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THE
WORKS
OF
ROBT. LEIGHTON, D. D.

SOMETIME
BISHOP OF DUNBLANE,
AFTERWARDS
ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW.

A new and enlarged Edition:

TOGETHER WITH THE
LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY THE
REV. G. JERMENT.

VOL. II.

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A PRACTICAL
COMMENTARY

UPON THE

First Epistle General of St. Peter.

CHAPTER iii. VERSE 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good?

THIS the apostle adds, as a further reason of the safety and happiness of that way he points out, from its own nature. There is something even intrinsic in a meek, and upright, and holy carriage, that is apt, in part, to free a man from many evils and mischiefs that the ungodly are exposed to, and do naturally draw upon themselves. Your spotless and harmless deportment will much bind up the hands even of your enemies, and sometimes, possibly, somewhat allay and cool the malice of their hearts, that they cannot so rage against you as otherwise they might. It will be somewhat strange and monstrous to rage against the innocent; *Who is he that will harm you?* &c. Here are two things, 1. The carriage. 2. The advantage of it.

1. Their carriage expressed, *followers*, &c. Or, as the word is, *Imitators of that which is good*.

There is an imitation of men that is impious and wicked, taking the copy of their sins; again, an imitation, that, though not so grossly evil, yet is poor and servile, being in mean things, yea sometimes de-

scending to imitate the very imperfections of others, as fancying some comeliness in them; as some of *Basil's* scholars, that imitated his slow speaking, which he had a little in the extreme, and could not help: but this is always laudable, and worthy of the best minds, to be *imitators of that which is good*, where-soever they find it. For that stays not in any man's person, as the ultimate pattern, but arises to the highest grace, being man's nearest likeness to God, his image and resemblance; and so, following the example of the saints in holiness, we look higher than them, and consider them as receivers, but God as the first owner and dispenser of grace, bearing his stamp and superscription, and belonging peculiarly to him, in what hand soever it be found, as carrying the mark of no other owner, but his only.

The word of God hath our copy in its perfection, and very legible and clear; and so the imitation of good, in the complete rule of it, is the regulating our ways by the word: but, even there we find, besides general rules, the particular tracks of life of divers eminent holy persons, and those on purpose set before us, that we may know holiness not to be an idle imaginary thing, but that men have really been holy; though not altogether sinless, yet holy and spiritual in some good measure; that there have been those who have "shined as lights amidst a perverse generation," as greater stars in a dark night, and *yet men*, as St. James says of Elias, *like us in nature, ἰμοιοπαθεῖς*, and the frailty of it; *subject to like passions as we are*^a. Why may we not then aspire to be holy, as they were, and attain to it, although we should fall short of the degree? Yet not stopping at a small measure, but running further, *pressing still forward toward the mark*^b; following them in the way they went, though at a distance; not reaching them, and yet walking, yea, running after them as fast as we can: not judging of holiness by our own sloth and natural averseness, taking it for a singularity fit only for rare extraordinary persons, such as prophets and

^a James v. 17.

^b Phil. iii. 14.

apostles were, or as the church of Rome fancies those to be, to whom it vouchsafes a room in the roll of saints. Do you not know that holiness is the only *via regia*, this *following of good*, that path wherein all the children of God must walk, one following after another, each striving to equal, and, if they could, to outstrip even those they look on as most advanced in it? This is, amongst many other, a misconceit in the Romish church, that they seem to make holiness a kind of impropriate good, that the common sort can have little share in; almost all piety being shut up within cloister-walls, as its only fit dwelling. Yet it hath not liked their lodging, it seems, but is flown over the walls away from them; for there is little of it even there to be found; but, however, their opinion of it places it there, as having little to do abroad in the world.

Whereas the truth is, that all christians have this for their common task, though some are under more peculiar obligations to study this one copy. Look on the rule of holiness, and be followers of it, and followers or imitators one of another, so far as their carriage agrees with that primitive copy, as writ after it; *Be ye followers of me*, μιμηται, says the apostle even to the meanest christians amongst those he wrote to, but thus, *as I am of Christ*^c.

Is it thus with us? Are we zealous and emulous followers of that which is good, exciting each other by our example to a holy and christian conversation, *provoking one another* (so the apostle's word is) *to love and to good works*^d? Or, are not the most, mutual corrupters of each other, and of the places and societies where they live; some leading, and others following, in their ungodliness? Not regarding the course of those that are most desirous to walk holily, or, if at all, doing it with a corrupt and evil eye; not to study and follow what is good in them, their way of holiness, but to espy any the least wrong step, to take exact notice of any imper-

^c 1 Cor. xi. 1.^d Heb. x. 24.

fection, and sometimes only charged on them by malignant falsehood? and by this, either to reproach religion, or to hearten or harden themselves in their irreligion and ungodliness, seeking warrant for their own willing licentiousness in the unwilling failings of God's children?

And, in their converse with such as themselves, they are following their profane way, and flattering and blessing one another in it. "What need we be so precise? and, if I should not do as others, they would laugh at me, I should pass for a fool." Well, thou wilt be a fool in the most wretched kind, rather than be accounted one by such as are fools, and know not at all wherein true wisdom consists.

Thus are the most carried with the stream of this wicked world, their own inward corruption easily agreeing and suiting with it; every man, as a drop, falling into a torrent, and easily made one, and running along with it into that dead sea where it empties itself.

But those, whom the Lord hath a purpose to sever and save, he carries in a contrary course, even to that violent stream; and these are the students of holiness, *the followers of good*; that bend their endeavours thus, and look on all sides diligently, on what may animate and advance them; on the example of the saints in former times, and on the good they espy in those that live together with them; and, above all, studying that perfect rule in the scriptures, and that highest and first pattern, there so often set before them, even the author of that rule, the Lord himself; *studying to be holy as he is holy, to be bountiful and merciful as their heavenly Father^e*; and in all labouring to be, as the apostle exhorts, *followers of God as dear children^f*. As children that are beloved of their father, and do love and reverence him; who therefore will be ambitious to be like him, and particularly aim at the following any

^e Τέλος ἀνθρώπου ὁμοίωσις θεῷ. Pyth.

^f Eph. v. 1, 2.

virtues or excellency in him: now, thus it is most reasonable in the children of God, their Father being the highest and best of all excellency and perfection.

But this excellent pattern is drawn down nearer their view in the Son Jesus Christ; where we have that highest example made low, and yet losing nothing of its perfection. So that we may study God in man, and read all our lesson, without any blot, even in our own nature. And this is truly the only way to be the best proficient in this following and imitating of all good. In him we may learn all, even those lessons that men most despise; God teaching them, by acting them, and calling us to follow; *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*⁸. But this is too large a subject. Would you advance in all grace? study Christ much, and you shall find not only the pattern in him, but strength and skill from him to follow it.

2. The advantage; *Who is he that will harm you?*

The very name of it says so much; *a good*, worthy the *following for itself*: But there is this further to persuade it, that, besides higher benefit, it oftentimes cuts off the occasions of present evils and disturbances, that otherwise are incident to men. *Who is he?* Men, even evil men, will often be overcome by our blameless and harmless behaviour.

1. In the life of a godly man, taken together in the whole body and frame of it, there is a grave beauty or comeliness, that oftentimes forces some kind of reverence and respect to it, even in ungodly minds.

2. Though a natural man cannot love them spiritually, as graces of the Spirit of God; (for so only the partakers of them are lovers of them;) yet he may have, and usually hath, a natural liking and esteem of some kind of virtues which are in a christian, and are not, in their right nature, in any other to be found; though a moralist may have somewhat

⁸ Matt. xi. 29.

like them, *meekness*, and *patience*, and *charity*, and *fidelity*, &c.

3. These, and other such like graces, do make a christian life so inoffensive and calm, that, except where the matter of their God or religion is made the crime, malice itself can scarce tell where to fasten its teeth or lay hold, or hath nothing to pull by, though it would; yea, oftentimes, for want of work or occasions, it will fall asleep for a while; whereas ungodliness and iniquity, sometimes by breaking out into notorious crimes, draws out the sword of civil justice, and where it rises not so high, yet it involves men in frequent contentions and quarrels^h. How often are the lusts, and pride, and covetousness of men, paid with dangers, and troubles, and vexations, that, besides what is abiding them hereafter, do even in this present life spring out of them? Now, these the godly escape, by their just, and mild, and humble carriage. *Whence so many jars and strifes* amongst the greatest part, but from their unchristian hearts and lives, *from their lusts that war in their members*ⁱ? their self-love and unmortified passions? One will abate nothing of his will, nor the other of his. Thus, where pride and passion meet on both sides, it cannot be but a fire will be kindled; when hard flints strike together, the sparks will fly about; but a soft mild spirit is a great preserver of its own peace, kills the power of contest; as woolpacks, or such like soft matter, most deaden the force of bullets. *A soft answer turns away wrath*, says Solomon^k, beats it off, *breaks the bone*, as he says; the very strength of it, as the bones are in the body.

And thus we find it, they that think themselves high spirited, and will bear least, as they speak, are often, even by that, forced to bow most, or to burst under it; while humility and meekness escape many a burden, and many a blow, always keeping peace within, and often without too.

Reflexion 1. If this were duly considered, might

^h Prov. xxiii. 29.

ⁱ Jam. iv. 1.

^k Prov. xv. 1.

it not do somewhat to induce your minds to love the way of religion, for that it would so much abate the turbulency and unquietness that abounds in the lives of men; a great part whereof the most do procure by the earthliness and distemper of their own carnal minds, and the disorder in their ways that arises thence.

2. You, whose hearts are set towards God, and your feet entered into his ways, I hope will find no reason for a change, but many reasons to commend and endear that way to you every day more than another; and, amongst the rest, even this, that, in them, you escape many, even present mischiefs, that you see the ways of the world are full of. And, if you will be careful to ply your rule and study your copy better, you shall find it more so. The more you *follow that which is good*, the more shall you avoid a number of outward evils, that are ordinarily drawn on upon men by their own enormities and passions. Keep as close as you can to the genuine, even track of a christian walk; and labour for a prudent and meek behaviour, adorning your holy profession, and this shall adorn you, and sometimes gain *those that are without*¹; yea, even your enemies shall be constrained to approve it.

It is known how much the spotless lives and patient sufferings of the primitive christians did sometimes work upon their beholders, yea, on their persecutors; and persuaded some that would not share with them in their religion, yet to speak and write for them.

Seeing, then, that reason and experience do jointly aver it, that the lives of men, conversant together, have generally a great influence one upon another; for, example is an animated or living rule, and is both the shortest and most powerful way of teaching: let me graft an exhortation or two, on this obvious remark.

1. Whosoever are in an exemplary or leading place in relation to others, be it many or few, be ye

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 21.

first followers of God. Set before you the rule of holiness, and withal, the best and highest examples of those that have walked according to it, and then you will be leading in it; and those that are under you, and bent to follow you in so doing, will *follow that which is good*^m. Lead and draw them on, by admonishing, and counselling, and exhorting; but especially by walking.—Pastors, be [τύποι] *ensamples* to the flock, or *models*, as our apostle hath itⁿ, that they may be stampt aright, taking the impression of your lives. Sound doctrine alone will not serve; though the water you give your flocks be pure, yet if you lay spotted rods before them, it will bring forth spotted lives in them; either teach not at all, or teach by the rhetoric of your lives^o.—Ye elders, be such in grave and pious carriage, whatsoever be your years; for young men may be so, and, possibly, gray hairs may have nothing under them but gadishness and folly many years old, habituated and inveterate ungodliness.—Parents and masters, let your children and servants read in your lives the life and *power of godliness, the practice of piety*; not lying in your windows or corners of your houses, and confined within the clasp of the book, bearing that or any such like title, but shining in your lives.

2. You that are easily receptive of the impression of example, beware of the stamp of unholiness, and a carnal formal course of profession, whereof the examples are most abounding; but, though they be fewer that bear the lively image of God impressed on their hearts, and expressed in their actions, yet study these, *and be followers of those as they are of Christ*^p. I know you will espy much irregular and unsanctified carriage in us that are set up for the ministry; and if you look round, you will find the *world lying in wickedness*; yet, if there be any that have any sparks of divine light in them, converse with those and follow them.

^m 1 Thess. v. 15.

^o Η μὴ διδάσκειν, ἢ διδάσκειν τῷ τρόπῳ.

ⁿ 1 Pet. v. 3.

^p 1 Cor. iv. 16.

3. And, generally, this I say to all, for none are so complete, but they may espy some imitable and emulable good, even in meaner christians; acquaint yourselves with the word, the rule of holiness; and then, with an eye to that, look on one another, and be zealous of progress in the ways of holiness. Choose to converse with such as may excite you and advance you, both by their advice and example. Let not a corrupt generation, in which you live, be the worse by you, nor you the worse by it. As far as you necessarily engage in some conversation with those that are unholy, let them not pull you into the mire, but, if you can, help them out; and let not any custom of sin about you, by familiar seeing, gain upon you, so as to think it fashionable and comely; yea, or so as not to think it deformed and hateful. Know, that you must row against the stream of wickedness in the world, unless you would be carried with it to the dead sea, or lake of perdition; take that grave counsel given⁹, be not *conformed to this world*, but *be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*, which is the daily advancement in renovation, purifying and refining every day.

Now, in this way you shall have sweet inward peace and joy, and some outward advantage too; that men, except they are monstrously cruel and malicious, will not so readily *harm you*. It will abate much of their rage; but, however, if you do not escape suffering by your holy carriage, yea, *if you suffer* even for it, *yet* in that *are ye happy*, as the apostle immediately adds.

Ver. 14. *But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.*

IN this verse we may observe two things: 1st. Even in the most blameless way of a christian's life,

⁹ Rom. xii. 2.

his suffering supposed. *2dly.* His happiness, even in suffering, asserted.

1. Suffering is supposed notwithstanding of righteousness, *yea for righteousness*; and that not as a rare unusual accident, but as the frequent lot of christians; as Luther calls *persecution, malus genius Evangelii*. And we, being forewarned of this, as not only the possible, but the frequent lot of the saints, ought not to hearken to the false prophecies of our own self-love, that divines what it would gladly have, and easily persuades us to believe it. Think not that any prudence will lead you by all oppositions and malice of an ungodly world; but many winter blasts will meet you in the most inoffensive way of religion, if you keep straight to it. Suffering and war with the world is a part of the godly man's portion here, which seems hard, but take it altogether, it is sweet; none in their wits will refuse that legacy entire, *In the world ye shall have trouble, but in me ye shall have peace*^a.

Look about you, and see if there be any estate of man, or course of life, exempted from troubles. The greatest are usually subject to greatest vexations; as the largest bodies have the largest shadows attending them. We need not tell nobles and rich men, that contentment doth not dwell in great palaces and titles, nor in full coffers; they feel it, that they are not free of much anguish and molestation, and that a proportionable train of cares, as constantly as of servants, follows great place and wealth. Riches, and trouble, or noise, are signified by the same Hebrew word^b; and kings find that their crowns, that are set so richly with diamonds without, are lined with thorns within.

And, if we speak of men that are *servants to unrighteousness*, besides what is to come, are they not often forced to suffer, amongst the service of their lusts, the distempers that attend unhealthy intemperance; and poverty that doges luxury at the heels; and the fit punishment of voluptuous persons

^a John xvi. ult.

^b Compare Job xxxvi. 19. with xxx. 24.

in painful diseases, that either quickly cut the thread of life, or make their aged *bones full of the sins of their youth^c*? So that, on the whole, take what way you will, there is no place nor condition so fenced and guarded, but public calamities, or personal griefs, find a way to reach us.

Seeing then, we must suffer, whatever course we take, this kind of suffering, *to suffer for righteousness*, is far the best. What Julius Cæsar said ill, of doing ill^d, we may well say of suffering ill; if it must be, it is best to be for a kingdom. And those are the terms on which Christians are called to suffer for righteousness; *if we will reign with Christ*, certain it is *we must suffer with him*; and, *if we do suffer with him*, it is as certain *we shall reign with him^e*. And therefore such sufferers are *happy*.

But I shall prosecute this suffering for righteousness, only with relation to the Apostle's present reasoning. His conclusion he establishes: 1. From the favour and protection of God. 2. From the nature of the thing itself. Now, we would consider the consistence of this supposition with those reasons.

1st, From the favour or protection of God. *The eyes of the Lord being on the righteous* for their good, and *his ear open to their prayer*; how is it, that, notwithstanding all this favour and inspection, they are so much exposed to suffering; and, even for the regard and affection they bear towards him, *suffering for righteousness*? These seem not to agree well, yet they do.

It is not said that his eye is so on them, as that he will never see them afflicted, nor have them suffer any thing; no: But this is their great privilege and comfort in suffering, that his gracious *eye is then upon them*, and sees their trouble, and *his ear towards them*; not so as to grant them an exemption (for that they will not seek for), but seasonable deliverance, and, in the mean while, strong sup-

^c Job. xx. 11.

^d Si violandum est jus, regnandi causa violandum.

^e 2 Tim. ii. 12.

port, as is evident in that xxxiv. Psalm. If his eye be always on them, he sees them suffer often, *for their afflictions are many*^f; and if his ear be to them, he hears many sighs and cries pressed out by sufferings: And they are content; this is enough, yea better than not to suffer; they suffer, and often directly for him; but he sees it all, takes perfect notice of it, therefore it is not lost. And they are forced to cry, but none of their cries escape his ear; he hears, and he manifests that he sees and hears, *for he delivers them*; and, till he does that, he keeps them from being crushed under the weight of the suffering; *He keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken*^g.

He sees, yea appoints and provides these conflicts for his choicest servants; he sets his champions to encounter the malice of Satan and the world, for his sake, to give proof of the truth and the strength of their love to him for whom they suffer, and to overcome even in suffering.

He is sure of his designed advantages out of the sufferings of his church and saints for his name; he loses nothing, and they lose nothing: but their enemies, when they rage most, and prevail most, are ever the greatest losers. His own glory grows, the graces of his people grow, yea, their very number grows, and that sometimes most by their greatest sufferings; it was evident in the first ages of the Christian churches: where were the glory of so much invincible love and patience, if they had not been so put to it?

2dly, For the other, that argument from the nature of the thing: It is certain that, when it is intimated that the said *following of good* would preserve from *harm*, it speaks what it is apt to do, and what, in some measure, it often doth; but then, considering the nature of the world, *its enmity against God* and religion, that strong poison in the serpent's seed, it is not strange that it often proves otherwise; that, notwithstanding the righteous car-

^f Ver. 19.^g Psal. xxxiv. 20.

riage of Christians, yea even *because* of it, they suffer much. It is a resolved case, *all that will live godly must suffer persecution*^h. It meets a Christian in his entry to the way of the kingdom, and goes along all the way. No sooner canst thou begin to seek the way to heaven, but the world will seek how to vex and molest thee, and make that way grievous; if no other way, by scoffs and taunts, intended as bitter blasts to destroy the tender blossom or bud of religion, or (as Herod) to kill Christ newly born. You shall no sooner begin to inquire after God, but, twenty to one, they will begin to inquire, *if thou art gone mad*. But if thou knowest *who it is whom thou hast trusted*ⁱ, and whom thou lovest, this is a small matter. What though it were deeper and sharper sufferings, yet still, *if you suffer for righteousness, happy are you*:

Which is the *second* thing that was proposed, and more particularly imports, 1. That a Christian, under the heaviest load of *sufferings for righteousness*, is yet still *happy*, notwithstanding these sufferings. 2. That he is happier even by these sufferings. And,

1st, All the sufferings and distresses of this world are not able to destroy the happiness of a Christian, nor diminish it; yea, they cannot at all touch it, it is out of their reach. If it were built on worldly enjoyments, then worldly deprivements and sufferings might shake it, yea, might undo it; when those rotten props fail, that which rests on them must fall. He that *hath set his heart on his riches*, a few hours can make him miserable; he that lives on popular applause, it is almost in any body's power to rob him of his happiness, a little slight or disgrace undoes him; or, whatsoever the soul fixes on of these moving unfixed things, pluck them from it, and it must cry after them, *Ye have taken away my gods*.

But the believer's happiness is safe, out of the reach of shot; he may be impoverished and imprisoned, and tortured and killed; but this one thing

^h 2 Tim. iii. 12.ⁱ 2 Tim. i. 12.

is out of hazard, he cannot be miserable; still, in the midst of all these, subsists a happy man. If all friends be shut out, yet the visits of the Comforter may be frequent, bringing him glad tidings from heaven, and communing with him of the love of Christ, and solacing him in that. It was a great word for a heathen to say of his false accusers, *Kill me they may, but they cannot hurt me*: How much more confidently may the Christian say so! Banishment he fears not, for his country is above; nor death, for that sends him home into that country.

The believing soul having hold of Jesus Christ, can easily despise the best and the worst of the world, and bid defiance to all that is in it; can share with the Apostle in that of his, *I am persuaded that neither death nor life shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*^k. Yea, what though the frame of the world were a-dissolving, and falling to pieces! This happiness holds, and is not stirred by it; for it is in that Rock of eternity, that stirs not, nor changes at all.

Our main work, truly, if you will believe it, is this, to provide this immovable happiness, that amidst all changes, and losses, and sufferings, may hold firm. *You may be free, chuse it rather*; not to stand to the courtesy of any thing about you, nor of any man, whether enemy or friend, for the tenure of your happiness. Lay it higher and surer, and, if you be wise, provide such a peace as will remain untouched in the hottest flame; such a light as will shine in the deepest dungeon, and such a life as is safe even in death itself; *that life that is hid with Christ in God*^l.

But if in other sufferings, even the worst and saddest, the believer be still a happy man, then more especially in those that are the best kind, suffering for righteousness: Not only do they not detract from his happiness; but,

2dly, They concur and give accession to it; he

^k Rom. viii. ult.

^l Col. iii. 3.

is happy even so by suffering; as will appear from the following considerations,

1. It is the happiness of a Christian, until he attain perfection, to be advancing towards it; to be daily refining from sin, and growing richer and stronger in the graces that make up a Christian, a new creature; to attain a higher degree of patience, and meekness, and humility, to have the heart more weaned from the earth and fixed on heaven: now, as other afflictions of the saints do help them in those their sufferings for righteousness, the unrighteous and injurious dealings of the world with them have a particular fitness for this purpose. Those trials that come immediately from God's own hand, seem to bind to a patient and humble compliance, with more authority, and, (I may say), necessity: There is no plea, no place for so much as a word, unless it be directly and expressly against the Lord's own dealing; but unjust suffering at the hands of men, requires some uncommon degrees of respect unto God, without whose hand they cannot move; so that for his sake, and for reverence and love to him, a Christian can go through those with that mild evenness of spirit, that overcomes even in suffering.

And there is nothing outward more fit to persuade a man to give up with the world and its friendship, than to feel much of its enmity and malice: and that directly venting itself against religion, making that the very quarrel, which is of all things dearest to a Christian, and in highest esteem with him.

If the world should caress them, and smile on them, they might be ready to forget their home; or at least to abate in the frequent thoughts and fervent desires of it, and to turn into some familiarity with the world, and favourable thoughts of it, so as to let out somewhat of their hearts after it; and thus grace would grow faint by the diversion and calling forth of the spirits; as in summer, in the hottest and fairest weather, it is with the body.

It is a confirmed observation, by the experience of

all ages, that when the church flourished most in outward peace and wealth, it abated most of its spiritual lustre^m, which is its genuine and true beauty; and, when it seemed most miserable by persecutions and sufferings, it was most happy, in sincerity, and zeal, and vigour of grace. When the moon shines brightest towards the earth, it is dark heaven-wards; and, on the contrary, when it appears not, is nearest the sun, and clear towards heaven.

2. Persecuted christians are happy in acting and evidencing, by those sufferings for God, their love to him. Love delights in difficulties, and grows in them: the more a christian suffers for Christ, the more he loves him, and accounts him the dearer; and the more he loves him, still the more can he suffer for him.

3. They are happy, as in testifying love to Christ and glorifying him, so in conformity with him, which is love's ambition. It affects likeness and harmony at any rate. A believer would readily take it as an affront, that the world should be kind to him, that was so harsh and cruel to his beloved Lord and Master. Canst thou expect, or wouldst thou wish, smooth language from that world that reviled thy Jesus, that called him Beelzebub? Couldst thou own and accept friendship at its hands, that buffeted him, and shed his blood? Or, art thou rather most willing to share with him, and of St. Paul's mind, *who executed his embassy in chains*ⁿ, and yet could boldly say, *° God forbid that I should glory in any thing save in the cross of Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

4. Suffering Christians are happy in the rich supplies of spiritual comfort and joy; that in those times of suffering are usual; so that as *their sufferings for Christ do abound, their consolations in him abound much more*, as the Apostle testifies^p. God is speaking most peace to the soul when the world

^m Opibus major, virtutibus minor.

ⁿ Πρεσβεύω ἐν ἀλύσει, Eph. vi. 20. [°] Gal. vi. 14. ^p 2 Cor. i. 5.

speaks most war and enmity against it; and this compenses abundantly. When the Christian lays the greatest sufferings men can inflict in the one balance, and the least glances of God's countenance in the other, he says, it is worth all the enduring of these to enjoy this; says with David; *Let them curse, but bless thou; let them frown, but smile thou.* And thus God usually doth; refreshes such as are prisoners for him with visits, that they would buy again with the hardest restraint and debarring of nearest friends. The world cannot but misjudge the state of suffering Christians; it sees, as Bernard speaks, their crosses, but not their anointings^f. Was not Stephen, think you, in a happy posture even in his enemies hands? Was he afraid of the showers of stones coming about his ears, that *saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the Father's right hand?* so little was he then troubled with the stoning him, that, as the text hath it, in the midst of them *he fell asleep*^g.

5. If those sufferings be so small, that they are weighed down even with present comforts, and so the Christian be happy in them in that regard, how much more doth the *weight of glory*^t surpass, that follows these sufferings? *They are not worthy to come in comparison; they are as nothing to that glory that shall be revealed,* in the Apostle's arithmetic. That, his expression, imports, [*λογίζομαι*], when I have cast up the sum of the sufferings of this present time, this instant now, [*τὸ νῦν,*] they amount to just nothing in respect of *that glory*^u. Now, these sufferings are happy, because they are the way to this happiness, and pledges of it, and (if any thing do) they raise the very degree of it; however, it is an *exceeding excellent weight of glory*; the Hebrew word that signifies *glory*, signifies *weight*, yet the glories that are here are all *too light*, τὸ εὐλαφὲς, except in the weight of cares and sorrows that at-

^g Psal. cix. 28.

^f Vident cruces nostras, unctioes non vident. St. BERN.

^g Acts vii. 55. 60. ^t 2 Cor. iv. 17. ^u Rom. viii. 18.

tend them; but that hath the weight of complete blessedness; speak not of all the sufferings, nor of all the prosperities of this poor life, nor of any thing in it, as worthy of a thought, when *that glory* is named; yea, let not this life be called *life*, when we mention that other life, that our Lord, by his death, hath purchased for us.

Be not afraid of their terror.] No time, nor place in the world, is so favourable to religion, that it is not still needful to arm a Christian mind against the outward oppositions and discouragements he shall meet with in his way to heaven. This is the Apostle's scope here; and he doth it, 1st, By an assertion; 2^{dly}, By an exhortation. The assertion, that, in *suffering for righteousness, they are happy*. The exhortation, agreeable to the assertion, that *they fear not*. Why should they fear any thing that are assured of happiness, yea, that are the more happy by those very things that seem most to be feared?

The words are in part borrowed from the Prophet Isaiah, who relates them as the Lord's words to him, and other godly persons with him in that time, countermanding in them that carnal distrustful fear, that drove a profane king and people to seek help, rather any where than in God, who was their strength; *fear not their fear, but sanctify the Lord, and let him be your fear, &c* ^x.

This the Apostle extends as an universal rule for Christians in the midst of their greatest troubles and dangers.

The things opposed here are, a perplexing troubling *fear of sufferings*, as the soul's distemper, and a *sanctifying of God in the heart*, as the sovereign cure of it, and the true principle of a healthful sound constitution of mind.

Natural fear, though not evil in itself, yet, in the natural man, is constantly irregular and disordered in the actings of it, still missing its due object, or measure, or both; either running in a wrong

^x Isa. viii. 12, 13.

channel, or overrunning the banks. As there are no pure elements to be found here in this lower part of the world, but only in the philosopher's books, (they define them indeed as pure, but they find them no where), thus we may speak of our natural passions as not sinful in their nature, yet in us that are naturally sinful, yea, full of sin, they cannot escape the mixture and allay of it.

Sin hath put the soul into such an universal disorder, that it neither loves nor hates what it ought, nor as it ought; hath neither right joy, nor sorrow, nor hope, nor fear; a very small matter stirs and troubles it; and as waters that are stirred, *ταραχθῆτε*, so the word signifies, having dregs in the bottom, become muddy and impure; thus the soul, by carnal fear, is confused, and there is neither quiet nor clearness in it. *A troubled sea, as it cannot rest, so, in its restlessness, it casts up mire*, as the prophet speaks^y. Thus it is with the unrenewed heart of man, the least blasts that arise disturb it, and make it restless, and its own impurity makes it cast up mire; yea, it is never right with him; either he is asleep in carnal confidence, or, being shaken out of that, he is hurried and tumbled to and fro with carnal fears; either in a lethargy, in a fever, or trembling ague: When troubles are at a distance, he *folds his hands*, and takes ease as long as it may be; and then, being surprised, when they come rushing on him, his sluggish ease is paid with a surcharge of perplexing and affrighting fears. And, is not this the condition of the most?

Now, because those evils are not fully cured in the believer, but he is subject to carnal security, as David, *I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved*^z; and filled with undue fears and doubts in the apprehensions or feeling of trouble, as he likewise, complaining, confesses the dejection and disquietness of his soul; and again, that he had almost lost his standing, *his feet had well nigh slipped*^a: therefore, it is very needful to caution them often

^y Isa. lvii. 20.^z Psal. xxx. 6.^a Psal. lxiii. 2.

with such words as these, *Fear not their fear, neither be ye troubled.* It will be proper, if you take it objectively, *their fear*; be not afraid of the world's malice, or any thing it can effect; or it may be taken subjectively, as the prophet means, "Do not you fear after the manner of the world; be not distrustfully troubled with any affliction that can befall you." Sure it is pertinent in either sense, or both together; *Fear not what they can do, nor fear as they do.*

If we look on the condition of men, ourselves and others, are not the minds of the greatest part continually tossed, and their lives worn out betwixt vain hopes and fears^b, providing incessantly new matter of disquiet to themselves?

Contemplative natures have always taken notice of this grand malady in our nature, and have attempted much the cure of it; they have bestowed much pains in seeking out prescriptions and rules for the attainment of a settled tranquillity of spirit, free from the fears and troubles that perplex us; but they have proved but mountebanks, that give big words enow, and do little or nothing, *all physicians of no value*, or of nothing, good for nothing, as Job speaks^c. Some things they have said well concerning the outward causes of this inward evil, and of the inefficacy of inferior outward things to help it; but they have not descended to the bottom and inward cause of this our wretched unquiet condition, much less ascended to the true and only remedy of it. In this, divine light is needful, and here we have it in the following verse.

Ver. 15. *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*^d

IMPLYING the cause of all our fears and troubles to be this, our ignorance and disregard of God;

^b Hæc inter dubii vivimus et morimur.

^c Job xiii. 4.

and the due knowledge and acknowledgment of him to be the only establishment and strength of the mind.

In the words we may consider these three things: 1. This respect of God, as it is here expressed, *Sanctify the Lord God.* 2. The seat of it, *in your hearts.* 3. The fruit of it, the power that this, *sanctifying God in the heart*, hath to rid that heart of those fears and troubles to which it is here opposed as their proper remedy.

1st. We have the respect to God expressed by the word *sanctify*. He is holy, most holy, the fountain of holiness; it is he, he alone, that powerfully sanctifies us, and then, and not till then, we sanctify him. When he hath made us holy, we know and confess him to be holy; we worship and serve our holy God; we glorify him with our whole souls, and all our affections; we sanctify him, by acknowledging his greatness, and power, and goodness; and, which is here more particularly intended, we do this by a holy fear of him, and faith in him. These confess his greatness, and power, and goodness, as the prophet is express, *Sanctify him, and let him be your fear and your dread*^a. And then he adds, if thus you sanctify him, you shall further sanctify him, *He shall be your sanctuary*: you shall account him so, in believing in him, and shall find him so, in his protecting you; you shall repose on him for safety; and these particularly cure the heart of undue fears.

2dly. We have the seat of this with respect to God, *in your hearts*. We are to be sanctified in our words and actions, but primely in our hearts, as the root and principle of the rest. He *sanctifies* his own *throughout*^b, makes their language and their lives holy, but first, and most of all, their hearts; and, as he chiefly sanctifies it, it chiefly sanctifies him. The heart acknowledges and worships him often when the tongue and body do not, and possibly cannot well join with it; it fears, and loves, and trusts in

^a Isa. viii. 13.

^b 1 Thess. v. 23.

him, which properly the outward man cannot do, though it does follow and is acted by these affections, and so shares in them according to its capacity.

Beware of an external superficial sanctifying of God, for he takes it not so; nay, he will interpret that a profaning of him and his name^c, *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*. He looks through all visages and appearances in upon the heart; sees how it entertains him, and stands affected to him. If it be possessed with reverence and love, more than either thy tongue or carriage can express, he graciously approves; and if it be not so, all thy seeming worship is but injury, and thy speaking of him is but babbling, be thy discourse never so excellent; yea, the more thou hast seemed to sanctify God, while thy heart hath not been chief in the business, thou shalt not by such service, have the less, but the more fear and trouble *in the day of trouble*, when it comes upon thee. No estate is so far off from true consolation, and so full of horrors, as that of the rotten-hearted hypocrite; his rotten heart is sooner shaken to pieces than any other. If you would have heart-peace in God, you must have this heart-sanctifying of him. It is the heart that is vexed and troubled with fears; the disease is there, and if the prescribed remedy reach not thither, it will do no good. But let your hearts sanctify him, and then he shall fortify and *establish your hearts*^d.

3dly. For the fruit of this holy affection; this sanctifying of God in the heart, composes the heart, and frees it from fears.

1. In general, the turning of the heart to consider and regard God, takes it off from those vain, empty, windy things, that are the usual causes and matter of its fears. It feeds on wind, and therefore the bowels are tormented within. The heart is subject to disturbance, because it lets out itself to such things, and lets in such things into itself as are ever in motion, and full of instability and restlessness;

^c Gal. vi. 7.

^d 1 Thess. iii. 13.

and so it cannot be at quiet till God come in and cast out these, and keep the heart within, that it wander out no more to them.

2. The particulars of this religious fear and faith work particularly in this,

1. That fear, as greatest, overtops and nullifies all lesser fears. The heart, possessed with this fear, hath no room for the other; it resolves the heart, in point of duty, what it should and must do, that it must not offend God by any means; that, it lays down as indisputable, and so cases it of doubtings and debates in that kind; whether shall I comply with the world, and abate somewhat of the sincerity and exact way of religion to *please men*, or to escape persecution or reproaches? No, it is unquestionably best, and only necessary to *obey him, rather than men*; to retain his favour, be it with displeasing the most respected and considerable persons we know; yea, rather to choose the universal and highest displeasure of all the world for ever, than his smallest discountenance for a moment; it counts that the only indispensable necessity to cleave unto God and obey him. If I pray, I shall be accused, might Daniel think; but yet, pray I must, come on it what will. So, if I worship God in my prayer, they will mock me, I shall pass for a fool. No matter for that, it must be done. I must call on God, and strive to walk with him. This sets the mind at ease, not to be *halting betwixt two opinions*, but resolved what to do. *We are not careful*, said they, *to answer thee, O king; our God can deliver us*^c; but, however, this we have put out of deliberation, *we will not worship the image*. As one said, *Non oportet vivere, sed oportet navigare*; it is not necessary to have the favour of the world, nor to have riches, nor to live; but it is necessary to hold fast the truth, and to walk holily, to sanctify the name of our Lord, and honour him, whether in life or death.

2. Faith in God clears the mind, and dispels, car-

^c Dan. iii. 16.

nal fears, so it is the most sure help; *What time I am afraid* (says David) *I will trust in thee*^f. It resolves the mind concerning the event, and scatters the multitude of perplexing thoughts that arise about that; what shall become of this and that? what if such an enemy prevail? what if the place of our abode grow dangerous, and we be not provided, as others are, for a removal? No matter, says faith, though all fail, I know of one thing that will not; I have *a refuge*, that all the strength of nature and art cannot break in upon or demolish; *a high defence, my rock in whom I trust, &c*^g. The firm belief of, and resting on his power, and wisdom, and love, gives a clear satisfying answer to all doubts and fears. It suffers us not to stand to jangle with each trifling grumbling objection, but carries all before it; makes day in the soul, and so chaces away those fears that vex us only in the dark, as affrightful fancies do. This is indeed *to sanctify God*, and give him his own glory, to *rest on him*. And it is a fruitful homage done to him, returning us so much peace and victory over fears and troubles, it persuades us that nothing *can separate from his love*, and that only we feared; and so the things that cannot reach that, can be easily despised.

Seek to have the Lord in your hearts, and sanctify him there, he shall make them strong, and carry them through all dangers; *Though I walk*, says David, *through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no ill, for thou art with me*^h. What is it that makes the church so firm and stout *though the sea roar, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea*, yet we will not fear? It is this, *God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved*ⁱ. No wonder, he is immovable, and therefore doth establish all where he resides. If the world be in the middle of the heart, it will be often shaken; for all there is continual motion and change, but God in it keeps it stable. Labour, therefore, to get God

^f Psal. lvi. 3.^g Psal. lxii. 5, 6.^h Psal xxiii. so xxvii. 1.ⁱ Psal. xli. 2, 3. 5.

into your hearts, residing in the midst of them, and then, in the midst of all conditions, they shall not move.

Our condition is universally exposed to fears and troubles, and no man is so stupid but he studies and projects for some fence against them; some bulwark to break the incursion of evils, and so bring his mind to some ease, ridding it of the fear of them. Thus the most vulgar spirits in their way, for even the brutes from whom such do not much differ in their actings and course of life too, are instructed by nature to provide themselves and their young ones of shelters, the birds their nests, and the beasts their holes and dens. Thus, men gape and pant after gain with a confused ill-examined fancy of quiet and safety in it, desiring once to reach such a day, as to say with the rich fool in the gospel, *Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, &c.*^k though warned by his short ease, and by many watch-words, yea, by daily experience, that days may come, yea, one day will, where fear and trouble shall rush in, and break over the highest tower of riches, that there is a day, called the *day of wrath*, wherein they *profit not at all*^l. Thus men seek safety in the greatness, or multitude, or supposed faithfulness, of friends; they seek by any means to be strongly underset this way, to have many, and powerful, and constant friends. But wiser men, perceiving the unsafety and vanity of these, and all external things, have cast about for some higher course. They see a necessity of withdrawing a man from externals, that do nothing but mock and deceive those most that trust most to them, but cannot tell whither to direct him. The best of them bring him *into himself*, and think to quiet him so; but the truth is, he finds as little rest and support there. Nothing truly strong enough within him, to hold out against the many sorrows and fears that still from without do assault him. So then, though it is well done to call off a man from outward things,

^k Luke xii. 19.

^l Prov. xi. 4.

as moving sands, that he *build not on them*, yet it is not enough ; for his own spirit is as unsettled a piece as is in all the world, and must have some higher strength than its own to fortify and fix it. This is the way that is here taught, *Fear not their fear, but sanctify the Lord your God in your hearts* ; and if you can attain this latter, the former will follow of itself.

In the general, God taking the place formerly possessed by things full of motion and unquietness, strengthens and establishes the heart ; but we may more particularly consider, 1. Fear of him. 2. Faith in him.

1st. This fear of God turns other fears out of doors ; there is no room for them where this great fear is, and being greater than they all, yet it disturbs not as they do, yea, it brings as great quiet as they brought trouble. It is an ease to have but one thing for the heart to deal withal, for many times the multitude of carnal fears is more troublesome than their weight, as flies that vex most by their number.

Again, this fear is not a terrible apprehension of God as an enemy, but a sweet composed reverence of God as our king, yea, as our Father ; as very great, but no less good than great ; so highly esteeming of his favour, as fearing most of all things to offend him in any kind ; especially if the soul have been formerly either under the lash of his apprehended displeasure, or, on the other side, have had some sensible tastes of his love, and have been entertained in his *banqueting house*, where *his banner over it was love*^m. Faith carries the soul above all doubts, with assurance that if sufferings, or sickness, or death come, *nothing can separate it from him*, this suffices ; yea, what though he may hide his face for a time, though that is the hardest of all, yet there is no separation, his children *fear him for his goodness* ; are afraid to lose sight of that, or deprive themselves of any of its influences. They desire to

^m Cant. ii. 4.

live in his favour, and then for other things they are not very thoughtful.

2dly. Faith sets the soul in God, and where is safety if it be not there? It rests on those persuasions it hath concerning him, and that interest it hath in him. Faith believes that he sits and rules the affairs of the world, with an all-seeing eye and all-moving hand: the greatest affairs surcharge him not, and the very smallest escape him not. He orders the march of all armies, and the events of battles, and yet thou and thy particular condition slips not out of his view. The very *hairs of thy head are numbered*^a. Are not all thy steps, and the hazards of them, known to him, and *all thy desires before him*? *Doth he not number thy wanderings*, every weary step thou art driven to, and *put thy tears in his bottle*^o? Thou mayest assure thyself, that however thy matters seem to go, all is contrived to subserve thy good, especially thy chief and highest good. There is a regular motion in them, though the wheels do seem to run cross. *All those things are against me*, said old Jacob^p, and yet they were all for him.

