* Mr. Richard Flavel, a faithful and laborious preacher of the Gospel.

did, that we shall be no more, but they are in the midst of a defiled, tempting, troublesome world; what temptations and troubles may befall them we do not know. Oh imitate Christ your pattern.

4. Hence we may see what *a high esteem Christ has of believers*: this was the treasure which he could not quit, he could not die till he had secured it in a safe hand: "I come unto thee, holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me."

Surely believers are dear to Jesus Christ; and with good reason, for he has paid dear for them: let his dying language, this last farewell, say how he prized them. "The Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Deut. 32:9. "They are a peculiar treasure to him, above all the people of the earth." Exod. 19:5. Whatever is much upon our hearts when we die, is dear to us indeed. Oh how precious, how dear should Jesus Christ be to us! Were we first and last upon his heart; did he pray for us, did he so wrestle with God for us, when the sorrows of death compassed him about? How then are we bound, not only to love him, and esteem him, whilst we live, but to be in pangs of love for him when we feel the pangs of death upon us! The very last whisper of our departing souls should be, Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXI.

SECOND PREPARATIVE ACT OF CHRIST FOR HIS OWN DEATH.
THE LORD'S SUPPER.

" *The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread : and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is my body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*" 1 Cor. 11: 23-25.

Christ had no sooner recommended his dear charge to the Father, but (the time of his death hastening on) he institutes his last supper, to be the memorial of his death, in all the churches, until his second coming; therein graciously providing for the comfort of his people, when he should be removed out of their sight. This his second act manifests no less love than the former. It is like a man's plucking off the ring from his finger when about to die, and delivering it to his dearest friends, to keep as a memorial of him.

In the text there are four things noticed by the apostle respecting this last and lovely act of Christ, namely, the *Author, time, institution, and end* of this holy, solemn ordinance.

1. The *Author* of it, the Lord Jesus: it is an effect of his royal power and authority; "And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth: go ye therefore." Matt. 28: 18, 19. The government is upon his shoulders. Isa. 9: 6. He shall bear the glory. Zech. 6: 13.

2. The *time* when the Lord Jesus Christ appointed this ordinance. "In the same night in which he was betrayed:" it could not be sooner, because the passover must first be celebrated; nor later, for that night he was

apprehended. It is therefore emphatically expressed, "in that same night," that night for ever to be remembered. He gives, that night, a season of spiritual refreshment to his disciples before the conflict: he appoints, that night, an ordinance in the church, for the confirmation and consolation of his people, in all generations, to the end of the world.

3. *The institution itself*; in which we have the memorative, significative, instructive signs, bread and wine; and the glorious mysteries represented and shadowed forth by them, namely, Jesus Christ crucified; the proper New Testament nourishment of believers. Bread and wine excellently shadow forth the flesh and blood of a crucified Saviour, not only in their usefulness, but the manner of their preparation. The corn must be ground in the mill, the grapes torn and squeezed in the wine-press, before we can either have bread or wine. And when all this is done, they must be received into the body, or they nourish not. So that these were very fit to be set apart for this use and end; and, as lively signs, shadow forth a crucified Jesus, represent him to us in his red garments.

4. Notice the *use, design, and end* of this institution. "In remembrance," or for a memorial "of me." Oh there is much in this: Christ knew how apt our base hearts would be to forget him, amidst the throng of sensible objects; and how great the loss which that forgetfulness of him and of his sufferings would occasion us; therefore he appoints a sign to be remembered by: "As oft as you do this, ye show forth the Lord's death till he come." Hence we observe,

The memorial Christ left with his people in the last supper, is a special mark of his care and love for them.

What! to order his picture (as it were) to be drawn when he was dying, to be left with his spouse! To rend his own flesh, and set flowing his own blood, to be meat

and drink for our souls! Oh what manner of love was this! It is true, his picture in the supper is full of scars and wounds; but these are honorable scars, and highly grace and commend it to his spouse, for whose sake he here received them. "They are marks of love and honor" drawn, that as oft as his people looked upon the portraiture of him, they might remember and be deeply affected with what he here endured for their sakes. These are the wounds my dear husband Jesus received for me. These are the marks of that love which passes the love of creatures. Oh see the love of a Saviour! Surely the spouse may say of the love of Christ what David, in his lamentations, said of the love of Jonathan, "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." But to prepare the point to be meat indeed and drink indeed to thy soul, reader, I shall discuss briefly these three things: what it is to remember Christ in the Lord's supper; what aptitude there is in that ordinance, so to bring him to our remembrance; and how the care and love of Christ is manifested in his leaving such a memorial of himself with us.

I. *Remembrance*, properly, is the return of the mind to an object with which it has been formerly conversant; and this may be, either speculatively and transiently, or affectionately and permanently. A speculative remembrance is only to call to mind the history of such a person and his sufferings; that Christ was once put to death in the flesh. An affectionate remembrance is when we so call Christ and his death to our minds as to feel the powerful impressions thereof upon our hearts. Thus, "Peter remembered the word of the Lord, and went out, and wept bitterly." Matt. 26:75. His very heart was melted with that remembrance; his bowels were pained, he could not refrain, but went out and wept abundantly. Thus Joseph, when he saw his brother Benjamin, which renewed the memory of former

days and endearments, was greatly affected: "And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake to me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste, for his bowels did yearn upon his brother; and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there." Gen. 43:29, 30. Such a remembrance of Christ is here intended. This is indeed a gracious remembrance of Christ: the mere speculative remembrance has nothing of grace in it. The time shall come when Judas that betrayed him, and the Jews that pierced him, shall historically remember what was done: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Rev. 1:7. Then, I say, Judas shall remember: This is he whom I perfidiously betrayed. Pilate shall remember: This is he whom I sentenced to be hanged on a tree, though I was convinced of his innocence. Then the soldiers shall remember: This is that face we spit upon, that head we crowned with thorns; lo, this is he whose side we pierced, whose hands and feet we once nailed to the cross. But this remembrance will be their torment, not their benefit. It is not therefore a bare historical, speculative, but a gracious, affectionate, impressive remembrance of Christ that is here intended: and such a remembrance of Christ supposes and includes,

1. *The saving knowledge* of him. We cannot be said to remember what we never knew; nor to remember savingly, what we never knew savingly. There have been many sweet and gracious transactions and intimacies between Christ and his people, from the time of their first happy acquaintance with him; but much of the sweetness they have had in former hours of communion with him, is lost and gone; for nothing is more

inconstant than our spiritual comforts. Here, at the Lord's table, our old acquaintance is renewed, and the remembrance of his goodness and love revived: "We will remember thy love more than wine; the upright love thee." Cant. 1:4.

2. Such a remembrance of Christ includes *faith*. Without discerning Christ in his supper, there is no remembrance of him; and, without faith, no discerning Christ there. But when the precious eye of faith hath spied Christ, under the veil, it presently calls up the affections, saying, "Come see the Lord." These are the wounds he received from me. This is he that loved me, and gave himself for me. Awake, my love, rouse up, my hope, flame out, my desires; come forth, O all ye powers and affections of my soul; come, see the Lord. No sooner doth Christ by his Spirit call to the believer, but faith hears; and discerning the voice, turns about, like Mary, saying, Rabboni, my Lord, my Master.

3. This remembrance of Christ includes *suitable impressions made upon the affections*; and therein lies the nature of that inestimable blessing, communion with God. Various representations of Christ are made at his table. Sometimes the soul there calls to mind the infinite *wisdom* that contrived the glorious and mysterious design of redemption: the effect of this is wonder and admiration. Oh the manifold wisdom of God! Eph. 3:10. Oh the depth, the height, the length, the breadth of this wisdom! I can as easily span the heavens as take the just dimensions of it.

Sometimes a representation of the *severity* of God is made to the soul in that ordinance. Oh how inflexible is the justice of God! What! no abatement; no sparing mercy; no, not to his own Son? This begets in the heart a just and deep *indignation against sin*. Oh cursed sin! it was thou usedst my dear Lord so; for

thy sake he underwent all this. If thy vileness had not been so great, his sufferings had not been so many. Cursed sin! thou wast the knife that stabbed him, thou the sword that pierced him. Ah, what revenge it works! When the believer considers and remembers that sin put Christ to all that shame and ignominy, and that he was wounded for our transgressions, he is filled with hatred of sin, and cries out, Oh sin, I will revenge the blood of Christ upon thee! thou shalt never live a quiet hour in my heart. And it also produces *an humble adoration of the goodness and mercy of God*, in exacting satisfaction for our sins, by such bloody stripes, from our Surety. Lord, if this wrath had seized on me, as it did on Christ, what had been my condition? If these things were done in the green tree, what would have been done in the dry?

Sometimes extraordinary representations are made of the *love* of Christ, who assumed a body and soul, on purpose to bear the wrath of God for our sins. And when that surpassing love breaks out in its glory upon the soul, how is the soul transported with it! crying out, What manner of love is this! Here is a love large enough to go round the heavens, and the heaven of heavens! Who ever loved after this rate, to lay down his life for enemies? Oh love unutterable and inconceivable! Sometimes the fruits of his death are there gloriously displayed: even his satisfaction for sin, and the purchase by his blood of the eternal inheritance: and this begets thankfulness and confidence in the soul. Christ is dead, and his death hath satisfied for my sin. Christ is dead, therefore my soul shall never die. Who shall separate me from the love of God? These are the fruits, and this the nature of that remembrance of Christ here spoken of.

II. What aptitude or *fitness is there in this ordinance to bring Christ so to remembrance? Much every way;*

for it is a sign, by him appointed to that end, and hath (as divines well observe) a threefold use, as it is memorative, significative, and instructive.

As it is *memorative*, it has the nature and use of a pledge or token of love left by a dying to a dear surviving friend. And so the Lord's supper comes to us like a ring plucked off from Christ's finger, or a bracelet from his arm; or rather like his picture from his breast, delivered to us with such words as these; "As oft as you look on this, remember me; let this help to keep me alive in your remembrance when I am gone, and out of your sight."

It is a *significative* sign, most aptly signifying his bitter sufferings for us, and our strict and intimate union with him; both which have an excellent fitness to move the heart and its deepest affections: the breaking of the bread and pouring forth the wine signify the former; our eating, drinking, and incorporating them, is a lively signification of the latter.

Moreover, this ordinance has an excellent use for this affectionate remembrance of Christ, as it is an *instructive* sign. It instructs and enlightens us particularly in these truths:

1. That Christ is *the bread on which our souls live*, proper meat and drink for believers, the most excellent New Testament food. It is said, "Man did eat angel's food," Psa. 78: 25: referring to the manna that fell from heaven, which yet was but a type and weak shadow of Christ, on whom believers feed.

2. It instructs us that the *New Testament is now in its full force*, and no substantial alteration can be made in it, since the Testator is dead, and by his death hath ratified it. So that all its excellent promises and blessings are now fully confirmed to the believing soul. Heb. 9: 16, 17. All these, and many more choice truths, are we taught by this sign: and in all these ways it reminds

us of Christ, and helps powerfully to raise, warm, and affect our hearts with the remembrance of him.

III. The last inquiry is, How Christ hath, hereby, left such a special mark of *his care and love for his people*? And,

1 This is a special mark of the care and love of Christ, inasmuch as hereby he has made abundant provision for the confirmation and *establishment of the faith of his people* to the end of the world. For this being an evident proof that the new testament is in full force, (it being the cup of the new testament in his blood, Matt. 26 : 28,) it tends as much to our satisfaction, as the legal execution of a deed, by which we hold and enjoy our estate. So that when he saith, Take, eat, it is as much as if God should stand before you at the table with Christ, with all the promises in his hand ; and say, I deliver this to thee as my deed. What think you, does not this promote and confirm the faith of a believer ?

2. This is a special mark of Christ's care and love, inasmuch as by it he has made abundant provision for the enlargement of the *joy and comfort of his people*. Believers are at this ordinance, as Mary was at the sepulchre, with fear and great joy. Matt. 28 : 8. Come, reader, speak thy heart : if thou be one that heartily lovest Jesus Christ, and hast gone many days, possibly years, mourning and lamenting because of the obscurity and uncertainty of thine interest in him ; who hast sought him sorrowing in this ordinance and in that, in one duty and another ; if at last Christ should take off that covering, as one calls it, from his face, and be known of thee in breaking of bread : suppose he should, by his Spirit, whisper thus in thine ear as thou sittest at his table, Dost thou indeed so prize, esteem, and value me ? will nothing but Christ and his love satisfy thee ? then, know that I am thine : take thine own Christ into the arms of thy faith this day : would not

this create in thy soul a joy transcending all the joys and pleasures of the world?

3. This is a signal mark of Christ's care and love, inasmuch as it is one of the highest and best helps for the *mortification of sin in his people*. Nothing tends more to the destruction of sin. One writer calls that table an altar, on which our corruptions are sacrificed and slain before the Lord. For how can they that there see what Christ suffered for sin, live any longer therein?

4. Moreover his care and love appear in providing an ordinance so excellently adapted to *excite his people's love* into a lively flame. When Joseph made himself known to his brethren, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold, be not grieved;" Oh what showers of tears and dear affections were there! how did they fall upon each other's necks! so that the Egyptians wondered. How does the soul (if I may so speak) passionately love Jesus Christ at such a time! "The fairest among ten thousand." What hath he done, what hath he suffered for me! what great things hath my Jesus given, and what great things hath he forgiven me! A world, a thousand worlds cannot show such another. Here the soul is melted down by love at his feet.

5. Christ's care and love are further manifested to people in this ordinance, as it is one of the strongest *bonds of union* between them: "We being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. 10:17. Here the people of God are sealed to the same inheritance, their dividing corruptions slain, their love to Christ, and consequently to each other, improved; and it is certainly one of the strongest ties to bind together gracious hearts in love.

INFERENCE 1. Did Christ leave this ordinance with his church to preserve his remembrance among his people? Then surely he foresaw, that, notwithstanding what he is, and what he has done, suffered, and promised

for them, they will for all this be *still prone to forget him*. One would think that such a Saviour should never be a whole hour out of his people's thoughts and affections; that wherever they go, they should carry him with them in their thoughts, desires, and delights; that they should lie down with Christ in their thoughts at night, and when they awake be still with him; that their very dreams should be sweet visions of Christ, and all their words savor of him. But Oh the baseness of these hearts! Here we live and converse in a world of sensible objects, which, like a company of thieves, rob us of Christ. Alas that it should be so with me, who am under such obligations to love him! Though he be in the highest glory in heaven, he doth not forget us; he hath graven us upon the palms of his hands; we are continually before him. He thinks on us, when we forget him. The whole honor and glory rendered him in heaven by the angels cannot divert his thoughts one moment from us; but every trifle that meets us in the way, is enough to divert our thoughts from him. Why do we not abhor and loathe ourselves for this? What! is it a pain, a burden, to carry Christ in our thoughts? As much a burden, if thy heart be spiritual, as a bird is burdened by carrying his own wings. Will such thoughts intrude unseasonably, and thrust Christ out of our minds? For shame, christian, for shame, let not thy heart wanton and wander from Christ after every vanity. Never leave praying and striving, till thou canst say, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; whilst I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." Psalm 63:5.

2. Hence also we infer that approaches to the Lord's table are *heart-melting seasons*; because therein the most affecting representations of Christ are made. As the Gospel offers him to the ear in the most sweet,

affecting sounds of grace; so does his supper to the eye, in the most pleasing visions on this side heaven. There, hearts that will not yield a tear under other ordinances, can pour out floods: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn." Zech. 12: 10. Yet I dare not affirm that every one whose heart is broken by the believing sight of Christ there, can evidence that it is so by a dropping eye. No, we may say of tears, as it is said of love. Cant. 8: 7. If some christians would give all the treasures of their houses for them, they cannot be purchased: yet they are truly humbled for sin, and seriously affected with the grace of Christ. For the support of such, I would distinguish, and have them do so also, between what is essential to spiritual sorrow, and what is contingent. Deep displeasure with thyself for sin, hearty resolutions and desires for its complete mortification, these are essential to all spiritual sorrow; but tears are accidental, and in some constitutions rarely found. If thou hast the former, trouble not thyself for want of the latter, though it is a mercy when they kindly and undissembledly flow from a truly broken heart. And surely, to see who it is that thy sins have pierced; how great, how glorious, how wonderful a Person, that was humbled, abased, and brought to the dust, for such a wretched being as thou, cannot but tenderly affect the considering soul.

3. Moreover, hence it is evident that the believing and affectionate remembrance of Christ is most advantageous at all times to the people of God; for it is the immediate end of one of the greatest ordinances that ever Christ appointed to the church. If at any time the heart be dead and hard, this is the likeliest means to dissolve, melt, and quicken it. Look hither, hard heart; hard indeed, if this hammer will not break it. Behold the blood of Jesus.

Art thou easily overcome by temptations to sin? This

is the most powerful restraint: "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Rom. 6:2. We are crucified with Christ, what have we to do with sin! When thy heart is yielding to temptation, think, how can I do this, and crucify the Son of God afresh! As David poured the water brought from the well of Beth-lehem on the ground, though he was athirst, for he said, "It is the blood of the men," (that is, they hazarded their lives to fetch it;) much more should a christian pour out upon the ground, yea, despise and trample under foot, the greatest profit or pleasure of sin; saying, Nay, I will have nothing to do with it, I will on no terms touch it, for it is the blood of Christ: it cost blood, infinite, precious blood to expiate it.

Are you afraid your sins are not pardoned, but still stand against you before the Lord? What more relieving, what more satisfying, than to see the cup of the new testament in the blood of Christ, which is "shed for many, for the remission of sins?" "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ that died."

Are you staggered at your sufferings, and the hard things you must endure for Christ in this world? Doth the flesh shrink from these things, and cry, Spare thyself? What is there more likely to fortify thy spirit with resolution and courage, than such a sight as this? Did Christ meet the wrath of men, and the wrath of God too? Did he stand with unbroken patience and stedfast resolution under such troubles, and shall I shrink for a trifle? Ah, he did not serve me so! I will arm myself with the like mind. 1 Pet. 4:2.

Is thy faith staggered at the promises? Here is what will help thee "against hope to believe in hope, giving glory to God." For this is God's seal added to his covenant, which ratifies and binds all that God hath spoken.

Dost thou idle away precious time, and live unusefully

to Christ in thy generation ! What more fit both to convince and cure thee, than such remembrance of Christ as this ? Oh when thou considerest thou art not thine own, thy time, thy talents are not thine own, but Christ's : when thou shalt see thou art bought with such a price, and so art strictly obliged to glorify God with thy soul and body, which are his, 1 Cor. 6 : 20, this will powerfully awaken a dull and sluggish spirit ! In a word, what grace is there that this remembrance of Christ cannot quicken ? What sin cannot it mortify ? What duty cannot it animate ? Oh it is of singular use to the people of God !

4. Though all other things do, yet *Christ never can become uninteresting*. Here is an ordinance to preserve his remembrance fresh to the end of the world. The beauty of this Rose of Sharon is never lost or withered. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. As his body in the grave saw no corruption, so neither can his love, or any of his excellencies. Other beauties have their prime and their fading ; but Christ abides eternally. Our delight in creatures is often most at first acquaintance ; when we come nearer to them, and see more of them, our delight is abated : but the longer you know Christ, and the nearer you come to him, still the more do you see of his glory. Every farther prospect of Christ entertains the mind with a fresh delight. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXII.

THIRD PREPARATIVE ACT OF CHRIST FOR HIS OWN DEATH—
AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

“And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Luke, 22: 41–44.

The hour is now almost come, even that hour of sorrow, of which Christ had so often spoken. Yet a little, a very little while, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. He has affectionately recommended his children to his Father. He has set his house in order, and ordained a memorial of his death to be left with his people. There is but one thing more to do, and then the tragedy begins. He recommended us, he must also recommend himself by prayer to the Father; and when that is done, he is ready.

This last act of Christ’s preparation for his own death is contained in this scripture, wherein we have an account of his prayer; of the agony attending it; and of his relief in that agony, by an angel, that came and comforted him.

In a praying posture he will be found when the enemy comes; he will be taken upon his knees: he was pleading hard with God in prayer, for strength to carry him through this heavy trial, when they came to take him. And this was a very remarkable prayer, both for the *solitariness* of it, he withdrew about a stone’s cast from his dearest intimates; no ear but his Father’s must hear

what he had now to say—for the vehemency and *importunity* of it; these were those strong cries that he poured out to God in the days of his flesh, Heb. 5 : 7—and for the *humility* expressed in it; he fell upon the ground, he laid himself as it were in the dust, at his Father's feet. Hence we note,

Our Lord Jesus Christ was praying to his Father in an extraordinary agony, when they came to apprehend him in the garden.

In explaining this last act of preparation on Christ's part, I shall speak of the place where he prayed, and of the time, the matter, and the manner of his prayer.

I. The *place*, where this last and remarkable prayer was poured out to God, was the garden: St. Matthew tells us it was called Gethsemane, which signifies the valley of fatness, or of olives. This garden lay very near to the city of Jerusalem, on the east, towards the Mount of Olives. Between it and the city was the brook Cedron, which rose from a hill upon the north, and over this brook Christ passed into the garden, John, 18 : 1; to which perhaps the psalmist alludes in Psalm 110 : 7, "He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore he shall lift up the head."

Christ went not into this garden to hide or shelter himself from his enemies. No, had that been his design, it was the most improper place he could have chosen, being the place where he was wont to pray, and a place well known to Judas, who was now coming to seek him. John, 18 : 2. He repairs thither, not to shun, but to meet the enemy; to offer himself as a prey to the wolves, which there found him, and laid hold upon him. He also resorted thither for an hour or two of privacy before they came, that he might there freely pour out his soul to God.

II. The *time* when he entered into this garden to pray was the shutting in of the evening; for it was after the

passover and the supper were ended. Then (Matthew, 26:36) Jesus went over the brook into the garden, between the hours of nine and ten in the evening, as it is conjectured; and so he had between two and three hours to pour out his soul to God; for it was about midnight that Judas and the soldiers came and apprehended him. This shows us in what frame and posture Christ desired to be found: and by it he left us an excellent pattern of what we ought to do, when imminent dangers are near us, even at the door. It becomes a soldier to die fighting, and a minister to die preaching, and a christian to die praying. If they come, they will find Christ upon his knees, wrestling mightily with God by prayer. He spent no moment of his life idly; but these were the last moments he had to live in the world, and here you see how they were filled up and employed.

III. Consider the *matter* of his prayer, or the things about which he poured out his soul to God in the garden. He prayed, saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

By the *cup*, understand that portion of sorrows then to be given to him by his Father. Great afflictions and bitter trials are frequently expressed in Scripture under the metaphor of a cup: "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup," Psalm 11:16, that is, the punishment allotted to them by God for their wickedness. So Ezekiel, 23:32, 33; "A cup deep and large;" Isaiah, 51:17; "Thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling and wrung them out." Such a cup now was Christ's cup; a cup of wrath; a large and deep cup, that contained more wrath than ever was drunk by any creature, even the wrath of an infinite God; a mixed cup, mixed with God's wrath and man's in the extremity; and all the bitter aggravating circum-

stances that ever could be imagined ; great consternation and amazement : this was the portion of his cup.

By the *passing of the cup from him*, understand his exemption from suffering that dreadful wrath of God which he foresaw to be now at hand. Christ's meaning in this conditional request is, Father, if it be thy will, excuse me from this dreadful wrath. My soul is amazed at it. Is there no way to shun it ? Cannot I be excused ? Oh, if it be possible, spare me. This is the meaning of it.

But how could Christ, who knew God had from everlasting determined he should drink it ; who had agreed in the covenant of redemption so to do ; who came (as himself acknowledges) for that end into the world, John, 18 : 37 ; who foresaw this hour all along, and professed when he spake of this bloody baptism with which he was to be baptized, that he was " straitened till it was accomplished," Luke, 12 : 50 ; how could he now when the cup was delivered to him, so earnestly pray that it might pass from him, or he be excused from suffering. What ! did he now repent of his engagement ? Doth he now begin to wish to be disengaged, and that he had never undertaken such a work ? No, no, Christ never repented of his engagement to the Father, never was willing to let the burden lie on us, rather than on himself ; there was not such a thought in his holy and faithful heart ; but the resolution of this doubt depends upon another distinction, which will show his meaning in it.

Mark then the distinction between *absolute* and *submissive* prayers. It was the latter that Christ offered, " If thou be willing ;" if not, I will drink it. But you will say, Christ knew what was the mind of God ; he knew what transactions had been of old between his Father and him ; and therefore though he did not pray absolutely, yet it is strange he would pray conditionally it might pass.

Mark, then, in the second place, the different natures

in which Christ acted. He acted sometimes as God, and sometimes as man. Here he acted according to his human nature ; simply expressing and manifesting in this request its reluctance to such sufferings : wherein he showed himself a true man, in shunning that which was destructive to his nature. As Christ had two distinct natures, so two distinct wills. And (as one well observes) in the life of Christ there was an intermixture of power and weakness, of the Divine glory and human frailty. At his birth a star shone, but he was laid in a manger. The devil tempted him in the wilderness, but there angels ministered to him. He was caught by the soldiers in the garden, but first made them fall back. So here, as man he feared and shunned death ; but as God-man he willingly submitted to it. "It was (as Deodatus well expresses it) a purely natural desire, by which, as man, for a short moment he apprehended and shunned death and torments ; but quickly recalled himself to obedience, by a deliberate will to submit himself to God."

In a word, as there was nothing of sin in it, it being a pure and sinless affection of nature ; so there was much good in it, and that both as it was a part of his satisfaction for our sin, to suffer inwardly such fear, trembling, and consternation ; and as it was a clear evidence that he was in all things made like unto his brethren, except sin ; and also, as it serves to express the grievousness and extremity of Christ's sufferings, the very prospect of which, at some distance, was so dreadful to him.

IV. Let us consider *the manner* in which he prayed : it was,

1. *Solitarily*. He doth not here pray in the audience of his disciples, as he had done before, but went at a distance from them. He had now private business to transact with God. He left some of them at the en-

trance of the garden; and Peter, James, and John, who went farther with him than the rest, he bids remain there, while he went and prayed. He did not desire them to pray with him, or for him; no, he must "tread the wine-press alone." Nor will he have them with him, lest it should discourage them to see and hear how he groaned, trembled, and cried, as one in an agony, to his Father.

Reader, there are times when a christian would not be willing that the dearest and most intimate friend he hath in the world should be privy to what passes between him and his God.

2. It was an *humble* prayer: that is evident by the postures into which he cast himself; sometimes kneeling, and sometimes prostrate upon his face. He lies in the very dust, lower he cannot fall; and his heart was as low as his body. He is meek and lowly indeed.

3. It was a *reiterated* prayer; he prays, and then returns to the disciples, as a man in extremity turns every way for comfort: "Father, let this cup pass," but in that request the Father hears him not; though as to support he was heard. Being denied deliverance by his Father, he goes and bemoans himself to his pensive friends, and complains bitterly to them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." But alas! they rather increase than ease his burden. For he finds them asleep, which occasioned that gentle reprehension, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Matt. 26:40. What, not watch with *me*? Who may expect it from you more than I? Could you not watch? I am going to die for you, and cannot you watch with me! What! cannot you watch with me *one hour*? Alas! what if I had required great matters from you? What! not an hour, and that the parting hour too? Christ finds no ease from them, and back again he goes to that sad place which he had stained with a bloody sweat,

and prays to the same purpose again. Oh how he returns upon God again and again, as if he resolved to take no denial! But, considering it must be so, he sweetly falls in with his Father's will, "Thy will be done."

4. It was a prayer accompanied with *a strange and wonderful agony*: "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Now he was red indeed in his apparel, as one that trod the wine-press. Consider what an extraordinary load pressed his soul at that time, even such as no mere man felt, or could support, even the wrath of the great and terrible God in its extremity. "Who (saith the prophet Nahum, 1:6) can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

The effects of this wrath, as it fell at this time upon the soul of Christ in the garden, are largely and very emphatically expressed by the several evangelists. Matthew tells us, his soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Matt. 26:38. The word signifies "beset with grief round about." And it is well expressed by that phrase of the psalmist, "The sorrows of death compassed me about, the pains of hell gat hold upon me." Mark varies the expression, and gives us another word no less significant and full, "He began to be sore amazed, and very heavy." Mark, 14:33. Luke has another expression for it in the text; He was "in an agony." An agony is the laboring and striving of nature in extremity. And John gives us another expression, "Now is my soul troubled." John, 12:27. The original word is very significant. This was the load which so oppressed his soul, that it could not find relief in tears; but the innumerable pores of his body are set open, to give vent by letting out streams of blood. And yet all this while no hand of man was upon him. This

was but a prelude to the conflict that was at hand. Now he stood, as it were, arraigned at God's bar, and had to do immediately with him. And you know "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

INFERENCE 1. Did Christ pour out his soul to God so ardently in the garden, when the hour of his trouble was at hand? Then *prayer is a singular preparative for, and relief under the greatest trouble.* It is a happy circumstance, when troubles find us in the way of our duty. The best posture in which we can wrestle with afflictions is upon our knees. The naturalist tells us, if a lion find a man prostrate he will do him no harm. Christ hastened to the garden to pray, when Judas and the soldiers were hastening thither to apprehend him. Oh! when we are nigh to danger, it is good for us to draw nigh to our God. Then should we be urging that reasonable request to God, "Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help." Psalm 22 : 11. Wo be to him whom death or trouble finds afar off from God. And as prayer is the best preparative for troubles, so it is the choicest relief under them. Grievs are eased by groans. You know it is some relief if a man can pour out his complaint into the bosom of a faithful friend, though he can but pity him; how much more to pour out our complaints into the bosom of a faithful God, who can both pity and help us! Luther was wont to call prayers the leeches of his cares and sorrows; they suck out the bad blood. It is the title of Psalm 102: "A prayer for the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." It is no small ease to open our hearts to God.

To go to God when thou art full of sorrow, when thy heart is ready to burst within thee, as was Christ's in this day of his trouble; and say, Father, thus and thus the case stands with thy poor child; and so and so it is with me: I will not go up and down complaining from

one creature to another, it is to no purpose; nor yet will I leave my complaint upon myself; but I will tell thee, Father, how the case stands with me; for to whom should children make their complaint but to their Father? Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me. What thinkest thou, reader, of this? Is it relieving to a sad soul? Yes, yes; if thou be a christian that hast had any experience of this, thou wilt say there is nothing like it; thou wilt bless God for appointing such an ordinance as prayer, and say, Blessed be God for prayer: I know not what I should have done, nor how I should have waded through all the troubles I have passed, if it had not been for the help of prayer.

2. Did Christ withdraw from the disciples to seek God by prayer? Then *the company of the best of men is not always seasonable*. Peter, James, and John were three excellent men, and yet Christ saith to them, Tarry ye here, while I go and pray yonder. The society of men is useful in its season, but no better than a burden out of season. I have read of a good man, that when his stated time for closet prayer was come, he would say to the company with him, whoever they were, "Friends, I must beg you excuse me for a while, there is a Friend waits to speak with me." The company of a good man is good, but it ceases to be so when it hinders the enjoyment of better company. One hour with God is to be preferred to a thousand days' enjoyment of the best men on earth. If thy dearest friends intrude unseasonably between thee and thy God, it is neither rude nor unfriendly to bid them give place to better company; I mean, to withdraw from them, as Christ did from the disciples, to enjoy an hour with God alone. In public and social duties we may admit the company of others to join us; and if they be such as fear God, the more the better: but in secret duties, Christ and thou must communicate between yourselves; and then the com-

pany of the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend that is as thine own soul, would not be welcome. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." Matt. 6 : 6. It is as much as if Christ had said, Be sure to retire into as great privacy as may be; let no ear but God's hear what thou hast to say to him. This is at once a mark of sincerity and a great help to spiritual liberty and freedom with God.

3. Did Christ go to God thrice upon the same account? Then christians should not be discouraged, though they have *sought God once and again*, and receive no answer of peace. Christ was not heard the first time, and he goes a second; he was not answered the second, and he goes the third, and yet was not answered in the thing he desired, namely, that the cup might pass from him; still he has no hard thoughts of God, but resolves his will into his Father's. If God deny you in the things you ask, he deals no otherwise with you than he did with Christ. "O my God, (saith he,) I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night, and am not silent." Yet he justifies God, "but thou art holy." Psalm 22 : 3. Christ was not heard in the thing he desired, and yet was heard in that he feared. Heb. 5 : 7. The cup did not pass as he desired, but God upheld him, and enabled him to drink it. He was heard as to support, he was not heard as to exemption from suffering: his will was expressed conditionally; and therefore though he had not the thing he so desired, yet his will was not crossed by the denial.

But now, when *we* have a suit depending before the throne of grace, and cry to God once and again, and receive no answer, how do our hands hang down and our spirits wax feeble! Then we complain, "When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayers. Thou coverest thyself with a cloud, that our prayers cannot pass

through." Lam. 3:8, 44. Then, with Jonah, we conclude "we are cast out of his sight." Alas! we judge by sense according to what we see and feel; and cannot live by faith on God, when he seems to hide himself, put us off, and refuse our requests. It calls for an Abraham's faith to "believe against hope, giving glory to God." If we cry, and no answer comes presently, our carnal reason draws a headlong, hasty conclusion. Surely I must expect no answer: God is angry with my prayers. The seed of prayer has lain so long under the clods, and it appears not; surely it is lost, I shall hear no more of it.

Our prayers may be heard, though their answer be for the present delayed. As David acknowledged, when he coolly considered the matter, "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee." Psalm 31:22. No, no, christian; a prayer sent up in faith, according to the will of God, cannot be lost, though it be delayed. We may say of it as David said of Saul's sword and Jonathan's bow, that they never returned empty.

4. Was Christ so earnest in prayer, that he prayed himself into a very agony? Let the people of God blush to think how *unlike their spirits are to Christ*, as to their praying frames.

Oh what lively, quick, deep, and tender apprehensions of those things about which he prayed, had Christ! Being in an agony, he prayed the more earnestly. I do not say Christ is imitable in this; no, but his fervor in prayer is a pattern for us, and serves severely to rebuke the dulness and formality of our prayers. How often do we bring the sacrifice of the dead before the Lord! how often do our lips move, and our hearts stand still! Oh! how unlike Christ are we! his prayers were pleading prayers; full of mighty argu-

ments and fervent affections. Oh ! that his people were in this more like him !

5. Was Christ in such an agony before any hand of man was upon him, merely from the apprehensions of the wrath of God, with which he now contested ? "Then surely it is a *fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* ; for our God is a consuming fire." Ah, what is divine wrath, that Christ should faint when the cup came to him ! Could not he bear, and dost thou think to bear it ? Did Christ sweat as it were drops of blood before it, and dost thou make light of it ? Poor man, if it staggered him, it will confound thee. If it made him groan, it will make thee howl eternally. Come, sinner, come ; dost thou make light of the threatenings of the wrath of God against sin ? Dost thou think there is no such matter in it as these zealous preachers represent ? Come, look here upon my text, which shows thee the face of the Son of God full of purple drops under the sense and apprehension of it. Hark how he cries, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass." Oh any thing of punishment rather than this. Hear what he tells the disciples ; "My soul is sorrowful, even to death : amazed, and very heavy." But fools make a mock at sin, and the threatenings that lie against it.

6. Did Christ meet death with such a heavy heart ? Let the hearts of christians be *the lighter for this, when they come to die*. The bitterness of death was all squeezed into Christ's cup. He was made to drink the very dregs of it, that so our death might be the sweeter to us. Alas ! there is nothing now left in death that is frightful, besides the pain of dissolution. I remember it is related of one of the martyrs, that being observed to be cheerful when he came to the stake, one asked him why his heart was so light, when death, and that in such a terrible form, was before him ? Oh, said he, my

heart is so light at my death, because Christ's was so heavy at his.

7. What cause have all the saints to love their dear Lord Jesus with *an abounding love!* Christian, open the eyes of thy faith, and fix them upon Christ as he lay in the garden. He that suffered for us more than any creature ever did or could, may well challenge more love than all the creatures in the world. Oh what hath he suffered, and suffered upon thy account! thy pride, thy earthliness, sensuality, unbelief, hardness of heart added weight to the burden of his sorrows in that day.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FIRST PREPARATIVE FOR CHRIST'S DEATH ON HIS ENEMIES' PART—TREASON OF JUDAS.

“And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him, gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him.” Matt. 26, 47-49.

We have seen how Christ prepared himself for his death. He has commended his people to the Father; instituted the blessed memorial of his death; poured out his soul to God in the garden; and now he is ready, and waits for the coming of his enemies. And think you that they were idle on their part? No, no, their malice made them restless. They had agreed with Judas to betray him. Under his conduct, a band of soldiers was sent to apprehend him. The hour, so long expected, is come. For “while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of

the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves."

These words contain the first preparative act, on their part, for the death of Christ, even to betray him, and that by one of his own disciples. Now they execute what they had plotted, ver. 14, 15. And,

1. We have here a description of the traitor: and it is remarkable how carefully the several evangelists have described him, both by his name, surname, and office, "Judas—Judas Iscariot—Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve;" that he might not be mistaken for Jude or Judas the apostle. God is tender of the name and reputation of his upright servants. His office, "one of the twelve," is added to aggravate the sin and to show how that prophecy was accomplished in him, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Ps. 41:9. Lo, this was the traitor, and this was his name and office.

2. You have a description of the treason, or an account of what this man did. He led an armed multitude to the place where Christ was, gave them a signal to discover him, and encouraged them to lay hands on him, and hold him fast. This the devil put into his heart, employing the lust of covetousness, which was predominant there. What will not a carnal heart attempt, if the devil suit a temptation to the predominant lust, and God withhold restraining grace!

3. You have here the way in which the hellish plot was executed. It was managed both with force and with fraud. He comes with a multitude, armed with swords and staves, in case they should meet with any resistance. And he comes to him with a kiss, which was his signal, lest they should mistake the man. For they aimed neither at small nor great, save only at the King of Israel, the King of glory. Here was much ado, you see, to take a harmless Lamb, that did not once start

from them, but freely offered himself up to them. And,

4. Observe when this treasonable design was executed upon Christ. It was while he stood among his disciples, exhorting them to prayer and watchfulness, dropping heavenly and most seasonable counsels. "While he yet spake, lo, Judas, and with him a multitude, came with swords and staves." Surely, then, it is no better than a Judas' plot to disturb and afflict the servants of God in the discharge of their duties. Hence,

It was the lot of our Lord Jesus Christ to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies by a false and pretended friend.

Look, as Joseph was betrayed and sold by his brethren; David by Ahithophel, his old friend; Samson by Delilah, that lay in his bosom; so Christ by Judas, one of the twelve; a man, his friend, his familiar, that had been so long conversant with him: he that by profession had lifted up his hand to Christ, now by treason lifts up his heel against him; he bids the soldiers bind those blessed hands that not long before had washed the traitor's feet.

We will here consider the character of Judas, and the relations he sustained to Christ; his treason, in its several aggravations; the motives by which he was governed; and the issue of this treason, both as to Christ and as to himself.

I. Judas was eminent by reason of *the dignity to which Christ had raised him*. He was one of the twelve; one retained not in a more general and common, but in the nearest and most intimate and honorable relation to Jesus Christ. There were in the time of Christ secret disciples; men that believed, but kept their stations, and abode with their relations in their callings. There were also seventy whom Christ sent forth; but none of these were so much with Christ, or so eminent in respect of their place, as the twelve; they were Christ's

family : it was the highest dignity that was conferred upon any : and of this number was Judas.

And being one of the twelve, he was daily conversant with Christ ; often joined him in prayer, often sat at his feet, hearing his gracious words. It was one of Augustine's three wishes, that he had seen Christ in the flesh : Judas not only saw him, but dwelt with him, traveled with him, and ate and drank with him. And during the whole time of his abode with him, all Christ's conduct towards him was obliging and winning ; yea, such was the condescension of Christ to this wretched man, that he washed his feet, and that but a little before he betrayed him.

In some respect, he was preferred to the rest. For he had not only a joint commission with them to preach the Gospel to others, (though, poor unhappy wretch, himself became a castaway,) but he had a peculiar office, he bare the bag, that is, he was almoner, or the steward of the family, to take care to provide for the necessary accommodations of Christ and them. Now who could ever have suspected that such a man as this should have sold the blood of Christ for a little money ? that ever he should have proved a perfidious traitor to his Lord, who had called him, honored him, and dealt with him so tenderly ?

II. But what did this man do ? and what are the just aggravations of his sin ? He most basely and unworthily sold and *delivered Christ into his enemies' hands, to be put to death* ; and all this for thirty pieces of silver. Blush, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, at this ! In this sin, most dark and horrid aggravations appear.

Judas had seen *the majesty of a God* in him whom he betrayed. He had seen the miracles that Christ wrought, which none but Christ could do. He knew that by the finger of God he had raised the dead, cast out devils, and healed the sick. He could not but see the beams

of Divine majesty shining in his very face, in his doctrine, and in his life.

Yea, he committed this wickedness after personal *warnings* and premonitions given him by Christ; he had often told them in general, that one of them should betray him. Mark, 14 : 18. He also denounced a dreadful wo upon him that should do it : "The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him; but wo to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good had it been for that man if he had never been born." Verse 21. This was spoken in Judas' presence. And one would have thought so dreadful a doom as Christ denounced upon the man that should attempt this, should have driven him from the thought of such wickedness. Nay, Christ came nearer to him than this, and told him he was the man : for when Judas (who was the last that put the question to Christ) asked him, "Master, is it I?" Christ's answer imports as much as a plain affirmation, "Thou hast said." Matt. 26 : 25.

Moreover, he did it not out of a blind zeal against Christ, as many of his other enemies did; of whom it is said that, "had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." 1 Cor. 2 : 8; but he did it *for money*. "What will ye give me, and I will betray him?" Matt. 26 : 15. He sells him, and he sells him at a low rate too; which showed what a grovelling estimate he had of Christ. He can part with him for thirty pieces of silver. If these pieces were the shekels of the sanctuary, they amounted but to three pounds fifteen shillings. But it is supposed they were the common shekels, which were mostly used in buying and selling; and then his price, that he put upon the Saviour of the world, was but one pound seventeen shillings and sixpence. A goodly price (as the prophet calls it) that he was valued at! Zech. 11 : 12, 13. I confess it is a wonder that he asked no more, knowing how much they

longed for his blood ; and that they offered no more for him. But how then should the Scriptures have been fulfilled ! Oh what a sale was this ! to sell that blood, of which all the gold and silver in the world is not worth one drop, for a trifle ! Still the wickedness of the sin rises higher and higher.

He left Christ in a most heavenly employment, when he went to make this soul-undoing bargain. For if he went away from the table, as some think, then he left Christ instituting and administering those heavenly signs of his body and blood : there he saw, or might have seen, the bloody work he was going about, acted as in a figure before him. If he tarried through the ordinance, as others suppose he did, then he left Christ singing a heavenly hymn, and preparing to go where Judas was preparing to meet him.

Besides, what he did was not *done by the persuasions of any*. The high priest sent not for him, and without doubt was surprised when he came to him on such an errand. For it could never enter into any of their hearts that one of his own disciples could be drawn into a confederacy against him. No, he went as a volunteer, offering himself to this work : which still heightens the sin, and makes it out of measure heinous.

The manner in which he executes his treasonable design adds further malignity to the deed. He comes to Christ with fawning words and demeanor, "Hail, Master, and kissed him." Here is honey in the tongue, and poison in the heart. Let us inquire,

III. *The cause and motives of this wickedness*, how he came to attempt and perpetrate such a villany. Maldonate the jesuit criminates the protestant divines for affirming that God had a hand in ordering and overruling this fact. But we say that Satan and his own lust were the impulsive cause of it : that God, as it was a wicked treason, permitted it ; and as it was a delivering of

Christ to death, was not only the permitter, but the wise and holy director and orderer of it, and by the wisdom of his providence overruled it to the great good and advantage of the church. Satan inspired the motion, "Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, and he went his way," Luke, 22 : 3, 4 ; his own lusts, like dry tinder, kindled presently : his heart was covetous. They covenanted to give him money, and he promised, &c.

The holy God disposed and ordered all this to the singular benefit and good of his people : the enemies of Christ did whatsoever "his hand and counsel had before determined to be done," Acts, 4 : 28, and by this determinate counsel of God he was taken and slain. Acts, 2 : 23. Yet this in no way excuses the wickedness of the instruments : for what they did, was done, from the power of their own lusts, most wickedly ; what He did, was, in the unsearchable depth of his own wisdom, most holy. God knows how to fulfil his purposes by the very sins of men, and yet have no communion at all in the sin he so overrules. Judas minded nothing but his own advantage, to get money : God permitted that lust to work, but overruled the issue to his own eternal glory and the salvation of our souls.

IV. But what was *the end and issue* of this deed ? As to Christ, it was his death ; for the hour being come, he doth not meditate an escape, nor put forth the power of his Godhead to deliver himself out of their hands. Indeed he showed what he could do, when he made them fall back and stagger with a word. He could have obtained more than twelve legions of angels to have been his life-guard ; but how then should the Scriptures have been fulfilled, or our salvation accomplished ?

And what did Judas get as a reward of his wickedness ? It ended in the ruin both of his soul and body. For immediately a death-pang of despair seized his con-

science; which was so intolerable, that he ran to the halter for a remedy; and so falling headlong, he burst asunder, and all his bowels gushed out. Acts, 1: 18. As for his soul, it went to its own place, ver. 25, even the place appointed for the son of perdition, as Christ calls him. John, 17: 12. His name is to this day, and shall be to all generations, a by-word, a proverb of reproach.

INFERENCE 1. Hence we learn that the greatest professors have need to be *jealous of their own hearts*, and look well to the grounds and principles of their profession. O professors, look to your foundation, and build not upon the sand, as this poor creature did. That is sound advice indeed which the apostle gives, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10: 12. Oh beware of a loose foundation. If you begin your profession as Judas did, no wonder if it shall end as his did.

Beware, therefore, that you hold not "the truth in unrighteousness." Judas did so: he knew much, but lived not according to what he knew, for he was still of a worldly spirit in the height of his profession. His knowledge never had any saving influence upon his heart; he preached to others, but he himself was a cast-away. He had much light, but still walked in darkness. He had no knowledge to do himself good.

Beware you live not in a course of secret sin. Judas did so, and that was his ruin. He made a profession indeed, and appeared well, but he was a thief. John, 12: 6. He made no conscience of committing sin, so he could but cover and hide it from men. This helped on his ruin, and so it will thine, reader, if thou be guilty herein. A secret way of sinning, under the covert of profession, will either break out at last to the observation of men, or else slide thee down insensibly to hell, and leave thee there only this comfort, that nobody at present shall know thou art there.

Beware of hypocritical pretences of religion to accommodate self-ends. Judas was a man that had great skill in this. He had a mind to fill his own purse by the sale of that costly ointment which Mary bestowed upon our Saviour's feet. And what a neat cover had he for it: "This might have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor." Here was charity to the poor, or rather poor charity; for this was only a blind to his base self-ends. O christian, be plain-hearted, take heed of craft and cunning in matters of religion.

Beware of self-confidence. Judas was very confident of himself. "Last of all, Judas said, Master, is it I?" Matt. 26:25. But he that was last in the suspicion was first in the transgression. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Prov. 28:26. It will be your wisdom to keep a jealous eye upon your own heart, and still suspect its fairest pretences.

If you would not do as Judas did, or come to such an end, take heed that you live not unprofitably under the means of grace. Judas had the best means of grace that ever man enjoyed. He heard Christ himself preach, he joined often with him in prayer, but he was never the better for it all; it was but as the watering of a dead stick, which will never make it grow, but rot it the sooner. Oh it is a sad sign, and a sad sin too, when men live under the Gospel from year to year, and are never the better. I warn you to beware of these evils, all ye that profess religion. Let these footsteps by which Judas went down to his own place, terrify you from following him in them.

2. Learn hence, also, that eminent knowledge and profession greatly *aggravate sin*. "Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve." Poor wretch! better had it been for him if he had never been numbered with them, nor enlightened with so much knowledge; for this rent his conscience to pieces, when he reflected on what he had

done, and drove him into the gulf of despair. To sin against clear light is to sin with a high hand. Those that had an agency in the death of Christ, through mistake and ignorance, could receive the pardon of their sin by that blood they shed. Acts, 3:19. Take heed therefore of abusing knowledge, and wresting conscience.

3. Learn hence, that *unprincipled professors will sooner or later become apostates*. Judas was an unprincipled professor, and see what he came to! Ambition invited Simon Magus to the profession of Christ, he would be "some great one," and how quickly did the rottenness of his principles discover itself in the ruin of his profession! That which wants a root must wither. Matt. 13:20, 21. That which is the predominant interest will prevail with us in the day of our trial. Hear me, all you that profess religion, and have given your names to Christ; if that profession be not built upon a solid and real work of grace in your hearts, you will never honor religion, nor save your souls by it. Oh it is your union with Christ, that, like a spring, maintains your profession. So much as you are united to Christ, so much constancy, steadiness, and evenness you will manifest in the duties of religion, and no more.

O brethren, when he that professes Christ for company, shall be left alone as Paul was; when he that makes religion a stirrup to help himself into the saddle of preferment and honor, shall see that he is so advanced to be drawn forth into Christ's camp and endure the heat of the day, and not to take his pleasure; in a word, when he shall see all things about him discouraging and threatening; his dearest interest on earth exposed for religion's sake; and that he has no faith to balance his present losses with his future hopes; I say, when it comes to this, you shall then see the rottenness of many hearts discovered, and Judas may have many

associates who will part with Christ for the world. Oh therefore look well to your foundation.

4. Moreover, in this example of Judas you may read this truth ; that men are never in more imminent danger than when they meet with *temptations suited to their besetting sins*, to their own iniquity. Oh pray, pray that ye may be kept from a violent besetting temptation. Satan knows that when a man is thus tried he falls by the root. The love of this world was all along Judas' master-sin, this was his predominant lust. The devil found out this, and suited it with a temptation which carried him immediately. This is the dangerous crisis of the soul. Now you shall see what it is, and what it will do. Put money before Judas, and presently you shall see what the man is.

5. Hence, in like manner, we are instructed that *no man knows where he shall stop* when he first engages himself in a way of sin.

Wickedness, as well as holiness, is not born in its full strength, but grows up to it by insensible degrees. So did the wickedness of Judas. I believe, he himself never thought he should have done what he did : and if any had told him, in the beginning of his profession, Thou shalt sell the blood of Christ for money, thou shalt deliver him most perfidiously into their hands that seek his life ; he would have answered, as Hazael did to Elisha, " What, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing ?" 2 Kings, 8 : 13. His wickedness first discovered itself in murmuring and discontent, taking a pique at some small matters against Christ, as you may find by comparing John 4, from ver. 60 to 70, with John 12, from ver. 3 to 9. But see to what it grows at last. That lust or temptation that at first is but a little cloud as big as a man's hand, may quickly overspread the whole heaven. Our engaging in sin is as the motion of a stone down hill, *vires acquirit eundo*, " it strengthens

itself by going ;” and the longer it runs, the more violent. Beware of the smallest beginnings of temptation. No wise man will neglect or slight the smallest spark of fire, especially if he see it among barrels of gunpowder. You carry gunpowder about you, Oh take heed of sparks.

6. Did Judas sell Christ for money ? *What a conqueror is the love of this world !* How many hath it cast down wounded ! What great professors have been dragged at its chariot wheels as its captives ! Hymeneus and Philetus, Ananias and Sapphira, Demas and Judas, with thousands and ten thousands since their days, led away in triumph. It “drowns men in perdition.” 1 Tim. 6 : 9. In that pit of perdition this son of perdition fell, and never rose more. O you that so court and pursue it, that so love and admire it, make a stand here ; pause a little upon this example ; consider to what it brought this poor wretch, whom I have presented to you dead, eternally dead, by the mortal wound that the love of this world gave him : it destroyed both soul and body. Pliny tells us, that the mermaids delight to be in green meadows, into which they draw men by their enchanting voices ; but, saith he, there always lie heaps of dead men’s bones by them. A lively emblem of a bewitching world ! Good had it been for many professors of religion, if they had never known what the riches, and honors, and pleasures of this world are.

7. Did Judas fancy so much happiness from a little money, that he would sell Christ to get it ? Learn, then, that that wherein men promise themselves much pleasure and contentment in the way of sin, *may prove the greatest curse* and misery to them. Judas thought it was a fine thing to get money ; he fancied much happiness in it ; but how sick was his conscience as soon as he had swallowed it ! Oh take it again ! saith he. It griped him to the heart. He knows not what to do to rid him-

self of that money. Oh mortify your fancies to the world ; count not riches necessary. "They that will be rich, fall into temptations, and many hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition." 1 Tim. 6 : 9. You may have your desires gratified with a curse. He that brings home fine clothes infected with the plague, is no great gainer, how cheap soever he bought them.

8. Was there one, and but one of the twelve, that proved a traitor to Christ ? Learn thence, that it is most unreasonable to be prejudiced against religion, and the sincere professors of it, *because some that profess it prove vile*. Should the eleven suffer for one Judas ? Alas, they abhorred both the traitor and his treason. As well might the high priest and his servants have condemned Peter, John, and all the rest, whose souls abhorred the wickedness. If Judas proved a vile wretch, yet there were eleven to one that remained upright : if Judas proved naught, it was not his profession made him so, but his hypocrisy ; he never learned it from Christ. If religion must be charged with all the failures of its professors, then there is no pure religion in the world. Name that religion, among the professors of which there is not one Judas. Take heed, reader, of prejudices against godliness on this account. The design of the devil, without doubt, is to undo thee eternally by them. "Wo to the world because of offences." Matt. 18 : 7. Blessed is he that is not offended at Christ.

9. Did Judas, one of the twelve, do so ? Learn thence, that *a drop of grace is better than a sea of gifts*. Gifts have some excellency in them, but the way of grace is the "more excellent way." 1 Cor. 12 : 31. There is many a learned head in hell. Gifts are the gold that beautifies the temple ; but grace is as the temple which sanctifies the gold. One tear, one groan, one breathing of an upright heart, is more than the tongues of angels.

Poor christian, thou art troubled that thou canst not

speak and pray so fluently as some others; but canst thou go into a corner, and there pour out thy soul affectionately, though not rhetorically, to thy Father? trouble not thyself. It is better for thee to feel one divine impression from God upon thy heart, than to have ten thousand fine notions floating in thy head.