In all estates, I know no heart's ease, but to believe; to *sanctify* and honour *thy God*, in resting on his word. If thou art persuaded of his love, sure that will carry thee above all distrusting fears. If thou art not clear in that point, yet depend and resolve to stay by him, yea, to stay on him, till he shew himself unto thee. Thou hast some fear of him, thou canst not deny it without gross injury to him and thyself; thou wouldst willingly walk in all well-pleasing unto him: Well then, *who is among you that feareth the Lord, though he see no present light, yet let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God*^q. Press this upon thy soul, for there is not such another charm for all its fears and unquiet; therefore, repeat it still with David: sing this still, till it be stilled; chide thy distrustful

^a Matt. x. 30.

^o Psal. lvii. 8.

^p Gen. xlii. 36.

^q Isa. l. 10.

heart into believing, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him*^r. Though I am all out of tune for the present, never a right string in my soul, yet he will put to his hand and redress all: and *I shall yet once again praise*; and therefore, even now, I will hope.

It is true, will the humble soul reply, God is a safe shelter and refuge, but he is holy, and holy men may find admittance and protection; but can so vile a sinner as I look to be protected and taken in under his safeguard? Go try. Knock at his door, and (take it not on our word, but on his own) *it shall be opened to thee*^s; and if that be once done, thou shalt have a happy life on it in the worst times. Faith hath this privilege, never *to be ashamed*; it takes sanctuary in God, and sits and sings *under the shadow of his wings*, as David speaks^t.

Whence the unsettledness of mens minds in trouble, or when it is near, but because they are far off from God? The heart is *shaken as the leaves of the tree with the wind*^u, there is no stability of spirit; God is not sanctified in it, and no wonder, for he is not known. Strange! the ignorance of God, and the precious promises of his word! the most living and dying strangers to him! When trouble comes they have not him *a known refuge*, but are to begin to seek after him, and to inquire the way to him; they cannot go to him as acquainted, and engaged by his own covenant with them. Others have empty knowledge, and can discourse of scripture, and sermons, and spiritual comforts, and yet have none of that fear and trust that quiets the soul: notions of God in their heads, but God not sanctified in their hearts.

If you will be advised, this is the way to have a high and strong spirit indeed, and to be above troubles and fears. Seek for a more lively and divine knowledge of God than most as yet have, and rest not till

^r Psal. xliii. 5.^s Matt. vii. 7.^t Psal. lxiii. 7.^u Isa. vii. 2.

you bring him into your hearts, and then you shall rest indeed on him.

Sanctify him by fearing him; *Let him be your fear and your dread**; fear not only outward gross offences, do not only fear an oath, and the profanation of the Lord's holy day, but fear all irregular earthly desires: fear the distempered affecting any thing, entertaining any thing in the secret of your hearts that may give distaste to your beloved. Take heed, respect the great person you have in your company, who lodges within you, the Holy Spirit. *Grieve him not*, for it will turn to your own grief if you do; for all your comfort is in his hand, and flows from him. If you be but in heart dallying with sin, it will unfit you for suffering outward troubles, and make your spirit low and base in the day of trial: yea, it will fill you with inward trouble, and disturb that peace, which, I am sure, you that know it, esteem more than all the peace and flourishing of this world. Outward troubles do not molest nor stir inward peace, but an unholy unsanctified affection doth. All the winds without, cause not an earthquake, but that within its own bowels doth. Christians are much their own enemies in unwary walking; hereby they deprive themselves of those comforts they might have in God; and so are often almost as perplexed and full of fears, upon small occasions, as worldlings are.

Sanctify him by believing. Study the main question, your *reconcilement* with him; labour to bring that to some point, and then in all other occurrences faith will uphold you, by relying on God as now on yours; for those three things make up the soul's peace: *1st.* To have right apprehensions of God, looking on him in Christ, and according to that covenant that holds in him. And, *2dly*, a particular apprehension, that is, laying hold on him in that covenant, as gracious and merciful, as satisfied and appeased in Christ, smelling, in his sacrifice, (which was himself), a savour of rest, and setting himself

* Isa. viii. 13.

before me, that I may rely on him in that notion. *3dly.* A persuasion, that by so relying on him my soul is at one, yea, is one with him. Yet, while this is wanting, as to a believer it may be, the other is our duty, to sanctify the Lord in believing the word of grace, and believing on him; reposing on his word; and this even severed from the other doth deliver, in a good measure, from distracting fears and troubles, and sets the soul at safety.

Whence is it, that, in times of persecution or trouble, men are troubled within and racked with fears, but because instead of God, their hearts are glued to those things that are in hazard by those troubles without, their estates, or their ease, or their lives? The soul destitute of God esteems so highly of such things, that it cannot but exceedingly feel when they are in danger, and fear their loss most, gaping after some imagined good, and saying, Oh! if I had but this, I were well. But then, such or such a thing may step in and break all my projects: and this troubles the poor spirit of man that hath no higher designs, but such as are so easily blasted, and still as any thing in man *lifts up his soul to vanity*, it must needs fall down again into vexation. There is a word or two in the Hebrew *for idols*, that signify withal *troubles*^y, and *terrors*^z, and so it is certainly. All our idols prove so to us; they fill us with nothing but anguish and troubles, with unprofitable cares and fears, that are good for nothing, but to be fit punishments of that folly out of which they arise. The ardent love or obstinate desire of prosperity, or wealth, or credit in the world, carries with it, as inseparably tied to it, a bundle of fears and inward troubles: *They that will be rich*, says the apostle^a, *fall into a snare, and many noisome and hurtful lusts*, and, as he adds in the next verse, *they pierce themselves through with many sorrows*.

^y [*Tigirim*], Isa. xlv. 16. from [*Tszus*], arctavit, hostiliter egit.

^z [*Miphletzeth*], 1 Kings xv. 13. from [*Phalatz*], contremiscere, et [*Emim*], Job xv. 25. from [*Aim*], formidabilis, terrificus.

^a 1 Tim. vi. 9.

He that hath set his heart upon an estate, or a commodious dwelling and lands, or upon an healthful and long life, cannot but be in continued alarms of renewed fears concerning them; especially *in troublous times*, the least rumour of any thing that threateneth his deprivation of those advantages strikes him to the heart; because his heart is in them. I am well seated, thinks he, and I am of a sound strong constitution, and may have many a good day. Oh! but besides the arrows of pestilence that are flying round about, the sword of a cruel enemy is not far off. This will affright and trouble a heart void of God; but, if thou wouldst readily answer and dispel all these, and such like fears, *sanctify the Lord God in thy heart*. The soul that eyes God renounces these things, looks on them at a great distance, as things far from the heart, and therefore that cannot easily trouble it, but it looks on God as within the heart, *sanctifies him in it*, and rests on him.

The word of God cures the many foolish hopes and fears that we are naturally sick of, by representing to us hopes and fears of a far higher nature, which swallow up and drown the other: as inundations and land-floods do the little ditches in those meadows that they overflow. *Fear not*, says our Saviour, *him that can kill the body*, what then? Fear must have some work, he adds, *but fear Him, that can kill both soul and body*^b. Thus in the passage cited here, *Fear not their fear, but sanctify the Lord, and let him be your fear and your dread*. And so for the hopes of the world, care not though you lose them for God; there is a *hope in you* (as it follows here) that is far above them.

Be ready always to give an answer.] The real christian is *all for Christ*, hath given up all right of himself to his Lord and master; to be all his, to do and suffer for him; and therefore sure will not fail in this which is least, to speak for him upon all occasions. If he sanctify him in his heart, the tongue

^b Matt. x. 28.

will follow, *and be ready* [πρὸς ἀπολογίαν] *to give an answer*, a defence or apology. Of this here are four things to be noted.

1st. The need of it, *Men will ask an account.*

2dly. The matter or subject of it, *the hope in you.*

3dly. The manner, with *meekness* and *fear.*

4thly. The faculty for it, *Be ready.*

1. For the *first*, the need of a defence or apology. Religion is always the thing in the world that hath the greatest calumnies and prejudices cast upon it; and this engages those that love it to endeavour to clear and disburthen it of them. This they do chiefly by the tract of their lives. The saints, by their blameless actions and patient sufferings, do write most real and convincing *apologies*; yet sometimes it is expedient, yea, necessary to add verbal defences, and to vindicate not so much themselves, as their Lord and his truth, suffering in *the reproaches cast upon them*. Did they rest in their own persons, a regardless contempt of them were usually the fittest answer^c; but where the holy profession of christians is likely to receive either the main or the indirect blow, and a word of defence may do any thing to ward it off, there we ought not to spare to do it.

Christian prudence goes a great way in the regulating of this; for *holy things are not to be cast to dogs*^d. Some are not capable of rational answers, especially in divine things; they were not only lost upon them, but religion indignified by contesting. But we are to answer every one that *inquires a reason* or an account; which supposes something receptive of it. We ought to judge ourselves engaged to give it, be it an enemy, if he will hear: if it gain him not, it may in part convince and cool him; much more be it one that ingenuously inquires for satisfaction, and possibly inclines to receive the truth, but is prejudiced against it by false misrepresentations of it: as satan and the profane world are very inventive of such shapes and colours as may

^c Spreta vilescerent.

^d Matt. vii. 6.

make truth most odious, drawing monstrous misconsequences out of it, and belying the practices of christians, making their assemblies horrible and vile by false imputations; and thus are they often necessitated to declare the true tenor, both of their belief and lives, in confessions of faith, and remonstrances of their carriage and custom.

The very name of christians, in the primitive times, was made hateful by the foulest aspersions of strange wickednesses committed in their meetings; and they passed credibly through with all that were not particularly acquainted with them. Thus it also was with the Waldenses; and so both were forced to *publish* apologies; and, as here, every one was and is bound, seasonably, to clear himself, and his brethren, and religion. Such is the expression here, *be ye always ready*; which intimates it was not always to be done to every one; but we, being ready to do, are to consider when, and to whom, and how far.

2. We have the matter or subject of the apology. All that they are to give account of is comprised here under this, *the hope that is in you*. Faith is the root of all graces, and of all obedience and holiness; and hope is so near in nature to it, that the one is commonly named for the other: for, the things that *faith* apprehends, and lays hold on, as present in the truth of divine promises, *hope* looks out for as to come in their certain performance. To believe a promise to be true before it be performed, is no other but to believe that it shall be performed; and hope expects that.

Many rich and excellent things do the saints receive, even in this mean despised condition they have here; but their *hope* is rather mentioned as the subject they may speak and give account of with most advantage; both because all they receive at present is but as nothing, compared to what they hope for; and because, such as it is, it cannot be made known at all to a natural man, and is so clouded with their afflictions and sorrows. These he sees, but their

graces and comforts he cannot see; and therefore the very ground of higher hopes somewhat to come, though he knows not what it is, speaks more satisfaction. To hear of another life, and a happiness hoped for, any man will confess it says something, and deserves to be considered.

So, then, the whole sum of religion goes under this word, *the hope that is in you*, for two reasons, 1. As it terminates in hope: And, 2. as that is, by way of eminence, *the hope*, the most noble of all others.

1. For that it doth indeed all resolve and terminate into things to come, and leads and carries on the soul towards them by all the graces in it, and all the exercise of them, and through all services and sufferings; still it aims at this, as its main scope, to keep that life to come in the believers's eye, till he get it in his hand; to entertain the hope of it, and bring him home to possess it. And,

2. It is eminently *The hope*; therefore the Apostle calls faith *the substance of things hoped for*, that which makes them be before they be, gives a solidity and substance to them. The name of *hope*, in other things, scarce suits with such a meaning, but sounds a kind of uncertainty, and is somewhat airy. For, of all other hopes but this, it is a very true word, *that hope is the name of an uncertain good*^a: But the gospel, being entertained by faith, furnishes a hope that hath substance and reality in it; and all its truth do centre into this, to give such a hope. There was in St. Paul's word, besides the fitness for his stratagem at that time, a truth suitable to this, where he assigns his whole cause for which he was in question, by the name of his *hope of the resurrection*^b.

And, indeed, this hope carries its own apology in it, for itself and for religion. What can more pertinently answer all exceptions against the way of godliness than this, to represent what hopes the saints have, that walk in that way. If you ask, Whither tends all this, your preciseness and singularity? Why

^a Spes est nomen boni incerti. SEN.

^b Acts xxiii. 6.

cannot you live as your neighbours, and the rest of the world about you? Truly the reason is this, we have somewhat further to look to than our present condition, and far more considerable than any thing here; we have a hope of blessedness after time, a hope to dwell *in the presence of God*, where our Lord Christ is gone before us; and we know that *as many as have this hope, must purify themselves even as he is pure*^c. The city we tend to is holy, and *no unclean thing shall enter into it*^d. The hopes we have cannot subsist in the way of the ungodly world; they cannot breathe in that air, but are choaked and stifled with it; and therefore we must take another way, unless we will forego our hopes, and ruin ourselves for company. “But all that bustle of godliness you make, is but ostentation and hypocrisy.” That may be your judgment; but, if it were so, we had but a poor bargain^e: *They have their reward*, that which they desire (*to be seen of men*) is given them, and they can look for no more; but we should be loath to have it so with us. That which our eye is on, is to come; our hopes are the thing which upholds us. We know that we shall appear before the judge of hearts, where shews and formalities will not pass: and we are persuaded, that *the hope of the hypocrite shall perish*^f; no man shall be so much disappointed and ashamed as he; but the *hope* that we have *makes not ashamed*^g. And while we consider that, so far are we from the regard of men’s eyes, that, were it not we are bound to profess our hope, and avow religion, and to walk like it, even before men, we would be content to pass through altogether unseen, and desire to pass as if it were so; as regardless either of the approbation, or of the reproaches and mistakes, of men; as if there were no such thing, for it is indeed nothing.

Yea, the hopes we have make all things sweet. Therefore do we go through disgraces and sufferings with patience, yea with joy, because of that hope

^c 1 John iii. 3.

^d Rev. xxi. 17.

^e Mat. vi.

^f Job. viii. 13.

^g Rom. v. 5.

of glory, and joy, laid up for us. A Christian can *take joyfully the spoilings of his goods, knowing that he hath in heaven a better and an enduring substance*^h.

It is, as we said, *The hope*. All the estate of a believer lieth in hope, and it is a royal estate; for outward things, the children of God have what he thinks fit to serve them, but those are not their portion, and therefore he gives often more of the world to those that shall have no more hereafter: but all their flourish and lustre is but a base advantage, as a lackey's gaudy clothes, that usually make more shew than his that is heir of the estate. How often under a mean outward condition, and very despicable every way, goes an heir of glory, *born of God*, and so royal; born to a *crown that fadeth not*, an estate of hopes, but so rich and so certain hopes, that the least thought of them surpasses all the world's possessions. Men think of somewhat for present, *a bird in hand*, as you say, the best on it: But the odds is in this, that when all present things shall be past and swept away, as if they had not been, then shall these hopers be in eternal possession; *they only shall have all for ever*, that seemed to have little or nothing here.

Oh! how much happier, to be the meanest expectant of the glory to come, than the sole possessor of all this world. These expectants are often held short in earthly things, and, had they the greatest abundance of them, yet they cannot rest in that; yea, all the spiritual blessings that they do possess here, are nothing to *the hope that is in them*, but as an earnest-penny to their great inheritance. So, indeed, it confirms their hope, and assures it unto them of that full estate, and therefore, be it never so small, they may look on it with joy, not so much regarding it simply in itself, as in relation to that which it seals and ascertains the soul of. Be it never so small, yet it is a pledge of the great glory and happiness which we desire to share in.

It is the grand comfort of a christian to look often

^h Heb. x. 34.

beyond all that he can possess or attain here ; and as to answer others, when he is put to it concerning his hope, so to *answer himself* concerning all his present griefs and wants : “ I have a poor traveller’s lot here, little friendship, and many straits, but yet I may go cheerfully homewards : For thither I shall come, and there I have riches and honour enough ; a palace and a crown abiding me : Here nothing but *depth calling unto depth*, one calamity and trouble (as waves) following another ; but I have a hope of that *rest that remaineth for the people of God*¹. I feel the infirmities of a mortal state, but my hopes of immortality content me under them. I find strong and cruel assaults of temptations breaking in upon me, but for all that, I have assured hope of a full-victory, and then of everlasting peace. *I find a law in my members* rebelling against *the law of my mind*^k, the worst of all evils ; so much strength of corruption within me : Yet there is withal a hope within me of deliverance, and I look over all to that ; *I lift up my head, because the day of my redemption draweth nigh*¹. This I dare avow and proclaim to all, and not be ashamed to *answer*, concerning this blessed hope.”

But then, *3dly*, For the manner of this, it is to be done with *meekness and fear*. Meekness towards men, and reverent fear towards God.

1. *With meekness*. Not therefore blustering and flying out into invectives, because he hath the better on it, against any man that questions him touching this hope ; as some think themselves certainly authorised to rough speech, because they plead for truth, and are on its side. On the contrary, so much the rather study meekness, for the glory and advantage of the truth. It needs not the service of passion ; yea, nothing so disserves it, as passion when set to serve it. The *Spirit of truth* is withal the *Spirit of meekness*, the dove that rested on that great champion of truth, who is the truth itself, and from him is derived to the lovers of truth, and they ought to seek

ⁱ Heb. iv. 9.^k Rom. vii. 23.¹ Luke xxi. 28.

the participation of it. Imprudence makes some kind of christians lose much of their labour, in speaking for religion, and they drive those further off, that they would draw into it.

And, 2. This defence is to be made *with fear*. Divine things are never to be spoke of in a light perfunctory way, but with a reverent grave temper of spirit: and, for this reason, some choice is to be made both of time and persons. The confidence that is in this hope makes the believer not fear men, to whom he answers, but still he fears his God, for whom he answers, and whose interest is chief in those things he speaks of. The soul that hath the deepest sense of spiritual things, and the truest knowledge of God, is most afraid to miscarry in speaking of him, most tender and wary how to acquit itself when engaged to speak of and for God.

4thly, We have the faculty of this apology, *be ready*. In this there is implied knowledge, and affection, and courage. For knowledge is not required of every christian, to be able to prosecute subtilties, and encounter the sophistry of adversaries, especially in obscure points; but all are bound to know so much, as to be able to aver that hope that is in them, the main doctrine of grace and salvation, wherein the most of men are lamentably ignorant.

Affection sets all on work; whatsoever faculty the mind hath, it will not suffer it to be useless, and it hardens it against hazards in defence of the truth, and produces that undaunted courage which this readiness expresses.

But the only way so to know and love the truth, and have courage for it, is that, to have the Lord *sanctified in the heart*. Men may dispute stoutly against popery and errors, and yet be strangers to God and this hope. But sure it is the liveliest defence, and that which alone returns comfort within, when it arises from the peculiar interest of the soul in God, and in those truths, and that hope, that are questioned. It is then pleading for the nearest friend, and for a man's own rights and inheritance, and these

will animate and edge it, when you apologize, not for a hope you have heard or read of barely, but a hope *in you*; not merely a hope in believers in general, but in *you*, by a particular sense of that hope within.

But, although you find it not so strong in you for your particular interest, yet, Are you seeking after it, and desiring it mainly? Is it your chief design to attain unto it? then forbear not, if you have occasion, to speak for it, and commend it to others, and to maintain the sweetness and certainty of it.

And, to the end you may be the more established in it, and so the stronger to answer for it, not only against men, but that great adversary that seeks so much to infringe and overbear it, know the right foundation of it; build it never on yourselves, nor any thing in you.

The work of grace may evidence to you the truth of your hope; but the ground it fastens on is Jesus Christ, in whom all our rights and evidences hold good: his death assuring us of freedom from condemnation, and his life and possession of glory being the foundation of our hope^m.

If you would have it immoveable, rest it there; lay all this hope on him, and, when assaulted, fetch all your answers for it from him, *For it is Christ in you that is your hope of gloryⁿ.*

Ver. 16. *Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.*

THE prosperity of fools is their destruction, says Solomon^a. But none of God's children die of this disease, of too much ease. He knows well how to breed them, and fit them for a kingdom. He keeps them in exercise, but yet so as they are not surcharged. He not only directs them how to overcome, but enables and supports them in all their conflicts, and gives them victory. One main thing, tending to their support and victory, is this, which is here re-

^m Heb. vi. 19.

ⁿ Col. i. 27.

^a Prov. i. 32.

quired in the saints, and is withal wrought and maintained in them by the Spirit of God, *Having a good conscience, &c.*

1. We have here two parties opposed in contest, the evil tongues of the ungodly, and the good conscience and conversation of the christian; *they speak evil of you and falsely accuse you*, but have you a good conscience.

2. The success of their contest; the good conscience prevails, and the evil-speakers are ashamed.

For the *first*, The parties engaged: of the first, it is said, *They speak evil*. This is a general evil in the corrupt nature of man, though in some it rises to a greater height than in others. Are not tables and chambers, and almost all societies and meetings, full of it? And even they that have some dislikings of it, yet are too easily carried away with the stream, and, for company's sake, take a share, if not in lending in their word, yet in lending their ear. Men willingly hear the detractions of others; and, unless it be of their friends, or such as they have interest in, do insensihly slide into some forced complacency, and easily receive the impression of calumnies and defamings. But the most are more active in this evil, can cast in their penny to make up the shot; have their taunt or criticism upon somebody in readiness, towards furnishing out the feast, such as most companies entertain one another withal: But it is a vile diet: satan's name, as the *Syriack* calls him, is *an eater of calumnies*. This tongue-evil hath its root in the heart, in a perverse constitution there. Pride and self-love, an overweening esteem that men naturally have of themselves, mounts them into that chair, gives them a fancied authority of judging others; and self-love a desire to be esteemed; and, for that end, they spare not to depress others, and load them with disgraces and injurious censures, seeking, upon their ruins, to raise themselves^b.

But this bent of the unrenewed heart and tongue to evil-speaking, works and vents most in the world,

^b Ex alieni nominis jactura gradum sibi faciunt ad gloriam. SALL.

against those that walk most contrary to the course of the world ; against such this furnace of the tongue, which *is kindled from hell*, as St. James tells us^c, is made seven times hotter than ordinary. As for sincere Christians, a company of hypocrites, (say they,) who so godly ? but yet they are false, and malicious, and proud, &c. ; and no kind of carriage in them shall escape, but there shall be some device to wrest and misname it. If they be cheerful in society, that shall be accounted more liberty than suits with their profession ; if of a graver sad temper, that shall pass for sullen severity : Thus, John Baptist and Christ were censured^d. If they be diligent and wary in their affairs, then in the world's construction, they are as covetous and worldly as any ; if careless and remiss in them, then silly witless creatures, good for nothing : still something stands cross.

The enemies of religion have not any where so quick an eye, as in observing the ways of such *as seek after God* ; my remarkers, David calls them^e, they that scan my ways, as the word is, and will not let the least step pass unexamined. If nothing be found faulty, then their invention works, either forges complete falsehoods, or disguises something that lies open to mistake ; or if they can catch hold on any real failing, there is no end of their triumph and insultations. 1. They aggravate and raise it to the highest. 2. While they will not admit to be judged of themselves by their constant walk, they scruple not to judge of the condition of a Christian by any one particular action, wherein he doth, or seems at least to miscarry. 3. They rest not there, but make one failing of one Christian the reproach of all ; “ Take up one of your devoto's, there is “ never one of them better.” 4. Nor rest they there, but make personal failings, of those that profess it, the disgrace of religion itself. Now, all these are very crooked rules, and such as use them are guilty of gross injustice.

1. There is a great difference betwixt a thing

^c James iii. 6.

^d Matt. xi. 18, 19.

^e Psm. lvi. 6.

taken favourably, and the same action misconstrued. And,

2. A great difference betwixt one particular act and a man's estate or inward frame, which they either consider not, or willingly or maliciously neglect.

3. How large is the difference that there is betwixt one and another in the measure of grace, and of their prudence, either in their naturals, or in grace, or possibly in both? Some who are honest in matter of religion, yet being very weak, may miscarry in such things as other Christians come seldom near the hazard of; and though some should wholly forsake the way of godliness, wherein they seemed to walk, yet why should that reflect upon such as are real and steadfast in it? *They went out from us*, says the Apostle, *but were not of us*^f. *Offences* of this kind *must* be, but the *woe* rests on him by *whom they come*, not on other Christians: And if it spread further than the party offending, the *woe* is to the profane world, that take offence at religion because of him; as our Saviour hath expressed it, *Wo to the world because of offences*^g. They shall stumble and fall, and break their necks upon these stumbling blocks or scandals. Thou that art profane, and seest the failing of a minister or Christian, and art hardened by it, this is a judgment to thee, that thou meetest with such a block in thy way. *Wo to the world*: It is a judgment on a place, when God permits religion, in the persons of some, to be scandalous.

4. Religion itself remains still the same, whatsoever be the failings and blots of one or more that profess it. It is pure and spotless; if it teach not holiness, and meekness, and humility, and all good purely, then except against it. But, if it be a straight golden reed by which the temple is measured, then let it have its own esteem, both of straightness and preciousness, whatsoever unevenness be found in those that profess to receive it.

5. Suspect and search yourselves, even in general, for

^f 1 John ii. 19.

^g Matt. xviii. 7.

this evil, of evil-speaking. Consider that we are to give [λόγος λογῶν] *an account of words*; and if for idle [ἄργον ρῆμα] *workless words*, how much more of lying or biting words^h? Learn more humility and self-censure. Blunt that fire-edge upon your own hard and disordered hearts, that others may meet with nothing but charity and lenity at your hands.

But, particularly, beware of this, in more or less, earnest or in jest, to reproach religion, or those that profess it. Know how particularly the glorious name of GOD is interested in that; and they that dare to be affronting him, what shall they say? How shall they stand when he calls them to account? If you have not attained to it, yet do not bark against it, but the rather esteem highly of religion. Love it, and the very appearance of it, where you find it. Give it respect and your good word at least; and, from an external approbation, Oh! that you would aspire to inward acquaintance with it, and then no more were needful to be said in this. It would commend itself to you sufficiently. But, in the mean time, be ashamed, be afraid of that professed enmity against God that is amongst you, a malignant hateful spirit against those that desire to walk holily, whetting your tongues against them.

1. Consider, What do you mean, this religion which we all profess, is it the way to heaven, or is it not? Do you believe this word or not? If you do not, what do you here? If you do, then you must believe too, that they that walk closest by this rule are surest in that way. They that dare not share with your oaths, and excessive cups, and profane conversation, what can you say? It is not possible to open your mouth against them without renouncing this word and faith: Therefore, either declare you are no Christians, and that Christ is not yours; or, in his name, I enjoin you, that you dare no more speak an ill word of christianity, and the power of religion, and those that seek after it. There are not

^h De verbo mendaci aut mordaci. BERN.

many higher signs of a reprobate mind, than to have a bitter virulent spirit against the children of God. Seek that tie of affection and fraternity, on which the beloved apostle, St. John, lays such stress, when he says, *Hereby we know that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren*ⁱ.

But because those hissings are the natural voice of the serpent's seed, expect them, you that have a mind to follow Christ, and take this guard against them that you are here directed, *Having a good conscience*; the second party we mentioned above, as engaged in contest.

It is a fruitless verbal debate, whether conscience be a faculty or habit, or not; and as in other things, so in this, that most of all requires more solid and useful consideration, the vain mind of man feedeth on the wind, loves to be busy to no purpose^k: How much better is it to have this supernatural goodness of conscience, than to dispute about the nature of it; to find it duly teaching and admonishing, reproving and comforting, rather than to define it most exactly^m?

When all is examined, it will be found to be no other but the *mind of man, under the notion of a particular reverence to himself, and his own actions*. And there is a twofold goodness of the conscience, *purity and tranquillity*, and this latter flows from the former; so that the former is the thing we ought primely to study, and the latter will follow of itself. For a time, indeed, the conscience, that is in a good measure pure, may be unpeaceable, but still it is the apprehension and sense of present or former impurity that makes it so; for, without the consideration of guiltiness, there is nothing that can trouble it. It cannot apprehend the wrath of God, but with relation unto sin.

The goodness of conscience here recommended, is *the integrity and holiness of the whole inward man in a Christian*; so the ingredients of it are, 1. A due

ⁱ 1 John iii. 14.

^k Magno conatu magnas nugas.

^l Malo sentire compunctionem, quam scire ejus definitionem.

light or knowledge of our rule: That as the lamps in the temple must be still burning within, as filthiness is always the companion of darkness: therefore, if you would have a good conscience, you must by all means have so much light, so much knowledge of the will of God, as may regulate you, and shew you your way, may teach you how to do, and speak, and think, as in his presence.

2. A constant regard, and using of this light, applying it to all; not sleeping, but working by it; still seeking a nearer conformity with the known will of our God; daily redressing and ordering the affections by it; not sparing to knock off whatsoever we find irregular within, that our hearts may be polished, and brought to a right frame by that rule. And this is the daily inward work of the Christian, his great business, *to purify himself, as the Lord is pure^m*.

And, 3. For the advancing of this work is needful, a frequent search of our hearts and of our actions, not only to consider what we are to do, but what we have done. These reflex inquiries, as they are a main part of the conscience's proper work, they are a chief means of making and keeping the conscience good: 1. Acquainting the soul with its own state; with the motions and inclinations that are most natural to it. 2. Stirring it up to work out, and purge away, by repentance, the pollution it hath contracted by any outward act or inward motion of sin. 3. This search both excites and enables the conscience to be more watchful; teaches how to avoid and prevent the like errors for the time to come. As natural wise men labour to gain thus out of their former oversights in their affairs, to be the wiser and wariet by them, and lay up that as bought wit, that they have paid dear for, and therefore are careful to make their best advantage of it; so God makes the consideration of their falls preservatives to his children from falling again; he makes a medicine of this poison: Thus, that the conscience may be good, it

^m 1 John iii. 3.

must be enlightened ; and it must be watchful, both advising before, and after censuring, according to that light.

The greater part of mankind little regard this ; they walk by guess, having perhaps ignorant consciences, (and the blind, you say, swallow many a fly,) yea, how many *consciences* without sense, *as seared with an hot iron*ⁿ; so stupified, that they feel nothing ! Others rest satisfied with a civil righteousness, an imagined goodness of conscience, because they are free from gross crimes. Others that know the rule of Christianity, yet study not a conscientious respect to it in all things. They cast some transient looks upon the rule, and their own hearts, it may be, but sit not down, they make it not their business, to compare them. They have time for any thing but that^o; but share not with St. Paul, do not exercise themselves in this, *to have a conscience void of offence towards God and men*^p. Those were his *Asceticks*, [*ἀσκηῶ*] he breathed himself, in striving against what might defile the conscience, or, as the word signifies, *elaborately wrought and dressed his conscience*^q. Think you, that other things cannot be done without diligence and intention, and is this a work to be done at random ? No, it is the most exact and curious of all works, to have the conscience right, and keep it so. As watches, or other such neat pieces of workmanship, except they be daily wound up and skilfully handled, they will quickly go wrong ; yea, besides daily inspection, conscience should (as these) at sometimes be taken to pieces, and more accurately cleansed ; for the best kept will gather soil and dust. Sometimes a Christian should set himself to a more solemn examination of his own heart, beyond his daily search ; and all little enough to have so precious a good as this, *a good conscience*. They that are most diligent and vigilant, find nothing to abate as superfluous, but still need of more. The heart is to be *kept with all diligence*^r, or above all keeping. Cor-

ⁿ 1 Tim. iv. 2.

^o Non vacant bonæ menti.

^p Acts xxiv. 16.

^q ἀσκήσασα χιτῶνα. НОМ.

^r Prov. iv. 23.

ruption within is ready to grow and gain upon it, if it be never so little neglected, and from without, to invade it, and get in. We breathe in a corrupt infected air, and have need daily to *antidote* the heart against it.

You that are studying to be excellent in this art of a good conscience, go on, seek daily progress in it; the study of conscience is a more sweet profitable study than of all science, wherein is much vexation, and, for the most part, little or no fruit. Read this book diligently, and correct your *errata* by that other book, the word of God. Labour to have it pure and right; other books and works are *καπεργὰ*, *curious*, and *παπεργὰ*, *by-works*; they shall soon disappear, but this is one of the *books that shall be opened* in that great day, *according to which we must be judged*^s.

On this follows a good conversation, as inseparably connected with a good conscience. Grace is of a lively active nature, and doth act like itself; holiness in the heart will be holiness in the life too; not some good actions, but a good conversation, an uniform even tract of life, the whole revolution of it regular: The inequality of some Christians ways doth breed much discredit to religion, and discomfort to themselves.

But observe here, 1. The order of these two.
2. The principle of both.

1. The conscience good, and then the conversation; *Make the tree good and the fruit will be good*, says our Saviour^t; so, here, a good conscience is the root of a good conversation: Most men begin at the wrong end of this work; they would reform the outward man first; that will do no good, it will be but dead work.

Do not rest upon external reformations, they will not hold, there is no abiding, nor no advantage, in such a work; you think, when reprov'd, Oh! I will mend and set about the redress of some outward things; but this is as good as to do nothing; the

^s Rev. xx. 12.

^t Matt. xii. 33.

mind and conscience being defiled, as the Apostle speaks^v, doth defile all the rest; it is a mire in the spring; although the pipes are cleansed they will grow quickly foul again; so Christians, in their progress in grace, would eye this most, that the conscience be growing purer, the heart more spiritual, the affections more regular and heavenly, and their outward carriage will be holier; whereas, the outward work of performing duties, and being much exercised in religion, may, by the neglect of this, be labour in vain, and amend nothing soundly. To set the outward actions right, though with an honest intention, and not so to regard and find out the inward disorder of the heart, whence that in the actions flows, is but to be still putting the index of a clock right with your finger, while it is foul, or out of order within, which is a continual business, and does no good. Oh! but a purified conscience, a soul renewed and refined in its temper and affections, will make things go right without in all the duties and acts of our callings.

2. The principle of good in both is Christ: *Your good conversation in Christ*. The conversation is not good, unless in him, so neither is the conscience.

1. He the person, we must be in him, and then the conscience and conversation will be good in him; the conscience that is morally good, having some kind of virtuous habits, yet being out of Christ, is nothing but pollution in the sight of God; it must be washed in his blood ere it can be clean; all our pains will not cleanse it, floods of tears will not do it; it is blood, and that blood alone that hath the virtue of *purging the conscience from dead works*^w.

2. *In him*, the perfect pattern of holiness; the heart and life is to be conformed to him, and so made truly good.

3. He is the Spirit of Grace, whence it is first derived, and always fed and maintained, and made active; a spirit goes forth from him that cleanseth

^v Tit. i. 15.

^w Heb. ix. 14.

our spirits, and so makes our conversation clean and holy.

If thou wouldst have thy conscience and heart purified and pacified, and have thy life certified, go to Christ for all, make use of him; as of his blood to wash off thy guiltiness, so of his Spirit to purify and sanctify thee. If thou wouldst have thy heart reserved for God, pure as his temple; if thou wouldst have thy lusts cast out that pollute thee, and findest no power to do it; go to him, desire him to scourge out that filthy rabble, that abuse his house *and make it a den of thieves*. Seek this, as the only way to have thy soul and ways righted, to *be in Christ*, and then *walk in him*. Let thy conversation be in Christ, study him, and follow him; look on his way, on his graces, his obedience, and humility, and meekness, till by looking on them, they make the very idea of thee new, as the painter doth of a face he would draw to the life; so behold his glory, that thou mayest be *transformed from glory to glory*: But, as it is there added, this must be *by the Spirit of the Lord*^x. Do not, therefore, look on him simply as an example without thee, but as life within thee, having *received him*; walk not only like him, *but in him*, as the apostle St. Paul speaks^y, and as the word is here, have your conversation not only according to Christ, but *in Christ*; *draw from his fulness grace for grace*^z.

2dly, The other thing in the words is, the advantage of this good conscience and conversation, its success in this contest with evil-speakers. (1.) Even external towards the malicious ungodly world; *they shall be ashamed that falsely accuse you*. Thus often it is even most evident to men; the victory of innocence, silent innocency, most strongly confuting all calumny, making the ungodly false accusers hide their heads. Thus, without stirring, the integrity of a Christian conquers; as a rock, unremoved, breaks the waters that are dashing against it. And this is not only a lawful but laudable way of revenge,

^x 2 Cor. iii. 18.

^y Col. ii. 6.

^z John i. 16.

shaming calumny out of it, and punishing evil-speakers by well-doing; shewing really how false their accusers were. This is the most powerful apology and refutation; as his was of the sophister, that would prove there was no motion, by rising up and walking. And without this good conscience and conversation, we cut ourselves short of other apologies for religion, whatsoever we say for it. One unchristian action will disgrace it more than we can repair, by the largest and best framed speeches on its behalf.

Let those, therefore, that have given their names to Christ, honour him, and their holy profession, most this way; speak for him as occasion requires; why should we not, provided it be *with meekness and fear*, as our apostle hath taught? But let this be the main defence of religion, live like it, and commend it so. Thus all should do that are called christians, should *adorn that holy profession* with holy conversation: but the most are nothing else but *spots and blemishes*, some *wallowing in the mire*, and provoking one another to all uncleanness. Oh! the unchristian life of christians! an evil to be much lamented, more than all the troubles we sustain. But these indeed do thus *deny Christ*, and declare that *they are not his*. So many as *have any* reality of Christ in you, be so much the more holy: the more wicked the rest are, strive to make it up, and to honour that name which they disgrace. And if they will reproach you, because ye walk not with them, and cast the mire of false reproaches on you, take no notice, but go on your way; it will dry, and easily rub off. Be not troubled with misjudgings; shame them out of it by your blameless and holy carriage, for that will do most to put lies out of countenance. However, if they continue impudent, the day is at hand, wherein all the enemies of Christ shall *be all clothed over*, and covered *with shame*, and they that have kept a good conscience, and *walked in Christ*, shall *lift up their faces with joy*.

2dly. There is an intrinsical good in this goodness of conscience, that sweetens all sufferings, as follows :

Ver. 17. *For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing.*

THERE is a necessity of suffering in any way wherein ye can walk ; if ye choose the way of wickedness, you shall not, by doing so, escape suffering ; and that supposed, this is by far the better, to suffer in *well-doing* ; and for it, than to suffer either for doing evil, or simply to suffer *in that way*, as the words run, *to suffer doing evil*, κακοποιούντας πάχειν.

1. The way of the ungodly is not exempt from suffering, even in their present circumstances, setting aside the judgment and wrath to come. They often suffer from the hands of men, whether justly or unjustly ; and often from the immediate hand of God, always just, both in that and the other, causing the sinner *to eat of the fruit of his own ways*^a. When profane ungodly men offer violences and wrongs one to another ; in this God is just against both, in that wherein they themselves are both unjust ; they are both rebellious against him, and so, though they intend not his quarrel, he means it himself ; sets them to lash one another. The wicked profess their combined enmity against the children of God, yet they are not always at peace amongst themselves : they often revile and defame each other, and so enmity is held up on both sides ; whereas the godly cannot hold them game in that, being like their Lord, *who, when he was reviled, reviled not again*^b. Besides, although the ungodly flourish at some times, yet they have their days of suffering, are subject to the common miseries of the life of man, and the common calamities of evil times ; the sword and pestilence, and such like public judgments : now, in what kind soever it be that they suffer, they are at a great

^a Prov. i. 30.

^b 1 Pet. ii. 23.

disadvantage, compared with the godly, in their sufferings.

Here impure consciences may lie sleeping, while men are at ease themselves; but when any great trouble comes and shakes them, then the conscience naturally begins to awake, and bustle, and proves more grievous to them than all that comes on them from without. When they remember their despising the ways of God, neglecting him and holy things, whence they are convinced, how that comfort might be reaped in these days of distress; this cuts and galls them most, looking back at their licentious profane ways; each of them strikes to the heart. As the apostle calls sin, *the sting of death*^c, so is it of all sufferings, and the sting that strikes deepest into the very soul: no stripes are like those that are secretly given by an accusing conscience^d.

A sad condition it is, to have from thence the greatest anguish, whence the greatest comfort should be expected; to have thickest darkness, whence they should look for the clearest light. Men that have evil consciences, love not to be with them; they are not much with themselves, as Augustine compares them to such as have shrewd wives, and therefore love not to be much at home. But yet, outward distress sets a man inward, as foul weather drives him home; and there, where he should find comfort, he is met with such accusations as are *like a continual dropping*, as Solomon speaks of *a contentious woman*^e. It is a most wretched state to live under sufferings or afflictions of any kind, and a stranger to God; for a man to have God and his conscience against him, that should be his solace in times of distress, being knocked off from the comforts of the world, whereon he rested, and having no provision of spiritual comfort within, nor expectation from above. But let us now,

2dly, Consider the state of the children of God in their sufferings, (especially such as are for God);

^c 1 Cor. xv. 56. ^d Surdo verbere cedit. Juv. ^e Prov. xix. 3.

and here, *first*, They can retire themselves *inwards*, and *rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience*^f; yea, the possession of Christ dwelling within them. All the trouble that befalls them, is but as the rattling of hail upon the tiles of the house to a man that is sitting within a warm room at a rich banquet; such is a good conscience, a feast, yea, *a continual feast*. The believer looks on his Christ, and in him reads his deliverance from condemnation, and that is a strong comfort, a cordial that keeps him from fainting in the greatest distresses. When the conscience gives this testimony that sin is forgiven, it raises the soul above outward sufferings. Tell the christian of loss of goods, or liberty, or friends, or life, he answers all with this, "Christ is mine, and my sin is pardoned; that is enough for me. What would I not have suffered, to have been delivered from the wrath of God, if any suffering of mine in this world could have done that? Now that is done to my hand. All other sufferings are light; they are *light*, and *but for a moment*. One thought of eternity drowns the whole time of the world's endurance, which is but as one instant, or twinkling of an eye, betwixt eternity before, and eternity after. How much less is any short life, and a small part of that is spent in sufferings? Yea, what is it, though it were all sufferings, without interruption, which yet it is not? When I look forward to *the crown*, all vanishes, and I think it *less than nothing*." Now, these things the good conscience speaks to the christian in his sufferings; therefore, certainly, his choice is best, that provides it for his companion against *evil and troublous times*: if moral integrity went so far, (as truly it did much in some men that had much of it), that they scorned all hard encounters, and esteemed this a sufficient bulwark, a strength impregnable, *hic murus aeneus esto, nil conscire sibi*; how much more the christian's good conscience, which alone is truly such!

2. As the christian may thus look inward, and re-

^f 2 Cor. i. 12.

joice in tribulation ; so there is another look, *upward*, that is here likewise mentioned, that allays very much all the sufferings of the saints ; *If the will of God be so* ^g.

The christian mind hath still one eye to this, above the hand of men, and all inferior causes, in suffering, whether for the name of God, or otherwise ; it looks on the sovereign will of God, and sweetly complies with that in all. Neither is there any thing that doth more powerfully compose and quiet the mind than this. It feels itself invincibly firm and content, when it hath attained this self-resignation to the *will of God* ; to agree to that in every thing. This is the very thing wherein tranquillity of spirit lies : it is no riddle, nor hard to be understood, yet few attain it. And I pray you, what is gained by our reluctances and repinings, but pain to ourselves ? *God doth what he will*, whether we consent or not ; our disagreeing doth not prevent his purposes, but our own peace. If we will not be led, we are drawn. We must suffer, if he will ; but if we will what he wills, even in suffering, that makes it sweet and easy ; when our mind goes along with his, and we willingly move with that stream of providence, which will carry us with it, though we row against it ; in which case we still have nothing but toil and weariness for our pains.

But this hard argument, of necessity, is needless to the child of God ; persuaded of the wisdom and love of his Father, he knows that to be truly best for him that his hand reaches. Sufferings are unpleasant to the flesh, and it will grumble ; but the voice of the Spirit of God, in his children, is that of that good king, *Good is the word of the Lord that he hath spoken* ^h ; or that other ⁱ, *Let him do with me as seemeth good in his eyes*. My foolish heart would think these things I suffer might be abated, but my wise and heavenly Father thinks otherwise : he hath his design of honour to himself, and good to me in these, which I would be loath to cross if I might. It would

^g 1 Pet. iii. 17.

^h Isa. xxxix. 8.

ⁱ 2 Sam. x. 12.

think, I may do God more service by these advantages; but, doth not he know best what is fit? Cannot he advance his grace more by the want of these things I desire, than I could do myself by having them? Cannot he make me a gainer by sickness and poverty, and disgraces, and loss of friends and children, by making up all in himself, and teaching me more of his all-sufficiency? Yea, even concerning the affairs of my soul, I am to give up all to his good pleasure. Though I desire *the light of his countenance* above all things in this world, yet if he see it fit to hide it sometimes; if that be his will, let me not murmur: there is nothing lost by this obedient temper; yea, what way soever he deals with us, there is much more advantage in it. No soul shall enjoy so much in all estates, as that which hath divested and renounced itself, and hath no will but God's.

Ver. 18. *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, (that he might bring us to God), being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*

THE whole life of a christian, is a steady aiming at conformity with Christ; so that, in any thing, whether doing or suffering, there can be no argument so apposite and persuasive as his example; and no kind or degree of obedience, either active or passive, so difficult, but the view and contemplation of that example will powerfully sweeten it. The apostle doth not decline the frequent use of it: here we have it thus, *for Christ also suffered.*

Though the doctrine of christian suffering is the occasion of speaking of Christ's suffering, yet he insists on it beyond the simple necessity of that argument, for its own excellency, and further usefulness. So we shall consider the double capacity. I. As an encouragement and engagement for christians to suffer. II. As the great point of their faith, whereon all their hopes and happiness depend, being the means of their reduction to God.

I. The due consideration of Christ's sufferings doth much temper all the sufferings of christians, especially such as are directly for Christ.

1. It is some known ease to the mind, in any distress, to look upon examples of the like, or greater distress, in present or former times^k. It diverts the eye from continual poring on our own suffering; and, when we return to view it again, it lessens it, abates of the imagined bulk and greatness of it. Thus public, thus spiritual troubles are lightened; and particularly the sufferings and temptations of the godly, by the consideration of this as their common lot, their highway, and not new in the person of any^l, *No temptation has befallen you, but what is common to men.* If we trace the lives of the most eminent saints, shall we not find every notable step that is recorded marked with a new cross; one trouble following on another, as the waves do^m, in an incessant succession? Is not this manifest in the life of Abraham, and of Jacob, and the rest of God's worthies, in the scriptures? And, doth not this make it an unreasonable, absurd thought, to dream of an exemption? Would any one have a new untrodden way cut out for him, free of thorns, and strewed with flowers all along? Would a man meet with no contradictions, nor hard measure from the world, or imagine that there may be such a dexterity necessary, as to keep its good will, and the friendship of God too? This will not be; and it is an universal conclusion, *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution*ⁿ. This is the path to the kingdom, that which all the sons of God, the heirs of it, have gone in, even Christ; as that known word is, one son without sin, but none without suffering; *Christ also suffered.*

2. As the example and company of the saints in suffering is very considerable, so that of Christ is more than any other, yea, than all the rest together. Therefore the apostle having represented the former

^k Ferre quam sortem patiuntur omnes.

^m Velut unda pellitur unda.

^l 1 Cor. x. 13.

ⁿ 2 Tim. iii. 12.

at large, ends in this, as the top of all^o; *There is a race set before us*, it is to be run, and *run with patience*, and *without fainting*: now, he tells us of a *cloud of witnesses*; a cloud made up of instances of believers suffering before us; and the heat of the day wherein we run is somewhat cooled, even by that cloud compassing us: but the main strength of their comfort here, lies in *looking to Jesus*, eyeing of his sufferings, and their issue. The considering and contemplating of him will be the strongest cordial, will keep you from *wearying* and *fainting* in the way^p.

The singular power of this instance lies in many particulars, considerable in it. To specify some chief things briefly in the steps of the present words: the example is great and fit, and the result of the sufferings contemplated, of infinite importance to the christian. Consider, 1st, the greatness of the example, which will appear from the greatness of the person, and of the sufferings.

1. From the greatness of the person: *Christ*, and that marked to us by the manner of expression, [*καὶ Χριστός*], *Christ also*, besides and beyond all others, *even Christ himself*.

There can be no higher example; not only are the sons of adoption sufferers, but the *begotten*, the *only begotten Son*, the eternal heir of glory, in whom all the rest have their title, their sonship, and heirship, derived from, and dependent on his; not only all the saints, but the king of saints. Who shall now repine at suffering? Shall the wretched sons of men refuse to suffer, after the suffering of the spotless glorious Son of God? as one speaks of pride, that after majesty, highest majesty, to teach humility, hath so humbled himself, how wicked and impudent a thing will it be for a worm to swell, to be high conceited^q? So thus our Lord hath taught us, by suffering in his own person, and hath dignified suf-

^o Heb. xii. 1, 2.

^p Verse 3.

^q Ubi se humiliavit Majestas, vermiculus infletur et intumescat?

ferings, so that we should certainly rather be ambitious than afraid of them. Recollect,

2. The greatness and continuance of his sufferings. That which the apostle speaks here of, *his once suffering*, hath its truth, taking in all. *He suffered once*; his whole life was one continued line of suffering, from the manger to the cross; all that lay betwixt was suitable. His estate and entertainment throughout his whole life agreed well with so mean a beginning, and so reproachful an end, of it: forced upon a flight, while he could not go; and living till he appeared in public, in a very mean despised condition, as the carpenter's son; and, after his best works, paid with envy and revilings, called a *wine-biber*, and a *caster out of devils by the prince of devils*; his life often laid in wait and sought for. Art thou mean in thy birth and life, despised, misjudged, and reviled, on all hands? Look how it was with him, that had more right than thou hast, to better entertainment in the world. Thou wilt not deny this, for it was his own; *it was made by him, and he was in it, and it knew him not*. Are thy friends harsh to thee? *He came unto his own, and his own received him not*^r. Hast thou a mean cottage, or art thou drawn from it? Hast thou no dwelling, and art thou every way poor and ill accommodated? He was as poor as thou canst be, *and had no where to lay his head*^s, worse provided than the *birds and faxes*. But then, consider to what a height his sufferings rose in the end, that most remarkable piece of them here meant, by his *once suffering for sins*. If thou shouldst be cut off by a violent death, or in the prime of thy years, mayst thou not look upon him as going before thee in both these? and in so ignominious a way; scourged, buffeted, and spit on; he endured all, *he gave his back to the smiters*^t, and then, as the same prophet hath it, *He was numbered amongst the transgressors*^v. When they had used him with all that shame, they *hanged him betwixt two thieves*, and they

^r John i. 10, 11.

^s Mat. viii. 20.

^t Isa. i. 6.

^v Isa. liii. ult.

that passed by, *wagged their heads*, and darted taunts at him, as at a mark fixed to the cross; *they scoffed and said, He saved others, himself he cannot save: But, for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame*, as the apostle says^x.

Thus we see the outside of his sufferings. But the christian is subject to grievous temptations, and sad desertions, that are heavier by far than the sufferings which indeed the apostle speaks of here. Yet even in these this same argument of his holds. For our Saviour is not unacquainted with, nor ignorant of, either of those, though still *without sin*. And, if any of *that* had been in any of his sufferings, it had not furthered, but undone all our comfort in him. But *tempted* he was; he suffered that way too, and the temptations were terrible, as you know. And, was there not some strong conflict when he fell down and prayed in the garden, and *sweat drops of blood*? Was there not an awful eclipse, when he cried out on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* So that, even in these, we may apply this comfort, and stay ourselves or souls on him, and go to him as a compassionate high-priest^y, *For Christ also suffered*.

2. Consider the fitness of the example; as the same is every way great, yea *greatest*, so it is fit, the *fittest* to take with a christian, to set before him so near a pattern, where he hath so much interest. As the argument is strong in itself, so is it to the new man, the christian man, particularly strongest; it binds him most; for it is not far fetched, but a home pattern^z; as when you persuade men to virtue, by the example of those that they have near relation to. They are *his servants*, and shall they, or would they, think to be *greater than their master*, to be exempt from his lot in the world? They are *his soldiers*, and will they refuse to follow him, and to endure with him? *Suffer hardship* (says the apostle to Timothy), *as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*^a. Will not a word

^x Heb. xii. 2.

^y Heb. iv. 15, 16.

^z Exemplum domesticum.

^a 2 Tim. ii. 3.

from him put a vigour in them to go after him, whether upon any march or service, when he calls them friends, *Commilitones*, an appellation used by Julius Cæsar, which wrought so much on his trained bands: yea, *he is not ashamed to call them brethren^b*, and, will they be ashamed to share with him, and to be known by their suitable estate to be his brethren?

3. There is from these sufferings of Christ, such a result of safety and comfort to a christian, that makes them a most effectual encouragement to suffering; which is this, if he suffered once, that was *for sin*; so that now, that heavy intolerable suffering for sin being once taken out of a believer's way, it makes all other sufferings light, exceeding light, as nothing in their account. *He suffered once for sin*, so that to them that lay hold on him, this holds sure, that sin is never to be suffered for in the way of strict justice again; as not by him, so not by them that are in him; for *he suffered for sins once*, and it was *for their sins*, every poor believer's. So now the soul, finding itself rid of that fear, goes cheerfully through all other hazards and sufferings.

The soul, perplexed about that question, finds no relief in all other enjoyments; all propositions of lower comforts are unsavoury and troublesome to it. Tell it of peace and prosperity; say, however the world go, you shall have ease and pleasure, and you shall be honoured and esteemed by all; yea, though you could make a man sure of these, yet, if his conscience be working and stirred about the matter of his sin, and the wrath of God, which is tied close to sin, he will wonder at your impertinency, in that you speak so far from the purpose. Say what you will of these, he still asks, "What do you mean by this? those things answer not me. Do you think I can find comfort in them, so long as *my sin is unpardoned*, and there is a sentence of eternal death standing above my head. I feel even an impress of somewhat of that hot indignation; some flashes of it, fly-

^b Heb. ii. 11.

ing and lighting upon the face of my soul, and how can I take pleasure in these things you speak of? And though I should be senseless, and feel nothing of this all my life, yet how soon shall I have done with it, and the delights that reach no further? and then to have *everlasting burnings*, eternity of wrath to enter to; how can I be satisfied with that estate?" All you offer a man in this posture is, as if you should set dainty fare, and bring music with it, to a man lying almost pressed to death under great weights, and you bid him eat and be merry, but lift not off his pressure: you do but mock the man and add to his misery; on the other side, he that hath got but a view of his Christ, and reads his own pardon in Christ's sufferings, can rejoice in this, in the midst of all other sufferings, and look on death without apprehension, yea, with gladness, for the *sting is out*: Christ hath made all pleasant to him by this one thing, that *he suffered once for sins*. Christ hath perfumed the cross, and the grave, and made all sweet. The pardoned man finds himself light, skips and leaps, and, *through Christ strengthening him*, he can encounter with any trouble. If you think to shut up his spirit within outward sufferings, he is now, as Sampson in his strength, able to carry away on his back the gates with which you would inclose him; yea, can submit patiently to the Lord's hand in any correction. "Thou hast forgiven my sin, therefore, deal with me as thou wilt, all is well." For the improvement of what has been said,

1. Learn to consider more deeply, and esteem more highly, of Christ, and his suffering, to silence our grumbling at our petty light crosses; for so they are in comparison of his. Will not the great odds of his perfect innocency, and of the nature and measure of his sufferings; will not the sense of the redemption of our souls from death by his death; will none of these, nor all of them, argue us into more thankfulness and love to him, and patience in our trials? Why will we then be called

christians? It is impossible to be fretful and male-content with the Lord's dealing with us in any kind, till first we have forgot how he dealt with his dearest Son for our sakes^c. But these things are not weighed by the most: we hear and speak of them, but our hearts receive not the impressions of them; therefore we repine against our Lord and Father, and drown a hundred great blessings in any little trouble that befalls us.

2. Seek surer interest in Christ and his suffering than the most either have attained, or are aspiring to, otherwise all that is *suffered here* will afford thee no ease nor comfort in any kind of suffering. No, though thou suffer, for a good cause, even for his cause, still this will be an extraneous foreign thing to thee? and to tell thee of his sufferings, will work no otherwise with thee than some other common story. And as in the *day of peace* thou regardest it no more, so in *the day of thy trouble* thou shalt receive no more comfort from it. Other things which you esteemed shall have no comfort to speak to you; *though you pursue them with words* (as Solomon says of the poor man's friends) *yet they shall be wanting to you*^d. And then you will surely find how happy it were to have this to turn you to, that the Lord Jesus suffered for sins, and for yours, and therefore hath made it a light and comfortable business to you to undergo momentary passing sufferings.

Days of trial will come; do you not see they are on us already? Be persuaded, therefore, to turn your eyes and desires more towards Christ. This is the thing we would still press; the support and happiness of your souls lie on it. But you will not believe it. Oh, that you knew the comforts and sweetness of Christ! Oh, that one would speak that knew more of them! Were you once but entered into this knowledge of him, and the virtue of his suf-

^c Enimvero non sentient sua, qui illius vulnera intuentur. Bern. Cant. Serm. 61.

^d Prov. xix. 7.

ferings, you would account all your days but lost wherein you have not known him; and in all times your hearts would find no refreshment like to the remembrance of his love.

Having somewhat considered these sufferings, as the apostle's argument for his present purpose, we come now,

2dly, To take a nearer view of the particulars, by which he illustrates them, as the main point of our faith and comfort: of them here are two things, their cause and their kind.

1. Their cause; both their meriting cause and their final cause. What in us procured these sufferings unto Christ; and what those his sufferings procured unto us. Our guiltiness brought suffering upon him; and his suffering brings us unto God.

1st, For the meritorious cause, our guilt brought sufferings on Christ. The evil of sin hath the evil of punishment inseparably connected with it: We have a natural obligation of obedience unto God, and he justly urges it; so that where the *command* of his law is broke, the *curse* of it presently followeth. And though it was simply in the power of the Supreme Lawgiver to have dispensed with the infliction, yet having, in his wisdom, purposed to be known a just God in that way, following forth the tenor of his law, of necessity there must be a suffering for sin.

Thus, the angels that kept not their station, falling from it, fell into a dungeon, where they are, *under chains of darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day*^a; and man fell under the sentence of death. But in this is the difference betwixt man and them; they were not of one, as parent or common root of the rest, but each one fell or stood for himself alone, so a part of them only perished; but man fell altogether; so that not one of all the race could escape condemnation, unless some other way of satisfaction be found out. And here it is, *Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust: Father, says he, I have glorified thee on earth*^b. In this

^a Jude 6.

^b John xvii. 3.

plot, indeed, do all the divine attributes shine in their full lustre; infinite mercy, and immense justice, and power, and wisdom. Looking on Christ as ordained for that purpose, *I have found a ransom*, says the Father^c; one fit to redeem man, a kinsman, one of that very same stock, the Son of man; one able to redeem man by satisfying me, and fulfilling all I lay upon him; *my Son, my only begotten Son, in whom my soul delights*: And he is willing, undertakes all, says, *Lo I come*^d, &c. We are agreed upon the way of this redemption; yea, upon the persons to be redeemed; it is not a roving blind bargain, a price paid for we know not whom. Hear his own words: *Thou hast given the Son* (says the Son to the Father) *power over all flesh; that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*^e; and afterwards, *all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them*^f.

For the sins of those he suffered, standing in their room; and what he did and suffered, according to the law of that covenant, was done and suffered by them. All the sins of all the elect were made up into an huge bundle, and bound upon his shoulders. So the Prophet speaks in their name; *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; and the Lord laid [or made to meet] on him the iniquity of us all*^g, where he had spoken of many ways of sin, and said, *we have turned every one to his own way*; he binds up all in the word of *iniquity* as all one sin, as if it were that one transgression of the first Adam that brought on the curse of his seed, borne by the second Adam, to take it away from all that are his seed, that are in him as their root.

He is the great High Priest appearing before God with the names of the elect upon his shoulders; and in his heart bearing them and all their burdens, and offering for them, not any other sacrifice *but himself*; charging all their sin on himself, as the priest did the sins of the people on the head of the sacrifice. *He,*

^c Job xxxiii. 24.^d Psal. xl. 7.^e John xvii. 2.^f Verse 10.^g Isa. liii. 5.

by the *Eternal Spirit*, says the Apostle, *offered up himself without spot unto God, spotless and sinless^h*; and so he only is fit to take away our sin, being a satisfactory oblation for it. He suffered; in him was our ransom, and thus it was paid. In the man Christ was the Deity, and so his blood was, as the Apostle calls it, *the blood of Godⁱ*; and, being pierced, it came forth, and was told down, as the rich price of our redemption; *not silver nor gold, nor corruptible things*, as our Apostle hath it before, *but the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish^k*.

Obs. 1. Shall any man offer to bear the name of a Christian, that pleases himself in the way of sin? that can delight and sport himself with it, when he considers this, that Christ suffered for sin? Do not think it, you that still account sin sweet, which he found so bitter, and light, which was so heavy to him, and made his *soul heavy to the death*. You are yet far off from him; if you were in him, and one with him, there would be some harmony of your hearts with his, and some sympathy with these sufferings, as endured by your Lord, your head, and for you. They that, with a right view, see him as pierced by their sins, that sight pierces them, and makes them mourn; brings forth tears, beholding the gushing forth of his blood. This makes the real Christian an avowed enemy to sin: shall I ever be friends with that, says he, which killed my Lord? No, but I will ever kill it, and do it by applying his death. The true penitent is sworn to be the death of sin: He may be surprised by it, but there is no possibility of reconcilment betwixt them.

Thou that livest kindly and familiarly with sin, and either openly declarest thyself for it, or hast a secret love for it, where canst thou reap any comfort? None can flow from these sufferings to thee continuing in that posture. It is all one, as if Christ had not suffered for sins; yea, it is worse than if no such thing had been, that there is salva-

^h Heb. ix. 14.ⁱ Acts xx. 28.^k 1 Pet. i. 17.

tion, and terms of mercy, unto thee, and yet thou perishest: That there is *balm in Gilead*¹, and yet thou art not healed. And if thou hast not comfort from Jesus crucified, I know not whence thou canst have any that will hold out. Look about thee, tell me what thou seest, either in thy possession, or in thy hopes, that thou esteemest most, and layest thy confidence on; or, to deal more liberally with thee, see what estate thou wouldst choose, hadst thou thy wish. Stretch thy fancy to devise an earthly happiness. These times are full of unquietness; but give thee a time of the calmest peace, not an air of trouble stirring; put thee where thou wilt, far off from fear of sword and pestilence, and encompass thee with children, friends, and possessions, and honours, and comfort, and health to enjoy all these; yet one thing thou must admit in the midst of them all, within a while thou must die; and, having no real portion in Christ, but a deluding dream of it, thou sinkest through that death into another death far more terrible. Of all thou enjoyest, nothing goes along with thee but unpardoned sin, and that delivers thee up to endless sorrow. *Oh! that you were wise and would consider your latter end*^m. Do not still gaze about you upon trifles, but yet be entreated to take notice of your Saviour, and receive him, that he may be yours. Fasten your belief and your love on him; *give all your heart to him*, who stuck not to *give himself an offering for your sins*ⁿ.

2. To you that have fled in to him for refuge, if sensible of the Church's distress, be upheld with this thought, that he that suffered for it will not suffer it to be undone. All the rage of enemies, yea, *the gates of hell, shall not prevail against it*^o; he may, for a time, suffer the Church to be brought low for the sins of his people, and other wise reasons, but he will not utterly forsake it. Though there is much chaff, yet he hath a precious number in these

Jer. iii. 18.

^m Deut. xxxii. 29.ⁿ Eph. v. 2.^o Matt. xvi. 18.

kingdoms, that he shed his blood for. Many God hath called, and yet is to call: He will not lose any of his flock that he bought so dear^p; and for their sake he will, at one time or another, repair our breaches, and establish his throne in these kingdoms. And for yourselves, what can affright you while this is in your eye? Let others tremble at the apprehension of sword or pestilence; but sure you have for them, and all other hazards, a most satisfying answer in this^q, “My Christ hath suffered for sin; I am not to fear that; and that set aside, I know the worst is but death. But I am wrong; truly death, that is the best, to be *dissolved*; and to be with Christ is [πολλῶ μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον] *much more better*.”

This were a happy estate indeed; but what shall they think that have no assurance? Those that doubt that Christ is theirs, and that he suffered for their sins: I know no way but to believe on him, and then you shall know that he is yours: From this is the grand mistake of many; they would first know that Christ is theirs, and they would believe, which cannot be, before he comes theirs by believing. It is that which gives title and propriety to him; he is set before sinners as a Saviour *that hath suffered for sin*, that they may look to him and be saved; that they may lay over their souls on him, and then they may be assured he suffered for them.

Say then, what is it that scares thee from Christ? this thou seest is a poor groundless exception, for he is set before thee as a Saviour to believe on, that so he may be thy Saviour. Why wilt thou not come unto him? why refuseth thou to believe? Art thou a sinner? art thou unjust? Then he is fit for thy case: He suffered for sins, *the Just for the unjust*. Oh! but so many and so great sins! yea, Is that it? It is true indeed, and good reason thou think so. But, 1st, Consider if they be excepted in the proclamation of Christ, the pardon that comes in his name: If not, if he make no exception, why

^p Acts xx. 28.^q Rom. v. 1, 2, 3.^r Phil. i. 23.

wilt thou? *2dly*, Consider if thou wilt call them greater than this sacrifice, *he suffered*. Take due notice of the greatness and worth, first of his person, and thence of his sufferings, and thou wilt not dare to say thy sin goes above the value of his suffering, or that thou art too unjust for him to justify thee: Be as unrighteous as thou canst be, art thou convinced of it? then know that Jesus the just, is more righteous than thy unrighteousness: And after all is said, that any sinner hath to say, they are yet, without exception, *blessed that trust in him*^s.

2. We have the *final cause* of his sufferings, *That he might bring us to God.*] It is the chief point of wisdom, to proportion means to their end: Therefore, the all-wise God, in putting his only Son to so hard a task, had a high end in this, and this was it, *That he might bring us unto God*. In this we have three things, *1st*, The nature of this good, nearness unto God. *2dly*, Our deprivation of it, by our own sin. *3dly*, Our restorement to it, by Christ's sufferings.

1. The nature of this good, *nearness to God*. God hath suited every creature he hath made with a convenient good to which it tends; and in the obtainment of which it rests and is satisfied. Natural bodies have each their own natural place, whither, if not hindered, they move incessantly till they be in it; and they declare, by resting there, that they are (as I may say) where they would be. Sensitive creatures are carried to seek a sensitive good, as agreeable to their rank and being, and, attaining that, aim no further. Now, in this is the excellency of man; he is made capable of a communion with his Maker, and, because capable of it, is unsatisfied without it; the soul, being cut out (so to speak) to that largeness, cannot be filled with less, though he is fallen from his right to that good, and from all right desire of it, yet not from a capacity

of it, no, nor from a necessity of it, for the answering and filling of his capacity.

Though the heart once gone from God, turns continually farther away from him, and moves not towards him till it be renewed; yet, even in that wandering, it retains that natural relation to God, as its centre, that it hath no true rest elsewhere, nor cannot by any means find it. It is made for him, and is therefore still restless till it meet with him.

It is true, the natural man takes much pains to quiet his heart by other things, and digests many vexations with hopes of contentment in the end, and accomplishment of some design he hath; but still the heart misgives. Many times he attains not the thing he seeks; but if he do, yet he never attains the satisfaction he seeks and expects in it; but only learns from that to desire something further, and still hunts on after a fancy, drives his own shadow before him, and never overtakes it; and if he did, yet it is but a shadow. And so in running from God, besides the sad end, he carries an interwoven punishment with his sin, the natural disquiet and vexation of his spirit, fluttering to and fro, and *finding no rest for the sole of his foot*: *The waters of inconstancy and vanity covering the whole face of the earth.*

We study to abase our souls, and to make them content with less than they are made for; yea, we strive to make them carnal, that they may be pleased with sensible things. And in this men attain a brutish content for a time, forgetting their higher good. But, certainly, we cannot think it sufficient, and that no more were to be desired beyond ease and plenty, and pleasures of sense; for then, a beast in good case, and a good pasture, might contest with us in point of happiness, and carry it away; for that sensitive good he enjoys without sin, and without the vexation that is mixt with us in all.

These things are too gross and heavy; the soul,

the immortal soul, descended from heaven, must either be more happy or remain miserable. The highest increated Spirit is the proper good; *the Father of spirits*, that pure and full good, raises the soul above itself; whereas all other things draw it down below itself. So, then, it is never well with the soul, but when it is near unto God, yea, in its union with him; married to him, and mismatching itself elsewhere, it hath never any thing but shame and sorrow. *All that forsake thee shall be ashamed*, says the Prophet^t; and the Psalmist^u, *They that are far off from thee shall perish*. And this is indeed our natural miserable condition, and it is often exprest this way, by *estrangedness* and *distance* from God^x. The *Gentiles* were *far off* by their profession and nation, but both *Jews* and *Gentiles* far off by their natural foundation; and both are *brought near by the blood* of the New Covenant; and that is the other thing here implied, that we are far off by reason of sin; otherwise there were no need of Christ, especially in this way *of suffering for sin, to bring us unto God*. This we proposed to consider secondly,

2. Our deprivation of this great good of nearness to God, by our sin. Now sin, as the breach of God's command, broke off man and separated him from God, and ever since the soul remains naturally remote from God, 1. Under a sentence of exile, pronounced by the justice of God; condemned to banishment from God, who is the life and light of the soul, as the soul itself is of the body. 2. It is under a flat impossibility of returning by itself; and that in two respects, 1. Because of the guiltiness of sin standing betwixt, as an unpassable mountain or wall of separation. 2. Because of the dominion of sin keeping the soul captive, yea, still drawing it farther off from God, and increasing the distance and the enmity every day. Nor is there in heaven, nor under heaven, any way to remove this enmity, and make up this distance,

^t Jer. xvii. 13.^u Psal. lxxiii. 27.^x Eph. ii.

and return man to the possession of God, but this one, by Christ, and him suffering for sins; which we are to consider,

3dly, Our restoration to nearness to God by Christ's sufferings. He endured the sentence pronounced against man; yea, even in this particular notion of it, as one main ingredient in his suffering was his being deserted of God, as to any sensible communication of comfort from him; of that he cried out^y, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* And, by suffering the sentence pronounced, he took away the guiltiness of sin, He himself being *spotless and undefiled; for such an High Priest became us*^z. The more defiled we were, the more did we stand in need of an undefiled Priest and Sacrifice; and He was both. Therefore the Apostle here very fitly mentions this qualification of our Saviour, as necessary for reducing us unto God, *the Just for the unjust*; so taking on him, and taking away, the guilt of sin, setting his strong shoulder to remove that mountain, he made way or access for man unto God.

This the Apostle hath excellently expressed^a, *He hath reconciled us by his cross, having slain the enmity*; he killed the quarrel betwixt God and us; killed it by his death. He thus brings the parties together, and hath laid a sure foundation of agreement in his own sufferings; appeases his Father's wrath by them, and by the same appeases the sinner's conscience. All that God hath to say, in point of justice, is answered there; all that the poor humbled sinner hath to say, is answered too. He hath offered up such an atonement as satisfies the Father; so he is content that sinners come in and be reconciled: And then Christ gives notice of this to the soul, to remove all jealousies: It is full of fear; though it would, it dare not approach unto God, apprehending him to be *a consuming fire*. They that have done the offence are usually the hardest to reconcile; because they are still in doubt

^y Matt. xxvii. 46.

^z Heb. vii. 26.

^a Eph. ii. 16.

of their pardon: But Christ assures us of a full and hearty forgiveness, quenching the flame of God's wrath by his blood. "No," says Christ, "upon my warrant come in; you will now find my Father otherwise than you imagine: He hath declared himself satisfied at my hands, and is willing to receive you, to be heartily and thoroughly friends; never to hear a word more of the quarrel that was betwixt you; he grants a full oblivion." And if the soul bear back still through distrust, he takes it by the hand, and draws it forward, leads it in to his Father, as the word *προσαγάγει* imports; presents it to him, and leaves not the matter till a full and sure agreement be made.

But for this purpose, that the soul may be able and willing to come unto God, the sufferings of Christ take away that other impediment. As they satisfy the sentence, and so remove the guiltiness of sin, so he hath by them purchased a deliverance from the tyrannous power of sin, that detains the soul from God, after all the way made for it. And he hath a power of applying his sufferings to the soul's deliverance in that kind too. *He opens the prison doors to them that are led captive*^b; and because the great chain is upon the heart willingly enthralled in sin, he, by his sovereign power, takes off that; he frees the heart from the love of sin; shews what a base slavish condition it is in, by representing, in his effectual way, the goodness of God, his readiness to entertain a returning sinner, the sweetness and happiness of communion with him. Christ powerfully persuades the heart to shake off all, and, without further delay, so to return unto God, as to be received into favour and friendship, and so to walk in the way of friendship with God, to give up itself to his obedience, to disdain the vile service of sin, and live suitably to the dignity of fellowship and union with God.

And there is no other but the power of Christ alone that is able to effect this, to persuade a sinner

^b Isa. lxi. 1.

to return, to bring home a heart unto God. Common mercies of God, though they have a leading faculty to repentance^c, yet the rebellious heart will not be led by them. The judgments of God, public or personal, though they should drive us to God, yet the heart, unchanged, runs the farther from God. Do we not see it by ourselves and other sinners about us? they look not at all towards him that smiles, much less do they return; or if any more serious thoughts of returning arise upon the surprise of an affliction, how soon vanish they? either the stroke abating, or the heart, by time, growing hard and senseless under it. Indeed, where it is renewed and brought in by Christ, then all other things have a sanctified influence, according to their quality, to stir up a Christian to seek after fuller communion, closer walk, and nearer access to God: But, leave Christ out, I say, and all other means work not this way; neither the works, nor word of God sounded daily in his ear, *Return, return*. Let the noise of the rod speak it too, and both join together to make the cry the louder, *yet the wicked will do wickedly*^d; will not hearken to the voice of God, will not *see the hand of God lifted up*^e; will not be persuaded to go in and seek peace and reconciliation with God, though declaring himself provoked to punish, and to behave himself as an enemy against his own people. How many are there, that, in their own particular, have been very sharply lashed with divers scourges on their bodies or families, and yet are never a whit the nearer God for it all, but their hearts as proud, and earthly, and vain, as ever; and, let him lay on ever so much, they will still be the same; a divine *virtue*, only, *going forth from Christ lifted up, draws men unto him*; and being come unto him, he *brings them unto the Father*.

Reflexion 1. You that are still strangers to God, who declare yourselves to be so, by living as strangers far off from him, do not still continue to abuse

^c Rom. ii. 4.

^d Dan. xii. 10.

^e Isa. xxvi. 11.

yourselves so grossly. Can you think any consolation in the sufferings of Christ yours, while it is so evident they have not gained their end upon you; have not brought you to God? Truly, most of you seem to think, that our Lord Jesus suffered rather to the end we might neglect God, and disobey him securely, than to reduce us to him. Hath he purchased you a liberty to sin; or, is not deliverance from sin, which alone is true liberty, the thing he aimed at, and agreed for, and laid down his life for?

2. Why let we still his blood run in vain as to us? He hath *by it opened up our way to God*, and yet we refuse to make use of it. Oh! how few come in. They that are brought unto God, and received into friendship with him, they entertain that friendship, they delight in his company, love to be much with him: Is it so with us? By being so near, they become like him, daily know his will better, and grow more suitable to it; but, alas! in the most, there is nothing of this.

3. But even they that are brought unto God may be faulty in this, in part, not applying so sweet a privilege. They can perhaps comply, and be too friendly with the vain world, can pass many days without a lively communion with God, not aspiring to the increase of that, as the thing our Lord hath purchased for us, and that wherein all our happiness and welfare lie, here and hereafter: Your hearts cleaving to folly, and not delighting yourselves in the Lord; not refreshed with this nearness to him, and union with him; your thoughts not often on it, nor your study to walk conform to it: Certainly it ought to be thus; and you should be persuaded to endeavour it may be thus with you.

4. Remember this for your comfort, that as you are brought unto God by Jesus Christ, so you are kept in that union by him. It is a firmer knot than the first was; there is no power of hell can dissolve it. He suffered once to bring us once unto God, never to depart again; as he suffered once for all,

so we are brought once for all: We may be sensibly nearer at one time than another, but yet we can never be separate nor cut off, being once knit by Christ, as the bond of our union. *Neither principalities, nor powers, &c. shall be able to separate us from the love of God^f*, because it holds in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.] The true life of a Christian, is to eye Christ in every step of his life, both as his rule, and as his strength; looking to him as his pattern, both in doing and suffering, and drawing power from him for going through both; for the look of faith doth that, fetches life from Jesus to enable it for all, being *without him able for nothing*. Therefore the Apostle doth still set this before his brethren; and here, having mentioned his suffering in general, the condition and end of it, he specifies the particular kind of it, that which was the utmost, *put to death in the flesh*, and then adds this issue out of it, *quickened by the Spirit*.

It is at once the strongest engagement, and the strongest encouragement. Was He, our Head, crowned with thorns, and shall the body look for garlands? Are we redeemed from hell and condemnation by him, and can any such refuse any service he calls them to? They that are *washed in the Lamb's blood will follow him whithersoever he goes^g*; and, following him through, they shall find their journey's end overpay all the troubles and sufferings of the way. *These are they*, said the elder who appeared in vision to John^h, *which came out of great tribulation*; tribulation, and great tribulation, yet they came out of it, and glorious too, arrayed in *long white robes*. The scarlet strumpet, as follows in that book, dyed her garments red in the blood of the saints: But this is their happiness, that *their garments are washed white in the blood of the Lamb*.

Once take away sin, and all suffering is light;

^f Rom. viii. 37, 38.

^g Rev. xiv. 4.

^h Rev. vii. 14.

now, that is done by this, *his once suffering for sin*; they that are in him shall hear no more of that as condemning them, binding them over to suffer that wrath that is due to sin. Now, this puts an invincible strength into the soul for enduring all other things, how hard soever.

Put to death.] This the utmost point, and that which men are most startled at, *to die*, and a violent death, *put to death*; and yet he hath led in this way who is the *Captain of our salvation*. *In the flesh.*] Under this second, his human nature, and divine nature and power, are differenced. *Put to death in the flesh* is a very fit expression, not only (as is usual) taking the flesh for the whole manhood, but because death is most properly spoken of that very person, or his flesh: the whole man suffers death, a dissolution, or taking to pieces, and the soul suffers a separation or dislodging; but death, or the privation of life and sense, belongs particularly to the flesh or body: But the *Spirit*, here opposed to the *flesh* or body, is certainly of a higher nature and power than is the human soul, which cannot of itself return to re-inhabit and quicken the body.

Put to death.] His death was both voluntary and violent; that same power that restored his life could have kept it exempted from death; but the design was for death. He therefore took our flesh, to put it off thus, and offered it up as a sacrifice; which, to be acceptable, must of necessity be free and voluntary; and, in that sense, he is said to have died even by that same Spirit, that here, in opposition to death, is said to quicken himⁱ, *Through the eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot unto God*. They accounted it an ill boding sign when the sacrifices came constrainedly to the altar, and drew back; and, on the contrary, were glad in the hopes of success, when they came cheerfully forward; but never sacrifice came so willingly all the way, and from the first step knew whither he was going. Yet, because

ⁱ Heb. ix. 14.

no other sacrifice would serve, he was most content: *Sacrifices and burnt offerings thou didst not desire: Then said I, Lo I come, &c^k.* He was not only a willing sacrifice, as Isaac, bound peaceably, and laid on the altar, but his own sacrificer: The beasts, if they came willingly, yet offered not themselves; but he *offered up himself*; and thus, not only by a willingness far above all those *sacrifices of bullocks and goats*, but *by the eternal Spirit*, he offered up himself. Therefore he says, in this regard, *I lay down my life for my sheep*; it is not pulled from me, but I lay it down; and so it is often expressed, by [*ἀπὸ θανάτου*] *he died*; and yet this suits with it, [*θανάτου ὄχις*] *put to death*: yea, it was also expedient to be thus, that his death should be violent, and so the more penal, so as to carry the more clear expression of a punishment, and such a violent death as had both ignominy and a curse tied to it; and this inflicted in a judicial way, (though as from the hands of men most unjustly), that he should stand, and be judged, and condemned to death as a guilty person, carrying in that the persons of so many that should otherwise have fallen under condemnation, as indeed guilty: *He was numbered with transgressors* (as the Prophet hath it), *bearing the sins of many*^l.

Thus, then, there was in his death external violence joined with internal willingness: But what is there to be found but complications of wonders in our Lord Jesus? Oh! high inconceivable mystery of godliness! *God manifested in the flesh!* Nothing in this world so strange, and sweet, as that conjuncture, *God man, humanitas Dei!* What a strong foundation of friendship and union betwixt the person of man and God, that their natures met in so close embraces in one person! And then, look on, and see so poor and despised an outward condition through his life; yet, having hid under it the majesty of God, *all the brightness of the Father's glory*; and this the top of all, that he was

^k Psal. xl. 6, 7.

^l Isa. liii. ult.

put to death in the flesh; the Lord of life dying, the Lord of glory clothed with shame. But it quickly appeared what kind of person it was that died; by this, he was put to death indeed in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

Quickened.] He was indeed too great a morsel for the grave to digest. For all its vast craving mouth, and devouring appetite, crying, *Sheol, Give, give*; yet was it forced to give him up again, as the fish which *swallowed up* the Prophet Jonah, when *the Lord spake*, was obliged to *vomit him out*, who in that was the figure of Christ^m. The chains of that prison are strong; but he was too strong a prisoner to be held by them; as our apostle hath it in his sermonⁿ, that it was *not possible that he should be kept by them*. They thought all was sure when they had rolled to the stone, and sealed it; that then *the grave had indeed shut her mouth upon him*; it appeared a done business to them, and looked as if it were very complete in his enemies eyes, and very desperate to his friends, his poor disciples and followers. Were they not near the point of giving over, when they said, *This is the third day, &c. And we thought this had been he that should have delivered Israel*^o. And yet he was then with them, who was indeed the *deliverer and salvation of Israel*. That rolling of the stone to the grave, was, as if they had rolled it towards the east in the night, to stop the rising of the sun the next morning; much further above all their watches and power was this *Sun of Righteousness* in his rising again. That body that was entombed, was united to the spring of life, the divine Spirit of the God-head that quickened it.

Reflexion 1. Thus the church, which is likewise his body, when it seems undone, when it is brought to the lowest posture and state, yet by virtue of that mystical union with Jesus Christ, (as his natural body, by personal union with his Deity), shall be preserved from destruction, and shall be delivered

^m Jonah i. 17. ii. 10.

ⁿ Acts ii. 24.

^o Luke xxiv. 21.

and raised in due time: yea, as he was nearest his exaltation in the lowest step of his humiliation, so is it with his church: when things are brought to the most hopeless appearance, then *shall light arise out of darkness: Cum duplicantur lateres venit Moses.*

Therefore, as we ought to seek a more humble sense of Sion's distress, so we should also be solicitous not to let go this hope, that her mighty Lord will, in the end, be glorious in her deliverance, and that all her sufferings and low estate shall be as a dark ground to set off the lustre of her restoration, when the Lord shall visit her with salvation. As in the rising of Jesus Christ, his almighty power and deity was more manifested than if he had not died: and therefore we may say confidently, with the Psalmist to his Lord^p, *Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up from the depths of the earth: thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.* Yea, the church comes more beautiful out of the deepest distress; let it be overwhelmed with waves, yet it sinks not, but rises up as only washed. And in this confidence we ought to rejoice, even in the midst of our sorrows; and, though we live not to see them, yet, even in beholding afar off, to be gladdened with the great things the Lord will do for his church in the latter times. He will certainly *make bare his holy arm in the eyes of the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God^q; his king that he hath set on his holy hill, shall grow in his conquests and glory; and all that rise against him shall he break with a rod of iron^r.* He was humbled once, but his glory shall be for ever; *as many were astonished at him, his visage being marred more than any man, they shall be as much astonished at his beauty and glory. So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at*

^p Psal. lxxi. 20, 21.