10. Did the devil win the consent of Judas to such a design as this? Could he get no other but the hand of an apostle to assist him? Learn hence, that the policy of Satan lies much in *the choice of his instruments*. No bird (saith one) like a living bird to tempt others into the net. Austin told an ingenious young scholar, "The devil coveted him for an ornament." He knows he hath a foul cause to manage, and therefore will get the fairest hand he can, to manage it with the less suspicion.

11. Did Judas, one of the twelve, do this? Then certainly christians may approve and join with such men on earth, whose faces they shall *never see in heaven*. The apostles held communion a long time with this man, and did not suspect him. Oh please not yourselves, therefore, that you have communion with the saints here, and that they think and speak charitably of you. "All the churches shall know, (saith the Lord,) that I am he that searcheth the heart and reins, and will give to every man as his work shall be." Rev. 2:23. In heaven we shall meet many that we never thought to meet there, and miss many that we were confident we should see there.

12. Did Judas, one of the twelve, a man so favored, raised, and honored by Christ, do this? Cease then from man, *be not too confident* in any. "Trust ye not in a friend, put no confidence in a guide, keep the door of thy lips from her that lieth in thy bosom." Mic. 7:5. Not that there is no sincerity in any man; but there is so much hypocrisy in many men, and so much corruption in the best of men, that we should not be too con-

fidant in any. Peter's modest expression of Silvanus is a pattern for us ; " Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose." 1 Pet. 5 : 12. The time shall come, saith Christ, that " brother shall betray brother to death." Matt. 10 : 21. Charity for others may be your duty, but too great confidence may be your snare. Fear what others may do, but fear thyself more.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SECOND AND THIRD PREPARATIVES FOR CHRIST'S DEATH. HIS ILLEGAL TRIAL AND CONDEMNATION.

" And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required." Luke, 23 : 23, 24.

Judas has made good his promise to the high priest, and delivered Jesus a prisoner into their hands. These wolves of the evening no sooner seize the Lamb of God, but they thirst after his precious innocent blood ; their revenge and malice admit no delay, as fearing a rescue by the people.

When Herod had taken Peter, he committed him to prison, " intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people." Acts, 12 : 4. But these men cannot sleep till they have Jesus' blood, and therefore the preparation of the passover being come, they resolve in all haste to destroy him ; yet lest it should look like a downright murder, they would have it formalized with a trial. This his trial and condemnation are the two last acts by which they prepared for his death, and are both contained in this context ; in which we may observe, *the*

indictment, and the *sentence* to which the judge proceeded.

In the indictment drawn up against Christ, they accuse him of many things, but can prove nothing. However, what is wanting in evidence must be supplied with clamor and importunity. For "they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified; and their voices prevailed:" when they can neither prove the sedition and blasphemy they charged him with, then "Crucify him, crucify him" must serve the turn, instead of all witnesses and proofs.

The sentence pronounced upon him by Pilate was that it should be as they required: from which we may observe these two conclusions:

1. *The trial of Christ was conducted most maliciously and illegally by his unrighteous judges.*
2. *Though nothing could be proved against him worthy of death, or of bonds; yet he was condemned to the death of the cross.*

Reader, here thou mayest see the Judge of all the world standing himself to be judged; he that shall judge the world in righteousness, judged most unrighteously; he that shall one day come to the throne of judgment, attended with thousands and ten thousands of angels and saints, standing as a prisoner at man's bar, and there denied the common right which a thief or murderer might claim, and is commonly given them.

To manifest the *illegality of Christ's trial*, let the following particulars be carefully weighed:

1. That he was *inhumanly abused*, both in words and actions, before the court met, or any examination was made; for as soon as they had taken him, they forthwith bound him, and led him away to the high priest's house. Luke, 22:54. And there they that held him, mocked him, smote him, blindfolded him, struck him on the face, and bid him prophesy who smote him; and

many other things blasphemously spake they against him. Ver. 63-65. How illegal and barbarous a thing was this? When they were but binding Paul with thongs, he thought himself abused contrary to law, and asked the centurion that stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" Is this legal? What! punish a man first, and judge him afterwards! But Christ was not only bound, but shamefully ill-treated by them all that night, dealing with him as the lords of the Philistines did with Samson, to whom it was sport to abuse him. No rest had Jesus that night; Oh it was a sad night to him: and this under Caiaphas' own roof.

2. He was examined and judged by *a court that had no authority to try him*: "As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the scribes came together and led him into their council." Luke, 22:66. This was the ecclesiastical court, the great sanhedrim, which, according to its first constitution, should consist of seventy grave, honorable, and learned men; to whom were to be referred all doubtful matters too hard for inferior courts to decide. And these were to judge impartially and uprightly for God, as men in whom was the Spirit of God. Numb. 11:16, &c. In this court the righteous and innocent might expect relief and protection. But now, contrary to the first constitution, it consisted of malicious scribes and pharisees, men full of revenge, malice, and all unrighteousness: and over these Caiaphas (a head fit for such a body) at this time presided. Still, though there remained the form of a court among them, their power was so abridged by the Romans that they could not hear and determine, judge and condemn in capital cases, as formerly. For as Josephus, their own historian, informs us, Herod in the beginning of his reign took away this power from them, (Antiq. lib. 14, cap. 205;) and they

said truly, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." John, 18 : 31. In these circumstances they bring him to Pilate's bar. But Pilate understanding that he was a Galilean, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and at that time in Jerusalem, Pilate sent him to Herod, and by him he was sent back again to Pilate.

3. As he was at first heard and judged by a court that had no authority to judge him ; so when he stood at Pilate's bar, he was accused of perverting the nation, and denying tribute to Cesar, than which nothing was more *notoriously false*. For as all his doctrine was pure and heavenly, and malice itself could not find a flaw in it ; so he was always observant of the laws under which he lived, and scrupulous of giving the least just offence to the civil powers. Yea, he not only paid the tribute himself, though he might have pleaded exemption, but charged it upon others as their duty, "Give unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's." Matt. 22 : 21.

4. To compass their malicious designs, they industriously labor to *suborn false witnesses* to take away his life, employing the grossest perjury and most manifest injustice that they might destroy him. So you read, "Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus to put him to death." Matt. 26 : 59. Abominable wickedness ! for such men, and so many, to join to shed the blood of the innocent, by known and studied perjury ! What will not malice against Christ induce men to do.

5. Moreover, *the conduct of the court* was most insolent and base towards him during the trial ; whilst he stood before them as a prisoner, yet uncondemned, sometimes they are angry at him for his silence ; and when he speaks, and that properly and to the point, they smite him on the mouth for speaking, and scoff at what he says.

To some of their light, frivolous, and insnaring ques-

tions he makes no reply, not for want of an answer, but because he heard nothing worthy of one; and to fulfil what the prophet Isaiah had long before predicted of him, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth;" Isa. 53:7; as also to leave us an example when to speak, and when to be silent, if we for his name's sake shall be brought before governors. Then they are ready to condemn him for his silence. "Answerest thou nothing? (saith the high-priest,) what is it that these witness against thee?" Matt. 26:62. "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" saith Pilate. Matt. 27:13.

And when he makes his defence in words of truth and soberness, they smite him for speaking: "When he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high-priest so?" John, 18:22. And what had he spoken to exasperate them? What he said, when they would have had him insnare himself with his own lips, was but this, "I spake openly to the world, I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them that heard me, behold, they know what I said." Oh who but himself could have so patiently borne such abuses! Under all this he stands in perfect innocency and patience, making no other return to the wretch that smote him, but this, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"

6. Not to dwell on other particulars, he is condemned to die by that very mouth which had once and again *professed he found no fault in him*. He had heard all that could be alleged against him, and saw it was a perfect piece of malice and envy. When they urge Pilate

to proceed to sentence him, "Why, (saith he,) what evil hath he done?" Matt. 27:23. Nay, in the preface to the very sentence itself, he acknowledges him to be a just person: "When Pilate saw he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, and said, I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it." Matt. 27:24. Here the innocency of Christ broke out like the sun from a cloud, convincing the conscience of his judge that he was just; and yet he must give sentence against him to please the people.

INFERENCE 1. FROM this trial of Christ we learn, that though we are not obliged to answer every captious, idle, or insnaring question, yet we are bound faithfully to *own and confess the truth*, when we are solemnly called to it. It is true, Christ was sometimes silent, and as a deaf man that heard not; but when the question was solemnly put, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Jesus said, I am." Mark, 14:61, 62. He knew that answer would cost his life. On this account the apostle says, "he witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate." 1 Tim. 6:13. Herein Christ hath pointed out the way of our duty, and by his own example, as well as precept, obliged us to a sincere confession of him and his truth, when we are lawfully required so to do; when we cannot be silent without a virtual denial of the truth; and when the glory of God, the honor of his truth, and the edification of others, are more attainable by our open confession, than they can be by our silence. You know what Christ hath said, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 10:33. It was a noble saying of the courageous Zuinglius, "What deaths would not I choose, what punishment would I not undergo; yea, into what vault of hell would I not rather choose to be thrown, than to witness against my conscience?"

Truth can never be bought too dear, nor sold too cheap. The Lord Jesus, you see, owns the truth at the imminent and instant hazard of his life. The whole cloud of witnesses have followed him therein. Rev. 14:1. We ourselves once openly owned the ways of sin; and shall we not do as much for Christ, as we then did for the devil? Did we then glory in our shame, and shall we now be ashamed of our glory? Do not we hope Christ will own us at the great day? Why, if we confess him, he also will confess us. Oh think on the reasonableness of this duty.

2. To bear the revilings, contradictions, and abuses of men with *a meek and quiet spirit*, is excellent and Christ-like. He stood before them as a lamb; he rendered not railing for railing; he endured the contradictions of sinners against himself. Imitate Christ in his meekness. He calls you so to do. Matt. 11:29. This will be convincing to your enemies, comfortable to yourselves, and honorable to religion: and as for your innocency, God will clear it up.

The second proposition before us, the **ILLEGAL SENTENCE** of Christ, may lead us to consider,

I. *Who gave the sentence?* It was Pilate, who succeeded Valerius Gratus in the presidentship of Judea, (as Josephus tells us,) in which trust he continued about ten years. This was in the eighth year of his government. Two years after, he was removed from his place and office by Vitellius, president of Syria, for his murdering of the innocent Samaritans. This necessitated him to go to Rome to clear himself before Cesar; but before he came to Rome, Tiberius was dead, and Caius in his room. Under him, says Eusebius, Pilate killed himself. "He was not very friendly or benevolent to the Jewish nation, and was suspicious of their rebellions and insurrections, which the priests and scribes ob-

served, and turned to account in their design against Christ." Therefore they tell him so often of Christ's sedition, and stirring up the people; and that if he let him go, he is not Cesar's friend, which consideration prevailed with him to do what he did. But though he had stood ill in the opinion of Cesar, how durst he attempt such a wickedness as this? What! give judgment against the Son of God? for it is evident, by many circumstances in this trial, that he had strong fears and convictions that he was the Son of God, which induced him to desire his release. John, 19:8-12. His mind was greatly perplexed, and in doubt, about this prisoner, whether he was a God or a man. And yet the fear of Cesar prevailed more than the fear of a Deity; he proceeds to give sentence. See in this predominancy of self-interest, what man will attempt and perpetrate, to secure and accommodate self.

II. *Against whom* doth Pilate give sentence? against a malefactor? No, his own mouth once and again acknowledged him innocent. Against a common prisoner? No, but one whose fame no doubt had often reached Pilate's ears, even the wonderful things wrought by him, which none but God could do: one that stood before him as the picture, or rather as the body of innocency and meekness. "Ye have condemned and killed the Just, and he resisteth you not." James, 5:6. Now was that word made good, "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood." Psalm 94:21.

III. But *what was the sentence* that Pilate gave? We have it not in the form in which it was delivered; but the sum of it was that it should be as they required. Now what did they require? Crucify him, crucify him. So that in what formalities soever it was delivered, this was the substance and effect of it, "I adjudge Jesus of Nazareth to be nailed to the cross, and there to hang

till he be dead." Which sentence against Christ was,

1. A most *unjust and unrighteous* sentence ; the greatest perversion of judgment and equity that was ever known to the civilized world since seats of judicature were first set up. What ! to condemn him before one accusation was proved against him ? And if what they accused him of (that he said he was the Son of God) had been proved, it had been no crime, for he really was so ; and therefore it was no blasphemy in him to say he was. Pilate should rather have come down from his seat of judgment and adored him, than sat there to judge him.

2. It was a *cruel* sentence, delivering up Christ to their wills. This was that misery which David so earnestly deprecated, " O deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies." Psalm 27 : 12. But Pilate delivers Christ over to the will of his enemies, men full of enmity, rage, and malice. As soon as these wolves had griped their prey, they were not satisfied with the cursed, cruel, and ignominious death of the cross, to which Pilate had adjudged him, but they are resolved he shall die over and over ; they will contrive many deaths in one : to this end they presently strip him ; scourge him cruelly ; array him in scarlet, and mock him ; crown him with a bush of platted thorns ; fasten that crown upon his head by a blow, which sets them deep into his sacred temples ; put a reed into his hand for a sceptre, spit in his face, strip off his mock-ropes again ; put the cross upon his back, and compel him to bear it. By all this, and much more, they express their cruelty, as soon as they had him delivered over to their will.

3. It was also a *rash and hasty* sentence. The Jews are all in haste ; consulting all night, and up by the break of day in the morning, to get him to his trial. They spur on Pilate with all arguments they can to give

sentence. His trial took up but one morning, and a great part of that was spent in sending him from Caiaphas to Pilate, and from Pilate to Herod, and then back again to Pilate; so that it was a hasty and headlong sentence that Pilate gave. He did not sift and examine the matter, but handled it very slightly. The trial of many a mean man hath engrossed ten times more time and debate than this trial of Christ.

4. It was an *extorted* sentence. They wring it from Pilate by mere clamor, importunity, and suggestions of danger. In courts of judicature, such arguments should signify but little; not importunity, but proof, should prevail: but timorous Pilate bends like a willow at the breath of the people; he had neither such a sense of justice, nor courage, as to withstand it.

5. It was a *hypocritical* sentence, masking horrid murder under the pretence and formality of law. Loth he was to condemn him, lest innocent blood should clamor in his conscience; but since he must do it, he will transfer the guilt upon them, and they take it; "His blood be on us, and on our children for ever," say they. Pilate calls for water, washes his hands before them, and declares, "I am free from the blood of this just person." But stay; free from his blood, and yet condemn a known innocent person! Free from his blood, because he washed his hands in water! Oh the hypocrisy of Pilate! Such juggling as this will not serve his turn, when he shall stand as a prisoner before him who now stood arraigned at his bar.

IV. *In what manner did Christ receive this cruel and unrighteous sentence?* He received it like himself, with admirable meekness and patience. He doth as it were wrap himself up in his own innocency and obedience to his Father's will, and stands at the bar with invincible patience and meek submission. He doth not once desire the judge to defer the sentence, much less fall down and

beg for his life, as other prisoners use to do at such times. No, but as a sheep he goes to the slaughter, not opening his mouth. From the time that Pilate gave sentence, till he was nailed to the cross, we do not read that he said any thing, save only to the women that followed him out of the city to Golgotha: and what he said there, rather manifested his pity to them, than any discontent at what was now come upon him; "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Luke, 23 : 28, &c. Oh the perfect patience and meekness of Christ!

INFERENCE 1. Do you see what was here done against Christ, under pretence of law? What cause have we to pray for *good laws and righteous rulers*? Oh! it is a singular mercy to live under good laws, which protect the innocent from injury. Laws are hedges about our lives, liberties, estates, and all the comforts we enjoy in this world. Times will be evil enough, when iniquity is not discountenanced and punished by law; but how evil are those times like to prove when iniquity is established by law! as the psalmist complains. Ps. 94 : 20. How much therefore is it our concern to pray that "judgment may run down as a mighty stream!" Amos, 5 : 24. "That our officers may be peace, and our exactors righteousness!" Isa. 60 : 17. It was not therefore without great reason that the apostle exhorted that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." 1 Tim. 2 : 1, 2. Great is the interest of the church of God in them; they are instruments of much good or much evil.

2. Was Christ condemned in a court of judicature? How evident then is it that there is *a judgment to come*? Surely things will not be always carried as they are in this world. When you see Jesus condemned, and

Barabbas released, conclude that a time will come when innocency shall be vindicated, and wickedness shamed. On this ground, Solomon concludes, and very rationally, that God will bring things hereafter to a more righteous tribunal: "And moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked." Eccl. 3: 16, 17. Some indeed, on this ground, have denied the Divine providence; but Solomon draws a quite contrary conclusion, God shall judge: surely he will take the matter into his own hand, he will bring forth the righteousness of his people as the light, and their just dealing as the noon-day. It is a mercy, if we be wronged in one court, that we can appeal to another, where we shall be sure to be relieved by a just, impartial Judge. "Be patient therefore, my brethren, until the coming of the Lord." James, 5: 7.

3. Again, here you see how *conscience may be overborne* by a fleshly interest. Pilate's conscience bid him beware, and forbear: his interest bid him act; his fear of Cesar was greater than his fear of God. But Oh! what a dreadful thing is it for conscience to be insnared by the fear of man! Prov. 29: 25. To guard thy soul, reader, against this mischief, let such considerations as these be ever with thee.

Consider *how dear those profits or pleasures cost*, which are purchased with the loss of inward peace! There is nothing in this world good enough to recompense such a loss, or balance the misery of a tormenting conscience. If you violate it for the sake of a fleshly lust, it will remember the injury many years after. Gen. 42: 21; Job, 13: 26. It will not only retain the memory of what you did, but it will accuse you for it. Matt. 27: 4. It will not fear to tell you that plainly, which others dare not whisper. It will not only accuse, but it will also

condemn you for what you have done. This condemning voice of conscience is a terrible voice. You may see the horror of it in Cain, the vigor of it in Judas, the doleful effects of it in Spira. It will produce shame, fear, and despair, if God give not repentance to life. The shame it works will so confound you, that you will not be able to look up. Job, 31 : 14 ; Ps. 1 : 5. The fear it works will make you wish for a hole in the rock to hide you. Isa. 2 : 9, 10, 15, 19. And its despair is a death-pang. Oh ! who can bear such a load as this ? Prov. 18 : 14.

Consider the nature of your present actions ; they are *seed sown for eternity*, and will spring up again in suitable effects, rewards and punishments, when you that did them are turned to dust. What a man sows, that shall he reap. Gal. 6 : 7. And as sure as the harvest follows the seed-time, so sure shall shame, fear, and horror follow sin. Dan. 12 : 2. What Zeuxis, the famous painter, said of his work, may much more truly be said of ours ; "I paint for eternity." Ah ! how bitter will those things be in the day of reckoning, which were pleasant in the acting ! It is true, our actions, physically considered, are transient ; how soon is a word or action spoken or done, and there is an end of it ! But morally considered, they are permanent, being put upon God's book of account. Oh, therefore, take heed what you do : so speak, and so act, as they that must give an account.

Consider how by these things men do but *prepare for their own torment* in a dying hour. There is bitterness enough in death, you need not add more gall and wormwood to increase it. What is the forcing and wounding of conscience now, but putting thorns in your death-bed, against you come to lie down on it ? This makes death bitter indeed. How many have wished in a dying hour, they had rather lived poor and low all their days, than to have strained their consciences for the world ! Ah !

how is the aspect of things altered in such an hour!

4. Did Christ stand arraigned and condemned at Pilate's bar? Then *the believer shall never be arraigned and condemned at God's bar*. This sentence that Pilate pronounced on Christ gives evidence that God will never pronounce sentence against such: for had he intended to have arraigned them, he would never have suffered Christ, their surety, to be arraigned and condemned for them. Christ stood at this time before a higher judge than Pilate; he stood at God's bar as well as his. Pilate did but that which God's own hand and counsel had before determined to be done, and what God himself at the same time did: though God did it justly and holily, dealing with Christ as a creditor with a surety; Pilate most wickedly and basely dealing with Christ as a corrupt judge, that shed the blood of a known innocent to pacify the people. But certain it is, that out of his condemnation flows our justification; and had not sentence been given against him, it must have been given against us.

Oh what a melting consideration is this! that out of his agony comes our victory; out of his condemnation, our justification; out of his pain, our ease; out of his stripes, our healing; out of his curse, our blessing; out of his crown of thorns, our crown of glory; out of his death, our life. If he could not be released, it was that you might. If Pilate gave sentence against him, it was that the great God might never give sentence against you. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

CHAPTER XXV.

CHRIST'S ADDRESS TO THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

“And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.” Luke, 23 : 27, 28, &c.

The sentence of death being given against Christ, the execution quickly follows. The evangelist here observes a memorable occurrence in their way to the place of execution ; the lamentations and wailing of some that followed him out of the city, who expressed their pity and sorrow for him most tenderly and compassionately : all hearts were not hard, all eyes were not dry. “ There followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.”

The text calls them “ Daughters, that is, inhabitants of Jerusalem ; like the expression, daughters of Zion, daughters of Israel.” There were many of them, a troop of mourners, that followed Christ out of the city towards the place of his execution, with lamentations and wailings.

What the principle or ground of these their lamentations was, is not agreed by those that have pondered the story. Some suppose their tears and lamentations were but the effects of their more tender and ingenuous natures, which were moved and melted with so tragical and sad a spectacle as was now before them. But Calvin and others attribute it to their faith, regarding them as a remnant reserved by the Lord in that lamentable dispersion of Christ's followers.

Christ's reply to them is, “ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me.” Strange, that Christ should forbid

them to weep for him under such unparalleled sufferings and miseries. If ever there was a heart-melting sight, it was here. Oh who could refrain from weeping ?

Those that look upon their sorrow as merely natural, take Christ's reply in a negative sense, prohibiting such tears as those. They that expound their sorrow as the fruit of faith, tell us, though the form of Christ's expression be negative, yet the sense is comparative. Weep rather upon your own account than mine ; reserve your sorrows for the calamities coming upon yourselves and your children. You are greatly affected, I see, with the misery that is upon me ; but mine will be quickly over, yours will lie long. In which he shows his merciful and compassionate disposition, who was still more mindful of the troubles and burdens of others than of his own. And indeed, the days of calamity coming upon them and their children were doleful days. What direful and unpreccented miseries befel them at the breaking up and devastation of the city, who hath not read or heard ? And who can refrain from tears that hears or reads it ?

Now, if we take the words in the first sense, as a prohibition of their merely natural grief, expressed in tears and lamentations for him, just as they would have been upon any other like tragical event ; then the observation from it will be, 1. That melting affections and sorrows, even from the sense and consideration of the sufferings of Christ, are no infallible signs of grace.

If you take it in the latter sense, as the fruit of their faith, as tears flowing from a gracious principle ; then the observation will be, 2. That the believing meditation of what Christ suffered for us, is of great force and efficacy to melt and break the heart.

I rather choose to prosecute both these branches than to decide which is the true interpretation, especially as each of them may be useful to us. I begin with the first,

Melting affections and sorrows, even from the sense of Christ's sufferings, are not infallible marks of grace.

The truth of this proposition will appear from the following reasons :

1. Because we find all sorts of affections manifested by those who have been but *temporary believers*. The stony-ground hearers, Matt. 13 : 20, "received the word with joy;" and so did John's hearers, who for "a season rejoiced in his light." John, 5 : 35. Now, if the affections of joy under the word may be exercised, why not of sorrow also ? If the comfortable things revealed in the Gospel may excite the one, by a parity of reasoning, the sad things it reveals may awaken the other. Even those Israelites whom Moses told they should fall by the sword, and not prosper, for the Lord would not be with them, because they were turned away from him ; when Moses rehearsed the message of the Lord in their ears, mourned greatly. Numb. 14 : 39. I know the Lord pardoned many of them their iniquities, though he took vengeance on their inventions ; and yet it is as true, that with many of them God was not well-pleased. 1 Cor. 10 : 5. Many instances of their weeping and mourning before the Lord we find in the sacred history ; and yet their hearts were not stedfast with God.

2. Because though the object about which our affections and passions are moved may be spiritual ; yet the *motives and principles* brought into exercise may be but *carnal and natural*. When I see a person affected in the hearing of the word, or prayer, even unto tears, I cannot at once conclude that this is the effect of grace ; for it is possible the pathetic nature of the subject, the eloquence of the speaker, the affecting tone and modulation of the voice may draw tears as well as faith.

Whilst Augustin was a manichee, he sometimes heard Ambrose ; and, saith he, "I was greatly affected in hearing him, even unto tears many times:" howbeit, it was

not the heavenly nature of the subject, but the abilities of the speaker that so affected him. And this was the case of Ezekiel's hearers. Chap. 33 : 32.

3. These motions of the affections may rather be a *fit and mood*, than the very frame and temper of the soul. There are seasons when the roughest and most obdurate heart may be pensive and tender : but that is not its temper and frame, but rather a fit, a pang, a transient passion. So the Lord complains of them, " O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee ? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee ? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away." Hos. 6 : 4. And so he complains, " When he slew them, then they sought him : and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the most high God their Redeemer ; nevertheless they did flatter him with their lips, and lied unto him with their tongues." Psalm 78 : 34-36. Had this remembrance of God been the gracious temper of their souls, it would have continued with them ; they would not have been thus wavering and lukewarm.

INFERENCE 1. If such as sometimes feel their hearts melted with the consideration of the sufferings of Christ, may yet be deceived ; what cause have they to fear and tremble, *whose hearts are unrelenting as the rocks*, yielding to nothing that is proposed, or urged upon them ! How many such are there, of whom we may say, as Christ said of the Jews, " We have piped unto you, but ye have not danced ; we have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented !" Matt. 11 : 17. If those perish that have rejoiced under the promises, and mourned under the threats of the word ; what shall become of them that are totally unconcerned and unmoved by what they hear ? who are given up to such hardness of heart, that nothing can affect them ? One would think, the consideration of the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews

should startle such individuals, and make them cry out, Lord, what will become of such a senseless, stupid, dead creature as I am? If they that have been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, may, notwithstanding, so fall away, that it shall be impossible to renew them again by repentance, what shall we then say, or think, of the state of those to whom the most penetrating and awakening truths are no more than a tale that is told?

2. If such as these may eternally miscarry; then *let all look carefully to their foundation*. It is manifest from 1 Cor. 10:12, that many souls stand exceeding dangerously, who are yet satisfied of their own safety. And if you consult the following scriptures, you shall find vain confidence to be a ruling passion among men, and one which is the utter overthrow and undoing of multitudes of professors. Gal. 6:3, 4; John, 8:54; Rom. 2:18, 19, 21; Matt. 25:11, 12; Matt. 7:22.

- Now there is nothing more apt to beget this vain soul-undoing confidence, than the stirrings and meltings of our affections about spiritual things, whilst the heart remains unrenewed. For such a man seems to have all that is required of a christian, and herein to have attained the very end of all knowledge—its influence upon the heart and affections. Indeed (thinks such a poor deluded soul) if I heard, read, or prayed, without any inward affections, with a dead, cold, and unconcerned heart; or if I made a show of zeal and affection in duties, and had it not; well might I suspect myself to be a hypocrite: but it is not so with me, I feel my heart really melted many times when I read the sufferings of Christ; I feel my heart raised and ravished with strange joys and comforts when I hear the glory of heaven in the Gospel: indeed if it were not so with me, I might

fear that the root of the matter is wanting ; but if to my knowledge affections be added, a melting heart joined with a knowing head, then I may be confident all is well. I have often heard ministers cautioning and warning their people not to rest satisfied with idle and speculative notions in their understandings, but to labor for impressions upon their hearts. This I have attained. I have often heard it given as a mark of a hypocrite, that he has light in his head, but it sheds not down its influence upon the heart ; whereas in those that are sincere, it works on their heart and affections : so I find it with me, therefore I am in a most safe estate.

O soul ! of all the false signs of grace, none are more dangerous than those that most resemble true ones ; and never doth the devil more surely and incurably destroy, than when transformed into an angel of light. What if these meltings of thy heart be but a flower of nature ? What if thou art more indebted to a good temper of body than a gracious change of spirit for these things ? Yet so it may be. Be not secure, but fear, and watch. Possibly, if thou wouldest but search thine own heart in this matter, thou mayest find that any other moving story will have like effects upon thee. Possibly, too, thou mayest find that, notwithstanding all thy raptures and joys at the hearing of heaven and its glory, thy heart is habitually earthly, and thy conversation is not there. For all thou canst mourn at the relation of Christ's sufferings, thou art not so affected with *sin*, which was the cause of them, as to crucify one corruption, or deny the next temptation, or part with any way of sin that is gainful or pleasurable to thee, for his sake.

Now, reader, if it be so with thee, what art thou the better for the glow of thy affections ? Dost thou think in earnest that Christ hath the better thoughts of thee, because thou canst shed tears for him, when notwithstanding thou every day piercest and woundest him ?

Oh! be not deceived. Nay, for aught I know, thou mayest find, upon a narrow search, that thou puttest thy tears in the room of Christ's blood, and givest the confidence and dependence of thy soul to them; and if so, they shall never do thee any good. Therefore search thy heart, cherish not, upon such poor weak grounds as these, a soul-undoing confidence. Always remember the wheat and tares resemble each other in their first springing up; that an egg is not more like an egg, than hypocrisy, in some shapes and forms into which it can cast itself, is like a genuine work of grace.

There be first, that shall be last; and last, that shall be first. Matt. 19 : 30. Great is the deceitfulness of our hearts. Jer. 17 : 9. And many are the subtleties and devices of Satan. 2 Cor. 11 : 3. Many also are the astonishing examples of self-deceiving souls recorded in the word. Remember what you have read of Judas. Great also will be the strictness of the last judgment. And how confident soever you be that you shall stand in that day, still remember that trial is not yet past. Your final sentence is not yet come from the mouth of your Judge. This I speak not to affright and trouble, but to excite and warn you. The loss of the soul is no small loss.

We proceed to the supposition, that the sorrow of these women was the fruit of their faith, and hence observe,

The believing meditation of what Christ suffered for us, is of great force and efficacy to melt and break the heart.

It is promised, that "they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Zech. 12 : 10. Ponder seriously, here, *the spring and motive*, "They

shall look upon me ;” it is the eye of faith that melts and breaks the heart. Mark also the *effect* of such a sight of Christ, “ They shall look and mourn ;” be in bitterness and sorrow. True repentance is a drop out of the eye of faith ; and the measure or degree of sorrow caused by a believing view of Christ is here expressed by two of the fullest instances of grief ; that of a tender father mourning over a dear and only son ; and that of the people of Israel mourning over Josiah, that peerless prince, in the valley of Megiddo.

Now to show how the believing meditation of Christ, and his sufferings, come kindly and savingly to break and melt down the gracious heart, I shall mention four considerations of the heart-breaking efficacy of faith, eyeing a crucified Jesus.

I. The viewing of Christ and his sufferings by faith, is *in itself most affecting and melting*. Faith is a true glass, that represents all his sufferings and agonies to the life. It presents them not as a fiction, or idle tale, but as a true and faithful narrative. This, says faith, is a true and faithful saying, that Christ was not only clothed in our flesh—even he that is over all, God blessed for ever, the only Lord, the Prince of the kings of the earth, became a man—but in this body of his flesh he bore the infinite wrath of God, which filled his soul with horror and amazement ; that the Lord of life hung dead upon the cross ; that he went as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before the shearer ; that he endured all this, and more than any finite understanding can comprehend, in my room and stead ; for my sake he there groaned and bled ; for my pride, earthliness, lust, unbelief, hardness of heart, he endured all this. I say, to realize the sufferings of Christ thus, is of great power to affect the coldest, dullest heart. You cannot imagine the difference there is in presenting things as realities, with convincing and satisfying evi-

dence, or looking on them as a fiction or uncertainty.

II. But faith can *apply* as well as realize; and if it do so, it must needs overcome the heart. Ah! christian, canst thou look upon Jesus as standing in thy room, to bear the wrath of God for thee; canst thou think on it, and not melt? That when thou, like Isaac, wast bound to the altar, to be offered up to justice, Christ, like the ram caught in the thicket, was offered in thy room. That when thy sins had raised a fearful tempest, threatening every moment to bury thee in a sea of wrath, Jesus Christ was thrown over to appease that storm! Say, reader, can thy heart dwell one hour upon such a subject as this? Canst thou, with faith, present Christ to thyself, as he was taken down from the cross, drenched in his own blood, and say, 'These were the wounds that he received for me; this is he that loved me, and gave himself for me; out of these wounds comes that balm that heals my soul; out of these stripes my peace? Oh you cannot hold up your heart long to the piercing thoughts of this, but your soul will be pained, and, like Joseph, you will seek a place to vent your tears.

III. Faith can also draw such things from the death of Christ as will *fill the soul with affection to him*, and break the heart in his presence. When it views Christ as dead, it infers, Is Christ dead for me? then was I dead in law, sentenced and condemned to die eternally; "If one died for all, then were all dead." 2 Cor. 5:14. How woful was my case when the law had passed sentence on me! I could not be sure when I lay down, but it might be executed before I rose; there was but a breath between my soul and hell.

Again, Is Christ dead for me? then I shall never die. If he be condemned, I am acquitted. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, it is Christ that died." Rom. 8:34. My soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; I

was condemned, but am now cleared ; I was dead, but am now alive. Oh the unsearchable riches of Christ ! Oh love past finding out !

Again, Did God give up Christ to such miseries and sufferings for me ? how shall he withhold any thing from me ? He that spared not his own Son, will doubtless with him freely give me all things. Rom. 8 : 32. Now I may rest upon him for pardon, peace, acceptance, and glory for my soul. Now I may rely upon him for provision, protection, and all supplies for the body. Christ is the root of these mercies ; he is more than all these, he is nearer and dearer to God than any other gift. Oh what a blessed, happy, comfortable state hath he now brought my soul into !

Once more, Did Christ endure all these things for me ? then he will never leave nor forsake me : it cannot be that after he has endured all this, he will cast off the soul for whom he endured it.

IV. Faith can also *compare the love of Christ* in all this, both with his dealings with others, and with the soul's dealing with Christ, who loved it. To compare Christ's dealings with others, is most affecting : he hath not dealt with every one as with me ; nay, few there are that can speak of such mercies as I have from him. How many are there that have no part nor portion in his blood ; who must bear that wrath in their own persons, that he bare himself for me ! He found me and singled me forth to be the object of his love, leaving thousands and millions still unreconciled ; not that I was better than they, for I was the greatest of sinners, far from righteousness, as unlikely as any to be the object of such grace and love : my companions in sin are left, and I am taken. Now the soul is full, too full to contain itself.

Yea, faith helps the soul to compare the love of Christ to it, with the returns it has made to him. And what,

my soul, have been thy returns to Christ since this grace appeared to thee? Hast thou returned love for love, love suitable to such love? Hast thou prized, valued, and esteemed him according to his own worth in himself, or his kindness to thee? Ah no, I have grieved, pierced, wounded his heart a thousand times by my ingratitude; I have suffered every trifle to take his place in my heart. I have neglected him a thousand times, and made him say, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Is this the reward I receive for all I have done and suffered for thee? Wretch that I am, how have I requited the Lord! This shames, humbles, and breaks the heart. And when from such sights of faith, and considerations as these, the heart is thus affected, it affords a good argument indeed, that thou art gone beyond all the attainments of temporary believers; flesh and blood hath not revealed this.

INFERENCE 1. Have the believing meditations of Christ, and his sufferings, such heart-melting influence? Then surely there is *but little faith among men*. Our dry eyes and hard hearts are evidence against us that we are strangers to the sights of faith. And,

2. Then surely the proper way of raising the affections, is to *begin with the exercise of faith*. It grieves me to see how many poor christians strive with their own dead hearts, endeavoring in vain to raise and affect them: they complain and strive, strive and complain, but can discover no love to the Lord, no brokenness of heart: they go to this ordinance and that, to one duty and another, hoping that now the Lord will fill the sails; but come back disappointed and ashamed. Poor christian, hear me one word; possibly it may do thee more service than all the methods thou hast yet used. If thou wouldst indeed get a heart melted for sin, and broken with the sense of the grace and love of Christ, thy way is not to force thy affections, nor to vex thyself, and go

about complaining of a hard heart, but set thyself to believe, realize, apply, infer, and compare by faith as you have now been directed; and see what this will do: "They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and mourn." This is the way to raise the heart, and break it.

3. Is this the way to get a truly broken heart? Then let those that have attained brokenness of heart this way, *bless the Lord* whilst they live for so choice a mercy. A heart so affected and melted, is not attainable by any natural or unrenewed person; if they would give all they have in the world, it cannot purchase one such tear or groan over Christ. Mark what characters of special grace it bears, in the description of it in Zech. 12 : 10. Such a frame as this is not born with us, or to be acquired by us; for it is there said to be poured out by the Lord upon us. Nature is not the principle of it, but faith; for it is there said, They shall look on me; that is, believe and mourn. Self is not the end and centre of these sorrows; it is not so much for bringing condemnation upon ourselves, as for piercing Christ: "They shall look on *me whom they have pierced*, and shall mourn;" so that this is sorrow after God, and not an impulse of nature. It is *the choicest and most precious gift*, ranked among the prime mercies of the new covenant. Ezek. 36 : 26. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." And God himself sets no common value on it: "The sacrifices of God are a broken heart: a broken and a contrite spirit, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psa. 51 : 17. That is, God is more delighted with such a heart, than with all sacrifices; one groan, one tear, flowing from faith and the spirit of adoption, are more to him than the cattle upon a thousand hills. Again, "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven

is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build me? and where is the place of my rest?—But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Isa. 66: 1, 2. All the magnificent temples and glorious structures in the world give me no pleasure in comparison of such a broken heart as this. Oh then, for ever bless the Lord, who hath done so much for you.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts, 2:23.

Having considered, in order, the preparative acts for the death of Christ, both by himself and his enemies, we now come to consider the death of Christ itself, which was the principal part of his humiliation, and is the chief pillar of our hope. And here we shall consider, First, The kind and nature of the death he died. Secondly, The manner in which he bare it, namely, patiently, solitarily, and instructively; dropping divers holy and instructive lessons upon all that were about him, in his seven last words upon the cross. Thirdly, The funeral solemnities at his burial. Fourthly, The weighty ends and great designs of his death. In all which particulars, as we proceed to discuss them, you will have an account of the deep debasement and humiliation of the Son of God.

1. In this text we have an account of the kind and nature of Christ's death, which is here described gene-

rally, as a violent death, Ye have slain him; and more particularly, as a most ignominious, cursed, dishonorable death, Ye have crucified him.

2. The causes of it are here likewise expressed, both principal and instrumental. The principal cause, permitting, ordering, and disposing all things about it, was "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." There was not an action or circumstance but came under his most wise and holy counsel and determination.

The instruments effecting it were their "wicked hands." This foreknowledge and counsel of God, as it did no way necessitate or constrain them; so neither doth it excuse their conduct from the least aggravation of its sinfulness. God's end and manner of acting was one thing, their end and manner of acting another. His most pure and holy; theirs, most malicious and daringly wicked. In respect to God, Christ's death was justice and mercy. In respect to man, it was murder and cruelty. In respect to himself, it was obedience and humility. Hence,

Our Lord Jesus Christ was not only put to death, but to the worst of deaths, even the death of the cross.

To this the apostle gives a plain testimony, "He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross," Phil. 2:8; where his humiliation is both specified, he was humbled to death; and aggravated by a most emphatical reduplication, even the death of the cross. So Acts, 5:30, "Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree:" it did not suffice you to put him to a violent death, but you also put him to the most base, vile, and ignominious death; "you hanged him on a tree." And here we will consider the nature, the manner, and the reasons of Christ's death.

I. As to *the kind or nature of his death*, it was violent, painful, shameful, cursed, slow, and unalleviated.

1. It was a *violent* death. Violent in itself, though

voluntary. "He was cut off out of the land of the living." Isa. 53:8. And yet "he laid down his life of himself; no man took it from him." John, 10:17. I call his death violent, because he died not a natural death, he lived not till nature was exhausted with age. He was but in the flower and prime of life. And indeed, he must either die a violent death, or not die at all; partly, because there was no sin in him to open a door to natural death, as it doth in all others; partly, because else his death had not been a sacrifice acceptable and satisfactory to God for us. That which died of itself was never offered up to God, but that which was slain in its full strength and health. The temple, which was a type of the body of Christ, John, 2:19, did not drop down as an ancient structure decayed by time, but was pulled down by violence, when it was standing in its full strength. Therefore he is said to suffer death, and to be put to death for us in the flesh. 1 Pet. 3:18.

2. The death of the cross was a most *painful* death. Indeed in this death were many deaths, contrived in one. The cross was a rack as well as a gibbet. The pains which Christ suffered upon the cross are by the apostle emphatically styled "The pains of death," Acts, 2:24; but properly they signify the pangs of travail. His soul was in travail, Isa. 53, his body in bitter pangs; and being, as Aquinas says, of the most excellent, exact and just temperament, his senses were more acute and delicate than ordinary; and so they continued all the time of his suffering, not in the least blunted by what he endured.

3. The death of the cross was a *shameful* death: not only because the crucified were naked, and exposed as spectacles of shame; but mainly, because it was a kind of death which was appointed for the basest and vilest of men. Free-men, when they committed capital crimes, were not condemned to the cross. No, that was the

death appointed for slaves. Tacitus calls it *servile supplicium*, the punishment of a slave: and Juvenal says, *Pone crucem servo*, Put the cross upon the back of a slave. And yet it is said of our Lord Jesus that he not only endured the cross, but despised the shame. Heb. 12: 2. Obedience to his Father's will, and zeal for our salvation, made him disregard its reproach.

4. The death of the cross was a *cursed* death. Upon that account he is said to be "made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Gal. 3: 13. However, as the learned Junius has well observed, this curse is only a ceremonial curse; for otherwise it is neither in itself, nor by the law of nature, or by the civil law, more execrable than any other death. And the main reason why the ceremonial law affixed the curse to this, rather than to any other death, was with respect to the death Christ was to die. And therefore, reader, see and admire the providence of God, that Christ should die by a Roman, and not a Jewish law. For crucifying, or hanging on a tree, was a Roman punishment, and not in use among the Jews. But the Scriptures cannot be broken.

5. The death of the cross was a very *slow and lingering* death. They died leisurely, which still increaseth and aggravateth the misery of it. If a man must die a violent death, it is a favor to be despatched: as they that are pressed to death beg for more weight. On the contrary, to hang long in the midst of tortures, to have death coming upon us with a slow pace, that we may feel every tread of it as it approaches, is a misery. And surely in this respect it was worse for Christ than for any other that was ever nailed to the tree. For all the while he hung there he remained full of life and acute sense. His life departed not gradually, but was whole in him to the last. Other men die gradually, and, towards their end, their sense of pain is much blunted; they

falter, and expire by degrees; but Christ stood under the pains of death in his full strength. His life was whole in him. This was evident by the mighty outcry he made when he gave up the ghost, which showed him to be full of strength, contrary to the experience of men, and made the centurion, when he heard it, conclude, "Surely this was the Son of God." Mark, 15 : 37, 39.

6. It was an *unalleviated* death. Sometimes they gave to malefactors, amidst their torments, vinegar and myrrh, to blunt, dull, and stupify their senses; and if they hung long, would break their bones to despatch them out of their pains. Christ had none of this favor. Instead of vinegar and myrrh, they gave him vinegar and gall to drink to aggravate his torments. And he died before they came to break his legs. For the Scriptures must be fulfilled, "Not a bone of him shall be broken."

This was the kind of death he died. Even the violent, painful, shameful death of the cross. An ancient punishment both among the Romans and Carthaginians. But in honor of Christ, who died this death, Constantine the Great abrogated it by law, ordaining that none should ever be crucified any more, because Christ died that death.

II. As to *the manner of the execution*, they that were condemned to the death of the cross bore their cross upon their own shoulders to the place of execution. They were stripped of all their clothes, and then were fastened to the cross with nails.

And that the equity of the proceedings might the better appear to the people, the cause of the punishment was written in capital letters, and fixed to the tree over the head of the malefactor. Of this I shall speak distinctly in the next discourse, there being so much of providence in this circumstance, as invites us to spend more than a few transient thoughts upon it.

III. Among *the reasons* why Christ died this, rather than any other kind of death, three are obvious.

1. Because Christ must *bear the curse* in his death, and a curse was by law affixed to no other kind of death, as it was to this. Christ came to take away the curse from us by his death; and so must be made a curse. On him must lie, all the curses of the moral law which were due to us. And that nothing might be wanting to make it a full curse, the very death he died must also have a ceremonial curse upon it.

2. Christ died this death, to *fulfil the types* and prefigurations that of old were made with respect to it. All the sacrifices were lifted up from the earth, upon the altar. But especially the brazen serpent prefigured this death, "Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole." Numb. 21:9. And, saith Christ, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up," John, 3:14, that so he might correspond with that type of him in the wilderness.

3. He died this death, because it was *predicted* of him, and in him must all the predictions, as well as types, be fully accomplished. The psalmist spake, in the person of Christ, of this death plainly, as if he had been writing the history rather than a prophecy of what was done: "For dogs have compassed me about, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and feet; I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me." Psalm 22:16, 17. Which has a manifest reference to the distension of all his members upon the tree, as on a rack. So, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." Zech. 12:10. Yea, our Lord himself foretold the death he should die, John, 3:14, saying he "must be lifted up," that is, hanged between heaven and earth. And the Scriptures must be fulfilled.

INFERENCE 1.—Is Christ dead? and did he die the

violent, painful, shameful, cursed death of the cross? Then surely *there is forgiveness with God*, and plenteous redemption for the greatest of sinners, that by faith apply the blood of the cross to their poor guilty souls. So speaks the apostle, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Col. 1:14. "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John, 1:7. Two things will make this demonstrable.

That there is a sufficient *efficacy* in the blood of the cross to expiate and wash away the greatest sins, is manifest, for it is precious blood, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of the Son of God." 1 Pet. 1:18. This preciousness of the blood of Christ riseth from the union it hath with that person, who is "over all, God blessed for ever." And on that account it is stiled the blood of God. Acts, 20:28. On account of its invaluable preciousness, it becomes satisfying and reconciling blood to God. So the apostle speaks, "And (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Col. 1:20. The same blood which is redemption to them that dwell on earth, is confirmation to them that dwell in heaven. Before the efficacy of this blood, guilt vanishes, and shrinks away as the shadow before the glorious sun. Every drop of it hath a voice, and speaks to the soul trembling under its guilt, better things than the blood of Abel. Heb. 10:24. It sprinkles us from all evil, that is, from an unquiet and accusing conscience. Heb. 10:22. For having enough in it to satisfy God, it must have enough in it to satisfy conscience.

And as there is sufficient efficacy in this blood to expiate the greatest guilt; so it is manifest that the virtue and efficacy of it is intended and *designed by God for the use of believing sinners*. Such blood as this was

shed, without doubt, for some weighty end; and who they are for whom it is intended, is plain enough from Acts, 13 : 39, "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses."

That the remission of the sins of believers was the great thing designed in the pouring out of this precious blood of Christ, appears from all the sacrifices that prefigured it to the ancient church. The shedding of the typical blood spoke a design of pardon. And the putting of their hands upon the head of the sacrifice spoke the way and method of believing, by which that blood was then applied to them, and is still applied to us in a more excellent way. Had no pardon been intended, no sacrifices had been appointed.

Moreover, let it be considered, this blood of the cross is the blood of a surety, that came under the same obligations with us, and in our name or stead shed it: and so of course frees and discharges the principal offender, or debtor. Heb. 7 : 22. Can God exact satisfaction from the blood and death of his own Son, the Surety of believers, and yet still demand it from believers? It cannot be. "Who (saith the apostle) shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." Rom. 8 : 33, 34. And why are faith and repentance prescribed as the means of pardon? Why doth God every where in his word call upon sinners to repent, and believe in this blood; encouraging them so to do, by so many precious promises of remission; and declaring the inevitable and eternal ruin of all impenitent and unbelieving ones, who despise and reject this blood? What, I say, doth all this speak, but the possibility of a pardon for the greatest of sinners; and the certainty of a free, full, and final pardon for all believers? Oh what a joyful sound is this! What transporting words of peace,

pardon, grace, and acceptance, come to our ears from the blood of the cross!

The greatest guilt ever contracted upon a trembling conscience, can no more stand before the efficacy of the blood of Christ, than the sinner himself can stand before the justice of the Lord, with all that guilt upon him.

Reader, the word assures thee, whatever thou hast been, or art, that sins of as deep a dye as thine have been washed away in this blood. "I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious; but I obtained mercy," saith Paul. 1 Tim. 1:13. But it may be thou wilt object, This was a rare and singular instance, and it is a great question whether any other sinner shall find such grace as he did. No question of it at all, if you believe in Christ as he did; for he tells us, verse 16, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." So that upon the same grounds on which he obtained mercy, you may obtain it also. Nothing but unbelief and impenitency of heart can bar thy soul from the blessings of this blood.

2. Did Christ die the cursed death of the cross for believers? Then though there be much of pain, there is *nothing of curse in the death of the saints*. It still wears its dart, by which it strikes; but hath lost its sting, by which it hurts and destroys. Death poured out all its poison, and lost its sting in Christ, when he became a curse for us.

But what speak I of the harmlessness of death to believers? It is their friend and benefactor. As there is no curse, so there are many blessings in it. "Death is yours." 1 Cor. 3:22. Yours as a special privilege and favor. Christ hath not only conquered it, but is more than a conqueror; for he hath made it beneficial, and

very serviceable to the saints. When Christ was nailed to the tree, then he said, as it were, to death, which came to grapple with him there, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction:" and so he was; for he swallowed up death in victory, spoiled it of its power. So that, though it may now affright some weak believers, yet it cannot hurt them at all.

3. If Christ died the cursed death of the cross for us, how cheerfully should we submit to, and *bear any cross for Jesus Christ!* He had his cross, and we have ours; but what are ours compared with his? His cross was a heavy cross indeed, yet how patiently and meekly did he support it! "He endured his cross:" we cannot endure or bear ours, though they be not to be named with his. Three things should marvellously strengthen us to bear the cross of Christ.

We shall bear it but *a little way*. It should be enough to me, says one, that Christ will have joy and sorrow sharers in the life of the saints; and that each of them should have a share of our days, as the night and day are kindly partners of time, and take it up between them. But if sorrow be the largest sharer of our days here, I know joy's day shall dawn, and will more than recompense all our sad hours. Let my Lord Jesus (since he will do so) weave my bit-and-span length of time with white and black; weal and wo. Let the rose be neighbor with the thorn. Sorrow and the saints are not married together; or suppose it was so, heaven shall make a divorce. Life is but short, and therefore crosses cannot be long. Our sufferings are but for a while. 1 Pet. 5: 10. They are but the sufferings of the "present time." Rom. 8: 18.

As we shall carry the cross of Christ but a little way, so also Christ himself *bears the most of it*. He takes the largest share himself. "The reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me." Psa. 64: 9. Nay.

to speak as the thing is, Christ doth not only bear half, or the greater part, but the whole of our cross and burden. Yea, he bears all, and more than all; for he bears us and our burden too, or else we should quickly sink and faint under it.

It is reviving to think what *an innumerable multitude of blessings* and mercies are the fruit and offspring of a sanctified cross. Since that tree was so richly watered with the blood of Christ, what store of choice and rich fruits doth it bear to believers!

"I know (says one) no man hath a velvet cross, but the cross is made of what God will have it; yet I dare not say, Oh that I had liberty to sell Christ's cross, lest therewith also I should sell joy, comfort, sense of love, patience, and the kind visits of a Bridegroom. I have but small experience of sufferings for Christ, but I find a young heaven, and a little paradise of glorious comforts and soul-delighting visits of Christ in suffering for him and his truth. My prison is my palace, my sorrow is full of joy; my losses are rich losses, my pain easy pain, my heavy days are holy days and happy days. I may tell a new tale of Christ to my friends. Oh what owe I to the file, and to the hammer, and to the furnace of my Lord Jesus! who hath now let me see how good the wheat of Christ is, that goes through his mill and his oven, to be made bread for his own table. Grace tried is better than grace, and more than grace. It is glory in its infancy. Who knows the truth of grace without a trial? And how soon would faith freeze without a cross! Bear your cross, therefore, with joy."

4. Did Christ die the death, yea, the worst of deaths for us? Then it follows that our mercies are *procured with great difficulty*; and that which is sweet to us in the fruition, was costly and hard to Christ in the acquisition. "In whom we have redemption through his blood." Col. 1:14. Upon which a late writer says,

“The way of grace is here to be considered ; life comes through death ; God comes in Christ ; and Christ comes in blood : the choicest mercies come through the greatest miseries. Oh ! how should this raise the value of our mercies ! What, the price of blood, the price of precious blood, the blood of the cross ! Oh what an esteem should this raise !

“ Things (as the same ingenious author adds) are prized rather as they come, than as they are. Far fetched and dear bought make the price, and give the worth with us weak creatures. Upon this ground the Scripture, when it speaks of our spiritual riches, tells the great price it cost ; as knowing if any thing will take with us, this will, ‘ To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.’ ” Rev. 1 : 5.

Beware then that you abuse not any of the mercies that Christ procured with so many bitter pangs and throes. And let all this endear him more than ever to you, and make you say, in a deep sense of his grace and love, Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TITLE AFFIXED TO THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

“ *And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This is the King of the Jews.* ” Luke, 23 : 38.

Before I pass on to the manner of Christ’s death I shall consider the title affixed to the cross, in which the wisdom of Providence was strikingly displayed. It was the manner of the Romans, that the equity of their pro-

ceedings might the more clearly appear to the people, when they crucified any man, to publish the cause of his death on a tablet written in capital letters, and placed over the head of the victim. And that there might be at least a show of justice in Christ's death, he also has his title or superscription.

This writing one evangelist calls the accusation, *αἰτία*, Matt. 27 : 37. Another calls it the title, *τίτλος*, John, 19 : 19. Another the inscription or superscription, *ἐπιγραφή*, so the text. And another the superscription of his accusation, *ἐπιγραφή τῆς αἰτίας*, Mark, 15 : 26. In short, it was a fair legible writing, intended to express the fact or crime for which the person died.

This was their usual manner, though sometimes we find it was published by the voice of the common crier ; as in the case of Attalus the martyr, who was led about the amphitheatre, one proclaiming before him, This is Attalus the christian. But it was customary to express the crime on a written tablet as the text expresses it. Wherein consider,

1. The character or description of Christ contained in that writing. He is described by his kingly dignity, "This is the King of the Jews : " the very office which but a little before they had reproached and derided, bowing the knee to him in mockery, saying, Hail, King of the Jews. The providence of God so orders it, that by the same he shall on the cross be vindicated and honored : This is the King of the Jews : or, as the other evangelists give it more fully, This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

2. The person that drew his character or title was Pilate. He that but now condemned him becomes his herald, to proclaim his glory. For the title is honorable. Surely this was not from himself, for he was Christ's enemy ; but rather than Christ should want a tongue to clear him, Divine Providence employs an enemy to do it.

3. The time when this honor was done him was when he was at the lowest ebb of his glory; when shame and reproach were heaped on him. When all the disciples had forsaken him, and fled. Not one left to proclaim his innocency, or speak a word in his vindication. 'Then doth the providence of God as strangely, as powerfully, overrule the heart and pen of Pilate to draw this title and affix it to his cross. Surely we must look higher than Pilate in this thing, and see how Providence serves itself by the hands of Christ's adversaries. Hence *The dignity of Christ was openly proclaimed and defended by an enemy; and that in the time of his greatest reproaches and sufferings.*

To unfold this mystery of Providence, that you may not stand idly gazing upon Christ's title, as many then did; we will consider the nature of this title, and how the providence of God was displayed in it.

I. The nature of Christ's title or inscription.

1. It was an *extraordinary* title, varying from all examples of that kind, and directly crossing the main design and end of their own custom. For, as I hinted before, the end of it was to clear the equity of their proceedings, and show the people how justly they suffered the punishments inflicted on them for such crimes. But lo, here is a title expressing no crime at all, and so vindicating Christ's innocency. This some of them perceived, and desired Pilate to change it. Write not, This is, but, This is he that said, I am the King of the Jews. In that, as they conceived, lay his crime. Oh how strange and wonderful was this! But what shall we say? It was a day of wonders and extraordinary things. As there was never such a person crucified before, so there was never before such a title affixed to the cross.

2. It was a *public* title, both written and published with the greatest advantage of being known far and near among all people, "for it was written in three lan-

guages, and those most known in the world at that time." The Greek tongue was then known in most parts of the world. The Hebrew was the Jews' native language. And the Latin the language of the Romans. So that it being written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, it was easy to be understood both by Jews and Gentiles.

Thus the providence of God designed to make it notorious and evident to all the world; for so all things intended for public view and knowledge were written. Josephus tells us of certain pillars, on which was engraven in letters of Greek and Latin, "It is a wickedness for strangers to enter into the holy place." So the soldiers of Gordian, the third emperor, when he was slain upon the borders of Persia, raised a monument for him, and engraved his memorial upon it, in Greek, Latin, Persic, Judaic, and Egyptian letters, that all people might read the same. And as it was written in three learned languages, so it was exposed to view in a public place, and at a time when multitudes of strangers, as well as Jews, were at Jerusalem, the time of the passover; so that all things concurred to spread and divulge the innocency of Christ, vindicated in this title.

3. It was an *honorable* title. Such was the nature of it, says Bucer, that in the midst of death Christ began to triumph by it.

4. It was a *vindicating* title; it cleared up the honor, dignity, and innocency of Christ, against all the false imputations, calumnies, and blasphemies which were cast upon him by the wicked tongues, both of Jews and Gentiles. They had called him a deceiver, a blasphemer, because he made himself the Son of God. But now in this they acknowledge him to be the King of Israel.

5. Moreover it was a *predicting* and *presaging* title. Evidently foreshowing the propagation of Christ's kingdom, and the spread of his name and glory among all kindreds, nations, tongues, and languages. As Christ

hath right to enter into all the kingdoms of the earth by his Gospel, and set up his throne in every nation ; so it was presaged by this title that he should do, and that Hebrews, Greeks, and Latins should be called to the knowledge of him. Nor is it a wonder that this should be predicted by wicked Pilate, when Caiaphas himself, a man every way as wicked as he, had prophesied to the same purpose ; for " being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation ; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." John, 11 : 51, 52. Yea, many have prophesied in Christ's name, who, for all that, shall never be owned by him. Matt. 7 : 22.

6. And lastly, It was an *immutable* title. The Jews endeavored, but could not persuade Pilate to alter it. To all their importunities he returns this resolute answer, " What I have written, I have written ;" as if he had said, Urge me no more, I have written his title, I cannot, I will not alter a letter thereof. Surely the constancy of Pilate at this time can be attributed to nothing but special Divine Providence. Most wonderful ! that he, who before was inconstant as a reed shaken by the wind, should now be fixed as a pillar of brass. And yet more wonderful, that he should write that very particular in the title of Christ, This is the King of the Jews, which so alarmed him but a little before, and was the consideration that moved him to give sentence. What was now become of the fear of Cesar ? that Pilate dares to be Christ's herald, and publicly to proclaim him, The King of the Jews.

II. In all this, *Divine Providence acted gloriously and wonderfully,*

1. In *overruling the heart and hand of Pilate contrary to his own inclination.* I doubt not but Pilate himself was far enough from intending what the wisdom of

Providence designed in this matter. He was a wicked man, and had no love to Christ. He had given sentence of death against him; yet this is he that proclaimed him to be Jesus, King of the Jews. His pen was so overruled, that he did not write what was in his own heart, but quite the contrary; even a fair and public testimony to the kingly office of the Son of God, This is the King of the Jews.

2. In applying a *present, proper, public remedy* to the reproaches and blasphemies Christ then received.

3. In keeping so timorous a person, a man of so base a spirit, that would do any thing to please the people, from receding or giving ground in the least to their importunities.

4. In casting the ignominy of the death of Christ upon those very men who ought to bear it. For it is as if Pilate had said, You have moved me to crucify your King, I have crucified him, and now let the ignominy of his death rest upon your heads, who have extorted this from me. He is righteous, the crime is not his but yours.

5. In fixing this title to the cross of Christ, amid such a confluence of people; so that it could never have been more advantageously published. How wonderful are the works of God! "His ways are in the sea, his paths in the great deeps; his footsteps are not known." His providence hath a prospect beyond the understanding of all creatures.

INFERENCE 1.—The providence of our God can, and often does *overrule the counsels and actions of the worst of men for his own glory*. It can serve itself by them that oppose it, and bring about the glory and honor of Christ by those very men and means which are designed to lay it in the dust. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." Psalm 76:10. The Jews thought, when they crowned Christ with thorns, bowed the knee and mocked him, led him to Golgotha and crucified him;

that now they had utterly despoiled him of all his kingly dignities; and yet even there he is proclaimed a King. Thus the dispersion of the Jews, upon the death of Stephen, spread the Gospel far and near, "For they went every where preaching the word." Acts, 8:4. Thus Paul's bonds for the Gospel fell out to the furtherance of the Gospel. Phil. 1:12. Oh the depth of Divine wisdom! to propagate and establish the interest of Jesus Christ by those very means that seem to import its destruction! How great a support should this be to the faith of God's people, when all things seem to oppose their hopes and happiness! "Let Israel therefore hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." Psalm 130:7. He is never at a loss for means to promote his own ends.

2. The greatest services performed for Christ *undesignedly*, shall never be accepted nor rewarded of God. Pilate did that for Christ that not one of his own disciples at that time durst do; and yet this service was not accepted of God, because he did it not designedly for his glory, but from the mere overruling of Providence. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, saith the apostle." 2 Cor. 8:12. The eye of God is first and mainly upon the will; if that be sincere and right for God, small things will be accepted; and if not, the greatest shall be abhorred. So 1 Cor. 9:17. "If I do this thing (that is, preach the Gospel) willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation is committed to me;" that is, if I, upon pure principles of faith and love, from my heart, designing the glory of God, and delighting to promote it by my ministry, cheerfully and willingly apply myself to the preaching of the Gospel, I shall have acceptance and reward with God; but if my work be a burden to me, and the service of God esteemed as a bondage,

Providence may use me for the dispensing of the Gospel to others, but I myself shall lose both reward and comfort. As it doth not excuse sin, that God can bring glory to himself out of it ; so neither doth it justify an action, that God overrules it to his praise. Paul knew that even the strife and envy in which some preached Christ, should turn to his salvation ; Phil. 1 : 19 ; and yet he was not at all beholden to them for promoting his salvation that way. So Pilate here promotes the honor of Jesus Christ, to whom he had no love, and whose glory he did not at all design ; and therefore hath neither acceptance nor reward with God. Oh then, whatever you do for Christ, do it heartily, designedly, for his glory ; of a ready and willing mind ; with pure and sincere aims, for this is acceptable with him.

3. Would not Pilate recede from what he had written on Christ's behalf ? How shameful is it for *christians* to *retract* what they have said or done for Christ. Did Pilate say, "What I have written, I have written ?" and shall not we say, What we have believed, we have believed ; and what we have professed, we have professed ? What we have engaged to Christ, we have engaged. As God's election, so your profession must be irrevocable. Oh let him that is holy be holy still. The counsel given by a reverend divine in this case, is both safe and good. "Be sure you stand on good ground, and then resolve to stand your ground against all the world. Follow God, and fear not men. Art thou godly ? repent not, whatsoever thy religion cost thee. Let sinners repent, and let saints repent of their faults, but not of their faith ; of their iniquities, but not of their righteousness. Repent not of your righteousness, lest you afterward repent of your repentance. Repent not of your zeal, or your forwardness, or activity in the holy ways of the Lord. Wish not yourselves a step further back, or a cubit lower in your stature in the grace of God. Wish

not any thing undone, concerning which God will say, Well done."

In Galen's time it was a proverbial expression, when any one would show the impossibility of a thing, You may as soon turn a christian from Christ as do it. A true heart-choice of Christ is without reserves, and what is without reserves will be without repentance. There is an obstinacy of spirit which is our sin. But this is our glory. In the matters of God, saith Luther, I assume this title, *Cedo nulli*, "I yield to none."

4. Remember when your hearts begin to startle at the sufferings and reproaches of Christ, there is an honorable title affixed to his cross. And as it was upon his, so it will be upon your cross also, if ye suffer for Christ. Moses saw it, which made him esteem the very reproaches of Christ above all the treasures of Egypt. Heb. 11 : 26. How did the martyrs glory in their sufferings for Christ! calling their chains of iron, chains of gold; and their manacles, bracelets.

It is related of Ludovicus Marsacus, a knight of France, that when he, with other christians of an inferior rank, were condemned to die for religion, and the gaoler had bound them with chains, but did not bind him, being a more honorable person than the rest; he was displeased with the omission, and said, "Why do not you honor me also with a chain for Christ, and create me a knight of that illustrious order?"

"To you (saith the apostle) it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to suffer for his sake." Phil. 1 : 29. There is a twofold honor attending the cross of Christ; one in the very sufferings themselves; another, as the reward and fruit of them. To suffer for Christ is a great honor. Yea, an honor peculiar to the saints. The angels glorify Christ by their active, but not by their passive obedience. This is reserved as a special honor for saints."

And as there is honor in being called to suffer on Christ's account; so Christ will confer special honor upon his suffering saints, in the day of their reward; "He that confesseth me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 10 : 32. O sirs, one of these days the Lord will come in the clouds of heaven, with a shout, accompanied with myriads of angels and ten thousands of his saints, those glittering courtiers of heaven. The heavens and earth shall flame and melt before him; and it shall be very tempestuous round about him; the graves shall open, the sea and earth shall yield up their dead. You shall see him ascending the awful throne of judgment, and all flesh gathered before his face; even multitudes, multitudes that no man can number. And then to be brought forth by Christ before that great assembly, and there to have an honorable mention and remembrance made of your labors and sufferings, your pains, patience, and self-denial, of all your sufferings and losses for Christ; and to hear from his mouth, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Oh what honor is this! Yet this shall be done to the man that now chooses sufferings for Christ, rather than sin; that esteems his reproach greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

It is an honor the angels have not. I make no doubt but they would be glad (had they bodies of flesh as we have) to lay their necks on the block for Christ. But this is the saint's peculiar privilege. The apostles went away from the council rejoicing that they were honored to be dishonored for Christ; or, as we translate it, "counted worthy to suffer shame for him." Acts, 5 : 41. Surely, if there be any "marks of honor," they are such as we receive for Christ's sake. If there be any shame that hath glory in it, it is the reproach of Christ, and the shame you suffer for his name.

5. Did Pilate so assert and defend the honor of Christ.

What doubt can there be of the success of Christ's interest and the *prosperity of his cause*, when the very enemies thereof are made to serve it? Those people can never be ruined who thrive by their losses; conquer by being conquered; multiply by being diminished: whose worst enemies are made to do that for them which friends cannot or dare not do. See you a heathen Pilate proclaiming the honor and innocency of Christ; God will not want instruments by whom to honor Christ. If others cannot, his very enemies shall.

6. Did Pilate vindicate Christ in drawing up such a title to be affixed to his cross? Then God will, sooner or later, *vindicate the innocency and integrity of his people*, who commit their cause to him. Christ's name was clouded with many reproaches; wounded by the blasphemous tongues of his malicious enemies. He committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously. 1 Pet. 2 : 23; and see how soon God vindicates him. That is sweet and seasonable counsel for us, when our names are clouded with unjust censures, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon day." Psalm 37 : 5, 6. Joseph was accused of incontinency; David, of treason; Daniel, of disobedience; Elijah, of troubling Israel; Jeremiah, of revolting; Amos, of preaching against the king; the apostles, of sedition and rebellion. But how did all these honorable names emerge from their reproaches, as the sun from a cloud! God vindicated their honor even in this world. "Slanders (saith one) are but as soap, which though it so. for the present, makes the garment more clean and shining." Scorn and reproach is but a little cloud, that is soon blown over. But suppose ye are not vindicated in this world, but die with a cloud upon your names; be sure God will clear it up, and that to purpose in the

great day. Then shall the righteous (even in this respect) shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Be patient, therefore, my brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Jude, 14, 15. Then shall they retract their censures, and alter their opinions of the saints. If Christ will be our advocate, we need not fear who are our accusers. If your name, for his sake, be cast out as evil, Christ will deliver it you again in that day whiter than snow.

7. Did Pilate give this title to cast the reproach of his death upon the Jews and clear himself? How natural is it to men to *transfer the fault of their own actions* from themselves to others! For when he writes, This is the King of the Jews, he wholly charges them with the crime of crucifying their King: and it is as if he had said, Hereafter let the blame and fault of this action lie wholly upon your heads, who have brought the guilt of his blood upon yourselves and your children. I am clear; you have extorted it from me. Oh where shall we find the ingenuous spirit, to take home to itself the shame of its own actions, and charge itself freely with its own guilt? It is the character of renewed, gracious hearts, to remember, confess, and freely bewail their own evils, to the glory of God.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SOLITARINESS OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." Zech. 13 : 7.

Having noticed the kind of death Christ died, and the vindication of his innocency by the honorable title providentially affixed to his cross, we are now to consider the manner in which he endured the cross ; and that was solitarily, meekly, and instructively.

His solitude in suffering is plainly expressed in the scripture now before us. It cannot be doubted but the prophet in this place speaks of Christ, if you consider Matt. 26 : 31, where you find these words applied to Christ by himself : " Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Besides, the title God here gives him, " The man that is my fellow," is too great for any creature in heaven or earth besides Christ. In these words we have,

1. The commission given to the sword by the Lord of hosts, " Awake, O sword, and smite, saith the Lord of hosts." The Lord of hosts, at whose command all creatures exist, who, with a word of his mouth, can command what weapons and instruments of death he please, calls here for the sword ; not the rod, gently to chasten, but the sword, to destroy. The strokes and thrusts of the sword are mortal ; and he bids it " to awake and smite." It is as if the Lord had said, Come forth out of thy scabbard, O sword of justice ; thou hast been hid there a long time, now awake and glitter, thou shalt drink royal blood, such as thou never before didst shed.

2. The person against whom it is commissioned, "My shepherd, and the man that is my fellow." This shepherd can be no other than Christ, who is often in Scripture styled "a Shepherd, yea, the chief Shepherd, the Prince of pastors." Who redeemed, feeds, guides, and preserves the flock of God's elect. 1 Pet. 5:4; John, 10:11. This is he whom he also styles the man his fellow: his other self. You have the sense of it in Phil. 2:6. He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Against Christ his fellow, the delight of his soul, the sword here receives its commission.

3. You have here the consequence of this deadly stroke upon the Shepherd: the scattering of the sheep. By the sheep understand that little flock, the disciples, which followed this Shepherd till he was smitten, that is, apprehended by his enemies, and they were scattered; they all forsook him and fled. Thus Christ was left alone, amidst his enemies. Not one dare make a stand for him, or own him in that hour of his danger.

4. Here is a gracious mitigation of this sad dispersion, "I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." By little ones he means the same that before he called sheep; but the expression is designedly varied, to show their feebleness and weakness, which appeared in their relapse from Christ. And by turning his hand upon them, understand God's gracious restoration, and gathering of them again after their sad dispersion, so that they shall not be lost, though scattered for the present. For after the Lord was risen, he went before them into Galilee, as he promised, Matt. 28:10; and gathered them again by a gracious hand, so that not one of them was lost but the son of perdition. Hence I observe that *Christ's dearest friends forsook and left him alone, in the time of his greatest distress and danger.*

And here let us inquire who were the sheep that

were scattered from their Shepherd, and left him alone ? what was their sin in so doing ; and what the causes, and the issue of it ?

I. *Who were the sheep* thus dispersed and scattered from their Shepherd when he was smitten ? It is evident they were those precious ones that he had gathered to himself, who had long followed him, and dearly loved him, and whom he loved. They were persons that had left all and followed him, and, till that time, faithfully continued with him in his temptations, Luke, 22 : 28 ; and were all resolved so to do, though they should die with him. Matt. 26 : 35.

II. But did they indeed adhere faithfully to him ? No, they all forsook him and fled. These sheep were scattered. This was not indeed a total and final apostasy, yet it was a very *sinful and sad relapse*. For,

1. It was against the very *articles of agreement* which they had sealed to Christ at their first admission into his service ; he had told them, in the beginning, what they must resolve upon ; " If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Luke, 14 : 26, 27. Accordingly they submitted to these terms, and told him they had left all and followed him. Mark, 10 : 28. Against this engagement made to Christ, they now sin.

2. It was against the very *principles of grace* implanted by Christ in their hearts. They were sanctified persons, in whom dwelt the love and fear of God. By these they were strongly inclined to adhere to Christ in the time of his sufferings, as appears by the honest resolves they had made. Grace strongly inclined them to duty ; their corruptions swayed them the contrary way. Grace bade them stand ; corruption bade them fly. Grace

told them it was their duty to share in the sufferings as well as the glory of Christ. Corruption represented these sufferings as intolerable, and bade them shift for themselves whilst they might. So that they sinned against light and the loving constraints thereof. I grant it was a sudden, surprising temptation, yet it cannot be imagined that for so long a time they were without any debate or reasonings respecting their duty.

3. It was much against *the honor of their Lord and Master*. By their sinful flight they exposed the Lord Jesus to the contempt and scorn of his enemies. This some conceive is implied in the question of the high-priest; "The high-priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine." John, 18:19. He asked him of his disciples, how many he had, and what was become of them now? And what was the reason they forsook their Master, and left him to shift for himself when danger appeared? But to those questions Christ made no reply. He would not accuse them to their enemies, though they had deserted him. But, doubtless, it did not a little reflect upon Christ, that there was not one of all his friends that dared own their relation to him in a time of danger.

4. It was against *their own solemn promise* made to him before his apprehension, to live and die with him. They had given their word, that they would not desert him; "Peter said to him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples." Matt. 26:35. Here they break their promise to Christ, who never did so with them. He might have told them when he met them afterwards in Galilee, as the Roman soldier told his general, who refused his petition after the war was ended, I did not serve you so at the battle of Actium.

5. It was *against Christ's heart-melting expostulations* with them, which should have abode in their hearts while

they lived. For when others that followed him went back, and walked no more with him, Jesus said to these very men that now forsook him at last, "Will ye also go away?"—John, 6 : 67. Will ye also forsake me ? Whatever others do, I expect better things of you.

6. It was against *the warning of a late direful example* in the fall of Judas. In him, as in a glass, they might have seen how fearful a thing it is to apostatize from Christ. They had heard Christ's dreadful threats against him. They were present when he called him "the son of perdition." John, 18 : 11. They had heard Christ say of him, "Good had it been for that man, if he had never been born." An expression that might alarm the deadest heart. They saw he had left Christ the evening before. And that very day in which they fled, he hanged himself. And yet they fly. After all this they forsake Christ.

7. It was against *the law of love*, which should have knit them closer to Christ, and to one another. If, to avoid the present shock of persecution, they had fled, yet surely they should have kept together, praying, watching, encouraging, and strengthening one another. But as they all forsook Christ, so they forsook one another ; for it is said they should go "every man to his own, and leave Christ alone." John, 16 : 32 ; that is, saith Beza, every man to his own-house, and to his own business.

8. Their departure was *accompanied with some offence at Christ*. For so he tells them, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night." Matt. 26 : 31. The word is, *σκανδαλισθησεσθε*, you shall be scandalized at me, or in me. Some think the scandal they took at Christ was this, that when they saw he was fallen into his enemies' hands, and could no longer defend himself ; they then began to question whether he were the Christ or no, since he could not defend himself from his enemies. Others more rightly understand it of their shameful flight

from Christ, seeing it was not now safe to abide longer with him. As he gave himself up, they thought it advisable to provide as well as they could for themselves, and somewhere or other to take refuge from the present storm, which had overtaken him. But what were,

III. *The grounds or reasons of their forsaking him ?*

1. *God's suspending aids of his grace.* They were not wont to do so. They never did so afterwards. They would not have done so now, had there been influences of power, zeal, and love from heaven upon them. But how then should Christ have borne the heat and burden of the day ? How should he have trod the wine-press alone ? How should his sorrows have been extreme, unmixed, unmitigated, if they had adhered faithfully to him ? No, no, it must not be ; Christ must not have the least relief or comfort from any creature ; and therefore, that he might be left alone, to grapple hand to hand with the wrath of God and of men, the Lord for a time withholds his encouraging, strengthening influences from them ; and then, like Samson when he had lost his locks, they were weak as other men. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," saith the apostle. Eph. 6 : 10. If that be withheld, our resolutions and purposes melt away before temptation, as snow before the sun.

2. *The temptation was great.* As they were weaker than they were used to be, so the temptation was stronger than any they had met. It is called "Their hour and the power of darkness." Luke, 22 : 53. A sifting, winnowing hour, verse 46. Oh it was a dark and cloudy day. Never had the disciples met such a whirlwind, such a furious storm before. The devil desired but to have the winnowing of them in that day, and so would have sifted and winnowed them, that their faith had utterly failed, had not Christ secured it by his prayer for them.

3. *Their remaining corruptions*, yet unmortified, concurred. Their knowledge was but little, and their faith feeble. On account of their weakness in grace, they were called "little ones" in the text. And as their graces were weak, so their corruptions were strong. Their unbelief and carnal fears grew powerfully upon them.

Do not censure them, reader, in thy thoughts, nor despise them for this their weakness. Neither say in thy heart, Had I been there as they were, I would never have done as they did. They thought as little of doing what they did, as you, or any of the saints do; and as much did their souls detest and abhor it: but here thou mayest see whither a soul that fears God may be carried, if his corruptions be irritated by strong temptations, and God withholds usual influences.

IV. Let us view *the issue* of this sad apostasy, and you shall find it ended better than it began. Though these sheep were scattered for a time, yet the Lord made good his promise, in "turning his hand upon these little ones," to gather them. The morning was overcast, but the evening was clear. Peter repents of his perfidious denial of Christ, and never denied him more. All the rest likewise returned to Christ, and never forsook him any more. He that was afraid at the voice of a damsel, afterwards feared not the frowns of the mighty. And they that durst not own Christ now, afterwards confessed him openly before councils and rulers, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his sake. Acts, 5:41. They that were now as timorous as hares, and started at every sound, afterwards became bold as lions, and feared not any danger, but sealed their confession of Christ with their blood. For though, at this time, they forsook him, it was by surprisal. Though they forsook him, they still loved him; though they fled from him, there still remained a gracious prin-

ciple in them ; the root of the matter was still in them, which recovered them again.

Though they forsook Christ, yet Christ never forsook them : he loved them still ; " Go tell the disciples, and (tell) Peter, that I go before you into Galilee." Mark, 16 : 7. Let them not think that I so remember their unkindness as to own them no more ; no, I love them still.

INFERENCE 1. Did the disciples forsake Christ, though they had such strong persuasions and resolutions never to do it ? Then we see that *self-confidence* is a sin incident to the best of men. They little thought their hearts would have proved so base and deceitful as they found them when they were tried. " Though all men forsake thee (saith Peter,) yet will not I." Good man, he resolved honestly, but he knew not what a feather he should be in the wind of temptation, if God once left him to his own fears.

Little reason have the best of saints to depend upon their inherent grace, let their stock be as large as it may. The angels, left to themselves, quickly left their own habitations. Jude 6. Upon which one well observes, That the best of created perfections are of themselves defective. Every excellency, without the prop of Divine preservation, is but a weight which tends to a fall. The angels in their innocency were but frail, without God's support ; even grace itself is but a creature, and therefore purely dependent. What becomes of the stream, if the fountain supply it not ? What continuance hath the reflection in the glass, if the man that looks into it turn away his face ? The constant supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ are the food and fuel of all our graces. The best men will show themselves but men if God leave them. He who hath renewed them, must also keep them. It is safer to be humble with one talent, than proud with ten ; yea, better to be an humble

worm, than a proud angel. Adam had more advantage to maintain his station than any of us. But though he was created upright, and had no inherent corruption to endanger him, he fell.

And shall we be self-confident, after such instances of human frailty? Alas, christian! how canst thou contend with "principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness?" "Be not high-minded, but fear." Consider well the instances of Noah, Lot, David, and Hezekiah, who all fell by temptations; yea, and that when one would think they had never been better provided to resist them. Lot fell after the Lord had thrust him out of Sodom, and his eyes had seen the direful punishment of sin, hell, as it were, rained upon them out of heaven. Noah, in like manner, immediately after God's wonderful and astonishing preservation of him in the ark; when he saw a world of men and women perish in the floods for their sins. David, after the Lord had settled the kingdom on him, which for sin he rent from Saul, and given him rest in his house. Hezekiah was but just up from a great sickness, wherein the Lord wrought a wonderful salvation for him. Did such men, and at such times, when one would think no temptations should have prevailed, fall? Then "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

2. Did Christ stand his ground, and go through with his suffering work, when all that had followed him forsook him? Then *a resolved adherence to God and duty*, though left alone, without company or encouragement, is Christlike, and truly excellent. You shall have better company than that which has forsaken you in the way of God. Elijah complains, "They have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." 1 Kings, 19:10. But all this did not discourage him in following the

Lord ; still he was very jealous for the Lord God of hosts. Paul complains, "At my first answer no man stood by me, all men forsook me : nevertheless the Lord stood with me." 2 Tim. 4 : 16, 17. And as the Lord stood by him, so he stood by his God alone, without any aid or support from men. How great a proof of integrity is this ! He that professes Christ for company, will also leave him for company. But to be faithful to God, when forsaken of men ; to be a Lot in Sodom ; a Noah in a corrupted generation ; oh, how excellent is it ! It is sweet to travel over this earth to heaven, in the company of the saints, that are bound thither with us, if we can ; but if we can have no company, we must not be discouraged from going on. It is not unlikely that, before you have gone many steps farther, you may have cause to say, "Never less alone, than when alone."

3. Did the disciples thus forsake Christ, and yet were all recovered at last ? Then, though believers are not privileged from backsliding, yet, by the grace of God, they shall be recovered. Though they fall, they shall rise again. Micah, 7 : 8. The highest flood of natural zeal and resolution may ebb, and be wholly dried up ; but saving grace is "a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." John, 4 : 14. The purpose of God, the frame and constitution of the new covenant, the meritorious and prevalent intercession of Jesus Christ, give the believer abundant security. "My Father, which gave them me, (saith Christ,) is greater than all : and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John, 10 : 29. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." 2 Tim. 2 : 19. Every person committed to Christ by the Father, shall be brought by him to the Father, and not one wanting. Among the many glorious promises this is one, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not

depart from me." As the fear of God in our hearts pleads in us against sin, so our potent Intercessor in heaven pleads for us with the Father. Upon these grounds we may, as the Apostle, Rom. 8: 34, 35, triumph in that full security which God hath given us; and say, What "shall separate us from the love of God?" Understand it either of God's to us, as Calvin, Beza, and Martyr do; or of our love to God, as Ambrose and Augustine do: it is true in both senses, and a most comfortable truth.

4. Did the sheep fly when the Shepherd was smitten; did such men, and so many forsake Christ in the trial? Then learn how sad a thing it is for the best of men to be *left to their own carnal fears* in the day of temptation. This was it that made those good men shrink away so shamefully from Christ in that trial. "The fear of man bringeth a snare." Prov. 29: 25. Oh what work will this unruly passion make, if the fear of God do not overrule it!

Helvidius Priscus, when, for doing what he thought his duty in the senate, he was threatened by Vespasian that he should die, nobly replied, "Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? Do what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in me to die like a Roman." And shall a christian see his steadfastness outdone by a heathen? Oh think what mischiefs your fears may do yourselves and others. Learn to trust God with your life, liberty, and comforts, in the way of your duty; and do not so magnify his erring creatures, as to be scared, by their threats, from your God and your duty. The politic design of Satan herein, is to affright you out of your coverts, where you are safe, into the net. I will enlarge on this no farther; I have elsewhere laid down fourteen rules for its cure. (See his Saint Indeed.)

5. Learn hence, how much *a man may differ from*

himself, according as the Lord is with him, or withdrawn from him. Where is he that does not experience this? Sometimes bold and courageous, despising dangers, bearing down all discouragements in the strength of zeal and love to God; at another time faint, feeble, and discouraged at every thing. Whence is this but from the different administrations of the Spirit, who sometimes imparts more, and sometimes less, of his gracious influence. These very men that fled now, could, when the Spirit was more abundantly shed forth upon them, boldly own Christ before the council, and despise all dangers for his sake. We are strong or weak according to the degrees of assisting grace. So that as you cannot take the just measure of a christian by one act, so neither must they judge of themselves by what they sometimes feel in themselves. But when their spirits are low, and their hearts discouraged, they should rather say to their souls, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him;" it is low with me now, but it will be better.

6. Was the sword drawn against the Shepherd, and he left alone to receive its soul-piercing strokes? How should all adore both *the justice and the mercy of God* so illustriously displayed herein! Here is the triumph of Divine justice, and the highest triumph it ever had, to single forth the chief Shepherd, the man that is God's fellow, and sheathe its sword in his breast for satisfaction.

And no less is the mercy and goodness of God signalized in giving the sword a commission against the man his fellow, rather than against us. Why had he not said, Awake, O sword, against the men that are mine enemies, shed the blood of them that have sinned against me, rather than, Smite the Shepherd, and only scatter the sheep. Blessed be God, that the dreadful sword was not drawn and brandished against our souls;

that God did not bathe it in our blood ; that his fellow was smitten, that his enemies might be spared. Oh what manner of love was this ! Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, who received the fatal stroke himself ; and hath now so sheathed that sword in its scabbard, that it shall never be drawn any more against those that believe in him.

7. Were the sheep scattered when the Shepherd was smitten ? Learn hence, that the best of men *know not their own strength till they come to the trial*. Little did these holy men imagine such a cowardly spirit had been in them, till temptation put it to the proof. Let this, therefore, be a caution for ever to the people of God. You resolve never to forsake Christ, you do well ; but so did these, and yet they deserted him. You can never know your own strength till temptation has tried it. It is said, Deut. 8 : 2, that God led the people so many years in the wilderness, to prove them, and to know them, (that is, to make them know) what was in their hearts. Little did they think such unbelief, murmurings, discontent, and a spirit bent to backslidings, had been in them, until their straits in the wilderness gave them the sad experience.

8. Did the dreadful sword of Divine justice smite the Shepherd, God's own fellow ; and at the time when the flock, from whom all its outward comforts arose, were scattered from him ? Then learn, that the holiest of men have *no reason to repine or despond*, though God should at once strip them of all their outward and inward comforts together. God took all comfort from Christ, both outward and inward ; and are you greater than he ? God sometimes takes outward, and leaves inward comfort ; sometimes he takes inward, and leaves outward comfort ; but the time may come when God may strip you of both. This was the case of Job, a favorite of God, who was blessed with outward and in-

ward comforts ; yet the time came when God stripped him of all, and made him poor to a proverb, as to all outward comfort ; and the venom of his arrows drank up his spirit. Should the Lord deal thus with you, how seasonable and relieving will be the following considerations :

Though the Lord deals thus with you, yet this is no new thing ; he hath so dealt with others, yea, with Jesus Christ himself. If these things were done to him that never deserved it for any sin of his own, how little reason have we to complain !

Nay, for this very reason did this befall Jesus Christ, that similar trials might be sanctified to you. For Jesus Christ passed through such a variety of conditions, on purpose that he might take away the curse, and leave a blessing against the time that you should come into them.

Moreover, though inward comforts and outward comforts were both removed from Christ in one day, yet he wanted not support in the absence of both. How relieving a consideration is this ! " Behold, (saith he,) the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone ; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." John, 16 : 32. Thy God, christian, can in like manner support thee, when all sensible comforts shrink away together from thy soul and body in one day.

9. It deserves a remark, that this forsaken condition of Christ *immediately preceded the day of his greatest glory* and comfort. The greatest darkness is said to be a little before the dawning of the morning. It was so with Christ, it may be so with thee. It was but a little while, and he had better company than that which forsook him. Act therefore your faith upon this, that the most glorious light usually follows the thickest darkness. The louder your groans are now, the louder your

triumphs will be hereafter. The horror of your present will but add to the lustre of your future state.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

“ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” Isaiah, 53 : 7.

The chapter containing these words treats wholly of the sufferings of Christ. Hornbeck tells us of a learned Jew, “ who ingenuously confessed that this chapter converted him to the christian faith ; and such delight he had in it that he read it more than a thousand times.” Such is the clearness of this prophecy, that he who penned it is deservedly styled the evangelical prophet. From this verse I shall speak of the grievous sufferings of Christ, and the glorious ornament he put upon them ; even the ornament of a meek and patient spirit. He opened not his mouth ; but went as a sheep to be shorn, or a lamb to the slaughter. The lamb goes as quiet to the slaughter-house as to the fold. By this lively and lovely similitude the patience of Christ is here expressed to us. Whence we learn that,

Jesus Christ supported the burden of his sufferings with admirable patience and meekness of spirit.

Patience never had a more glorious triumph than it had upon the cross. The meekness and patience of Christ's spirit, amidst injuries and provocations, is excellently set forth in 1 Pet. 2 : 22, 23. “ Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth : who, when

he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

In this point we have the burden of sufferings and provocations with which Jesus Christ was oppressed; his admirable meekness and patience; and the causes and grounds of the perfect patience he exercised.

I. *The burden of sufferings and provocations* which Christ supported was very great; for on him met all kinds of trouble at once, and those in their highest degrees and fullest strength: trouble in his soul, which was the soul of his trouble, "He began to be sore amazed and very heavy." Mark, 14: 33. The wrath of an infinite God beat him down to the dust. His body was full of pain and exquisite tortures in every part. Not a member or sense but was the seat and subject of torment.

His name suffered the vilest indignities, blasphemies and reproaches that the malignity of Satan and wicked men could utter against it. Contempt was poured upon all his offices. Upon his kingly office, when they crowned him with thorns, arrayed him with purple, bowed the knee with mockery to him, and cried, "Hail, King of the Jews:" his prophetic office, when they blinded him, and then bid him "prophesy who smote him:" his priestly office, when they reviled him on the cross, saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." They scourged him, spit in his face, and smote him.

All this, and much more than this, meeting at once upon an innocent and dignified person; one that was greater than all; one that could have crushed all his enemies as a moth; all this borne without the least discomposure of spirit, is the highest triumph of patience ever exhibited to man. It was one of the greatest wonders of that wonderful day.

II. Consider this *almighty patience and unparalleled meekness* of Christ, supporting such a burden.

Christian patience, or the grace of patience, is an ability to *suffer hard and heavy afflictions, according to the will of God*. It is a glorious power, that strengthens the suffering soul to bear. It is our passive fortitude: "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness," Col. 1:11; that is, strengthened with the might or power of God himself. God hath several kinds of burdens to impose upon his people. Some heavier, others lighter; some to be carried but a few hours, others many days, others all our days: some more spiritual, bearing upon the soul; some more external, touching the flesh immediately and the spirit by way of sympathy; and sometimes both kinds are laid on together. So they were at this time on Christ. His soul full of the bitter sense and apprehension of the wrath of God: his body filled with tortures: in every member and sense grief took up its lodging. Here was the highest exercise of patience.

III. Let us inquire into *the grounds and reasons* of this perfect patience; and you shall find perfect holiness, wisdom, fore-knowledge, faith, heavenly-mindedness, and obedience, at the root of it.

1. This admirable patience and meekness of Christ was the fruit of his perfect *holiness*. His nature was free from those corruptions that ours groans and labors under. Take the meek Moses, who excelled all others in this grace—let him be tried, and see how "unadvisedly he may speak with his lips." Psalm 106:33. Take a Job, whose patience is resounded over all the world—"ye have heard of the patience of Job," and let him be tried by outward and inward troubles meeting upon him in one day, and even a Job may curse the day wherein he was born. Envy, revenge, discontent, despondence, are weeds naturally springing up in the corrupt soil of our sinful natures. "I saw a little child grow pale with

envy," said Augustin. "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." Jam. 4 : 5. The principle of all these evils being in our nature, they will show themselves in time of trial. Our nature is fretful and passionate. But it was otherwise with Christ. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me," John, 14 : 30, no principle of corruption, as an inlet to temptation. Our High Priest was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Heb. 7 : 26.

2. The meekness and patience of Christ proceeded from the *infinite wisdom* with which he was filled. The wiser any man is, the more patient he is. Hence meekness, the fruit, is denominated from patience, the root that bears it, "the meekness of wisdom." Jam. 3 : 13. And anger is lodged in folly, its proper cause. "Anger resteth in the bosom of fools." Eccl. 7 : 9. Seneca would allow no place for passion in a wise man's breast. Wise men ponder, consider, and weigh things deliberately before they suffer their affections and passions to be stirred and enraged. Hence come the constancy and serenity of their spirits. "A man of understanding is of an excellent (or, as the Hebrew is, a cool) spirit." Prov. 17 : 27. Wisdom filled the soul of Christ. He is wisdom in the abstract. Prov. 8. In him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom." Col. 2 : 3. Hence he was no otherwise moved with the revilings and abuses of his enemies, than a wise physician is with the impertinence of his distempered and crazy patient.

3. His patience flowed also from his *fore-knowledge*. He had a perfect prospect from eternity of all which befel him. It came not upon him by surprisal. He wondered not as if some strange thing had happened. He foresaw all these things : "And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed." Mark, 8 : 31. Yea, he had agreed with his

Father to endure all this for our sakes, before he assumed our flesh. Hence, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Isa. 50 : 6. As he guards his disciples against being offended in him, by forewarning them what they must expect ; " These things I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them," John, 16 : 4 ; so he, foreknowing what himself must suffer, and having agreed so to do, bore those sufferings with singular patience ; " Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye ?" John, 18 : 4.

4. His patience sprang from the *faith* he exercised under all he suffered. His faith looked through all those dark and dismal clouds, to the joy set before him. Heb. 12 : 2. He knew that though Pilate condemned, God would justify him. Isa. 50 : 4-8. And he set one over-against the other : he balanced the glory into which he was to enter, with the sufferings through which he was to enter it. He exercised faith in God for divine support under sufferings, as well as for glory, the fruit and reward of them, " I have set " (or, as the apostle varies it, " I foresaw) the Lord always before me ; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth." Psa 16 : 8-11. Here is faith exercised by Christ for strength to carry him through. And then it follows, " My flesh also shall rest in hope ; for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life. In thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Here is his faith acting upon the glory into which he was to enter after he had suffered these things : this filled him with peace.

5. As his faith, eyeing the glory into which he was

passing, made him endure all things ; so *the heavenliness of his spirit* filled him with tranquillity and calmness under all abuses and injuries. The more heavenly any man's spirit is, the more sedate, composed, and peaceful. "As the higher heavens (saith Seneca) are more ordinate and tranquil, where there are neither clouds nor winds, storms nor tempests, and it is the inferior heavens that lighten and thunder, and the nearer the earth the more tempestuous and unquiet : even so the sublime and heavenly-minded is placed in a calm and quiet station." Certainly that heart which is sweetened frequently with heavenly, delightful communion with God, is not very apt to be embittered with wrath, or soured with revenge against men. The peace of God appeases and ends all strifes and differences. The heavenly Spirit marvellously causes a sedate and quiet breast. Never was there such a heavenly soul on earth as Christ's : he had most sweet and wonderful communion with God : he had meat to eat, which others, yea, his most intimate friends, knew not of. The Son of man was in heaven upon earth, John, 3 : 13 ; even in respect to the blessed heavenly communion he had with God, as well as in respect to his Deity.

6. As his meekness and patience sprang from the heavenliness of his spirit ; so likewise, from his *complete and absolute obedience* to his Father's will : he could most quietly submit to all the will of God, and never regret any part of the work assigned him. For you must know, that Christ's death was on his part an act of obedience ; he all along eyeing his Father's command and counsel in what he suffered. Phil. 2 : 7, 8 ; John, 18 : 11 ; Psa. 40 : 6-8. Now just as considering the hand of God in an affliction, calms and quiets the gracious soul ; as David, 2 Sam. 16 : 11 ; so much more it quieted Jesus Christ, who was privy to the design and end of his Father, with whose will he all along com-

plied; looking on Jews and gentiles but as the instruments ignorantly fulfilling God's pleasure, and serving the great design of his Father. Such was his patience, and such the grounds of it.

In making a practical improvement of this subject I might use it in various ways; but the direct and main use is, to press us to a Christ-like patience in all our sufferings and troubles. And seeing in nothing we are more generally defective, and defects of christians herein are so prejudicial to religion, and uncomfortable to themselves; I resolve to wave all other uses, and confine myself to this branch; even a persuasive to christians unto all patience in tribulations; to imitate their lamb-like Saviour. Unto this, christians, you are expressly called: "Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously." 1 Pet. 2: 21, 22. Here is your pattern; a perfect pattern! a lovely and excellent pattern! Will you be persuaded to the imitation of Christ herein? Methinks I should persuade you to it; yea, every thing about you persuades to patience in suffering: look which way you will, upward or downward, inward or outward, backward or forward, to the right hand or to the left, you shall find all things persuading and urging upon you true christian patience.

1. Look *upwards*, when tribulations come upon you: look to that sovereign Lord, that commissions and sends them upon you. You know troubles do not rise out of the dust; "Behold, I frame evil, and devise a device against you." Jer. 18: 11. Troubles and afflictions are of the Lord's framing and devising, to reduce his wan-

dering people to himself. You may observe much of divine wisdom in the choice, measure, and season of your troubles: sovereignty, in electing the instruments of your affliction; in making them as afflictive as he pleaseth; and in making them obedient to his call, both in coming and going. Now, could you in times of trouble look up to this sovereign hand, which holds your souls, bodies, and all your comforts; how quiet would your hearts be! "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." Ps. 39:9. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." 1 Sam. 3:18. Oh, when we have to do with men, and look no higher, how do our spirits swell and rise with revenge and impatience! But if you once come to see that man is a rod in your Father's hand, you will be quiet. Ps. 46:10. It is for want of looking up to God in our troubles, that we fret, murmur, and despond as we do.

2. Look *downward*, and see what is below you, as well as up to that which is above you. You are afflicted, and you cannot bear it. No trouble like your trouble! never man in such a case as you are! Well, cast your eye downward, and see those who lie much lower than you. Can you see none on earth in a more miserable state? Are you at the very bottom, and not a man below you? surely there are thousands in a sadder case than you. What is your affliction? Have you lost a relative? Others have lost all. Have you lost an estate, and are become poor? Well, there are some "who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper-roots for their meat. They are driven forth from among men, they cried after them as after a thief. They dwell in the cliffs of the valleys, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks. Among the bushes they brayed, under the nettles they were gathered together." Job, 30:4-7. Are you persecuted and afflicted for Christ's sake? What think you of their sufferings, "who had trial of cruel mock-

ings; yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Heb. 11: 36, 37. And are you better than they? I know not what you are; but I am sure these were men "of whom the world was not worthy." Verse 38.

Or are your afflictions more spiritual and inward? Say not the Lord never dealt more bitterly with the soul of any than with you. What think you of the case of David, Heman, Job, Asaph, whose doleful cries, by reason of the terrors of the Almighty, may melt the hardest heart that reads their complaints? The Almighty was a terror to them; the arrows of God were within them; they roared by reason of the disquietness of their hearts. Or are your afflictions outward and inward together; an afflicted soul in an afflicted body? Well, so it was with Paul, Job, and many other of those worthies gone before you. Surely you may see many on earth who have been, and are in far lower and sadder states than you. Or if not on earth, doubtless you will admit there are many in hell who would be glad to change conditions with you, as bad as you think yours to be. And were not all these moulded out of the same lump with you? Surely if you can see any below you, you have no reason to return so ungratefully upon your God, and accuse your Maker of severity, or charge God foolishly.

3. Look *inward*, and see if you can find nothing there to quiet you. Cast your eye into your own heart; consider either its corruptions or its graces. Cannot you find weeds enough there, that need such winter-weather as this to rot them? Hath not that proud heart need enough of all this to humble it? that carnal heart need of such things as these to mortify it? that backsliding, wandering heart need of all this to reduce and recover

it to its God? "If need be, ye are in heaviness." 1 Pet. 1:6. O christian! didst thou not see need of this before thou camest into trouble? Or hath not God shown thee the need of it since thou wast under the rod? Be assured, if thou dost not see it, thy God doth: he knows thou wouldest be ruined for ever, if he should not take this course with thee.

Thy corruptions require all this to kill them. And as your corruptions call for it, so do your graces too. Wherefore think ye the Lord planted the principles of faith, humility, patience, in your soul? Were they put there for nothing? Did the Lord intend they should lie sleeping? Or were they planted there to be exercised? And how shall they be exercised without tribulation? Can you tell? Doth not "tribulation work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope?" Rom. 5:3, 4. Is not "the trial of your faith much more precious than of gold which perishes?" 1 Pet. 1:7. Oh look inward, and you will be quiet.

4. Look *outward*, and see who stands by and observes you under your trouble. Are there not many eyes upon you; yea, many envious observers round about you? It was David's request, "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, because of my enemies," Ps. 5:8; or, as the Hebrew word there might be rendered, because of mine observers or watchers. There is many an envious eye upon you. To the wicked there can scarcely be a higher gratification, than to see your conduct under trouble so like their own; for thereby they are confirmed in their prejudices against religion, and in their good opinion of themselves. "These may talk and profess more than we," say they, "but when they are tried, it appears plainly enough, their religion enables them to do no more than we do; they talk of heaven's glory, and their future expectations; but it is only talk, for it is apparent enough their hopes cannot balance a small affliction,

with all the happiness they talk of." Oh, how do you dishonor Christ before his enemies, when you make them think all your religion lies in talking of it!

5. Look *backward*, and see if there be nothing behind you that may hush and quiet your impatient spirit; consult the multitude of experiences, both your own and others. Is this the first strait that ever you were in? If so, you have reason to be quiet, yet to bless God that hath spared you so long, when others have had their days filled with sorrow. But if you have been in troubles formerly, and the Lord hath helped you: if you have passed through the fire, and not been burnt; through the waters, and not drowned; if God hath stood by you, and hitherto helped you; O what cause have you to be quiet now, and patiently wait for the salvation of God! Did he help you then, and cannot he do so now? Did he give water, and cannot he give bread also? Is he the God of the hills only, and not the God of the valleys? Oh call to mind the days of old, the years of the right-hand of the Most High. "These things I call to mind, therefore I have hope." Lam. 3: 21. Have you kept no records of past experience? How ungrateful then have you been to your God, and how injurious to yourself, if you have not read them over in such a day as this; for to that end were they given you.

6. Look *forward*, to the end of your troubles. Look to the end of their *duration*, and that is very near; they shall not be everlasting troubles, if you fear the Lord. "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect." 1 Pet. 5: 10. These light afflictions are "but for a moment," compared with the vast eternity before you. What are a few days and nights of sorrow when they are past? Are they not swallowed up as a drop in the vast ocean? But **more**

especially look to *their result*. What do all these afflictions tend to and effect? Do they not work out an exceeding weight of glory? Are you not by them made "partakers of his holiness?" Heb. 12. Is not the fruit of all this, to take away your sins? What! and be impatient at this; fret and repine, because God is, in this way, perfecting your happiness? Oh ungrateful soul!

7. Look to *the right-hand*, and see how you are shamed, convinced, and silenced by other christians; and it may be such, too, as never made the profession you have done; and yet can not only patiently bear the afflicting hand of God, but are blessing, praising, and admiring God under their troubles; whilst you are sinning against and dishonoring him under smaller ones. It may be you will find some poor christians that know not where to get their next meal, and yet are speaking of the bounty of their God; while you are repining in the midst of plenty. Ah! if there be any ingenuousness in you, let this shame you. If this will not, then,

8. Look to *your left-hand*, and there you will see a sad sight, and what one would think should quiet you. There you may see a company of wicked, unconverted sinners, acting under their troubles but too much like yourself. What do they more than fret and murmur, despond and sink; mix sin with their afflictions, when the rod of God is upon them? It is time for thee to improve, when thou seest how near thou art come to them, whom thou hopest thou shalt never be ranked and numbered with.

Reader, such considerations as these would be of singular use to thy soul at such a time, but above all, thine eyeing *the great pattern of patience*, Jesus Christ; whose lamb-like carriage, under a trial with which thine is not to be named, is here recommended to thee. Oh how should this transform thee into a lamb, for meekness!

CHAPTER XXX.

THE INSTRUCTIVENESS OF CHRIST'S DEATH, IN HIS SEVEN LAST WORDS;—THE FIRST, "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM."

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." *Luke*, 23:34.

We have considered the solitude and patience of Christ's death. We come now to its instructiveness in the excellent and weighty sayings which dropped from his blessed lips upon the cross, whilst his sacred blood dropped on the earth from his wounded hands and feet. These sayings are seven in number; three directed to his Father, and four to those about him. Of the former this is one, "Father, forgive them," &c. In which notice,

The mercy prayed for: "Father, forgive." Forgiveness is not only a mercy, a spiritual mercy, but one of the greatest mercies a soul can obtain from God, without which, whatever else we have from God is no mercy to us.

The persons for whom he requests forgiveness: who were the same that with wicked hands crucified him. Their crime was the most horrid ever committed by men. The best of mercies is by him desired for the worst of sinners.

The motive or argument urged to procure this mercy for them: "They know not what they do." As if he had said, Lord, what these poor creatures do, is not so much out of malice to me as the Son of God; it is from their ignorance. To the same purpose the apostle saith, "Whom none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." 1 Cor. 2:8. Yet this is not to be extended

to all that had a hand in the death of Christ, but to the ignorant multitude, among whom were some who afterwards believed in him; "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it." Acts, 3: 17. For them this prayer of Christ was heard. Hence we derive three propositions, which claim each to be distinctly considered, viz.

1. *That ignorance is the usual cause of enmity to Christ.*

2. *That there is forgiveness with God, for such as oppose Christ through ignorance.*

3. *That to forgive enemies, and beg forgiveness for them, is the true christian spirit.*

Proposition 1. *Ignorance is the usual cause of enmity to Christ.*

And here let us inquire, what their ignorance of Christ was; whence it was; and how it disposed them to such enmity against him.

I. *What was their ignorance who crucified Christ?* They knew many other truths, but did not know Jesus Christ; in that their eyes were held. Natural light they had; yea, and scripture light they had; but in this particular, that this was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, they were blind and ignorant. But how could that be? Had they not heard at least of his miraculous works? Did they not see how his birth, life, and death agreed with the prophecies, both in time, place, and manner? Whence should their ignorance arise, when they saw, or at least might have seen, the Scriptures fulfilled in him; and that he came among them at a time when they were full of expectations of the Messiah?

II. It is true, indeed, they knew the Scriptures; and it cannot but be supposed the fame of his mighty works had reached their ears: but yet,

1. Though they had the Scriptures among them, *they misunderstood them*. You find, John, 7 : 52, how they reason with Nicodemus against Christ ; " Art thou also of Galilee ? Search, and see : for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Here is a double mistake : they supposed Christ to arise out of Galilee, whereas he was of Bethlehem, though much conversant in the parts of Galilee ; and they thought, because they could find no prophet had arisen out of Galilee, therefore none should.

Another mistake that blinded them about Christ, was from their belief that Christ should not die, but live for ever : " We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever : and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up ? who is this Son of man ?" John, 12 : 34. This they probably gathered from such passages as Isa. 9 : 7, " Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David." In like manner we find them in another mistake ; " We know this man whence he is ; but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is." John, 7 : 27. This, likely, proceeded from their misunderstanding of Micah, 5 : 2, " His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Thus were they blinded about the person of Christ, by the misinterpretation of scripture prophecies.

2. Another thing occasioning their mistake of Christ, was *the outward meanness of his condition*. They expected a pompous Messiah, one that should come with state and glory, as the king of Israel. But when they saw him in the form of a servant, coming in poverty, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, they utterly rejected him : " We hid as it were our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Isa. 53 : 3. Nor is it any great wonder these should be scandalized at his poverty, when the disciples themselves had such carnal apprehensions of his kingdom. Mark, 10 : 37, 38.

3. Add to this, their implicit *faith in the learned rab-*

bies and doctors, who utterly misled them in this matter, and greatly prejudiced them against Christ. "Lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing to him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" They drew their faith from their rulers, and followed wherever they led.