^q Isa. lii. 10.

^r Psal. ii.

him^s. According as here, we find that remarkable evidence of his divine power in rising from the dead, *put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit*.

2. Thus may a believing soul at the lowest, when, to its own sense, it is given over unto death, and swallowed up of it, as it were *in the belly of hell*, yet look up to this divine power; he *whose soul was not left there*, will not leave thine there. Yea, when thou art most sunk in thy sad apprehensions, and far off to thy thinking, then is he nearest to raise and comfort thee; as sometimes it grows darkest immediately before day. Rest on his power and goodness, which never failed any that did so: *It is he* (as David says) *that lifts up the soul from the gates of death*^t.

3. Would any of you be cured of that common disease, the fear of death, look this way, and you shall find more than you seek; you shall be taught, not only not to fear, but to love it. Consider, 1. his death: *he died*. By that, thou that receivest him as thy life, mayest be sure of this, that thou art by that his death, freed from the second death^a; and that is the great point. Let that have the name which was given to the other, *the most terrible of all terrible things*; and as the second death is removed, this death that thou art to pass through, is, I may say, beautified and sweetened; the ugly visage of it becomes amiable, when ye look on it in Christ, and in his death, that puts such a pleasing comeliness upon it, that whereas others fly from it with affrightment, the believer cannot choose but embrace it. He longs to lie down in that bed of rest, since his Lord lay in it, and hath warmed that cold bed, and purified it with his fragrant body. 2. But especially look forward to his return thence, *quickened by the Spirit*; this being to those that

^s Isa. lii. 14, 15.

^t Isa. ix. 13.

^a Descendit huc vita nostra, et tulit mortem nostram, et occidit eam de abundantia vitæ suæ, &c. AUG.

are in him the certain pledge, yea, the effectual cause, of that blessed resurrection that is in their hopes. There is that union betwixt them, that they shall rise by the communication and virtue of his rising; not simply by his power, so the wicked to their grief shall be raised, but *they by his life*, as theirs. Therefore is it so often reiterated^a, where he speaks of himself as the *living and life-giving bread to believers*, he adds again and again, *I will raise them up at the last day*^b. This comfort we have even for *the house of clay* we lay down; and for our more considerable part, our immortal souls, this his death and rising hath provided for them, at their dislodging, an entrance into that glory where he is. Now, if these things were lively apprehended and laid hold on, Christ made ours, and the first resurrection manifest in us, were we quickened by his spirit to newness of life, certainly there would not be a more welcome and refreshing thought, nor a sweeter discourse to us, than that of death; and no matter for the kind of it. Were it a violent death; so was his. Were it what we account most judgment-like amongst diseases, the plague; was not his death very painful? and was it not an accursed death? and by that curse endured by him in his, is not the curse taken away to the believer? Oh how welcome shall that day be, that day of deliverance! To be out of this woful prison: I regard not at what door I go out, being at once freed from so many deaths, and let in to enjoy him who is my life.

^a John vi.^b Verse 39, 40. 44.

Ver. 19. *By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison :*

20. *Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.*
21. *The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

THERE is nothing that so much concerns a christian to know as the excellency of Jesus Christ, his person and works ; so that it is always pertinent to insist much on that subject. The apostle having spoken of this Spirit or divine nature, and the power of it, raising him from the dead, takes occasion to speak of another work of that Spirit, to wit, the emission and publishing of his divine doctrine ; and that, not as a new thing following his death and rising, but as the same in substance with that which was by the same spirit promulgated long before, even to the first inhabitants of the world. *Quickened by the Spirit*, that is in our days, says the apostle ; but then, long before that, by the same spirit, *he went and preached to the spirits in prison.*

This place is somewhat obscure in itself, but as it usually happens, made more so by the various fancies and contests of interpreters, aiming or pretending to clear it. These I like never to make a noise of. They that dream of the *descent of Christ's soul into hell*, think this place sounds somewhat that way ; but, being examined, it proves no way suitable, nor can, by the strongest wresting, be drawn to fit their purpose : for, 1. That it was to preach he went thither, they are not willing to avow ; though the end they assign is as groundless and imaginary as this is. 2. They would have his business to be with the spirits of the faithful deceased before his coming, but here we see it is with the disobedient.

And, 3. His spirit here is the same with the sense of the foregoing words, which mean not his soul, but his eternal deity. 4. Nor is it *the spirits that were in prison*, as they read it, but *the spirits in prison*, which, by the 'opposition of their former condition, *sometime or formerly disobedient*, doth clearly speak their present condition, as the just consequent and fruit of their disobedience.

Other misinterpretations I mention not, taking it as agreeable to the whole strain of the apostle's words^c, that Jesus Christ did, before his appearing in the flesh, speak by his Spirit in his servants to those of the foregoing ages, yea the most ancient of them, declaring to them the way of life, though rejected by the unbelief of the most part. This is inserted in the mentioning of Christ's sufferings, and exaltation after them. And, after all, the apostle returns to that again, and to the exhortation which he strengthens by it; but so as this discourse taken in, is pertinently adapted to the present subject. The apostle's aim in it, we may conceive to be this, (his main scope being to encourage his brethren in the faith of Christ, and way of holiness, against all opposition and hardship,) so to instruct his readers in Christ's perpetual influence into his church in all

^c Thus I then thought, but do now apprehend another sense, as probable, if not more, even that so much rejected by most interpreters: the mission of the Spirit, and preaching of the gospel by it, after his resurrection, preaching to sinners, and converting them, according to the prophecy which he first fulfilled in person, and after more amply in his apostles. That prophecy I mean, Isa. lx. 1. *The Spirit upon him*; and it was sent from him on his apostles, to preach to *spirits in prison*; to preach liberty to these captives, captive spirits; and therefore called *spirits in prison*, to illustrate the thing the more, by opposition to that Spirit of Christ, *the spirit of liberty*, setting them free; and this to shew the greater efficacy of Christ's preaching than of Noah's, though he a signal preacher of righteousness, yet only himself and his family, eight persons saved by him, but multitudes of all nations by the Spirit and preaching of Christ in the gospel; and that by the seal of baptism, and the resurrection of Christ, represented in the return from the water, and our dying with him by immersion, and that figure of baptism like their ark.

ages, even before his incarnation, as that they might at the same time see the great unbelief of the world, yea their opposing of divine truth, and the small number of those that receive it, and so not be discouraged by the fewness of their number, and the hatred of the world; finding that salvation in Jesus Christ, dead and risen again, which the rest miss of by their own wilful refusal. And this very point he insists on clearly in the following chapter, *ver.* 3, 4. And those very ways of ungodliness there specified, which believers renounce, were those that the world was guilty of in these days, and in which they were surprised by the flood: *They eat and drank till the flood came upon them.*

In the words of these three verses we have three things: 1. An assertion concerning the preaching of Christ, and the persons he preached to. 2. The designation and description of the time or age wherein that was, and the particular way of God's dealing with them. 3. The adapting or applying of the example to christians.—First, the assertion concerning the preaching of Christ, and the persons he preached to, in these words, which I take together, *By the which spirit he went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient.*

In these words we have a preacher and his hearers. First, Of the preacher. We shall find here, 1. His ability. 2. His activity in the use of it. 1. His ability, altogether singular and matchless; the very spring of all abilities, the spirit of wisdom himself, being the co-eternal Son of God: that spirit he preached by, was that spirit by which he raised himself from the dead; and without this spirit there is no preaching: now he was, as our apostle calls him, *a preacher of righteousness*; but it was by the power of this spirit; for in him did this spirit preach. The Son is the wisdom of the Father: his name is the word; not only for that by him *all things were created*, as John hath it^d; not only as the Son is that power by which, as by the word of his mouth, all things

^d John i. 4.

were made; but he is *the word*, likewise, as *revealing the Father*; declaring to us the counsel and will of God: therefore he is by the same Evangelist, in the same place, called that *Light that illuminates the world*^c, without which man, called the lesser world, the intellectual world, were as the greater world without the sun. And all that bring aright the doctrine of saving wisdom, derive it necessarily from him; all preachers draw from this sovereign preacher, as the fountain of divine light, as all the planets receive their light from the sun, and by that diffusing amongst them, it is not diminished in the sun, but only communicated to them, remaining still full and entire in it, as its source. Thus doth the Spirit flow from Christ, in a particular degree, unto those he sends forth in his name, and it is in them that he preaches by the power and light of his eternal Spirit.

Hither, then, must they all come that would be rightly supplied and enabled for that work. It is impossible to speak duly of him in any measure, but by his Spirit. There must be particular access, and a receiving of instructions from him, and a transfusion of his Spirit into ours. Oh! were it thus with us, how sweet were it to speak of him? To be much in prayer, much dependence on him, and drawing from him, would do much more in this, than reading and studying, seeking after arts and tongues, and common knowledge. These, indeed, are not to be despised nor neglected. *Reading is good, and learning good, but above all anointing is necessary, that anointing that teacheth all things*^f. And you that are for your own interest, be earnest with this Lord, this fountain of Spirit, to let forth more of it upon his messengers in these times; you would receive back the fruit of it, were ye busy this way; you should find more life and refreshing sweetness in

^c John i. 9.

^f Utilis lectio, utilis eruditio, sed magis unctio necessaria, quippe quæ sola docet de omnibus. BERN.

the word of life, how weak and worthless soever they were that brought it; it should descend as sweet showers upon the valleys, and make them fruitful.

2. We have the activity of Christ as a preacher. By this spirit, it is said here, *he preached*: not only did he so in the days of his abode on earth, but in all times, both before and after; he never left his church altogether destitute of saving light, which he dispensed himself, and conveyed by the hands of his servants; therefore it is said, *he preached*; that this may be no excuse for times after he is ascended into heaven, no, nor for times before he descended to the earth in human flesh; though he preached not then, nor does now in his flesh, yet *by his spirit he then preached*, and still doth; so according to what was chief in him, he was still present with his church, and preaching in it, and is so to the end of the world. This his infinite Spirit, being every where, yet it is said here, by it *he went and preached*, signifying the remarkable clearness of his administration that way: as when he appears eminently in any work of his own, or taking notice of our works, God is said to come down; so to those cities of Babel and Sodom^g, *Let us go down*; and^h, *I will go down and see*; so, Exod. iii. 8. *I am come down to deliver Israel*: thus here, so clearly did he admonish them by Noah, coming as it were himself on purpose to declare his mind to them. And this word, I conceive, is the rather used to shew what equality there is in this: he came, indeed, visibly, and dwelt amongst men, when he became flesh; yet before that, he visited by his Spirit; he went by that and preached. And so in after-times, himself being ascended, and not having come visibly in his flesh to all, but to the Jews only; yet in the preaching of the apostles to the Gentiles, as the great apostle says of him in this expressionⁱ, *he came and preached to you which were afar off*; and this he continues

^g Gen. xi. 5. 7.

^h Gen. xviii. 21.

ⁱ Eph. ii. 17.

to do in the ministry of his word: and therefore, says he, *He that despiseth you, despiseth me*^k.

Were this considered, it could not but procure far more respect to the word, and more acceptance of it. Would you think that in his word Christ speaks by his eternal Spirit? yea, he comes, and preaches, addresses himself particularly to you in it; could you slight him thus, and turn him off with daily refusals, or delays at least? Think it is too long you have so unworthily used so great a Lord, that brings unto you so great salvation; that came once in so wonderful a way to work that salvation for us in his flesh, and is still coming to offer it unto us by his Spirit; does himself preach to us, tell us what he undertook on our behalf, and how he hath performed all; and now nothing rests but that we receive him, and believe on him, and all is ours. But alas! from the most, the return is, which we have here, *disobedience*. And this is what we are,

2dly, To consider of his hearers. You may indeed observe two things in these hearers, by which they are characterised: their present condition in the time the apostle was speaking of them, *they are spirits in prison*; and this former disposition, when the Spirit of Christ was preaching to them, *they were sometime disobedient*: this latter went first in time, and was the cause of the other. Therefore of it first.

1. The past disposition of the hearers spoken of; *they were sometime disobedient*. If you look to their visible subordinate preacher, you find he was a holy man, and an able and diligent *preacher of righteousness*, both in his doctrine, and in the track of his life, which is the most powerful preaching; on both which accounts it seems strange that he prevailed so little. But it appears much more so, if we look higher, even to this height, at which the apostle points, that almighty *Spirit of Christ* that preached to them; and *yet they were disobedient*. The word is ἀπειθήσασι, *they were not persuaded*; and

^k Luke x. 16.

it signifies both unbelief and disobedience, and that very fitly; unbelief being in itself the grand disobedience, the mind not yielding to divine truth, and so the spring of all disobedience in affection and action. And this *root of bitterness*, this unbelief, is deep fastened in our natural hearts; and without a change in them, a taking them to pieces, they cannot be good. It is as a tree firmly rooted, which cannot be plucked up without loosening the ground round about it; and this accursed root brings forth fruit unto death, because the word is not believed; the threats of the law, and promises of the gospel: therefore men cleave unto their sins, and speak peace unto themselves while they are under the curse.

It may seem very strange that the gospel is so fruitless amongst us; yea, that neither word nor rod, both preaching aloud to us the doctrine of humiliation and repentance, persuade any man to return, or so much as to turn inward, and question himself to say, *What have I done?* But thus it will be, till *the spirit be poured from on high*, to open and soften hearts. It is to be desired, as much wanting in the ministry of the word; but were it there, that would not serve unless it were by a concurrent work within the heart, meeting the word, and making the impressions of it there; for here we find the spirit went and preached, and yet the spirits of the hearers still unbelieving and disobedient. It is therefore a combined work of this spirit in the preacher and hearers that makes it successful, otherwise it is but shouting in a dead man's ear; there must be *something within*, as one said in a like case.

But, *2dly*, We have the present condition of these hearers, *To the spirits in prison*. That is now their posture; and because he speaks of them as in that posture, he calls them spirits; for it is their spirits that are in that prison; and likewise calls them spirits to whom the spirit of Christ preached; because it is indeed that which the preaching of the word

aims at; it hath to do with the spirits of men. It is not content to be *at their ear* with a sound, but works on their minds and spirits some way, either to believe and receive, or to be hardened and sealed up to judgment by it, which is *for rebels*. If disobedience follow on the preaching of that word, *the prison* follows on that disobedience; and that word, by which they would not be bound to obedience, binds them over to that prison, whence they shall never escape, nor be released for ever.

Take notice of it, and know that you are warned; you will not receive salvation, offering, pressing itself upon you. You are every day in that way of disobedience, hastening to this perpetual imprisonment.

Consider you now sit and hear this word; so did these that are here spoken of: they had their time on earth, and much patience was used towards them; and though you are not to be swept away by a flood of waters, yet you are daily carried on by the flood of time and mortality¹. And how soon you shall be on the other side, and sent into eternity, you know not. I beseech you, be yet wise; hearken to the offers yet made you; for in his name I yet once again make a tender of Jesus Christ, and salvation in him, to all that will let go their sins, to lay hold on him. Oh! do not destroy yourselves. You are in prison, he *proclaims unto you liberty*. Christ is still following us himself with treaties^m. Christ proclaims your liberty, and will you not accept of it? Think, though you are pleased with your present thralldom and prison, it reserves you (if you come not forth) to this other prison, that shall not please you: these chains of spiritual darkness, in which you are, unless you be freed, will deliver you up to the *chains of everlasting darkness*, wherein these hopeless prisoners are *kept to the judgment of the great day*; but if you will receive Jesus Christ

¹ Psal. xc. 5.

^m Clamans dictis, factis, morte, vita, descensu, ascensu, clamans ut redeamus ad eum. AUG.

presently, upon that, life and liberty, and blessedness, are made yours. *If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeedⁿ.*

2dly, We have the designation of the time or age of this preacher considered under the former head. *When once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.*] There are too main continuing wonders in the world; the bounty of God, and disloyalty of man: and the succession of times is no other but new additions of these two. One grand example is here set before us, an œcumenical example as large as the whole world; much patience, and yet invincible disobedience. Here are two things in the instance: 1st. The Lord's general dealing with the world of the ungodly at that time. 2dly, His peculiar way with his own chosen, Noah and his family: he waited patiently for all the rest; but he effectually saved them.

Obs. 1. The *time* designed thus, *in the days of Noah.* There were many great and powerful persons in these days, that overtopped Noah (no doubt) in outward respects, as well as in their stature, the proud giants; and they begot children, *mighty men of old, men of renown*, as the text hath it^o. And yet, as themselves perished in the flood, their names are drowned. They had their big thoughts certainly, that their houses and *their names* should *continue*, as the Psalmist speaks^p, and yet they are sunk in perpetual oblivion. And Noah's name, who walked in humble obedience, you see, in these most precious records of God's own book, still looks fresh, and smells sweet, and hath this honour, that the very age of the world is marked with this name, to be known by it: *In the days of Noah.* That which profane ambitious persons do idolatrously seek after, they are often remarkably disappointed of: they would have their names memorable and famous, yet they rot; they are either buried with them, or remembered with disgrace; and rotting above ground as carcasses uninterred, and so are the

ⁿ John viii. 35.

^o Gen. vi. 3.

^p Psal. xlix. 11.

more noisome; and it is as little credit to them to be mentioned, as for Pilate that his name is in the Confession of Faith. But the name and remembrance of the righteous is still sweet and delightful: as the name of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and of Isaac and Jacob: their names are embalmed indeed, that they cannot rot; embalmed with God's own name, [*Eternal*]; that name is wrapt about theirs, *The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

Thus is Noah here mentioned as preferred of God; and so in the second epistle, as *a preacher of righteousness*; and^a among these worthies whose honour is that they believed. This is only a name, a small thing not to be mentioned in comparison of their other privileges, and especially of that venerable life and glory which they are heirs to. And indeed it is a thing they regard very little; yet this we see, that even this advantage follows them, and flies from the vain and ungodly that haunt and pursue it.

Obs. 2. The Lord's dealing with the wicked in those times, before he swept them away by the deluge, is represented in these two particulars: 1. Long-suffering; and withal, 2. Clear warning. Long-suffering; long forbearing to be angry, as the Hebrew word is in his name^r, which supposes a great provocation, and the continuance of it, and yet patience continuing. And in this appears the goodness of God, considering how hateful sin is to him, and how powerful he is to punish it; were it, if it pleased him, in one moment to cut off all the ungodly, high and low, throughout the whole world; yet he bears, and forbears to punish. Oh! what a world of sin is every day committed in nations, in cities and villages, yea in families? and therefore how wonderful is it that he doth not strike with present judgments, and not only forbears to punish, but multiplies his common mercies on them; *Sun and rain, and fruitful seasons*^s!

Yea, there is so much of this, that it falls under

^a Heb. xi.

^r Exod. xxxiv. 8.

^s Acts xiv. 17.

a gross misconstruction; yet he bears that too. *Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil*^t. Because there is not so much as a word of it for the time, (so the word is), this swells and fills the heart of man, and makes it *big to do evil*. And not only is the Lord's long-suffering mistaken by the ungodly, but even by his own that should understand him better, and know the true sense of his ways; yet sometimes they are misled in this point: beholding his forbearance of punishing the workers of iniquity, instead of magnifying his patience, they fall very near into questioning his justice and providence^u. Our narrow hasty spirits, left to their own measures, take not in these larger views that would satisfy us in the ways of God, and forget the immense largeness of his wise designs, his deep reach from one age to another, yea, from eternity to eternity. Consider, 1. How easily he can right himself, in point of justice, when he will; that none can make escape from him^x, how loose soever their guard seem, and how great liberty soever appears in their present condition. 2. That as he can most easily, so he will most seasonably, be known in executing judgment; and that his justice shall shine the brighter, by all that patience he hath used, by the sun of prosperity. 3. We think not how little that time is to him, that seems long to us, *to whom a thousand years are as one day*^y. It seemed a long time of the church's distress, and their enemies triumph, in those seventy years of the Babylonish captivity; and yet in God's language, it is spoken of as *a moment, a small moment*^z. However, in the issue, the Lord always clears himself; he is indeed long-suffering and patient; but the impenitent abusers of his patience pay interest for all the time of their forbearance, in the weight of judgment when it comes upon them.

^t Eccles. viii. 11.^u Psal. xiii. Jer. xii. Job. xx. &c.^x Nemo decoquit huic creditori.^y Psal. xc. 4.^z Isa. liv. 7, 8.

But thus we see the Lord deals; thus he dealt with the world in the beginning, *when all flesh had corrupted their way; yet, saith he, their days shall be one hundred and twenty years*².

Let us learn to curb and cool our brisk humours towards even stubborn sinners; be grieved at their sin, for that is our duty; but think it not strange, nor fret at it, that they continue to abuse the long-suffering of God, and yet that he continues ever abused by suffering them. Zeal is good, but as it springs from love, if it be right, so it is requited by love, and carries the impressions of that, of love to God, and so a complacency in his way, liking it because it is his; and of love to men, so as to be pleased with that waiting for them, in possibility, at least, of their being reclaimed; knowing that, however, if they return not, yet the Lord will not loose his own at their hands. *Wilt thou, said these two fiery disciples, that we call for fire as Elias?* Oh! but the spirit of the dove rested on him that told them, *They knew not what spirit they were of*³. You speak of Elias, and you think you are of his spirit in this motion: But you mistake yourselves; that comes from another spirit than you imagine: Instead of looking for such sudden justice without you, look inward, and see whence that is; examine and correct within you.

When you are tempted to take ill that goodness and patience of God to sinners, consider, 1. Can this be right, to differ from his mind in any thing? Is it not our only wisdom, and ever safe rule, to think as he thinks, and will as he wills? And I pray you, does he not hate sin more than you do? Is not his interest in punishing it deeper than yours? And if you be zealous for his interest, as you pretend, then be so with him, and in his way; for starting from that, sure you are wrong. 2. Consider, did he not wait for thee? What had become of thee, if long-suffering had not subserved his purpose of further mercy, of free pardon to thee? And why

² Gen. vi. 3.

³ Luke ix. 54, 55.

wilt thou not always allow that to which thou art so much obliged? Wouldest thou have the bridge cut because thou art so over? Sure thou wilt not own so gross a thought. Therefore, esteem thy God still the more thou seest of his long-suffering to sinners; and learn for him, and with him, to bear and wait.

But, *2dly*, This was not a dumb forbearance, such as may serve for a surprise, but continual teaching, and warning joined with it, as before. We see they wanted not preaching of the choicest kind. He, the *Son of God*, by his eternal *Spirit*, *went and preached to them*. It was his truth in Noah's mouth, and with that we have a continued real sermon, exprest in this verse, *While the ark was preparing*: that spoke God's mind, and every knock (as the usual observation is) of the hammers and tools used in building, preached to them, threatening aloud designed judgment, and exhorting to prevent it. And therefore that word is added, *ἐξεδέχετο*, that the long-suffering of God waited or expected; expected a believing of his word, and returning from their wickedness: But we see no such thing followed; they took their own course still, and therefore the Lord took his. They had polluted the earth with their wickedness; now, the Lord would have the cleansing by repentance; that being denied, it must be another way, by a flood: And because they and their sins remained one, they would not part with them, therefore was one work made of both; they and their sins, as inseparable, must be cleansed away together.

Thus impenitency, under much long-suffering, makes judgment full and complete. I appeal to you, hath not the Lord used much forbearance towards us? Hath he not patiently spared us, and clearly warned us, and waited long for the fruit of all? Hath any thing been wanting? Have not temporal mercies been multiplied on us? Have not the spiritual riches of the Gospel been opened up to us?

And each of you, for yourselves, consider how it

is with you after so much long-suffering of God, which none of you can deny he hath used towards you; and so many gracious invitations, with that patience, have they gained your hearts? or do you still remain servants to sin, still strangers to him, and formal worshippers? I beseech you think on it, what will be the issue of that course? Is it a light matter to you *to die in your sins*, and to have *the wrath of God abiding on you*? To have refused Christ so often, and that after you have been so often requested to receive salvation; after the Lord hath followed you with intreaties, hath called to you so often, *Why will ye die?* yet wilfully to perish, and withal to have all these intreaties come in and accuse you, and make your burden heavier? Would you willingly die in this estate? If not, then think that yet he is waiting, if at length you will return. This one day more of his waiting you have, and of his speaking to you; and some that were here with you the last day are taken away since. *Oh! that we were wise, and would consider our latter end*^b. Though there were neither sword or pestilence near you, you must die, and, for any thing you know, quickly. Why wear you out the day of grace and those precious seasons still? As uncertain of Christ, yea, as undiligent after him, as you were long ago? As you love your souls, be more serious in their business. This was the undoing of the sinners we are speaking of; they were all for present things; *they eat and drank, they married*, in a continued course, without ceasing, and without minding their after estate^c. They were drowned in these things, and that drowned them in a flood. Noah did also eat and drink, but his main work was in that time the preparing of the ark. The necessities of this life the children of God are tied to, and forced to bestow some time and pains on them; but the thing that takes up their hearts, that which the bent of their souls is set on, is their interest in Jesus Christ: and all your wise designs are but a pleasing mad-

^b Deut. xxxii. 29.^c Luke xvii. 27.

ness, till this be chief with you. Others have had as much of God's patience, and as fair opportunity, as you, whose souls and Christ had never met, and now know that they never shall. They had their time of worldly projects and enjoyment, as you now have, and followed them, as if they had been immortally to abide with them; but they are passed away as a shadow, and we are posting after them, and within a while shall lie down in the dust. Oh! how happy they whose hearts are not here, trading with vanity, and gathering vexation, but whose thoughts are on that blessed life above trouble. Certainly they that pass for fools in the world, are the only *children of wisdom*; that have renounced their lusts and their own wills, have yielded up themselves to Jesus, taking him for their King, and have their minds resting on him as their salvation.

While the ark was a preparing.] *Observe*, The delay of the Lord's determined judgment on the ungodly was indeed long-suffering towards them; but here was more in it to Noah and his family; the providing for their preservation; and till that was completed for them, the rest were spared. Thus, the very forbearance that the ungodly do enjoy, is usually involved with the interest of the godly; something of that usually goes into it; and so it is in a great part for their sakes, that the rest are both spared, and are furnished with common mercies. The saints are usually the scorn and contempt of others; yet are, by that love the Lord carries towards them, the very arches, pillars of states and kingdoms, and families, where they are, yea of the world^d; the frame whereof is continued mainly in regard to them^e. But they that are ungrateful to the great Maker and upholder of it, and regardless of him; what wonder if they take no notice of the advantage they receive by the concernment of his children in the world. *Observe*

Here, 1. The work. 2. The end of it. I. in the

^d Semen sanctum statumen terra.

^e Isa. vi. 13.

work, preparing of the ark, observe, 1st, God's appointment; 2dly, Noah's obedience.

1st, For the appointment of God. The divine power was not tied to this, yet his wisdom chose it. He that steered the course of this ark safely all that time, could have preserved those he designed it for without it; but thus it pleases the Lord, usually, to mix his most wonderful deliverances with some selected means; exercising that way our obedience in their use, yet so as the singular power of his hand in them, whereon faith rests, doth clearly appear, doing by them what, in a more natural way, they could not possibly effect.

2dly, For the obedience of Noah, if we should insist on the difficulties, both in this work, and in the way of their preservation by it, it would look the clearer, and be found very remarkable. The length of the work, the great pains in providing materials, especially considering the opposition that probably he met with in it, from the profane about him, the mightier of them at least, the hatred, and continual scoffs of all sorts, it required principles of an invincible resolution to go through with it. What (would they say) means this old dotard to do? whither this monstrous voyage? and for *that* it spoke, as no doubt he told them their ruin, and his safety; this would incense them so much the more. You look far before you; and what, shall we all perish, and you alone escape? But through all the sovereign command and gracious promise of his God carried him, regarding their scoffs and threats as little in making the ark, as he did afterwards the noise of the waters about it, when he was sitting safe within it. This his obedience, having indeed so boisterous winds to encounter, had need of a well-fastened root, that it might stand and hold out against them all, and so it had. The Apostle St. Paul tells us what the root of it was; *by faith, being warned of God, he prepared an ark*¹. And there is no living and lasting obedience but what

¹ Heb. xi. 7.

springs from that root: He believed what the Lord spake of his determined judgment on the ungodly world; and from the belief of that arose that holy fear, which is expressly mentioned as exciting him to this work. And he believed the word of promise, that the Lord spake concerning his preservation by the ark; and the belief of these two carried him strongly on to the work, and through it, against all counter blasts and opposition; overcame his own doubtings, and the mockings of the wicked, still looking to him that was the master and contriver of the work.

Till we attain such a fixed view of our God, and such firm persuasion of his truth and power, and goodness, it will never be right with us. There will be nothing but wavering and unsettledness in our spirits and in our ways; every little discouragement from within, or without, that meets us, will be like to turn us over. We shall not walk in an even course, but still reeling and staggering, till faith be set wholly upon its own basis, the proper foundation of it: not set betwixt two, upon one strong prop, and another that is rotten, partly on God, and partly on creature helps and encouragements, or our own strength; that is the way to fall off. Our only safe and happy way is, in humble obedience, in his own strength, to follow his appointments without standing and questioning the matter, and to resign the conduct of all to his wisdom and love; to put the rudder of our life into his hand, to steer the course of it as seemeth him good, resting quietly on his word of promise for our safety. Lord, whither thou wilt, and which way thou wilt, be thou my guide, and it sufficeth.

This absolute following of God, and trusting him with all, is marked as the true character of faith in Abraham, going after God from his country, *not knowing* nor asking *whither he went*^s, secure in his guide. And so in that other greater point of offering his Son, he silenced all disputes about it,

^s Heb. xi. 8.

by that mighty conclusion of faith, *accounting that he was able to raise him from the dead*^h. Thus here, Noah, *by faith, prepared the ark*; did not argue and question how shall this be done, and if it were, how shall I get all the kinds of beasts gathered together to put into it, and how shall it be ended, when we are shut in? No, but believed firmly that it should be finished by him, and he saved by it; and he was not disappointed.

II. The end of this work was the *saving of* Noah, and his family, from the general deluge, wherein all the rest perished.

Here it will be fit to consider the point of the preservation of the godly in ordinary and common calamities; briefly in these positions.

1. It is certain that the children of God, as they are not exempted from the common universal calamities and evils of this life, that befall the rest of men, so not from any particular kind of them. As it is *appointed for them*, with *all* others, *once to die*ⁱ, so we find them not privileged from any kind of disease, or other way of death; not from falling by sword, or by pestilence, or in the frenzy of a fever, or any kind of sudden death: yea, when these, or such like, are on a land, *by way of public judgment*, the godly are not altogether exempted from them, but may fall in them with others; as we find Moses dying in the wilderness with those he brought out of Egypt. Now, though it was for a particular failing in the wilderness, yet it evinces, that there is in this no encroachment upon their privileges, nothing contrary to the love of God towards them, and his covenant with them.

2. The promises made to the godly, of preservation from common judgments, have their truth, and are made good in many of them so preserved; though they do not hold absolutely and universally: for they are ever to be understood in subordination to their highest good: but when they are preserved, they ought to take it as a gracious accomplishment,

^h Heb. xi. 19.

ⁱ Heb. ix. 27.

even of these promises to them, which the wicked, many of which do likewise escape, have no right to, but are preserved for after-judgment.

3. It is certain, that the curse and sting is taken out of all those evils incident to the godly with others, in life and death, which makes the main difference, though to the eye of the world invisible. And it may be observed, that in these common judgments of sword or pestilence, or other epidemic diseases, a great part of those that are cut off are of the wickedest, though the Lord may send of those arrows to some few of his own, to call them home.

The full and clear distinction of the godly and wicked, being reserved for their after estate in eternity, it needs not seem strange, that in many things it appears not here: one thing above all others, most grievous to the child of God, may take away the wonder of other things they suffer in common, that is, the remainders of sin in them while they are in the flesh: though there is a spirit in them above it, and contrary to it, which makes the difference; yet sometimes the too much likeness, especially in the prevailings of corruption, doth confuse the matter, not only to others eyes, but their own.

4. Though the great distinction and severing be reserved to that great and solemn day, that shall clear all, yet the Lord is pleased, in part, more remarkably at some times to difference his own from the ungodly, in the execution of temporal judgments, and to give these as preludes of that final and full judgment. And this of Noah was one of the most eminent in that kind, being the most general judgment that ever befell the world, or that shall till the last, and so the liveliest figure of it; this was by water, as the second shall be by fire, and it was most congruous that it should resemble in this, as the chief point, the saving of righteous Noah and his family from it; prefiguring the eternal salvation of believers, as our apostle teacheth.

Wherein few, that is, eight persons were saved by water.] This great point of the fewness of those that are saved in the other greater salvation, as in this, I shall not now prosecute: only,

1. If so few, then the inquiry into ourselves, whether we be of these few, should be more diligent, and followed more home than it is yet with the most of us. We are wary in our trifles, and only in this easily deceived, yea, our own deceivers in this great point. Is not this folly far beyond what you usually say of some, *Penny wise and pound fool*; to be wise for a moment, and fools for eternity?

2. You that are indeed seeking the way of life, be not discouraged by your fewness; it hath always been so; you see here how few of the whole world, and is it not better to be of the few in the ark, than of the multitude in the waters? Let them fret, as ordinarily they do, to see so few more diligent for heaven, as no doubt they did of Noah; and this is it that galls them, that any should have higher names, and surer hopes this way: "What! are none but such as you going to heaven, think you us all damned?" What can we say, but there is a flood of wrath wasting many who say so, and certainly all that are out of the ark shall perish in that flood.

3. This is that main truth that I would leave with you; look on Jesus Christ as the ark, of whom this was a figure; and believe it, out of him there is nothing but certain destruction, a deluge of wrath, all the world over, on those out of Christ. Oh! it is our life, our only safety, to be in him. But these things are not believed. Men think they believe them, and do not. Were it believed that we are under the sentence of eternal death in our natural state, and that there is no escape, but by removing out of ourselves unto Christ, Oh! what thronging would there be to him; whereas, now he invites and calls, and how few are persuaded to come to him. Noah believed the Lord's word of judgment against the world, believed his promise made to him, and prepared an ark. Is it not a high sign of unbelief,

that there being an ark of everlasting salvation ready prepared to our hand, we will not so much as come to it? 1. Will you, who are not yet entered, be persuaded certainly that the ark-door stands open; his offers are free; do but come, and try if he will turn you away; no, he will not, *Him that comes to me, I will in no ways cast out*^k. And as there is such acceptance, and sure preservation in him, there is as sure perishing without him, trust on what you will. Be you of a giant's stature, as many of them were, to help you to climb up, as they would sure do when the flood came on, to the highest mountains, and tallest trees, yet it shall overtake you. Make your best of your worldly advantages, or good parts, or civil righteousness, all shall prove poor shifts from the flood of wrath, which rises above all those, and drowns them; only the ark of our salvation is safe. Think how gladly they would have been within the ark, when they found death without it, and now it was too late! How would many, that now despise Christ, wish to honour him one day? Men; so long as they thought to be safe on the earth would never betake them to the ark, but rather would think it a prison; and could men find salvation any where else, they would never come to Christ for it: this is, because they know him not: but yet, be it necessity, let that drive thee in; and then being in him, thou shalt find reason to love him for himself, besides the salvation thou hast in him.

2. You that have fled in to him for refuge, wrong him not so far as to question your safety. What though the floods of thy former guiltiness rise high, thine ark shall still be above them; and the higher they rise, the higher he shall rise, shall have the more glory in freely justifying and saving thee. Though thou find the remaining power of sin still within thee, yet it shall not sink thine ark; there was in this ark sin, yet they were saved from the flood. If thou dost believe, that puts thee in Christ,

^k John vi. 37.

and he will bring thee safe through, without splitting or sinking.

3. As thou art bound to account thyself safe in him, so to admire that love that set thee there. Noah was a holy man; but whence was both his holiness and preservation while the world perished, but because *he found favour*, or *free grace*, as the word is, in the eyes of the Lord. And no doubt he did much contemplate this, being secure within, when the cries of the rest drowning, were about him. Thus, think you seeing so few are saved in this blessed ark, wherein I am, in comparison of the multitudes that perish in the deluge; whence is this? Why was I chosen, and so many about me left? why, but because it pleased him. But all is straight here. We have neither hearts nor time for ample thoughts of this love, till we be beyond time; then shall we admire and praise without ceasing, and without wearying.

We have now considered the great and remarkable example the apostle makes use of. It is time we proceed to consider, *Thirdly*, The adapting or applying it to the instruction of Christians, for which it is indeed so fit and suitable, which he clears in the particular resemblance of it with the rule of christianity.

Ver. 21. *The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

IN which words we have, 1. The end of *baptism*. 2. The proper virtue or efficacy of it for that end. And, 3. A resemblance in both these to Noah's preservation in the flood.

1st. The end of baptism, to *save us*. This is the great common end of all the ordinances of God; that one high mark they all aim at. And the great and common mistake of them is, that they are not so understood and used. We come and sit a while, and,

if we can keep awake, give the word the hearing; but, how few of us receive it as *the ingrafted word that is able to save our souls*^a? Were it thus taken, what sweetness would be found in it, which most that hear and read it are strangers to? How precious would these lines be, if we looked on them thus, saw them meeting and concentrating in *salvation as their end*. Thus likewise the sacraments, considered indeed as seals of this inheritance, annexed to the great charter of it, seals of salvation, would be highly regarded: this would powerfully beget a fit appetite for the Lord's Supper, when we are invited to it, and would beget a due esteem of baptism; would teach you more frequent and fruitful thoughts of your own, and more pious considerations of it when you require it for your children. A natural eye looks upon bread, and wine, and water, and the outward difference of their use there, that they are set apart and differenced, as is evident by external circumstances, from their common use; but the main of the difference, where their excellency lies, it sees not, as the eye of faith above that espies salvation under them: and Oh! what a different thing are they to it, from what they are to a formal user of them. We should aspire to know the hidden rich things of God, that are wrapt up in his ordinances. We stick in the shell and superficies of them, and seek no further; that makes them unbeautiful, and unsavoury to us, and that use of them turns into an empty custom. Be more earnest with him that hath appointed them, and made this their end to save us, that he would clear up the eye of our souls, to see them thus under this relation, and see how they suit to this their end; and tend to it, and seriously seek salvation in them from his own hand, and we shall find it.

This doth *save us*. So that this salvation of Noah and his family from the deluge, and all outward deliverances and salvations, are but dark shadows of this. Let them not be compared, these reprimals

^a James i. 21.

and prolongings of this present life, to the deliverance of the soul from death, the second death; the stretching of a moment to the concernment of eternity. How would any of you welcome a full and sure protection from common dangers, if such were to be had? That you should be ascertained of safety from sword and pestilence; that whatever others suffered about you, you and your family should be free? (And they that have escaped a near danger of this kind are too apt to rest there, as if no more were to be feared; whereas this common favour may be shewed to these that are far off from God;) and what though you be not only thus far safe, but, I say, if you were secured for the future, which none of you absolutely are? Yet, when you are put out of danger of sword and plague, still death remains, and sin and wrath may be remaining with it; and shall it not be all one to die under these in a time of public peace and welfare, as if it were now? Yea, it may be something more unhappy, by the increase of the heap of sin and wrath; guiltiness augmented by life prolonged; and will be more grievous to be pulled away from the world, in the midst of peaceable enjoyment, and to have everlasting darkness to succeed to that short sun-shine of thy day of ease. Alas! the sad succession! Happiness of a short date, and misery for ever. What availed it wicked Ham, to outlive the flood, to inherit a curse after it; to be kept undrowned in the waters, to see himself and his posterity blasted with his father's curse? Think seriously, what will be the end of all thy temporary safety and preservation, if thou share not in this salvation, and find not thyself sealed and marked for it; to flatter thyself with a dream of happiness, and *walk in the light of a few sparks*^b, that will soon die out, and *then lie down in sorrow*? A sad bed that the most have to go to, after they have wearied themselves all the day, all their life, in a chace of vanity!

2dly, The next thing is, the power and virtue of

^b Isa. l. 11.

this means for its end. That baptism hath a power, is clear, in that it is so expressly said, *it doth save us*: which kind of power is as clear in the way of it here exprest; not by a natural force of the element, though adapted and sacramentally used; it only can wash away the filth of the body; its physical efficacy or power reaches no farther: but it is in the hand of the Spirit of God, as other sacraments, and as the word itself is, to purify the conscience, and convey grace and salvation to the soul, by the reference it hath to, and union with, that which it represents. It saves *by the answer of a good conscience unto God*, and it affords that, *by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead*.

Thus, then, we have a true account of the power of this, and so of other sacraments, and a discovery of the error of two extremes: (1.) Of those that ascribe too much to them, as if they wrought by a natural inherent virtue, and carried grace in them inseparably. (2.) Of those that ascribe too little to them, making them only signs and badges of our profession. Signs they are, but more than signs, merely representing; they are means exhibiting, and seals confirming, grace to the faithful. But the working of faith, and the conveying of Christ into the soul to be received by faith, is not a thing put into them to do of themselves, but still in the supreme hand that appointed them: and he indeed both causes the souls of his own to receive these his seals with faith, and makes them effectual to confirm that faith which receives them so. They are then, in a word, neither empty signs to them that believe, nor effectual causes of grace to them that believe not.

The mistake on both sides arises from the want of duly considering the relative nature of these seals, and that kind of union that is betwixt them, and the grace they represent; which is real, though not natural or physical, as they speak. So that though they do not save all that partake of them, yet they do really and effectually save believers, (for whose salvation they are means), as the other external ordi-

nances of God do. Though they have not that power which is peculiar to the author of them, yet a power they have, such as befits their nature; and by reason of which they are truly said to sanctify and justify, and so to save, as the apostle here avers of baptism.