III. Let us see how this ignorance *disposed them to such enmity* against Christ.

Ignorance disposes men to enmity and opposition to Christ, by removing those checks and rebukes of conscience by which they are restrained from evil. As conscience binds and reproves by the authority and virtue of the law of God, where that law is not known, there can be no reproofs; and therefore we truly say that ignorance is virtually every sin.

Ignorance enslaves and subjects the soul to the lusts of Satan; he is "the ruler of the darkness of this world." Eph. 6:12. There is no work so base and vile, but an ignorant man will undertake it.

Nay, if a man be ignorant of Christ, his truth, or people, he will not only oppose and persecute, but think it his duty so to do. John, 16:3. Before the Lord opened Paul's eyes, "he verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Christ."

INFERENCE 1. How falsely is *the Gospel charged as the cause* of discord and trouble in the world! It is not light, but darkness, that makes men fierce and cruel. As light increases, so doth peace: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fating together; and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isa. 11:6, 9. What a sad condition would the world be in without Gospel light! all places would be dens of rapine, and mountains of prey

Certainly we owe much of our civil liberty and outward tranquillity to Gospel light. If a sword, or variance, at any time, follow the Gospel, it is but an accidental, not a direct and proper effect of it.

2. How dreadful is it to *oppose Christ and his truths knowingly!* Christ pleads their ignorance as an argument to procure their pardon. Paul himself was once filled with rage and madness against Christ and his truth: it was well for him that he did it ignorantly: had he gone against his light and knowledge, there had been little hope of him: "I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief." 1 Tim. 1: 13. I do not say, it is utterly impossible for one that knowingly and maliciously opposes and persecutes Christ and his people to be forgiven, but it is not usual. Heb. 6: 4, 5. There are few instances of it.

3. What an awful *majesty sits upon the brow of holiness*, that so few, who see it, dare to oppose it! Few are so daringly wicked as to fight against it with open eyes: "Who will harm you whilst ye are followers of that which is good?" 1 Pet. 3: 13. Who dare be so hardy as to attack known godliness, or afflict and wrong the known friends of it? The true reason why many christians suffer, is not because they are godly, but because they do not manifest the power of godliness more than they do: their lives are so like the lives of others, that they are often mistaken for others. For holiness, manifested in its power, is so awfully glorious, that the consciences of the vilest cannot but honor it. "Herod feared John, for he was a just man." Mark, 6: 20.

4. The enemies of Christ are objects of *pity*. Alas, they are blind, and know not what they do. Nor should any other affection than pity stir in our hearts towards them. Were their eyes but open, they would never do as they do; we should look upon them as the physician

doth upon his diseased patient. Did they but see with the same light you do, they would be as far from hating Christ, or his ways, as you are. As soon as they cease to be ignorant, they cease to hate, saith Tertullian.

5. How needful is it before we engage against any person or way, to be well *satisfied that it is wickedness* we oppose! You see the world generally mistakes in this matter. Oh beware of doing you know not what! for Satan will know what he is doing by you: he blinds your eyes, and then sets you to work. You may eternally reflect on and lament what you have done. Oh beware what you now do!

Proposition 2. *There is forgiveness with God, for such as oppose Christ through ignorance.*

If "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," Matt. 12:31, even those whose wicked hands crucified Christ may receive remission by that blood they shed. Compare Acts, 2:23, 38. And here I must show what forgiveness is, and the possibility of it, for such as ignorantly oppose Christ.

I. Forgiveness is *God's gracious discharge of a believing penitent sinner from the guilt of all his sin, for Christ's sake.*

It is *God's* discharge. None can forgive sin but God only. Mark, 2:7. The primary and principal wrong is done to him: "Against thee, thee only," that is, thee mainly or especially, "have I sinned." Psalm 51:4. Sins are called debts, debts to God, Matt. 6:12; and as pecuniary debts oblige him that owes them to the penalty, if not discharged, so do our sins. And who can discharge the debtor but the creditor?

It is a *gracious* act of discharge. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." Isa. 43:25. And yet sin is not so forgiven, that God expects no satisfaction at all; but none from us, because God hath provided a surety for us, by whom he is satis-

fied: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Eph. 1 : 7.

It is a gracious discharge *from the guilt of sin*. Guilt is that which pardon properly deals with, involving obligation to punishment. Pardon is the dissolving of that obligation. The pardoned soul is a discharged soul: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." Rom. 8 : 33.

It is God's discharge *of a believing penitent sinner*. Infidelity and impenitence are not only sins in themselves, but such as bind all other sins upon the soul. "By him, all that believe are justified from all things." Acts, 10 : 43. So Acts, 3 : 19, "Repent therefore, that your sins may be blotted out:" this is the method in which God dispenses pardon to sinners.

It is *for Christ's sake* we are discharged; he is the meritorious cause of our remission: "As God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." Eph. 4 : 32. It is his blood alone that meritoriously procures our discharge. This is a brief and true account of the nature of forgiveness.

II. Now to evince the possibility of forgiveness for such as *ignorantly oppose Christ*, let these things be weighed :

1. Why should any poor soul, now humbled for its enmity to Christ in the days of ignorance, question the possibility of forgiveness, when there is *more efficacy in the blood of Christ*, the meritorious cause, than is requisite to the forgiveness of the most aggravated sins? There is power enough in that blood, not only to pardon thy sins, but the sins of the whole world, were it actually applied. 1 John, 2 : 2. There is not only a sufficiency, but a redundancy of merit, in that precious blood.

2. And as the sin of ignorantly opposing Christ exceeds not the power of the meritorious cause of forgiveness; so *neither is it any where excluded from pardon* by the word of God. Nay, such is the extensiveness of the promise to believing penitents, that this case is manifestly included, and forgiveness tendered to thee in the promises: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. 55:7. There are many such extensive promises in the Scriptures; and not one parenthesis in all these blessed pages, in which this case is excepted.

3. And it is yet more satisfactory; that *God hath already forgiven* such sinners, and those eminent for their enmity to Christ, that others may be encouraged to hope for the same mercy, when they also shall be, in the same manner, humbled for it. One striking example is that of Paul, 1 Tim. 1:13, 16, "who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

4. Moreover, it is encouraging to consider, that when God had cut off others in the way of their sin, he *hath hitherto spared thee*. What speaks this but a purpose of mercy to thy soul? Thou shouldst account the long-suffering of God thy salvation. 2 Pet. 3:15. Had he smitten thee in the way of thy sin and enmity to Christ, what hope had remained? But if he hath not only spared thee, but also given thee a heart ingenuously humbled for thy sins; doth not this speak mercy for thee? surely it looks like a gracious design of love to thy soul.

INFERENCE 1. Is there forgiveness with God for such as have been enemies to Christ, his truth, and Gospel? Then certainly there is *pardon and mercy for the friends of God*, who involuntarily fall into sin by the surprisals of temptation, and are penitent for it, as ingenuous children for offending a good father. Can any doubt, if God have pardon for such enemies, he hath it for children? If he have forgiveness for such as shed the blood of Christ with wicked hands, hath he not much more mercy and forgiveness for such as love Christ, and are more afflicted for their sin against him, than by all other troubles?

How sorrowful do the dear children of God sometimes sit, after their lapse into sin! Will God ever pardon this? will he be reconciled again? May I hope his face shall be to me as in former times? Mourning soul! if thou didst but know the largeness, tenderness, freeness of that grace, which yearns over enemies, and hath given forth thousands and ten thousands of pardons to the worst of sinners, thou wouldst not sink thus.

2. Is there pardon with God for enemies? How inexcusable then are all they that persist and perish in their enmity to Christ! Surely their destruction is of themselves. *Mercy is offered to them*, if they will receive it. Isa. 55:7. Proclamation is made in the Gospel, that if there be any among the enemies of Christ, who repent of what they have been and done against him, and are now unfeignedly willing to be reconciled, they shall find mercy: but "God shall wound the head of the enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses." Psa. 68:21. "If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." Psa. 7:12, 13. This lays the blood of every man that perishes in his enmity to Christ, at his

own door ; and vindicates the righteousness of God, in the severest strokes of wrath upon them. This also will be a cutting thought to their hearts eternally : I might once have had pardon, and I refused it : the Gospel trumpet sounded ; gracious terms were offered, but I rejected them.

3. Is there mercy with God and forgiveness, even for his worst enemies, upon their submission ? How unlike to God then are all *implacable spirits* ! Some there are that cannot bring their hearts to forgive an enemy ; "to whom revenge is sweeter than life." 1 Sam. 24 : 16. "If a man find his enemy, will he let him go ?" This is hell-fire, a fire that never goeth out. How little do such poor creatures consider : if God should deal by them, as they do by others, what words could express the misery of their condition ! It is a sad sin, and a sad sign, a character of a wretched state, wherever it appears. Those that have found mercy, should be ready to show mercy ; and they that expect mercy themselves, should not deny it to others.

Proposition 3. *To forgive enemies and beg forgiveness for them, is the true christian spirit.*

Thus did Christ : "Father, forgive them." And thus did Stephen, in imitation of Christ : "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Acts, 7 : 59, 60. This accords with the rule of Christ, "But I say unto you, love your enemies ; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." Matt. 5 : 44, 45. And here I shall show what a forgiving spirit is, and how well it becomes all that call themselves christians.

I. Let us inquire *what this christian forgiveness is.*

1. It consists *not in a stoical insensibility* to wrongs and injuries. God hath not made men blocks, that have no sense or feeling. Nor hath he made a law inconsistent with their very natures; but allows us a tender sense of natural evils, though he will not allow us to revenge them by moral evils: nay, the more deep and tender our sense of wrongs and injuries, the more excellent is our forgiveness of them; so that a forgiving spirit doth not exclude sense of injuries, but the sense of injuries graces the forgiveness of them.

2. Christian forgiveness is *not a politic concealment* of our wrath and revenge, because it will be a reproach to manifest it, or because we want opportunity. This is carnal policy, not christian meekness. So far from being the mark of a gracious spirit, it is apparently the sign of a vile nature.

3. Christian forgiveness is *not an injurious giving up of our rights* to the pleasure of every one that would invade them. No; these we may lawfully defend and preserve; though, if we cannot defend them lawfully, we must not avenge our wrongs: this is not christian forgiveness. But, positively,

It is a *christian lenity, or gentleness of mind, freely passing by the injuries done to us, in obedience to the command of God.*

It is a *lenity, or gentleness of mind.* The grace of God calms the tumultuous passions; corrects our disturbed spirits, and makes them benign, gentle, and easy to be entreated: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness." Gal. 5: 22.

This gracious lenity *inclines the christian to pass by injuries*; so to pass them by, as neither to retain them revengefully in the mind, or requite them when we have opportunity; yea, and that freely: not by constraint, because we cannot avenge ourselves, but willingly. We abhor to do it when we can. So that as a carnal heart

thinks revenge its glory, the gracious heart is content that forgiveness should be his glory. I will be even with him, saith nature : I will be above him, saith grace : it is his glory to pass over transgression. Prov. 19 : 11.

And this it doth *in obedience to the command of God*. Their own nature inclines men another way. "The spirit that is in us lusteth to envy ; but he giveth more grace." Jam. 4 : 5. It lusteth to revenge, but the fear of God represseth those motions. Such considerations as these : God hath forbidden me ; yea, and God hath forgiven me, as well as forbidden me : prevail upon him when nature urges to revenge the wrong. "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph. 4 : 32. This is forgiveness in a christian sense. And,

II. This is *excellent, and singularly becoming the profession of Christ*.

It speaks your religion excellent, that it can mould your hearts into that heavenly frame, to which they are so averse, yea, contrarily disposed by nature. It is the glory of pagan morality, that it can hide men's lusts and passions : the glory of christianity that it can destroy, and really mortify the lusts of nature. Would christians but live up to the excellent principles of their religion, christianity would be no more rivalled by pagan morality : the christian challenged to imitate Socrates ! Oh christians, yield not the day to heathens ! Let all the world see the true greatness, heavenliness, and excellency of our represented Pattern ; and by true mortification of your corrupt nature, enforce an acknowledgment from the world, that a greater than Socrates is here. He that is really a meek, humble, patient, heavenly christian, wins this glory to his religion, that it can do more than all other principles and rules in the world. In nothing were the most accomplished heathens more defective than in the forgiving of injuries : it was a thing

they could not understand, or, if they did, could never bring their hearts to it; witness that rule of their great Tully: "It is the first office of justice (saith he,) to hurt no men, except first provoked by an injury." The addition of that exception spoiled his excellent rule.

But christianity teaches, and some christians have attained it, to receive evil, and return good: "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat." 1 Cor. 4: 12, 13. This is that meekness wrought in us by the wisdom from above. James, 3: 17. This commends a man to the consciences of others, who, with Saul, must acknowledge, when they see themselves so outdone, "Thou art more righteous than I," 1 Sam. 24: 16, 17; who must say, had we been so much injured, and had such opportunities to revenge, we should never have passed them by, as these men did. This impresses and stamps the very image of God upon the creature, and makes us like our heavenly Father, who doeth good to his enemies, and sends showers of outward blessings upon them that pour out floods of wickedness daily to provoke him. Matt. 5: 44, 45. In a word, this christian temper gives a man the true possession and enjoyment of himself. So that our breasts shall be as the pacific sea, smooth and pleasant, when others are as the raging sea, foaming and casting up mire and dirt.

INFERENCE 1. The Christian religion is the greatest *friend to the peace and tranquillity of states and kingdoms*. Nothing is more opposite to the true christian spirit, than implacable fierceness, strife, revenge, tumult, and uproar. It teaches men to do good, and receive evil; to receive evil, and return good. "The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make

peace." James, 3 : 17, 18. The church is a dove for meekness. Cant. 6 : 9. When the world grows full of strife, christians then grow weary of the world : and sigh out the psalmist's request, " O that I had wings like a dove ! then would I fly away and be at rest."

The rule by which we are to walk, is, " If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath ; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay it, saith the Lord." Rom. 12 : 18, 19. It is not religion, but our lusts, that make the world so unquiet. James, 4 : 1, 2. Not godliness, but wickedness, that makes men bite and devour one another. One of the first effects of the Gospel, is to civilize those places where it comes, and settle order and peace among men. Happy would it be if religion did more obtain in all nations. It is the greatest friend to their tranquillity and prosperity.

2. How dangerous a thing is it to abuse and *wrong meek and forgiving christians* ! Their readiness to forgive often invites injury, and encourages vile spirits to insult and trample upon them : but if men would seriously consider it, there is nothing should more deter and affright them from such practices than the spirit of forgiveness. You may abuse and wrong them, and they must not avenge themselves, nor repay evil for evil : true, but because they do not, the Lord will ; even the Lord to whom they commit the matter ; and he will do it to purpose, except ye repent.

" Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." James, 5 : 7. Will ye stand to that issue ? had you rather indeed have to do with God than with men ? When the Jews put Christ to death, " he committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously." 1 Pet. 2 : 22, 23. And did they gain any thing by that ? did not the Lord severely avenge the blood of Christ on

them and their children? yea, do not they and their children groan under the doleful effects of it to this day? If God undertakes (as he always doth) the cause of his abused, meek, and peaceable people, he will be sure to avenge it sevenfold more than they could.

3. Let us all *imitate our pattern*, the Lord Jesus Christ, and labor for meek, forgiving spirits. I shall only propose two inducements to it; the honor of Christ, and your own place; two things dear indeed to a christian. His glory is more than your life, and all that you enjoy in this world. Oh do not expose it to the scorn and derision of his enemies. Let them not say, How is Christ a lamb, when his followers are lions? how is the church a dove, when its members tear and devour like birds of prey? Consult also the quiet of your own spirits. What is life worth, without the comfort of life? What can you have in all that you do possess in the world, as long as you have not the possession of your own souls? If your spirits be full of tumult and revenge, the Spirit of Christ will grow a stranger to you: that Dove delights in clean and quiet breasts. Oh then imitate your Lord in this grace also!

CHAPTER XXXI.

SECOND EXCELLENT WORD OF CHRIST UPON THE CROSS.

“BEHOLD THY MOTHER!”

“*Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!*” *John, 19:27.*

In this second memorable and instructive word of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, he has left us an excellent pattern for the discharge of our relative duties. It may be well said, the Gospel makes the best husbands

and wives, the best parents and children, the best masters and servants: it furnishes the most excellent precepts, and proposes the best patterns. Here we have the pattern of Jesus Christ presented to all children for their imitation, teaching them how to acquit themselves towards their parents, according to the laws of nature and grace. Christ was not only subject and obedient to his parents whilst he lived, but manifested his tender care even whilst he hung in the torments of death upon the cross. "Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!"

The words contain an affectionate recommendation of his distressed mother to the care of a dear disciple, a bosom friend.

The *design* and end was to manifest his tender respect and care for his mother, who was now in a most distressed, comfortless state. For now was Simeon's prophecy, Luke, 2: 35, fulfilled in the trouble and anguish that filled her soul. Her soul was "pierced" for him, both as she was his mother, and as she was a mystical member of him, her Head, her Lord: and therefore he commends her to John, the beloved disciple, saying, "Behold thy mother!" that is, let her be to thee as thine own mother. Let thy love to me be now manifested in thy tender care for her.

The *manner* of his recommending her was very affectionate and moving, "Behold thy mother!" As if he had said, I am now dying, leaving all human society and relations, and entering into a new state, where neither the duties of natural relations are exercised, nor their comforts enjoyed. It is a state of dominion over angels and men, not of subjection and obedience; this I now leave to thee. Upon thee do I devolve both the honor and duty of being in my stead and room to her, as to all dear and tender care over her. It was also a *mutual* recommendation: to his mother he said, "Wo-

man, behold thy son!" not mother, but woman, intimating not only the change of state and conditions with him, but also the request he was making for her to the disciple with whom she was to live, as a mother with a son.

The *time* when his care for his mother so eminently manifested itself, was when his departure was at hand, and he could no longer be a comfort to her, by his bodily presence; yea, his love and care manifested themselves when he was full of anguish both in his soul and body. Hence,

Christ's tender care of his mother, even in the time of his greatest distress, is an excellent pattern for children to the end of the world.

"There are three great foundations, or bonds of relation, on which all family government depends:" those of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. The Lord has planted in the souls of men affections suitable to these relations; and to his people he has given grace to regulate those affections, appointed duties to exercise those graces, and seasons to discharge those duties. So that, as in the motion of a wheel every spoke takes its turn, and bears its stress; in like manner, in the whole round of a christian's conversation, every affection, grace, and duty, at one season or other, comes to be exercised.

But yet grace has not so far prevailed in the sanctification of any man's affections, that there will be no excesses or defects in their exercise towards our relations; yea, in this eminent saints have been eminently defective. But the pattern set before us here is a perfect pattern. As the church finds him the best of husbands, so to his parents he was the best of sons; and being the best and most perfect, he is therefore the rule and measure of all others. Christ knew how the corruptions we draw from our parents are returned in

their bitter fruits upon them again, to the wounding of their very hearts ; and therefore it pleased him to commend obedience and love to parents, in his own example.

It was anciently a proverb among the heathen, it is good to be an old man, or woman, only in Sparta. The ground of it was the strict laws among the Spartans to punish the rebellion and disobedience of children to their aged parents. And shall it not be good to be an old father and mother in this land, where the Gospel of Christ is preached, and such an argument as this now set before you urged ; an argument which the heathen world never heard ?

Let all that sustain the relation of children seriously ponder this example of Christ proposed for their imitation, in which we will consider what duties belong to the relation of children, and how they are enforced by Christ's example.

I. *The duties* pertaining to the relation of children.

1. *Fear and reverence* are due from children to their parents, by the express command of God : "Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father." Lev. 19 : 3. God has clothed parents with his authority. He has entrusted to them the care of the souls and bodies of their children ; and he expects that children reverence them, although in respect of outward estate, or honor, they be never so much above them. Joseph, though lord of Egypt, bowed down before his aged father, with his face to the earth. Gen. 48 : 12. Solomon, the most magnificent and glorious king that ever swayed a sceptre, when his mother came to speak with him for Adonijah, rose up to meet her, bowed himself to her, and set her upon his right hand. 2 Kings, 2 : 19.

2. *Dear and tender love* is due from children to their parents : and to show how strong and dear that love ought to be, it is joined with the love you have for your own lives ; as it appears in the injunction, to deny

both for Christ's sake. Matt. 10 : 37. The bonds of nature are strong and direct between parents and children. Oh the care, the cost, the pity, the tenderness, the pains, the fears they have expressed for you. It is worse than heathenish ingratitude not to return love for love. This filial love is not only in itself a duty, but should be the root or spring of all your duties to them.

3. *Obedience* is due them, by the Lord's strict and special command: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right; honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise." Eph. 6 : 1. Filial obedience is not only founded upon the positive law of God, but also upon the law of nature: "This is right," says the apostle, that is, right both according to natural and positive law. However, this subjection and obedience is not absolute and universal. God has not divested himself of his own authority, to clothe a parent with it. Your obedience to them must be "in the Lord," that is, in things consonant to that Divine and holy will, to which they, as well as you, must be subject. Yea, even the wickedness of a parent exempts not from obedience, where his command is proper. Nor, on the other hand, must the holiness of a parent sway you, where his commands and God's are opposite. Yield yourselves, therefore, cheerfully to obey all which they lawfully enjoin, and take heed that the sin fixed on heathen who know not God, be not found upon you, "disobedience to parents." Rom. 1 : 30. Remember, your disobedience to their just commands rises much higher than an affront to their personal authority; it is disobedience to God himself, whose commands second and strengthen theirs upon you.

4. *Submission* to their discipline and rebukes is also your duty: "We had fathers of our own flesh that corrected us, and we gave them reverence." Heb. 12 : 9. Parents ought not to abuse their authority. "Cruelty

in them is a great sin; wrath and rebellion in a child against his parents is monstrous." Two considerations should not fail to bring children into a submissive frame, especially to godly parents. Their aim is to save your souls from hell. They judge it better for you to hear the voice of their anger, than the terrible voice of the wrath of God. And when they rebuke and chasten, it is with grief in their hearts, and tears in their eyes. It is no delight to them to cross, vex, or afflict you. But for their duty to God, and tender love to your souls, they would neither rebuke nor chasten: and when they do, how do they afflict themselves in afflicting you!

5. *Faithfulness* to all their interests is due to them, by the natural and positive law of God. As far as in you lies, you are bound to promote, not to waste and scatter their substance; to assist, not defraud them. "Whoso robbeth his father or mother, and saith, it is no transgression, the same is a companion of a destroyer." Prov. 28:24. To dispose of their goods, much more of yourselves, without their consent, is ordinarily the greatest injustice to them.

6. And more especially, *the requital* of all their love, care, and pains for you, is your duty so far as God enables you: "Let them learn to show piety at home, and requite their parents." 1 Tim. 5:4. It is a saying frequent among the Jews, "A child should rather labor at the mill than suffer his parents to want." And to the same effect is that other saying, "Your parents must be supplied by you if you have it; if not, you ought to beg for them, rather than see them perish." It was both the comfort and honor of Joseph, that God made him an instrument of so much succor and comfort to his aged father and distressed family. Gen. 47:13. And you are also to know, that what you do for them, is not alms, or charity; it is but requiting them, which is justice, not charity. And it can never be a full

requital. Indeed the apostle tells us, 2 Cor. 12:14, that parents lay up for their children, and not children for their parents; and so they ought. But surely if Providence impoverish them, and bless you, an honorable maintenance is their due. Even Christ himself took care for his mother.

II. Consider how *the example of our Lord*, who was so subject to them in his life, Luke, 2:51, and so careful to provide at his death, enforces all those duties upon children, especially upon gracious children.

1. His example in this has the force and power of *law*, yea, a law of love, or a law lovingly constraining you to an imitation of him. If Christ himself condescends to be your pattern, if God is pleased to take relations like yours, and go before you in the discharge of relative duties; Oh, how are you obliged to imitate him, and tread in all his footsteps! This was by him intended as a pattern, to facilitate and direct your duties.

2. He will *call you to account in judgment* how you have answered the pattern of obedience and tender care he set before you in the days of his flesh. What will the disobedient plead in that day? He that heard the groans of an afflicted father or mother, will now come to reckon with the disobedient child for them; and the glorious example of Christ's own obedience, and his tenderness to his relations, will, in that day, condemn and aggravate, silence and shame such wretched children as shall stand guilty before his bar.

INFERENCE 1. Has Jesus Christ given such a pattern of obedience and tenderness to parents? Then there can be *nothing of Christ in stubborn, rebellious children*. The children of disobedience cannot be the children of God. If Divine Providence directs this to the hands of any that are so, my heart's desire and prayer for them is, that the Lord will manifest to them their sin-

fulness, while they consider the following *inquiries*:

Have you not been guilty of slighting your parents by *irreverent words or conduct*? To such I commend the consideration of Prov. 30:17, which, methinks, should be to them as the hand-writing that appeared upon the wall to Belshazzar: "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." That is, they shall be brought to an untimely end, and the birds of the air shall eat that eye that, but for the parent it despised, had never seen the light. It may be you are vigorous and young, they decayed and wrinkled with age: but, saith the Holy Ghost, "Despise not thy mother when she is old." Prov. 23:22. It may be you are rich, they poor; own, and honor them in their poverty, and despise them not. God will requite it with his hand if you do.

Have you not been *disobedient* to the commands of parents? A son of Belial is a child of wrath, if God give not repentance to life. Is not this the awful brand set upon the heathen? Rom. 1:30. Wo to him that makes a father or mother complain, as the tree in the fable, that they are cleft asunder with the wedges that are cut out of their own bodies.

Have you not risen up rebelliously against, and *hated your parents for chastening you*, that they might save your soul from hell? What is this but to resist an ordinance of God for your good? and, in rebelling against them, to rebel against the Lord? Well, if they do not, God will take the rod into his own hand, and him you shall not resist.

Have you not been *unjust* to your parents, and defrauded them? first, helped to make them poor, and then despised them because they were poor. Oh, horrid wickedness! What a complicated evil is this! Thou art, in the language of Scripture, a companion with de-

stroyers. Prov. 28:24. This is the worst of theft, in God's account.

Are you not, or have you not been *ungrateful* to parents? Leaving them to shift for themselves in those straits into which you have helped to bring them. Oh consider it, children, this is an evil which God will surely avenge, except ye repent. What! to be hardened against thine own flesh; to be cruel to thine own parents, that with so much tenderness fed thee, when else thou hadst perished!

If any one of my readers be guilty of these evils, to humble you for them, and reclaim you from them, I desire that *these few considerations* may be laid to heart.

The effects of your obedience or disobedience will *remain* upon you and yours to many generations. If you be obedient children in the Lord, both you and yours may reap the fruits of your obedience in multitudes of sweet mercies for many generations. So runs the promise, "Honor thy father and mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Eph. 6:2, 3. You know what an eye of favor God cast upon the Rechabites for this. Jeremiah, 35:8-19. And as his blessings are, by promise, entailed on the obedient, so is his curse upon the disobedient: "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness," Prov. 20:20; that is, the lamp of his life shall be quenched by death, yea, say others, and his soul also, by the blackness of darkness in hell.

Though other sins do, this sin seldom escapes exemplary punishment, even *in this world*.

Heathens will rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you. They never had such precepts or examples as you, and yet some of them would rather have chosen death, than done as you do. But why speak I of

heathens! the stork in the heavens, yea, the beasts of the earth, condemn the disobedience of children.

These are sins *inconsistent* with the true fear of God, in whomsoever they are found. A man is indeed what he is in his family. He that is a bad child can never be a good christian. Either bring testimonies of your godliness from your relatives, or it may be well suspected to be no better than counterfeit. Never talk of your obedience to God, whilst your disobedience to the just commands of your parents gives you the lie.

A *parting* time is coming, when death will break up the family; and when that time comes, Oh! how bitter will the remembrance of these things be! Surely this will be more insupportable to you than their death, if the Lord open your eyes, and give you repentance.

2. Have you such a pattern of obedience and tender love to parents? Then, children, imitate your pattern, as it becomes christians, and *take Christ for your example*. Whatsoever your parents be, see that your conduct towards them is such as becomes your profession of Christ.

If your parents are godly, Oh beware of grieving them by any unbecoming conduct. Art thou a christian indeed? thou wilt then reckon thyself obliged to them in a double bond, both of grace and nature. Oh what a mercy would some children esteem it, if they had parents fearing the Lord, as you have!

If they be carnal, walk circumspectly, in the most careful and punctual discharge of your duties; for how knowest thou, Oh child, but hereby thou mayest win thy parents? wouldst thou but humbly and seriously entreat and persuade them to mind the ways of holiness, speaking to them at fit seasons, with all humility and reverence, expressing your wishes by relating some pertinent history, or proposing some excellent example, leaving their own conscience to draw the conclusion,

and make the application ; it is possible they might ponder your words in their hearts, as Mary did Christ's. Luke, 2 : 49, 51. And would you but add to all this your earnest cries to heaven for them, and your own daily example, that they may have nothing to complain of you ; and thus wait with patience for the desired effect ; Oh, what a blessed instrument might you be of their everlasting good !

3. Let those who have children that fear the Lord, and endeavor to imitate Christ in these duties, account them *a singular treasure and heritage from him*, and give them all due encouragement. How many have no children ; and how many have such as are the very reproach and heart-breaking of their parents, bringing down their hoary heads with sorrow to the grave ! If God have given you the blessing of godly children, you can never be sufficiently thankful for such a favor. Oh that ever God should honor you to train up children for heaven ! What a comfort must it be to you, whatever troubles you meet with abroad, when you come home among godly children, that are careful to sweeten your life by their obedience ! Especially, what a comfort is it, when you come to die, that you leave them allied to Christ, and so need not be anxious how it shall be with them when you are gone ! Take heed of discouraging such children, from whom so much glory may arise to God, and so much comfort to yourselves. Thus let Christ's pattern be improved, who by such eminent holiness in all his relations, left you an example that you should follow his steps.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THIRD OF CHRIST'S WORDS UPON THE CROSS—TO THE
PENITENT THIEF.

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Luke, 23: 43.

In this scripture you have the third excellent saying of Christ upon the cross, expressing the riches of free grace to the penitent thief; a man that had spent his life in wickedness, and for his wickedness was now to die. His conduct had been vile and profane, but now his heart was broken for it; he proves a convert, yea, the first-fruits of the blood of the cross. In the former verse he manifests his faith; “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” In this Christ manifests his pardon and gracious acceptance of him; “Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” In which consider,

1. The matter or substance of the promise made by Christ, that he shall be with him in paradise. By paradise he means heaven itself, which is here shadowed to us by a place of delight and pleasure. This is the receptacle of gracious souls, when separated from their bodies. And that paradise signifies heaven itself, and not a third place, as some have imagined, is evident from 2 Cor. 12: 2, 4; where the apostle calls the same place by the names of the third heaven, and paradise. This is the place of blessedness designed for the people of God. So you find, Rev. 2: 7; “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God;” that is, to have the

fullest and most intimate communion with Jesus Christ in heaven. And this is the substance of Christ's promise to the thief: "Thou," that is, thou in spirit, or thou in the noblest part, thy soul, "shalt be with me in paradise."

2. The person to whom Christ makes this excellent and glorious promise was one that had lived sinfully and profanely; a very vile and wretched man, now justly under condemnation. But the Lord gave him a penitent believing heart. Now, almost at the last gasp, he is soundly, in an extraordinary way, converted; and, being converted, he owns and professes Christ amidst all the shame and reproach of his death; vindicates his innocency, and humbly supplicates for mercy; "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

3. The set time for the performance of this gracious promise is, to-day; this very day, shalt thou be with me in glory; not after the resurrection, but immediately from the time of thy dissolution, thou shalt enjoy blessedness.

4. We have here the confirmation and seal of this most comfortable promise to him with Christ's solemn asseveration; "Verily I say unto thee." Higher security cannot be given. I that am able to perform what I promise, for heaven and the glory thereof are mine: I that am faithful and true to my promises, and have never forfeited my credit with any; I say it, I solemnly confirm it: "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Hence we have three plain obvious truths for our instruction and consolation.

1. *There is a future eternal state, into which souls pass at death.*

2. *All believers are, at their death, immediately received into a state of glory and eternal happiness.*

3. *God may, though he seldom doth, prepare men for this glory, immediately before their dissolution by death.*

Proposition 1. *There is a future eternal state, into which souls pass at death.*

This truth is a principal foundation-stone to the hopes and happiness of souls ; and is briefly established by the following arguments :

1. *The being of a God* undeniably evinces a future state for human souls after this life. For, if there be a God who rules the world which he hath made, he must rule it by rewards and punishments, equally and righteously distributed to good and bad ; putting a difference between the obedient and disobedient, the righteous and the wicked. To make a species of creatures capable of moral government, and not to rule them at all, is to make them in vain, and is inconsistent with his glory, which is the end of all things. To rule them, but not suitably to their natures, consists not with that infinite wisdom from which their beings proceeded. To rule them in a way suitable to their natures, namely, by rewards and punishments, and not to bestow or inflict them at all, is utterly incongruous with the veracity and truth of Him that cannot lie. So then, as he hath made rational creatures capable of moral government by rewards and punishments, he rules them in the way suitable to their natures, promising " it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked." These promises and threatenings can be no cheat, merely intended to terrify where there is no danger, or encourage where there is no real benefit ; but what he promises, or threatens, must be accomplished, and every word of God must be fulfilled. But it is evident that no such distinction is made by the providence of God (at least ordinarily and generally) in this life ; but all things come alike to all ; and as with the righteous, so with the wicked. Yea, here it goes ill with them that fear God ; they are oppressed ; they receive their evil things, and wicked men their good : therefore we conclude, the righteous Judge

of the whole earth will, in another world, recompense to every one according as his work shall be.

2. As the very being of God evinces it, so *the Scriptures plainly reveal it*. These Scriptures are the system of laws for the government of man, which the wise and holy Ruler of the world hath enacted and ordained. And in them we find promises made to the righteous, of a full reward in the world to come, for all their obedience, patience, and sufferings; and threatenings made against the wicked, of eternal wrath and anguish, as the just recompense of their sin in hell for ever: "Treasuring up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality; eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Rom. 2 : 5-10. So 2 Thess. 1 : 4-7, "We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is *a manifest token* of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you, who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire." To these plain testimonies multitudes might be added, if it were needful. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but these words shall never pass away.

3. As the Scriptures reveal it, so the consciences of all men have some *presentiments of it*. Where is the man whose conscience never felt any impressions of hope or fear from a future world? If it is said that

these may be but the effects of education, that, having read such things in the Scriptures, or heard them from preachers, we raise up to ourselves hopes and fears about them ; I demand how the consciences of the heathen, who have neither Scriptures nor preachers, came to be impressed with these things ? Does not the apostle tell us, that their consciences work upon these things ? Rom. 2 : 15 ; their thoughts, with reference to a future state, accuse, or else excuse ; that is, their hearts are cheered and encouraged by the good they do, and terrified with fears about the evils they commit. Whereas, if there were no such impression respecting the future, conscience would neither accuse nor excuse for good or evil done in this world.

4. The *incarnation and death of Christ are in vain* without it. What did he propose to himself, or what benefit have we by his coming, if there be no such future state ? Did he take our nature, and suffer such terrible things in it for nothing ? If you say, christians have much comfort from it in this life : I answer, the comforts they have are identified with and inseparable from faith and expectation of the happiness to be enjoyed, as the purchase of his blood, in heaven. And if there be no such heaven to which they are appointed, no hell from which they are redeemed, they do but comfort themselves with a fable, and bless themselves with a thing of nought : their comfort is no greater than the comfort of a beggar that dreams he is a king, and when he awakes finds himself a beggar still. Surely the end of Christ's death was to deliver us from the wrath to come, 1 Thess. 1 : 10 ; not from an imaginary, but a real hell ; to bring us to God, 1 Pet. 3 : 18 ; to be the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him. Heb. 5 : 9.

INFERENCE 1. Is there an eternal state, into which souls pass after this life ? How precious then is *present time*,

upon the improvement whereof that state depends. Oh what a huge weight hath God hung upon a small wire! God hath set us here in a state of trial; and according as we improve these few hours, so will it fare with us to all eternity. Every day, every hour, nay, every moment of your present time hath an influence upon your eternity. Do you believe this? What! and yet squander away precious time so carelessly, so vainly! When Seneca heard one promise to spend a week in recreation with a friend that invited him, he wondered that he should make so rash a promise! What, said he, throw away so considerable a part of your life? How can you do it? Surely our prodigality, in the expense of time, argues that we have little sense of vast eternity.

2. How rational are all the *duties and self-denial* of religion, which serve to promote and secure future eternal happiness! So vast is the disproportion between time and eternity; between things seen, and things not seen as yet; between the present vanishing and the future permanent state, that he can never be justly reputed wise, that will not let go the best enjoyment he hath on earth, if it stand in the way of his eternal happiness. Nor can that man ever escape the just censure of notorious folly, who, for the gratifying of his appetite and present pleasure, parts with eternal glory in heaven. Darius repented that he had lost a kingdom for a draught of water; "Oh," said he, "for how short a pleasure have I sold a kingdom!" It was Moses' choice, and his choice argued his wisdom, rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Heb. 11: 25.

3. If there be such an eternal state into which souls pass immediately after death; *how great a change does death make upon every man!* Oh what a serious thing is it to die! It is your passage out of the swift river of time, into the boundless and bottomless ocean of eternity.

You that now converse with sensible objects, with men like yourselves, then enter the world of spirits. You that now see the continual revolutions of days and nights, passing away one after another, will then be fixed in a perpetual NOW. Oh what a serious thing is death! The souls of men are now, as it were, asleep in their bodies; at death they awake, and find themselves in the world of realities. Let this teach you, both how to assist dying persons when you visit them, and to make every day some provision for that hour yourselves. Be serious, be plain, be faithful with others that are stepping into eternity; be so with your own souls every day. Oh remember eternity!

Proposition 2. *All believers are, at their death, immediately received into a state of glory and eternal happiness.*

"*This day shalt thou be with me.*" This proposition the atheist denies: he thinks he shall die, and therefore resolves to live as the beasts that perish. Beryllus, and some others after him, taught that there was indeed a future state of happiness and misery for souls, but that they pass not into it immediately after death, but sleep till the resurrection, and then awake and enter it. But have they found any such intimation in the Scriptures? Not at all. The Scriptures take notice of no such interval; but plainly enough deny it: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." 2 Cor. 5:8. No sooner parted from the body, than present with the Lord. So Phil. 1:23. "Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." If the soul of the apostle was to sleep till the resurrection, how was it far better to be dissolved, than to live? Surely Paul's state in the body had been far better than his state after death, if this were so; for here he enjoyed much sweet communion with God by faith, but then he would enjoy nothing. The Scrip-

tures place no interval between the dissolution of a saint and his glorification: they speak of the saints that are dead, as already with the Lord; and the wicked that are dead, as already in hell, calling them spirits in prison, 1 Pet. 3: 19, 20; assuring us that Judas went presently to his own place. Acts, 1: 25. And to that sense is the parable of Dives and Lazarus. Luke, 16: 22.

But let us weigh these four things more particularly, for our full satisfaction in this point:

1. Why should the happiness of believers be deferred, since they are *immediately capable* of enjoying it, as soon as separated from the body? Alas, the soul is so far from being assisted in the enjoyment of God by the body, in its present state, that it is clogged or hindered by it: so speaks the apostle, 2 Cor. 5: 6, 8; "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;" that is, our bodies prejudice our souls, obstruct and hinder the fulness and freedom of their communion. When we part from the body, we go home to the Lord; then the soul is escaped as a bird out of a cage or snare. Here I am anticipated by an excellent pen, (Shaw's Farewell to Life,) to whose excellent observations on this point I only add this; that if the entanglements, snares, and prejudices of the soul are such in its embodied state, that it cannot so freely dilate itself and receive the comforts of God by communion with him; then surely the laying aside of that clog, or the freeing of the soul from that burden, can be no bar to the greater happiness it enjoys in its separate state.

2. Why should the happiness and glory of the soul be deferred, unless God has some *farther preparative work* to do upon it, before it be fit to be admitted into glory? But surely there is no such work wrought upon it after its separation by death: all that is done in the work of preparation is done here. The day is then ended, and

night comes, when no man can work. John, 9:3. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no wisdom, nor knowledge, nor device in the grave, whither thou goest." Eccles. 9:10. So that our glorification is not deferred, in order to our fuller preparation for glory. If we are not fit when we die, we can never be fit: all is done upon us that ever was intended to be done; for departed saints are called "the spirits of the just made perfect." Heb. 12:23.

3. Again, Why should our salvation slumber, when the *damnation of the wicked* slumbers not? God defers not their misery, and surely he will not defer our glory. If he be quick with his enemies, he will not be slow and dilatory with his friends. It cannot be imagined but he is as much inclined to acts of favor to his children, as to acts of justice to his enemies. See Jude, ver. 7; Acts, 1:25; 1 Pet. 3:19, 20.

4. How do such delays accord with Christ's ardent desires to have his people *with him where he is*, and with the vehement longings of their souls to be with Christ? You may see those reflected flames of love between the Bridegroom and his spouse in Rev. 22:17, 20. They long for his coming; and the expectation and faith in which the saints die, is then to be satisfied; and surely God will not deceive them. I deny not but their glory will be more complete when the body, their absent friend, is re-united, and made to share with them in their happiness; yet that hinders not, but meanwhile the soul may enjoy its glory, whilst the body sleeps in the dust.

INFERENCE 1. Are believers immediately with God after their dissolution? Then how surprisingly *glorious will heaven be* to believers! Not that they are in it before they think of it, or are fitted for it; no, they have spent many thoughts upon it before, and been long preparing for it; but the suddenness and greatness of the

change is amazing to our thoughts. For a soul to be now here in the body, conversing with men, living among sensible objects, and within a few moments to be with the Lord; this hour on earth, the next in the third heaven; now viewing this world, and anon standing among an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect: Oh what a change is this! To live as angels of God! To live without eating, drinking, sleeping! To be lifted up from a bed of sickness to a throne of glory! To leave a sinful, troublesome world, a sick and pained body, and be in a moment perfectly cured, and feel thyself perfectly well, and free from all infirmity and sorrow! You cannot think what this will be! Who can tell what sights, what apprehensions, what thoughts, what frames believing souls have, before the bodies they left are removed from the eyes of their dear surviving friends!

2. Are believers immediately with God after their dissolution? Where then shall *unbelievers* be, and in what state will they find themselves immediately after death hath closed their eyes? To be torn from the body, from friends and comforts, and thrust into endless misery into the dark vault of hell; never more to see the light of this world; never to see a comfortable sight; never to hear a joyful sound; never to know the meaning of rest, peace, or delight any more: Oh what a change! To exchange the smiles and applause of men, for the frowns and fury of God; to be clothed with flames, and drink Divine wrath, when but a few days before they were clothed in silks, and filled with earthly pleasure! How is the state of things altered with them! It was the lamentable cry of poor Adrian, when he felt death approaching: "Oh my poor wandering soul! alas! whither art thou going! Where must thou lodge this night! Thou shalt never jest more, never be merry more!"

Your term in your houses and bodies is out, and there

is another habitation provided for you ; but it is a dismal one ! When a saint dies, heaven above is as it were moved to receive and entertain him ; at his coming, he is received into everlasting habitations, into the inheritance of the saints in light. When an unbeliever dies, we may say of him, "Hell from beneath is moved for him, to meet him at his coming ; it stirreth up the dead for him." Isa. 14 : 9. No more sports, nor plays, nor cups of wine, nor sensual delight ; the more of these you enjoyed here, the more intolerable will this change be to you. If saints are immediately with God, others are immediately with Satan.

3. *How little cause have they to fear death*, who shall be with God so soon after their death ! Some there are that tremble at the thoughts of death ; that cannot endure to hear it mentioned ; that would rather stoop to any misery here, yea, to any sin, than die, because they are afraid of the exchange. But you that are interested in Christ can lose nothing by the exchange : the words death, grave, and eternity, should have another kind of sound in your ears, and make contrary impressions upon your hearts. If your earthly tabernacle be broken up, you shall not be found naked ; you have "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ;" and it is but a step out of this into that. Oh what sweet and happy thoughts should you have of that great and last change ! But what speak I of your fearlessness of death ? Your duty lies much higher than that ; for,

4. If believers are immediately with God after their dissolution, then it is their *duty to long for that dissolution*, and cast many an anxious look towards heaven. So did Paul, "I desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better." The advantages of this exchange are unspeakable : you have gold for brass ; wine for water ; substance for shadow ; solid glory for very va-

nity Oh! if the dust of this earth were but once blown out of your eyes, that you might see the Divine glory, how weary would you be to live, how willing to die! But then be sure that your title is sound and good: leave not so great a concern to the last; for, though God may do for you in an hour, what was not done all your days, yet it is not common.

Proposition 3. God may, though he seldom doth, prepare men for glory immediately before their dissolution by death.

There is one parable, and no more, that speaks of some that were called at the last hour. Matt. 20: 9, 10. And there is this one instance in the text, and no more, that gives us an account of a person so called. We acknowledge God may do it, his grace is his own, he may dispense it how and where he pleaseth. Who shall fix bounds or put limits to free grace, but God himself, whose it is? If he do not ordinarily show such mercy to dying sinners (as indeed he doth not) it is not because their hearts are so hardened by long custom in sin that his grace cannot break them, but because he most justly withholds that grace from them. When blessed Mr. Bilney, the martyr, heard a minister preaching thus: "Oh, thou old sinner, thou hast lain these fifty years rotting in thy sin, dost thou think now to be saved? that the blood of Christ shall save thee?" O, said Mr. Bilney, what preaching of Christ is this! If I had heard no other preaching than this, what had become of me? No, no, old sinners or young sinners, great or small sinners, are not to be beaten off from Christ, but encouraged to repentance and faith; for who knows but the bowels of mercy may yearn at last upon one that hath all along rejected it? This thief, a few hours before he died, was as unlikely ever to receive mercy as any person in the world could be.

But surely we have no encouragement to neglect the present season of mercy, because God may show mercy hereafter. Many, I know, have hardened themselves in ways of sin, by this example of mercy. But what God did at this time for this man, cannot be expected to be done ordinarily: for,

1. God hath vouchsafed *us* the ordinary and stated *means of grace*, which this sinner had not; and therefore we cannot expect such extraordinary and unusual conversion as he had. This poor creature probably never heard one sermon preached by Christ, or any of his apostles: he lived the life of a highwayman, and concerned not himself about religion. But we have Christ preached freely and constantly in our assemblies: we have line upon line, precept upon precept: and when God affords the ordinary preaching of the Gospel, he doth not use to work wonders. When Israel was in the wilderness, then God gave them bread from heaven, and clave the rocks to give them drink; but when they came to Canaan, where they had the ordinary means of subsistence, the manna ceased.

2. Such a conversion as this may not be ordinarily expected by any man, because *such circumstances will never occur again*. It is possible, if Christ were to die again, and thou to be crucified with him, thou mightest receive thy conversion in such a miraculous and extraordinary way; but Christ dies no more; such a day as that will never come again. Mr. Fenner, in his excellent discourse upon this point, tells us, that as this was an extraordinary time, Christ being now to be installed in his kingdom, and crowned with glory and honor; so extraordinary things were now done; as when kings are crowned, the streets are richly adorned, the conduits run with wine, and great malefactors are pardoned, for then they show their royal munificence and bounty; it is the day of the gladness of their

hearts. But let a man come at another time to the conduits, he shall find no wine, but ordinary water. Let a man be in the jail at another time, and he may be hanged; yea, and have no reason but to expect and prepare for it. What Christ did now for this man, was at an extraordinary time.

3. Such a conversion as this may not ordinarily be expected, for as such circumstances will never occur again, so there will never more be *the same reason* for such a conversion. Christ converted him upon the cross, to give an instance of his Divine power at that time, when it was almost wholly clouded; as in that day the Divinity of Christ broke forth in other miracles; the preternatural eclipse of the sun, the great earthquake, the rending of the rocks and vail of the temple; all, to give evidence of the Divinity of Christ, and prove him to be the Son of God whom they crucified; but that is now sufficiently confirmed, and there will be no more occasion for miracles to prove it.

4. No one has reason to expect such a conversion that enjoys the ordinary means; because, though in this convert we have a pattern of what free grace can do, yet, as divines pertinently observe, it is a pattern *without a promise*; God has not added any promise to it, that ever he will do it for any other; and where we have not a promise to encourage our hope, our hope can avail but little.

INFERENCE 1. Let those that have found mercy in the evening of their life, admire the *extraordinary grace* that therein hath appeared to them. Oh that ever God should accept the bran, when Satan hath had the flour of thy days! The above named reverend author tells us of one Marcus Caius Victorius, a very aged man in the primitive times, who was converted from heathenism to christianity in his old age. He came to a minister, and told him he heartily owned and embraced the

christian faith. But neither the minister nor the church for a long time would trust him, from the unusualness of conversion at such an age. But after he had given them good evidence of its reality, there were acclamations and singing of psalms, the people every where crying, Marcus Caius Victorius is become a christian. This was written for a wonder! Oh! if God have wrought such wondrous salvation for you, what cause have you to do more for him than others! To appear to you at last, when so hardened by long custom in sin, that one might say, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Oh! what riches of mercy have appeared to you!

2. Let this convince and startle such, as *even to their grey hairs remain in an unconverted state*. Be-think yourselves, ye that are full of days, and full of sin, whose time is almost ended, and your great work not begun; who have but a few sands more in the glass to run, and then your conversion will be impossible: your sun is setting; your night is coming; the shadows of the evening are stretched out upon you; you have one foot in the grave. Oh think how sad a case you are in: God may do wonders, but they are not seen every day, for then they would cease to be wonders. O strive, strive, while you have a little time, and a few more helps and means; strive to get that work accomplished now that was never yet done; defer it no longer, you have delayed too long already. It may be you have been these sixty, seventy; or eighty years, beginning to live, about to change your practice; but hitherto you still continue the same. Do not you see how Satan has deceived and cheated you with vain purposes, till he has brought you to the very brink of the grave and hell? Oh it is time now to make a stand, pause a little where you are, and see to what he hath brought you. The Lord now at last give you an eye to see, and a heart to consider.

3. Let this be a call and caution to all *the young* to begin with God betimes, and take heed of delaying till the last, as many thousands have done, to their eternal ruin. Now is your time, if you desire to be in Christ; if you have any sense of the weight and worth of eternal things upon your hearts. I know your age is one that delights not in the serious thoughts of death and eternity: you are more inclined to enjoy your pleasures and leave these serious matters to old age; but let me persuade you against that, by these considerations.

Oh seek religion *now*, because this is the moulding age. Now your hearts are tender, and your affections flowing: now is the time when you are most likely to be wrought upon.

Now, because this is the freest part of your time. It is with the morning of life, as with the morning of the day: if a man have business to be done, let him take the morning for it; for in the after-part of the day a hurry of business comes on, so that you either forget it, or want opportunity for it.

Now, because your life is immediately uncertain; you are not certain that ever you shall attain the years of your fathers: there are graves in the church-yard just of your length, and skulls of all sorts and sizes in Golgotha, as the Jews' proverb is.

Now, because God will not spare you on account of your youth, if you die without an interest in Christ.

Now, because your life will be the more eminently useful, and serviceable to God, when you know him betimes, and early begin his service. Augustin repented, and so have many thousands since, that he began so late, and knew God no sooner.

Now, because your whole life will be happier, if the morning of it is dedicated to the Lord. The first fruits sanctify the whole harvest: this will have a sweet influence upon all your days, whatever changes, straits, or troubles you may meet.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FOURTH SAYING OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—

"MY GOD, MY GOD," &c.

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. 27: 46.

These are words that might rend the hardest heart: it is the voice of the Son of God in an agony: his sufferings were great, very great before, but never in such extremity as now; when this heaven-rending and heart-melting outcry broke from him upon the cross, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" In which observe,

1. The time when it was uttered was "about the ninth hour," or about three in the afternoon. For as the Jews reckoned the hours of the day from six in the morning, their ninth hour answered to our third in the afternoon. And this is particularly marked by the evangelists, to show us how long Christ hung in distress upon the cross, both in soul and body, which at least was full three hours: towards the end whereof his soul was so distressed and overwhelmed, that he uttered this doleful cry in his bitter anguish.

2. The manner of the complaint. It is not of the cruel tortures he felt in his body, nor of the scoffs and reproaches of his name; they were all swallowed up in the sufferings within, as the river is swallowed up in the sea, or the lesser flame in the greater. He seems to neglect all these, and only complains of what was more burdensome than ten thousand crosses; even his Father's deserting him, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is a more inward trouble that burdens him, and darkens his spirit: the hidings of God's face,

an affliction to which he was totally a stranger until now.

3. The manner in which he uttered his sad complaint, was with a remarkable vehemency: "he cried with a loud voice," not like a dying man, in whom nature was spent, but as one full of vigor, life, and sense. He stirred up the whole power of nature when he made this grievous outcry. There is in it also an emphatical reduplication, which shows with what vehemency it was uttered; "My God, my God." Nay, to increase the force and vehemency of this complaint, here is an affectionate interrogation, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" It is as if he were surprised by the strangeness of this affliction: and rousing up himself with an unusual vehemency, turns himself to the Father, and cries, Why so, my Father? Oh what dost thou mean by this? What! hide that face from me that was never hid before! What! hide it from me now, in the depth of my other torments and sorrows! O what new, what strange things are these! Hence,

God, to heighten the sufferings of Christ to the uttermost, forsook him in the time of his greatest distress, to the unspeakable affliction and anguish of his soul.

This proposition shall be considered in respect to the desertion itself; the design or end of it; and its effect and influence on Christ.

I. *The desertion itself.* Divine desertion, generally considered, is God's withdrawing himself from any, not as to his essence, for that fills heaven and earth, and constantly remains the same; but as to the manifestation of his favor, grace, and love: when these are gone, God is said to be gone. Devils and the damned are absolutely and for ever forsaken of God. It is in another sense that he sometimes forsakes his dearest children, that is, he removes all sweet manifestations of his favor and love for a time. This desertion of Christ by his Father, was,

1. A very *sad* desertion, such as was never in all respects experienced by any, nor can be to the end of the world. All his other sufferings were but small to this; they bore upon his body, this upon his soul; they came from the hands of vile men, this from the hands of his Father. He suffered both in body and soul; but the sufferings of his soul were the very soul of his sufferings. Under all his other sufferings he opened not his mouth; but this touched the quick, so that he could not but cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

2. It was a *penal* desertion, inflicted on him as a satisfaction for those sins of ours which deserved that God should forsake us for ever, as the damned are forsaken by him. As there lies a twofold misery upon the damned in hell, namely, pain of sense, and pain of loss; so upon Christ answerably, there was not only an impression of wrath, but also a subtraction or withdrawment of all sensible favor and love.