Now, that which is intended for our help, our carnal minds are ready to turn into a hinderance and disadvantage. The Lord representing invisible things to the eye, and confirming his promises even by visible seals, we are apt, by the grossness of our unspiritual hearts, instead of stepping up by that which is earthly to the divine spiritual things represented, to stay on the outward element, and go no further: therefore the apostle, to lead us into the inside of this seal of baptism, is very clear in designing the effect and fruit of it: *Not* (says he) *putting away the filth of the flesh*; and water, if you look no further, can do no more. There is an invisible impurity upon our nature, chiefly on our invisible part, our soul: this washing means the taking away of that; and where it reaches its true effect, it doth so purify the conscience, and makes it good, truly so in the sight of God, who is the judge of it.

Consider: 1. It is a pitiful thing to see the ignorance of the most professing christianity, and partaking of the outward seals of it, yet not knowing what they mean; not apprehending the spiritual dignity and virtue of them. They are blind in the *mysteries of the kingdom*, and not so much as sensible of that blindness. And being ignorant of the nature of these holy things, they cannot have a due esteem of them, which arises out of the view of their inward worth and efficacy. A confused fancy they have of some good in them; and this rising to the other extreme, to a superstitious confidence in the simple performance and participation of them, as if that carried some inseparable virtue with it, which none could miss of, that are sprinkled with the waters of baptism, and share in the elements of bread and wine in the Lord's supper!

And what is the utmost plea of the most for their title to heaven, that in these relative and external things they are christians, are baptized, hear the word, and are admitted to the Lord's table; not considering how many have gone through all these, and daily are going on in the ways of death; never coming near Jesus Christ, *who is the way, and truth, and the life*: whom the word, and the seals of it, hold forth to believers, assuring them that they are washed in his blood, and quickened with his life, and made like him, and co-heirs of glory with him.

2. Even they that have some clearer notion of the nature and fruit of the seals of grace, yet are in a practical error, that they look not with due diligence into themselves; inquiring after the efficiency of them in their hearts; do not study the life of Christ; to know more what it is, and then to search into themselves for the truth, and the growth of that life within them. Is it not an unbecoming thing for a christian (when he is about to appear before the Lord at his table, and so looks something more narrowly within) to find as little faith, as little divine affection, a heart as unmortified to the world, as cold towards Christ, as before his last address to the same table, after the intervening, possibly, of many months; in which time, had he been careful often to reflect inwards on his heart, and to look back upon that new sealing in his last participation, he might probably have been more improved? And, truly, as there is much guiltiness cleaves to us in this, so, generally, much more in reference to this other sacrament that is here the Apostle's subject, *baptism*, which being but once administered, and that in infancy, is very seldom, and slightly, considered by many, even real christians. And so we are at a loss in that profit and comfort; that increase of both holiness and faith, that the frequent recollecting of it, after a spiritual manner, would no doubt advance us to. And not only do we neglect to put ourselves upon the thoughts of it in private, but, in the frequent opportunities of such thoughts in public, we let it pass unregarded,

are idle, inconsiderate, and so truly guilty beholders. And the more frequently we have these opportunities, the less are we touched with them; they become common, and work not; and the slighting of them grows as common with us as the thing. Yea, when the engagement is more special and personal; when parents are to present their infants to this ordinance; and then might, and certainly ought to have a more particular and fixed eye upon it, and themselves, as being sealed with it, to ask within after the fruit and power of it, and to stir up themselves anew to the actings of faith, and ambition after newness of life, and with earnest prayer for their children to be suitors for themselves, for further evidence of their interest in Christ: Yet, possibly, many are not much in these things at such times, but are more busied to prepare their house for entertaining their friends, than to prepare their hearts for offering up their infant unto God to be sealed; and withal to make a new offer of their own hearts to him, to have renewed on them the inward seal of the covenant of grace, the outward seal whereof they did receive, as it is now to be conferred upon their infant.

Did we often look upon the face of our souls, and observe the many spots with which we have defiled them after our washing, it might work us to shame and grief, and would drive us, by renewed application, to wash often in that blood which that water figures; which alone can fetch out the stain of sin; and then it would set us upon renewed purposes of purity, to walk more carefully, to avoid the pollutions of the world we walk in, and to purge out the pollutions of the hearts that we carry about with us, that defile us more than all the world besides. It would work an holy disdain of sin, often to contemplate ourselves as washed in so precious a laver: "Shall I, would the christian say, considering that I am now cleansed in the precious blood of my Lord Jesus, run again into that puddle out of which he so graciously took me, and made me clean? Let swine wallow in it; he hath made me of his sheep-

fold; he hath made me of that excellent order for which all are consecrated, by that washing that partake of it: *He hath washed us in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God the Father.* Am I of these? and shall I debase myself, to the vile pleasures of sin? No, I will think myself too good to serve any sinful lusts; seeing he hath looked on me, and taken me up, and washed and dignified me; I am wholly his, all my study and business shall be to honour and magnify him.

The answer of a good conscience, &c.] The taking away of spiritual filthiness, as the true and saving effect of baptism, the Apostle here expresses by that which is the further result and effect of it, *The answer of a good conscience unto God.* For it is the washing of that filthiness which makes both the conscience good, and, in making it such, fits it to make answer unto God. A good conscience, in its full sense, is a pure conscience, and a peaceable conscience; and it cannot, indeed, be peaceably good, unless it be purely good. And although, on the other side, it may want the present enjoyment of peace, being purified, yet certainly in a purified conscience there is a title and right to peace; it is radically there, even when it appears not. And, in due time, it shall appear, shall spring forth, bud and flourish.

The purified and good condition of the whole soul may well, as here it doth, go under the name of the good conscience, it being so prime a faculty of it, and as the glass of the whole soul, wherein the estate of it is represented. Therefore^c, the efficacy of the blood of Christ is expressed thus, that it *purgeth our consciences from dead works*, which expression is the same thing in effect with that here, *the answer of a good conscience unto God.*

The answer, ἐπερωτήματα.] The asking or questioning of conscience, which comprises likewise its answer, for it intends the whole correspondence of the conscience with God, and with itself, as towards God, or

^c Heb. ix.

in the sight of God ; and indeed God's questioning it, is by itself ; it is his deputy in the soul ; he makes it pose itself for him, and before him, concerning its own condition ; and so the answer it gives itself in that posture, he as it were sitting and hearing it in his presence, is an answer made unto him : This questioning and answering, (if such a thing were at this time, as it was certainly soon after) ; yet means not the questions and answers used in the baptism of persons, who, being of years, professed their faith in answering the questions moved ; it possibly alludes unto that, but it further, by way of resemblance, expresses the inward questioning and answering which is transacted within, betwixt the soul and itself, and the soul and God ; and so is allusively called *ἰτερώρημα*, a questioning and answering, but distinctively specified, *εις Θεόν* ; so that whereas the other was towards men, this is unto God.

I. A good conscience is a waking, speaking conscience ; and as the conscience that questions itself most is of all sorts the best, so that which is dumb, or asleep, and is not active and frequent in self-inquiries, is not a good conscience. The word is judicial, *ἰτερώρημα*, *interrogation* used in law for the trial and executing of processes ; and this is the great business of conscience, to sit, and examine, and judge within ; to *hold courts* in the soul : and it is of continual necessity that it be so. There can be no *vacation* of this judicature without great damage to the estate of the soul ; yea, not a day ought to pass without a session of conscience within ; for daily disorders arise in the soul, which, if they pass on, will grow and gather more, and so breed more difficulty in their trial and redress. Yet men do easily turn from this work as hard and unpleasant ; and make many a long vacancy in the year, and protract it from one day to another. In the morning they must go about their business, and at night they are weary and sleepy ; and all the day long one affair steps in after another ; and if business fail, some tri-

fling company or other; and so their days pass on; the soul is overgrown with impurities and disorders.

You know what confusions, and disorders, and evils, will abound amongst a rude people, where there is no kind of court nor judicature held. Thus is it with that unruly rabble, the lusts and passions of our souls, when there is no discipline nor judgment within; or where there is but a neglect and intermission of it for a short time. And the most part of souls are in the posture of ruin; their vile affections, as a headstrong tumultuous multitude, that will not suffer a deputed judge to sit amongst them, cry down their consciences, and make a continual noise, that the voice of it may not be heard; and so force it to desist and leave them to their own ways.

But you that take this course, know you are providing the severest judgment for yourselves by disturbing of judgment; as when a people rise against an inferior judge, the prince or supreme magistrate that sent him, hearing of it, doth not fail to vindicate his honour and justice in their exemplary punishment.

Will you not answer unto conscience, but when it begins to speak, turn to business or company, that you may not hear it? Know, that it and you must answer unto God; and when he shall make inquiry, it must report, and report as the truth is, knowing that there is no hiding the matter from him. "Lord, there are to my knowledge a world of enormities within the circuit I had to judge, and I would have judged them, but was forcibly resisted and interrupted; and was not strong enough to oppose the tumultuous power that rose against me. Now the matter comes into thine own hand to judge it thyself." What shall the soul say in that day, when conscience shall make such an answer unto God, and it shall come under the severity of his justice for all? Whereas if it had given way to the conscience to find out, and judge and rectify matters, so that it could have answered concerning its procedure that way, God

would have accepted this as the answer of a good conscience, and what conscience had done, he would not do over again. It hath judged, then I acquit; *for if we would judge ourselves*, (says the Apostle), *we should not be judged*^d.

The questioning or inquiry of conscience, and so its report or answer unto God, extends to all the affairs of the soul, all the affections and motions of it, and all the actions and carriage of the whole man. The open wickedness of the most testifies against them, that though sprinkled with water in baptism, yet they are strangers to the power and gracious efficacy of it; not *baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire*; still their dross and filth remaining in them, and nothing else appearing in their ways; so that their consciences cannot so much as make a good answer for them unto men, much less unto God. What shall it answer for them, being judged, but that they are swearers, and cursers, and drunkards, or unclean; or that they are slanderers, delighting to pass their hours in descanting on the actions and ways of others, and looking through the miscoloured glass of their own malice and pride; that they are neglecters of God and holy things; *lovers of themselves*, and their own *pleasures, more than lovers of God*^e? And, have such as these impudence enough to call themselves Christians, and to pretend themselves to be such as are washed in the blood of Christ? Yes, they do this. But be ashamed and confounded in yourselves, you that remain in this condition. Yea, although thou art blameless in men's eyes, and possibly in thy own eyes too, yet thou mayest be *filthy* still in the sight of God. There is such a *generation*, a multitude of them, that *is pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness*^f. There are many moral evil persons that are most satisfied with their own estate, or such as have further a *form of godliness*, but their lusts are not mortified by *the power of it*. Secret pride, and earthliness of mind, and vain glory, and carnal wisdom, are still entertained with plea-

^d 1 Cor. xi. 31.^e 2 Tim. iii. 2. 4.^f Prov. xxx. 12.

sure within ; these are foul pollutions, filthy and hateful in the sight of God : So that where it is thus, that such guests are in peaceable possession of the heart, there the *blood and Spirit of Christ* are not yet come ; neither can there be this *answer of a good conscience unto God*.

This *answer of a good conscience unto God*, as likewise its questioning, to enable itself for that answer, is touching two great points, that are of chief concern to the soul, its *justification* and *sanctification* ; for baptism is the seal of both, and purges the conscience in both respects. That water, is the figure both of the blood and water, the justifying blood of Christ, and the pure water of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ ; he takes away the condemning guiltiness of sin by the one, and the polluting filthiness by the other.

Now, the conscience of a real believer inquiring within, upon right discovery will make this answer unto God : “ Lord, I have found that there is no standing before thee, for the soul in itself is overwhelmed with a world of guiltiness : but I find a *blood sprinkled* upon it, that hath, I am sure, virtue enough to *purge it* all away, and to *present it pure unto thee*. And I know that wheresoever thou findest that blood sprinkled, thine anger is quenched and appeased immediately upon the sight of it. Thine hand cannot smite where that blood is before thine eye.” And this the Lord does agree to, and authorises the conscience, upon this account, to return back an answer of safety and peace to the soul.

So for the other, “ Lord, I find a living work of holiness on this soul ; though there is yet corruption there, yet it is as a continual grief and vexation, it is an implacable hatred ; there is no peace betwixt them, but continual enmity and hostility : and if I cannot say much of the high degrees of grace, and faith in Christ, and love to him, and heavenliness of mind ; yet I may say, there is a beginning of these ; at least this I most confidently affirm, that there are real and earnest desires of the soul after these things.

It would know and conform to thy will, and be delivered from itself and its own will; and though it were to the highest displeasure of all the world, it would gladly walk in *all well-pleasing* unto thee." Now, he that sees the truth of these things, knowing it to be thus, owns it as his own work, and engages himself to advance it, and bring it to perfection.

This is a taste of that intercourse the purified conscience hath with God, as the saving fruit of baptism.

And all this it doth, not of itself, but by virtue of *the resurrection of Jesus Christ*, which refers both to the remote effect, *salvation*, and the nearer effect, as a means and pledge of that, *the purging of the conscience*.

By this, his death, and the effusion of his blood in his sufferings, are not excluded, but are included in it: His resurrection being the evidence of all that work of expiation, both completed and accepted; full payment being made by our surety; and so he set free, his freedom is the cause and the assurance of ours. Therefore the Apostle St. Paul expresses it so, *That he died for our sins, and rose for our righteousness*; and our Apostle shews us the worth of our *living hope* in this same resurrection^g; *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*.

Now, that baptism doth apply and seal to the believer his interest in the death and resurrection of Christ, the Apostle St. Paul teaches to the full^h, *We are buried with him*, says he, *by baptism into his death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life*. Where the dipping into the waters is referred to, as representing our dying with Christ; and the return thence, as expressive of our rising with him.

3dly, The last thing is, the resemblance of baptism

^g chap. i. 3.

^h Rom. vi. 4

in these things, with the saving of Noah in the flood. And it holds in that we spoke last of: For he seemed to have rather entered into a grave, as dead, than into a safeguard of life, in going into the ark; yet, being buried there, he rose again, as it were, in his coming forth to begin a new world. The waters of the flood drowned the ungodly, and washed them away, and their sin together, as one inseparable heap of filthiness; and upon the same waters the ark floating, preserved Noah. Thus the waters of baptism are intended as a deluge to drown sin, and to save the believer, who by faith is separated both from the world and from his sin; so it sinks, and he is saved.

And there is, further, another thing specified by the Apostle, wherein, though it be a little hard, yet he chiefly intends the parallel; the *fearness* of these that are saved by both. For though many are sprinkled with the elemental water of baptism, yet few, so as to attain by it the *answer of a good conscience towards God*, and to live by participation of the resurrection and life of Christ.

Thou that seest the world perishing in a deluge of wrath, and art now most thoughtful for this, how thou shalt escape it; fly in to Christ as thy safety, and rest secure there. Thou shalt find life in his death, and that life further ascertained to thee in his rising again. 1. There is so full and clear a title to life in these two, that thou canst challenge all adversaries upon this very ground as unconquerable, whilst thou standest on it, and mayest speak thy challenge in the Apostle's style, *It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?* But how know you that He justifies? *It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen, who sitteth at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*ⁱ. It alludes to that place^k where Christ speaks of himself, but in the name of all that adhere to him; *He is near that justifies me, who is he that will contend with me?* So that what Christ speaks there, the Apostle, with good

ⁱ Rom. viii. 33, 34.

^k Isa. l. 8.

reason imparts to each believer as in him. If no more is to be laid to Christ's charge, he being now acquitted, as is clear by his rising again, then neither to thine, who art clothed with him, and one with him.

This is the grand answer of a good conscience; and, in point of justifying them before God, there can be no answer but this, What have any to say to thee? Thy debt is paid by Him that undertook it, and he is free. Answer all accusations with this, *Christ is risen.*

And then, for the mortifying of sin, and strengthening of thy graces, look daily on that death and resurrection: Study them, set thine eye upon them, till thy heart take on the impression of them by much spiritual and affectionate looking on them; *beholding the glory of thy Lord Christ*, then be *transformed into it*¹. It is not only a moral pattern or copy, but an effectual cause of thy sanctification, having real influence into thy soul; dead with him, and again alive with him. Oh! happiness and dignity unspeakable, to have this life known and cleared to your souls! If it were, how would it make you live above the world, and all the vain hopes and fears of this wretched life, and the fears of death itself! Yea, it would make that visage of death, which to the world is most affrightful, most lovely to thee.

It is the apostle's maxim, that *the carnal mind is enmity against God*; and as it is universally true of every carnal mind, so of all the motions and thoughts of it, even where it seems to agree with God, yet it is still contrary; if it acknowledge and conform to his ordinance, yet, even in so doing, it is in direct opposite terms to him, particularly in this, that which he esteems most in them, the carnal mind makes least account of. He chiefly eyes and values the inside; the natural man dwells and rests in the shell and superficies of them. God, according to his spiritual nature, looks most on the more spiritual part of his worship and worshippers. The carnal mind is in this,

¹2 Cor. iii. 18.

just like itself altogether, for the sensible external part, and unable to look beyond it. Therefore the Apostle here, having taken occasion to speak of baptism, in terms that contain a parallel and resemblance between it and the flood, is express in correcting this mistake. It is not, says he, *in putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience.*

Were it possible to persuade you, I would recommend one thing to you ; learn to look on the ordinances of God suitably to their natures, spiritually, and inquire after the spiritual effect and working of them upon your consciences. We would willingly have all religion reduced to externals. This is our natural choice, and we would pay all in this coin, as cheaper and easier by far, and would compound for the spiritual part, rather to add and give more external performance and ceremony. Hence the natural complacency of popery, which is all for this service of the flesh and body-services ; and to those prescribed of God, all deal so liberally with him in that kind, as to add more, and frame new devices and rites ; what you will in this kind, sprinklings, and washings, and anointings ; and incense : But whither tends all this ? Is it not a gross mistake of God to think him thus pleased ; or, is it not a direct affront, knowing that he is not pleased with these, but desires another thing, to thrust that upon him that he cares not for, and refuse him what he calls for ? that single humble heart-worship and walking with him, that purity of spirit and conscience that he only prizes, and no outward service, but for these ; as they tend to this end and do attain it ? Give me, says he, nothing, if you give not this. Oh ! saith the carnal mind, any thing but this thou shalt have. As many washings and offerings as thou wilt, *thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil ;* yea, rather than fail, *let the fruit of my body go for the sin of my soul*^m. Thus we ; will the outward use of word and sacraments do it ? then all shall be well ; baptized we are ;

^m Micah vi. 6.

and shall I hear much and communicate often, if I can reach it? Shall I be exact in point of family-worship; shall I pray in secret? all this I do, or at least I now promise. Ay, but when all that is done, there is yet one thing may be wanting, and if it be so, all that amounts to nothing. Is thy conscience purged and made good by all these; or art thou seeking and aiming at this, by the use of all means? then certainly thou shalt find life in them. But, does thy heart still remain uncleansed from the old ways, not purified from *the pollutions of the world*? Do thy beloved sins still lodge with thee, and keep possession of thy heart? then art thou still a stranger to Christ, and an enemy to God. The word and seals of life are dead to thee, and thou art still dead in the use of them all. Know you not, that many have made shipwreck upon the very rock of salvation? That many which were baptised as well as you, and as constant attendants on all the worship and ordinances of God as you, yet remained without Christ, and died in their sins, and are now past recovery? Oh! that you would be warned! There are still multitudes running headlong that same course, tending to destruction, through the midst of all the means of salvation; the saddest way of all to it, through word and sacraments, and all heavenly ordinances, to be walking hell-wards. Christians and yet no Christians; baptized and yet unbaptized; as the Prophet takes in the profane multitude of God's own people with the nationsⁿ; *Egypt, and Judah, and Edom; all these nations are uncircumcised*: and the worst came last, *and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart*. Thus, are the most of us unbaptised in the heart; and as this is the way of personal destruction, so it is that, as the Prophet there declares, that brings upon the church so many public judgments: and, as the Apostle tellsthe Corinthians^o, that for the abuse of the Lord's table, *many were sick, and many slept*, certainly our abuse of the holy things of God, and want of their proper spiritual fruits, are amongst the

ⁿ Jer. ix. 26.^o 1 Cor. xi. 30.

prime sins of this land, for which so many slain have fallen in the fields by the sword, and in the streets by pestilence; and more are likely yet to fall, if we thus continue to provoke the Lord to his face. For, it is the most avowed direct affront to profane his holy things; and thus we do while we answer not their proper end, and are not inwardly sanctified by them. We have no other word, nor other sacraments, to recommend to you, than these that you have used so long to no purpose; only we would call you from the dead forms, to seek the living power of them, that you perish not.

You think the *renouncing of baptism* a horrible word, and that we would speak only so of witches; yet it is a common guiltiness that cleaves to all, who renounce not the filthy lusts, and the self-will of their own hearts; for baptism carries in it a renouncing of these; and so the cleaving unto these is a renouncing of it. Oh! we all were sealed for God in baptism; but who lives so? How few have the impression of it on the conscience, and the expression of it in the walk and fruit of their life! We do not, as clean washed persons, abhor and fly all pollutions, *all fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*^p.

We have been a long time hearers of the gospel, whereof baptism is the seal, and most of us often at the Lord's table. What hath all this done upon us? ask within: Are your hearts changed? Is there a new creation there? Where is that spiritual mindedness? Are your hearts dead to the world and sin, and alive to God; *your consciences purged from dead works*?

What mean you; Is not this the end of all the ordinances, to make all clean, and to renew and make good the conscience? to bring the soul and your Lord into a happy amity, and a good correspondence, that it may not only be in speaking terms, but often speak and converse with him? may have liberty both to demand and answer, as the original word implies? That it may speak the language of faith and humble

^p Eph. v. 11.

obedience unto God; and he may speak the language of peace to it; and both, the language of the Lord each to other?

That conscience alone is good, that is much busied in this work; in demanding and answering; that speaks much with itself, and with God: This is both the sign that it is good, and the means to make it better. That soul will doubtless be very wary in its walk, that takes daily account of itself, and renders up that account unto God. It will not live by guess, but naturally examine each step beforehand, because it is resolved to examine all after; will consider well what it should do, because it means to ask over again what it hath done; and not only to answer itself, but to make a faithful report of all unto God; to lay all before him, continually upon trial made; to tell him what is in any measure well done as his own work, and bless him for that, and tell him, too, all the slips and miscarriages of the day, as our own; complaining of ourselves in his presence, and still entreating free pardon, and more wisdom to walk more holily and exactly; and gaining, even by our failings, more humility and more watchfulness.

If you would have your consciences answer well, they must inquire and question much beforehand, Whether is this, I purpose and go about, agreeable to my Lord's will? Will it please him? Ask that more, and regard that more, than this that the most follow; will it please or profit myself? fits that my own humour? And examine not only the bulk and substance of thy ways and actions, but the manner of them, how thy heart is set: so think it not enough to go to church, or to pray, but *take heed how ye hear*; consider how pure He is, and how piercing His eye, whom thou servest.

Then, again, reflect afterwards; think it not enough I was praying, or hearing, or reading, it was a good work, what need I question it further? No, but be still reflecting, and asking how it was done; how I have heard, how I have prayed? Was my heart humbled, by the discoveries of sin, from the word?

Was it refreshed with the promises of grace? Did it lie level under the word, to receive the stamp of it? Was it in prayer set and kept in a holy bent towards God? Did it breathe forth real and earnest desires into his ear, or was it remiss, and roving, and dead in the service? So, in my society with others, in such and such company, what was spent of my time, and how did I employ it? Did I seek to honour my Lord, and to edify my brethren, by my carriage and speeches; or did the time run out in trifling vain discourse? when alone, what is the carriage and walk of my heart? where it hath most liberty to move in its own pace, is it delighted in converse with God? Are the thoughts of heavenly things frequent and sweet to it; or does it run after the earth and the delights of it, spinning out itself in impertinent vain contrivances?

The neglect of such inquiries is that which entertains and increases the impurity of the soul, so that men are afraid to look into themselves, and to look up to God. But oh! what a foolish course is this, to shift off that which cannot be avoided! in the end answer must be made to that All-seeing Judge with whom we have to do, and to whom we owe our accounts.

And, truly, it should be seriously considered, what makes this good conscience, that makes an acceptable answer unto God. That appears by the opposition, *not the putting away the filth of the flesh*; then it is the putting away of *soul-filthiness*; so then it is the renewing and purifying of the conscience that makes it good, *pure and peaceable*. In the purifying it may be troubled, which is but the stirring in cleansing of it, which makes more quiet in the end, as phisic, or the lancing of a sore; and after it is in some measure cleansed, it may have fits of trouble, which yet still add further purity and further peace: So there is no hazard in that work; but all the misery is, a dead security of the conscience remaining filthy, and yet unstirred; or, after some stirring or pricking, as a wound not thoroughly cured, skinned over,

which will but breed more vexation in the end; it will fester and grow more difficult to be cured; and if it be cured, it must be by deeper cutting and more pain, than if at first it had endured a thorough search.

O, my brethren! take heed of sleeping unto death in carnal ease. Resolve to take no rest till you be in the element and place of soul rest, where solid rest indeed is. Rest not till you be with Christ; though all the world should offer their best, turn them by with disdain; if they will not be turned by, throw them down, and go over them, and trample upon them. "You have no rest to give me; nor will I take any at your hands, nor from any creature. There is no rest for me till I be under his shadow, who endured so much trouble to purchase my rest; and whom having found, I may sit down quiet and satisfied; and when the men of the world make boast of the highest contents, I will outvie them all with this one word, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*."*

The answer of a good conscience toward God.] The conscience of man is never right at peace in itself, till it be rightly persuaded of peace with God; which, while it remains filthy, it cannot be; for *he is holy, and iniquity cannot dwell with him*: What communion betwixt light and darkness? so then the conscience must be cleansed ere it can look upon God with assurance and peace. This cleansing is sacramentally performed by baptism effectually by the Spirit of Christ and the blood of Christ; and he lives to impart both: therefore here is mentioned his resurrection from the dead, as that by virtue whereof we are assured of this purging and peace. Then can it, in some measure, with confidence answer, "Lord, though polluted by former sins, and by sin still dwelling in me, yet thou seest that my desires are to be daily more like my Saviour; I would have more love and zeal for thee, more hatred of sin, that can answer with St. Peter, when he was posed,

* Cant. ii. 16.

* 2 Cor. vi. 14.

Lovest thou me? Lord, I appeal to thine own eye, who seest my heart: *Lord thou knowest that I love thee*^t, at least I desire to love thee, and to desire thee, and that is love. Willingly would I do thee more suitable service, and honour thy name more; and I do sincerely desire more grace for this, that thou mayest have more glory; and I entreat the light of thy countenance for this end, that, by seeing it, my heart may be more weaned from the world, and knit unto thyself." Thus it answers touching its inward frame, and the work of holiness by the spirit of holiness dwelling in it. But to answer justice, touching the point of guilt, it flies to the blood of sprinkling, fetches all its answers thence, turns over the matter upon it, and that blood answers for it; for it doth speak, and *speaks better things than the blood of Abel*^u; speaks full payment of all that can be exacted from the sinner; and that is a sufficient answer.

The conscience is then, in this point, made speechless at once; driven to a nonplus in itself; hath from itself no answer to make; but then it turns about to Christ, and finds what to say, "Lord there is indeed in me nothing but guiltiness; I have deserved death, but I have fled into the city of refuge, which thou hast appointed; there I resolve to abide, to live and die there. If justice pursue me, it shall find me there: I take sanctuary in Jesus. My arrest laid upon me will light upon him, and he hath wherewithal to answer it. He can straightway declare he hath paid all, and can make it good: hath the acquittance to shew; yea, his own liberty is a real sign of it. He was in prison, and is let free, which declares that all is satisfied." Therefore the answer here rises out of the *resurrection of Jesus Christ*.

And in this very thing lies our peace and way, and all our happiness; Oh! it is worth your time and pains to try your interest in this; it is the only thing worthy your highest diligence. But the most are out of their wits, running like a number of distract-

^t John xxi. 15.^u Heb. xi. 24.

ed persons, and still in a deal of business, but to what end they know not. You are unwilling to be deceived in those things that at their best and surest do but deceive you when all is done; but are content to be deceived in that which is your great concernment. You are your own deceivers in it; gladly gulled with shadows of faith and repentance, false touches of sorrow, and false flashes of joy, and are not careful to have your souls really unbottomed from themselves, and built upon Christ; to have him your treasure, your righteousness, your all, and to have him your answer unto God your Father. But if you will yet be advised, let go all, to lay hold on him; lay your souls on him, and leave him not; he is *a tried foundation stone, and he that trusts on him shall not be confounded*^x.

Ver. 22. *Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.*

THIS is added on purpose to shew us further what he is, how high and glorious a Saviour we have.

We have here four points or steps of the exaltation of Christ: 1. Resurrection from the dead. 2. Ascension into heaven. 3. Sitting at the right hand of God. 4. In that posture, his royal authority over the angels. The particulars are clear in themselves. Of the sitting at the right hand of God, you are not ignorant that it is a borrowed expression, drawn from earth to heaven, to bring down some notion of heaven to us; to signify to us in our language, suitably to our customs, the supreme dignity of Jesus Christ, God and man, the Mediator of the new covenant, his matchless nearness unto his Father, and the sovereignty given him over heaven and earth. And that of the subjection of angels, is but a more particular specifying of that his dignity and power, as enthroned at the Father's right hand, they being the most elevated and glorious creatures; so that his authority

^x Isa. xxviii. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 6.

over all the world is implied in that subjection of the highest and noblest part of it: His victory and triumph over the angels of darkness, is an evidence of his invincible power and greatness, and matter of comfort to his saints; but this which we read of here is his supremacy over the glorious elect angels.

That there is amongst them priority we find; that there is a comely order in their differences cannot be doubted: But to marshal their degrees and stations above, is a point, not only of vain fruitless curiosity, but of presumptuous *intrusion*, whether these are names of their different particular dignities, or only different names of their general excellency and power, as I think it cannot be certainly well determined, so it imports us not to determine; only this we know, and are particularly taught from this place, that whatsoever is their common dignity, both in names and differences, they are all subject to our glorious head, Christ.

What confirmation they have in their estate by him, (though piously asserted by divines), is not so infallibly clear from the alledged scriptures, which may bear another sense. But this is certain, that he is their king, and they acknowledge him to be so, and do incessantly admire and adore him. They rejoice in his glory, and in the glory and happiness of mankind through him; they yield him most cheerful obedience, and serve him readily in the good of his church, and each particular believer, as he deposes and employs them.

Which is the thing here intended, having in it these two, his dignity above them, and his authority over them. 1. His superior dignity; that even that nature which he stooped below them to take on, he hath carried up and raised above them; the very earth, the flesh of man exalted in his person above all those heavenly spirits, who are of so excellent and pure a being in their nature, and from the beginning of the world have been clothed with so transcendent glory. The text assures us, that a parcel of clay is made so bright, and set so high, as to outshine these bright

flaming spirits, these stars of the morning, that flesh being united to the Fountain of Light, the blessed Deity in the person of the Son.

In coming, to fetch and put on this garment, he made himself *lower than the angels*; but carrying it with him at his return to his eternal throne, and sitting down with it there, it is high above them, as the Apostle teaches excellently and amply^a, *To which of them, said he, Sit on my right hand?*

This they look upon with perpetual wonder, but not with envy nor repining: No, amongst all their eyes, no such eye is to be found; yea, they rejoice in the infinite wisdom of God in this design, and his infinite love to poor lost mankind. It is wonderful indeed to see him filling the room of their fallen brethren with new guests from earth; yea, such as are born heirs of hell; not only that sinful man should thus be raised to a participation of glory with them who are spotless, sinless spirits, but that their flesh, in their Redeemer, should be dignified with a glory so far beyond them. This is that mystery they are intent in looking and prying into, and cannot, nor ever shall, see the bottom of it; for it hath no bottom.

2. Jesus Christ is not only exalted above the angels in absolute dignity, but in *relative authority* over them. He is made Captain over those heavenly bands; they are all under his command, for all services wherein it pleases him to employ them; and the great employment he hath, is the attending on his Church, and particular elect ones; *are they not all ministring spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation^b?* They are the servants of Christ, and in him, and, at his appointment, the servants of every believer; and are many ways serviceable and useful for their good, which truly we do not duly consider. There is no danger of overvaluing them, and inclining to worship them upon this consideration; yea, if we take it right, it will rather take off from that. The angel judged his argument strong enough to St. John

^a Heb. i. 2.

^b Heb. i. ult.

against that, that he was but *his fellow servant*^c. But this is more, that they are servants to us, although not therefore inferior, it being an honorary service, yet certainly inferior to our Head, and so to his mystical body, taken in that notion as a part of him.

Reflexion 1. The height of this our Saviour's glory will appear the more, if we reflect on the descent by which he ascended to it. Oh! how low did we bring down so high a Majesty, into the pit wherein we had fallen, by climbing to be higher than he had set us. It was high indeed, as we were fallen so low, and yet he, against whom it was committed, came down to help us up again, and to take hold of us, *took us on*; so the word is *ἐπιλαμβάνεται*^d; he *took not hold of the angels*; let them go; hath left them to die for ever: *But he took hold of the seed of Abraham*, and took on him indeed their flesh, dwelling amongst us, and in a mean part; *emptied himself*, *ἐκένωσε*^e, and became of no repute; and further, after he descended to the earth, and into our flesh, in it he became *obedient to death* upon the cross^f, and descended into the grave; and by these steps, was walking towards that glory wherein he now is; *he abased himself*, wherefore, says the Apostle, *God hath highly exalted him*^g. So he himself^h, *Ought not Christ first to suffer these things, and so enter into his glory?* Now this indeed it is pertinent to consider, and the Apostle is here upon the point of *Christ's suffering*. That is his theme; and therefore he is so particular in the ascending of Christ to his glory. Who, of those that would come thither, will refuse to follow him in the way where he led? He is *ἀρχηγός*, *the leader of our faith*ⁱ. And who of those that follow him, will not love and delight to follow him through any way, the lowest and darkest? it is excellent and safe, and then it ends you see where.

2. Think not strange of the Lord's method with his Church, bringing her to so low and desperate a

^c Rev. xix. 10.

^d Heb. ii. 16.

^e Phil. ii. 17.

^f Ver. 8.

^g Ver. 8.

^h Luke xxiv. 26.

ⁱ Heb. xii. 2.

posture many times. Can she be in a condition more seemingly desperate than was her Head? not only in ignominious sufferings, but dead and laid in the grave, and the stone rolled to it and sealed, and all made sure? and yet he arose and ascended, and now sits in glory, and shall sit *till all his enemies become his footstool*. Do not fear for him, that they shall overtop, yea, or be able to reach him, who is exalted higher than the heavens; neither be afraid for his Church, *which is his body*, and, if her Head be safe and alive, cannot but partake of safety and life with him. Though she were, to sight, dead and laid in the grave, yet shall she rise thence, and be more glorious than before^k; and still the deeper her distress be, shall rise the higher in the day of deliverance.

Thus, in his dealing with a soul, observe the Lord's method; think it not strange that he brings a soul low, very low, which he means to comfort and exalt very high in grace and glory; that he leads it by hell-gates to heaven; that it be at that point, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Was not the Head put to use that word, and so to speak it, as the head speaks for the body, seasoning it for his members, and sweetening that bitter cup by his own drinking of it? Oh! what a hard condition may a soul be brought unto, and put to think, *Can He love me, and intend mercy for me, that leaves me to this?* And yet, in all, the Lord is preparing it thus for comfort and blessedness.

3. Turn your thoughts more frequently to this excellent subject, the glorious high estate of our *great High Priest*. The angels admire this mystery, and we slight it; they rejoice in it, and we, whom it certainly more nearly concerns, are not moved with it; we do not draw that comfort and that instruction from it, which it would plentifully afford, if it were sought after: It comforts us against all troubles and fears. Is He not on high who hath undertaken for us? doth any thing befall us, but it

^k Isa. xxvi. 19.

is past first in heaven? and shall any thing pass there to our prejudice or damage? HE sits there, and is upon the council of all, *who hath loved us, and given himself for us*; yea, who as he descended thence for us, did likewise ascend thither again for us; hath made our inheritance there which he purchased sure to us, taking possession for us, and in our name; since he is there, not only as the Son of God, but as our Surety, and as our Head; and so the believer may think himself even already possessed of this right, inasmuch as his Christ is there. The saints are glorified already in their Head. *Where he reigns, there I believe myself to reign*, says Augustine¹. And consider in all thy straits and troubles, outward and inward, they are not hid from him. He knows them, and feels them, is a compassionate High Priest, and hath a gracious sense of thy frailties and griefs, fears, and temptations; and he will not suffer thee to be surcharged: but is still presenting thy estate to the Father, and using that interest and power he hath in his affection for thy good. And what wouldest thou more? Art thou one whose heart desires to rest upon him, and cleave to him? Thou art knit so to him, that his resurrection and glory secures thee thine: His life and thine are not two, but one life, as that of the head and members; and if he could not be overcome of death, thou canst not neither. Oh! that sweet word, *Because I live, ye shall live also*^m.

Let thy thoughts and carriage be moulded in this contemplation rightly, ever to look on thy exalted Head. Consider his glory; see not only thy nature raised in him above the angels, but thy person interested by faith in that his glory, and then think thyself too good to serve any base lust. Look down on sin and the world with a holy disdain, being united to him who is so exalted and so glorious. And let not thy mind creep here; engage not thy heart to any thing that time and this earth can afford. Oh! why are we so little there, where there

¹ Ubi Caput meum regnat, ibi me regnare credo. ^m John xiv. 19.

is such a spring of delightful and high thoughts for us? *If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where he sitsⁿ.* What mean you? are ye such as will let go your interest in this once crucified, and now glorified, Jesus? if not, why are ye not more like it? why does it not possess your hearts more? ought it not to be thus? should not our hearts be, where our treasure, where our blessed Head, is? Oh! how unreasonable, how unfriendly, is it, how much may we be ashamed to have room in our hearts for earnest thoughts or desires, or delights, about any thing beside Him?

Were this deeply impressed upon the hearts of those that have a right in it, would there be found in them any engagement to the poor things that are passing away? Would death be a terrible word? yea, would it not be one of the sweetest, most rejoicing, thoughts, to solace and ease the heart under all pressures, to look forward to that day of liberty? This infectious disease^o may keep possession all the winter, and grow hot with the year again. Do not therefore flatter yourselves, and think it is past; you have yet remembering strokes to keep it in your eye. But, however, shall we abide still here? or is there any reason, when things are duly weighed, why we should desire it? Well, if you would be untied beforehand, and so feel your separation from this world less, this is the only way. Look up to him, who draws up all hearts that do indeed behold him. Then, I say, thy heart shall be removed beforehand, and the rest is easy and sweet: When that is done, all is gained. And consider how he desires the completing of our union with him. Shall it be his request, and earnest desire, and shall it not be ours too, *that where he is, there we may be also^p?* Let us expect it with patient submission, yet striving by desires and suits, and looking out for our release *from this body of sin and death.*

ⁿ Col. iii. 1.

^o This probably refers to the Pestilence in 1665. See the lecture on chap. iv. 6. Though the Pestilence doth not affright you so, &c.

^p John xvii. 24.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1. *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.*

THE main of a Christian's duty lies in these two things, patience in suffering, and avoidance of sin, ἀνέχου καὶ ἀπέχου, and they have a natural influence each upon the other. Although affliction simply doth not, yet affliction sweetly and humbly carried doth, purify and disengage the heart from sin, wean it from the world and the common ways of it. And again, holy and exact walking keeps the soul in a sound healthful temper, and so enables it to patient suffering, to bear things more easily; as a strong body endures fatigue, heat, cold, and hardship, with ease, a small part whereof would surcharge a sickly constitution. The consciousness of sin, and careless unholy courses, must wonderfully weaken a soul and distemper it, so that it is not able to endure much; but every little thing disturbs it: Therefore the Apostle hath reason, both to insist so much on these two points in this epistle, and likewise to interweave the one so often with the other, pressing jointly throughout, the chearful bearing of all kind of afflictions, and the careful forbearing all kind of sin; and out of the one discourse he slides into the other, as here.

And as the things agree in their nature, so in their great pattern and principle, Jesus Christ; and the Apostle still draws both from thence; that of patience⁹; that of holiness here, *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us, &c.*

The chief study of a Christian, and the very thing that makes him to be a Christian, is conformity with Christ. *This is the sum of religion* (said that wise heathen) *to be like him whom thou worshippest*^r. But this example being in itself too sub-

⁹ Chap. iii. 18.

^r Summa religionis imitari quem colis.

lime, is brought down to our view in Christ; the brightness of God is veiled, and veiled in our own flesh that we may be able to look on it. The inaccessible light of the Deity is so attempered in the humanity of Christ, that we may read our lesson by it in him, and may direct our walk by it; and that truly is our only way; there is nothing but wandering and perishing in all other ways; nothing but darkness and misery out of him; but *he that follows me*, says he, *shall not walk in darkness*^s. And therefore is he set before us in the gospel, in so clear and lively colours, that we may make this our whole endeavour to be like him.

Consider here: 1. The high engagement to this conformity. 2. The nature of it. 3. The actual improvement of it. 1. The engagement lies in this, that he suffered for us. Of this before; only in reference to this, had he come down, as some have mis-imagined it, only to set us this perfect way of obedience, and give us an example of it in our own nature; this had been very much. That the Son of God should descend to teach wretched man, and the great King to descend into man, and dwell in a tabernacle of clay, to set up a school in it, for such ignorant accursed creatures! and should in his own person act the hardest lessons, both in doing and suffering, to lead us in both. But the matter goes yet higher than this. Oh! how much higher hath he suffered, not simply as our rule, but as our Surety, and in our stead. *He suffered for us in the flesh*. We are the more obliged to make his suffering our example, because it was to us more than an example, it was our ransom.

This makes the conformity reasonable in a double respect: 1. It is *due* that we follow him, who led thus as the *Captain of our Salvation*; that we follow in suffering, and in doing, seeing both were so for us. It is strange how some armies have addicted themselves to their head, to be at his call night and day, in summer and winter; to refuse no

^s John viii. 12.

travail or endurance of hardship for him; and all only to please him, and serve his inclination and ambition; as Cæsar's trained bands, especially the veterans, what hardships did they not endure in counter-marches, and in traversing different and distant countries? But besides that, our Lord and leader is most great and excellent, and so well deserves following for his own worth. This lays upon us an obligation beyond all conceiving, that he first suffered for us; that he endured such hatred of men, and such wrath of God the Father, and went through death, so vile a death, to procure our life. What can be too bitter to endure, or too sweet to forsake, to follow him? Were this duly considered, would we cleave to our lusts, or to our ease? Would we not go through fire and water, yea, through death itself, and, were it possible, through many deaths, to follow him?

1. Consider, as it is justly due, so it is made *easy* by that his suffering for us. Our burden, that pressed us to hell, being taken off, is not all that is left, to suffer or do, as nothing? Our chains, that bound us over to eternal death, being knocked off, shall we not walk, shall we not run, in his ways? Oh! think what that burden and yoke was he hath eased us of; how heavy, how unsufferable, it was, and then we shall think what he so truly says, that all he lays on is sweet; *His yoke easy, and his burden light*^t. Oh! the happy change, to be rescued from the vilest slavery, and called to conformity and fellowship with the Son of God.

2. The nature of this conformity (to shew the nearness of it) is expressed in the very same terms as in the pattern; it is not a remote resemblance, but the same thing, even *suffering in the flesh*. But that we may understand rightly what suffering is here meant, it is plainly this, ceasing from sin; so *suffering in the flesh* here, is not simply the enduring of afflictions, which is a part of a Christian's conformity with his head Christ^u, but implies a

^t Matth. xi. 30.

^u Rom. viii. 29.

more inward and spiritual suffering. It is the suffering and the dying of our corruption, the taking away the life of sin by the death of Christ; and that death of his sinless flesh, works in the believer the death of sinful flesh, that is, the corruption of his nature, which is so usually in scripture called *flesh*. Sin makes man base, drowns him in flesh, and the lusts of it; makes the very soul become gross and earthly; turns it as it were to flesh: So the Apostle calls the very mind that is unrenewed, *a carnal mind*^x. And what doth the mind of a natural man hunt after and run out into, from one day and year to another? Is it not on the things of this base world, and the concernment of his flesh^y? What would he have, but be accommodated to eat, and drink, and dress, and live at ease? *He minds earthly things*, savours and relishes them, and cares for them: examine the most of your pains and time, and your strongest desires, and most serious thoughts, if they go not this way, to raise yourselves and yours in your worldly condition. Yea, the highest projects of the greatest natural spirits are but earth still, in respect of things truly spiritual. All their state designs go not beyond this poor life that perishes in the flesh, and is daily perishing, even while we are busiest upholding it, and providing for it. Present things, and this lodge of clay, this flesh and its interest, take up most of our time and pains; the most, yea all, till that change be wrought the Apostle speaks of, till Christ be put on^z, *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*; and then the other will easily follow that follows in the words, *Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*. Once in Christ, and then your necessary general care for this natural life will be regulated and moderated by the Spirit. And for all unlawful and enormous desires of the flesh, you shall be rid of providing for these. Instead of all provision for the life of the flesh in that sense, there is another guest, and another life, for you now to wait on and furnish

^x Rom. viii. 7.^y Corporis negotium.^z Rom. xiii. 14.

for: in them that are in Christ, that flesh is dead, they are freed from its drudgery; *He that hath suffered in the flesh hath rested from sin.*

Ceased from sin.] He is at rest from it, a godly death, as they *that die in the Lord rest from their labours*². He that hath suffered in the flesh, and is dead to it, dies indeed in the Lord; rests from the base turmoil of sin; it is no longer his master. As our sin was the cause of Christ's death, his death is the death of sin in us; and that not simply, as he bore a moral pattern of it, but as the real working cause of it. The death of Christ has in this respect an effectual influence on the soul, kills it to sin: *I am crucified with Christ*, says St. Paul^a. Faith so looks on the death of Christ, that it takes the impression of it; sets it on the heart, kills it unto sin: Christ and the believer do not only become one in law, so as his death stands for theirs, but are one in nature, so as his death for sin causes theirs to it^b, *Baptized into his death.*

This suffering in the flesh being unto death, and such a death (*crucifying*), hath indeed pain in it; but what then, it must be so like his, and the believer like him, in willingly enduring it. All the pain of his suffering in the flesh, his love to us digested and went through it; so all the pain to our nature in severing and pulling us from our beloved sins, and our dying to them, if his love be planted in our hearts, that will sweeten it, and make us delight in it. Love desires nothing more than likeness, and shares willingly in all with the party loved; and above all love, this divine love is purest and highest, and works most strongly that way; takes pleasure in that pain, and is a voluntary death, as Plato calls love. *It is strong as death*, says Solomon^c. As death makes the strongest body fall to the ground, so doth the love of Christ make the most active and lively sinner dead to his sin: and as death severs a man from his dearest and most fa-

² Rev. xiv. 13.

^a Gal. xi. 20.

^b Rom. vi. 3.

^c Cant. viii. 6.

miliar friends, thus doth the love of Christ, and his death flowing from it, sever the heart from its most beloved sins.

I beseech you seek to have your hearts set against sin, to hate it, to wound it, and be dying daily to it. Be not satisfied, unless ye feel an abatement of it, and a life within you. Disdain that base service, and being bought at so high a rate, think yourselves too good to be slaves to any base lust. You are called to a more excellent and more honourable service. And of this suffering in the flesh, we may safely say what the apostle speaks of the sufferings with and for Christ, that the partakers of these sufferings are co-heirs of glory with Christ; *If we suffer thus with him, we shall also be glorified with him*^c. If we die with him, we shall live with him for ever.

3. We have the actual improvement of this conformity; *Arm yourselves with the same mind, or thoughts* of this mortification. Death, taken naturally in its proper sense, being an entire privation of life, admits not of degrees: but this figurative death, this mortification of the flesh in a Christian, is gradual; in so far as he is renewed, and is animated and acted by the Spirit of Christ, he is thoroughly mortified; (for this death, and that new life joined with it, and here added, *ver. 2.* go together and grow together); but because he is not totally renewed, and there is in him of that corruption still that is here called flesh, therefore it is his great task to be gaining further upon it, and overcoming and mortifying it every day; and to this tend the frequent exhortations of this nature; *Mortify your members that are on the earth; so*^d, *likewise reckon yourselves dead to sin, and let it not reign in your mortal bodies.* Thus here, *Arm yourselves with the same mind*, or with this very thought. Consider and apply that suffering of Christ in the flesh, to the end that you with him, suffering in the flesh, may cease from sin. Think it

^c Rom. viii. 17.

^d Rom. vi.

ought to be thus, and seek that it may be thus, with you.

Arm yourselves.] There is still fighting, and sin will be molesting you; though wounded to death, yet will it struggle for life, and seek to wound its enemy; will assault the graces that are in you. Do not think if it be once struck, and you have given it a stab near to the heart, by the *sword of the Spirit*, that therefore it will stir no more. No, so long as you live in the flesh, in these bowels there will be remainders of the life of this flesh, your natural corruption; therefore ye must be armed against it. Sin will not give you rest, so long as there is a drop of blood in its vein, one spark of life in it; and that will be so long as you have life here. This old man is stout, and will fight himself to death; and at the weakest it will rouse up itself, and exert its dying spirits, as men will do sometimes more eagerly than when they were not so weak, nor so near death.

This the children of God often find to their grief, that corruptions which they thought had been cold dead, stir and rise up again, and set upon them. A passion or lust, that after some great stroke, lay a long while as dead, stirred not, and therefore they thought to have heard no more of it, though it shall never recover fully again, to be lively as before, yet will revive in such a measure as to molest, and possibly to foil, them yet again: therefore is it continually necessary that they live in arms, and put them not off to their dying day; till they put off the body, and be altogether free of the flesh. You may take the Lord's promise for victory in the end; that shall not fail; but do not promise yourself ease in the way, for that will not hold. If at some times your enemy have the advantage, give not all for lost. He hath often won the day that hath been foiled and wounded in the fight. But likewise take not all for won, so as to have no more conflict, when sometimes you have the better, as in particular battles. Be not

desperate when you lose, nor secure when you gain them: when it is worst with you do not throw away your arms, nor lay them away when you are at best.

Now, the way to be armed is this, *the same mind*: how would my Lord, Christ, carry himself in this case? and what was his business in all places and companies? Was it not to do the will, and advance the glory, of his Father? If I be injured and reviled, consider how would he do in this? Would he repay one injury with another, one reproach with another reproach? No, *being reviled, he reviled not again*^e. Well, through his strength, this shall be my way too. Thus ought it to be with the christian, framing all his ways and words, and very thoughts, upon that model, *the mind of Christ*, and to study in all things *to walk even as he walked*^f; studying it much, as the reason and rule of mortification, and drawing from it, as the real cause and spring of mortification.

The pious contemplation of his death will most powerfully kill the love of sin in the soul, and kindle an ardent hatred of it. The believer, looking on his Jesus crucified for him, and *wounded for his transgressions*, and taking in deep thoughts of his spotless innocency that deserved no such thing, and of his matchless love that yet endured it all for him, will then naturally think, "Shall I be a friend to that which was his deadly enemy? Shall sin be sweet to me, that was so bitter to him, and that for my sake? Shall I ever lend it a good look, or entertain a favourable thought of that which shed my Lord's blood? Shall I live in that for which he died, and died to kill it in me?" Oh! let it not be.

To the end it may not be, let such really apply that death to work this on the soul; for this is always to be added, and is the main thing indeed, by holding and fastening that death close to the soul, effectually to kill the effects of sin in it; to stifle and

^e 1 Pet. ii. 23.

^f 1 John ii. 6.

crush them dead, by pressing that death on the heart; looking on it, not only as a most complete model, but as having a most effectual virtue, for this effect, and desiring him, entreating our Lord himself, who communicates himself, and the virtue of his death, to the believer, that he would powerfully cause it to flow in upon us, and let us feel the virtue of it.

It is then the only thriving and growing life, to be much in the lively contemplation and application of Jesus Christ; to be continually studying him, and conversing with him, and drawing from him; *receiving of his fulness, grace for grace*^f. Wouldst thou have much power against sin, and much increase of holiness, let thine eye be much on Christ; set thine heart on him; let it dwell in him, and be still with him. When sin is like to prevail in any kind, go to him, tell him of the insurrection of his enemies, and thy inability to resist, and desire him to suppress them, and to help thee against them, that they may gain nothing by their stirring, but some new wound. If thy heart begin to be taken with, and move towards, sin, lay it before him; the beams of his love shall eat out that fire of these sinful lusts. Wouldst thou have thy pride, and passions, and love of the world, and self-love, killed, go sue for the virtue of his death, and that shall do it; seek his Spirit, the Spirit of meekness, and humility, and divine love. Look on him, and he shall draw thy heart heavenwards, and unite it to himself, and make it like himself. And is not that the thing thou desirest?

^f John i. 16.

Ver. 2. *That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.*

3. *For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.*

THE chains of sin are so strong, and so fastened on our nature, that there is in us no power to break them off, till a mightier and stronger Spirit than our own come into us. The Spirit of Christ dropped into the soul, makes it able to *break through a troop, and leap over a wall*, as David speaks of himself furnished with the strength of his God^a. Mens resolutions fall to nothing: And as a prisoner that offers to escape, and does not, is bound faster, thus usually it is with men in their self-purposes of forsaking sin: they leave out Christ in the work, and so remain in their captivity, yea, it grows upon them; and while we press them to free themselves, and shew not Christ to them, we put them upon an impossibility: but a look to him makes it feasible and easy. Faith in him, and that love to him which faith begets, breaks through and surmounts all difficulties. It is the powerful love of Christ that kills the love of sin, and kindles the love of holiness in the soul; makes it a willing sharer in his death, and so a happy partaker of his life: for that always follows, and must of necessity, as here is added, *He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin*, is crucified and dead to it, but he loses nothing: yea, it is his great gain, to lose that deadly life of the flesh for a new spiritual life; a life indeed, *living unto God*. That is the end why he so dies, that he may thus live, *That he no longer should live*, &c. and yet live far better, *live to the will of God*. He that is one with Christ by believing, is one throughout in death and life. As Christ rose, so he that is dead to sin with him, through the power of

^a Psal. xviii. 29.

his death, rises to that new life with him, through the power of his resurrection. And these two are our sanctification, which, whosoever do partake of Christ, and are found in him, do certainly draw from him. Thus are they joined^b; *Likewise reckon you yourselves dead indeed to sin, but alive to God, and both through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

All they that do really come to Jesus Christ, as they come to him as their Saviour to be clothed with him, and made righteous by him; they come likewise to him as their sanctifier, to be made new and holy by him, to die and live with him, to *follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes*, through the hardest sufferings, and death itself. And this spiritual suffering and dying with him, is the universal way of all his followers: they are all martyrs thus in the crucifying of sinful flesh, and so dying for him, and with him; and they may well go cheerfully through, though it bear the unpleasant name of *death*: yet as the other death is (which makes it so little terrible, yea, often to appear so very desirable to them, so is this) the way to a far more excellent and happy life, so that they may pass through it gladly, both for the company and end of it. It is with Christ they go into his death, as unto life in his life. Though a believer might be free upon these terms, he would not. No, sure: could he be content with that easy life of sin, instead of the divine life of Christ? No, he will do thus, and *not accept of deliverance, that he may obtain* (as the apostle speaks of the martyrs^c), *a better resurrection.* Think on it again, you to whom your sins are dear still, and this life sweet; you are yet far from Christ and his life.

The apostle, with intent to press this more home, expresses more at large the nature of the opposite estates and lives that he speaks of, and so sets before his Christian brethren, 1. The dignity of that new life; and then, 2. By a particular reflection upon the former life, he presses the change. The former

^b Rom. vi. 11.

^c Heb. xi. 35.

life he calls a living, *to the lusts of men*; this new spiritual life, *to the will of God.*

The lusts of men.] Such as are common to the corrupt nature of man; such as every man may find in himself and perceive in others. The apostle in the 3d verse more particularly, for further clearness, specifies those kinds of men that were most notorious in these lusts, and those kinds of lusts that were most notorious in men. Writing to the dispersed Jews, he calls sinful lusts *the will of the Gentiles*, as having least controul of contrary light in them; and yet the Jews walked in the same, though they had the law as a light and rule for the avoiding of them; and implies, that these lusts were unbeseeming even their former condition as Jews; but much more unsuitable to them, as now Christians. Some of the grossest of these lusts he names, meaning all the rest, all the ways of sin, and representing their vileness in the more lively manner; not as some take it, when they hear of such heinous sins, as if it were to lessen the evil of more civil nature by the comparison or intimate freedom from these to be a blameless condition, and a change of it needless. No, the Holy Ghost means it just contrary. That we may judge of all sin and of our sinful nature, by our estimate of these sins that are most discernible and abominable; all sin, though not equal in degree, yet is of one nature, and originally springing from one root, arising from the same unholy nature of man, and contrary to the same holy nature and will of God.

So then, 1. These that walk in these highways of impiety, and yet will have the name of *Christians*, they are the shame of Christians, and the professed enemies of Jesus Christ, and of all others the most hateful to him: they seem to have taken on his name, for no other end but to shame and disgrace it; but he will vindicate himself, and the blot shall rest upon these impudent persons, that dare hold up their faces in the church of God as parts of it, and are indeed nothing but the dishonour of it, spots and

blots; that dare profess to worship God as his people, and remain unclean, riotous and profane persons. How suits thy sitting here before the Lord, and thy sitting with vile ungodly company on the ale-bench? How agrees the word, sounds it well, "There goes a drunken Christian, an unclean, a basely covetous, an earthly minded, Christian!" and the naming of these is not besides the text, but agreeable to the very words of it; for the apostle warrants us to take it under the name of *idolatry*; and in that name he reckons it to be mortified by a Christian^a; *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

2. But yet men, that are someway exempted from the blot of these foul impieties, may still remain slaves to sin, alive to it, and dead to God, living to the lusts of men, and not to the will of God, pleasing others and themselves, displeasing him. And the smoothest, best bred, and most moralized natural man, is in this base thralldom: and the more miserable, that he dreams of liberty in the midst of his chains, thinks himself clean by looking on those that wallow in gross profaneness; takes measure of himself by the most crooked lives of ungodly men about him, and so thinks himself very straight; but lays not the straight rule of the will of God to his ways and heart, which, if he did, he would then discover much crookedness in his ways, and much more in his heart, that now he sees not, but takes it to be square and even.

Therefore I advise and desire you to look more narrowly to yourselves in this, and see whether you be not still living to your own lusts and wills instead of God; seeking, in all your ways, to advance and please yourselves, and not him. Is not the bent of your hearts set that way? Do not your whole desires and endeavours run in that channel, how you and yours may be somebody, and you may have

^a Col. iii. 5.

wherewithal to serve the flesh, and to be accounted of and respected amongst men? And if we trace it home, all a man's honouring and pleasing of others, tends to, and ends in pleasing of himself. It resolves in that, and is it not so meant by him? He pleases men, either that he may gain by them, or be respected by them, or something that is still pleasing to himself may be the return of it. So self is the grand idol, for which all other heart-idolatries are committed. And, indeed, in the unrenewed heart there is no scarcity of them. Oh! what multitudes, what heaps, if the wall were digged through, and the light of God going before us, and leading us in to see them? The natural motion and way of the natural heart is no other but still seeking out new inventions, a forge of new gods, still either forming them to itself, or worshipping these it hath already framed; committing spiritual fornication from God with the creature, and multiplying lovers every where, as it is tempted: as the Lord complains of his people, *upon every high hill, and under every green tree*^e.

You will not believe so much ill of yourselves, will not be convinced of this unpleasant but necessary truth: and this is a part of our self-pleasing, that we please ourselves in this, that we will not see it; not in our callings and ordinary ways, not in our religious exercises, for in these we naturally aim at nothing but ourselves; either our reputation, or at best our own safety and peace; either to stop the cry of conscience for the present, or escape the wrath that is to come: but not in a spiritual regard of the will of God, and out of pure love to himself for himself; yet thus it should be, and that love the divine fire in all our sacrifices. The carnal mind is in the dark, and sees not its vileness in living to itself; will not confess it to be so; but when God comes into the soul, he lets it see itself, and all its idols and idolatries, and forces it to abhor and loath itself for all its abominations; and having discovered

^e Jer. ii. 20. iii. 6.

its filthiness to itself, then he purges and cleanses it for himself, *from all its filthiness, and from all its idols*^f, according to his promise, and comes in and takes possession of it for himself, enthrones himself in the heart, and it is never right nor happy till that be done.

But to the will of God.] We readily take any little slight change for true conversion, but we may see here that we mistake it; it doth not barely knock off some obvious apparent enormities, but casts all in a new mould; alters the whole frame of the heart and life; kills a man, and makes him alive again; and this new life is contrary to the old: for the change is made with that intent, *that he live no longer to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.*

He is now indeed, *a new creature*, having a new judgment and new thoughts of things, and so accordingly, new desires and affections, and answerable to these new actions; *Old things past away and dead, and all things become new*^g.

Politick men have observed, that in states, if alterations must be, it is better to alter many things than a few. And physicians have the same remark for one's habit and custom for bodily health, upon the same ground; because things do so relate one to another, that except they be adapted and suited together in the change, it avails not; yea, it sometimes proves the worse in the whole, though a few things in particular seem to be bettered. Thus, half reformations in a Christian turn to his prejudice; it is only best to be thoroughly reformed, and to give up with all idols; not to live one half to himself and the world, and, as it were, another half to God; for that is but falsely so, and, in reality, it cannot be. The only way is to make a heap of all, to have all sacrificed together, and to live to no lust, but altogether, and only, to God. Thus it must be; there is no monster in the new creation, no half new creature, *either all, or not at all*, *ολος ἢ μὴ ολως*. We have to deal with the Maker and the Searcher of the heart

^f Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

^g 2 Cor. v. 17.

in this turn, and he will have nothing unless he have the heart, and none of that neither, unless he have it all. If thou pass over into his kingdom, and become his subject, thou must have him for thy only sovereign. Loyalty can admit of no rivalry^h, and least of all the highest, and best of all. If Christ be thy king, then his laws and sceptre must rule all in thee, thou must now acknowledge no foreign power; that will be treason.

And if he be thy husband, thou must renounce all others; wilt thou *provoke him to jealousy?* yea, beware how thou givest a thought or a look of thy affection any other way, for he will spy it, and will not endure it. The title of a husband is as strict, and tender, as the other of a king.

It is only best to be thus: it is thy great advantage and happiness to be thus entirely freed from so many tyrannous base lords, and now subject only to one, and he so great, and withal so gracious and sweet a king; *the Prince of Peace*. Thou wast hurried before, and racked with the very multitude of them; thy lusts, so many cruel task-masters over thee, they gave thee no rest, and the work they set thee to was base and slavish, more than the burdens, and pots, and toiling in the clay of Egypt; thou wast held to work in the earth, to pain, and to soil and foul thyself with their drudgery.

Now thou hast but one to serve, and that is a great ease; and it is no slavery, but true honour, to serve so excellent a Lord, and in so high services: for he puts thee upon nothing but what is neat, and what is honourable. Thou art as *a vessel of honour* in his house, for his best employments; now thou art not in pain how to please this person and the other; nor needest thou to vex thyself to gain men, to study their approbation and honour; nor to keep to thine own lusts and observe their mind. Thou hast none but thy God to please in all; and if he be pleased, thou mayest disregard who be displeased. His will is not fickle and changing as mens are, and

^h Omnisque potestas impatiens consortis.

as thine own hath often been; he hath told thee what he likes, and desires, and alters not: so now thou knowest whom thou hast to do withal, and what to do, whom to please, and what will please him, and this cannot but much settle thy mind, and put thee at ease: thou mayest say heartily, as rejoicing in the change of so many for one, and such, for such a one, as the church saysⁱ; *O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over me, but now by thee only will I make mention of thy name*; now none but thyself, not so much as the name of them any more; away with them; through thy grace thou only shalt be my God. It cannot endure that any thing be named with thee.

Now that it may be thus, that we may wholly live *to the will of God*, we first must *know his will*, what it is. Persons grossly ignorant of God, and of his will, cannot live to him; we cannot *have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, for he is light*^k. This takes off a great many amongst us, that have not so much as a common notion of the will of God. But besides, that knowledge, which is a part, and (I may say) the first part, of the renewed image of God, is not a natural knowledge of spiritual things, merely attained by human teaching or industry; but it is a beam of God's own, issuing from himself, both enlightening and enlivening the whole soul. It gains the affection and stirs to action: and so, indeed, it acts and increases by acting; for the more we walk according to what we know of the will of God, the more we shall be advanced to know more. That is the real *proving what is his good, and holy, and acceptable will*. So says Christ, *If any will do the will of my Father, he shall know of the doctrine*^m. Our lying off from the lively use of known truth, keeps us low in the knowledge of God, and communion with him.

2. So then upon that knowledge of God's will,

ⁱ Isa. xxvi. 13.

^k 1 John i. 6, 7.

^l Rom. xii. 2.

John vii. 17.

where it is spiritual, and from himself, follows the *suiting of the heart with it*, the affections taking the stamp of it, and agreeing with it; *receiving the truth in the love of it*, so that the heart may be transformed into it, and now not driven to obedience violently, but sweetly moving to it, by love within the heart framed to the love of God, and so of his will.

3. As Divine knowledge begets this affection, so this affection will *bring forth action*, real obedience. For these three are inseparably linked, and each dependent on, and the product of, one another. The affection is not blind, but flowing from knowledge, nor actual obedience constrained, but flowing from affection; and the affection is not idle, seeing it brings forth obedience; nor the knowledge dead, seeing it begets affection.

Thus the renewed, the living Christian, is *all for God*; a sacrifice entirely offered up to God, and a *living sacrifice*, which lives to God. He takes no more notice of his own carnal will; hath renounced that to embrace the holy will of God; and therefore, though there is a contrary law and will in him, yet he does not acknowledge it, but only the law of Christ, as now established in him; that law of love, by which he is sweetly and willingly led to real obedience. So that he consults not now in his ways, *with flesh and blood*, what will please them, but only inquires what will please his God; and knowing his mind, resolves to demur no more, nor to ask consent of any other. *That he will do*; and it is reason enough to him, my Lord wills it; therefore in his strength, *I will do it*; for now I live to his will, it is my life to study and obey it.

Now, we know what is the true character of the redeemed of Christ, that they are freed from the service of themselves and of the world, yea, dead to it, and have no life but for God, as all his.

Let this, then, be our study and ambition, to attain this, and to grow in it; to be daily further freed from all other ways and desires, and more wholly

addicted to the will of our God; displeased when we find any thing else stir or move within us, but that,—that, the spring of our motion in every work.

1. Because we know that his sovereign will is, (and is most justly) the glory of his name, therefore are we not to rest till this be set up in our view, *as our end in all*, and to count all our plausible doings as hateful (as indeed they are) that are not aimed at this end; yea, endeavouring to have it as frequently, and as expressly, before us as we can, still keeping our eye on the mark; throwing away, yea undoing, our own interest, not seeking ourselves in any thing, but him in all.

2. *As living to his will* is the great and ultimate end we should propose in all our intentions and actions, so in all and every step towards their execution or accomplishment: For we cannot attain his end but in his way, nor can we intend it without a resignation of the way to his prescription; taking all our directions from him, how we shall honour him in all. The soul that lives to him hath enough, not only to make any thing warrantable but amiable; it is his care to seek his will; and, having found it, he not only does it, but delights to do it; that is, to live to him, to find it our life; as we speak of a work wherein men do most, and with most delight employ themselves. “That such
“a lust be crucified, is it thy will, Lord? then no
“more advising, no more delay. How dear soever
“that was when I lived to it, it is now as hateful,
“seeing I live to thee who hatest it. Wilt thou
“have me forget an injury, though a great one,
“and love the person that hath wronged me?
“While I lived to myself and my passions, this
“had been hard. But now, how sweet is it! seeing
“I live to thee, and am glad to be put upon things
“most opposite to my corrupt heart; glad to tram-
“ple upon my own will, to follow thine; and this
“I daily aspire to, and aim at, to have no will of
“my own, but that thine be in me, that I may live

“to thee, as one with thee; and thou my rule and delight. Yea, not to use the very natural comforts of my life but for thee; to eat, and drink, and sleep for thee; and not to please myself, but to be enabled to serve and please thee; to make one offering of myself and all my actions to thee my Lord.”

Oh! it is the only sweet life to be living thus, and daily learning to live more fully thus. It is heaven this, a little scantling of it here, and a pledge of whole heaven: This is, indeed, the life of Christ; not only like his, but one with his; it is his spirit, his life derived into the soul; and, therefore, both the most excellent, and, certainly, most permanent, for *he dieth no more*, and therefore this his life cannot be extinguished. Hence is the perseverance of the saints; because they have one life with Christ, and so are alive unto God, once for all, for ever.

It is true, the former custom of sin would plead old possession with grace; and this the Apostle implies here, that because *formerly we lived* to our lusts, they will urge that; but he teaches us to beat it directly back on them, and turn the edge of it as a most strong reason against them. “True you had so long time of us, the more is our sorrow and shame, and the more reason that it be no longer so.”

The rest of this time in the flesh.] That is, in this body, not to be spent as the foregoing, *in living to the flesh*, that is, the corrupt lusts of it, and the common ways of the world: But as often as the Christian looks back on that, to find it as a spur in his side, to be the more earnest, and more wholly busied in living much to God, having lived so long contrary to him, in living to the flesh. *The past may suffice*; there is a figure in that^a, meaning much more than the words express: It is *enough*, Oh! *too much*, to have lived so long so miserable a life.

^a Called in the Schools, *Liptotes*.

Now, says the Christian, "Oh! corrupt lusts and deluding world! look for no more, I have served you *too long*. The rest, whatsoever it is, must be to my Lord; to live to him by whom I live; and ashamed and grieved I am I was so long in beginning. So much past, it may be, the most, of my short race past, before I took notice of God, or looked towards him. Oh! how have I lost, and worse than lost, all my bypast days? Now, had I the advantages and abilities of many men, and were I to live many ages, all should be to live to my God, and honour him. And what strength I have, and what time I shall have, through his grace, shall be wholly his." And when any Christian hath thus resolved, his intended life being so imperfect, and the time so short, the poorness of the offer would break his heart, were there not an eternity before him, wherein he shall live to his God, and in him, without blemish and without end.

Spiritual things being once discerned by a spiritual light, the whole soul is carried after them; and the ways of holiness are never truly sweet till they be thoroughly embraced with a full renunciation of all that is contrary to them.

All his former ways of wandering from God are very hateful to a Christian, who is indeed returned and brought home; and those most of all hateful, wherein he hath most wandered and most delighted. A sight of Christ gains the heart, makes it break from all intanglements of its own lusts, and of the profane world about it. And these are the two things the Apostle here aims at, exhorting Christians to the study of newness of life, and shewing the necessity of it. He intimates that they cannot be Christians without it; he opposes their new estate and engagement, to the old customs of their former condition, and to the continuing custom and conceit of the ungodly world; that against both they maintain that rank and dignity to which now they are called, and, in a holy disdain of both,

walk as the redeemed of the Lord. Their own former custom he speaks to, ver. 2, 3. and to the custom and opinion of the world, ver. 4. and both these will set strong upon a man, especially while he is yet weak, and newly entered into that new estate. :

1. His old acquaintance, his wonted lusts, will not fail to bestir themselves to accost him in their most obliging familiar way, and represent their long continued friendship. But the Christian, following the principles of his new being, will not entertain any long discourse with them, but cut them short; tell them that the change he hath made he avows, and finds it so happy, that these former delights may put off hopes of regaining him. No, though they dress themselves in their best array, and put on all their ornaments, and say, as that known word of that courtesan, *I am the same I was*, the Christian will answer as he did, *I am not the same I was*. And not only thus will he turn off the plea of former acquaintance that sin makes, but turn it back upon it, as, in his present thoughts, making much against it. "The longer I was so deluded, the more reason now that I be wiser; the more time so mispent, the more pressing necessity of redeeming it. Oh! I have too long lived in that vile slavery. All was but husks I fed on; *I was laying out my money for that which was no bread, and my labour for that which satisfied not*°. Now I am on the pursuit of a good that I am sure will satisfy, will fill the largest desires of my soul; and shall I be sparing and slack, or shall any thing call me off from it? Let it not be. I that took so much pains, early and late, to *serve and sacrifice* to so base a god; shall I not now *live more to my new Lord, the living God*, and *sacrifice my time and strength, and my whole self, to him?*"

And this is still the regret of the sensible Christian, that he cannot attain to that unwearied dili-

gence, and that strong bent of affection, in seeking communion with God, and living to him, that sometimes he had for the service of sin; he wonders that it should be thus with him, not to equal that which it were so reasonable that he should so far exceed.

It is, beyond expression, a thing to be lamented, that so small a number of men regard God, the author of their being, that so few *live to him in whom they live*; returning that being and life they have, and all their enjoyments, as is due, to him from whom they all flow. And then, how pitiful is it, that the small number that is thus minded, minds it so remissly and coldly, and is so far outstripped by the *children of this world*, that they follow painted follies and lies with more eagerness and industry than the *children of wisdom* do that certain and solid blessedness that they seek after^p. Strange! that men should do so much violence one to another, and to themselves in body and mind, for trifles and chaff! and that there is so little to be found of that allowed and commanded *violence, for a kingdom, and such a kingdom that cannot be moved*^q; a word too high for all the monarchies under the sun.

And, should not our diligence and violence in this so worthy a design be so much the greater, the later we begin to pursue it? They tell it of Cæsar, that when he passed into Spain, meeting there with Alexander's statue, it occasioned him to weep, considering that he was up so much more early, having performed so many conquests in those years, wherein he thought he himself had done nothing, and was but yet beginning. Truly it will be a sad thought, to a really renewed mind, to look back on the flower of youth and strength as lost in vanity; if not in gross profaneness, yet in self-serving and self-pleasing, and in ignorance and neglect of God. And perceiving their few years so far spent ere they set out, they will account

^p Plus illi ad vanitatem, quam nos ad veritatem. ^q Heb. xii. 28.

days precious, and make the more haste, and desire, with holy David, *enlarged hearts to run the way of God's commandments*^r. They will study to live much in a little time; and, having lived all the past time to no purpose, will be sensible they have none now to spare upon the lusts and ways of the flesh, and vain societies and visits: Yea, they will be redeeming all they can even from their necessary affairs, for that which is more necessary than all other necessities, *that one thing needful*, to learn the will of our God, and live to it; this is our business, our *high calling*, the main and most excellent of all our employments.

Not that we are to cast off our particular callings, or omit due diligence in them; for that will prove a snare, and involve a person in things more opposite to godliness. But certainly this *living to God* requires, 1. A fit measuring of thy own ability for affairs, and, as far as thou canst choose, fitting thy load to thy shoulders, not surcharging thyself with it. An excessive burden of businesses, either by the greatness or multitude of them, will not fail to entangle thee, and depress thy mind; and will hold it so down, that thou shalt not find it possible to walk upright and look upwards, with that freedom and frequency that becomes heirs of heaven.

2. The measure of thy affairs being adapted, look to thy affection in them, that it be regulated too. Thy heart may be engaged in thy little business as much, if thou watch it not, as in many and great affairs. A man may drown in a little brook or pool as well as in a great river, if he be down and plunge himself into it, and put his head under water. Some care thou must have, that thou mayest not care; these things are thorns indeed; thou must make a hedge of them, to keep out those temptations that accompany sloth, and extreme want that waits on it: But let them be the hedge; suffer them not to grow within the garden: *Though they in-*

^r Psal. cxix. 32.

crease, set not thy heart on them, nor set them in thy heart. That place is due to another, is made to be the garden of thy beloved Lord; made for the best plants and flowers; and there they ought to grow, the love of God, and faith, and meekness, and the other fragrant graces of the spirit. And know that this is no common nor easy matter to keep the heart disengaged in the midst of affairs, that still it be reserved for him whose right it is.

3. Not only labour to keep thy mind spiritual in itself, but by it put a spiritual stamp even upon thy temporal employments; and so thou shalt live to God, not only without prejudice of thy calling, but even in it, and shalt converse with him in thy shop, or in the field, or in thy journey, doing all in obedience to him, and offering all, and thyself withal, as a sacrifice to him: Thou still with him, and he still with thee, in all. This is to live to the will of God indeed, to follow his direction, and intend his glory in all. Thus the wife, in the very oversight of her house, and the husband, in his affairs abroad, may be living to God, raising their low employments to a high quality this way, "Lord, even this mean work I do for thee, complying with thy will, who hast put me in this station, and given me this task; *thy will be done.* Lord, I offer up even this work to thee, accept of me, and of my desire to obey thee in all." And as in their work, so in their refreshments and rest, such Christians pursue all for him, *whether they eat or drink*, doing all for this reason, because it is his will; and for this end, that he may have *glory*; bending the use of all their strength, and all his mercies, that way; setting this mark on all their designs and ways, *this for the glory of my God, and this further for his glory*^s, so from one thing to another throughout their whole life. This is the art of keeping the heart spiritual in all affairs, yea, of spiritualizing the affairs themselves in

their use, that in themselves are earthly. This is the *elixir* that turns lower metal into gold, the mean actions of this life, in a Christian's hands, into obedience and holy offerings unto God.

And, were we acquainted with the way of intermixing holy thoughts, ejaculatory eyeings of God, in our ordinary ways, it would keep the heart in a sweet temper all the day long, and have an excellent influence into all our ordinary actions and holy performances, at those times when we apply ourselves solemnly to them. Our hearts would be near them, not so far off to seek, and call in, as usually they are through the neglect of this. This were to *walk with God* indeed; to go all the day long as in our Father's hand; whereas, without this, our praying morning and evening looks but as a formal visit, not delighting in that constant converse which yet is our happiness and honour, and makes all estates sweet. This would refresh us in the hardest labour; as they that carry the spices from Arabia are refreshed with the smell of them in their journey; and some observe, that it keeps their strength, and frees them from fainting.

If you would then live to God indeed, be not satisfied without the constant regard of him; and whosoever hath attained most of it, study it yet more to *set the Lord always before you*, as David professeth^t; and then shall you have that comfort that he adds, *He shall be still at your right hand, that you shall not be moved.*

And you that are yet to begin to this, think what his patience is, that, after you have slighted so many calls, you may yet begin to seek him, and live to him; and then, consider, if you still despise all this goodness, how soon it may be otherwise; you may be past the reach of this call, and may not begin, but be cut off for ever from the hopes of it. Oh, how sad an estate! and the more, by the remembrance of these slighted offers and invitations! will you then yet return, you that would share in

^t Psal. xvi. 8.

Christ? let go these lusts to which you have hitherto lived, and embrace him, and in him there is spirit and life for you. He shall enable you to live this heavenly life to the will of God, *his God and your God, and his Father and your Father*^u. Oh! delay no longer this happy change; how soon may that puff of breath that is in thy nostrils, who hearest this, be extinguished! and art thou willing to die in thy sins, rather than that they die before thee? thinkest thou it a pain to live to the will of God? sure it will be more pain to lie under his eternal wrath. Oh! thou knowest not how sweet they find it that have tried it! or thinkest thou, I will afterwards? Who can make thee sure either of that afterwards, or of that will, if but afterwards? why not now presently, without further debate? hast thou not served sin long enough? may not the time past in that service suffice, yea, is it not too much? wouldest thou only live unto God as little time as may be, and think the dregs of thy life good enough for him? what ingratitude and gross folly is this! yea, though thou wert sure of coming in to him, and being accepted; yet, if thou knowest him in any measure, thou wouldest not think it a privilege to defer it, but willingly choose to be free from the world and thy lusts to be immediately his, and wouldest, with David, *make haste, and not delay to keep his righteous judgments*: all the time thou livest without him, what a filthy wretched life is it, if that can be called life that is without him? to live to sin, is to live still in a dungeon; but to live to the will of God, is to walk in liberty and light; to walk by light unto light, by the beginnings of it to the fulness of it, that is in his presence.

^u John xx. 17.

Ver. 4, 5. *Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you; Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.*

GRACE, until it reach its home, and end in glory, is still in conflict, with a restless party within and without, yea, the whole world against it. It is a stranger here, and is accounted and used so; *they think it strange that you run not with them, and they speak evil of you.* These wondering thoughts they vent in reproaching words.

In these two verses we have these three things:

1. The Christian's opposite course to the world.
2. Their opposite thoughts and speeches of this course.
3. The supreme and final judgment of both.

1. The opposite course in that, *They run to excesses of riot.* 2. *You run not with them.* They run to excesses, *ἄστυς*, of riot or luxury. Though all natural men are not, in the grossest kind, guilty of this, yet they are all of them some way truly riotous or luxurious, lavishing away themselves, and their days, upon the poor perishing delights of sin, each according to his own palate and humour. As all persons that are riotous, in the common sense of it, gluttons or drunkards, do not love the same kind of meats or drink, but have several relishes or appetites; yet they agree in the nature of the sin; so the notion enlarged after that same manner, to the different custom of corrupt nature, takes in all the ways of sin; some glutting in, and continually drunk with pleasures and carnal enjoyments, others with the cares of this life, which our Saviour reckons with surfeiting and drunkenness, as being a kind of it, and surcharging the heart as they do, as there he expresses it^a, *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life.* Whatsoever it is that draws away the heart from

^a Luke xxi. 34.

God, that, how plausible soever, doth debauch and destroy us. We spend and undo ourselves upon it, as the word *ἀσωτία* signifies, *making havock of all*. And the other word *ἀνάχυσσις*, *profusion and dissolute lavishing*, pouring out the affection upon vanity. It is scattered and defiled as *water spilt upon the ground*, that cannot be cleansed nor *gathered up again*. And the representation is indeed very just; it passes all our skill and strength to recover and recollect our hearts for God; he only can do it for himself; he that made it can *gather it*, and *cleanse it*, and make it new, and unite it to himself. Oh! what a scattered, broken, unstable thing is the carnal heart till it be changed, falling in love with every gay folly it meets withal, and running out to rest profusely upon things like its vain self, that suit and agree with it, and serve its lusts: it can dream and muse upon these long enough, any thing that feeds the earthliness or pride of it, can be prodigal of hours, and let out floods of thoughts, where a little is too much, but is bounded and straitened where all are too little; hath not one fixed thought in a whole day to spare for God.

And truly this *running out* of the heart is a continual drunkenness and madness: it is not capable of reason, and will not be stopped in its current by any persuasion; it is *mad upon its idols*, as the Prophet speaks^b. You may as well speak to a river in its course, and bid it stay, as speak to an impenitent sinner in the course of his iniquity; and all the other means you can use, is but as the putting of your finger to a rapid stream to stay it. But there is a hand can both stop and turn the most impetuous *torrent of the heart*^c, be it even of a *King*, that will least endure any other controulment.

Now, as the ungodly world naturally moves to this profusion with a strong and swift motion, *runs to it*, so it *runs together* to it, and that makes the current both the stronger and swifter; as a number of brooks falling into one main channel make a mighty

^b Jer. 1. 38.

^c Prov. xxi. 1.

stream. And every man naturally is, in his birth, and in the course of his life, just as a brook, that of itself is carried to that stream of sin that is in the world, and then falling into it, is carried rapidly along with it. And if every sinner, taken apart, be so inconvertible by all created power, how much more hard a task is a public reformation, and turning a land from its course of wickedness; all that is set to dam up their way, doth at the best but stay them a little, and they swell, and rise, and run over with more noise and violence than if they had not been stopped. Thus we find outward restraints prove, and thus the very public judgments of God on us. They may have made a little interruption, but, upon the abatement of them, the course of sin, in all kinds, seems to be now more fierce, as it were, to regain the time lost in that constrained forbearance: So that we see the need of much prayer to entreat his powerful hand, that can turn the course of Jordan, that he would work, not a temporary, but an abiding change of the course of this land, and cause many souls to look upon Jesus Christ, and flow into him, as the word is, in Psal. xxxiv. 5.