3. It was a *real*, not fictitious desertion. He doth not personate a deserted soul, and speak as if God had withdrawn the comfortable sense and influence of his love from him; but the thing was so indeed. The Godhead restrained and kept back, for this time, all its joys, comforts, and sense of love from the manhood. This bitter doleful outcry of Christ gives evidence enough of its reality.

4. This desertion took place in *the time of Christ's greatest need*. His Father forsook him at that time, when all earthly comforts had forsaken him, and all outward evils had broken in together upon him; when men, yea, the best of men stood afar off, and none but barbarous enemies were about him. When pain and shame, and all miseries weighed him down; then, to complete and fill up his suffering, God stands afar off too.

5. It was such a desertion as left him only to *the sup-*

ports of his faith. He had nothing now to rest upon but his Father's covenant and promise. And indeed, the faith of Christ manifested itself in these very words of complaint in the text. For though all comfortable sights of God and sense of love were obstructed, yet you see his soul still cleaves to God. His faith laid hold on God, "Eli, Eli:" "My God, my God;" thou, with whom is infinite and everlasting strength; thou that hast hitherto supported my manhood, and according to thy promise upheld thy servant; what! wilt thou now forsake me? My God, I lean upon thee. To these supports and refuges of faith this desertion shut up Christ: by these things he stood, when all other visible and sensible comforts shrunk away, both from his soul and body.

II. Consider *the designs and ends* of Christ's desertion, which were principally satisfaction and sanctification. *Satisfaction* for those sins of ours which deserved that we should be totally and everlastingly forsaken of God. This is the desert of every sin, and the damned do feel it, and shall to all eternity. God is gone from them for ever: not essentially; the just God is with them still, the God of power is still with them, the avenging God is ever with them; but the merciful God is gone, and gone for ever. And thus would he have withdrawn himself from every soul that sinned, had not Christ borne that punishment for us in his own soul. If he had not cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" we must have howled out this hideous complaint in the lowest hell for ever, "O righteous God, thou hast for ever forsaken me."

And as satisfaction was designed in this desertion of Christ, so also was *the sanctification of every desertion of the saints.* For he having been forsaken before us, and for us, whenever God forsakes us, that very forsaking is sanctified, and thereby turned into a mercy to

believers. Hence are all the precious fruits and effects of our desertions: such as the earnest exciting of the soul to prayer, Psa. 77:2; 88:1-9; fortifying the tempted soul against sin; reviving former experiences; Psa. 77:5; enhancing the value of the Divine presence with the soul, and teaching it to hold Christ faster than ever before. These, and many more, are the precious effects of sanctified desertion; but how many or how good soever these effects are, they all owe themselves to Jesus Christ, as their Author; who, for our sakes, would pass through this sad and dark state, that we might find in it such blessings.

III. Consider *the effects and influence* of this desertion upon the spirit of Christ. It did not drive him to despair, yet it even amazed him, and almost swallowed up his soul in the deeps of trouble and consternation. This cry is a cry from the deeps, from a soul oppressed even to death. Let but five particulars be weighed, and you will say, never was there any darkness like this; no sorrow like Christ's sorrow in this deserted state.

1. This was *a new thing to Christ*, such as he never was acquainted with before. From all eternity until now there had been constant and wonderful outpourings of love, delight, and joy, from the bosom of the Father into his bosom. He never missed his Father before; never saw a frown or a veil upon that blessed face before. This made it a heavy burden indeed.

2. As it was a new thing, and therefore the more amazing, so it was *a great thing to Christ*; so great, that he scarce knew how to support it. Had it not been a great trial indeed, so great a spirit as his would not have so drooped under it, and made so sad a complaint of it. It was so sharp, so heavy an affliction to his soul, that it caused him, who was meek under all other sufferings as a lamb, to roar under this like a lion; for so much those words of Christ signify; "My God, my

God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from the voice of my roaring?" Psalm 22 : 1.

3. It was, too, a burden laid on *in the time of his greatest distress*; when his body was in tortures, and all about him was full of horror and darkness. He suffered this desertion at a time when he never had such need of Divine supports and comforts.

4. So heavy was this pressure upon Christ's soul, that in all probability it *hastened his death*. It was not usual for crucified persons to expire so soon; and those that were crucified with him were both alive after Christ's spirit was gone. Some have hung more than a day and a night, some two full days and nights, in those torments alive; but never did any feel inwardly what Christ felt. He bore it till the ninth hour—then makes a fearful outcry and dies.

INFERENCE 1. Did God forsake Christ upon the cross as a punishment to him for our sins? Then as often as we have sinned, so oft *have we deserved to be forsaken of God*. This is the just recompense and desert of sin. And, indeed, here lies the principal evil of sin, that it separates between God and the soul. By sin we depart from God, and, as a due punishment of it, God departs from us. This will be the dismal sentence in the last day, "Depart from me, ye cursed." Matt. 25. Thenceforth there will be a gulf fixed between God and them. Luke, 19 : 20. No more friendly intercourse with the blessed God for ever. Beware, sinners, how you say to God now, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," lest he say, "Depart from me," $\bar{\jmath}$ shall never see my face.

2. Did Christ never make such a sad complaint and outcry till God hid his face from him? Then the hiding of God's face is certainly *the greatest misery* that can possibly befall a gracious soul in this world. When they scourged, buffeted, and smote Christ, yea, when

they nailed him to the tree, he opened not his mouth ; but when his Father hid his face from him, he cried out ; yea, his voice was the voice of roaring : this was more to him than a thousand crucifyings. And, surely, as it was to Christ, so is it to all gracious souls, the saddest stroke, the heaviest burden they ever felt. When David forbade Absalom to come to Jerusalem to see his father, he complains, " Wherefore am I come from Geshur, if I may not see the king's face ?" 2 Sam. 14 : 32. So doth the gracious soul bemoan itself ; Wherefore am I redeemed, called, and reconciled, if I may not see the face of my God ?

It is said of Tully, when he was banished from Italy, and of Demosthenes, when he was banished from Athens, that they wept every time they looked towards their own country : and, is it strange that a poor deserted believer should mourn every time he looks heaven-ward ? Say, christian, did the tears never trickle down thy cheeks when thou lookedst toward heaven, and couldst not see the face of thy God as at other times ? If two dear friends cannot part for a season, but that parting must be in a shower, blame not the saints if they sigh and mourn bitterly when the Lord, who is the life of their life, depart, though but for a season ; for if God depart, their sweetest enjoyment on earth, the very crown of all their comforts is gone : and what will a king take in exchange for his crown ? What can recompense a saint for the loss of his God ? Indeed, if they had never seen the Lord, or tasted the incomparable sweetness of his presence, it were another matter ; but the darkness which follows the sweetest light of his countenance is double darkness.

And that which doth not a little increase the horror of this darkness is, that when their souls are thus benighted, and the sun of their comfort is set ; then doth Satan, like the wild beasts of the desert, creep out of his

den, and roar upon them with hideous temptations. Surely this is a sad state, and deserves tender pity! Pity is a debt due to the distressed, and the world shows not a greater distress than this. If ever you have been in trouble of this kind, you will never slight others in the same case: nay, one end of God's exercising you with troubles of this nature, is to teach you compassion towards others. Do they not cry to you, as Job, 19 : 21, "Have pity, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me." Draw forth bowels of mercy and tender compassion to them; for, either you have been, or are, or may be in the same case. However, if men do not, most certainly Christ, who hath felt it before them, and for them, will pity them.

3. Did God really forsake Jesus Christ upon the cross? Then from the desertion of Christ singular *consolation* springs up to the people of God; yea, manifold consolation. Christ's desertion is *the preventive* of your final desertion; because he was forsaken for a time, you shall not be forsaken for ever; for he was forsaken for you; and God's forsaking him, though but for a few hours, is equivalent to his forsaking you for ever. It is every way as much for the dear Son of God, the delight of his soul, to be forsaken of God for a time; as if such a poor inconsiderable thing as thou art should be cast off to eternity. Now this being equivalent, and borne in thy room, must needs give thee the highest security in the world that God will never finally withdraw from thee: had he intended to have done so, Christ had never made such a sad outcry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Moreover, this sad desertion of Christ becomes a comfortable *pattern* to poor deserted souls in divers respects; and the proper business of such souls, at such times, is to cye it believingly, in these six respects:

Though God deserted Christ, yet at the same time he *powerfully supported* him: his omnipotent arms were under him, though his face was hid from him: he had not indeed his smiles, but he had his supports. So, christian, just so shall it be with thee: thy God may turn away his face, but he will not pluck away his arm.

Though God deserted Christ, yet *he deserted not God*: his Father forsook him, but he could not forsake his Father, but followed him with this cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And is it not even so with you? God goes from your soul, but you cannot go from him. No, your heart is mourning after the Lord, seeking him carefully with tears; complaining of his absence as the greatest evil in this world.

Though God forsook Christ, yet he *returned to him again*. It was but for a time, not for ever. In this also doth his desertion parallel yours. God may, for wise and holy reasons, hide his face from you, but not as it is hid from the damned, who shall never see it again. This cloud will pass away; this night shall have a bright morning: "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit shall fail before me, and the souls which I have made."

Though God forsook Christ, yet at that time he could *justify God*. "O my God, (saith he,) I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent: but thou art holy." Psalm 22: 2, 3. Is not thy spirit, according to its measure, framed like Christ's in this; canst thou not say, even when he writes bitter things against thee, he is a holy, faithful, and good God for all this? There is not one drop of injustice in all the sea of my sorrows. Though he condemn me, I must and will justify him.

Though God took from Christ all visible and sensible comfort, inward as well as outward; yet Christ subsisted *by faith*, in the absence of them all: his desertion

put him upon the acting of his faith. "My God, my God," are words of faith; the words of one that wholly depends upon his God: and is it not so with you? Sense of love is gone, sweet sights of God hid in a dark cloud: well, what then? must thy hands presently hang down, and thy soul give up all its hope? What! is there no faith to relieve in this case? Yes, yes, and blessed be God for faith. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light; let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God." Isaiah, 50: 10.

Christ was deserted *a little before the glorious morning* of light and joy dawned upon him. It was a little, a very little while, after this sad cry, before he triumphed gloriously: and so it may be with you; heaviness may endure for a night, but joy and gladness will come in the morning.

But, reader, perhaps you are saying, I fear I am absolutely and finally forsaken. Why so? Do you find the characters of such a desertion upon your soul? Examine and tell me, whether you find a heart willing to forsake God? Is it indifferent to you whether God ever return again? Is there no mourning, melting, or thirsting after the Lord? Indeed, if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever; but can you do so? Oh, no, let him do what he will, I am resolved to wait for him, cleave to him, mourn after him, though I have no present comfort from him, no assurance of my interest in him; yet will I not exchange my poor weak hopes for all the good in this world.

Again, you say God hath forsaken you, but hath he taken away from your soul all conscientious tenderness of sin, so that now you can sin freely, and without regret? If so, it is a sad token indeed: tell me, soul, if thou indeed judgest God will never return in loving-

kindness to thee any more; why dost thou not then give thyself over to the pleasures of sin, and draw thy comforts from the creature, since thou canst have no comfort from thy God? Oh, no, I cannot do so; even if I die in darkness and sorrow, I will never do so: my soul is as full of fear and hatred of sin as ever, though empty of joy and comfort. Surely these are no tokens of a soul finally abandoned by its God.

4. Did God forsake his own Son upon the cross? Then the dearest of God's people *may, for a time, be forsaken* of their God. Think it not strange, when you, that are the children of light, meet with darkness, yea, and walk in it; neither charge God foolishly, nor say he deals hardly with you. You see what befell Jesus Christ, whom his soul delighted in. It is doubtless your concern to expect and prepare for days of darkness. You have heard the doleful cry of Christ, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" You know how it was with Job, David, Heman, Asaph, and many others, the dear servants of God, what heart-melting lamentations they made upon this account; and are you better than they? Oh, prepare for spiritual troubles; I am sure you do enough every day to involve you in darkness. Now, if at any time this trial befall you, mind these two reasonable admonitions, and lay them up for such a time.

Exercise *the faith of adherence*, cleave to God, when you have lost the faith of evidence. When God takes away that, he leaves this: that is necessary to the comfort, this to the life of his people. It is sweet to live with clear views of your interest in Christ; but if they be gone believe and rely on God. Stay yourself on your God when you have no light. Isa. 50: 10. Drop this anchor in the dark, and do not reckon all gone when evidence is gone: never reckon yourselves undone whilst you can adhere to your God.

Take *the right method* to recover the sweet light

which you have sinned away from your souls. Do not go about from one to another complaining; nor yet sit down desponding under your burden. But,

Search diligently after the cause of God's withdrawal: urge him importunately by prayer, to show thee wherefore he contends with thee. Job, 10 : 2. Say, Lord, what evil is it which thou so rebukest? I beseech thee show me the cause of thine anger: have I grieved thy Spirit in this thing, or in that? Was it my neglect of duty, or my formality in duties? Was I not thankful for the sense of thy love, when it was shed abroad in my heart? O Lord, why is it thus with me?

Humble your soul before the Lord for every evil you shall be convinced of: tell him, it pierces your heart that you have so displeased him, and that it shall be a caution to you, whilst you live, never to return again to folly: invite him again to your soul, and mourn after the Lord till you have found him. If you seek him, he will be found of you. 2 Chron. 15 : 2.

Wait on in the use of means till Christ return. Oh be not discouraged; though he tarry, wait you for him; for, blessed are all they that wait for him.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FIFTH SAYING OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—"I THIRST."

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."—John, 19 : 28.

These words were spoken by Christ upon the cross, a little before he bowed the head and yielded up the ghost. They are recorded only by the evangelist John.

1. The person complaining is Jesus. This is a clear evidence that it was no common suffering: great and resolute spirits will not otherwise complain.

2. The affliction or suffering of which he complains is thirst. His soul thirsted, in vehement desires and longings, to accomplish and finish the great and difficult work he had undertaken; and his body thirsted, by reason of those unparalleled agonies it endured. It was the latter, the proper natural thirst here intended, when he said, "I thirst." Now, "this natural thirst," of which he complains, "is the raging of the appetite for moist nourishment, arising from the scorching up of the parts of the body for want of moisture." And, amongst all the pains and afflictions of the body, there can scarcely be named a greater and more intolerable one than extreme thirst. The most mighty and valiant have stooped under it. Samson, after all his conquests and victories, "was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant; and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" Judges, 15: 18. Hence, Isa. 41: 17, thirst is used to express the most afflicted state: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them;" that is, when my people are in extreme necessity, under extraordinary pressure and distress, I will be with them, to supply and relieve them. Thirst causes a most painful compression of the heart, when the body, like a sponge, sucks and draws for moisture, and there is none. And this may be occasioned either by long abstinence from drink, or by the laboring and exhaustion of the spirits under grievous agonies and extreme tortures.

Now, though we find not that Christ had tasted a drop since he sat with his disciples at the table—after that no more refreshment for him in this world—yet

this was not the cause of his raging thirst: it is to be ascribed to the extreme sufferings which he had so long conflicted with, both in his soul and body. These preyed upon him, and drank up his very spirits.

3. The time when he thus complained was "when all things were now accomplished," that is, when all things were even ready to be accomplished in his death; a little, a very little while before he expired, when the pangs of death began to be strong upon him: and so it was both a sign of death at hand, and of his love to us, which was stronger than death, and would not complain sooner, because he would admit of no relief, nor take the least refreshment until he had done his work:

4. The design and end of his complaint was, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," that is, that it might appear, for the satisfaction of our faith, that whatsoever had been predicted by the prophets, was exactly accomplished, even to a circumstance, in him. Now it was foretold of him, "They gave me gall for my meat, and, in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink," Psalm 69 : 21; and herein it was verified. Hence,

Such were the agonies of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, as drank up his very spirits, and made him cry, "I thirst."

"If I should live a thousand years, and every day die a thousand times the same death for Christ that he once died for me, yet all this would be nothing to the sorrows Christ endured in his death." At this time the Bridegroom Christ might have borrowed the words of his spouse, the church, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Lam. 1 : 12.

The sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross were twofold, namely, his corporeal, and spiritual

sufferings. We shall consider them distinctly, and show how both these meeting upon him in their fulness and extremity, must drink up his spirits, and make him cry, "I thirst."

I. His *corporeal* and more external sufferings were exceedingly great, acute, and extreme; for they were sharp, universal, continual, and unrelieved by any inward comfort.

1. They were *sharp* sufferings; his body was racked in those parts where sense more eminently dwells—in the hands and feet; "They pierced my hands and my feet." Ps. 22: 16. Now Christ, by reason of his exact and excellent temper of body, had doubtless more quick, tender, and delicate senses than other men. Sense is, in some, more delicate and tender, and in others dull and blunt, according to the temperament and vivacity of the body and spirits; but in none as it was in Christ, whose body neither sin nor sickness had any way enfeebled or dulled.

2. His pains also were *universal*, not affecting one, but every part; they seized every member; from head to foot, no member was free from torture: for, as his head was wounded with thorns, his back with bloody lashes, his hands and feet with nails, so every other part was stretched and distended beyond its natural length, by hanging upon that cruel engine of torment, the cross. And as every member, so every particular sense was afflicted.

3. These universal pains were *continual*, not by fits, but without any intermission. He had not a moment's ease by the cessation of pain; wave came upon wave, one grief upon another, till all God's waves and billows had gone over him. To be in extremity of pain, and that without a moment's intermission, will quickly overcome the stoutest nature in the world.

4. His pains were altogether *unrelieved*. If a man

have sweet comforts flowing into his soul from God, they allay the pains of the body : this made the martyrs shout amidst the flames. Yes, even inferior comforts and delights of the mind will greatly relieve the oppressed body. But now Christ had no relief this way ; not a drop of comfort came from heaven into his soul : but, on the contrary, his soul was filled up with grief ; so that instead of relieving, it increased unspeakably the burden of the outward man. For,

II. Let us consider these *inward sufferings of his soul*, how great they were, and how quickly they spent his natural strength, and turned his moisture into the drought of summer.

1. His soul felt *the wrath of an angry God*, which was terribly impressed upon it. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion ; but what is that to the wrath of God ? "Who can stand before his indignation ? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger ? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." Nahum, 1 : 6. Had not the strength that supported Christ been greater than that of rocks, this wrath had overwhelmed and ground him to powder.

2. And as it was the wrath of God that lay upon his soul, so it was the pure wrath of God, *without any alloy or mixture* : not one drop of comfort came from heaven or earth ; all the ingredients in his cup were bitter : "For God spared not his own Son." Rom. 8 : 32. Had Christ been abated or spared, we had not.

3. Yea, *all the wrath of God* was poured out upon him, even to the last drop ; so that there is not one drop reserved for his redeemed to feel. Christ's cup was deep and large, it contained all the fury and wrath of an infinite God ! and yet he drank it up : he bore it all.

III. It is evident that such extreme sufferings, meeting upon him, must *exhaust his inmost spirits*, and make him cry, "I thirst." For let us consider,

1. What mere *external pains* and outward afflictions can do. These prey upon and consume our spirits. So David complains, "When thou with rebukes correctest man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away as a moth;" Ps. 39 : 11 ; that is, as a moth frets and consumes the most strong and well-wrought garment without any noise, so afflictions waste and wear out the strongest bodies. They make the firmest constitution like a decayed garment : they shrivel and dry up the most vigorous and flourishing body, and make it like a bottle in the smoke. Ps. 119 : 83.

2. Consider what mere *internal troubles* of the soul can do upon the strongest body ; they spend its strength and devour the spirits. So Solomon speaks, Prov. 17 : 22, "A broken spirit drieth the bones," that is, it consumes the very marrow with which they are moistened. So Psa. 32 : 3, 4, "My bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy on me : my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." What a spectacle of pity did Francis Spira become, merely through the anguish of his spirit ! A spirit sharpened with such troubles, like a keen knife, cuts through the sheath. Certainly, whoever hath had any acquaintance with trouble of soul, knows, by sad experience, how, like an internal flame, it feeds and preys upon the very spirits, so that the strongest stoop and sink under it. But,

3. When *outward bodily pains meet with inward spiritual troubles*, and both in extremity come in one day, how soon must the firmest body fail and waste away ! Now strength fails apace, and nature must sink under the load. The soul and body sympathize with each other under trouble, and mutually relieve each other. If the body be sick and full of pain, the spirit supports, cheers, and relieves it by reason and resolution all that it can ; and if the spirit be afflicted, the body sympathi-

zes and helps to bear up the spirit: but if the one be overladen with strong pains, more than it can bear, and calls for aid from the other; and the other be oppressed with intolerable anguish, and cries out under a burden greater than it can bear, so that it can contribute no help, but instead thereof, adds to the burden, which before could not be borne; then nature must fail, and the friendly union between soul and body suffer a dissolution by such an extraordinary pressure. So it was with Christ, when outward and inward sorrows met in one day in their extremity upon him. Hence the bitter cry, "I thirst."

INFERENCE 1. How *horrid a thing is sin!* How great is that evil of evils, which deserves that all this should be inflicted and suffered for its expiation! The sufferings of Christ for sin give us the true account and fullest representation of its evil. Oh then, let not thy vain heart slight sin, as if it were but a small thing! If ever God show thee the face of sin in this glass, thou wilt say, there is no other such horrid representation to be made to man. Fools make a mock at sin, but wise men tremble at it.

2. How afflictive and intolerable are *inward troubles!* Did Christ complain so sadly under them, and cry, "I thirst?" Surely then they are not so light as some regard them. If they so scorched the very heart of Christ, preyed upon his very spirits, and turned his moisture into the drought of summer, they should not be slighted, as they are by some. The Lord Jesus was fitted to bear and suffer as strong troubles as ever befell the nature of man, and he did bear all other troubles with admirable patience; but when it came to this, when the flames of God's wrath scorched his soul, then he cries, "I thirst."

David's heart was, for courage, as the heart of a lion; but when God exercised him with inward troubles for sin, then he roars out under the anguish of it: "I am

feeble, and sore broken ; I have roared, by reason of the disquietness of my heart. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me : as for the light of mine eyes, it is also gone from me." Psa. 38 : 8, 10. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Many have declared that all the torments in the world are nothing to the wrath of God upon the conscience. What is the worm that never dies but the sting of a guilty conscience? This worm feeds upon and gnaws the vital, most sensible part of man ; and is the principal part of hell's horror. In bodily pains, a man may be relieved by proper medicines ; here nothing but "the blood of sprinkling" relieves. In outward pains, the body may be supported by the resolution and courage of the mind ; here the mind itself is wounded. Oh let none despise these troubles, they are most intolerable !

3. How *dreadful a place is hell*, where this cry is heard for ever, "I thirst!" There the wrath of the great and terrible God flames upon the damned for ever, in which they thirst, and none relieves them. If Christ complained, "I thirst," when he had conflicted but a few hours with the wrath of God ; what is the state of those who are to grapple with it for ever? When millions of years are gone, ten thousand millions more are coming on. There is an everlasting thirst in hell, and it admits of no relief. Think of this, ye that now add drunkenness to thirst, who wallow in all sensual pleasures, and drown nature in excess of luxury. Remember what Dives said in Luke, 16 : 24 ; "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame." If thirst in the extremity of it be now so insufferable, what is that thirst which is infinitely beyond this in measure, and never shall be relieved? Say not it is hard that God should deal thus with his poor creatures. You

will not think so, if you consider to what he exposed his own dear Son, when sin was but imputed to him; and what that man deserves to feel, that hath not only merited hell, but by refusing Christ, the remedy, the hottest place in hell.

4. How should *nice and wanton appetites be reproved!* The Son of God wanted a draught of cold water to relieve him, and could not have it. God hath given us a variety of refreshments to relieve us, and we despise them. We have better things than a cup of water to refresh and delight us when we are thirsty, and yet are not pleased. Oh that this complaint of Christ on the cross, "I thirst," were but believingly considered; it would make you bless God for what you now despise, and beget contentment in you for the meanest mercies and most common favors. Did the Lord of all things cry, "I thirst," and had nothing in his extremity to comfort him; and dost thou, who hast a thousand times forfeited all temporal as well as spiritual mercies, contemn and slight the common bounties of Providence? What! despise a cup of water, who deservest nothing but a cup of wrath from the hand of the Lord! Oh lay it to heart, and hence learn contentment with any thing.

5. Did Jesus Christ upon the cross cry, "I thirst?" Then believers shall *never thirst eternally*. Their thirst shall be certainly satisfied. So it is promised, "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." Matt. 5:6. In heaven they shall depend no more upon the stream, but drink from the overflowing fountain. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures: for with thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see light." Psalm 36:8. There they shall drink and praise, and praise and drink for evermore; all their desires shall be filled with complete satisfaction. Oh how desirable

a state is heaven upon this account! and how should we be restless till we come thither, as the thirsty traveler is until he meet the cool, refreshing spring he seeks! This present state is a state of thirsting; that to come, of refreshment and satisfaction. Some drops indeed are received from the fountain by faith, but they quench not the believer's thirst; rather, like water sprinkled on the fire, they make it burn the more: but there the thirsty soul hath enough.

6. Did Christ in the extremity of his sufferings cry, "I thirst?" Then how great is *the love of God to sinners*, who for their sakes exposed the Son of his love to such extreme sufferings! Oh the height, length, depth, and breadth of that love which passeth knowledge! The love of God to Jesus Christ was infinitely beyond all the love we have for our children: and yet, as dearly as he loved him, he was content to expose him to all this, rather than we should perish eternally.

And it should never be forgotten that Jesus Christ was exposed to these extremities of sorrow for sinners, the greatest of sinners, who deserved not one mercy from God. This commends the love of God singularly to us, in that "whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5: 1. Thus the love of God in Jesus Christ still rises higher and higher in every view of it. Admire, adore, and be transported with the thoughts of this love! Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SIXTH SAYING OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—"IT IS FINISHED."

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."—John, 19:30.

"It is finished." This is the sixth remarkable word of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, uttered as a triumphant shout when he saw the glorious issue of all his sufferings at hand.

It is but one word in the original; but in that one word is contained the sum of all joy, the very spirit of all divine consolation. The ancient Greeks valued themselves in being able to speak much in little; "to give a sea of matter in a drop of language." What they only sought, is here found. "It is finished"—the great work of man's redemption is done; and therein all the types and prefigurations that shadowed it forth are fulfilled. The completing of redemption is the principal, and the fulfilling of all the types the collateral and secondary sense implied. Yet it must be observed, that when we say Christ finished redemption by his death, the meaning is not that it was by his death alone; for his abode in the grave, resurrection, and ascension, had all their joint influence therein. According, then, to the principal scope of the passage, we observe that,

Jesus Christ hath perfected and completely finished the great work of redemption, committed to him by God the Father.

To this great truth the apostle gives full testimony, "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Heb. 10:14. And to the same purpose Christ says, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." John, 17:4.

We shall inquire what this work was; how Christ finished it; and what is the evidence that it is completed.

I. *What was the work* which Christ finished by his death?

It was the fulfilling of the whole law of God in our room, and for our redemption, as a sponsor or surety for us. The law is glorious; the holiness of God is engraven or stamped upon every part of it; "From his right hand went a fiery law." Deut. 33:2. The jealousy of the Lord watched over every point and tittle of it, for his dreadful and glorious name was upon it; it cursed every one that continued not in all things contained therein. Gal. 3:10. Two things, therefore, were necessarily required in him that should perfectly fulfil it; perfection in his character, and perfection in his work.

1. *Perfection in his character.* He that wanted this, could never say, "It is finished." Perfect working proceeds from a perfect Being. That he might therefore finish this great work of obedience, and therein the glorious design of our redemption; lo! in what shining and perfect holiness was he produced! "That holy thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Luke, 1:35. And indeed "such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Heb. 7:26. So that the law could have no exception against his person; nay, it was never so honored as in having such a perfect and excellent person as Christ stand at its bar and give it due reparation.

2. There must be also *a perfection of work and obedience* before it could be said, "It is finished." This was in Christ: he continued in all things written in the law, to do them: he fulfilled all righteousness, as it behoved him to do. Matt. 3:15. He did all that was required to be done, and suffered all that was requisite to be suffered: he did and suffered all that was commanded or threatened, in such perfection of obedience, both active

and passive, that the pure eye of Divine justice saw no defect in it; and so finished the work his Father gave him to do. This was a necessary, a difficult, and a precious work.

It was necessary in respect to *the Father*. I do not mean that God was under any necessity, from his nature, of redeeming us; for our redemption is an act of the free counsel of God; but when God had once determined to redeem and save poor sinners by Jesus Christ, then it became necessary that the counsel of God should be fulfilled: "To do whatsoever thy hand and counsel had before determined to be done." Acts, 4 : 28.

It was necessary with respect to *Christ*, by the precious compact between the Father and him. Therefore it is said by Christ, "Truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined." Luke, 22 : 22; that is, as it was fore-agreed and covenanted. Under the necessity of fulfilling his engagement to the Father, he came into the world; and being come, he turns not from it. "I must work the works of him that sent me." John, 9 : 3.

Yea, and it was no less necessary upon *our account* that this work should be finished; for, had not Christ finished this work, sin had quickly finished all our lives, comforts, and hopes. Without the finishing of this work, not a son or daughter of Adam could ever have seen the face of God. Therefore it is said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John, 3 : 14, 15.

As it was necessary this work should be finished, so the finishing of it was *difficult*: it cost many a groan, and many a tear, before Christ could say, "It is finished." All the angels in heaven were not able, by their united strength, to lift that burden one inch from the ground, which Christ bore upon his shoulders, yea, and bare it away. How heavy a burden this was, appears in some

degree by his agony in the garden, and the bitter outcries he made upon the cross, which we have already considered.

It was also a most *precious* work which Christ finished by his death ; that work was done in few hours, which will be the matter of everlasting songs and triumph by angels and saints to all eternity. Oh it was a precious work ! The mercies that now flow from this fountain, such as justification, sanctification, adoption, are not to be estimated, besides the endless happiness and glory of the world to come, which it cannot enter into the heart of man to conceive. If the angels sang when the foundation-stone was laid, what shouts, what triumphs should there be among the saints, as this voice is heard, "It is finished!"

II. Let us inquire *in what manner* Jesus Christ finished this glorious work.

1. It was finished most *obediently*, "He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2 : 8. "His obedience was the obedience of a servant, though not servile obedience." So it was foretold of him before he entered upon his work, "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." Isa. 50 : 5.

2. As Christ finished it obediently, so he finished it *freely*. Freedom and obedience in acting are not at all opposite to, or exclusive of each other. Moses' mother nursed him in obedience to the command of Pharaoh's daughter, yet most freely for her own delight. So it is said of Christ, and that by his own mouth, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself : I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." John, 10 : 17, 18. He liked the work for the sake of the end to be accom-

plished. When he had a prospect of it from eternity, then were his delights with the sons of men: then he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth. Prov. 8: 30, 31. And when he came into the world, with what a full and free consent did his heart echo to the voice of his Father calling him to it! "Lo, I come: I delight to do thy will: thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40.

3. He also finished the work *diligently*; he was never idle wherever he was, but "went about doing good." Acts, 10: 38. Sometimes he was so intent upon his work that he "forgot to eat bread." John, 4: 30, 31. As the life of some men is but a diversion from one trifle to another, from one pleasure to another; so the whole life of Christ was spent between one work and another: never was a life so filled up with labor: the very moments of his time were all employed for God to finish this work.

4. He finished it *completely and fully*. All that was to be done by way of meritorious redemption is *fully done*; no hand can come after his; angels can add nothing to it. That is perfected to which nothing is wanting, and to which nothing can be added. Such is the work which our Lord Jesus Christ finished. Whatever the law demanded is perfectly paid; whatever a sinner needs, is perfectly obtained and purchased; nothing can be added to what he hath done; he put the last hand to it, when he said, "It is finished."

III. Let us consider *what evidence* we have that Christ so finished the work of redemption.

1. When Christ died, the work of redemption must be finished, inasmuch as the blood, as well as the obedience of Christ, was of *infinite value and efficacy*, sufficient to accomplish all the ends for which it was shed; when that therefore is actually shed, justice is fully paid, and, consequently, the souls for whom it is paid are fully redeemed from the curse.

2. It is apparent that Christ finished the work, by the discharge or *acquittance* God the Father gave him, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand. If Christ the sinner's surety, be, as such, discharged by God the creditor, then the debt is fully paid. Now Christ was justified and cleared, at his resurrection, from all charges and demands of justice; therefore it is said, 1 Tim. 3:16, that he was "justified in the Spirit," that is, openly discharged by that very act of the Godhead, his raising him from the dead. For when the grave was opened, and Christ arose, it was to him as the opening of the prison-doors, and setting a surety at liberty, who was confined for another man's debt. To the same sense Christ speaks of his ascension. The Spirit shall convince the world of righteousness; John, 16:10; that is, of a complete and perfect righteousness in me, imputable to sinners for their perfect justification. And whereby shall he convince and satisfy them that it is so? By this, "Because I go to the Father, and ye see me no more." There is a great deal of force and weight in those words, "because ye see me no more:" as if he had said, By this you shall be satisfied that I have fully and completely performed all righteousness, and that, by my active and passive obedience, I have so fully satisfied God for you, that you shall never be charged or condemned; because, when I go to heaven, I shall abide there in glory with my Father, and not be sent back again, as I should if any thing had been omitted by me. And this the apostle gives us also in plain words, "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Heb. 10:12-14. And what doth he infer from that, but the very truth before us, that "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified?"

3. It is evident Christ hath finished the work, by the blessed *effects of it upon all that believe* in him: for by

virtue of the completeness of Christ's work, finished by his death, their consciences are now pacified, and their souls, at death, actually received into glory; neither of which could be, if Christ had not in this world finished the work. If Christ had done his work imperfectly, he could not have given rest and tranquillity to the laboring and burdened souls that come to him, as now he doth. Matt. 11:28. Conscience would still be hesitating, trembling, and unsatisfied; and had he not finished his work, we could not have had entrance through the veil of his flesh into heaven, as all that believe in him have. Heb. 10:19, 20.

INFERENCE 1. Hath Christ perfected and completely finished all his work for us? How sweet a relief is this to them that believe in him against the defects and imperfections of all our services. There is nothing finished that we do: all our duties are imperfect. Oh there is much sin and vanity in the best of our duties: but here is the grand relief, and that which answers to all our doubts and fears upon that account; Jesus Christ hath finished all his work, though we can finish none of ours: and so, though we be defective, poor, imperfect creatures in ourselves, yet we are complete in him. Col. 2:9, 10. Though we cannot perfectly obey, or fulfil one command of the law, yet is "the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us that believe." Rom. 8:4. Christ's complete obedience makes us complete, and without fault before God. It is true, we ought to be humbled for our defects, and troubled for every failing in obedience; but we should not be discouraged, though multitudes of weaknesses be upon us, and many infirmities compass us about, in every duty: though we have no righteousness of our own; yet, of God, Christ "is made unto us righteousness;" and that righteousness is infinitely better than ours: instead of our own, we have his. Oh blessed be God for Christ's perfect righteousness!

2. Did Christ finish his work? How dangerous is it to *join any thing of our own to the righteousness of Christ*, in point of justification before God! Jesus Christ will never endure this; it reflects upon his work dishonorably: he will be all, or none, in our justification. If he have finished the work, what need of our additions? And if not, to what purpose are they? Can we finish that which Christ himself could not? But we would fain be sharing with him this honor, which he will never endure. Did he finish the work, and will he ever divide the glory and praise of it with us? No, no, Christ is no half Saviour. Oh it is a hard thing to bring these proud hearts to live upon Christ for righteousness. God humbles proud nature, by calling sinners wholly from their own righteousness to Christ for their justification.

3. Did Christ finish his work for us? then there can be no doubt but he will also finish his work *in us*. As he began the work of our redemption, and finished it; so "he that hath begun the good work in you, will also finish it" upon your souls. Phil. 1:6. Jesus Christ is not only called the author, but the finisher of our faith. Heb. 12:2. If he begin it, no doubt he will finish it. And indeed the finishing of his own work of redemption gives full evidence that he will finish his work of sanctification within us; and that because these two works of Christ have a respect and relation to each other; such a relation, that the work he finished by his own death, resurrection, and ascension, would be in vain to us, if the work of sanctification should not in like manner be finished. Therefore, as he presented a perfect sacrifice to God, and finished redemption; so will he present every one perfect and complete, for whom he offered up himself; for he will not lose the end of all his sufferings. To what purpose would his meritorious work be, without complete and full application? Therefore be not discouraged at defects and imperfections in

yourselves: be humbled for them, but not dejected: this is Christ's work as well as that: that work is finished, and so will this be.

4. Is Christ's work of redemption a complete and finished work? How excellent and comfortable is the method of *salvation by faith*! Surely the way of believing is the most excellent way in which a poor sinner can approach God; for it brings before him a complete, entire, perfect righteousness; which must be most honorable to God, as well as most comfortable to the soul that draws nigh to him. Oh how complete, finished, and perfect is the righteousness of Christ! the searching eye of the holy and jealous God can find no defect in it. Let God or conscience look upon it; turn it every way; view it on every side; thoroughly weigh and examine it; it will appear a pure, a perfect work, containing in it whatsoever is necessary for the reconciling of an angry God, or calming the distressed and perplexed soul. How pleasing then, and acceptable to God, must be that faith which presents so complete and excellent an atonement to him! Hence the acting of our faith upon Christ for righteousness, the approaches of faith to God with such an acceptable present, is called the work of God; "This is the work of God that ye believe." John, 6: 29. One act of faith pleases him more than if you should toil all your lives at the task of obedience to the law. As it is more for God's honor and thy comfort to pay all thou owest him at one payment, in one full sum, than to be paying by very small degrees, and never be able to make full payment, or see the bond cancelled; so this perfect work alone produces perfect peace.

5. Did Christ work, and work out all that God gave him to do, till he had finished his work? How necessary, then, is a *laborious working life* to all that call themselves christians! The life of Christ, you see, was a la-

borious life. Shall he work, and we slumber and sleep? Oh work, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Phil. 2:12.

Will any one say, But if Christ's work was complete, we may sit still? If he finished the work, nothing remains for us to do?

I answer. Nothing of that work which Christ did remains for you to do, but there is other work for you to do; yea, store of work lying upon your hands. You must work as well as Christ, though not for the same ends Christ did. He wrought all his life long, to work out a righteousness to justify you before God. But you must work to obey the commands of Christ, into whose right you are come by redemption: you must work to testify your thankfulness to Christ, for the work he finished for you: you must work, to glorify God by your obedience; "let your light so shine before men." For these, and divers other such ends and reasons, your life must be a working life. May God preserve all his people from the gross and vile opinions of antinomian libertines, who cry up grace and decry obedience.

Reader, be thou a follower of Christ, imitate thy pattern; yea, let me persuade thee, as ever thou hopest to prove thine interest in him, imitate him in such particulars as these that follow:

Christ began *early* to work for God; he employed the morning of his life, even the very beginning of it: "How is it (said he to his parents, when he was but a child about twelve years old) that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Reader, if the morning of thy life be not gone, Oh devote it to the work of God as Christ did: if it be, ply thy work the closer in the afternoon of thy life.

As Christ began early, so he *followed his work closely*; he was early up, and he wrought hard, so hard, that "he forgot to eat bread." John, 4:31, 32. So zealous

was he in his Father's work, that his friends thought he was beside himself. Mark, 3:21. So zealous, that "the zeal of God's house" consumed him.

Christ often thought upon *the shortness of his time*, and wrought diligently because he knew his working-time would be but little. "I must work the works of Him that sent me whilst it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work." John, 9:4. Oh in this be like Christ: rouse your heart to diligence. If a man have much to write, and is almost at the end of his paper, he will put much matter in a little room.

He did much work for God in a very *silent manner*: he labored diligently, but did not spoil his work, when he had wrought it, by vain ostentation. When he had expressed his charity in acts of mercy and bounty to men, he would humbly seal up the glory of it with this charge, "See ye tell no man." Matt. 8:4. He affected no popular air. Oh imitate your pattern; work hard for God, and let not pride blow upon it, when you have done. It is difficult for a man to do much, and not value himself too much for it.

Christ carried on his work for God *resolvedly*: no discouragements could beat him off, though never any work met more from first to last. How did scribes and pharisees, Jews, Gentiles, yea, devils set upon him, by persecutions, and reproaches, violent oppositions, and subtle temptations; yet, he goes on with his Father's work: he is deaf to all discouragements. So it was foretold of him, "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged." Isa. 42:4. Oh that more of this spirit of Christ were in his people: Oh that, in the strength of love to Christ, and zeal for the glory of God, you may pour out your hearts in his service, and, like a river, sweep down all discouragements before you.

He continued working while he continued living: his *life and labor ended together*: he fainted not in his

work : nay, the greatest work he did in this world, was his last. Oh be like Christ in this, be not weary of well-doing : give not over the work of God, while you can move hand or tongue to promote it, and see that your last works be more than your first. Oh let the motions of your soul after God be, as all natural motions are, swiftest when nearest the centre. * Say not it is enough, whilst there is any capacity of doing more for God. In these things, christians, be like your Saviour.

6. Did Christ finish his work ? Look to it, christians, that ye also *finish your work* which God hath given you to do ; that you may with comfort say, when death approaches, as Christ said, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do ; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self." John, 17 : 4. Christ had a work committed to him, and he finished it : you have a work also committed to you : Oh see that you may be able to say, It is finished, when your time is ended : Oh work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; and, that I may persuade you to it, I beseech you lay to heart these considerations :

If your work be not *done before you die*, it can never be done. "There is no work, nor knowledge, nor device in the grave, whither thou goest." Eccl. 9 : 5, 10. They that go down to the pit cannot celebrate the name of God. Isa. 38 : 18. Death binds up the hand from working any more ; strikes dumb the tongue that it can speak no more. The body, which is the soul's instrument to work by, is broken and thrown aside : the soul itself presented immediately before the Lord, to give an account of all its works. The night cometh ; make haste and finish your work.

If you finish not your work, the season of *mercy*, as well as the season of working, will be over at death.

* Si dixisti sufficit, periisti. If thou once say it is enough, thou art lost.

Do not think, you that have neglected Christ all your lives, you that could never be persuaded to a laborious holy life, that ever your cries and entreaties shall prevail with God for mercy, when your season is past. No, it is too late: "Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him?" Job, 27 : 9. The season of mercy is then over; as the tree falls, so it lies; then he that is holy shall be holy still, and he that is filthy shall be filthy still. Alas, poor souls, you come too late; "The Master of the house is risen up, and the door is shut." Luke, 13 : 25. The season is over: happy had it been if ye had known the day of your visitation.

If your work be not finished when you come to die, you can never *finish your lives with comfort*. He that hath not finished his *work with care*, can never finish his *course with joy*. Oh what a dismal case is that soul in, that finds itself surprised by death unprepared! To lie shivering upon the brink of the grave, saying, Lord, what will become of me! Oh I cannot, I dare not die! For the poor soul to shrink back into the body, and cry, Oh, it were better for me to do any thing than die! Oh, I dare not go before the awful judgment-seat. If I had in season made Christ sure, I could then die with peace. Lord, what shall I do? How dost thou like this, reader? Will this be a comfortable close? When one asked a christian that spent six hours every day in private devotion, why he did so? He answered, Oh, I must die, I must die. Well then, look to it that you finish your work as Christ also did his.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SEVENTH AND LAST SAYING OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

“*And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.*” *Luke, 23 : 46.*

These are the last words of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, with which he breathed out his soul. They were David's words before him, Psalm 31 : 5, and for substance, Stephen's after him. Acts, 7 : 59. They are words full both of faith and comfort ; fit to be the last breathings of every gracious soul departing from this world.

1. The person here acting is the Lord Jesus Christ, who in this, as well as in other things, acted as the Head of the church. This must be remarked carefully, for therein lies no small part of a believer's consolation. When Christ commends his soul to God, he solemnly presents our souls with his, to his Father's acceptance. Jesus Christ neither lived nor died for himself, but for believers : what he did in this very act, refers to them as well as to his own soul : you must look therefore upon Christ, in this last and solemn act of his life, as gathering all the souls of the elect together, and making a solemn tender of them all, with his own soul, to God.

2. The person to whom he commits this precious treasure was his own Father : “*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*” *Father* is a sweet, encouraging, assuring title : well may a son commit any concern, however dear, into the hands of a father, especially such a Son into the hands of such a Father.

3. The thing committed into his hand, “*my spirit,*” was his soul, now upon the very point of separation from

the body. The soul is the most precious of all treasures. A whole world is but a trifle, if weighed, for the price of one soul. Matt. 16 : 26. This inestimable treasure he now commits into his Father's hands.

4. The act by which he puts it into that faithful hand, "I commend," was in Christ an act of faith, a most special and excellent act intended as a precedent for all his people.

5. The last thing observable is, the manner in which he uttered these words: "with a loud voice;" he spake that all might hear, and that his enemies, who judged him now destitute and forsaken of God, might be convinced that he was not so, but that he was dear to his Father still, and could put his soul confidently into his hands: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Taking, then, these words, not only as spoken by Christ, the Head of all believers, and so commending their souls to God with his own, but also as a pattern, teaching them what they ought to do themselves when they come to die; we observe, that

Dying believers are warranted, and encouraged, by Christ's example, believingly to commend their precious souls into the hands of God.

Thus the apostle directs christians to commit their souls to God's fatherly protection, when they are going to prison, or to the stake for Christ: "Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." 1 Pet. 4 : 19. We will consider what is implied in the soul's thus commending itself to God by faith, and what warrant or encouragement gracious souls have for so doing.

I. *What is implied* in a believer's commending his soul into the hands of God at death?

1. It evidently implies that *the soul outlives the body*; it feels the house in which it dwelt dropping into ruins,

and looks out for a new habitation with God. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The soul knows itself to be more noble than the corruptible body, which it is now to leave in the dust: it understands its relation to the Father of spirits, and from him expects protection and provision in its disembodied state; and therefore commits itself into his hands. If it vanished, and did not survive the body; if it were annihilated at death, it were but mocking God to say, when we die, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

2. It implies the *soul's true rest to be in God*. See which way its motions and tendencies are, not only in life, but in death. "Father, into thy hands." God is the centre of all gracious spirits. While they tabernacle here, they have no rest but in the bosom of their God: when they go hence, their expectation and earnest desires are to be with him. It had been working after God by gracious desires before: it had cast many a longing look heaven-ward; but when the gracious soul comes near its God, (as it doth in a dying hour,) "then it even throws itself into his arms;" as a river that, after many turnings and windings, pours itself into the ocean. "Nothing but God can please it in this world, and nothing but God can satisfy it when it goes hence." Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none on earth that I desire in comparison of thee. Ps. 73: 25.

3. It also implies *the great value* believers place upon the soul. This is the precious treasure; and their main solicitude and chief care is to see it secured in a safe hand: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." These words express the believer's care for his soul, that it may be safe, whatever becomes of the vile body. A believer, when he comes nigh to death, spends but few thoughts about his body, where it shall be laid, or how it shall be disposed of; he trusts that in the hands

of friends : but as his great care all along was for his soul, so he expresses it in these his very last breathings, in which he commends it into the hands of God. It is not, Lord Jesus, receive my body, take care of my dust ; but, "Receive my spirit ;" Lord, secure the jewel, when the casket is broken.

4. These words imply the deep sense that dying believers have of *the great change* that is coming upon them by death ; when all visible and sensible things are shrinking away from them, and failing. They feel the world and the best comforts of it failing ; and the soul cleaves more closely than ever to God : "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Not that the soul cleaves to God, merely because it has then no other support. No ; it chose God for its portion when it was in the midst of all its outward enjoyments, and had as good security as other men have for the long enjoyment of them. True, though gracious souls have chosen God for their portion, and do truly prefer him to the best of their comforts ; yet, in this imperfect state, they live not wholly upon God, but partly by faith, and partly by sense ; partly upon things seen, and partly upon things not seen. Earthly objects had some interest in their hearts ; alas, too much : but now all these are vanishing. "I shall behold man no more, with the inhabitants of the world," said sick Hezekiah : the soul now turns itself from them all, and casts itself upon God, expecting now to live upon its God entirely, like the blessed angels.

5. It implies *faith in the atonement* of God, and his full reconciliation to believers, by the blood of the great Sacrifice ; else they durst never commit their souls into his hands : "For it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. 10 : 31 ; that is, of God unappeased by the offering up of Christ. The soul dare no more cast itself into the hands of God, without such

an atoning sacrifice, than it dare approach consuming fire. And, indeed, the reconciliation of God by Jesus Christ, as it is the ground of all acceptance with God; for we are "made accepted in the Beloved;" so it is plainly implied in the order or manner of the reconciled soul's committing itself to him: it first casts itself into the hands of Christ, and then into the hands of God by him. So Stephen cried, when dying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

6. It implies both the *efficacy and excellency of faith*, in supporting and relieving the soul at a time when nothing else can. Faith is its conductor, when in the greatest perplexity and distress: it secures the soul when it is turned out of the body; when heart and flesh fail, this leads it to the Rock that fails not; it remains by the soul till it sees it safe through all the territories of Satan, and safe landed upon the shore of glory; and then is swallowed up in vision. Many a favor hath faith conferred upon the soul while in the body. The great service it did was in the time of its espousals to Christ. This is the marriage-knot, the blessed bond of union between the soul and Christ. Many a relieving sight and sweet support hath faith afforded since the soul's espousals; but, surely, its first and last work are its most glorious works. By faith it first ventured itself upon Christ; threw itself upon him in the deepest sense of its own vileness and utter unworthiness, when sense, reason, and multitudes of temptations stood by, contradicting and discouraging; by faith it now casts itself into his arms, when it is launching out into vast eternity. They are both noble acts of faith; but the first, no doubt, is the greatest and most difficult; for, when once the soul is interested in Christ, it is easy still to commit itself into his hands. It is easier for a child to cast himself into the arms of his own father in distress, than for one that hath been both a stranger and an enemy to

him, to cast itself upon him, that he may be a Father and a Friend to it. But,

II. *What warrant or encouragement* have gracious souls to commit themselves at death into the hands of God? I answer, Much every way; all things encourage and warrant their so doing: for,

1. The God, to whom the believing soul commits itself at death, is its Creator, *the Father of its being*: he created and inspired it, and so it hath the relation of a creature to a Creator; yea, of a creature now in distress, to a faithful Creator: "Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator." 1 Pet. 4: 19. True, this single relation, in itself, gives no encouragement to a creature that has sinned: "It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them, will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them, will show them no favor." Isa. 27: 11. But now, grace brings that relation into repute: holiness ingratiate us again, and revives the remembrance of this relation; so that believers only can plead this.

2. Again, as the gracious soul is his creature, so it is his *redeemed creature*; one that he hath bought, and that with a great price, even the precious blood of Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19. This greatly encourages the departing soul to commit itself into the hands of God. "Into thy hand I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Ps. 31: 5. Lord, I am not only thy creature, but thy redeemed creature; one that thou hast bought with a great price: for my sake Christ came from thy bosom, and at the expense of his precious blood redeemed me, and wilt thou at last exclude me? Shall the ends both of the creation and redemption of this soul be lost together? will God form such a soul, in which are so many wonders of the wisdom and power of its Creator; will he, when sin has

marred the frame and defaced the glory of it, recover it to himself again, by the death of his own dear Son; and after all this, cast it away? "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:" I know thou wilt have respect to the work of thy hands; especially to a redeemed creature, upon which thou hast expended so great love.

3. Nay, this is not all; the gracious soul is *his renewed creature*. This lays a firm ground for the believer's confidence and acceptance; not that it is the proper cause, or reason of its acceptance, but is the soul's best evidence that it is accepted with God, and shall not be refused by him, when it comes to him at death: for, in such a soul there is a double workmanship of God, both glorious, though the last exceeds in glory. A natural workmanship, in the excellent frame of that noble creature, the soul; and a gracious workmanship upon that again; a new creation upon the old; glory upon glory. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." Eph. 2: 10. The Holy Ghost came down from heaven on purpose to create this new workmanship, to frame this new creature; and indeed it is the chief of all God's works of wonder in this world, and must give the believer abundant encouragement to commit himself to God. By this "we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. 1: 12. It is also the design and end of Him that wrought it: "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." 2 Cor. 5: 5. Had he not designed thy soul for glory, the Spirit would never have come down to sanctify it: surely it shall not fail of a reception into glory, when it is cast out of this tabernacle: such a work was not wrought in vain, neither can it ever perish. Sanctification so roots itself in the soul, that where the soul goes, it goes: gifts indeed die; all natural excellency and beauty depart at death, Job, 4: 21; out grace ascends with the soul; it is a sanctified when

a separate soul. And will God shut the door of glory upon such a soul, that by grace is made meet for the inheritance? Oh, it cannot be!

4. As the gracious soul is a renewed soul, so it is also a *sealed soul*; God hath sealed it in this world for that glory, into which it is now to enter at death. All gracious souls have those works of grace wrought on them, which evince their title to glory; and many the Spirit helps clearly to discern their interests in Christ and all the promises. This both secures heaven to the soul in itself, and becomes also an earnest or pledge of that glory in the unspeakable joys and comforts it produces in the soul. "Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. 1:22. How can the soul that hath found all this, fear a rejection by its God, when at death it comes to him? Surely, if God have sealed, he will not refuse you; if he have given his earnest, he will not shut you out.

5. Moreover, every gracious soul may confidently cast itself into the arms of its God, when it goes hence, with, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" forasmuch as it is *in covenant with God*, and God stands obliged by his covenant and promise to such, not to cast them out when they come unto him. As soon as thou didst become his by regeneration, that promise became thine, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Heb. 13:5. And will he leave the soul at a time when it has more need of his support than it ever had? Every gracious soul is entitled to that promise, "I will come again, and receive you to myself." John, 14:3. And will he fail to make it good when the time of the promise is come, as at death it is? It cannot be. When he sees a poor soul that he hath made, redeemed, sanctified, sealed, and by solemn promise engaged himself to receive, coming to him at death, firmly depending upon his faithfulness, saying, as David, 2 Sam. 23:5, Though, Lord,

there be many defects in me, "yet thou hast made a covenant with me, well ordered in all things, and sure ; and this is all my salvation, and all my hope ;" how can God refuse such a soul ? How can he cast it off, when it so casts itself upon him ?

6. But this is not all ; the gracious soul sustains many *intimate and dear relations* to the God into whose hands it commends itself at death. It is his spouse, and the consideration of such a day of espousals may well encourage it to cast itself into the bosom of Christ, its head and husband. It is a member of his body, flesh, and bones. Eph. 5 : 30. It is his child, and he its everlasting Father. Isa. 9 : 6. It is his friend : "Henceforth (saith Christ) I call you not servants, but friends." John, 15 : 15. What confidence may these, and all the other dear relations Christ owns to the renewed soul, beget in such an hour as this ! What husband can throw off the dear wife of his bosom, who in distress casts herself into his arms ? What Father can shut the door upon a dear child that comes to him for refuge, saying, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit ?

7. The *unchangeableness of God's love* to his people gives confidence that they shall in no wise be cast out. They know Christ shall be the same to them at last as he was at first ; the same in the pangs of death as in the comforts of life : "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." John, 13 : 1. He doth not love as the world loves, only in prosperity ; but they are as dear to him when their beauty and strength are gone, as in their greatest prosperity. If we live, we live to the Lord ; and if we die, we die to the Lord ; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. Rom. 14 : 8.

Now consider all these things, and weigh them both apart and together, and see whether they amount not to a full evidence of the truth of this point, that dying be-

lievers are warranted and encouraged to commend their souls into the hands of God; whether they have not every one of them cause to say, as the apostle did, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12.

INFERENCE 1. Are dying believers only warranted and encouraged thus to commend their souls into the hands of God? How sad, then, *the state of all dying unbelievers!* Such souls will fall into the hands of God, but that is their misery, not their privilege: they are not reposed by faith in the hands of mercy, but fall by sin into the hands of justice: not God, but the devil is their father. John, 8:44. Whither should the child go but to its own father? They have not one of the above-mentioned encouragements to cast themselves into the hands of God, except the mere relation they have to him as their Creator, and that is of no avail without the new creation. If they have nothing but this to plead for their salvation, the devil hath as much to plead as they. It is the new creature that brings the first creation into repute again with God.

Oh dismal, oh deplorable case! A poor soul is turned out of house and home, and knows not where to go; it departs, and immediately falls into the hands of justice. Little, ah little do the friends of such a one think, whilst they are honoring his dust by a splendid and honorable funeral, what a state the poor soul is in, and to what fearful straits and extremities it is now exposed! He may cry, indeed, Lord! Lord! open to me, Matt. 7:22; but to how little purpose are these vain cries! Will God hear him when he crieth? Job, 27:9.

2. Will God graciously accept, and faithfully keep what the saints commit to him at death? How careful then should they be *to keep what God commits to them, to be kept for him* while they live! You have a great trust to commit to God when you die, and God commits a

great trust to you whilst you live : you expect him faithfully to keep what you shall then commit to his keeping, and he expects you faithfully to keep what he now commits to you. If you keep his truth, he will keep your soul. " Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee," &c. Rev. 3 : 10. Be faithful to your God, and you shall find him faithful to you. None can pluck you out of his hand ; see that nothing wrest his truth out of your hands. " If we deny him, he also will deny us." 2 Tim. 2 : 12. Take heed lest those estates you have gotten as a blessing attending the Gospel, prove a temptation to you to betray the Gospel. " Religion (saith one) brings forth riches, but the daughter devours the mother." How can you expect acceptance with God, who have betrayed his truth and dealt perfidiously with him ?

3. If believers may safely commit their souls into the hands of God, how confidently may they *commit all lesser interests* into the same hands ! Shall we trust him with our souls, and not with our lives, liberty, or comfort ? Can we commit the treasure to him and not trust him with a trifle ? Surely, if you can trust him for eternal life, you may much more trust him for daily bread. If your prayers for temporal blessings proceed from pure motives, the glory of God, not the gratification of your lusts ; if your desires after them be moderate, content with that proportion the Infinite Wisdom sees fittest for you : if you take God's way to obtain them, and dare not violate conscience, or commit a sin, though you should perish for want ; if you can patiently wait God's time for relief from your straits, and not make any sinful haste ; you shall be surely supplied : he that remembers your souls will not forget your bodies. But we live by sense, and not by faith ; present things strike our affections more powerfully than invisible things to come. The Lord humble his people for this.

4. Is it the privilege of believers to commit their souls to God in a dying hour! Then *how precious, how useful a grace is faith* to the people of God, both living and dying! While we live and converse here in the world, all our comfort and safety is from it; for all our union with Christ, the fountain of mercies and blessings, is by faith: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Eph. 3: 17. All our communion with Christ is by it: "He that cometh to God must believe." Heb. 11: 6. The soul's life is wrapt up in this communion with God, and that communion in faith. All communications from Christ, all quickening, comfort, joy, strength, and whatsoever serves the well-being of the life of *grace*, are through that faith which first unites us to Christ, and still maintains our communion with Christ; "believing, we rejoice." 1 Pet. 1: 8. The inner man is renewed, whilst we look to the things that are not seen. 2 Cor. 4: 18. And as our life, and all its supports and comforts here depend on faith, so in our death, the safety and comfort of our souls then depends upon our faith: he that hath no faith, cannot commit his soul to God, but rather shrinks from God. Faith can do many precious offices for your souls upon a death-bed, when the light of this world is gone, and all joy ceases on earth: it can give us sights of invisible things in the other world, and those sights will breathe life into our souls, amidst the very pangs of death.

Reader, do but think what a comfortable foresight of God and the joys of salvation thou wilt have, when thine eye-strings are breaking: faith can not only see that beyond the grave which will comfort, but it can cleave to its God, and clasp Christ in a promise, when it feels the ground of all sensible comforts trembling, and sinking under thy feet: "My heart and my flesh fail, but God is the strength (or rock) of my heart, and my portion for ever." Reeds fail, but the rock is firm

footing; yea, and when the soul can no longer tabernacle here, it can cast itself upon God, with, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Oh precious faith!

5. Do the souls of dying believers commend themselves into the hands of God? Then let not the *surviving relations of such* sorrow as those that have no hope. A husband, a wife, a child, is rent by death out of your arms: well, but consider into what arms, into what bosom they are commended. Is it not better for them to be in the bosom of God than in yours? Could they be spared so long from heaven as to come back again to you but an hour, how would they say to you, as Christ said to the daughters of Jerusalem, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." I am in safe hands, I am out of the reach of all storms and troubles. Oh did you but know what their state is who are with God, you would be more than satisfied about them.

6. Is it the privilege of dying believers to commend their souls into the hands of God? Then as ever you hope for comfort or peace in your last hour, see that your souls *be such as may then be commended* into the hands of a holy and just God: see that they be holy souls; God will never accept them if they be not holy: "Without holiness no man shall see God." Heb. 12: 14. "He that hath this hope, (namely, to see God,) purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John, 3: 3. Endeavors after holiness are inseparably connected with all rational expectations of blessedness. Will you put an unclean, filthy, defiled thing into the pure hands of the most holy God? Oh see that thy soul be holy, and already accepted in the Beloved; or wo to it when it shall take its leave of the tabernacle it now inhabits! The gracious soul may then confidently say, Lord Jesus! into thy hand I commend my spirit. O let all that can say so then, now say, Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CHRIST'S FUNERAL ILLUSTRATED.

"Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews' preparation-day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." John, 19: 40-42.

You have heard the last words of the dying Jesus commending his spirit into his Father's hands. And now the Life of the world hangs dead upon a tree. The Light of the world, for a time, shut up in a dismal cloud. The Sun of Righteousness set in the region and shadow of death. The Lord is dead; he that conquered death, is now himself to be locked up in the grave. All friends and lovers of Jesus are now invited to his funeral. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Mark,

1. The preparations made for it, particularly the begging and perfuming of the body. His body could not be buried, till, by begging, his friends had obtained it as a favor from his judge. The dead body was by law in the power of Pilate, who adjudged it to death, as the bodies of those that are hanged are in the power of the judge to dispose of them as he pleases. And when they had gotten it from Pilate, they wound it in fine linen clothes with spices. But what need of spices to perfume that blessed body? His own love was enough to embalm it in the remembrance of his people to all generations: but hereby they manifest, as far as they are able, the dear affection they have for him.

2. The bearers that carried his body to its grave were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two secret disciples; both men of estate and honor. None could ima-

gine that these would have appeared at a time of so much danger, with such boldness for Christ; that they, who were afraid to come to him (except by night) when he was living, would go openly and boldly to manifest their love to him when dead. But now they are inspired with zeal and courage, when those that made greater and more open confessions have left him.

3. The attendants who followed the body were the women that attended him out of Galilee; among whom only the two Marys and the mother of Zebedee's children (whom Mark calls Salome) are named.

4. The grave, or sepulchre, where they laid him was Joseph's new tomb, which he had prepared in a garden near Golgotha, where our Lord died. Two things are remarkable about this tomb; it was another's tomb, and it was a new tomb. It was another's; for as he had not a house of his own to live in, so he had not a tomb of his own to lay his body in when dead. And it was a new tomb, wherein never man was yet laid. Doubtless there was the hand of Providence in this; for had any other been laid there before him, it might have proved an occasion of marring the credit and the glory of his resurrection, by pretending it was some former body, and not the Lord's, that arose. In this also Divine Providence had a respect to that prophecy, Isa. 53: 9, which was to be fulfilled at his funeral: "He made his grave with the rich."

5. No mention is made of the groans and tears with which they laid him in his sepulchre; yet we may well presume they were not wanting in expressions of their deep sorrow; for as they wept and smote their breasts when he died, Luke, 23: 48; so, no doubt, they laid him with melting hearts and flowing eyes in his tomb.

6. The solemnities with which his funeral rites were performed were all suitable to his humbled state. It was, indeed, a funeral as decently ordered as the straits

of time and circumstances would permit; but there was nothing of pomp or outward state. Thus was he laid in his grave, where he continued for three incomplete days and nights in the territories of death, in the land of darkness and forgetfulness; partly to correspond with Jonah his type, and partly to show the world the reality of his death. Hence,

The dead body of our Lord Jesus Christ was decently interred by a small number of his own disciples, and continued in the state of the dead for a time.

These matters of fact being so plainly recorded by the several evangelists, we need only here satisfy two inquiries: Why Christ had any funeral at all, since his resurrection was so soon to follow his death? and, What manner of funeral he had?

1. *Why had Christ any funeral*, since he was to rise again from the dead within the space that men commonly lie before their interment; and had his body continued longer unburied, it could see no corruption, having never been tainted by sin?

1. It was necessary Christ should be buried, *to ascertain his death*; else it might have been looked upon as a cheat: for, as his enemies were ready to impose so gross a cheat upon the world at his resurrection, "That the disciples came by night, and stole him away," much more would they have denied at once the reality, both of his death and resurrection, had he not been so perfumed and interred. But his being bound "in linen with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury," and remaining so long in the tomb, gave full assurance to the world of the certainty of his death. Now, since our eternal life is wrapt up in Christ's death, it can never be too firmly established. To this, therefore, we may well suppose Providence had special respect in the manner of his burial.

2. He must be buried, *to fulfil the types and prophecies.*

His abode in the grave was prefigured by Jonah's abode three days and nights in the belly of the whale: "So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matt. 12:40. Yea, the prophet had described the very manner of his funeral, and, long before he was born, foretold in what kind of tomb his body should be laid: "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," Isa. 53:9; pointing, by that expression, at this tomb of Joseph, who was a rich man; and the Scriptures cannot be broken.

3. He must be buried *to complete his humiliation*; this being the lowest step he could possibly descend to in his abased state. "They have brought me to the dust of death;" lower he could not be laid.

4. But the great end and reason of his interment was *the conquering of death in its own dominion* and territories; which victory over the grave furnished the saints with that triumphant song of deliverance, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. 15:55. Our graves would not be so sweet and comfortable to us, when we come to lie down in them, if Jesus had not lain there before us and for us. Death is a dragon, the grave its den; a place of dread and terror; but Christ goes into its den, there grapples with it, and for ever overcomes it; disarms it of all its terror; and not only makes it cease to be inimical, but to become the greatest blessing to the saints; a bed of rest, and a perfumed bed; they do but go into Christ's bed, where he lay before them.

II. Let us inquire *what manner of funeral Christ had?*

1. It was a *very obscure and private* funeral. Here was no external pomp: Christ affected it not in his life, and it was no way suitable to the ends and manner of his death. Humiliation was designed in his death; and pomp is inconsistent with such an end: besides, he died

upon the cross; and persons so dying have not much ceremony and state at their funeral. The dead body of the Lord was not brought from his own house, as other men's commonly are, but from the cross. They begged it of his judge. Had they not obtained this favor from Pilate, it must have been buried in Golgotha—cast into a pit dug under the cross. And when buried, it was attended with a very poor train: a few sorrowful women followed it. Other men are accompanied to their graves by their relations and friends: the disciples were all scattered from him, afraid to own him dying, and dead. And these few that were resolved to give him a funeral, are forced, by reason of the strait of time, to do it in great haste; for the preparation for the passover was at hand. This was the obscure funeral which the body of the Lord had. Thus was the Prince of the kings of the earth, who has the keys of death and hell, laid into his grave.

2. Yet though men could bestow little honor upon his funeral, *the heavens bestowed marks of honor*; adorned it with divers miracles, which wiped off the reproach of his death. These miracles preceded or attended his interment.

There was an extraordinary and preternatural eclipse of the sun; such an eclipse as was never seen since it first shone in heaven: the sun fainted at the sight of such a rueful spectacle, and clothed the whole heaven in black. The sight of this caused a great philosopher, who was then far from the place where this unparalleled tragedy was acting, to cry out, " *Either the God of nature now suffers, or the frame of the world is dissolved." Such a preternatural eclipse is unknown in the world's history: it was not in the time of conjunction, but oppo-

* Aut Deus naturæ patitur, aut mundi machina dissolvitur.—
Dionysius Areopog.

sition, the moon being then at full. From the sixth to the ninth hour "there was darkness over all the land."

And as Christ's funeral was attended with such a miraculous eclipse, which put the heavens and earth into mourning; so the rocks did rend; the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom; the graves opened, and the dead bodies of many saints arose and went into the holy city, and were seen of many. The rending of the rocks was a sign of God's fierce indignation, Nahum, 1:6, and manifested the greatness of his power; showing what they deserved, and what he could do to them that had committed this horrid deed; though he rather chose at this time to show the dreadful effects of it upon inanimate rocks, than rocky-hearted sinners: but especially it served to convince the world that it was none other but the Son of God that died.

As for the rending in twain of the veil, it was a notable miracle, plainly showing that all ceremonies were now accomplished and abolished—no more veils now—as also that believers have now most free access into heaven. At that very instant when the veil was rent, the high priest was officiating in the most holy place, and the veil which hid him from the rest of the people being rent, they might freely see him about his work in the holy of holies; a lively emblem of our High Priest, whom now we see by faith in the heavens, there performing his intercession-work for us.

The opening of the graves plainly showed the design and end of Christ's entering the grave; that it might not have dominion over the bodies of the saints, but being vanquished and destroyed by Christ: might yield up all his whom he ransomed from the grave; a specimen whereof was given in those holy ones that rose and appeared to many in the holy city.

And now we have seen Jesus interred; he that wears at his girdle the keys of hell and death, himself locked

up in the grave. What shall I say of him whom they now laid in the grave? Shall I undertake to tell you what he was, what he did, suffered, and deserved? Alas! the tongue of angels must pause and stammer in such a work. He is a Sun of Righteousness, a *Fountain of Life*. Of him it might be said in that day, Here lies the adorable Jesus, in whom is treasured up whatsoever an angry God can require for his satisfaction, or an empty creature for his perfection; before him was none like him, and after shall none arise comparable to him. "If every leaf and spire of grass," saith one, "nay, all the stars, sands, and atoms, were so many souls and seraphim, whose love should double in them every moment to all eternity, yet would it fall infinitely short of what is due to his worth and excellency. Suppose a creature possessed of all the choice endowments that ever dwelt in the best of men since the creation of the world; and added to this, the understanding, strength, splendor, and holiness of all the angels, it would all amount but to a dark shadow of this incomparable Jesus."

Come and see, believing souls, look upon Jesus in his winding-sheet, by faith, and say, Lo, this is he, of whom the church said, "My Beloved is white and ruddy:" his ruddiness is now gone, and a death-paleness hath prevailed over all his body, but still he is lovely as ever, yea, altogether lovely. If David, lamenting the death of Saul and Jonathan, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights; who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel;" much rather may I say, Children of Zion, weep over Jesus, who clothed you with righteousness and the garments of salvation.

This is he who quitted the throne of glory; left the bosom of unspeakable delights; came in a body of flesh produced in perfect holiness; brake through many and great impediments, (thy great unworthiness, the wrath

of God and man,) by the strength of love to bring salvation home to thy soul. Can he that believably considers this, do less than wonder at the love that brought him to the dust of death, and cry out with an ancient worthy, "My Lord was crucified!"

INFERENCE 1. Was Christ buried in this manner? Then a *decent and mournful funeral*, where it can be had, is very laudable among christians. I know the departed souls of the saints have no concern for their bodies; yet there is a respect due to them, as they are the temples wherein God hath been served and honored by the souls that once dwelt in them; as also on account of their relation to Christ, and the glory that will be revealed in them, when they shall be changed, and made like unto Christ's glorious body. Upon such grounds as these their bodies deserve an honorable treatment, as well as from humanity, which owes this honor to the bodies of all men. To have no funeral is accounted a judgment. Eccles. 7 : 4. We read of many solemn and mournful funerals in Scripture,* wherein the people of God have affectionately paid their respects and honors to the dust of the saints, as men that were deeply sensible of their worth, and how great a loss the world sustains by their removal. Christ's funeral had as much of decency and solemnity in it as the time would permit; though he was a stranger to all pomp, both in life and death.

2. Did Joseph and Nicodemus so boldly appear at a time of so much danger, to beg the body and give it a funeral? Let it be for ever a caution to strong christians, *not to despise or glory over the weak*. You see here a couple of timorous persons, that were afraid to be seen in Christ's company, when the other disciples professed their readiness to die with him: yet those flee, and these

* Gen. 23 : 2; 35 : 19, 1, 10. 2 Chron. 35 : 24. John, 11 : 31. Acts, 8 : 2.

appear for him when the trial comes indeed. If God desert the strong, and assist the weak, the feeble shall be as David, and the strong as tow. I speak not this to discourage any from striving to the utmost to improve the grace imparted to him; for it is ordinarily found in experience, that the degrees of assisting grace are given according to the measure of grace sin exercises; but I speak it to prevent a sin incident to strong christians, of despising the weak, which God corrects by such instances and examples as this before us.

3. Hence we may be assisted in discerning the depths of Christ's humiliation for us, by seeing *from what, and to what his love brought him*. It was not enough for him who was in the form of God, to become a creature, which was an infinite stoop, nay, to be made a man, an inferior order of creatures; nay, to be a poor man, to spend his days in poverty and contempt; but his dead body must be laid in the tomb for our sakes. Oh what manner of love is this! Now the deeper the humiliation of the Son of God the more satisfactory must it be to us; for it shows us not only the heinousness of sin that deserves all this, but the fulness of Christ's satisfaction, whereby he restores the breach. Oh, it was deep humiliation indeed! How unlike himself is he now become! Doth he look like the Son of God? What! the Son of God, whom all the angels adore, to be hurried by three or four persons into his grave in an evening! to be carried from Golgotha to the grave in this manner, and there lie as a captive to death for a time! Never was such change of conditions; never such abasement.

4. From this funeral of Christ results the purest and strongest consolation and encouragement to believers *against the fear of death and the grave*. If Jesus hath lain in the grave before you, let me say then to you as the Lord spake to Jacob, "Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will go down with thee, and I will also

surely bring thee up again." Gen. 46 : 3, 4. Fear not, believer, to go down to the grave, for God will be with thee there, and will surely bring thee up thence. This consideration, that Jesus Christ hath lain in the grave himself, gives *manifold encouragements* to the people of God against the terrors of the grave.

The grave received, but could not destroy Jesus Christ: and as it was with Christ's personal body, so shall it be with Christ's mystical body: it could not retain him; it *shall not for ever retain them*. This resurrection of Christ out of his grave, is the very ground of our hope for a resurrection out of our graves. "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." 1 Cor. 15 : 20.

As the union between the body of Christ and the Divine nature was not dissolved when that body was laid in the grave, so the *union between Christ and believers* is not, cannot be dissolved, when their bodies are laid in their graves. It is true, the natural union between his soul and body was dissolved for a time; but the essential union was not dissolved, no, not for a moment: that body was the body of the Son of God, when it was in the sepulchre. In like manner the natural union between our souls and bodies is dissolved by death; but the mystical union between us and Christ can never be dissolved.

As Christ's body, when it was in the grave, did there rest in hope; *so shall the bodies of the saints* when they lay them down in the dust: "My flesh also shall rest in hope," saith Christ. Ps. 16 : 9. In like manner the saints commit their bodies to the dust in hope: "The righteous hath hope in his death." Prov. 14 : 32. And as Christ's hope was not a vain hope, so neither shall their hope be vain.

Christ's lying in the grave before us, hath quite *changed the nature of the grave*; so that it is not what it once

was. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," was a part of the threatening and curse for sin. The grave was as a prison, to keep the bodies of sinners against the great assizes, and then deliver them up into the hands of a great and terrible God; but now it is no prison, but a bed of rest, where Christ lay before us; which is a sweet consideration of the grave indeed: "They shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds." Isa. 57:2. Oh then let not believers stand in fear of the grave. He that hath one foot in heaven need not fear to put the other into the grave. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Ps. 23:4.

Indeed, the grave is a terrible place to them that are *out of Christ*: death is the Lord's officer to arrest them; the grave is the Lord's prison to secure them. When death draws them into the grave, it draws them thither as a lion doth his prey into the den to devour it. "Death shall feed" or prey "upon them." Ps. 49:14. Death there reigns over them in its full power. Rom. 5:14. And though at last it shall render them back again to God, yet it were better for them to lie everlastingly where they were, than to rise to such an end; for they are brought out of their graves as a condemned prisoner out of the prison, to go to execution. But with the saints it is not so; the grave (thanks be to our Lord Jesus Christ!) is a privileged place to them, whilst they sleep there; and when they awake, it will be with singing. When they awake, they shall be satisfied with his likeness.

5. Since Christ was laid in the grave, and his people reap such privileges by it; as ever you expect rest or comfort in your grave, see that *you now become united with Christ*. It was an ancient custom of the Jews, to put rich treasures into the grave with their friends, as well as to bestow much upon their sepulchres. It is

possible that you have no great sum to bestow upon your funerals, nor are they likely to be splendid; no stately monuments; no hidden treasure; but if Christ be yours, you carry with you to your grave what is better than all the gold and silver in the world. What would you be the better if your coffin were made of beaten gold, or your grave-stone set thick with glittering diamonds? But if you die in the Lord, that is, interested in and united to him, you shall carry *six grounds of comfort* with you to your grave, the least of which is not to be purchased with the wealth of both the Indies.

The first is, that *the covenant of God holds firmly with the very dust* of the believer all the days of its appointed time in the grave. So much Christ tells us, Matt. 22: 31, 32; "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: God is not the God of the dead, but of the living:" Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are naturally dead; but inasmuch as God, long after their deaths, proclaimed himself their God, they live, that is, their covenant relation lives still. "Whether we live, or whether we die, (saith the apostle,) we are the Lord's." Rom. 14: 7-9. Now, what an encouragement is here! I am as much the Lord's in the state of the dead, as I was in the state of the living: death puts an end to all other relations and bonds, but the bond of the covenant decays not in the grave: our dust is still the Lord's.

As God's covenant, so his *love* to our very dust abides. The apostle is express, Rom. 8: 38, 39, that death separates not the believer from the love of God. As at first it was not our natural comeliness or beauty that engaged his love to us; so neither will he cease to love us when that beauty is gone, and we become objects of loathing to all flesh. When a husband cannot endure to see his wife, or a wife her husband; but saith of them

that were once dear and pleasant, as Abraham of his beloved Sarah, "Bury my dead out of my sight;" yet then the Lord delights in it as much as ever.

As God's love will be with you in the grave, so God's providence shall take order *when* you shall be laid in it. He will bring you thither in the best time; "Thou shalt come to thy grave as a shock of corn in its season." Job, 5:26; you shall be ripe and ready before God house you there. It is said of David, that "after he had served his generation by the will of God, he fell asleep." Acts, 13:36. Oh what a holy and wise will is that will of God that so orders our death! And how proper is it that our will should be lost in his!

If you be in Christ, God's pardons have loosed all the bonds of guilt from you, before you lie down in the grave; so that you shall *not die in your sins*. It is a grievous threatening, "Ye shall die in your sins." John, 8:24. Better be cast alive into a pit among dragons and serpents, than into your grave dead in sin. Oh what a terrible word is that, "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust!" Job, 20:11. But from the company of sin, in the grave, all the saints are delivered. God's full, free, and final pardon has shut guilt out of your grave.

Whenever you come to your grave, you shall find the *enmity of the grave slain* by Christ: it is no enemy; nay, you will find it a privileged place to you: it will be as sweet to you that are in Christ, as a soft bed in a still, quiet chamber to one that is weary. Therefore it is said, "Death is yours," 1 Cor. 3:22; yours as a privilege; your friend: there you shall find sweet rest in Jesus; be hurried, pained, troubled no more.

If in Christ, know this for your comfort, that your own *Lord Jesus keeps the keys of all the chambers of death*; and as he unlocks the door of death when you enter it, so he will open it again for you when you

awake; and from the time he opens to let you in, till the time he opens to receive you, he himself watches over you while you sleep there. "I have the keys of death." Rev. 1:18. Oh then, as you expect peace or rest in the chamber of death, get union with Christ. A grave with Christ is a comfortable place.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FOUR WEIGHTY ENDS OF CHRIST'S HUMILIATION.

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."—
Isaiah, 53:2.

We come now to speak of the blessed ends for which Christ was so deeply abased. It is inconsistent with common prudence for a man to be at a vast expense of time, pains, and cost, without a worthy design. And it is much less imaginable that Christ should abase himself, by stooping from the bosom of his Father to the state of the dead, if he had not had some excellent and glorious design, the attainment of which might be equivalent to the sorrows and abasements he endured. That he had such a design is plainly implied in the words before us: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." In which we have,

1. The travailing pangs of Christ. So the agonies of his soul and torments of his body are fitly called, not only because of their sharpness and acuteness, but because they forerun and make way for the birth, which abundantly recompenses all those labors.

2. The assured fruits and effects of this travail; "He shall see of the travail of his soul." By seeing, understand the fruition, obtaining, or enjoyment of the end

of his sufferings. He shall not shed his blood at hazard ; his design shall not fail ; but he shall certainly see the ends at which he aimed.

3. This shall yield him great satisfaction ; as a " woman forgets her sorrow, for joy that a man is born into the world," John, 16 : 21 ; he shall see it and be satisfied. As God, when he had finished the work of creation, viewed his work with pleasure and satisfaction ; so doth our exalted Redeemer behold the happy issue of his sufferings. It affords pleasure to a man to see great enterprises brought to a happy issue. Much more doth it yield delight to Jesus Christ to see the results of the most profound wisdom and love shown in the work of redemption. Hence,

All the blessed designs and ends for which the Lord Jesus Christ humbled himself to the death of the cross, shall certainly be attained.

My present design is not to prove this proposition, nor to show the joy Christ will derive from the results of his death ; but to inquire into some of the main and principal designs and ends of his humiliation. And we shall find, that as the sprinkling of the typical blood in the old testament was for four weighty ends or uses, so also the precious and invaluable blood of the testator and surety of the new testament is shed for four weighty ends.

I. That typical blood was shed and applied to deliver from danger : " And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are ; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you, to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt." Exod. 12 : 13.

II. That blood was shed to make an atonement betwixt God and the people : " And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin-offering, so shall he do with this ; and the priest shall make an

atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them." Lev. 4 : 20.

III. That blood was shed to purify persons from their ceremonial pollutions : "He shall dip the cedar-wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, with the living bird, in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water : and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field." Lev. 14 : 6, 7.

IV. That blood was shed to ratify and confirm the testament or covenant of God with the people : "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." Exod. 24 : 8.

These were the four main ends for shedding and sprinkling that typical blood ; and in like manner there are four principal ends for shedding and applying Christ's blood. As that typical blood was shed to deliver from danger, so this was shed to deliver from wrath, even the wrath to come. That was shed to make an atonement, so was this. That was shed to purify persons from uncleanness, so was this. That was shed to confirm the testament, so was this. As will appear more fully in the following particulars :

I. One principal design and end of shedding the blood of Christ was to deliver his people from danger, *the danger of that wrath which burns to the lowest hell*. So you find, 1 Thess. 1 : 10, "Even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." Here our misery is specified by the term wrath, a word of deep and dreadful signification. The damned best understand the import of that word. But more, it is called *wrath to come*, implying both its futurity and perpetuity. It is wrath that shall certainly and inevitably come upon sinners. As

surely as the night follows day, as surely as the winter follows summer, so shall wrath follow sin and its pleasures. Yea, it is not only to come, but when it comes it will be abiding wrath, or wrath still coming. When millions of years and ages are gone, this will still be wrath to come; ever coming, as a river ever flowing.

From this wrath to come Jesus hath delivered his people by his death, which was the price of their redemption from the wrath of the great and terrible God: "Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Rom. 5:9. The blood of Jesus was the price that ransomed man from this wrath. And,

1. He delivered his people *freely*, by his own voluntary interposition and undertaking of the mediatorial office, moved thereunto by his own pity and compassion, which yearned over them in their misery. The saints were once a lost generation, that had sold themselves, and their inheritance also; and had not wherewithal to redeem either: but there was One who became their near kinsman, to whom the right of redemption belonged; who being the Heir of all things, undertook to be their God; and out of his own proper substance to redeem both them and their inheritance: them, to be his own inheritance, Eph. 1:11; and heaven, to be theirs. 1 Pet. 1:4. All this he did most freely, when none made supplication to him. No sighing of the prisoners came before him. He designed it for us before we had a being. And in the fulness of time freely expended the infinite treasures of his blood to purchase our deliverance from wrath.

2. Christ by death hath also delivered his people *fully*. A full deliverance it is, both in respect to time and degree. It was not a reprieve, but a deliverance. Therefore is he become "the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him." Heb. 5:9. And he died, not to

procure a mitigation or abatement of the rigor or severity of the sentence, but to rescue his people fully from all degrees of wrath. So that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ. Rom. 8 : 1.

3. This deliverance obtained for us by the death of Christ, is a *special* and distinguishing deliverance. Not common to all, but peculiar to some ; and they by nature no better than those that are left under wrath. Yea, as to natural disposition, moral qualifications, and external endowments, oftentimes far inferior to them that perish. " You see your calling, brethren." 1 Cor. 1 : 26.

4. It is a *wonderful* salvation. It would weary the arm of an angel to write all the wonders of this salvation. That ever such a design should be laid, such a project of grace contrived in the heart of God, who might have suffered the whole race to perish—that it should be for man, and not the angels, by nature more excellent than we—that Christ himself should go forth upon this glorious design—that he should effect it in such a way, by taking our nature and suffering the penalty of the law therein—that our deliverance should be wrought out and finished when both the Redeemer and his design seemed to be lost and to have perished—these, with many more, are such wonders that it will employ eternity itself to search, admire, and render praise for them.

Before I part from this first end of the death of Christ, give me leave to deduce two useful inferences from it, and then proceed to a second.

INFERENCE 1. Hath Christ by his death delivered his people from the wrath to come ? How ungrateful and disingenuous must it be for those that have obtained such a deliverance to *repine at the light afflictions they suffer for Christ* in this world. Alas ! what are these sufferings, that we should complain of them ? Are they like those which the Redeemer suffered for our deli-

verance? Did ever any of us endure for him what he endured for us? Or is there any thing you can suffer for Christ in this world, comparable to the wrath to come, which you must have endured, had he not, by the price of his own blood, rescued you from it?

Reader, wilt thou but make the comparison in thine own thoughts, and then pronounce when thou hast duly compared. What is the wrath of man to the wrath of God? What is the arm of a creature to the anger of Deity? Can man thunder with an arm like God? What are the sufferings of the vile body here to the tortures of a soul and body in hell? What are the troubles of a moment to that wrath which, after millions of years are gone, will still be called "wrath to come?" Oh, what comparison between a point of time and the interminable duration of vast eternity? What comparison between the transient sorrows and sufferings of this life, and the continued, uninterrupted wrath to come? Our troubles here are not constant; there are gracious relaxations, lucid intervals; but the wrath to come allows not a moment's mitigation. What light troubles are those which work, under the blessing of God, to the everlasting good of them that love him, compared with that wrath to come, out of which no good is possible to the souls on which it lies! And how much more comfortable is it to suffer in fellowship with Christ and his saints for righteousness' sake, than with devils and reprobates as the penalty of sin! Complain not then, O ye that are delivered by Jesus from wrath to come, of any thing ye suffer, or shall suffer from Christ, or for Christ, in this world.

2. If Jesus Christ have thus delivered his people, how little comfort can any man take in his present enjoyments whilst it remains a question whether *he be delivered from the wrath to come?* It is well for the present, but will it be so always! Man regards the future, and

it will not satisfy him that his present condition is comfortable, except he have some hopes it shall be so hereafter. It can afford him little content that all is easy and pleasant about him now, whilst thus terrible hints of wrath to come are given him by his own conscience daily. Oh, methinks such a thought as this, What if I am reserved for the wrath to come? should be to him as the fingers appearing upon the plaster of the wall were to Belshazzar in the height of his festivity. Give not sleep to thine eyes, reader, till thou hast good evidence that thou art of that number whom Jesus hath delivered from the wrath to come, till thou canst say Christ is mine. Three things may give thee evidence that this is thy happy portion :

If Jesus have delivered thee *from sin*, the cause of wrath, thou mayest conclude he hath delivered thee from wrath, the effect and fruit of sin. Upon this account the name Jesus was given to him, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 1 : 21. Whilst a man lies under the dominion and guilt of sin, he lies exposed to wrath to come; and when he is delivered from the guilt and power of sin, he is certainly delivered from the danger of this coming wrath. Where sin is not imputed, wrath is not threatened.

If thy soul do set *an inestimable value on Jesus Christ*, and be endeared to him on account of that inexpressible grace manifested in this deliverance, it is a good sign thy soul hath a share in it. Mark what an epithet the saints give Christ upon this account; "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Col. 1 : 12, 13. Christ is therefore dear, and dear beyond all expression to his people.

A disposition and readiness of mind to *do or endure any thing for Christ*, is a good evidence that you are

delivered from the wrath to come. "That we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." Col. 1 : 10. There is a readiness to *do* for Christ. "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness," ver. 11. There is a cheerful readiness to *endure* any thing for Christ. And how both these flow from the sense of this great deliverance from wrath, the verses following, just cited, will show. Oh then, be serious and assiduous in gaining this evidence. Till this be, nothing can be pleasant to thy soul.

II. As the typical blood was shed and sprinkled to deliver from danger, so it was shed *to make atonement*: "He shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them." Lev. 4 : 20. The meaning is, that by the blood of the bullock, all whose efficacy consisted in its relation to the blood of Christ signified and shadowed by it, the people, for whom it was shed, should be reconciled to God by the expiation and remission of their sins. And what was shadowed in this typical blood, was really accomplished by Jesus Christ, in the shedding of his blood.

Our reconciliation to God is therefore another of the glorious results for which Christ travailed. So you find it expressly, Rom. 5 : 10; "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." This *if* is not a word of doubting, but argumentation. The apostle supposes it a known truth, or principle yielded by all christians, that the death of Christ was to reconcile the redeemed to God. And again he affirms it with like clearness: "Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things." Col. 1 : 20. And that this was a main and principal end designed both by the Father and Son in the humiliation of Christ, is plain from 2 Cor. 5 : 19; "God was in

Christ reconciling the world unto himself." God filled the humanity with grace and authority. The Spirit of God was in him to qualify him. The authority was in him by commission, to make all he did valid. The grace and love of God to mankind was in him, and one of the principal effects in which it was manifested was this design upon which he came, namely, to reconcile the world to God. Upon which ground Christ is called the "propitiation for our sins." 1 John, 2 : 2. "Reconciliation or atonement is the making up of the ancient friendship between God and men which sin had dissolved, thus reducing these enemies into a state of concord and sweet agreement." And the means by which this blessed design was effectually compassed, was the death of Christ, which made complete satisfaction to God for our sin. There was a breach made by sin between God and the fallen angels, but that breach is never to be repaired; since, as Christ took not on him their nature, he never intended to be a Mediator of reconciliation between God and them. But that which Christ designed, as the end of his death, was to reconcile God and man. Not the whole species, but those who were given to Christ and should believe in him.

INFERENCE 1. If Christ died to reconcile God and man, *how horrid an evil is sin!* And how terrible was that breach between God and the creature, which could be closed no other way but by the death of the Son of God!

2. *How sad is the state of all who are not at peace with God,* through the blood of his Son. To the impenitent unbeliever God is not reconciled; and if God be his enemy, how little avails it who is his friend! He has an Almighty Enemy, whose very frown is destruction: "I lift up my hand to heaven and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows

drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh ; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy." Deut. 32 : 40-42.

Yea, God is an unavoidable Enemy. Fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, there shall his hand hold thee. Psal. 139 : 10. The wings of the morning cannot carry thee out of his reach. If God be your enemy, you have an immortal Enemy, who lives for ever to avenge himself upon his adversaries. What wilt thou do when he departs from thee, even in this world, as from Saul ? 1 Sam. 28 : 15, 16. Alas, whither wilt thou turn ? To whom wilt thou complain ? And what wilt thou do when thou shalt stand at his bar and see that God, who is thine Enemy, upon the throne ? Sad is their case indeed, who are not comprehended in the articles of peace with God.

3. If Christ died to reconcile us to God, *give diligence to be assured of your interest* in this reconciliation. If Christ thought it worth his blood to purchase it, it is worth your care and pains to obtain it. And what better evidence can you have than a conscientious tenderness lest you sin against him ? Ah if reconciled, you will say, as Ezra, 9 : 13, 14, " And now our God, seeing thou hast given us such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments ?" If reconciled to God, his friends will be your friends, and his enemies your enemies. If God be your friend, you will be diligent to please him. John, 15 : 10, 14. He that makes not peace with God is an enemy to his own soul. And he that is at peace, but takes no pains to be assured of it, is an enemy to his own comfort.

III. But I must pass from this to the third end of Christ's death, namely, *The sanctification of his people*. Typical blood was shed to purify them that were unclean ; and so was the blood of Christ to purge away the

sins of his people: He "gave himself for the church that he might sanctify and cleanse it." Eph. 5: 25, 26. "For their sakes I sanctify myself," that is, consecrate or devote myself to death, "that they also might be sanctified through the truth." John, 17: 19. This benefit received by the blood of Christ, is the theme of that doxology, which, in a lower strain, is now sounded in the churches, but will form the song of the Lamb in heaven; "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,—be glory and honor for ever." Rev. 1: 5, 6. The evil of sin consists not only in its punishment, but in its pollution. Justification properly removes the former, sanctification the latter; but both justification and sanctification flow unto sinners from the death of Christ. And though it is proper to say the Spirit sanctifies, yet it is certain it was the blood of Christ that procured for us the Spirit of sanctification. Had not Christ died, the Spirit had never come down from heaven upon any such design.

The pouring forth of Christ's blood for us obtained the pouring forth of the Spirit of holiness upon us. Therefore the Spirit is said to come in his name, and to "take of his, and show it unto us." Hence it is said, he came both by blood and by water, 1 John, 5: 6; by blood, washing away the guilt; by water, purifying from the filth of sin. Now this fruit of Christ's death, even our sanctification, is a most incomparable mercy. Do but consider a few particular excellencies of holiness.

1. Holiness is the image and glory of God. His image, Col. 3: 10, and his glory, Exod. 15: 11. "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness?" Now, when the guilt and filth of sin are washed away, and the soul clothed with the beauty of God by sanctification, Oh what a beautiful creature is the soul now! It is a beam of Divine glory upon the creature.

2. And as it is the soul's highest beauty, so it is the soul's best evidence for heaven. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." Matt. 5:8. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Heb. 12:14. No gifts, no duties, no natural endowments can claim heaven, but the least measure of true holiness will secure it to the soul.

3. Again, as holiness is the soul's best evidence for heaven, so it is a continual spring of comfort on the way thither. The purest and sweetest pleasures in this world are the results of holiness. Till we live holy lives, we never live comfortably. Heaven is epitomized in holiness.

4. And, to say no more, it is the peculiar mark by which God hath visibly distinguished his own from other men: "The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." Psalm 4:3. Oh holiness, how surpassingly glorious art thou!

INFERENCE 1. Did Christ die to sanctify his people? How deep is *the pollution* of sin, that nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it! All the tears of a penitent sinner, should he shed as many as there have fallen drops of rain since the creation, cannot wash away one sin. The everlasting burnings in hell cannot purify the flaming conscience from the least sin.

2. Did Christ die to sanctify his people? Behold *the love of a Saviour*. "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." He did not shed the blood of beasts, as the priests of old did, but his own blood. Heb. 9:12. And that not common, but "precious blood," 1 Pet. 1:19, the blood of God, one drop of which outvalues the blood that runs in the veins of all Adam's posterity. And not some of that blood, but all, all, to the last drop. And thus liberal was he of his blood to us when we were enemies. Oh what manner of love is this!

IV. As Christ died to sanctify his people ; so he died also *to confirm the new testament to all sanctified ones.* So it was in the type, *Exod. 24 : 8*, and so it is in Christ, *Matt. 26 : 28*, "This is the new testament in my blood," that is, ratified and confirmed by my blood. For "where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." *Heb. 9 : 16*. So that now all the blessings and benefits bequeathed to believers in the last will and testament of Christ, are abundantly confirmed and secured to them by his death. Yea, he died on purpose to make that testament of force to them. Men make their wills and testaments ; and Christ makes his. What they bequeath, and give in their wills, is a free and voluntary act, they cannot be compelled to do it. And what is bequeathed to us in this testament of Christ, is altogether a free and voluntary donation. Other testators usually bequeath their estates to their wives and children, and near relations ; so doth this testator : all is settled upon his spouse, the church ; upon believers, his children. A stranger intermeddles not with these mercies. Men give all their goods and estate that can be conveyed, to their friends that survive them. Christ giveth to his church, in the new testament, three sorts of goods :

1. All temporal good things ; *1 Tim. 6 : 6 ; Matt. 6 : 33* ; that is, the comfort and blessing of all, though not the possession of much ; "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." *2 Cor. 6 : 10*.

2. All spiritual good things, as remission of sin, and acceptance with God, which are contained in their justification. *Rom. 3 : 24-26*. Sanctification of their natures, both initial and progressive. *1 Cor. 1 : 30*. Adoption into the family of God. *Gal. 3 : 26*. The ministry of angels. *Heb. 1 : 14*. Interest in all the promises. *2 Pet. 1 : 4*.

3. All eternal good things. Heaven, glory, and eter-

nal life. Rom. 8: 16, 17. No such bequests as these were ever found in the testaments of princes. All that kings and nobles settle by will upon their heirs, are but trifles to what Christ hath conferred in the new testament upon his people.

All this is confirmed and ratified by the death of Christ. He died, not merely, as Socinians say, to confirm the new testament by way of testimony, or witness-bearing in his death. This is a fearful derogation from the efficacy of Christ's blood, bringing it down to equality with the blood of martyrs; as if there were no more in it than in their blood. But know, reader, Christ died not only, or principally, to confirm the testament by his blood, as witness to the truth of those things, but *his death ratified it* as the death of a testator, which makes the new testament irrevocable; just as when a man hath made his will, and is dead, that will is presently in force, and can never be recalled. Besides, the will of the dead is sacred with men; they dare not cross it. It is certain the last will and testament of Christ is most sacred, and God will never annul or make it void. Moreover, it is not with Christ as with other testators, who die, and must trust the performance of their wills with their executors; but as he died to put it in force, so he lives again to be the executor of his own testament. And all power to fulfil his will is now in his hands. Rev. 1: 18.

INFERENCE 1. Did Christ die to confirm the new testament, in which such legacies are bequeathed to believers? How are all believers concerned to *assure their title to the mercies contained in this blessed testament!*

Examine your relations to Christ. Are you his spouse? Have you forsaken all for him? Psa. 45: 10, 11. Are you ready to take your lot with him, in prosperity or in adversity? Jer. 2: 2. Are you loyal to Christ? "Thou shalt be for me, and not for another." Hos. 3: 3. Do

you yield obedience to him as your Head and Husband? Eph. 5:23; then you may be confident you are interested in the blessings of Christ's last will and testament; for can you imagine Christ will make a testament and forget his spouse? It cannot be. If he so loved the church as to give himself for her, much more what he hath purchased is settled on her. Again, are you his spiritual seed, his children by regeneration? Are you born of the Spirit? John, 3. Do you resemble Christ in holiness? 1 Pet. 1:15, 16. Do you find a reverential fear of Christ impelling you to obey him in all things? Mal. 1:6. Are you led by the Spirit of Christ? As many as are so led, "they are the sons of God." Rom. 8:14. To conclude, Have you the spirit of adoption, enabling you to cry, Abba, Father? Gal. 4:6; that is, helping you in a gracious manner, with reverence mixed with filial confidence, to open your heart spiritually to your Father on all occasions? If so, you are children; and if children, doubt not but you have a rich legacy in Christ's last will and testament.

You may also discern your interest in the New Testament or covenant (for they are substantially the same thing) by the *new covenant impressions made on your hearts*, which are so many clear evidences of your right to the benefits it contains. Such are spiritual illuminations, Jer. 31:34; gracious softness and tenderness of heart, Ezek. 11:19; the awful dread and fear of God, Jer. 32:43; the copy or transcript of his laws on your hearts in gracious correspondent principles, Jer. 31:33. These things speak you to be children of the covenant, on whom all these great things are settled.

2. To conclude, it is the indispensable duty of all on whom Christ hath settled such mercies, to *admire and walk in his love*. Admire the love of Christ. Oh how intense and ardent was the love of Jesus, who designed for you such an inheritance, with such a settlement of

it upon you! Before this love let all the saints fall down astonished, humbly professing that they owe themselves, and all they are, or shall be to eternity, to this love. And be sure you walk becoming persons for whom Christ hath done such great things. Comfort yourselves under present trials with your spiritual privileges, James, 2:5, and let all your rejoicing be in Christ, whilst others are blessing themselves in vanity.

Having finished what I designed to say of the work of redemption, as performed by Christ in his humbled state, we shall now view that blessed work as further advanced and perfected in his state of EXALTATION.

The whole of that work was not to be finished in a state of suffering and abasement on earth: the apostle makes his exaltation so necessary a part of his priesthood, that without it he could not have been a priest. "If he were on earth he should not be a priest," Heb. 8:4; that is, if he had continued here, and had not been raised again from the dead, and taken up into glory, he could not have been a complete and perfect priest. For just as it was not enough for the sacrifice to be slain without, and his blood left there; but it must be carried within the veil, into the most holy place before the Lord, Heb. 9:7; so it was not sufficient that Christ shed his own blood on earth, except he carry it before the Lord into heaven, and there perform his intercession-work for us.

Moreover, God the Father stood engaged in a solemn covenant to reward him for his deep humiliation, with a most glorious and illustrious advancement. Isa. 49:5-7. And how God made this good to Christ, the apostle very clearly expresses. Phil. 2:9. Our surety could not be detained in the prison of the grave, when the

debt for which he was imprisoned was fully discharged, so that the law of God must acknowledge itself to be fully satisfied in all its claims and demands. His resurrection from the dead was, therefore, his discharge or acquittance upon full payment, which could not in justice be denied him.

And, indeed, there never was a more glorious manifestation of the name of God to the world, than was made in that work: "That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2: 11. Oh how illustriously, yea, astonishingly, is the love of God to poor sinners displayed in Christ's exaltation! When, to show his complacency and delight in our recovery, he hath openly declared to the world, that his exalting Christ to all that glory, to which no mere creature ever was or can be raised, was bestowed upon him as a reward for that work, that most grateful work of our redemption: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him." Phil. 2: 9. There is an "emphatical pleonasm in that word;" it implies super-exaltation! A greater proof of the Father's high satisfaction in the recovery of poor sinners cannot be given. For this, therefore, God the Father shall have glory and honor ascribed to him in heaven to all eternity.

Now this singular exaltation of Jesus Christ, as it properly respects his human nature which alone is capable of advancement, for, in his Divine nature, he never ceased to be the Most High; so it was awarded to him as a common person, and as the Head of all believers, their Representative in this as well as in his other works. God therein showing what, in due time, he intends to do with the persons of his elect, after they, in conformity to Christ, have suffered a while. Whatever God the Father intendeth to do in us, or for us, he hath first done it to the person of our Representative, Jesus Christ. And this, if you observe, the Scriptures carry,

in very clear and plain expressions, through all the degrees and steps of Christ's exaltation, namely, his resurrection, ascension, session at the right hand of God, and returning to judge the world; of which I purpose to speak distinctly in the following discourses.

He arose from the dead as a public person: "If ye then be risen with Christ," saith the apostle, Col. 3 : 1 ; so that the saints have communion and fellowship with him in his resurrection.

He ascended into heaven as a public person; for so it is said in Eph. 2 : 6. "He hath raised us up," or exalted us together with Christ; "and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We sit there in our Representative. And when he shall come again to judge the world, the saints shall come with him. So it is prophesied, "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." Zech. 14 : 5. And as they come with Christ from heaven, so they shall sit on thrones with him. They shall be assessors with the Judge. 1 Cor. 6 : 2. This deserves a special remark, that all this honor is given to Christ as our Head and Representative, for thence results abundance of comfort to the people of God. Carry it therefore along with you in your thoughts, throughout the whole of Christ's advancement. Think, when you hear that Christ is risen from the dead, and is in all his glory and authority in heaven, how sure is the salvation of his redeemed. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession." Heb. 7 : 25. Think how safe the people of God in this world are, whose Head is in heaven. It was a comfortable expression of one of the fathers, encouraging himself and others with this truth in a dark day; "Come (said he,)

why do we tremble thus ? Do we not see our Head above water ?" If he live, believers cannot die ; " Because I live, ye shall live also." John, 14 : 19.

And let no man's heart suggest a suspicion that this wonderful advancement of Christ may cause him to forget his poor people groaning here below under sin and misery. For the temper and disposition of his faithful and tender heart is not changed with his condition. He bears the same respect to us as when he dwelt among us ; indeed he there lives and acts upon our account. Heb. 7 : 25. 1 John, 2 : 1, 2.

How seasonable and comfortable will the meditations of Christ's exaltation be to thee, O believer, when sickness hath wasted thy body, withered its beauty, and God is bringing thee to the dust of death ! Think, then, that that " vile body shall be conformed to the glorious body of Christ." Phil. 3 : 21. As God hath glorified, and highly exalted his Son, " whose form was marred more than any man's," so will he exalt thee also. I do not say, to an equality in glory with Christ, for in heaven he will be discerned and distinguished, by his peculiar glory, from all the angels and saints ; as the sun is known by its excellent glory from the lesser stars. But we shall be conformed to this glorious Head, according to the proportion of members. Oh whither will love mount the believer in that day !

Having thus spoken of Christ's exalted state, to cast some general light upon it, and engage your attention to it, I shall now proceed briefly to consider this his wonderful exaltation, under the above-mentioned heads : his resurrection, ascension, session at the Father's right hand, and his return to judge the world.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

"He is not here : for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."—Matt. 28 : 6.

We have contemplated Christ's humiliation, wherein the Sun of righteousness appeared as a setting sun, gone out of sight. But as the sun, when to us it is set, begins a new day in another part of the world, so Christ, having finished his course in this world, rises again, and that to perform another glorious part of his work in the world above. In his death, he was in a sense totally eclipsed ; but in his resurrection, he begins to recover his light and glory. An angel descends from heaven, to roll away the stone, and, with it, the reproach of his death ; and to announce his resurrection to the two Marys, whose love to Christ had drawn them to visit the sepulchre, where they lately left him.

At this time (the Lord being newly risen) the keepers were trembling, and as dead men, so terrible was the majesty and awful solemnity attending Christ's resurrection. But, to encourage these pious souls, the angel anticipates them with these good tidings : "He is not here ; for he is risen, as he said : come, see the place where the Lord lay : " as if he had said, be not troubled, though you have not the end you came for, one sight more of your dear, though dead Jesus ; yet you have not lost your labor ; for, to your eternal comfort I tell you, "he is risen, as he said." And to put it out of doubt, come hither and satisfy yourselves, "See the place where the Lord lay." In which words we have both a declaration and confirmation of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

1. "He is not here." Here indeed you laid him, here you left him, and here you thought to find him as you left him; but you are happily mistaken. He is not here. He is risen, *ἠγέρθη*; the word imports the active power, or self-quickening principle, by which Christ raised himself from the state of the dead. It was the divine nature, or Godhead of Christ, which revived and raised the manhood.

2. Here is also a plain confirmation of Christ's resurrection, and that, first, from Christ's own prediction. "He is risen, as he said." He foretold that which I declare to be now fulfilled. Let it not therefore seem incredible to you. Secondly, by their own sight. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." The grave hath lost its guest; it is now empty; death hath lost its prey. It received, but could not retain him; "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Hence,

Our Lord Jesus Christ, by the Almighty power of his own Godhead, revived, and rose from the dead; to the terror and consternation of his enemies, and the unspeakable consolation of believers.