This is their course, *but you run not with them.* The godly are a small and weak company, and yet run counter to the grand torrent of the world, just against them. And there is a Spirit within them, whence that their contrary motion flows; a Spirit strong enough to maintain it in them, against all the crowd and combined course of the ungodly^d. *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* As Lot in Sodom, his righteous soul was not carried with them, but *vexed with their ungodly doings.* There is to a believer the example of Christ, to set against the example of the world, and the Spirit of Christ against the spirit of the world; and these are by far the more excellent and stronger. Faith, looking to him, and drawing virtue from him, makes the soul surmount all discouragements and oppositions; so^e, *Looking to Jesus:*

^d 1 John iv. 4.

^e Heb. xii. 2.

And not only as an example worthy to oppose to all the world's examples; the saints were so^f; but he more than they all: But further, *he is the Author and Finisher of our Faith*; and so we eye him, as *having endured the cross, and despised the shame, and as set down at the right hand of the throne of God*. Not only that in doing so, we may follow him in that way, unto that end as our pattern, but as our Head, from whom we borrow our strength to follow so, *the Author and Finisher of our faith*. And so^g, *This is our victory, whereby we overcome the world, even our faith*.

The Spirit of God shews the believer clearly both the baseness of the ways of sin, and the wretched measure of their end. That divine light discovers the fading and false blush of the pleasures of sin, that there is nothing under them but true deformity and rottenness, which the deluded gross world does not see, but takes the first appearance of it for true and solid beauty, and so is enamoured with a painted strumpet. And as he sees the vileness of that love of sin, he sees the final unhappiness of it, that *her ways lead down to the chambers of death*. Methinks a believer is as one standing upon a high tower, that sees the way wherein the world runs, in a valley, as an unavoidable precipice, a steep edge, hanging over the bottomless pit, where all that are not reclaimed fall over before they be aware; this they, in their low way, perceive not, and therefore walk and run on in the smooth pleasures and ease of it towards their perdition; but he that sees the end will not run with them.

And as he hath by that light of the Spirit this clear reason of thinking on, and taking another course, so by that Spirit he hath a very natural bent to a contrary motion, that he cannot be one with them. That Spirit moves him upwards, whence it came, and makes that, in so far as he is renewed, his natural motion, though he hath a clog of flesh that cleaves to him, and so breeds him some diffi-

^f Chap. xi. and xii.

^g 1 John v. 4.

culty; yet in the strength of that new nature he overcomes it, and goes on till he attain his end, where all the difficulty in the way presently is over-rewarded and forgotten; that makes amends for every weary step, that every one of these that walk in that way *does appear in Zion before God*^h.

2. We have their opposite thoughts and speeches of each other; *they think it strange, speaking evil of you.* The Christian and the carnal man are most *wonderful* to each other. The one wonders to see the other walk so strictly, and deny himself to these carnal liberties that the most take, and take for so necessary, that they think they could not live without them. And the Christian thinks it strange that men should be so bewitched, and still remain children in the vanity of their turmoil, wearying and humouring themselves from morning to night, running after stories and fancies, ever busy doing nothing; wonders that the delights of earth and sin can so long entertain and please men, and persuade them to give Jesus Christ so many refusals; to turn from their life and happiness, and choose to be miserable; yea, and take much pains to make themselves miserable. He knows the depravedness and blindness of nature in this; knows it by himself that once he was so, and therefore wonders not so much at them as they do at him; yet the unreasonableness and frenzy of that course now appears to him in so strong a light, that he cannot but wonder at these woful mistakes. But the ungodly wonder far more at him, not knowing the inward cause of his different choice and way. The believer, as we said, is upon the hill; he is going up, looks back on them in the valley, and sees their way tending to, and ending in death, and calls them to retire from it as loud as he can; tells them the danger; but either they hear not, nor understand this language, or will not believe him; finding present ease and delight in their way, they will not consider and suspect the end of it; but they judge him the fool that will not

^h Psalm lxxxiv. 6.

share with them, and take that way where such multitudes go, and with such ease; and some of them with their train, and horses, and coaches, and all their pomp: And he, and a few straggling poor creatures like him, climbing up a craggy steep hill, and will by no means come off from that way, and partake of theirs; not knowing, or not believing, that at the top of that hill he climbs, is that happy glorious city, *the new Jerusalem*, whereof he is a citizen, and whither he is tending; not believing that he knows the end both of their way and his own; and therefore would reclaim them if he could, but will by no means *return unto them*ⁱ, as the Lord commanded the Prophet.

The world thinks strange that a Christian can spend so much time in secret prayer, not knowing, nor being able to conceive, the sweetness of communion with God, which he attains that way; yea, while he feels it not, how sweet it is, beyond the world's enjoyments, to be but seeking after it, and waiting for it. Oh! the delight that is in the bitterest exercise of repentance! The very tears, much more the succeeding harvest of joy! It is strange unto a carnal man to see the child of God disdain the pleasures of sin, not knowing the higher and purer delights and pleasures that he is called to^k, and of which he hath, it may be, some part at present; but however the fulness of them in assured hope.

The strangeness of the world's way to the Christian, and his to it, though that is somewhat unnatural, yet affects them very differently. He looks on the deluded sinners with pity, they on him with hate. Their part, which is here expressed, of wondering, breaks out in reviling; *they speak evil of you*; and what is their voice? "What mean these precise fools? will they readily say. What course is this they take, contrary to all the world? Will they make a new religion, and condemn all their honest civil neighbours that are not like them? Ay,

ⁱ Jer. xv. 19.

^k *Incontinentes voræ voluptatis, ignari.* ARIST. ETH.

forsooth, do all go to hell, think you, except you, and those that follow your way? We are for no more than good-fellowship and liberty; and as for so much reading and praying, these are but brainsick melancholy conceits; a man may go to heaven like his neighbour, without all this ado." Thus they let fly at their pleasure: but this troubles not the composed Christian's mind at all; while curs snarl and bark about him, the sober traveller goes on his way, and regards them not. He that is acquainted with the way of holiness, can endure more than the counter-blasts and airs of scoffs and revilings; he accounts them his glory and his riches: So *Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.* And besides many other things to animate, we have this that is here expressed,

3dly, As the supreme and final judgment; and oh! how full is it; *They shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.* And he hath this *in readiness*, τῷ ἐτοιμῶς ἔχοντι, hath the day set; and it shall surely come, though you think it far off.

Though the wicked themselves forget their scoffs against the godly, and though the Christian slights them, and lets them pass, they pass not so; they are all registered; and the great court-day shall call them to account for all these riots and excesses, and withal for all their reproaches of the godly, that would not run with them in these ways. Tremble, then, ye despisers and mockers of holiness, though you come not near it. What will you do when these you reviled shall appear glorious in your sight, and their King, *the King of saints* here, much more glorious, and his glory their joy, and all terror to you? Oh! then all faces that could look out disdainfully upon religion, and the professors of it, *shall gather blackness*, and be bathed with shame; and the despised saints of God *shall shout so much the more for joy.*

You that would rejoice, then, in the appearing of

that holy Lord, and judge of the world, let your way be now in holiness; avoid and hate the common ways of the wicked world: they live in their foolish opinion, and that shall quickly end; but the sentence of that day shall stand for ever.

Ver. 6. *For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit.*

IT is a thing of prime concernment for a Christian to be rightly informed, and frequently put in mind, what is the true estate and nature of a Christian; for this the multitude of those that bear that name, either know not, or commonly forget, and so are carried away with the vain fancies and mistakes of the world. The Apostle hath characterised christianity very clearly to us in this place, by that which is the very nature of it, *conformity with Christ*, and that which is necessarily consequent upon that, *disconformity with the world*. And as the nature, and natural properties, of things hold universally; thus it is in those that, in all ages, are so effectually called by the gospel, as to be moulded and framed thus by it. Thus it was, says the Apostle, with your brethren that are now at rest, as many as received the gospel; and for this end was it preached to them, *that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit*.

We have first here, the preaching of the gospel as the suitable means to a certain end. 2. The express nature of that end.

1. The preaching of the gospel as a suitable means to a certain end; *for this cause*. There is a particular end, and that very important, for which the preaching of the gospel is intended; this end many consider not, hearing it, as if it were to no end, or not propounding a fixed determined end in their hearing. This therefore is to be considered by those that preach this gospel, that they aim right

in it at this end, and no other. There must be no self-end. The legal priests were not to be squint-eyed^m, nor must evangelical ministers be thus squinting to base gain, or vain applause: and also, it is necessarily incumbent upon them, that they make it their study to find in themselves this work, *this living to God*, otherwise, they cannot skilfully nor faithfully apply their gifts to work this effect on their hearers; and therefore acquaintance with God is most necessary.

How sounds it to many of us, at the least, but-as a well contrived story, whose use is to amuse us, and possibly delight us a little, and there is an end! and indeed no end, for this turns the most serious and most glorious of all messages into an empty sound. If we keep awake, and give it a hearing, it is much; but for any thing further, how few deeply beforehand consider, "I have a dead heart; therefore will I go unto the word of life, that it may be quickened: It is frozen, I will go and lay it before the warm beams of that sun that shines in the gospel; my corruptions are mighty and strong, and grace, if there be any in my heart, is exceeding weak; but there is in the gospel a power to weaken and kill sin, and to strengthen grace; and this being the intent of my wise God in appointing it, it shall be my desire and purpose, in resorting to it, to find it to me according to his gracious intendment; to have faith in my Christ, the fountain of my life, more strengthened, and made more active in drawing from him; to have my heart more refined and spiritualized, and to have the sluice of repentance opened, and my affections to divine things enlarged; more hatred of sin, and more love of God and communion with him."

Ask yourselves concerning former times; and to take yourselves even now, inquire within, "Why came I hither this day? what had I in mine eye and desires this morning ere I came forth, and in my way as I was coming? Did I seriously propound

^m Lev. xxi. 20.

an end or no, and what was my end?" Nor doth the mere custom of mentioning this in prayer satisfy the question; for this, as other such things usually do in our hand, may turn to a lifeless form, and have no heat of spiritual affection; none of David's panting and breathing after God in his ordinances; such desires as will not be stilled without a measure of attainment, as the child's desire of the breast; as our Apostle resembles it, chap. ii. 1.

And then again, being returned home, reflect on your hearts, "Much hath been heard, but is there any thing done by it? Have I gained my point? It was not simply to pass a little time that I went, or to pass it with delight in hearing; *rejoicing in that light*, as they did in St. John Baptist's", *for a season*, [*πρὸς ὥραν*] as long as the hour lasts! It was not to have my ear pleased, but my heart changed; not to learn some new notions, and carry them cold in my head, but to be *quicken'd*, and *purified*, and *renewed in the spirit of my mind*? Is this done? Think I now with greater esteem of Christ, and the life of faith, and the happiness of a Christian? And are such thoughts solid and abiding with me? What sin have I left behind? What grace of the Spirit have I brought home? or what new degree, or at least new desire of it, a living desire, that will follow its point?" Oh! this were good repetition.

It is a strange folly in multitudes of us to set ourselves no mark, to propound no end in the hearing of the gospel. The merchant sails not only that he may sail, but for traffic, and traffics that he may be rich. The husbandman plows not only to keep himself busy with no further end, but plows that he may sow, and sows that he may reap with advantage: and shall we do the most excellent and fruitful work fruitlessly? hear only to hear, and look no further? This is indeed a great vanity, and a great misery, to lose that labour, and gain nothing by it, which, duly used, would be of all others most ad-

vantageous and gainful; and yet all meetings are full of this.

Now, when you come, this is not simply to hear a discourse, and relish or dislike it in hearing; but a matter of life and death, of eternal death and eternal life; and the spiritual life, begot and nourished by the word, is the beginning of that eternal life. Which leads us to consider,

2. The express nature of the end, that they might *live to God in the Spirit*: But first observe, it was *to them that are dead*. By which, I conceive, he intends such as had heard and believed the gospel, when it came to them, and now were dead. And this, I think, he doth to strengthen these brethren to whom he writes, to commend the gospel to this intent, that they might not think the condition and end of it hard; as our Saviour mollifies the matter of outward sufferings thus, *So persecuted they the Prophets that were before you*^o. And the Apostle afterwards in this chapter uses the same reason in that same subject: So here, that they might not judge the point of mortification he presses so grievous, as naturally men will do, he tells them, it is the constant end of the gospel; and they that have been saved by it, went that same way he points out to them. They that are dead before you, died this way that I press on you, before they died; and the gospel was preached to them for that very end.

Men pass away and others succeed, but the gospel is still the same, hath the same tenor and substance, and the same ends. As Solomon speaks of the heavens and earth, that remain the same, while *one generation passes, and another cometh*^p, the gospel surpasses both in its stability, as our Saviour testifies^q, *they shall pass away, but not one jot of this word*. And indeed they wear and wax old the Apostle teaches us; but the gospel is from one age to another, of most unalterable integrity, hath still the same vigour and powerful influence as at the first.

^o Matth. v. 12.

^p Eccl. i. 4.

^q Matth. v. 18.

They that formerly received the gospel, received it upon these terms; therefore, think it not hard: and they *are* now *dead*; all the difficulty of that work of dying to sin is now over with them; if they had not died *to* their sins by the gospel, they had died *in* them, after a while, and so died eternally. It is therefore a wise prevention, to have sin judged and put to death in us before we die; if we will not part with sin, if we die in it, and with it, we and our sin perish together; but if it die first before us, then we live for ever.

And what think you of thy carnal will, and all the delights of sin? What is the longest term of its life? Uncertain it is, but most certainly very short: thou and these pleasures must be severed and parted within a little time; however, thou must die, and then they die, and you never meet again. Now, were it not the wisest course to part a little sooner with them, and let them die before thee, that thou mayest *inherit eternal life*, and eternal delights in it, *pleasures for evermore*? It is the only wise and profitable bargain, let us therefore delay it no longer.

This is our season of enjoying the sweetness of the gospel; others heard it before us in these places that now we fill, and now they are removed, and we must remove shortly, and leave our places to others, to speak and hear in. It is high time we were considering what we do here; to what end we speak and hear; high time, without farther delay, to lay hold on that salvation that is held forth unto us; and that we may lay hold on it, we must immediately let go our hold of sin, and those perishing things that we hold so firm and cleave so fast to. Do they that are dead, who heard and obeyed the gospel, now repent their repentance and mortifying the flesh? Or, do they not think ten thousand times more pains, were it for many ages, all too little for a moment of that which now they enjoy, and shall enjoy to eternity? And *they that are dead*, who heard the gospel and slighted it, if such a thing

might be, what would they give for one of those opportunities that now we daily have, and daily lose, and have no fruit or esteem of them! You have lately seen many of you, and you that shifted the sight have heard of numbers, cut off in a little time; 'whole families swept away by the late stroke of God's hand', many of which did think no other but that they might have still been with you here in this place and exercise, at this time, and many years after this. And yet, who hath laid to heart the lengthening out of his day, and considered it more as an opportunity of securing that higher and happier life, than as a little protracting of this wretched life, which is hastening to an end? Oh! therefore be entreated *to-day, while it is called To-day, not to harden your hearts*^s. Though the pestilence doth not now affright you so, yet that standing mortality, and the decay of these earthen lodges, tell us that shortly we shall cease to preach and hear this gospel. Did we consider, it would excite us to a more earnest search after our evidences of that eternal life that is set before us in the gospel; and we should seek them in the characters of that spiritual life, which is the beginning of eternal life within us, and is wrought by the gospel in all the heirs of salvation.

Think therefore wisely of these two things, of the proper end of the gospel, and of the approaching end of thy days, and let thy certainty of this latter drive thee to seek more certainty of the other, that thou mayest partake of it; and then this again will make the thoughts of the other sweet to thee. That visage of death, that is so terrible to unchanged sinners, shall be amiable to thine eye; having found a life in the gospel as happy and lasting as this is miserable and vanishing, and seeing the perfection of that life on the other side of death, thou wilt long for the passage.

Be more serious in this matter, of daily hearing the gospel; consider why it is sent to thee, and what it brings, and think it is too long I have slighted its

^r 1665.^s Psal. xcvi. 7, 8. Heb. iii. 7. iv. 7.

message, and many that have done so are cut off, and shall hear it no more: I have it once more inviting me, and it may be this may be the last invitation I shall receive; and in these thoughts, ere you come, bow your knee to the Father of spirits, that this one thing may be granted you, that your souls may find at length the lively and mighty power of his Spirit upon yours, in the hearing of this gospel, that *you may be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*

Thus is the particular nature of that end expressed. And, not to stun and perplex you with the noise of various senses, the Apostle intends, I conceive, nothing else but the dying to the world and sin, and living unto God; which is his main subject and scope in the foregoing discourse. That death was before called a *suffering in the flesh*, which is in effect the same; and therefore, though the words may be drawn another way, yet it is strange that interpreters have been so far wide of this their genuine and agreeable sense, and that they have been by almost all of them taken in some other intendment.

To be judged in the flesh, in the present sense, is to die to sin, or that sin die in us; and it is thus expressed: 1. Suitably to the nature of it, it is to the flesh a violent death, and it is according to a sentence judicially pronounced against it. That guilty and miserable life of sin is in the gospel adjudged to death; there that arrest and sentence is clear and full¹. That sin must die that the soul may live; it must be crucified in us, and we to it, that we may partake of the life of Christ and happiness in him: and this is called *to be judged in the flesh*, to have this sentence executed. 2. The thing is the rather spoke here under the term of being judged, in counter-balance of that judgment mentioned immediately before, ver. 5. the last judgment of quick and dead; wherein they that would not be thus judged, but mocked and despised those that were, shall fall under a far more terrible judgment, and the sentence of a

¹ Rom. vi. 6. &c. viii. 13.

heavy death indeed, even everlasting death; though they think they shall escape and enjoy liberty in living in sin. And that *to be judged according to men*, is, I conceive, added, to signify the connaturalness of the life of sin to a man's now corrupt nature; that men do judge it a death indeed to be severed and pulled from their sins, and that a cruel death; and the sentence of it in the gospel a heavy sentence, *a hard saying*, to a carnal heart, that he must give up all his sinful delights, must die indeed in self-denial, must be separated from himself, which is to die, if he will be joined with Christ, and live in him. Thus men judge that they are adjudged to a painful death by the sentence of the gospel; although it is that they may truly and happily live, yet they understand it not so. They see the death, the parting with sin and all its pleasures; but the life they see not, nor can any know it till they partake of it. It is known to Him in whom it is; *It is hid with Christ in God*^a; and therefore the opposition here is very fitly thus represented, that the death is *according to men in the flesh*, but the life is *according to God in the Spirit*.

As the Christian is adjudged to this *death in the flesh* by the gospel, so he is looked on and accounted, by carnal men, as dead; for that he enjoys not with them what they esteem their life, and think they could not live without it. One that cannot carouse and swear with profane men, is a silly dead creature, good for nothing; and he that can bear wrongs, and love him that injured him, is a poor spiritless fool, hath no metal nor life in him, in the world's account. Thus is he *judged according to men in the flesh*, he is as a dead man, *but lives according to God in the Spirit*; dead to men, and alive to God, as *ver. 2*.

Now, if this life be in thee, it will act: all life is in motion, and is called *an act*; but most active of all is this most excellent, and, as I may call it, most lively, life. It will be moving towards God; often seeking to him, making still towards him as its prin-

^a Col. iii. 3

ciple and fountain, exerting itself in holy and affectionate thoughts of him; sometimes on one of his sweet attributes, sometimes on another; as the bee amongst the flowers. And as it will thus act within, so it will be outwardly laying hold on all occasions, yea, seeking out ways and opportunities to be serviceable to thy Lord; employing all for him, commending and extolling his goodness, doing and suffering cheerfully for him, laying out the strength of desires, and parts, and means, in thy station, to gain him glory. If thou be alone, then not alone, but with him; seeking to know more of him, and be made more like him. If in company, then casting about how to bring his name in esteem, and to draw others to a love of religion and holiness by speeches, as it may be fit, and most by the true behaviour of thy carriage. Tender over the souls of others, to do them good to thy utmost; thinking, each day, an hour lost when thou art not busy for the honour and advantage of him to whom thou now livest. Thinking in the morning, "Now, what may I do this day for my God? How may I most please and glorify him, and use my strength and wit, and my whole self, as not mine but his?" And then in the evening, reflecting, "O Lord, have I seconded these thoughts in reality? What glory hath he had by me this day? Whither went my thoughts and endeavours? What busied them most? Have I been much with God? Have I adorned the gospel in my converse with others?" And if thou findest any thing done this way, this life will engage thee to bless and acknowledge him, the spring and worker of it. If any step has been taken aside, were it but to *an appearance of evil*, or if any fit season of good hath escaped thee unprofitably, it will lead thee to check thyself, and to be grieved for thy sloth and coldness, and see if more love would not beget more diligence.

Try it by sympathy and antipathy, which follow the nature of things; as we see in some plants and creatures, that cannot grow, cannot agree together,

and others that do favour one another, and profit mutually. If thy soul hath an aversion and reluctancy against whatever is contrary to holiness, this is an evidence of this new nature and life. If thou hast this principle within, thy heart rises against wicked ways and speeches, oaths and cursings, and rotten communication; yea, thou canst not endure unworthy discourses, wherein most spend their time; findest no relish in the unsavoury societies of such as know not God; *canst not sit with vain persons*, but findest a delight in those that have the image of God upon them; such as partake of that divine life, and carry the evidences of it in their carriage. David did not disdain the fellowship of the saints: and that it was no disparagement to him, is implied in the name he gives them^a, *the excellent ones*, the magnificent or noble *adiri*; and that word is taken from one that signifies a robe or noble garment, *adereth, toga magnifica*; so he thought them nobles and kings as well as he; they had *robes royal*, and therefore were fit companions of kings. A spiritual eye looks upon spiritual dignity, and esteems and loves them that are *born of God*, how low soever be their natural birth and breeding. The sons of God have of his Spirit in them, and are born to the same inheritance, where all shall have enough; and they are tending homewards by the conduct of the same Spirit that is in them, so that there must be amongst them a real complacency and delight in one another.

And then consider the temper of thy heart towards spiritual things, the word and ordinances of God, whether thou dost esteem highly of them, and delight in them? Whether there be compliance of the heart with divine truths? something in thee, that suits and sides with them against thy corruptions? In thy affliction dost thou not seek to the puddles of earthly comforts, but hast thy recourse to the sweet crystal streams of the divine promises, and dost thou find refreshment in them? It may be, at

^a Psal. xvi. 2.

some times, in a spiritual distemper, holy exercises and ordinances will not have that present sensible sweetness to a Christian, that he desires; and some will for a long time lie under dryness and deadness this way; yet there is here an evidence of this spiritual life, that thou stayest by thy Lord and reliest on him; and wilt not leave these holy means, how sapless soever to thy sense for the present. Thou findest for a long time little sweetness in prayer, yet thou prayest still; and when thou canst say nothing, yet offerest at it, and lookest towards Christ thy life. Thou dost not turn away from these things to seek consolation elsewhere, but as thou knowest that life is in Christ, thou wilt stay till he refresh thee with new and lively influence. It is not any where but in him, as St. Peter said, *Lord whither should we go, thou hast the words of eternal life*^b.

Consider with thyself, if thou hast any knowledge of the growth or deficiencies of this spiritual life? for it is here but begun, and breathes in an air contrary to it, and lodges in an house that often smokes and darkens it. Canst thou go on in formal performances from one year to another, and make no advancement in the inward exercises of grace, and retest thou content with that? it is no good sign. But art thou either gaining victories over sin, and further strength of faith and love, and other graces, or, at least, art thou earnestly seeking these, and bewailing thy wants and disappointments of this kind? Then thou livest. At the worst wouldst thou rather grow this way, be further off from sin, and nearer God, than grow in thy estate, or credit, or honours? Esteemest thou more of grace than of the whole world? There is life at the root; although thou findest not that flourishing thou desirest, yet the desire of it is life in thee: and, if growing this way, art thou content, whatsoever is thy outward estate? Canst thou solace thyself in the love and goodness of thy God, though the world frown on thee? Art thou not able to take comfort in the smiles of the

^b John vi. 68.

world when his face is hid? This tells thee thou livest, and he is thy life.

Although many Christians have not so much sensible joy, yet they account spiritual joy, and the light of God's countenance, the only true joy, and all other without it madness; and they cry, and sigh, and attend for it. Meanwhile, not only duty, and the hopes of attaining a better state in religion, but even love to God, makes them to do so, to serve, and please, and glorify him to their utmost. And this is not a dead resting without God, but it is a stable compliance with his will in the highest point; waiting for him, and living by faith, which is most acceptable to him. In a word, whether in sensible comfort or without it, still this is the fixed thought of a believing soul, *it is good for me to draw nigh to God^c*, only good; and it will not live in a willing estrangedness from him, what way soever he be pleased to deal with it.

Now for the entertaining and strengthening this life, which is the great business and care of all that have it, 1. Beware of omitting and interrupting those spiritual means, that do provide it and nourish it. Little neglects of that kind will draw on greater, and great neglects will make great abatements of vigour and liveliness. Take heed of using holy things coldly and lazily, without affection; that will make them fruitless, and our life will not be advantaged by them, unless they be used in a lively way. Be active in all good within thy reach; as this is a sign of the spiritual life, so it is a helper and friend to it. A slothful unstimulating life, will make a sickly unhealthful life. Motion purifies and sharpens the spirits, and makes men robust and vigorous.

2. Beware of admitting a correspondence with any sin; yea, do not so much as discourse familiarly with it, or look kindly toward it; for that will undoubtedly cast a damp upon thy spirit, and diminish thy graces at least, and will obstruct thy communion

^c Psal. lxxiii. 28.

with God. Thou knowest (thou who hast any knowledge of this life) that thou canst not go to him with that sweet freedom thou wert wont, after thou hast been but tampering or parlying with any of thy old loves. Oh! do not make so foolish a bargain, as to prejudge the least of thy spiritual comfort for the greatest and longest continued enjoyments of sin, which are base, and but *for a season*.

But wouldst thou grow upwards in this life? *Sdly*, Have much recourse to Jesus Christ thy head, the spring from whom flow the animal spirits that quicken thy soul. Wouldst thou know more of God? He it is that *reveals the Father*, and reveals him as *his Father*; and in him *thy Father*, and that is the sweet notion of God. Wouldst thou overcome thy lusts further? Our victory is in him, apply his conquest; *We are more than conquerors, through him that loved us*^d. Wouldst thou be more replenished with graces, and spiritual affections? His fullness is, for that use, open to us; life, and more life, in him, and for us; this was his business here, he came, *that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly*^e.

Ver. 7. *But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*

THE heart of a real Christian is really taken off from the world and set heavenwards; yet there is still in this flesh, so much of the flesh hanging to it, as will readily poise all downwards, unless it be often wound up and put in remembrance of these things, that will raise it still to further spirituality. This the apostle doth in this epistle, and particularly in these words.

In which are three things to be considered, 1. A threefold duty recommended. 2. Their mutual relation, that binds them to one another. 3. The reason here used to bind them upon a Christian.

I. A threefold duty recommended, sobriety,

^d Rom. viii. 37.

^e John x. 10.

watchfulness and prayer; and of the three the last is evidently the chief, and is here so meant, the other being recommended as suitable and subservient to it; therefore I shall speak first of it.

1. *Prayer.* 'And, truly, to speak, and to hear of it often, were our hearts truly and entirely acquainted with it, would have still new sweetness and usefulness in it. Oh! how great were the advantage of that lively knowledge of it, beyond the exactest definition of it, and knowledge that can discourse most copiously and accurately on the heads of doctrine that concern it.

Prayer is not a smooth expression, or a well contrived form of words; not the product of a ready memory, nor rich invention exerting itself in the performance. These may draw a neat picture of it, but still the life is wanting. The motion of the heart Godwards, holy and divine affection, makes prayer real and lively, and acceptable to the *living God*, to whom it is presented; the pouring out of thy heart to him that made it, and therefore hears it, and understands what it speaks, and how it is moved and affected in calling on him. It is not the gilded paper, and good writing of a petition, that prevails with a king, but the moving sense of it; and to the king that discerns the heart, heart sense is the sense of all, and that which he alone regards; he listens to hear what that speaks, and takes all as nothing where that is silent. All other excellence in prayer is but the outside and fashion of it; that is the life of it.

Though prayer precisely taken, is only petition, yet, in its fuller and usual sense, it comprehends the venting our humble sense of vileness and sin, in sincere confession, and the extolling and praising the holy name of our God, his excellency and goodness, with thankful acknowledgment of received mercies. Of these sweet ingredient perfumes is the incense of prayer composed, and by the divine fire of love it ascends unto God; the heart, and all with it: and when the hearts of the saints unite in joint prayer,

the pillar of sweet smoke goes up the greater and fuller. Thus says that song of the spouse, *going up from the wilderness, as pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, and all the powders of the merchant*^a. The word there^b signifies *straight pillars*, like the tallest straightest kind of trees; and, indeed, the sincerity and unfeignedness of prayer makes it go up as a straight pillar, when there is no crookedness in it, but it is tending straight towards heaven, and bowing to no side by the way. Oh! the single and fixed viewing of God, as it, in other ways, is the thing makes all holy and sweet, so particularly does it in this divine work of prayer.

It is true we have to deal with a God, who of himself needs not this our pains either to inform, or excite him; he fully knows our thoughts before we express them, and our wants before we feel them, or think of them. Nor doth this affection, and gracious bent to do his children good, wax remiss, or admit the least abatement and forgetfulness of them.

But, instead of necessity, on God's part, which cannot be imagined, we shall find that equity, and that singular dignity and utility of it, on our part, which cannot be denied.

1. *Equity*, That thus the creature signify his homage to, and dependence on, his Creator, for his being and well being; that he takes all the good he enjoys, or expects, from that sovereign good, declaring himself unworthy, waiting for all upon the terms of free goodness, and acknowledging all to flow from that spring.

2. *Dignity*, Man was made for communion with God his Maker; it is the excellency of his nature to be capable of this end, the happiness of it to be raised to enjoy it. Now, in nothing more, in this life, is this communion actually and highly enjoyed, than in the exercise of prayer. That he may freely impart his affairs, and estate, and wants, to God, as the most faithful and powerful friend, the richest and

^a Cant. iii. 6.

^c Timeroth from 'Temer a palm-tree.

most loving father; may use the liberty of a child, telling his father what he stands in need of; and desires; and communing with him with humble confidence; while admitted so frequently into the presence of so great a king.

3. The *utility* of it. 1. Easing the soul in times of difficulty, when it is pressed with griefs and fears, by giving them vent, and that in so advantageous a way; emptying them into the bosom of God. The very vent, were it but into the air, gives ease; or speak it to a statue rather than smother it; much more ease then is found, when it is poured into the lap of a confident and sympathizing friend, though unable to help; yet much more of one that can help. And, of all friends, our God is, beyond all comparison the surest, and most affectionate, and most powerful. So^c, both compassion and effectual salvation are expressed, *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.* And so, resting on his love, power, and gracious promises, the soul quiets itself in God, upon this assurance, that it is not vain to seek him, and that he *despiseeth not the sighing of the poor*^d.

2. The soul is more spiritually affected with its own condition, by laying it open before the Lord; more deeply sensible of sin, and ashamed in his sight, in confessing it before him; more dilated and enlarged to receive the mercies sued for; as the *opening wide of the mouth* of the soul that it *may be filled*^e; more disposed to observe the Lord in answering; and to bless him, and trust on him, upon the renewed experiences of his regard to its distresses and desires.

3. All the graces of the Spirit, in prayer, are stirred and exercised; and, by exercise, strengthened and increased. Faith, in applying the divine promises, which are the very ground that the soul

^b Isa. lxiii. 9.^d Psal. xii. 5.^e Psal. lxxxix. 10.

goes upon to God; and Hope looking out to their performance; and Love particularly expressing itself in that sweet converse, and delighting in it, as love doth in the company of the person loved; thinks all hours too short in speaking with him: Oh! how the soul is refreshed with freedom of speech with its beloved Lord! And as it delights in that, so it is continually advanced, and grows by each meeting and conference; beholding the excellency of God, and relishing the pure and sublime pleasures that are in near communion with him. 1. Looking upon the Father in the face of Christ, and using him as a mediator in prayer, as still it must, it is drawn to further admiration of that bottomless love, which found that way of agreement, that *new and living way* of our access, when all was shut up, and we to have been shut out for ever. And then the affectionate expressions of that reflex love, finding that vent in prayer, do kindle higher; and being as it were fanned and blown up, rise to a greater, and higher, and purer flame, and so tend upwards the more strongly. David, as he doth profess his love to God in prayer in his Psalms, so no doubt it grew in the expressing, *I will love thee, O Lord my strength*, Psal. xviii. 1; and Psal. cxvi. 1. doth raise an incentive of love out of this very consideration of the correspondence of prayers; *I love the Lord because he hath heard*, and resolves thereafter upon persistence in that course, *therefore will I call upon him as long as I live*. And as the graces of the Spirit are advanced in prayer by their actings; so for this further reason, because prayer sets the soul particularly near unto God in Jesus Christ. It is then in his presence, and being much with God in this way, it is powerfully assimilated to him by converse with him; as we readily contract their habits with whom we have much intercourse, especially if they be such as we singularly love and respect. Thus the soul is moulded further to the likeness of God, is stamped with brighter characters of him, by being much with him; becomes liker God, more holy and

spiritual, and, like Moses, brings back a bright shining from the mount^b.

4. And not only thus, by a natural influence, doth prayer work this advantage, but even by a federal efficacy, suing for, and upon suit obtaining, supplies of grace, as the chief good; and besides all other needful mercies, it is a real means of receiving; *Whatsoever you shall ask, that will I do*, says our Saviour^c. God having established this intercourse, and engaged his truth and goodness in it, that if they call on him, they shall be heard and answered. If they *prepare the heart to call, he will incline his ear to hear*; and our Saviour hath assured us, that we may build upon his goodness, and the affection of a Father in him; that *he will give good things to them that ask*, says one Evangelist^d; and *the Holy Spirit to them that ask it* says another^e; as being *the good* indeed, the highest of gifts, and the sum of all good things, and that for which his children are most earnest supplicants. Prayer for grace doth, as it were, set the mouth of the soul to the spring, draws from Jesus Christ, and is replenished out of his fulness, thirsting after it, and drawing from it that way.

And for this reason it is, that our Saviour, and from him, and according to his example, the Apostles recommend prayer so much; *Watch and pray*, says our Saviour^f; and St. Paul, *Pray continually*^g. And our Apostle here particularly specifies this, as the grand mean of attaining that conformity with Christ which he presses; this is the highway to it, *Be sober, and watch unto prayer*. He that is much in prayer, shall grow rich in grace. He shall thrive and increase most that is busiest in this, which is our very traffic with heaven, and fetches the most precious commodities thence. He that sets oftenest out these ships of *desire*, that makes the most voyages to that land of spices and pearls, shall be sure to improve his stock most, and have most of heaven upon earth.

But the true art of this trading is very rare. Every

^b Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30. ^c John xiv. 13. ^d Matt. vii. 11.

^e 1 Luke xi. 13. ^f Matt. xxvi. 41. ^g 1 Thess. v. 17.

trade hath something wherein the skill of it lies ; but this is deep and supernatural, is not reached by human industry. Industry is to be used in it, but we must know the faculty of it comes from above ; that Spirit of prayer, without which learning, and wit, and religious breeding, can do nothing ; Therefore, this is to be our prayer often, our great suit for the Spirit of prayer, that we may speak the language of the sons of God by the Spirit of God, which alone teaches the heart to pronounce aright those things, that the tongue of many hypocrites can articulate well to man's ear ; and only the children in that right strain that takes him, call God their *Father*, and cry unto him as their Father. And therefore many poor unlettered Christians far outstrip your school-rabbies in this faculty, because it is not effectually taught in these lower academies ; they must be in God's own school, children of his house, that speak this language. Men may give spiritual rules and directions in this, and such as may be useful, drawn from the word, that furnishes us with all needful precepts ; but you are still to bring these into the seat of this faculty of prayer, the heart ; and stamp them upon it, and so to teach it to pray, without which there is no prayer ; this is the prerogative royal of Him that framed the heart of man within him.

But, for advancing in this, and growing more skilful in it, prayer is, with continual dependence on the Spirit, to be much used. Praying much thou shalt be blest with much faculty for it. So then, askest thou, what shall I do that I may learn to pray ? There be things here to be considered, that are expressed as serving this end ; but for present this, and chiefly this, " by praying thou shalt learn to pray." Thou shalt both obtain more of the Spirit, and find more the cheerful working of it in prayer, when thou puttest it often to that work for which it is received, and wherein it is delighted ; and as both advantaging all graces, and the grace of prayer itself, this frequency and abounding in prayer is here very clearly intended, in that the Apostle makes it as the

main of our work, and would have us to keep our hearts in a constant aptness for it; *Be sober and watch*; to what end? *unto prayer.*

2. Sobriety is recommended; *Be sober.* They that have no better, must make the best they can of carnal delights. It is no wonder they take as large a share of them as they can bear, and sometimes more. But the Christian is called to a more excellent state, and higher pleasures; so that he may behold men glutting themselves with these base things, and be as little moved to share with them, as men are taken with the pleasure a swine hath in *wallowing in the mire*^h.

It becomes the heirs of heaven to be far above the love of the earth; and in the necessary use of any earthly things, still to keep within the due measure of their use, and to keep their heart wholly disengaged from an excessive affection to them. This is *the sobriety* to which we are here exhorted.

It is true, that, in the most common sense of the word, it is very commendable, and it is fit to be so considered by a Christian, that he fly gross intemperance, as a thing most contrary to his condition, and holy calling, and wholly inconsistent with the spiritual temper of a renewed mind, and those exercises to which it is called, and its progress in its way homewards. It is a most unseemly sight to behold one, simply by outward profession a Christian, overtaken with *surfeiting and drunkenness*, much more to be given to the vile custom of it: all sensual delights, even the filthy lust of uncleanness, go under the common name of insobriety, intemperance, ἀκολασία; and they all degrade and destroy the noble soul; are unworthy of man, much more of a Christian; and the contempt of them preserves the soul, and elevates it.

But the sobriety here recommended, though it takes in that too, yet reaches further than temperance in meat and drink. It is the spiritual temperance of a Christian mind in all earthly things, as our Saviour

^h 2 Pet. ii. 22.

joins these together¹; *Surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life*: and under the *cares* are comprehended all the excessive desires and delights of this life, which cannot be followed and attended without distempered carefulness.

Many that are sober men, and of temperate diet, yet are spiritually intemperate, drunk with pride or covetousness, or passion; drunk with self-love, and love of their pleasures and ease, with *love of the world, and the things of it*; which cannot consist with *the love of God*, as St. John tells us^k; drunk with the inordinate unlawful love even of their lawful calling, and the lawful gain they pursue by it. Their hearts are still going after it, and so reeling to and fro, never fixed on God and heavenly things, but either hurried up and down with incessant business, or, if sometimes at ease, it is, as the ease of a drunken man, not composed to better and wiser thoughts, but falling into a dead sleep, contrary to the watching here joined with sobriety.

3. We are to consider the remaining duty of watchfulness; *Watch*. There is a Christian rule to be observed in the very moderating of bodily sleep, and that particularly for the interest of prayer; but watching, as sobriety here, is chiefly the spiritual circumspectness and vigilancy of the mind, in a wary waking posture, that it be not surprised by the assaults or sleights of Satan, by the world, nor its nearest and most deceiving enemy, the corruption that dwells within, which being so near, doth most readily watch unperceived advantages, and easily circumvents us^l. The soul of a Christian being surrounded with enemies, both of so great power and wrath, and so watchful to undo it, should it not be watchful for its own safety, and live in a military vigilancy continually, keeping constant watch and sentinel, and suffering nothing to pass that may carry the least suspicion of danger? Should he not be distrustful and jealous of all the motions of his own heart, and the smilings of the world? And in

¹ Luke xxi. 34.

^k 1 John ii. 15.

^l Heb. xii. 1.

relation to these, it will be a wise course to take that word as a good caveat, *Be watchful, and remember to mistrust^m.* Under the garment of some harmless pleasure, or some lawful liberties, may be conveyed into thy soul, some thief or traitor, that will either betray thee to the enemy, or at least pilfer and steal of the most precious things thou hast. Do we not by experience find how easily our foolish hearts are seduced and deceived, and how apt they are even to deceive themselves? and by things that seem to have no evil in them, yet are drawn from the height of affection to the highest good, and from communion with God, and study to please him; which should not be intermitted, for then it will abate, whereas it ought still to be growing.

II. We proposed to consider the mutual relation of these duties: Now, this relation is clear; they are each of them assistant and helpful to the other, and, in their nature, inseparably linked together, as they are here in the words of the Apostle. *Sobriety* is the friend of *watchfulness*, and *prayer* of both. Intemperance doth of necessity draw on sleep; excessive eating or drinking, sending up too many, and so gross, vapours, surcharge the brain; and when the body is thus deadened, how unfit is it for any active employment? Thus the mind, by a surcharge of delights or desires, or cares of earth, is made so heavy and dull, that it cannot awake; hath not the spiritual activity and clearness that spiritual exercises, particularly prayer, do require. Yea, as bodily insobriety, full feeding and drinking, not only for the time indisposes to action, but, by custom of it, brings the body to so gross and heavy a temper, that the very natural spirits cannot stir to and fro in it with freedom, but are clogged, and stick as the wheels of a coach in a deep miry way; thus is it with the soul glutted with earthly things; the affections bemired with them, make it sluggish, and inactive in those that are spiritual, and render the motions of the spirit lifeless; and, obstructed thus,

^m Νῆφε καὶ μέμνησο ἁπίσειν.

grows carnally secure and sleepy, and prayer comes heavily off. But when the affections are soberly acted, and care is taken, that, even in lawful things, they have not full liberty, with the reins laid on their necks, to follow the world, and carnal projects, and delight, to the utmost, when the unavoidable affairs of this life are done with a spiritual mind, a heart kept free and disengaged; then is the soul more nimble for spiritual things, for divine meditation and prayer. It can watch and continue in these things, and spend itself in that *excellent way* with more alacrity.