That our Lord Jesus Christ, though laid, was not lost in the grave, but the third day revived and rose again, is a truth confirmed to us "by many infallible proofs," as Luke witnesses. Acts, 1 : 3. We have testimonies of it both from heaven and earth. From heaven, we have the testimony of angels who cannot deceive us. The angel tells the two Marys, in the text, "He is risen." We have also testimonies of it from men, holy men, who were eye-witnesses of this truth, to whom he showed himself alive, by the space of forty days after his resurrection, on no less than *nine occasions. At one time five hundred brethren saw him at once. 1 Cor. 15 : 6. These were holy persons, who durst not deceive, and

* John, 20 : 14. Mark, 16 : 12. John, 20 : 19. 1 Cor. 15 : 5-7. 1 Cor. 15 : 8. John, 20 : 26. John, 21 : 1, 2. Luke, 24 : 36.

who confirmed their testimony with their blood. So that no point of religion is rendered more infallibly certain than this before us.

And blessed be God that it is so. For if it were not, then were the Gospel in vain, 1 Cor. 15 : 14, seeing it hangs the whole weight of our faith, hope, and salvation upon Christ as risen from the dead. If this were not so, then would the holy and divinely inspired apostles be found false witnesses. 1 Cor. 15 : 15 ; for they all, with one mouth, constantly, and to the death, affirmed it. If Christ be not risen, then are believers yet in their sins. 1 Cor. 15 : 17. He " was raised again for our justification." Rom. 4 : 25. Whilst Christ was dying, and continued in the state of the dead, the price of our redemption was paying ; the payment was not completed till he revived and rose again. Hence the whole force and weight of our justification depends upon his resurrection. Nay, had not Christ risen, the dead in Christ " had perished," 1 Cor. 15 : 18, even the dead who died in the faith of Christ, and of whose salvation there now remains no ground to doubt.

Moreover, had he not revived and risen from the dead, how could all the types that prefigured this have been satisfied ; and all the predictions of his resurrection, by which it was so plainly foretold, have been fulfilled ? See Matt. 12 : 40 ; Luke, 24 : 46 ; Ps. 16 : 10 ; 1 Cor. 15 : 4. Had he not risen from the dead, how could he have been installed in the glory he now has in heaven, and which was promised him before the world was, on account of his death and sufferings ? " For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living," Rom. 14 : 9 ; and that, in this state of dominion and glorious advancement, he might powerfully apply the virtue and benefits of his blood to us. So, then, there remains no doubt of the fact of Christ's resurrection. Instead, therefore,

of attempting further to confirm it, I will proceed to explain the nature and manner of his resurrection.

1. Christ rose from the dead *with awful majesty*. "And, behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Matt. 28:2-4. Human infirmity was not able to bear such heavenly majesty as attended the scenes of that morning. Nature sank under it. This earthquake was, as one calls it, a sign of triumph, or token of victory, given by Christ, not only to the keepers and the neighboring city, but to the whole world, showing that he had overcome death in its own dominions, and, like a conqueror, lifted up his head above all his enemies.

2. And to increase the splendor and the triumph of that day, his resurrection was attended with *the resurrection of many of the saints*; who had slept in their graves till then, and were awakened and raised to attend the Lord at his rising. "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Matt. 27:52, 53. This wonder was designed, both to adorn the resurrection of Christ, and to give a specimen or pledge of our resurrection; which also is to be in virtue of his. This indeed was the resurrection of saints, and none but saints, the resurrection of many saints, yet it was but a special resurrection, intended only to show what God will one day do for all his saints; and for the present, to give testimony of Christ's resurrection from the dead. They were seen, and known of many in the city, who doubtless never thought to have seen them any more in this world. To inquire curiously, as

some do, who they were, what discourse they had with those to whom they appeared, and what became of them afterwards, is vain. God hath cast a veil upon these things, that we might content ourselves with the written word; and he that "will not believe Moses and the prophets, neither will he believe though one rose from the dead."

3. As Christ rose from the dead with those attendants who accompanied him at his resurrection; so it was *by the power of his own Godhead* that he quickened and raised himself; and by virtue of his resurrection were they also raised who accompanied him. It was not the angel who rolled back the stone that revived him in the sepulchre, but he resumed his own life; so he tells us, John, 10 : 17; "I lay down my life, that I may take it again." Hence, 1 Pet. 3 : 18, he is said to be put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, that is, by the power of his Godhead, or Divine nature, which is opposed there to flesh, or his human nature. By the eternal Spirit he offered himself up to God, when he died, Heb. 9 : 14; that is, by his own Godhead, not the third Person in the Trinity, for then it could not have been ascribed to him as his own act, that he offered up himself. And by the same Spirit he was quickened again. Therefore the apostle well observes, "that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead." Rom. 1 : 4. Now, if he had been raised by the power of the Father, or of the Holy Spirit only, and not by his own, how could he be declared by his resurrection to be the Son of God? What more had appeared in him than in others? Others are raised by the power of God. So that in this respect also it was a marvellous resurrection. Never any did, or shall rise as Christ rose, by a self-quickening principle. For though many dead saints rose at that time, it was by virtue of Christ's resurrection that their graves were

opened, and their bodies quickened: as he said when he raised Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life." John, 11: 25.

4. It may therefore be truly affirmed, that though some dead saints were raised to life before the resurrection of Christ, yet Christ is "*the First-born from the dead*," as he is called, Col. 1: 18. For though Lazarus and others were raised, yet it was not by themselves, but by Christ. It was by his virtue and power, not their own. And though they were raised to life, yet they died again; but Christ dieth no more. "Death hath no dominion over him." He was the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

5. Christ rose as a *public person*; "as the first-fruits of them that slept." 1 Cor. 15: 20. I desire that this may be well understood; for upon this account it is that our resurrection is secured to us by the resurrection of Christ; and not a resurrection only, but a blessed and happy one, for the first-fruits both assured and sanctified the whole harvest.

Now that Christ did rise as a public person, representing and comprehending all the elect, who were called the children of the resurrection, is plain from Eph. 2: 6, where we are said to be risen with, or in him. So that, as we are said to die in Adam, as the branches die in the death of the root; so we are said to be raised from death in Christ, who is the Head, Root, and Representative of all his spiritual seed. And why is he called the First-born, and First-begotten from the dead, but with respect to the whole of those that are also to be born from the dead in their time and order? As sure as the whole harvest follows the first-fruits, so shall the general resurrection of the saints to life eternal follow this birth of the first-born from the dead. It shall surely follow it, and that not only as a consequent follows an antecedent, but as an effect follows its proper cause.

There is a three-fold influence of Christ's resurrection upon the resurrection of the saints, as at once its meritorious, efficient, and exemplary cause:

The resurrection of Christ is a *meritorious* cause of the saints' resurrection, as it completed his satisfaction, and so our justification is properly assigned to it. Rom. 4 : 25.

It is also the *efficient* cause of it. For when the saints shall rise, they shall be raised by Christ as their Head, in whom is the effective principle of their life. Your life is "hid with Christ in God." Col. 3 : 3. So Rom. 8 : 10. "And if Christ be in you, the body indeed is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness:" that is, though you are really united to Christ by the Spirit, yet your bodies must die as well as other men's; but your souls shall be immediately, upon your dissolution, swallowed up in life. And then it follows, verse 11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you;" that is, though your bodies must die, yet they shall live again in the resurrection; and that by virtue of the Spirit of Christ which dwelleth in you, and is the bond of your mystical union with him your Head. You shall not be raised as others are, by a mere word of power, but by the Spirit of life dwelling in Christ your Head, which is a choice prerogative indeed.

Christ's resurrection is also the *exemplary cause or pattern* of our resurrection. "He being the first and best, is therefore the pattern and measure of all the rest." "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Phil. 3 : 21. Now *the conformity of our resurrection to Christ's* may be noticed in the following particulars :

Christ's body was raised *substantially the same* that it

was before ; and so will ours be. Not another, but the same body. " This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality." 1 Cor. 15 : 53. It will be the same body, not another body in its stead. Should God prepare another body to be raised instead of this, it would not be a resurrection, but a creation.

His body was raised, not by a word of power from the Father, but *by his own Spirit*. So the resurrection of the saints is to be effected, as already said, by his Spirit which now dwelleth in them. That very Spirit of Christ which effected their spiritual resurrection from sin, shall also effect their corporeal resurrection from the grave.

His body was raised first : he had in this, as well as in other things, the pre-eminence ; so shall the saints, in respect to the wicked, have the *pre-eminence in the resurrection*, " The dead in Christ shall rise first." 1 Thess. 4 : 16. They are to attend the Lord at his coming, and will be brought forth sooner than the rest of the world to attend on that service.

Christ's *body was marvellously improved* by the resurrection ; and so will ours be. It fell in weakness, but was raised in power, no more capable of sorrow, pain, and dishonor. In like manner our bodies are " sown in weakness, but raised in strength ; sown in dishonor, raised in glory ; sown natural bodies, raised spiritual bodies," 1 Cor. 15 : 43, 44. No infirmities attend glorified bodies, nor are they henceforth subject to any of those natural necessities by which they are now bound. There are no defects or deformities in the children of the resurrection. What members are now defective or deformed, will then be restored to their perfect being and beauty ; " for," as Tertullian says, " if the universal death of all parts be rescinded by the resurrection, how much more the partial death of any single member !" From thenceforth they are free from the law of mortality,

"They can die no more." Luke, 20 : 35, 36. Thus shall they be improved by their resurrection.

Again, Christ's body was *raised from the dead to be glorified* and crowned with honor. Oh it was a joyful day to him ; and so will the resurrection of the saints be to them the day of the gladness of their hearts. It will be said to them in that morning, "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust." Isa. 26 : 19. Oh how comfortable will be the meeting between the glorified soul and its new-raised body. Three things will make it so.

The gratification of the soul's *natural desire of union with its own body*. For even glorified souls in heaven have such a desire of re-union. We are all sensible of the soul's affection to the body now, its sympathy with it, and unwillingness to be separated from it. It is said to be "at home in the body." 2 Cor. 5 : 6. This inclination remains in heaven, it reckons not itself completely happy till its older dear companion and partner be with it. Now, when this inclination to its own body, its longings after it, are gratified with the sight and enjoyment of it again, what a joyful meeting will this be ! especially if we consider,

The excellent temper and state in which they shall meet each other. For, as the body shall be raised with all the improvements and endowments imaginable which may render it every way desirable, so the soul comes down immediately from God out of heaven, shining in its holiness and glory. And thus it re-enters its body, and animates it again.

But that wherein the chief joy of this meeting consists, is *the end* for which the glorified soul comes down to quicken and repossess it, namely, to meet the Lord, and ever to be with the Lord ; to receive a full reward for all the labors and services it performed for God in this world. This must make that day a day of triumph and exaltation. It comes out of the grave, as Joseph

out of prison, to be advanced to the highest honor. Oh do but imagine with what an ecstasy of joy the soul will thus resume its own body, and say, as it were, unto it, Come away, my dear, my ancient friend, who servedst and sufferedst with me in the world; come along with me to meet the Lord, in whose presence I have been ever since I parted with thee. Now thy bountiful Lord hath remembered thee also, and the day of thy glorification is come. Surely it will be a joyful meeting. What a joy is it for dear friends to meet after long separation; how they usually give demonstrations of their love and delight in each other by embraces, kisses, and tears. And frame to yourselves the idea of perfect health, when a sprightly vivacity runs through every part, and the spirits, as it were, overflow as we go about any business; especially such as the business of that day will be, to receive a crown and a kingdom. Do but imagine what a bright morning this will be, and how the pains and agonies, cold sweats and bitter groans at parting will be recompensed by the joy of such a meeting!

INFERENCE 1. If Christ was thus raised from the dead, then *death is overcome*, and swallowed up in victory: were it not so, it had never let Christ escape out of the grave. Death is a dreadful enemy, it defies all the sons and daughters of Adam. None but Christ dared cope with this king of terrors, and he, by dying, foiled it in its own territories and dominions, and came off conqueror. For, as the apostle says, it was impossible it should hold or detain him. Acts, 2: 24. Never did death meet with its over-match before, and Christ conquering it for us, and in our names rising as our representative, now every single saint triumphs over it as a vanquished enemy: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15: 55, 57. Thus, like Joshua, they set the foot of faith upon the neck of this king of terrors.

2. Have Christ and his resurrection such a potent influence upon the resurrection of the saints? Then it is the duty, and will be the wisdom of the people of God, *so to govern, dispose, and employ their bodies*, as becomes those that understand what glory is prepared for them at the resurrection of the just. Particularly,

Be not fondly tender of them, but *employ them for God*. How many good duties are lost and spoiled by sinful indulgence to our bodies! Alas! we are generally more solicitous to live long, than to live usefully. How many christians have active, vigorous bodies, yet God hath little service from them! If your bodies were animated by some other souls that love God more than you do, and burn with holy zeal in his service, more work would be done for God in a day, than is now done in a month. To have an able, healthy body, and not use it for God, is as if one should give you a strong and stately horse, upon condition you must not work or ride him. Wherein is the mercy of having a body, except it be employed for God? Will not its reward at the resurrection recompense all the pains now endured in his service?

See that you *preserve the due honor of your bodies*. "Possess them in sanctification and honor." 1 Thess. 4:4. Oh let not those eyes be now defiled with sin, by which you shall see God,—those ears be inlets to vanity, which shall hear the hallelujahs of the blessed. God hath designed honor for your bodies, Oh make them not either the instruments or objects of sin. There are sins against the body. 1 Cor. 6:18. Preserve your bodies from those defilements, for they are the temple of God; "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." 1 Cor. 3:17.

Let not the indulgence of your bodies draw your souls into snares, and bring them under the power of temptations to sin. This is a very common case. Oh how many

thousands of precious souls perish eternally for the satisfaction of a vile body for a moment ! Their souls must suffer, because the body must be indulged. It is recorded to the immortal honor of those worthies, Heb. 11 : 32-35, that they " accepted not deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." They might have had a temporal resurrection from death to life, from reproach to honor, from poverty to riches, from pain to pleasure ; but upon such terms they judged it all not worth acceptance. They would not expose their souls to secure their bodies. They had the same natural affections that other men have. They were made of as tender flesh as we, but such was their care of their souls, and the hope of a better resurrection, that they listened not to the complaints of their bodies. Oh that we all had the same resolution.

Withhold not, upon the pretence of your own temporal wants, that which God and conscience bid you to *communicate for the refreshment of the saints*, whose present necessities require your assistance. Oh be not too indulgent to your own flesh, and cruel to others. Certainly the consideration of that reward which shall be given you at the resurrection, for every act of christian charity, is a sufficient incentive. And to that end it is urged as a motive to charity : " When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind ; and thou shalt be blessed ; for they cannot recompense thee : for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Luke, 14 : 13, 14. It was the opinion of an eminent modern divine, that no man living fully understands and believes that scripture, " Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25 : 40. How few saints would be exposed to daily wants and necessities, if that scripture were but fully understood and believed !

3. Is Christ risen from the dead, and that as a public

person and representative of believers? How are we all concerned to *secure to ourselves an interest* in Christ, and consequently in this blessed resurrection! What consolation would be left in this world, if the hope of the resurrection were taken away? It is this blessed hope that must support you under all the troubles of life, and in the agonies of death. The securing of a blessed resurrection to yourselves, is therefore your deepest concern. And it may be secured to yourselves, if, upon serious heart-examination, you discover the following evidences:

If you are *regenerated*, born in a new nature to God, for we are "begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Christ's resurrection is the ground-work of our hope; and the new birth is our title or evidence of our interest in it. So that until our souls are partakers of the spiritual resurrection from the death of sin, we can have no assurance that our bodies shall be partakers of that blessed resurrection to life. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power." Rev. 20 : 6. Let not unregenerate souls expect a comfortable meeting with their bodies again. Rise they shall, by God's terrible citation, at the sound of the last trump, but not to the same end that the saints arise. They, and they only, who are sanctified by the Spirit, shall have a joyful resurrection.

If you be *dead with Christ*, you shall live again by the life of Christ. If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Rom. 6 : 5, 8. Some refer the word *συμφυτεῖς*, (planted together,) to believers themselves; Jews and Gentiles, who "grow together like branches upon the same root;" but I rather understand it with reference to Christ and believers, who are, in other scriptures, said to suffer together, and be glorified together;

to die together, and live together; to be crucified together, and buried together; all showing the communion they have with Christ, both in his death and in his life. Now, if the power of Christ's death, that is, the mortifying influence of it, have been exerted upon our hearts, killing their lusts, deadening their affections, and subduing their appetites, then the power of his life, or resurrection, shall come upon our dead, withered bodies, to revive and raise them up to live with him in glory.

If your *hearts and affections be now with Christ* in heaven, your bodies in due time shall be there also, and conformed to his glorious body. "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body." Phil. 3 : 20, 21. "The body is here called vile, or the body of our vileness." Not as God made it, but as sin hath marred it. Not absolutely, and in itself, but relatively, and in comparison with what it will be at the resurrection. Then those scattered bones and dispersed dust, like pieces of old broken, battered silver, will be new-cast, and wrought in the best and newest fashion, even like to Christ's glorious body. Whereof we have this evidence, that our conversation is already heavenly. The temper, frame, and disposition of our souls is already so; therefore the frame and temper of our bodies in due time shall be so.

If you *strive now to attain* the resurrection of the dead, no doubt it shall be yours. This was Paul's great desire, "that by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Phil. 3 : 11. He means not simply a resurrection from the dead, for that all men shall attain, but that complete holiness and perfection which shall attend the resurrection of the just; so it is explained, verse 12. So then, if God have raised in your hearts a vehement desire and assiduous endeavor after

a perfect freedom from sin, and full conformity to God, in the beauty of holiness, that very love of holiness, and your present pantings after perfection, speak you to be the persons for whom it is reserved.

If you *do good* in your generation; if you are useful in the world, you shall have part in this blessed resurrection: "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life." John, 5 : 28, 29. Now it is not every act, materially good, that entitles a man to this privilege; but the same requisites defined as necessary to constitute a good prayer, are also necessary to every good work. The person, matter, manner, and end must **be good**. Nor is it any single good act, but a series and course of holy actions that is here meant. What an incitement should this be to us all, (as indeed the apostle makes it, closing up the doctrine of the resurrection with this solemn exhortation, 1 Cor. 15 : 58, with which I also close,) "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

CHAPTER XL.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." John, 20 : 17.

We have been following Christ through his humiliation, from the time that he left the blessed bosom of the

Father : and now, as he has finished the whole course of his obedience on earth, and risen again from the dead, we must, in this discourse, follow him back again into heaven, to that bosom of ineffable delight and love which, for our sakes, he so freely left. He did not rise from the dead, to live such a low, animal life as this, but a most glorious life, as enthroned King in heaven : upon which state he was now ready to enter, as he tells Mary in the text, and bids her tell it to the disciples ; "Go, tell my brethren that I ascend to my Father," &c. In which injunction we have,

1. The persons to whom this message was sent,—My "brethren," so he calls the disciples. A sweet term, and full of love. Much like that of Joseph to his brethren, Gen. 45 : 4, save that there is much more tenderness in it. He reminds them in the same breath of what they had done against him ; "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold:" but Christ says, "Go tell my brethren," without the least mention of their cowardice or unkindness.

2. The message itself,—Tell my brethren, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father ; to my God, and your God." It is in the present tense, as if he were then ascending, though he did not ascend for some weeks after ; but he so expresses it, to show what was the next part of his work, which he was to act in heaven for them ; and how much his heart was set upon it : "I ascend to my Father, and your Father ; to my God, and your God." This is the substance of the message sent by Mary to the pensive disciples. Hence

Our Lord Jesus Christ not only rose from the dead, but ascended into heaven ; there to accomplish all that remained to be done for completing the salvation of his people.

So much the apostle plainly witnesses, "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above

all heavens." Eph. 4 : 10. A full and faithful account of his ascension the several evangelists have given us. Mark, 16 : 19 ; Luke, 24 : 51. This is sometimes called his going away, as John, 16 : 7. Sometimes his being exalted. Acts, 2 : 33. Sometimes his being made higher than the heavens. Heb. 7 : 26. And sometimes his entering within the veil. Heb. 6 : 19, 20. We will here consider the questions: Who ascended? Whence did he ascend? Whither? When? How? Why?

I. *Who* ascended? This the apostle answers, "the same that descended," Eph. 4 : 9, 10, namely, Christ. And himself tells us, "I ascend." And though the ascension were of Christ's whole person, yet it was a figurative expression with respect to his Divine nature, and rather applies to the humanity of Christ, which really changed places and conditions. Hence he said, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." John, 16 : 28. He goes away, and we see him no more. As God, he is spiritually with us still, even to the end of the world. But as man, the heavens must contain him "until the restitution of all things." Acts, 3 : 21.

II. *Whence* did Christ ascend? I answer, generally, he is said to ascend from this world, to leave the world, John, 16 : 28; but more particularly, it was from Mount Olivet, near Jerusalem, the very place where he began his last sufferings. Oh, what a difference was there between the state of Christ in his agony at the Mount of Olives before his passion, and that now at his ascension! But,

III. *Whither* did he ascend? It is manifest it was into the third heavens; the throne of God, and place of the blessed; where all the saints shall be with him for ever. It is said to be "far above all heavens," that is, above the heavens which we see, for they are but the pavement of that stately palace of the great King. He is

gone, saith the apostle, "within the veil," that is, into the most holy place. Into his Father's house, John, 14 : 2. And he is also said to go to the "place where he was before," John, 6 : 62, from whence at his incarnation he came.

IV. *When* did Christ ascend ? Was it as soon as he arose from the dead ? No ; "after his passion," he was "seen of them forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Acts, 1 : 3. And truly the care and love of Christ to his people was very manifest in his thus remaining with them. He had ineffable glory prepared for him in heaven, and awaiting his coming, but he will not go to possess it, till he has settled all things for the good of his church here. For in this time he confirmed the truth of his resurrection, and gave charge to the apostles concerning the discipline and order of his house or kingdom. When he had set all things in order, he would stay no longer. He had a great work to do for us in the other world. He desired to be no longer here than he had work to do for God and souls ; a good pattern for the saints.

V. *How* did Christ ascend into heaven ?

1. He ascended as a *public person* or *forerunner*, in our names, and upon our account. So it is said expressly, Heb. 6 : 19, 20, speaking of the most holy place within the veil, "whither the forerunner is for us entered." His entering into heaven as our forerunner, implies his *public capacity*, as one that went upon our business to God. "I go before to prepare a place for you," John, 14 : 2, to take possession of heaven in your names. The forerunner hath respect to others that were to come to heaven after him in their several generations ; for whom he hath prepared mansions, which are kept for them against their coming. It also implies his *precedency* ; he is our forerunner, but he himself had no forerunner. Never any entered heaven before him, but such as entered in his name, and through the virtue of

his merits. He was the first that ever entered into heaven directly, immediately, in his own name, and upon his own account. All the fathers who died before him entered in his name.

2. He ascended *triumphantly* into heaven. "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises." Psa. 47:5, 6. A cloud is prepared, as a royal chariot, to carry up the King of glory to his princely pavilion. "A cloud received him out of their sight." Acts, 1:9. And then a royal guard of mighty angels surrounded the chariot, if not for support, yet for the greater state and solemnity of their Lord's ascension. And Oh what songs of the blessed angels were heard in heaven! How was the whole city of God moved at his coming! For, as when "he brought his first-begotten in the world, he said, let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. 1:6; so at his return thither when he had finished the work of redemption, those exalted intelligences gave no less demonstrations of their delight and joy. The very heavens echoed and resounded. Yea, the triumph is not ended, and shall never end.

It is said, "I saw, in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him." Dan. 7:13, 14. This vision of Daniel was accomplished in Christ's ascension, when *they*, that is, the angels, brought him to the Ancient of days, that is, to God the Father, who, to express his welcome to Christ, gave him glory and a kingdom. Therefore God is said to "receive him up into glory." 1 Tim. 3:16. He went up, and the Father received him; yea, received so as none ever was received before him, or shall be received after him.

3. Further, Christ ascended *munificently*, shedding forth abundantly inestimable gifts upon his church at his ascension. "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." The place to which the apostle refers, is Psalm 68 : 17, 18, where you have both the triumph and magnificence with which Christ ascended. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that God might dwell among them." These words were a celebration of the triumph of David over the enemies of God, 2 Sam. 8; who brought him presents, which he dedicated to the Lord. Just so our Lord Jesus Christ, when he had overcome by his death on the cross, and now triumphed in his ascension, receives his enemies as his conquest, and gives them, by their conversion to the church, for its use and service: thus he received gifts, even for the rebellious, that is, sanctifies the natural gifts and faculties of such as hated his people before, dedicating them to the Lord, in his people's service. Thus, it is said, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, and Jerome came into Canaan laden with Egyptian gold; came into the church richly laden with natural learning and abilities. Augustine was a manichee, Cyprian a magician, the learned Bradwardine a proud freethinker, who once said, when he read Paul's epistles, *Dedignabar esse parvulus*, "I scorned such childish things," but he afterwards became a very useful man in the church of God. And even Paul himself was as fierce an enemy to the church as breathed on earth, till Christ gave him into its bosom by conversion, and then no mere man ever did the Lord and his people greater service. Men of all sorts, greater and smaller lights, have been given to the church. Officers of all sorts were

given it by Christ. Extraordinary and temporary, as prophets, apostles, evangelists; ordinary and standing, as pastors and teachers, which remain to this day. Eph. 4: 11. And those stars are fixed in the church-heaven by a most firm establishment. 1 Cor. 12: 28. Thousands now in heaven, and thousands on earth also, are blessing Christ at this day for these his ascension gifts.

4. Our Lord Jesus Christ ascended *with a blessing on his lips*: whilst he was blessing his people, he was parted from them. Luke, 24: 50, 51. Therein making good to them what is said by him, "Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end." John, 13: 1. There was a great deal of love manifested by Christ in this last act on earth. The last sight they had of him in this world was a most sweet and encouraging one. They heard nothing from his lips but love, they saw nothing in his face but love, till he mounted his triumphant chariot, and was taken out of their sight. Surely these blessings at parting were sweet and rich. They were the mercies which his blood had so lately purchased for them. And they were not only intended for them who had the happiness to be with him when he ascended; but they reach us as well as them; and will reach the last saint that shall be upon the earth till he come again. They who surrounded Christ were but representatives of the future churches. Matt. 28: 20. In blessing them, he blesseth us also.

5. He ascended, as well as rose again, *by his own power*. He was not merely passive in his ascension, but it was his own act. He went to heaven. Therefore it is said, Acts, 1: 10, "he went up," namely, by his own Divine power. And this plainly evinces him to be God, for no mere creature ever rose from earth, far above all heavens, as Christ did.

VI. *Why* did Christ ascend? I answer,

1. If Christ had not ascended, he *could not have inter-*

ceded in heaven for us ; and take away Christ's intercession, and you blight the hope of the saints. For what have we to support us, under the daily surprisals of sin, but this, that "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father:" mark that, "*with the Father;*" a Friend upon the place; one that abides there, on purpose to transact all our affairs, and as a surety for peace between God and us.

2. If Christ had not ascended, *you could not have entered* into heaven; for he went to "prepare a place for you." John, 14 : 2. He was the first that entered heaven directly, and in his own name; and had he not done so, we could not have entered in his name. The forerunner made way for all that should come after him in their several generations. Nor could your bodies have ascended after their resurrection but in virtue of Christ's ascension. For he ascended in the capacity of our Head and Representative; to his Father, and our Father; for us, and himself too.

3. If Christ had not ascended, *he could not have entered on the glory* he now enjoys in heaven. This world is not the place where perfect felicity and glory dwell. And then, how had the promise of the Father been made good to him? Or our glory, which consists in being with, and conformed to him, where had it been? "Ought not Christ to suffer, and to enter into his glory?" Luke, 24 : 26.

4. If Christ had not ascended, how could we have been assured that his payment on the cross *made full satisfaction to God*? How is it that the Spirit convinceth the world of righteousness, John, 16 : 8, 10, but from Christ's going to the Father, and returning hither no more? which gives evidence of God's full satisfaction, both with his person and work.

5. Further: How should we have enjoyed the *blessings of the Spirit and ordinances* if Christ had not ascended? If Christ had not gone away, "the Comforter

had not come ;” John, 16 : 7 ; he begins where Christ had finished. For he takes of his, and shows it to us. John, 16 : 14. And therefore it is said, “ The Holy Ghost was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” John, 17 : 39. He was then given as a sanctifying spirit, but not given in the measure that afterwards he was, to furnish and qualify men with gifts for service. And, indeed, by Christ’s ascension, both his sanctifying and his ministering gifts were shed forth more commonly and more abundantly upon men ; so that whatsoever good of conversion, edification, support, or comfort you receive from spiritual ordinances, he hath shed forth that which you now see and feel. It is the fruit of Christ’s ascension.

6. If Christ had not ascended, how had all the *types and prophecies* that prefigured and foretold it been fulfilled ? “ And the Scriptures cannot be broken.” John, 10 : 35.

So that, upon all these accounts, it was expedient that he should go away. It was for his glory, and for our advantage. Though we lost the comfort of his bodily presence, yet if “ we loved him, we should rejoice, because he went to the Father.” John, 14 : 28. We ought to have rejoiced in his advancement, though it had been to our loss ; but when it is so much for our benefit, as well as his glory, it is in all respects a ground of joy that he is ascended to his Father, and our Father ; to his God, and our God. It was in view of all the blessings flowing to us from his ascension, that he charged his people not to be troubled at his leaving them. John, 14.

INFERENCE 1. Did Christ ascend into heaven ? Is our Jesus, our treasure indeed there ? *Where then should the hearts of believers be*, but in heaven, where their Lord, their Life is ? Surely it is not good that your love and your Lord should be in two different countries, said one that is now with him. Up, and hasten after

him, that he and you may be together. Christians, you ascended with him virtually, when he ascended; you shall ascend to him personally, hereafter; Oh that you would ascend to him, spiritually, in acts of faith, love, and desires daily. How good were it, if we could say with the apostle, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour." Phil. 3:20. A heart tending upwards, is the best evidence of your interest in Christ's ascension.

2. Did Christ go to heaven as a forerunner? How should we *haste to follow him*? Come, christians, "Lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets you, and run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus." Heb. 12:1, 2. The Captain of our salvation is entered within the gates of the new Jerusalem, and calls to us out of heaven to hasten to him; proposing the greatest encouragements to them that follow: "He that overcometh shall sit with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Rev. 3:21. How tedious should it seem to us, to live so long at a distance from our Lord!

3. Did Christ ascend so triumphantly, leading captivity captive? How little reason then have believers *to fear their conquered enemies*? Sin, Satan, and every enemy, were in that day led away in triumph, dragged at Christ's chariot wheels, brought after him as it were in chains. It is a triumphant sight to see the necks of those tyrants under the foot of our Joshua. He made at that day "an open show of them." Col. 2:15. Their strength is broken for ever. In this he showed himself more than a conqueror; for he conquered and triumphed too. Satan was then trodden under his feet, and he hath promised to tread him under our feet also, and that shortly. Rom. 16:20. Some power our enemies yet retain, the serpent may bruise our heel, but Christ hath bruised his head.

4. Did Christ ascend so munificently, shedding forth

so many mercies upon his people ; mercies of inestimable value, reserved on purpose to adorn that day ? Oh then see that you abuse not *the precious ascension gifts* of Christ, but value and improve them as the choicest mercies. Now the ascension-gifts, as I told you, are either the ordinances and officers of the church, (for he then gave them pastors and teachers,) or the Spirit that furnished the church with all its gifts. Beware you abuse not either.

Abuse not the *ordinances and officers* of Christ. This is a prevailing sin. Surely God hath written to us the great things of his law, and we have accounted them small things.

And see *that you abuse not the Spirit*, whom God sent from heaven at his ascension, to supply his bodily absence among us, and who is the great pledge of his care and tender love of his people. Take heed that you do not vex him by your disobedience ; nor grieve him by your unkindnesses ; nor quench him by your sinful neglect of duty, or abuse of light. Oh cherish the Spirit, and obey his voice ; comply with his designs, and yield up yourselves to his guidance and conduct. Methinks, to be entreated by the love of the Spirit, Rom. 15 : 30, should be as great an argument as to be entreated for Christ's sake. Now, to persuade all the saints to be tender of *grieving the Spirit by sin*, let me urge a few considerations :

He was *the first and principal mercy* that Christ received for you at his entrance into heaven. It was the first thing he asked of God when he came to heaven. So he speaks, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you." John, 14 : 16. So that the Spirit is the first-born of mercies ; and deserves the first place in our hearts and esteem.

The Spirit comes not in his own name to us, (though, if so, he deserves a dear welcome for his own sake, and

for the benefits we receive by him, which are inestimable,) but he comes to us *in the name, and in the love, both of the Father and the Son*; as one authorized and delegated by them: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father," John, 15 : 26 ; and in John, 14 : 26, the Father is said to "send him in Christ's name."

But you should beware of grieving the Spirit, on account of *his own nature and office*.

In his *nature* he is God : co-equal with the Father and Son in nature and dignity : "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me." 2 Sam. 23 : 2, 3. He is God ; the Rock of Israel. God omnipotent, for he created all things. Gen. 1 : 31. God omnipresent, filling all things. Psalm 139 : 7. God omniscient, who knows your heart. Rom. 8 : 27. Beware therefore of grieving him, for in so doing you grieve God.

Think also of his *office*, and the benefits we receive by him. Gratitude and ingenuousness must compel us to obey him ; for he is sent in the character of an Advocate to help us to pray ; to indite our requests for us ; to teach us what and how to ask of God. Rom. 8 : 26. He comes to us as a Comforter. John, 14 : 16. And none like him. His work is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us ; that is, to take of his death, and resurrection, ascension, yea, of his present intercession in heaven, and show it to us. It was he that formed the body of Christ in the womb, and so prepared him to be a sacrifice for us. He filled that humanity with his unexampled fullness, Luke, 1 : 35 ; Isa. 61 : 1 ; Col. 1 : 19 ; thus fitting and anointing him for the discharge of his office. It is he that gives efficacy to the ordinances : without him they would be a dead letter. It was he that blessed them to your conviction and conversion. 2 Cor. 9 : 6 ; John, 16 : 9 ; 1 Pet. 1 : 12 ; 1 John, 3 : 24 ; Rom.

8 : 9, 26 ; John, 14 : 26 ; Ezek. 36 : 25-27. Without him you could never have had an interest in Christ, or communion with Christ. It was he that so often hath helped your infirmities, when you knew not what to say ; comforted your heart when it was overwhelmed within you, and you knew not what to do ; preserved you many thousand times from sin and ruin, when you have been upon their slippery brink. It is he, in his sanctifying work, that is the best evidence your soul has for heaven. It were endless to enumerate the mercies you have by him. And now, reader, dost thou not blush to think how unworthily thou hast treated such a friend ? Oh grieve not the Holy Spirit, whom Christ sent as soon as he went into heaven, in his Father's name, and in his own name, to perform all these offices for you.

5. Is Christ ascended to the Father as our forerunner ? Then the door of salvation stands *open to all believers*, and by virtue of Christ's ascension they also shall ascend after him, "far above all heavens." O my friends, what a place hath Christ prepared for you ! what a splendid habitation hath he provided for you ! "God is not ashamed to be called your God ; for he hath prepared for you a city." Heb. 11 : 16. In that city Christ hath provided mansions and resting-places for your everlasting abode, John, 14 : 2, and keeps them for you till your coming. Oh how august and glorious a dwelling is that, where sun, and moon, and stars shall roll as much below your feet as they are now above your heads ! May God give us a joyful meeting within the veil with our forerunner, and sweeten our passage into it with many a blessed foresight and foretaste. And, in the mean time, let the love of a Saviour inflame our hearts, so that whenever we cast a look towards that place where our forerunner is for us entered, our souls may say, with melting affections, Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ ; and again, blessed be God for his unspeakable gift.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SESSION OF CHRIST AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND.

"When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Heb. 1:3.

Christ having finished his whole work on earth, and returned again to his Father, assumes the seat prepared for him at God's right hand. How is his condition changed within a few days! Here he groaned, wept, labored, suffered, and found no rest: there he enters into rest, sits down for ever in the highest throne, prepared by the Father for him when he should have done his work.

The design of the epistle to the Hebrews is to demonstrate Christ to be the fulness of all legal types and ceremonies, and that whatever light glimmered to the world through them, was but as the light of the day-star to the light of the sun. In this chapter Christ is described, and in this third verse particularly,

1. By his essential and primeval glory and dignity, he is "the brightness of his Father's glory," the very refulgency of that Sun of glory. As the sun communicates its light and influence to us by its beams; so doth God communicate his goodness, and manifest himself by Christ. Yea, he is "the express image," or character, "of his person."

2. He is described by the work he wrought here on earth, in his humbled state. It was a glorious work, and wrought by his own single hand, "when he had by himself purged our sins." A work that all the angels in heaven could not do.

3. He is described by his glory, which, as a reward of that work, he now enjoys in heaven. "When he had

by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ;” that is, the Lord clothed him with the greatest power, and highest honor, that heaven itself could afford. Hence,

When our Lord Jesus Christ had finished his work on earth, he was placed in the seat of the highest honor and authority at the right hand of God in heaven.

This truth is transformingly glorious. Stephen had but a glimpse of Christ at his Father’s right hand, and it caused “his face to shine as it had been the face of an angel.” Acts, 6 : 15. This high advancement was foretold and promised before he undertook the work of redemption. “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Psalm 110 : 1. And this promise was performed to Christ after his resurrection and ascension, in his supreme exaltation, far above all created beings in heaven and earth. Eph. 1 : 20–22. We shall here inquire what is meant by God’s right hand ; and what is implied in Christ’s sitting there, his enemies being made his footstool.

1. What are we to understand here by *God’s right hand*? It is obvious that the expression is figurative. God hath no hand, right or left ; but it is an expression, in which God stoops to the creature’s understanding, implying honor, power, and nearness.

1. The right hand is the hand of *honor*, where we place those whom we highly esteem. Solomon placed his mother in a seat at his right hand. 1 Kings, 2 : 19. So in token of honor, God sets Christ at his right hand ; called in the text, the right hand of Majesty. God therein expressed favor, delight, and honor, such as he never conferred on any creature. “To which of the angels said he at any time, Sit thou on my right hand?” Heb. 1 : 13.

2. The right hand is also the hand of *power* ; and the

setting of Christ there, imports his exaltation to the highest authority, and most supreme dominion. Not that God the Father hath put himself out of his authority, and advanced Christ above himself; no, "when he saith he hath put all things under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him." 1 Cor. 15 : 27. But to sit as an enthroned King at God's right hand, imports power, yea, the most sovereign and supreme power; which is implied in the language of Christ himself: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power." Matt. 26 : 64.

3. It also signifies *nearness* of place, and so it is applied to Christ, Psalm 110 : 5, "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath;" that is, the Lord, who is very near thee, present with thee, he shall subdue thine enemies.

II. Let us see what is implied in Christ's sitting at God's right hand, his enemies being made his footstool.

1. It implies the perfecting and *completing of Christ's work*, for which he came into the world. After his work was ended, then he sat down and rested from those labors. "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Heb. 10 : 11, 12. Here he assigns a double difference between Christ and the Levitical priests; they stand, which is the posture of servants; he sits, which is the posture of a Lord. They offer daily, because their sacrifices cannot take away sin; he did his work fully, by one offering; and after that, sits or rests for ever in heaven.

2. His sitting at God's right hand shows *the high satisfaction of God the Father in him*, and in his work. "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand;" the words are introduced as the words of the Father

welcoming Christ to heaven, and, as it were, congratulating the happy accomplishment of his most difficult work. He delighted greatly to behold him here in his work on earth, as expressed by a voice from the excellent glory, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 2 Pet. 1 : 17. And himself tells us, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life," John, 10 : 17 ; it was a work dear to the heart of God from eternity ; he took infinite delight in it.

3. Christ's sitting at God's right hand in heaven, shows the *advancement of Christ's human nature* to the highest honor, even to be the object of adoration to angels and men. For it is properly his human nature that is the subject of all this honor and advancement ; and being advanced to the right hand of Majesty, it is become an object of worship and adoration. Not simply as it is flesh and blood, but as it is personally united to the Second Person and enthroned in the supreme glory of heaven.

Oh here is the mystery, that flesh and blood should ever be advanced to the highest throne of Majesty, and that being there installed in glory, we may now direct our worship to him as God-man ; and to this end was his humanity so advanced, that it might be adored and worshipped by all. "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son : that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." And the Father will accept of no honor separate from his honor. Therefore it is added, "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him." John, 5 : 22, 23. Hence the apostles, in the salutations of their epistles, beg for grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ ; and desire the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with the churches.

4. It imports *the sovereignty and supremacy of Christ over all* : the investiture of Christ with authority over

the empire of both worlds ; for this belongs to him that sits upon his throne. When the Father said to him, Sit thou at my right hand, he thereby delivered to him the dispensation and economy of the kingdom. He put the awful sceptre of government into his hand. So the apostle interprets it ; " He must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." 1 Cor. 15 : 25. And to this purpose the same apostle accommodates (if not expounds) the words of the psalmist, " Thou madest him a little lower than the angels," that is, in respect to his humbled state on earth, " thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands ; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." Heb. 2 : 7, 8. He is over the spiritual kingdom, the church, absolute Lord. Mat. 28 : 18-20. He is also Lord over the providential kingdom, the whole world, Psalm 110 : 2 ; and this providential kingdom, being subordinate to his spiritual kingdom, he orders and rules the providential for the advantage and benefit of the spiritual. Eph. 1 : 22.

5. To sit at God's right hand, his enemies being made his footstool, presents Christ as *Conqueror over all his enemies*. To have his enemies under his feet, denotes conquest and complete victory. They trampled his name and his saints under their feet, and Christ will tread them under his feet. It is true indeed this victory is incomplete as yet ; for now " we see not yet all things put under him, (saith the apostle,) but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor," and that is enough ; enough to show that the power of his enemies is broken ; and though they make some opposition still, yet it is to no purpose ; he is infinitely above them, and they must fall before him ; all the power of God stands ready to strike through his enemies. Psalm 110 : 5.

6. Christ's sitting in heaven shows us *the great and*

wonderful change in his state and condition since his ascension. Ah, it is far otherwise with him now than it was in the days of his humiliation here on earth. It were good, as a worthy of ours says, (Case, in his Mount Pisgah,) to compare in our thoughts the abasement of Christ, and his exaltation, as it were in columns, one over against the other. He was born in a stable, but now he reigns in his royal palace. Then he had a manger for his cradle, but now he sits on a chair of state. Then, in contempt, they called him the carpenter's son; now he obtains a more excellent name than angels. Then he was led away into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil; now it is proclaimed, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Then he had not where to lay his head; now he is exalted to be Heir of all things. In his state of humiliation "he endured the contradiction of sinners;" in his state of exaltation "he is adored and admired by saints and angels." Then "he had no form or comeliness; and when we saw him, there was no beauty, that we should desire him:" now the beauty of his countenance sends forth such glorious beams as may dazzle the eyes of the celestial inhabitants round about him.

7. Christ's sitting at God's right hand implies *the advancement of believers* to the highest honor: for this session of Christ respects them, and he sits there as our Representative, in which respect we are made to "sit with him in heavenly places." Eph. 2: 6. How secure may we be (saith Tertullian) who do now in Christ, our Head, already possess the kingdom! Surely it is matter of exceeding joy that Christ our Head, our flesh and blood, possesses all this glory at his Father's right hand.

INFERENCE 1. Is Christ so honored, to sit enthroned at God's right hand? What *honor is reserved in heaven* for those that are faithful to Christ, now on earth! Christ prayed, and his prayer was heard, that we may be with him to behold the glory that God hath given him, John,

17 : 24 ; and what heart can conceive the felicity of such a sight ? " Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty." Isa. 33 : 17. But this is not all : though it be much, to be spectators of Christ on his throne of glory ; we shall not only see him on his throne, but also sit with him enthroned in glory. The sight you shall then have of Christ will change you into his likeness. " We shall be like him, (saith the apostle,) for we shall see him as he is." 1 John, 3 : 2. He will place us, as it were, in his own throne with him. So runs the promise, " To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne ; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. 3 : 21 ; and so 2 Tim. 2 : 12, " If we suffer we shall also reign with him." The Father set Christ on his right hand, and Christ will set the saints on his right hand. So, you know, the sheep are placed by the angels at the great day, Matt. 25 ; and so the church, under the figure of the daughter of Egypt, is placed " on the king's right hand, in gold of Ophir." Psalm 45. This honor have all the saints. Oh what manner of love is this ! These expressions indeed do not imply that the saints shall have a parity of glory with Christ, for in all things he must have the pre-eminence : but they show the great honor Christ will give to the saints ; as also, that his glory shall be their glory in heaven ; as the glory of the husband redounds to the wife ; and again, their glory will be his glory, 2 Thess. 1 : 10, and so it will be a social glory. Oh, it is admirable to think to what free grace hath already exalted poor dust and ashes ! to think how near the saints are now to this royal, princely Jesus ! But how much higher are the designs of grace not yet fulfilled. They transcend all that we now know ! " Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be." 1 John, 3 : 2. Ah what reason have you to honor Christ on earth, who is preparing such honor for you in heaven !

2. Is Christ thus enthroned in heaven? Then how impossible is it that ever *his interest should fail on earth!* The church has many subtle and potent enemies; but as Haman could not prevail against the Jews whilst Esther their friend spake for them to the king, no more can they whilst our Jesus sits at his and our Father's right hand. Surely they that touch his people touch the very "apple of his eye." Zech. 2 : 8. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." 1 Cor. 15 : 25. The enemy under his feet shall not destroy the children in his arms. He sits in heaven on purpose to manage all to the advantage of his church. Eph. 1 : 22. Are our enemies powerful? Lo, our King sits on the right hand of power. Are they subtle and deep in their contrivance? He that sits on the throne overlooks all they do. "He that sits in heaven" beholds and derides their attempts. Psalm 2 : 4. He may permit his enemies to straiten them in one place, but it shall be for their enlargement in another. For it is with the church as with the sea; what it loses in one place it gets in another, and so really loses nothing. He may suffer them also to distress us in outward things, but we shall be recompensed with inward and better mercies; and so we shall lose nothing. A footstool, you know, is useful to him that treads on it, and serves to lift him up higher; so shall Christ's enemies be to him and his, albeit they think not so. What singular benefits the opposition of his enemies occasions to his people, I have elsewhere shown. (See his Saint Indeed.)

3. Is Christ set down on the right hand of the Majesty in heaven? Oh *with what reverence should we approach him* in the duties of his worship! Away with light and low thoughts of Christ. Away with formal, irreverent, and careless frames in praying, hearing, yea, in conversing and speaking of Christ. Away with all deadness and drowsiness in duties; for he is a great

King with whom you have to do ; a King, to whom the kings of the earth are but as bits of clay. Lo, the angels cover their faces in his presence. He is an adorable Majesty.

When John had a vision of this enthroned King, about sixty years after his ascension, such was the overpowering glory of Christ, as the sun when it shineth in its strength, that when he saw him he fell at his feet as dead, till Christ laid his hand on him and said, "Fear not ; I am the first and the last ; I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." Rev. 1 : 17, 18. When he appeared to Saul in the way to Damascus, it was in glory above the glory of the sun, which overpowered him also, and laid him as one dead upon the ground.

Oh that you did but know what a glorious Lord you worship and serve, who makes the very place of his feet glorious wherever he comes. Surely he "is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him." There is indeed a boldness or liberty of speech allowed to the saints, Eph. 3 : 12 ; but no rudeness or irreverence. We may indeed come, as the children of a king come to their father, who is both their awful Sovereign and tender Father ; which double relation causes a due mixture of love and reverence in their hearts when they come before him. Though he be your Father, Brother, Friend, yet the distance between him and you is infinite.

4. If Christ be so gloriously advanced in the highest throne, then *none are dishonored by suffering* the vilest things for his sake. The very chains and sufferings of Christ have glory in them. Hence Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Heb. 11 : 26. He not only endured the reproaches of Christ, but counted them treasures, to be reckoned among his honors and things of value. Dis-

grace itself is honorable, when it is endured for the Lord of glory. And surely there is (as one says) a little paradise, a young heaven, in sufferings for Christ. If there were nothing else but that they are endured for him, it would richly reward all we can suffer; but if we consider how kind Christ is to them that count it their glory to be abased for him; that though he be always kind to his people, he (if we may so speak) overcometh himself in kindness when they suffer for him; it will almost make us in love with his reproaches.

5. If Christ sat not down to rest in heaven till he had finished his work on earth; then *let us not think of rest till we have finished our work*. How willing are we to find rest here! to dream of that, which Christ never found in this world, nor any ever found before us! Oh think not of resting till you have done working and done sinning. Your life and your labors must end together. "Write, (saith the Spirit,) Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for *they rest* from their labors." Rev. 14 : 13. Here you must be content to dwell in the tents of Kedar; hereafter you shall be within the curtains of Solomon. Heaven is the place of which it may be truly said, that there "the weary be at rest." Oh think not of resting on this side heaven.

Grace will not suffer you to rest here. Its tendencies are beyond this world. It will be looking and longing for the blessed hope. A gracious person regards himself as a pilgrim seeking a better country, and is suspicious of danger in every place and state. *Grace* is still rousing up the sluggish heart with the language, "Arise, depart, this is not thy rest, for it is polluted." Micah, 2 : 10. Its further tendencies and continual jealousies will keep you from long sitting still in this world.

Your *corruptions* also will keep you from rest here. They will continually exercise your spirits, and keep you upon your watch. Saints have their hands filled

with work by their own hearts every day, sometimes to prevent sin, and sometimes to lament it; and always to watch and fear, to mortify and kill it. Sin will not long suffer you to be quiet. Rom. 7 : 21-23. And if a bad heart will not break your rest here, then

Satan will do it. He will find you work enough with his temptations and suggestions, and except you can sleep quietly in his arms as the wicked do, there is no rest to be expected. "Your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist." 1 Pet. 5 : 8.

Nor will *wicked men* suffer you to be quiet on this side heaven. The very name by which they are alluded to in Scripture speaks their turbulent disposition. "My soul (saith the holy man) is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows." Psalm 57 : 4. Well, then, seek to enter into your rest, as Christ did into his, having "finished the work" which was given him to do.

CHAPTER XLII.

CHRIST'S ADVENT TO JUDGMENT.

"And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." Acts, 10 : 42.

Christ, enthroned in the highest glory in heaven, is there to abide for the effectual and successful government both of the world and of the church, until all given him by the Father before the world was, and purchased by the blood of the cross, be gathered in; and then

cometh the judgment of the great day, which will perfectly separate the precious from the vile; put the redeemed in full possession of the purchase of his blood in heaven; and then shall he "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all."

This last act of Christ, his judging the world, is a special part of the exaltation and honor bestowed upon him, "because he is the Son of man." John, 5:27. In that day shall his glory, as King and supreme Lord, shine forth as the sun in its strength. Oh what an honor will it be to the man Christ Jesus, who stood arraigned and condemned at Pilate's bar, to sit upon the great white throne, surrounded with thousands and ten thousands of angels; men and devils waiting upon him to receive the final sentence from his mouth! In this will the glory of Christ's sovereignty and power be illustriously displayed before angels and men. And this is that great truth which he commanded to be preached and testified to the people, namely, that it is "he which is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead."

Judgment is the prerogative of the whole undivided Trinity; but, in its visible management and execution, it is assigned to Christ.

The persons to be judged are the quick and dead: all that at his coming shall be living, or shall ever have lived: all that ever sprang from Adam; and all the apostate spirits that fell from heaven and are reserved in chains to the judgment of this great day, with all the actions, both secret and open, that ever they did. 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 2:16.

The Fountain of this delegated authority is God the Father; for he hath ordained Christ to be the Judge. He is "ordained," as the Son of man, to this honorable office and work. The word denotes a firm establishment of Christ in that office by his Father. He is now, by right of redemption, Lord and King. He enacts laws

for government, then he comes to judge of men's obedience and disobedience to his laws. Hence,

Our Lord Jesus Christ is ordained by God the Father to be the Judge of quick and dead.

This truth stands upon the firm basis of Scripture authority. You have it from his own hand, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." John, 5 : 22. And so the apostle, "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." Acts, 17 : 31. And again, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." Rom. 2 : 16. We will here show the certainty of a judgment to come; the quality and nature of it; and that his being appointed Judge of the world is a special part of Christ's exaltation.

I. *The certainty of a judgment.* This is a truth of firmer establishment than heaven and earth. It is no devised fable, no cunning artifice to keep the world in awe; but a thing as confessedly true as it is awfully solemn. For,

1. As the Scriptures just cited (with 2 Cor. 5 : 10; Eccles. 12 : 14; Matt. 12 : 36; and many other passages) plainly reveal it; so *the justice and righteousness of God require* it should be so. For the Judge of all the earth will do right. Gen. 18 : 25. Justice requires that a difference be made between the righteous and the wicked: "Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him; wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him." Isa. 3 : 10, 11. But no such distinction is generally and fully made in this world. Yea, often the wicked prosper, and the righteous perish: "There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness." Eccles. 7 : 15. Here the "wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than himself." Hab. 1 : 13; as the fishes of

the sea, where the great and strong swallow up the small and weak. And even in courts of judicature, where the innocent might expect relief, they often meet with the worst oppression. How fairly and justly therefore doth the wise man infer a judgment to come from this consideration: "I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work," Eccles. 3: 16, 17; which denotes that the judgment to come is often the only relief and support with which the innocent may quiet and comfort themselves. "Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." James, 5: 6, 7. It is confessed that sometimes God vindicates his providence against the atheism of the world, by particular strokes upon the wicked; but this is rare. And as one of the fathers well observes, "if no sin were punished here, no providence would be believed; again, if every sin were openly punished here, no judgment hereafter could be expected."

2. Besides, man is a reasonable being, and every reasonable being is *an accountable being*. He is a subject capable of moral government. His actions have a relation to law. He is swayed by rewards and punishments. He acts by counsel, and therefore must expect to give an account of his actions. "So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." Rom. 14: 12. All the gifts of body, mind, estate, time, &c. are so many talents committed and intrusted to us by God; every one has at least one talent; and a time to render an account for all will come. Matt. 25: 14, 15. We are stewards, and stewards must give an account, in order to which there must be a day of judgment.

3. *Our own conscience* gives clear evidence of this truth. Lo, it is engraven legibly upon every man's own breast. Every one hath a tribunal in his own conscience, which both accuses and excuses for good and evil, and which it could never do, did it not forebode a future judgment. In this court, records are now kept of all we do, even of our most secret actions and thoughts. But if no judgment, what need of records? Nor let any imagine that this may be but the fruit of education; that having heard such things, we are groundlessly alarmed. For if so, how comes it to obtain so universally? Who could be the author of such a common deception? But let us consider,

II. *What manner of judgment* this will be.

1. It will be *a great and awful day*. It is called the "judgment of the great day." Jude, 6.

The manner of Christ's coming will be awfully solemn, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." 1 Thess. 4: 16, 17. Christ shall come forth out of heaven, with the shouts of angels, above all which shall the voice of the archangel be distinctly heard. And after this, the trump of God shall sound. The dead being raised, shall be gathered before the great throne on which Christ shall sit in his glory; and there by the angels they shall be divided exactly to the right and left hand of Christ. Here will be the greatest assembly that ever met; where Adam may see his numerous offspring, even as the sand upon the sea-shore, which no man can number. And never was such a perfect division made. There were apparent separations of the righteous and the wicked in this world, but no other separation was like this. The saints shall meet the Lord in the air; the

Judge shall sit upon the throne, with all the saints round about him; the wicked remaining below upon the earth, to receive their final doom.

These preparatives will make it awful; and much more will *the work itself*, on which Christ now comes, be awful. It is "to judge the secrets of men," Rom. 2: 16; to sever the tares from the wheat; to present every man in his real character; and according as he shall be found on that trial, to sentence him to his everlasting and immutable state. O what a solemn thing is this!

And no less will *the execution of the sentence* make it a great and solemn day. The heart of man cannot conceive what impressions the voice of Christ, from the throne, will make, both upon believers and unbelievers.

Imagine Christ upon his glorious throne, surrounded with myriads and legions of angels, his royal guard; a poor unbeliever trembling at the bar; an exact scrutiny made into his heart and life; the dreadful sentence given; and then a cry, while he is delivered over to the executioners of eternal vengeance, never, never to see a glimpse of hope or mercy more.

Imagine Christ, like the general of an army, mentioning with honor, at the head of all the hosts of heaven and earth, the services that the saints have done for him in this world; then justifying them by open proclamation; and then their mounting with him to the third heavens, and entering the gates of the city of God, in the noble train of saints and angels, to be for ever with the Lord. Oh what a great day must this be!

2. As it will be an awful and solemn judgment, so it will be most *exact and critical*. The name of the Judge is, the "Searcher of hearts." His eyes as a flame of fire, pierce to the dividing of the heart and reins. It is said, Matt. 12: 36, that men shall then give an account of "every idle word that they shall speak." It is a day that will perfectly discriminate the character of every

man. No hypocrite can escape. Justice will hold the balances in an even hand.

3. It will be a *universal* judgment, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." 2 Cor. 5 : 10. "Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." Rom. 14 : 12. Both those that were under the law, and those that, having not the law, were a law unto themselves." Rom. 2 : 14. Those that had many talents, and he that had but one talent, must appear at this bar; those that were carried from the cradle to the grave, and he that stooped for age; the rich and poor; the father and the child; the master and servant; the believer and the unbeliever, must appear in that day. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened." Rev. 20 : 12.

4. It will be a *convicting* judgment. All things will be so clearly presented, that the sentence of Christ, both on saints and sinners, shall be applauded. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, because thou hast judged thus." His judgments will be as the light that goeth forth. So that those poor sinners whom he will condemn, shall be first self-condemned. Their own consciences shall be forced to confess that there is not one drop of injustice in all that sea of wrath into which they are to be cast.

5. It will be a *supreme and final* judgment, from which lies no appeal. It is the sentence of the highest and only Lord. "As the ultimate resolution of faith is into the word and truth of God, so the ultimate resolution of justice is into the judgment of God." This judgment is supreme and imperial. Christ is the only Potentate, 1 Tim. 6 : 5; the sentence once passed, its execution is infallible. So you find it in the judicial process given us, Matt. 25; when the sentence is pronounced by Christ, it is immediately added, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." This is the judgment of the great day.

III. God, in ordaining Christ to be the Judge, has *highly exalted him*. Here his royal dignity will be illustrated; now he will appear in his glory.

1. In executing judgment Christ will be *glorified in his kingly office*, as fully as he has been in his other offices. We find but some few glimpses of his kingly office breaking forth in this world: as, his riding with hosannas into Jerusalem, his driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and his title upon the cross: all these were but faint beams: now that office will shine in its glory, as the sun in the midst of the heavens. For what were the hosannas of little children, in the streets of Jerusalem, to the shouts and acclamations of thousands of angels, and ten thousands of saints? What was his driving the profane out of the temple, to his turning the wicked into hell, and sending his angels to gather out of his kingdom every thing that offendeth? What was a title written by his judge, and fixed on the ignominious tree, to the name that shall now be seen "on his vesture, and on his thigh, King of kings, and Lord of lords?"

2. This will be *a display of his glory in the highest*, before the whole world. For there will be present at once, and together, all the inhabitants of heaven, and earth, and hell: angels must be there to attend and minister; those glittering courtiers of heaven must attend his person: men and devils must be there to be judged: and before this great assembly will Christ appear in royal majesty. He will "reign before his ancients gloriously." Isa. 24: 23. He will then "come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." 2 Thess. 1: 10.

3. This will *roll away for ever the reproach of his death*: for Pilate and the high priest that judged him shall now stand quivering at his bar; with Herod that set him at nought, and the soldiers and officers that traduced and abused him: there they that reviled him on

the cross, wagging their heads, will stand, with trembling knees, before his throne. "For every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Rev. 1:7.

INFERENCE 1. Is Jesus Christ ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead? Great then is the security of believers that they *shall not be condemned* in that day. Who shall condemn, when Christ is Judge? If believers are condemned in judgment, Christ must give sentence against them; yea, and they must condemn themselves too. I say, Christ must give sentence, for that is the proper and peculiar office of Christ. And certainly no sentence of condemnation shall in that day be given by Christ against them. He died to save them, and he will never cross and overthrow the designs and ends of his own death. Nay, they have been cleared and absolved already. And being once absolved by Divine sentence, they can never be condemned afterward; for one Divine sentence cannot oppose another. He justified them here in this world by faith; and declared in his word, which shall then be the rule of judgment, Rom. 2:16, that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ." Rom. 8:1. And surely he will not retract his own word, and give a sentence contrary to his own statute-book, out of which he hath told us that they shall be judged.

Moreover, all, except those who then survive on the earth, will have passed their particular judgment long before that day; and being therein acquitted by God the Judge of all, justified, and admitted into heaven, Christ cannot now condemn them with the world.

Nay, he that judgeth them, is their Head, Husband, Friend, and Brother; who loved them, and gave himself for them. Oh then, with what confidence may they go, even unto his throne! and say, with Job, Though he try us as fire, we shall come forth as gold: we know that

we shall be justified. And more than this, they themselves shall be the assessors with Christ in that day. No, it is not the business of that day to condemn them; but to absolve and pronounce them pardoned and justified in that "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord;" Acts, 3:19; a "time of refreshing" indeed to his people. You that now believe, shall not come into condemnation. John, 5:24. You that now judge yourselves, shall not be condemned with the world. 1 Cor. 11:31, 32.

2. If Christ be ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead, how *miserable will Christless souls be* at that day! They that are Christless now, will be speechless, helpless, and hopeless then. How will their hands hang down, and their knees smite together!" Oh what pale faces, quivering lips, fainting hearts, and biting consciences will be among them in that day! Oh dreadful day! Oh astonishing sight! to see the world in a dreadful conflagration, the elements melting, the stars falling, the earth trembling, the judgment set, the prisoners brought forth! Oh who shall endure this day, but those that by union with Christ are secured against its danger and dread!

Let me demand of poor Christless souls, whom this day is likely to take unawares, do you think it possible to avoid appearing, when terrible citation is given by the trump of God? Alas, how can you imagine it? is not the same power that revived your dust, able to bring you before his bar? There is a necessity that you must come forth, "We *must* all appear." 2 Cor. 5:10. It is not in the sinner's choice to obey the summons or not.

And if you must appear, are there no accusers, nor witnesses, that will appear against you, and confront you in the court? What think you, was Satan so often a tempter to you here, and will he not be an accuser there? Yes, nothing more sure; for that was the main design

of all his temptations. What think you of your own conscience? is it not privy to your secret wickedness? does it not now sometimes whisper in your ear what you do not like to hear? If it whisper now, it will thunder then. Rom. 2:15, 16. Will not the Spirit accuse you, for resisting his motions and stifling thousands of his convictions? Will not your companions in sin accuse you, who drew or were drawn by you to sin? Will not your spiritual teachers be your accusers? How many times have you made them complain, Lord, they are iron and brass, they have made their faces harder than a rock; they refuse to return! Will not your very relations be your accusers, to whom you have failed in all your relative duties? Yea, and every one whom you have tempted to sin, abused, defrauded, overreached: all these will be your accusers.

Then, being accused before Jesus Christ, what will you plead? will you confess, or will you deny the charge? If you confess, what need more? "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee," saith Christ. Luke, 19:22. If you deny, and plead not guilty, thy Judge is the Searcher of hearts, and knoweth all things; so that it will not at all help thee to make a lie thy last refuge. This will add to the guilt, but not cover it.

If no defence or plea be left thee, then what canst thou imagine should retard the sentence? Why should not Christ go on to that dreadful work? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Gen. 18:25. Shall he not render to every man according to his deeds? 2 Cor. 5:10. Yes, no question but he will proceed to that sentence, how terrible soever it be to you to think of it now, or hear it then.

If sentence be once given by Christ against thy soul, what canst thou imagine will hinder the execution? Will he alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth? Ps. 89:34. Dost thou hope he is more merciful and pitiful

than this? Thou mistakest, if thou expect mercy in any other way than that in which he has revealed it. Thousands and ten thousands will rejoice in, and magnify his mercy then; but they are such as obeyed his call, repented, believed, and obtained union with his person here. To unbelievers, it is against the settled law of Christ and the constitution of the Gospel to show mercy. But it may be, you think your tears, your cries, your pleadings with him may move him. These, indeed, might have availed in time, but they come out of season now. Alas! too late. What the success of such pleas and cries will be, he has told you in two passages of Scripture: Job, 27: 8, 9, "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?" Matt. 7: 22, 23, "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." And must it come to this dismal issue with you indeed? God forbid it should. Oh then,

3. If Christ be appointed the Judge of all, how are all concerned to *secure their interest in him*, and therein an eternity of happiness to their own souls, by a living faith in his all-cleansing blood. Of all the business that men have in this world, there is none so solemn, so necessary, and important as this. O, this is a work, the very thought of the consequences of which might drink up your spirits.

Summon, then, thy powers of reflection and consideration; go alone, reader, and, forgetting all other things, ponder with thyself this thine own deep, dear, eternal concern. Examine the state of thy own soul. Look into the Scriptures, then into thine own heart, and then

to heaven, saying, Lord, let me not be deceived in so great a concern as this. Oh let not the trifles of time drive the impressions of death, judgment, and eternity from thy heart. Oh that that solemn word *eternity* might be night and day with thee ; that the awe of it may be still upon thy spirit. A lady having spent the whole afternoon and a great part of the evening at cards, in mirth and jollity, came home late at night, and finding her waiting-maid reading, she looked over her shoulder upon the book, and said, poor melancholy soul, why dost thou sit here poring so long upon thy book ? That night she could not sleep, but lay sighing and weeping : her servant asked her once and again what ailed her ; at last she burst into tears, and said, Oh ! it was one word that I cast my eye upon in thy book, that troubles me ; there I saw that word ETERNITY. How happy were I if I were prepared for eternity ! Sure it concerns us, seeing we look for such things, to be diligent that we may be found of him in peace. Oh let not that day come by surprise upon you. Remember, that as death leaves, so judgment will find you.

4. Is Jesus Christ appointed Judge of quick and dead ? Then look to it, all you that hope to be found of him in peace, that you *avoid sin, and daily practise those duties* to which the consideration of that day powerfully persuades you. Do you indeed expect such a day ? Oh then

See that you be *meek and patient under all injuries* and abuses for Christ's sake. Avenge not yourselves, but leave it to the Lord, who will do it. Do not anticipate the work of God. "Be patient, my brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." James, 5 : 7, 8. Be communicative, public-hearted christians, studying and devising liberal things for Christ's distressed members ; and you shall have both an honorable remembrance of it, and a full reward of it in that day. Matt. 25 : 34-36. Be watchful and sober, keep the golden bridle of modera-

tion upon all your affections; and see that you be not overcharged with the cares and love of this present life. Luke, 21 : 34, 35. Will you that your Lord come and find you in such a posture? Oh "let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." Phil. 4 : 5. Improve all your Master's talents diligently and carefully. Then must you make up your account for them all.

But, above all, be *sincere* in your profession. Let your hearts be found in God's statutes, that you may never be ashamed; for this day will be the day of manifestation of all hidden things. Nothing is so secret, but that day will reveal it: "Beware of hypocrisy; for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." Luke, 12 : 1, 2.

Thus I have finished, through Divine aids, the whole doctrine of the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. I close with a general

CONCLUDING APPEAL.

And now, let me persuade all those for whom the dear Son of God came from the blessed bosom of the Father, assumed flesh, and laid down his own life a ransom for their souls; for whom he lived, died, rose, ascended, and lives for ever in heaven to intercede—to *live wholly to Christ*, as Christ lived and died for us.

Oh brethren, never were the heathen world acquainted with such arguments to deter them from sin, such motives to urge them to holiness, as I now spread before you. My request is, that you give up both your hearts and lives to glorify the Father, Son, and Spirit, whose you are. Greater things are expected from you than from other men. See that you turn not all this grace into licentiousness. Think not that because Christ hath done so much for you, you may sit still; much less indulge yourselves in sin, because Christ offered up such

an excellent sacrifice for its expiation. No, though Christ came to be a curse, he did not come to be a cloak for sin. "If one died for all, then were all dead; that they that live, should not henceforth live to themselves, but unto him that died for them." 2 Cor. 5 : 14, 15. Oh keep your lives pure and clean. "If you live in the Spirit, see that you walk in the Spirit," Gal. 5 : 25 ; that is, says one, "shape and order your lives and actions according to the dictates, instinct, and impulses of the Spirit, and of that grace of the Spirit planted in your hearts, which tendeth to practical holiness." Oh let the grace which is in your hearts flow out in all your actions. Let the faith that is in your hearts appear in your prayers; the obedience of your hearts in hearing; the meekness of your hearts in suffering; the mercifulness of your hearts in distributing; the truth and righteousness of your hearts in trading; the sobriety and temperance of your hearts in eating and drinking. These are the fruits of Christ's sufferings indeed, they are sweet fruits. Let grace refine, ennoble, and elevate all your actions; that you may say, "Truly our conversation is in heaven." Let grace have the ordering of your tongues and of your hands; the moulding of your whole conversation. Let not humility appear in some actions and pride in others; holy seriousness in some companies and vanity in others. Suffer not the fountain of corruption to mingle with or pollute the streams of grace. But be you in the fear of the Lord all the day long. Let there be a due proportion between all the parts of your conversation. Approve yourselves the servants of Christ in all things; "By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." 2 Cor. 6 : 6, 7. See then how circumspectly you walk. Cut off occasion from them that desire occasion; and in

well-doing commit yourselves to God, and commend religion to the world.

These great duties I shall commend to your consciences by the considerations that *the redeemed of the Lord are under the highest obligations to be holy; that they are assisted to a life of holiness; and that God intends to make great use of their lives, for the conviction and conversion of others.*

I. God hath laid his redeemed under *infinite obligations to pure and holy lives.* I know the command lies upon all men. Even those that cast away the cords of the command, and break Christ's bonds asunder, are yet bound by them, and cannot plead a dispensation to live as they do. Yea, it is not unusual for them to feel the obligations of the command upon their consciences, even when their impetuous lusts hurry them on to its violation. But there are special ties that bind you to holiness more than others. Many special and peculiar engagements you are under *from God, from yourselves, from your brethren, and from your enemies.*

I. God hath LAID YOU UNDER INFINITE OBLIGATIONS to purity and strictness of life. Yea, *every person in the blessed Trinity* hath cast his cord over your souls, to bind your hearts and lives to the most strict and full obedience of his commands.

1. *God the Father* hath obliged you to holiness of life, not only by the common tie of creation, (and is it reasonable that God, with such infinite skill, should create a being to be employed against him? that he should plant the tree, and another eat the fruit of it?) but he also constrains you, by his wise and merciful *designs and counsels for your recovery and salvation.* It was he that laid the corner-stone of your salvation with his own hands. The first motion sprang out of his breast. If God had not designed the Redeemer for you, the

world had never seen him. It was the act of the Father to give you to the Son to be redeemed, and then to give the Son to be your Redeemer: both stupendous and astonishing acts of grace. And in both God acted as a most free Agent. Oh how much owest thou to the Lord for this! And what obligations doth it leave upon thy soul, to obey, please, and glorify him!

God the Father also binds you by his *bountiful remunerations of your obedience*. What service didst thou ever perform for him, for which he hath not paid thee a thousand times more than it is worth? Didst thou ever seek him diligently, and not find him a bountiful Rewarder? Didst thou ever give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, and not receive a disciple's reward? Matt. 10: 42. Hast thou not found inward peace and comfort flowing into thy soul on every act of sincere obedience? Oh what a good Master do the saints serve! You that are remiss and inconstant in your obedience, you that are heartless and cold in duties, hear how your God expostulates with you: "Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness?" Jer. 2: 31. Have I been a hard Master to you? Have you any reason to complain of me? Are fruits of sin like fruits of obedience? Do you know where to find a better master? Why then are you so inconstant, so sluggish and remiss in my work? Surely God is not slack to fulfil his promise. May you not say with David, "This I had, because I kept thy precepts?" Psalm 119: 56. There are fruits in holiness, even present fruit. It is a high favor to be employed for God; reward enough that he will accept any thing thou doest. But to return every duty with such comforts, such quickenings, such inward and outward blessings into thy bosom, so that thou mayest open the treasury of thine own experience, view the variety of encouragements and the tokens of his love received; and say, This I had, and that I had, by wait-

ing on God and serving him—Oh what obligations are these upon thee to be ever abounding in the work of the Lord! Though thou must not work for wages, yet God will not let thy work go unrewarded. For he is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love.

Your Father hath further obliged you by signifying to you his *great delight and pleasure in your holiness and purity of life*. He hath told you, that "such as are upright in their way are his delight." Prov. 11:20. That he would have you "forget not to do good, and to communicate, for with such sacrifices he is well pleased." Heb. 13:16. You know you cannot "walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing," except ye be "fruitful in every good word and work." Col. 1:10. And what a bond is this upon you to a holy life! Can you please yourself in displeasing your Father? If you have the heart of a child, surely you cannot. Oh you cannot grieve his Spirit by loose and careless walking, but you must grieve your own spirit too. How often hath God pleased and gratified you, and will you not please him? In many things the Lord hath wonderfully condescended to please you, and now there is but one thing that he desires of you, and that most reasonable, yea, beneficial to you, as well as pleasing to him; "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1:27. This is the one thing, the great and main thing he expects from you in this world; and will not you do it? Can you expect that he should gratify your desires, when you are so thoughtless of grieving and displeasing him? Well, if you know what will please God, and yet resolve not to do it, but will rather please your flesh, and gratify the devil than him; pray change your profession, fall into your own rank among hypocrites, and appear as indeed you are.

The Father hath further obliged you to strictness and purity of conversation, by *his gracious promises* to such

as so walk. He hath promised to do great things for you, if you "order your conversation aright." Psa. 50: 23. He will be your sun and shield, if you walk softly before him. Gen. 15: 1. "He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from him that walketh uprightly." Psa. 84: 11 And he promises no more to you than he hath made good to others that have thus walked. If you look to enjoy the good of the promise, you are obliged by all your expectations and hopes to order your life purely and uprightly. This hope will compel you to purge your life, as well as your heart, from all pollution: "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. 7: 1.

Yea, he hath yet more obliged you to strict and holy lives, by *his confidence in you*, that you thus walk and please him. He expresseth himself in Scripture, as one that dares trust you with his glory, knowing that you will be tender of it. But if a man repose confidence in you, and trust you with his concerns, it lays great obligation on you to be faithful. What obligations were laid upon Abraham to walk uprightly, when God said of him, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Gen. 18: 19. As for this wicked generation, whom I will speedily consume in my wrath, they regard not my laws, they trample my commands under their feet, they care not how they provoke me, but I expect other things from Abraham. I know him, he is a man of another spirit, and what I promise myself from him, he will make good. And of like import is Isa. 63: 7, 8, "I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude

of his loving-kindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie : so he was their Saviour." Here you have the endearing mercies of God to that people, ver. 7, and the Lord's confident expectations of suitable returns from them, ver. 8. As if he had said, I made a full account, that after all these endearments and favors bestowed upon them, they would not offer to be disloyal and false to me. I have made them sure to myself by so many bonds of love. "Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction." Zeph. 3 : 7. Oh how great are the expectations of God from such as you!

You are further bound to a holy life, by *what the Son hath done for you*. Is not this pure and holy life the very aim and end of his death? Did he not shed his blood to "redeem you from your vain conversation?" 1 Pet. 1 : 18. Was it not the design of all his sufferings, that "being delivered out of the hands of your enemies, you might serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life?" Luke, 1 : 74, 75. And is not the apostle's inference, 2 Cor. 5 : 14, 15, highly reasonable? "If one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them?" Did Christ only buy your person, and not your services also? No, whoever hath thy time, thy strength, or any part of either, I can assure thee, christian, that Christ hath paid for it, and thou givest away what is not thine own. Every moment of thy time is his ; every talent, whether of grace or nature, is his ; and dost thou defraud him of his own? Oh how liberal are you of your precious words and hours, as if Christ had never made a purchase of them! Oh think of this, when the fountain of corruption flows out at thy tongue in idle discourse ; or at thy hand, in sinful, unwarrantable actions ; doth this become the redeemed of the Lord? Did Christ come from the

bosom of his Father for this? Did he endure the cross, and lay down his life for this? Was he so well pleased with all his sorrows and sufferings, his pangs and agonies, for the joy he should have in seeing the travail of his soul; and doth not this constrain you to guard your own life, and keep it pure? Oh! what will constrain you if this will not? But,

This is not all; as the weigher casts in weight after weight till the scales are counterpoised; so doth God cast in obligation after obligation, and argument upon argument, till thy heart, christian, be won to this heavenly life. And therefore, as Elihu said to Job, "Suffer me a little, and I will show thee what I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Chap. 36 : 22. I now plead on behalf of *the Holy Spirit, who hath so many times helped you to plead for yourselves with God.* He that hath so often refreshed, quickened, and comforted you, he will be quenched, grieved, and displeased by an impure, loose, and careless conversation; and what will you do then? Who shall comfort you when the Comforter is departed from you; when he that should relieve your soul is far off? Oh "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption." Eph. 4 : 30. There is nothing grieves him more than an ungodly life, for he is a holy Spirit. As water damps and quenches the fire, so doth sin quench the Spirit. 1 Thess. 5 : 19. Will you quench the warm affections and burning desires which he hath kindled in your bosom? If you do, it is a question whether you ever recover them again to your dying day. The Spirit is grieved when thy corruptions within are stirred by temptations, and break out to the defiling of thy life; then is the Holy Spirit of God, as it were, made sad and heavy within thee, as that expression, *μη λυτσητε*, (Grieve not,) Eph. 4 : 30, may be rendered. For thus thou resistest his motions, whereby as a loving constraint he would

lead and guide thee in the way of thy duty ; yea, thou not only resistest his motions, but crossest his grand design, which is to purge and sanctify thee wholly, and build thee up more and more to the perfection of holiness. And when thou thus forsakest him, and crossest his design in thy soul, then doth he usually withdraw as a man that is grieved by the unkindness of his friend.

This is the fruit of a careless life. To this sad issue it will bring thee at last ; and when it is come to this, thou shalt go to ordinances and duties, and find no good in them, no life-quickening comfort. When thy heart, which was wont to be enlarged and flowing, shall be withered and dry ; when, like Samson, thou shalt go forth and shake thyself, as at other times, but thy strength is gone ; then tell me, what are the awful results of resisting, quenching, and grieving the Holy Spirit of God by an impure and ungodly life ?

2. You are under great obligations *to your own souls*, as well as to God, to keep your lives pure. As God hath bound you to purity of conversation, so you have bound yourselves. There are several things in you, and done by you, which wonderfully increase and strengthen your obligations to practical holiness.

Your clearer illumination is a strong bond upon your souls : " Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord ; walk as children of light." Eph. 5 : 8. You cannot plead ignorance. You stand convinced in your own consciences before God, that this is your unquestionable duty. Christians, will you not all yield to this ? I know you readily yield. We live, indeed, in a contentious, disputing age. In other things our opinions are different. One christian is of this judgment, another of that ; but in this we all meet, in one mind and judgment, that it is our indisputable duty to live pure, strict, and holy lives. The grace of God, which hath appeared to you, hath taught you this truth clearly and convinc-

ingly. Tit. 2 : 11, 12. " You have received how you ought to walk, and to please God." 1 Thess. 4 : 1. The inference, then, is plain and undeniable, that you cannot walk as others, in the vanity of their mind, without offering violence to your own light. You cannot suffer the corruptions of your heart to break forth into practice, without wounding your own conscience : " He that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin," James, 4 : 17 ; yea, aggravated sin ; sin beyond that of the heathen ; sin that sadly wastes and violates conscience. Certainly you have no cloak for your sin. Besides, what pleasure in sin can you have ? Indeed, those who for want of light know not what they do, or whose consciences are seared and past feeling, may seek a little pleasure (such as it is) in sin ; but what pleasure can you have, so long as light is ever breaking in upon you, and smiting you for what you do ?

Again, you are *a professor* of holiness ; you have given in your name to Christ, to be his disciple ; and by this your engagements to a holy life are yet further strengthened : " Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Tim. 2 : 19. The name of Christ is called upon you, and it is a worthy name. James, 2 : 7. You bear his name as his spouse, or his child ; and will you not live suitably to it ? Oh how will that worthy name of Christ be blasphemed through you, if you adorn it not with a becoming deportment ? Better you had never professed his name, than to pour contempt on Jesus Christ, by your scandalous conversation, before the eyes of the world. Oh, that is a heavy charge, " Through you is the name of God blasphemed among the heathen." Rom. 2 : 24. Unhappy man ! that ever thou shouldst be a reproach to Christ ! The mass of wicked men may sin, and sin again, and the world take little notice of it ; but the faults of professors are like a blazing comet, or an eclipsed sun, on which all men gaze, and make their

observations. Oh then, what manner of persons ought you to be, who bear the worthy name of Christ!

But more than this, you have obliged yourself to this life of holiness *by your own prayers*. How many times have you lifted up your hands to heaven, and cried with David, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." Psa. 119:5, 133. Were you in earnest with God when you thus prayed? Did you mean as you said? If your heart and tongue agreed in this request, doubtless it is as much your duty to endeavor to practise, as to desire to possess those graces of the Spirit. And more, all these prayers stand on record before the Lord, and will be produced against you as witnesses to condemn you for your hypocrisy and vanity. How often, also, have you in your prayers lamented and bewailed the sins of your life! You have said with Ezra, "O my God, I am ashamed, and even blush to look up unto thee." Chap. 9:6. And do not your confessions oblige you to greater circumspection and care for time to come? Will you confess and sin; and sin and confess? go to God and bewail your faults, and then return again to the commission of them? God forbid you should thus dissemble with God, trifle with sin, and add iniquity to iniquity.

You have also *often reprov'd or censur'd others* for their falls, which adds to your own obligation to walk circumspectly. Have you not often reprov'd your erring brethren; or at least privately censur'd them, (for these left-handed blows of secret censure are more common than the fair and open strokes of just and due reproof;) and will you practise the same things for which you criminate and censure others? "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" Rom. 2:21. Will your rebukes ever do good to others, whilst you allow in yourself what you condemn in them? By these very

reproofs you are self-condemned ; and out of your own mouth God will judge you. Your censures and reproofs of others will leave you without plea or apology, if you guard not carefully your own life. And will you be careless still ? Fear you not the displeasure of God, nor the wounding and disquieting of your own conscience ? Surely these things are of no light value with you, if you be a christian indeed.

3. You are further bound to a life of practical holiness on *account of your brethren*. If, through the neglect of your hearts, your lives be defiled and polluted, many innocent and upright ones will be reproached and grieved by it. This mischievous effect holy David earnestly deprecated : " O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake : let not those that seek thee, be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel." Ps. 69 : 5, 6. As if he had said, Lord, thou knowest what a weak and foolish creature I am, and how liable to fall, if left to myself ; and should I, through my foolishness, act unbecoming a saint, how would this reproach and sadden the hearts of thy people ! They will be as men confounded at the report of my fall. The fall of one christian is a reproach to all the rest. Thy loose and careless life will cause them to estrange themselves from thee, as being ashamed to own thee ; and canst thou bear that ? will it not grieve and pierce your very heart to see a cloud of strangeness and trouble over the countenances of your brethren ; to see yourself disowned and lightly esteemed by them ?

This very consideration struck Ustazanes, a great favorite in the Persian court. Through fear, he had denied the christian faith, and complied with the idolatrous worship of the king. One day sitting at the court-gate, he saw Simon, the aged archbishop of Seleucia,

drawn along to prison for his constancy in the christian faith, and felt such veneration for his character, that he instantly rose and expressed his reverence to this holy man. But the godly man frowned upon him, and turned away his face, as thinking such an apostate unworthy of the least respect from him. This struck Ustazanes to the heart, and drew from him many tears and groans; and thus he reasoned with himself: Simon will not own me, and will God, when I appear before his tribunal? Simon will not speak to me, will not so much as look upon me, and can I expect a good word or look from Jesus Christ, whom I have so shamefully betrayed and denied? Hereupon he threw off his countly robes and put on mourning apparel, professed himself a christian, and died a martyr. Oh it is a piercing thing to an honest heart, to be cast out of the favor of God's people. If you dishonor your profession, neither God nor his people will look kindly upon you.

4. *Your very enemies* should engage you to this pure and holy life, both as they are your bold censurers and your watchful observers. They censure you as hypocrites, and will you give them ground for such a charge? They say, your tongues only are more holy than other men's; and shall they prove it from your practice? They also observe you diligently, and are highly gratified by your falls. If your lives be loose and defiled, you will not only be a shame to your friends, but the song of your enemies. You will gratify all the enemies of God. For this they are watching. And they triumph in your falls, not only from the deep-rooted enmity between the friends and enemies of Christ, but because all your errors are as so many absolutions to their consciences, and justifications (as they think) of their ways and practices. For, as your strictness and holiness condemn them, as Noah, by his godly life, condemned the world, Heb. 11:7; so when you fall, you, as it were, absolve their consciences,

and loose the bonds of conviction you had made fast upon them. Oh, say they, whatever these men talk, we see they are no better than we. They can do as we do. They can deceive and cheat for advantage. They can comply with any thing for their own ends: it is not conscience, as we once thought, but mere humor, that made them so precise. And Oh! what a sad thing is this! Hereby you shed soul-blood. You fasten the bonds of death upon their souls. You kill those convictions, which, for any thing you know, might have ended in their conversion. When you fall, you may rise again; but they may fall at your example, and never rise more, never have a good opinion of the ways of God or of his people any more. Upon this consideration, David begs of God, "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies," (or observers,) "make thy way straight before my face." Psalm 5:8. Thus you see how your very enemies should influence you to a holy life.

Now what think you of all this? Are you not obliged to this purity of life? Are all these bonds such that you can free yourselves from them at pleasure? If all these things are of no force with you, may it not be questioned, notwithstanding your profession, whether any spiritual principle, any fear of God, or love to Christ, be in your soul?

II. Consider, as you are more obliged than others to keep the issues of life pure, so God hath given you GREATER ASSISTANCES AND ADVANTAGES for it than others have. God hath not been wanting in helps and means. Even the heathen, who are without the Gospel, will be speechless and inexcusable before God; how much more will you be if your life be still unholy, who, besides the light of nature and the general light of the Gospel, have such a principle put within you, such patterns set

before you, such an assistant ready to help you; so many rods to quicken you and prevent your wandering.

1. Shall men of such *principles* walk as others do? Shall we lament for you, as David once did for Saul, saying, "There the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away, the shield of Saul; as though he had not been anointed with oil:" There the honor of a christian was vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with the Spirit? "You have received an unction from the Holy One," which teacheth you all things, 1 John, 2 : 20; an illumination far above that which is in other men. 1 Cor. 2 : 12. "Ye are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Eph. 2 : 10. This holy spirit, or principle, enkindled in the soul, has such a tendency to this holy life, that if you live not purely and strictly, you must offer violence to your own principles and new nature.

This principle affords you a twofold help to a life of holiness. It restrains from sin, as in Joseph; "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" And it also inclines you powerfully to obedience. It is a curb to sin, and a spur to holiness. It is impossible for others to live spiritually and heavenly, because they have no new nature to incline them thereto. And, methinks, it should be hard for you to live carnally and sensually, and therein cross the very bent and tendency of the new creation which is formed in you. How can you neglect prayer, as others do, whilst the Spirit, by divine pulsations, is awaking and rousing up your sluggish hearts with such inward motions and whispers as Psalm 27 : 8, "Seek ye my face;" yea, whilst you feel (during your omissions of duty) something within that bemoans itself, and, as it were, cries for food, and will not let you be quiet till it be relieved? How can you give your hearts to the world, as other men do, when all the while your spirit is restless, and aches like a bone

out of joint? And you can never be at ease till you come back to God, and say, as Psalm 116 : 7, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." Is it not hard, yea, naturally impossible, to fix a stone and make it abide in the fluid air? Doth not all matter, in a restless motion, tend to its proper centre, and desire its own perfection? So doth this new creature also. You see how the rivers in their course will not be checked, but bear down all the obstacles in their way; a stop doth but make them rage the more, and run the swifter afterwards.

There is a central force in these material things, which never ceases to act. And such is the impulse of a renewed soul: "It shall be in him a well of water springing up." John, 4 : 14. And is it not hard for you to keep it down, or turn its course? Was it not so with David and Jeremiah? If you do not live holy lives, you must cross your own new nature, and violate the law that is written in your heart. Till you were converted, says one, the flesh was predominant, and therefore it was impossible for you to live any other than a fleshly life; for every thing will act according to its predominant principle. Should you not then live a spiritual life? Should not the law of God, written in your hearts, be legible in your lives? Oh should not your lives be according to the tendency of your hearts? Doubtless this is no small advantage to practical holiness. But,

2. Besides this principle within, you have no small assistance for purity of life, by *the excellent patterns* before you. The path of holiness is no untrodden path. Christ and his servants have beaten it before you. The life of Christ is your copy, and it is a fair copy indeed, without a blot. Oh what an advantage is this, to draw all the lines of your actions according to his example! This glorious, grand example is often urged for your imitation: "Looking unto Jesus." Heb. 12 : 2. He hath left you "an example, that ye should follow his steps."

1 Pet. 2 : 21. His life is a living rule to his people ; and besides Christ's example, you have a cloud of witnesses, and these men of like passions, temptations, and constitutions with you ; who have gone before you in exemplary holiness. The Holy Ghost intending therein your special help and advantage, hath inspired many to write the lives of the saints, and preserve for your use their holy sayings and heavenly actions. He bids you " take them for an example." James, 5 : 10. Oh ! what excellent men have gone before you ! what renowned worthies have led the way ! Men, whose conversation was in heaven, while they tabernacled on earth. While this lower world had their bodies, the world above had their hearts and their affections. Their actions and their designs were for heaven. Men that improved troubles and comforts, losses and gains, smiles and frowns, and all for heaven ; their hearts, their language, and their lives were full of heaven. Oh what singular help is this ! Where they followed Christ, and kept the way, they are set before you for your imitation ; and where any of them turned aside, you have a mark set upon that action for your caution and prevention. Does any strange or unusual trial befall you ? Here you may see " the same affliction accomplished in your brethren." 1 Pet. 5 : 9. Here is a store of good company to encourage you. Do the world and the devil endeavor to turn you from your duty, by loading it with shameful scoffs or sufferings ? You may look to Jesus, who despised the shame ; and to your brethren, who counted it their honor to be dishonored for the name of Christ. Acts, 5 : 41. Is it a dishonor to thee to be ranked with Abraham, Moses, David, and such as were the glory of the age in which they lived ? Art thou at any time in discouragement, and ready to despond under any burden ? Oh, how mayest thou be animated by such examples ! Some sparks of their holy courage cannot but steal into thy

breast whilst thou considerest them. In them God hath set before thee the possibility of overcoming all difficulties; thou seest men of the same mould, who had the same trials, discouragements, and fears that now thou hast, and yet overcame all. How is thy unbelief checked when thou sayest, Oh! I shall never reach the end, I shall one day utterly perish! Why dost thou say so? Why may not such a poor creature as thou art be carried through as well as they? Had not they the same temptations and corruptions with you? Were they not all troubled with an evil heart, an insnaring world, and a busy devil, as well as you? Alas! when they put on the divine, they did not put off the human nature; but complained, and feared, as you do; and yet were carried through all.

Oh what an advantage have you in this respect! They that first trusted in Christ had not such helps. You have the benefit of their experience. You, in these last times, have certainly the best helps to holiness; and yet, will not you live strictly and purely? Will you take the name and profession of christians, and yet be lofty in your spirit, earthly in your designs, negligent of duty, vain in your communications? Pray, from which of all the saints did you learn to be proud? Did you learn it from Christ, or any of his? From which of his saints did you learn to be earthly and covetous, passionate and censorious, overreaching and crafty? If you have read of such sins committed by them, have you not also read of their shame and sorrow, their repentance and reformation? If you have found any such blots in their lives, they were left there designedly, to prevent the same in yours. Oh what a help to holiness is this!

3. You have not only a principle within you, and a pattern before you, but you have also *an omnipotent Assistant* to help and encourage you throughout your way. Are you feeble and infirm? and is every tempta-

tion, even the weakest, strong enough to turn you out of the way of your duty? Lo, God hath sent his Spirit to help your infirmity. Rom. 8 : 26. No matter then how weak you are, how many and mighty your difficulties and temptations are, as long as you have such an Assistant to help you. Great is your advantage for a holy life in this respect.

When a temptation to sin presses sore upon you, *he pleads with your conscience* within, whilst Satan is tempting without. How often hath he brought such Scriptures to your remembrance, as have saved you out of the temptation! If you attend to his voice, you may hear a voice within you, "Oh, do not this abominable thing which I hate." Jer. 44 : 4. "Thine eyes shall behold thy teachers; and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Isa. 30 : 20, 21. Here you have a twofold help to holiness, the outward teaching of the word, verse 20, and the inward teachings of the Spirit, verse 21.

When you walk holily and closely with God in duty, and the Spirit encourages you by those inward comforts, sealings, and joys you have from him at such times; how often does he *refresh your spirits* in public ordinances, and in private duties, with his hidden manna, with marrow and fatness, with incomparable and unspeakable comforts, and all this to strengthen and encourage you in your way.

When you are indisposed to duty, and find your hearts empty and dry, *he is ready to fill, quicken, and raise them*; so that often the beginning and the end of your prayers, hearing, or meditations, are as unlike as if one man had begun and another ended the duty.

Oh then, what assistances for a holy life have you! Others indeed are bound to resist temptation as well as you; but, alas! having no special assistance from the

Spirit, what can they do? It may be, they reason with temptation a little while, and in their own strength resolve against it; but how easy a conquest doth Satan make where he meets no greater opposition than this! Others are bound to hear, meditate, and pray, as well as you; else the neglect of these duties would not be their sin; but, alas! what pitiful work do they make of it, being left to the hardness and vanity of their own hearts! When you spread your sails, you have a gale; but they lie wind-bound, heart-bound, and can do nothing spiritually in the way of duty.

4. You have a further advantage to this holy life, *by all the chastisements* with which God visits you. I might show you, in many particulars, the benefits you thus receive; but will now present only three:

By these he *prevents your straying and wandering*. Others may wander even as far as hell, and God employ no sanctified rod upon them, to reduce or stop them; but say, "Let them alone." Hos. 4: 17. But if you wander out of the way of holiness, he will send some trial to keep you within bounds. "Lest I should be lifted up, a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, was sent to buffet me." 2 Cor. 12: 7. So David, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." Psalm 119: 67. Afflictions are used by God, as thorns by husbandmen, to stop the gaps and keep you from breaking out of God's way: "I will hedge up her way with thorns, and build a wall, that she shall not find her paths." Hos. 2: 6. Basil was sorely afflicted with an inveterate head-ache, and often prayed for its removal: at last God removed it, but in the room of it he was sorely exercised with temptation; which, when he perceived, he heartily desired his head-ache again, to prevent a worse evil. You little know the ends and uses of many of your afflictions. Are you exercised with bodily weakness? It is a mercy you are so; and if these

pains and infirmities were removed, these clogs taken off, you might, with Basil, wish for them again, to prevent worse evils. Are you poor? With that poverty God hath clogged your pride. Are you reproached? With these reproaches God hath clogged your ambition. Corruptions are prevented by your afflictions. And is not all this a most merciful help to holiness of life?

By your afflictions, your *corruptions are purified*. By these God dries up and consumes that spring of sin that defiles you: "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." Isa. 27:9. God orders your wants to kill your wantonness; and makes your poverty slay your pride. "When they fall by the sword, and by famine, and by captivity, and by spoil, it is to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white." Dan. 11:33-35. Others have the same afflictions that you have, but they are not sanctified to them. To you they are as fire for purging, and water for cleansing: and yet, shall not your lives be clean? It is true, as one well observes, Christ's blood is the only fountain to wash away sin; but, in the virtue and efficacy of that blood, sanctified afflictions also purify us. A cross without Christ never made any man better, but with Christ, saints are much the better for the cross. Hath God put you so many times into the furnace, and yet is not the dross consumed? The more afflictions you have suffered, the more assistance you have had for this life of holiness.

By all your troubles, God hath been sundering your affections from the world, and drawing out your souls to a more excellent life and state than this. He makes your sorrows in this life give a lustre to the glory of the next. Be sure, he will never give you rest here; and all, that you may long more ardently for that to come. He often makes you groan, "being burdened, earnestly desiring to be clothed with your house from heaven."

2 Cor. 5 : 2, 4. And yet will you not be weaned from the lusts, customs, and sins of this world? Oh what manner of persons should you be in heavenly and holy conversation!

You stand upon the higher ground. You have, as it were, the wind and tide with you. None are assisted for this life as you are. Put all this together, and see what this second argument contributes to constrain you to a holy life. Have you received a supernatural principle, fitting you for, and inclining you to holy actions, resisting and holding you back from sin? Hath God also set before you such eminent patterns to encourage and quicken you in your way? Doth the Spirit himself stand ready in so many ways to help you in all difficulties, and hath God hedged up the way of sin with the thorns of affliction to prevent your wandering; and yet will you turn aside? Will you offer violence to your own principles and new nature? refuse to follow such leaders as have beaten the way before you? resist or neglect the gracious assistance of the blessed Spirit, which he offers you in every need; and venture upon sin, though God hath hedged up your way with afflictions? Oh, how can you do such great wickedness, and sin against such grace as this!

III. Another irresistible motive to a godly life appears in THE GREAT AND MANIFOLD USES God will make of the visible holiness and purity of your lives, both in this world and that to come. Among these are,

1. To *win souls to Christ*, and bring them in love with religion. Practical holiness is lovely, attractive, and constraining. If the heathen could say of moral virtue, that, were it visible to human eyes, all men would adore it, and fall in love with it; how much rather may we so say of true holiness, made visible in the lives of saints! So much of God as appears in men, so much excellency

there is in them to draw men to him. And this is the apostle's argument: "That ye may have fellowship with us." 1 John, 1 : 3. Why, what is there in your fellowship to invite men to you? "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Who can but covet the company of them who keep company every day with God? Great is the efficacy of visible holiness upon the hearts of men; either working in fellowship with the word, or working solitarily without the word.

Where God is pleased to afford the word unto men, there the practical holiness of saints is of great use in *enforcing it upon their hearts*. When the lives of christians speak to the eyes of men, what the Gospel does to their ears; when we so preach, and you so believe and live; when we draw men by our doctrines, and you draw with us by your example; when we "hold forth the word of life" doctrinally, and you hold it forth practically, as Phil. 2 : 16; where is the heart that can stand before us? Oh! when the plain and powerful Gospel pierces the ears of men, and at the same time the visible holiness of professors so shines that they must acknowledge that God is in you of a truth; then it will take effect upon the souls of men; then will Christ see of the travail of his soul daily.

Yea, if God deny the word to men, yet *this practical holiness may be to them an ordinance for conversion*. In this way souls may be won to Christ without the word, as the apostle speaks. 1 Peter, 3 : 1. Though pulpits should be silent, and vision fail; yet, if your lives but preach the reality, excellency, and sweetness of Jesus Christ and his ways; if you in this way preach down the love of the world, and let men see what poor vanities these are; and preach up the necessity and beauty of holiness; surely you, even you may be honored to bring many souls to Christ, to "turn many to righteousness," and cause many to bless God, on your behalf, in

the day of visitation. This is the use God hath for the holiness and purity of your lives; and doth not this constrain you? What, not when it may prove the means of eternal life to others? Surely, if you have any bowels of mercy you cannot hide from others that whereby they may be saved. How can you, instead of "holding forth the word of life," (which is your manifest duty,) visibly hold forth the works of death before men? Have you been blessed by the faithfulness of others, and shall none be helped by you towards heaven? Dare you say, let others shift as well as they can, find the way to heaven by themselves as they can, they shall have no benefit by your light? If such be the language of your heart or life, you are christians of a different stamp and spirit from any we find described in Scripture. Should you not rather say as the lepers did, "Do we well to hold our peace," 2 Kings, 7 : 9, whilst others are perishing? If the lips of ministers are silenced, shall *the lives of christians* be also silent? Shall poor sinners neither hear any thing from us, nor see any thing from you, that may help them to Christ? The Lord have mercy then upon the poor world, and pity it, for its case is desperate. Oh "put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy." Destroy not, by the looseness of your conversation, so many souls; for your scandalous falls are like a bag of poison put into the spring which supplies the whole city with water.

2. Another use God makes of the holy lives of his children is *to recover the credit of religion*, which, by the apostacies of hypocrites and scandalous falls of careless professors, is wounded and exposed to contempt. Much reproach by this means is brought upon religion, and how shall that reproach be rolled away, but by your strictness and purity? By this the world must be convinced that all are not so. Though some be a blot to the name of Christ, yet others are his glory. The more

others disgrace religion, the more God expects you to honor and adorn it. I remember Chrysostom brings in the persecutors speaking to two renowned martyrs, after this manner, Why are you so nice and scrupulous? See you not that others of your rank and profession have done these things? To which they returned this noble answer, "For that very reason we will stand out like men, and will never yield to sin." There is a holy impulse in the zeal of a christian, which makes it the more bright in the midst of obstacles, as fire burns most vehemently in the coldest weather. If men make void God's law, therefore will David love his commandments above gold. Psalm 119 : 127.

3. God makes your holy living *an encouragement to his ministers*. And indeed it is of no small use to refresh their hearts, and strengthen their hands in their painful work: "Now we live," saith the apostle, "if ye stand fast in the Lord." 1 Thess. 3 : 8. He speaks as if his very life lay at the mercy of the people, because so much of its joy and comfort consisted in their regularity and stedfastness. God knows what a hard duty his poor ministers have, and how many discouragements attend them in their work; hear how one of them expresses it: "Ministers would not be grey-headed so soon, nor die so fast, notwithstanding their great labors, if they were but successful; but this cuts to the heart, and makes us bleed in secret, that though we do much, yet it comes to nothing. Our work dies, therefore we die—not so much that we labor, as that we labor in vain."—Lockyer on Colossians.

Christians, you hear our case, you see our work. Now a little to cheer our spirits in the midst of our hard and killing labors! God sends us to you for a little refreshment, that, by beholding your holy and heavenly conversation, your cheerful obedience, and sweet agreement in the ways of God, we may be comforted in all these troubles. 2 Thess. 1 : 3, 4.

4. God hath further use for the holiness of your lives, *in smiting the consciences of his and your enemies*. There is awful majesty in holiness, and when it shines upon the conscience of a wicked man, it makes him stoop and do obeisance to it, which turns to a testimony for Christ and his ways before the world. Thus Herod was overawed by the strict and holy life of John; he feared him, knowing that he was a just and holy man. That bloody tyrant was convinced in his conscience of the worth and excellency of this servant of God, and was forced to reverence him for his holiness. How much is it to the honor of holiness, that it conquers its very persecutors, and makes them stoop to the meanest servant of God! It is said of Henry II. of France, that he was so daunted by the heavenly majesty of a poor tailor who was burnt before him, that he went home sad, and vowed that he would never be present at the death of such men any more. When Valens the emperor came in person to apprehend Basil, he saw such majesty in his very countenance that he reeled at the sight of him, and had fallen backward to the ground had not his servants supported him. O holiness, holiness, thou art a conqueror! So much, O christians, as you show of it in your lives, so much you preserve your interest in the consciences of your enemies. Cast off this, and they presently despise you.

5. God will use the purity of your walk to *judge and convince the world in the great day*. It is true, the world shall be judged by the Gospel, but your lives shall also be produced as a commentary upon it; and God will not only show them by the word how they ought to have lived, but bring forth your lives and ways to stop their mouths, by showing how others did live. This I suppose is intended in that text, "The saints shall judge the world, yea, we shall judge angels," 1 Cor. 6 : 2, 3; that is, our examples are to condemn their lives and

practices ; as Noah, Heb. 11 : 7, is said to condemn the world by building the ark ; that is, his faith in the threatening, and obedience to the command, condemned their supineness, infidelity, and disobedience. They saw him every day about the work, diligently preparing for a deluge, and yet were not moved with fear ; this left them inexcusable. So when God shall say in that day to the careless world, Did you not see the care and diligence, the holy zeal, watchfulness, and self-denial of my people, who lived among you ? How many times have they been watching and praying, when you have been drinking or sleeping ! Was it not easy to reflect, when you saw their pains and diligence, Have not I a soul to be saved as well as they ; a heaven to win or lose, as well as they ? Oh how speechless and inexcusable will this render wicked men ! Yea, it shall not only be used to judge them, but angels also. How many shocks of temptations have poor saints stood ; whereas angels fell without a tempter ! They stood not in their integrity, though created with such excellent natures How much then are you concerned on this account to walk blamelessly ! if not, instead of judging them, you shall be condemned with them.

Thus you see what use shall be made of your lives and actions. Oh then, since you are under such obligations to a holy life, and are so wonderfully assisted in it ; and since God employs the holy living of his people for such admirable ends, both here and in the world to come, " see that ye be holy in all manner of conversation." See that, " as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, ye so walk in him ;" always remembering, that for this very end Christ hath redeemed, or " delivered you out of the hands of your enemies, that you might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of your lives." Luke, 1 : 74, 75. To how

little purpose will be all that I have said, and you have heard of Christ, if it be not converted into practical godliness! This is the scope and design of it all.

And now, reader, thou art come to the last leaf of this treatise of Christ; it will be but a little while, and thou shalt come to the last page or day of thy life, and thy last moment in that day. Wo to thee, wo and alas for ever, if an interest in this blessed Redeemer be then wanting! The world affords not a sadder sight, than a poor Christless soul shivering upon the brink of eternity. To see the poor soul, that now begins to awake out of its long dream, at its entrance into the world of realities, shrink back into the body, and cry, Oh, I cannot, I dare not die. Lord, what will become of me? Oh, what shall be my eternal lot? This, I say, is as sad a sight as the world affords. That this may not be thy case, reflect upon what thou hast read in these discourses. Judge thyself in the light of them. Obey the calls of the Spirit in them. Let not thy slight and formal spirit float upon the surface of these truths, like a feather upon the water; but get them deeply fixed upon thy spirit, by the Spirit of the Lord; turning them into life and power upon thee; and so animating the whole course and tenor of thy conversation by them, that it may proclaim to all that know thee, that thou art one who esteemest all to be but dross, *that thou mayest win Christ.*

The Author of this invaluable work was the eldest son of an eminently pious clergyman, the Rev. Richard Flavel; and was born at Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, England, in or near 1630. He was educated at University College, Oxford; labored in the ministry six years at Deptford, and was then called, in 1656, to Dartmouth, a port in the south of England, where, after thirty-five years of faithful service in days of peculiar trial, he died suddenly and with great composure, June 26, 1691, aged 61.

By the Act of Uniformity, August 24, 1662, Mr. Flavel and two thousand clergymen who could not in conscience subscribe, were expelled from their benefices. He continued, however, to labor for the good of his people, amid persecutions, obstacles, and interruptions; preaching, as opportunity could be gained, in private dwellings, in obscure neighborhoods, or the seclusion of the forest, through a period of twenty-five years, until 1687, when the royal license was granted to worship God without molestation, and he resumed his public labors in a new and commodious church erected by his affectionate people; delivering, at that time, his series of discourses from Rev. 3: 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Most of his works, comprising six octavo volumes, which breathe a strain of tender piety, and have a spiritual unction perhaps unparalleled, were composed during this period of persecution.

"The Fountain of Life," published in 1671, he says, "was written in a time of great distractions;" first more at large as delivered to such audiences as could be assembled, and then condensed, that he might thus "ease the reader both in his pains and his purse." His dedication of this work to his own people contains the following delightful passages:

"I cannot but recount the goodness of our God, yea the riches of his goodness:

"Who freely gave Jesus Christ out of his own bosom for us; and hath not withheld his Spirit, ordinances, and ministers, to reveal and apply him to us:

"Who engaged my heart upon this transcendent subject, in the course of my ministry among you; a subject which angels study and admire, as well as we:

"Who so signally protected and overshadowed our assembly in those days of trouble wherein these truths were delivered to you, when you sat under his shadow with great delight, and his banner over you was love:

"Who made these meditations of Christ a strong support and sweet relief to *mine*,* now with Christ, and no less to me, under the greatest trials that ever befel me in this world:

"Who hath not left himself without witness among us, blessing my labors to the conversion and edification of many.

"In testimony of a thankful heart for these invaluable mercies, I humbly and cheerfully rear this pillar of remembrance, inscribing it with, EBENEZER, and JEHOVAH-JIREH."

* Probably his departed wife.

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