Again, as this sobriety, and the watchful temper attending it, enables for prayer, so prayer preserves these. It winds up the soul from the earth, raises it above these things which intemperance feeds on, acquaints it with the transcending sweetness of divine comforts, the love and loveliness of Jesus Christ; and these most powerfully wean the soul from these low creeping pleasures which the world gapes after, and swallows with such greediness. He that is admitted to nearest intimacy with the king, and is called daily to his presence, not only in the view and company of others, but likewise in secret, will he be so mad as to sit down and drink with the kitchen-boys, or the common guards, so far below what he may enjoy? Surely not.

Prayer being our near communion with the great God, certainly it sublimates the soul, and makes it look down upon the base ways of the world with disdain, and despise the truly besotting pleasures of it. Yea, the Lord doth sometimes fill those souls, that converse much with him, with such beatific delights, such inebriating sweetness, as I may call it, that it is, in a happy manner, drunk with those: and the more it enjoys of this, the more is the soul above base intemperance in the use of the delights of the world. As common drunkenness makes a man less than a man, this makes him more; that sinks him below himself, and makes him a beast; this raises him above himself, and makes him an angel.

Would you, as sure you ought, have much faculty for prayer, and be frequent in it, and find much the pure sweetness of it? Then, 1st, Deny yourselves more the muddy pleasures and sweetness of the world. If you would pray much, and with much advantage, then *be sober, and watch unto prayer*. Suffer not your hearts to long so after ease and wealth, and esteem in the world. These will make your hearts, if they mix with them, become like them, and take their quality; will make them gross and earthly, and unable to mount up; will clog the wings of prayer; and you shall find the loss, when your soul is heavy and drowsy, and falls off from delighting in God, and your communion with him. Will such things as those you follow, be able to countervail your damage? Can they speak you peace, and uphold you in a day of darkness and distress? or may it not be such now, as will make them all a burden and vexation to you? But, on the other hand, the more you abate and let go of these, and come empty and hungry to God in prayer, the more room shall you have for his consolations; and therefore the more plentifully will he pour in of them, and enrich your soul with them the more, the less you take in of the other.

2. Would you have yourselves raised to, and continued and advanced in, a spiritual heavenly temper, free from the surfeits of earth, and awake, and active, for heaven? Be incessant in prayer.

But, thou wilt say, I find nothing but heavy indisposedness in it; nothing but roving and vanity of heart: and so, though I have used it some time, it is still unprofitable and uncomfortable to me. Although it be so, yet hold on, give it not over. Or, need I say this to thee, though it were referred to thyself, wouldst thou forsake it and leave off? then, what wouldst thou do next? for if there be no comfort in it, far less any for thee in any other way. If temptation should so far prevail with thee as to try intermission, either thou wouldst be forced to return to it presently, or certainly wouldst fall into a more

grievous condition; and, after horrors and lashings, must, at length, come back to it again, or perish for ever: Therefore, however it go, continue praying. Strive to believe that love thou canst not see. For where sight is abridged, there it is proper for faith to work. If thou canst do no more, lie before thy Lord, and look to him. "Lord, here I am, thou mayest quicken and revive me, if thou wilt: and I trust thou wilt; but if I must do it, I will die at thy feet; my life is in thy hand, and thou art goodness and mercy; while I have breath I will cry; or if I cannot cry, yet I will wait on, and look to thee."

One thing forget not, that the ready way to rise out of this sad, yet safe state, is to be much in viewing the Mediator, and interposing him betwixt the Father's view and thy soul. Some who do orthodoxly believe this to be right, yet (as often befalls us in other things of this kind) they do not so consider and use it, in their necessity, as becomes them, and therefore fall short of comfort. He hath declared it, *No man comes to the Father but by me*. How vile soever thou art, put thyself under his robe, and into his hand, and he will lead thee in to the Father, and present thee acceptable and blameless: The Father shall receive thee, and declare himself well pleased with thee in his well-beloved Son, who hath covered thee with his righteousness, and brought thee so clothed, and set thee before him.

III. The third thing we are to consider is, the reason binding on these duties of sobriety, watchfulness and prayer, *The end of all things is at hand*.

It is necessary often to remember this; for even believers too readily forget it; and it is very suitable to the Apostle's foregoing discourse of judgment, and to his present exhortation to sobriety and watchfulness unto prayer, even the general *end of all is at hand*; though, since the Apostle wrote this, many ages are past. For, 1. The Apostles usually speak of the whole time after the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh, as *the last time*; for that two double chiliads of years past before it, the one before, the

other under the law ; and in this third, it is conceived, shall be the end of all things. And the Apostles seem, by divers expressions, to have apprehended it in their days not far off. So St. Paulⁿ, *We which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.* As not impossible, that it might come in their time, which put him upon some explication of that correction of their mistakes, in his next epistle to them, wherein, notwithstanding he seems not to assert any great tract of time to intervene, but in that time great things were first to come.

2. However, this might always have been said in respect of succeeding eternity. The whole duration of the world is not considerable, and to the eternal Lord that made it, and hath appointed its period, *a thousand years are but as one day.* We think a thousand years a great matter, in respect of our short life, and more through our short-sightedness, that look not through this to eternal life: but what is the utmost length of time, were it millions of years, to a thought of eternity! We find much room in this earth, but to the vast heavens, it is but as a point. Thus, that which is but small to us, a field or little inclosure, a fly, had it skill, would divide it into provinces in proportion to itself.

3. To each man the *end of all things*, is, even after our measure, at hand; for when he dies, the world ends for him. Now, this consideration fits the subject, and presses it strongly; seeing all things shall be quickly at an end, even the frame of heaven and earth, why should we, knowing this, and having higher hopes, lay out so much of our desires and endeavours upon these things that are posting to ruin? It is no hard notion to be sober and watchful to prayer, to be trading that way, and seeking higher things, and to be very moderate in these, which are of so short a date. And as, in themselves, and their utmost term, they are of short duration; so more evidently to each of us particularly, who are *so soon cut off, and flee away.* Why should our hearts cleave to those things from which

we shall so quickly part, and from which, if we will not freely part and let them go, we shall be pulled away, and pulled with the more pain, the closer we cleave, and faster we are glued to them?

This the Apostle St. Paul casts in seasonably, though many think it not seasonable at such times, when he is discoursing of a great point of our life, marriage, to work Christian minds to a holy freedom both ways, whether they use it or no; not to view it, nor any thing here, with the world's spectacles, which make it look so big and so fixed, but to see it in the stream of time as passing by, and no such great matter. *The fashion of this world passeth away*, παράγει^ο, as a pageant or shew in a street, going through and quickly out of sight. What became of all the marriage solemnities of kings and princes of former ages, which they were so taken up with in their time? When we read of them described in history, they are as a night dream, or a day-fancy, which passes through the mind and vanishes!

Oh! foolish man, that hunteth such poor things, and will not be called off till death benight him, and finds his great work not done, yea, not begun; no, nor seriously thought of. Your buildings, your trading, your lands, your matches, and friendships, and projects, when they take with you, and your hearts are after them, say, but for how long all these? *Their end is at hand; therefore be sober, and watch unto prayer.* Learn to divide better; set apart more hours for it, and fewer for them: your whole heart for it, and none of it for them. Seeing they will fail you so quickly, prevent them. Become free; lean not on them till they break, and you fall into the pit.

It is reported of one, that, hearing the 5th of Genesis read, *so long lived*, and yet the burden still, *they died*, Enoch lived 905, and he died, Seth 912; and he died, Methuselah 969, and he died, he took so deep the thought of death and eternity, that it changed his whole frame, and set him from a voluptuous to a

most strict and pious course of life. How small a word will do much, when God sets it into the heart! But sure this one thing would make the soul more calm and sober in the pursuit of present things, if their term were truly computed and considered. How soon shall youth, and health, and carnal delights, be at an end? How soon shall state-craft and king-craft, and all the great projects of the highest wits and spirits be laid in the dust? This casts a damp upon all those fine things. But to a soul acquainted with God, and, in affection, removed hence already, no thought so sweet as this; it helps much to carry it cheerfully through wrestlings and difficulties, through better and worse; they see land near, and shall quickly be at home; that is the way. *The end of all things is at hand*: an end of a few poor delights, and the many vexations of this wretched life; an end of temptations and sins, the worst of all evils; yea, an end of the imperfect fashion of our best things here, an end of prayer itself, to which succeeds that new song of endless praises.

Ver. 8. *And, above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

THE graces of the Spirit are an entire frame, making up the new creature, and none of them can be wanting; therefore the doctrine and exhortation of the apostles speak of them usually, not only as inseparable, but as one. But there is amongst them all none more comprehensive than this of *love*, insomuch that St. Paul calls it *the fulfilling of the law*^a. Love to God is the sum of all relative to him, and so likewise is it towards our brethren. Love to God is that which makes us live to him, and be wholly his; that which most powerfully weans us from this world, and causeth us delight in communion with him, in holy meditation and prayer. Now the apostle adding here the duty of Christians to one another, gives this is as the prime, yea, the sum of all; *Above all have fervent love.*

^a Rom. xiii. 10.

Concerning this, consider 1. The nature of it. 2. The eminent degree of it. And, 3. The excellent fruit of it.

1. The nature of this love. 1. It is an union, therefore called a *bond* or *chain*, that links things together. 2. It is not a mere external union, that holds in customs, or words, or outward carriage, but an union of hearts. 3. It is here not a natural, but a spiritual supernatural union; it is that mutual love of Christians *as brethren*. There is a common benevolence and good will due to all; but a more particular uniting affection amongst Christians, which makes them interchangeably one.

The devil being an apostate spirit, revolted and separated from God, doth naturally project and work division. This was his first exploit, and still his grand design and business in the world. He first divided man from God; put them at an enmity by the first sin of our first parents; and the next we read of in their first child, was enmity against his brother. So Satan is called by our Saviour, justly, *a liar and a murderer from the beginning*^b; he murdered man by lying, and made him a murderer.

And as the devil's work is division, Christ's work is union; he came to *dissolve the works of the devil*, *ἵνα λύσῃ*^c, by a contrary work. He came to make all friends; to recollect and reunite all men to God, and man to man; and both those unions hold in him by virtue of that marvellous union of natures in his person, and that mysterious union of the persons of believers with him as their head. So the word, *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι*^d, *To unite all in one head*.

This was his great project in all; this he died and suffered for, and this he prayed for^e; and this is strong above all ties, natural or civil, union in Christ. This they have that are indeed Christians; this they pretend to have, if they understood it, who profess themselves Christians. If natural friendship be capable of that expression, *one spirit in two bodies*,

^b John viii. 44.^c 1 John iii. 8.^d Eph. i. 10.^e John xvii.

Christian union hath it much more really and properly : for there is, indeed, one spirit more extensive in all the faithful : yea, so one spirit, that it makes them up into *one body* more extensive : they are not so much as divers bodies, only divers *members of one body*.

Now, this love of our brethren is not another from the love of God, it is but the streaming forth of it, or the reflection of it. Jesus Christ sending in his Spirit into the heart, unites it to God in himself by love, which is indeed all, that *loving of God* supremely and entirely, with *all the mind and soul, all the combined strength of the heart!* And then that same love, first wholly carried to him, is not divided or impaired by the love of our brethren, but is dilated, as derived from the other. God allows, yea, commands, yea causes, that it stream forth, and act itself toward them ; remaining still in him, as in its source and centre ; beginning at him, and returning to him, as the beams that diffuse themselves from the sun, and the light and heat, yet are not divided or cut off from it, but remain in it, and, by emanation, issue from it. Loving our brethren in God, and for him ; not only because he commands us to love them ; and so the law of love to him ties us to it, as his will ; but because that love of God doth naturally extend itself thus, and acts thus : in loving our brethren after a spiritual Christian manner, we do even in that love our God.

Loving of God makes us one with God, and so gives us an impression of his divine bounty in his Spirit ; and his love, the proper work of his Spirit, dwelling in the heart, enlarges and dilates it, as self-love contracts and straitens it : so that as self-love is the perfect opposite to the love of God, it is likewise so to brotherly love ; it shuts out and undoes both : and where the love of God is rekindled and enters the heart, it destroys and burns up self-love, and so carries the affection up to himself, and in him forth to our brethren.

This is that bitter root of all enmity in man against

God, and amongst men, against one another, *self*, man's heart turned from God towards himself; and the very work of renewing grace is, to annul and destroy *self*, to replace God in his right, that the heart and all its affections and motions, may be at his disposal. So that, instead of *self-will* and *self-love* that ruled before, now the will of God, and the love of God, command all.

And where it is thus, there this *φιλανθρωπία*, this love of our brethren will be sincere. Whence is it that wars, and contests, and mutual disgracings and despisings, do so much abound, but that men love themselves, and nothing but themselves, or in relation to themselves, as it pleases, or is advantageous to them? That is the standard and rule; all is carried by interest, so thence are strifes and defamings, and bitterness against one another; but the Spirit of Christ coming in undoes all selfishness. And now, according to God, what he wills and loves, that is law, and a powerful law; the law of love is so written on the heart, that it obeys not unpleasantly, but with delight, and knows no constraint, but the sweet constraint of love. To forgive a wrong, to love even thine enemy for him, is not only easy now but delectable, although a little while ago thou thoughtest it was quite impossible.

That Spirit of Christ, which is all sweetness and love, so calms and composes the heart, that peace with God, and that unspeakably blessed correspondence of love with him, doth so fill the soul with lovingness and sweetness, that it can breathe nothing else. It hates nothing but sin, pities the sinner, and carries to the worst that love of good will, desiring their return and salvation. But as for those, in whom appears the image of their Father, their heart cleaves to them as brethren indeed. No natural advantages, no birth, no beauty, nor wit, draws a Christian's love so much, as the resemblance of Christ; wherever that is found, it is comely, and lovely to a soul that loves him.

Much communion with God sweetens and calms

the mind, cures the distempers of passion and pride, that are the avowed enemies of love; particularly prayer and love suit well. (1.) Prayer disposes to this love; *he that loveth not, knoweth not God*, saith the beloved Apostle, *for God is love*^f. He that is most conversant with love, the spring of it, where it is purest and fullest, cannot but have the fullest measure of it, flowing in from thence into his heart, and flowing forth from thence unto his brethren. If they that use the society of mild and good men, are insensibly assimilated to them, grow like them, and contract somewhat of their temper; much more doth familiar walking with God powerfully transform the soul into his likeness; makes it merciful and loving, and ready to forgive, as he is. On the other hand.

(2.) This love disposes to prayer, to pray together. Hearts must be consorted and tuned together; otherwise, how can they sound the same suits harmoniously? How unpleasant, in the exquisite ear of God, that made the ear, are the jarring disunited hearts, that often seem to join in the same prayer, and yet are not set together in love. And when thou prayest alone, while thy heart is imbittered and disaffected to thy brother, although upon an offence done to thee, it is as a mistuned instrument; the strings are not accorded, are not in tune amongst themselves, and so the sound is harsh and offensive. Try it well thyself, and thou wilt perceive it; how much more he, to whom thou prayest, when thou art stirred, and in passion against thy brother, or not, on the contrary, lovingly affected towards him; what broken, disordered, unfastened stuff are thy requests! Therefore the Lord will have this done first, the heart tuned; *Go thy way*, (says he), *leave thy gift and be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift*^g.

Why is this so much recommended by Christ, and so little regarded by Christians? It is given by him as the characteristic and badge of his followers, and of them that pretend to be so, how few wear it?

^f John iv. 8.

^g Mat. v. 23, 24.

Oh! a little real Christianity were more worth than all that empty profession and discourse, that we think so much of. Hearts receiving the mould and stamp of this rule, these were living copies of the gospel; *ye are our epistle*, says the Apostle^b. We come together, and hear, and speak, sometimes of one grace, and sometimes of another; and the most never seek to have their hearts enriched with the possession of any of them. We search not to the bottom the perverseness of our nature, and the guiltiness that is upon us in these things; or we shift off the conviction, and find a way to forget it, when the hour is done.

That accursed root, self-love, that makes man an enemy to God, and men enemies and *devourers one of another*, who sets to the discovery and the displanting of it? Who bends the force of holy endeavours and prayer, supplicating the hand of God for the plucking of it up? Some natures are quieter and make less noise, but till the heart be possessed with the love of God, it shall never truly love either men, in that way due to all, or the children of God in their peculiar relation.

Among yourselves, &c.] That is here the point, the peculiar love of the saints as thy brethren, glorying and rejoicing in the same Father; as the sons of God, *begotten again* to that *lively hope* of glory. Now these, as they owe a bountiful disposition to all, are mutually to love one another as brethren.

Thou, that hatest and reproachest the godly, and the more they study to walk as the children of their holy Father, hatest them the more, and art glad to find a spot on them to point at, or wilt dash mire on them where thou findest none; know that thou art in this the enemy of God; know that the indignity done to them, Jesus Christ will take as done to himself; truly *we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*ⁱ. So then renounce this word, or else believe that thou art yet far

^b 2 Cor. iii. 2.

ⁱ 1 John iii. 4.

from the life of Christ, that so hatest it in others. Oh! but they are a number of hypocrites, wilt thou say. If they be so, this declares so much the more thy extreme hatred of holiness, that canst not endure so much as the picture of it; canst not see any thing like it, but thou must let fly at it. And this argues thy deep hatred of God. Holiness, in a Christian, is the image of God, and the hypocrite, in the resemblance of it, is the image of a Christian; so thou hatest the very image of the image of God; for, deceive not thyself, it is not the latent evil in hypocrisy, but the apparent good in it, that thou hatest. The profane man thinks himself a great zealot against hypocrisy, he is still exclaiming against it; but it is only this he is angry at, that all should not be ungodly; wicked enemies of religion, as he is; either dissolute, or merely civil; and the civil man is frequently the bitterest enemy of all strictness beyond his own size, as condemning him, and therefore he cries it down, as all of it false and counterfeit wares.

Let me entreat you, if you would not be found *fighters against God*, let no revilings be heard amongst you, against any who are, or seem to be, followers of holiness. If ye will not reverence it yourselves, yet reverence it in others, at least do not reproach it. It should be your ambition, else why are you willing to be called Christians? But if you will not *pursue holiness*, yet persecute it not: If you will not *have fervent love to the saints*, yet burn not with infernal heat of fervent hatred against them; for, truly, that is one of the most likely pledges of these flames, and society with damed spirits; as love to the children of God is, of that inheritance and society with them in glory.

You that are brethren, and united by that purest and strongest tie, as you are one in your head, in your life derived from him, in your hopes of glory with him; seek to be more one in heart; in fervent love one to another in him. Consider the combinations and concurrences of the wicked against him and his *little flock*; and let this provoke you to more

united affections. Shall the *scales of Leviathan*^k, (as one alludes), stick so close together, and shall not the members of Christ be more one and undivided: you that can resent it, stir up yourselves, to bewail the present divisions and fears of more; entreat earnestly for that *one Spirit* to act and work more powerfully in the hearts of his people.

II. We may observe the eminent degree of this love. 1. Its eminency amongst the graces, *above all*, 2. The high measure of it required, fervent love, [εκτεθειν], a high bent, or strain of it; that which acts strongly, and carries far.

1. It is eminent, that which indeed among Christians preserves all, and knits altogether; therefore called^l, *the bond of perfection*, to signify, that all is bound up by it. How can they pray together, advance the name of their God, keep in and stir up all grace in one another, unless they be united in love? How can they have access to God, or fellowship with Him *who is love*, as St. John speaks, if instead of this sweet temper there be rancour and bitterness among them? So then, uncharitableness and divisions amongst Christians, do not only hinder their civil good, but their spiritual much more; and that not only *lucro cessante*, (as they speak), interrupting the ways of mutual profiting, but *damno emergente*, it doth really damage them, and brings them to losses; preys upon their graces, as hot withering winds on herbs and plants. Where the heart entertains either bitter malice, or but uncharitable prejudices, there will be a certain decay of spirituality in the whole soul.

2. Again, for the *degree* of this love required, it is not a cold indifferency, a negative love, as I may call it, or not willing of evil; nor a lukewarm wishing of good, but fervent and active love; for, if fervent, it will be active, a fire that will not be smothered, but will find a way to extend itself.

III. The fruits of this love follow. 1. *Covering of evil*, in this verse. 2. *Doing of good*, ver. 9, &c.

^k Job xli. 15.

^l Col. iii. 14.

For the first of these, it is said, *Charity shall cover the multitude of sins*. The expression is taken from Solomon; and as covering sins is represented as a main act of love, so love is commended by it, this being a most useful and laudable act of it, that it *covers sins*, and *a multitude of sins*.

Solomon saith^m, as the opposition clears the sense, *Hatred stirs strife*, aggravates and makes the worst of all, *but love covers a multitude of sins*; it delights not in undue disclosing of brethrens failings, doth not eye them rigidly, nor expose them willingly to the eyes of others.

Now, this recommends charity, in regard of its continual usefulness and necessity this way, considering human frailty; and *that in many things* (as St. James speaks) *we all offend*ⁿ; so that this is still needful on all hands. What do they think that are still picking at every appearing infirmity of their brethren; know they not that the frailties that cleave to the saints of God while they are here, do stand in need of, and call for, this mutual office of love, to cover and pass them by? Who is there that stands not in need of this? If none, why are there any that deny it to others? There can be no society nor entertaining of Christian converse without it; giving (as we speak) allowance; reckoning to meet with defects, and weaknesses on all hands; covering the failings of one another, seeing it is needful from each to another.

Again, as the necessity of this commends it, and the love whence it flows, so there is that laudable ingenuity in it, that should draw us to the liking of it. It is the bent of the basest and most worthless spirits to be busy in the search and discovery of others failings, passing by all that is commendable and imitable; as base flies readily sitting on any little sore they can find, rather than upon the sound parts. But the more excellent mind of a real Christian loves not unnecessarily to touch, no, nor to look upon them, rather turns away; such never uncover their

^m Prov. x. 12.ⁿ James iii. 2.

brother's sores, but to cure them; and no more than is necessary for that end; they would willingly have them hid, that neither they nor others might see them.

This bars not the judicial trial of scandalous offences, nor the delation of them, and bringing them under due censure. The forbearing of this is not charity, but both iniquity and cruelty; and this cleaves too much to many of us. They that cannot pass the least touch of a wrong done to themselves, can digest twenty high injuries done to God by profane persons about them, and resent it not; and such may be assured, that they are yet destitute of love to God, and of Christian love to their brethren, which springs from it.

The uncovering of sin, necessary to the curing of it, is not only no breach of charity, but is indeed a main point of it, and the neglect of it the highest kind of cruelty. But further than that goes, certainly this rule teaches the veiling of our brethrens infirmities from the eyes of others, and even from our own, that we look not on them with rigour; no, nor without compassion.

1. Love is witty in finding out the fairest construction of things doubtful, and this is a great point. Take me the best action that can be named, pride and malice shall find a way to disgrace it, and put a hard visage upon it. Again, what is not undeniably evil, love will turn to all the ways of viewing it, till it find the best and most favourable.

2. Where the thing is so plainly a sin, that this way of covering it can have no place, yet then will love consider what may lessen it most; whether a surprise, or strength of temptation, or ignorance, as our Saviour, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*^o, or natural complexion; or at least will still take in human frailty, to turn all the bitterness of passion into sweet compassion.

3. All private reproofs, and where conscience re-

quires public delation and censure, even these will be sweetened in that compassion that flows from love. If it be such a sore as must not be let lie covered up, lest it prove deadly, so that it must be uncovered, to be lanced and cut, that it may be cured, still this is to be done as loving the soul of the brother. Where the rule of conscience urges it not, then thou must bury it, and be so far from delighting to divulge such things, that, as far as without partaking in it thou mayest, thou must veil it from all eyes, and try the way of private admonition; and if the party appear to be humble and willing to be reclaimed, then forget it, cast it quite out of thy thoughts, that, as much as may be, thou mayest learn to forget it more. But this, I say, is to be done with the tenderest bowels of pity, feeling the cuts thou art forced to give in that necessary incision, and using mildness and patience. Thus the Apostle instructs his Timothy, *Reprove, rebuke, exhort*, but do it with *long-suffering, with all long-suffering*^p. And even *them that oppose, instruct*, says he, *with meekness; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth*^q.

4. If thou be interested in the offence, even by unfeigned free forgiveness, so far as thy concern goes, let it be, as if it had not been. And though thou meet with many of these, charity will gain and grow by such occasions: and the more it hath covered, the more it can cover, *cover a multitude*, says our Apostle; *covers all sins*, says Solomon; yea, though thou be often put to it by the same party, what made thee forgive once, well improved, will stretch our Saviour's rule to *seventy times seven times in one day*^r.

And, truly, in this, men mistake grossly, that think it is greatness of spirit to resent wrongs, and baseness to forgive them; on the contrary, it is the only excellent spirit scarce to feel a wrong, or, feeling, straight to forgive it. It is the greatest

^p 2 Tim. iv. 2.^q chap. ii. 25.^r Mat. xviii. 21, 22.

and best of spirits that enables to this, the Spirit of God, that dove-like spirit that rested on our Lord Jesus, and from him is derived to all that are in him. I pray you think, is it not a token of a tender sickly body, to be altered with every touch, from every blast it meets with? And thus is it a sign of a poor weak sickly spirit, to endure nothing, to be distempered at the least air of an injury; yea, with the very fancy of it, where there is really none.

Inf. 1. Learn then to beware of these evils, that are contrary to this charity. Do not dispute with yourselves in rigid remarks and censures, when the matter will bear any better sense.

2. Do not delight in tearing a wound wider, and stretching a real failing to the utmost.

3. In handling of it, study gentleness, pity and meekness. These will advance the cure, whereas thy flying out into passion against thy fallen brother, will prove nothing, but as the putting of thy nail into the sore, that will readily rankle it, and make it worse. Even sin may be sinfully reprov'd; and how thinkest thou, that sin shall redress sin, and reduce the sinner.

There is a great deal of spiritual art and skill in dealing with another's sin; and it requires much spirituality of mind, and much prudence, and much love; especially a mind clear from passion, for that blinds the eye, and makes the hand rough; so that a man neither rightly sees nor handles, the sore he goes about to cure. And many are lost through the ignorance and neglect of that due temper to be brought to this work. Men think otherwise, that their rigours are much spirituality; but they mistake it^s; *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

4. For thyself, as an offence touches thee, learn to delight as much in that divine way of forgiveness, as carnal minds do in that base inhuman way

of revenge. It is not, as they judge, a glory to bluster and swagger for every thing, but the *glory of a man to pass by a transgression*^t. This makes him godlike. And consider thou often that love that covers all thine, that blood that was shed to wash off thy guilt; needs any more be said to gain all in this, that can be required of thee.

Now, the other fruit of love, which is *doing good*, is, 1. Expressed in one particular^u. Then dilated to a general rule^x, which will be considered below.

Ver. 9. *Use hospitality one to another without grudging.*

HOSPITALITY or kindness to strangers, is mentioned here as an important fruit of love; it being in those times and places, in much use in travel, and particularly then needful to be often exercised among Christians one to another, by reason of hot and general persecutions. But under this name, I conceive, all other supply of the wants of our brethren in outward things to be here comprehended.

Now, for this, the way and measure, indeed, must receive its proportion from the estate and ability of persons. But certainly the great straitening of hands in these things, is more from the straitness of hearts than of means. A large heart, with a little estate, will do much with cheerfulness and little noise, while hearts glued to the poor riches they possess, or rather are possessed by, can scarce part with any thing, till they be pulled from all.

Now, for supply of our brethrens necessities, one good help is, the retrenching of our own superfluities. Turn the stream into that channel where it will refresh thy brethren, and enrich thyself, and let it not run into the dead sea. Thy vain excessive entertainments, thy gaudy variety of dresses, these thou dost not challenge, thinking it is of thine own; but know, as follows, thou art but *steward* of it,

^t Prov. xix. 11.

^u ver. 9.

^x ver. 10.

and this is not faithfully laying out; thou canst not answer for it; yea it is robbery; thou robbest thy poor brethren that want necessaries, whilst thou lavishest thus on unnecessaries. Such a feast, such a suit of apparel, is direct robbery in the Lord's eye, and the poor may cry, that is mine that you cast away so vainly, by which both I and you might be profited^a; *With-hold not good from him therefore to whom it is due,* &c.

Without grudging.] Some look to the actions, but few to the intention and posture of mind in them? and yet that is the main; it is indeed all, even with men, so far as they can perceive it; much more with thy Lord, who always perceives it to the full. He delights in the good he does his creatures: He would have them so affected to one another, especially would see his children to have this trace of his likeness. See, then, when thou givest alms, or entertainest a stranger, that there be nothing either of under grumbling, or crooked self seeking in it. Let the *left-hand* have no hand in it, not so much as *know* of it, as our Saviour directs^b, not to please men, or to please thyself, or simply out of a natural pity or consideration of thy own possible incidency into the like case, which many think very well, if they be so moved: But if there be here a higher principle moving thee, love to God, and to thy brother, in, and for him, this will make it cheerful and pleasant to thyself, and well-pleasing to him, for whom thou dost it. We lose much in actions, of themselves good, both of piety and charity, through disregard of our hearts in them; and nothing will prevail with us, to be more intent this way to look more on our hearts, but this, to look more on Him that looks on them, and judges, and accepts all according to them.

Though all the sins of former ages gather, and fall into the latter times, this is pointed out as the grand evil, *uncharitableness*. The Apostle St. Paul^c, tells us, that in the last day, *men shall be covetous,*

^a Prov. iii. 27, 28.

^b Mat. vi. 3.

^c 2 Tim. iii. 2.

slanderers, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God: But how, from whence all this confluence of evils? The spring of all is set first, and that is the direct opposite of Christian love; *they shall be* [*φιλαυτοι*] *lovers of themselves*. This is it, that kills the love of God, and the love of our brethren, and kindles that infernal fire of love to please themselves; so that riches make men voluptuous and covetous, &c. Truly, whatsoever become of mens curious computation of times, this wretched selfishness and decay of love, may save us the labour of much *chronological* debate in this, and lead us from this certain character of them, to conclude these to be the *latter times*, in a very strict sense. All other sins are come down along, and run combined now; but truly uncharitableness is the main one. As old age is a rendezvous or meeting place of maladies, but especially subject to cold diseases: thus is it in the old age of the world, many sins abound, but especially coldness of love, as our Saviour foretells it, that in *the last days the love of many shall wax cold*^d. As the disease of the youth of the world, was the *abounding of lust*^e, so of its age, *decay of love*: And as that heat called for a total deluge of waters; so this coldness for fire, to the kindling an universal fire, that shall make an end of it and the world together^f.

But they alone are the happy men, and have the advantage of all the world, in whom the world is burnt up beforehand, by another fire; that divine fire of the love of God, kindled in their hearts, by which they ascend up to him, and are reflected from him upon their brethren, with a benign heat and influence for their good. Oh! be unsatisfied with yourselves, and restless till you find it thus, till you find your hearts possessed with this excellent grace of love, that you may have it, and use it, and it may grow by using and acting, I could, methinks,

^d Mat. xxiv. 12.^e Gen. vi.^f Aqua propter ardorem libidinis, ignis propter teporem charitatis.

heartily study on this, and weary you with reiterated pressing this one thing, if there were hopes in so wearying you, to weary you out of these evils that are contrary to it; and in pressing this grace, to make any real impression of it upon your hearts: besides all the further good that follows it, there is in this love itself, so much peace and sweetness, as abundantly pays itself, and all the labour of it; whereas pride and malice do fill the heart with continual vexations and disquiet, and eat out the very bowels wherein they breed. Aspire to this, to be wholly bent, not only to procure or desire hurt to none, but to wish and seek the good of all; and, for those that are in Christ, sure that will unite thy heart to them, and stir thee up, according to thy opportunities and power, to do them good, as parts of Christ, and of the same body with thyself.

Ver. 10. *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*

THIS is the rule concerning the gifts and graces bestowed on men; and we have here, 1. Their difference in their kind and measure. 2. Their concordance in their source and use.

1. Their difference in their kind and measure, which is expressed in the first clause, *as every one hath received*. Then again in the last clause [*ποικίλη χάρις*] *various or manifold grace*, where *χάρις*, *grace*, is all one with the former, *χάρισμα*, *gift*, and is taken at large for all kind of endowments and furniture by which men are enabled to mutual good. One man hath riches, another authority and command, another wit or eloquence, or learning; and some, though eminent in some one, yet have a fuller conjuncture of divers of these. We find not more difference in visages and statures of body, than in qualifications and abilities of the mind, which are the visage and stature of it; yea, the

odds is far greater betwixt man and man in this than it can be in the other.

Now, this difference accords well, 2dly, With the accordance here expressed in their common spring and common use; for the variety of these many gifts suits well with the singular riches and wisdom of their one Giver, and with the common advantage and benefit of the many receivers. And in the usefulness of that variety to the receivers, shines forth the bounty and wisdom of the Giver, in so ordering all that diversity, to one excellent end; so this *manifold grace* ποικίλη χάρις here, commends that πολυποικίλη σοφία, *manifold wisdom*, that the Apostle speaks of^a.

There is such an admirable beauty in this variety, such a symmetry and contemperature of different, yea, of contrary, qualities, as speaks his riches, that so divers gifts are from the same Spirit. A kind of *embroidering*^b, of many colours happily mixt, as the word ποικίλλειν signifies; as it is in the frame of the natural body of man as the lesser world, and in the composure of the greater world; thus in the Church of God, the mystical body of Jesus Christ, exceeding both the former in excellency and beauty.

And as there is such art in this contrivance, and such comeliness in the resulting frame, so it is no less useful; and that chiefly commends the thing itself, and the supreme wisdom ordering it, that as, in the body, each part hath not only its place for proportion and order, but each its use; and as, in the world, each part is beneficial to another; so here, every man's gift relates, and is fitted, to some use for the good of others.

Infer. 1. The first thing which meets us here is very useful to know, that all is *received*, and received of *gift*, of most *free gift*; so the words do carry. Now, this should most reasonably check all

^a Eph. iii. 10.

^b The Psalmist's word for the body Psm. cxxix. 15. is, curiously wrought.

murmuring in those that receive least; and insulting in those that receive most: whatever it is, do not repine but praise, how little soever it is, for it is a free gift. Again, how much soever it is, *be not high minded, but fear*; boast not thyself, but humbly bless thy Lord; *for if thou hast received it, how canst thou boast?*

2. Every man hath received some gift, no man all gifts; and this, rightly considered, would keep all in a more even temper; as, in nature, nothing is altogether useless, so nothing is self-sufficient: This, duly considered, would keep the meanest from repining and discontent, even him that hath the lowest rank in most respects; yet something he hath received, that is not only a good to himself, but, rightly improved, may be so to others likewise. And this will curb the loftiness of the most advanced, and teach them, not only to see some deficiencies in themselves, and some gifts in far meaner persons, which they want: but, besides the simple discovery of this, it will put them upon the use of what is in lower persons, not only to stoop to the acknowledgment, but even, withal, to the participation and benefit of it; not to trample upon all that is below them, but to take up, and use, things useful, though lying at their feet. Some flowers and herbs that grow very low, are of a very fragrant smell, and healthful use.

Thou that carriest it so high, lovest much by it. Many poor Christians whom thou despisest to make use of, may have that in them which might be very useful for thee, though thou overlookest it, and treadest on it. St. Paul acknowledgeth he was *comforted by the coming of Titus*, though far inferior to him. Sometimes a very mean illiterate Christian may speak more profitably and comfortably, even to a knowing learned man, than multitudes of his own best thoughts can do, especially in a time of weakness and darkness.

3. As all is received, and with that difference,

so the third thing is, that all is received, *to minister to each other*; and mutual benefit is the true use of all, suiting the mind of him that dispenses all, and the way of his dispensation. Thou art not proprietary lord of any thing thou hast, but *οικονομος*, a steward; and therefore oughtest gladly to be a good steward, that is, both faithful and prudent in thy intrusted gifts, using all thou hast to the good of the household, and so to the advantage of thy Lord and master. Hast thou abilities of estate, or body, or mind? let all be thus employed. Thinkest thou that thy wealth, or power, or wit, is thine, to do with them as thou wilt, to engross to thyself, either to retain useless, or to use; to hoard and wrap up, or to lavish out, according as thy humour leads thee? No, all is given, as to a steward, wisely and faithfully to lay up and lay out. Not only thy outward and common gifts of mind, but even saving grace, which seems most interested and appropriated for thy private good, yet is not wholly for that; even thy graces are for the good of thy brethren.

Oh! that we would consider this in all, and look back and mourn on the fruitlessness of all that hath been in our hand all our life hitherto. If it have not been wholly fruitless, yet, how far short of that fruit we might have brought forth! any little thing done by us looks big in our eye; we view it through a magnifying glass; but who may not complain that their means, and health, and opportunities, of several kinds, of doing for God, and for our brethren, have lain dead upon their hands in a great part? As Christians are defective in other duties of love, so most in that most important duty, of advancing the spiritual good of each other. Even they that have grace, do not duly use it to mutual edification. I desire none to leap over the bounds of their calling, or rules of Christian prudence in their converse; yea, this were much to be blamed; but I fear lest unwary hands, throwing on water to quench that evil, have let some of it fall by upon those

sparks, that should rather have been stirred and blown up.

Neither should the disproportion of gifts and graces hinder Christians to minister one to another, nor move the weaker to envy the stronger, nor the stronger to despise the weaker; but each is, in his place, to be serviceable to another, as the Apostle excellently presses by that most fit resemblance of the parts of the body^d; *As the foot says not, Why am I not the eye, or the head; the head cannot say of the foot, I have no need of thee.* There is no envy, no despising, in the natural body. Oh! what pity is it there should be so much in the mystical! Were we more spiritual, this would less be found. In the mean time, Oh! that we were more agreeable to that happy estate we look for, in our present aspect and carriage one to another. Though all graces are, in some measure, where there is one, yet all not in a like measure. One Christian is more eminent in meekness, another in humility, a third in zeal, &c. Now by their spiritual converse, one with another, each may be a gainer; and many ways may a private Christian promote the good of others, with whom he lives, by seasonable admonitions, and advice, and reproof, sweetened with meekness; but most by holy example, which is the most lively, and most effectual speech.

Thou that hast greater gifts, hast more entrusted in thy hand, and therefore the more engagement to fidelity and diligence. Men in great place and public services, ought to stir themselves up by this thought to singular watchfulness and zeal; and, in private converse, one with another, to be doing and receiving spiritual good. Are we not strangers here; and, is it not strange that we so often meet and part, without a word of our home, or the way to it, or our advancement towards it? Christians should be trading, one with another, in spiritual things; and he, sure, that faithfully useth most, receives most. That is comprehended under that

^d 1 Cor. xii. 15, 21.

word^c; *To him that hath, (i. e. possesses actively and usefully), shall be given; and from him that hath not, (i. e. uses not), shall be taken away even that which he hath.* Merchants can feel in their trading a dead time, and complain seriously of it; but Christians, in theirs, either can suffer it, and not see it, or see it, and not complain; or, possibly, complain, and yet not be deeply sensible of it.

Certainly it cannot be sufficiently regretted, that we are so fruitless in the Lord's work in this kind, that when we are alone we study it not more, nor seek it more by prayer, to know the true use of all we receive, and do not in society endeavour it accordingly; but we trifle out our time; and instead of the commerce of grace, to our mutual enriching, we trade in vanity, and as it were children exchanging shells and toys together.

This surely will lie heavy upon the conscience when we reflect on it, and shall come near the brink of time, looking forwards on eternity; and the looking back to our days, so vainly wasted, and worn out to so little purpose. Oh! let us awake, awake ourselves and one another, to more fruitfulness and faithfulness, whatsoever be our received measure, less or more.

Be not discouraged; to have little in the account shall be no prejudice. The approbation runs not, *Thou hast much*; but, in the contrary, *Thou hast been faithful in little*: Great faithfulness in the use of small gifts hath great acceptance, and a great and sure reward. Great receipts engage to greater returns, and therefore require the greater diligence; and that not only for the increase of grace within, but the assistance of it in others. Retired contemplation may be more pleasing; but due activity for God and his Church is more profitable. Rachel was fair, but she was barren; Leah blear eyed, but fruitful.

^c Matt. xxv. 29.

Ver. 11. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God: if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

EVERY part of the body of Christ, as it partakes life with the rest, imparts service to the rest; but there be some more eminent, and, as I may say, *organic* parts of this body, and these are more eminently useful to the whole. Therefore the Apostle, having enlarged himself into a general precept, adds a word in special to these special parts, the preachers of the word, and (which here I conceive is meant by deacons or ministers) the other assistant officers of the church of God.

These are co-ordained by Jesus Christ, as Lord of his own house, to be serviceable to him in it. He sits and sanctifies for this great work all who are called unto it by himself, and they are directed for the acquitting of their great work: (1.) By a clear rule of the due manner. (2.) By a view of the main end of its appointment.

Particular rules for the preaching of the word may be many, but this is a most comprehensive one which the Apostle gives; *If any speak, let him speak as of the oracle of God.* It is clear from the rule what speaking is regulated, and for brevity once expressed. If any speak the oracles of God, let him speak them like themselves, *as the oracles of God.*

It is a chief thing in all serious actions to take the nature of them aright, for this chiefly regulates them, and directs in their performance. And this especially should be regarded in those things, that are of highest worth and greatest weight, in spiritual employments, wherein it is most dangerous, and yet with us most ordinary, to mistake and miscarry. Were prayer considered as presence and speech with the great God, the king of glory, Oh! how would this mould the mind! What a watchful, holy, and

humble deportment would it teach! So that truly all directions for prayer might be summed up after this same model in this one, if any man pray, let him speak *as speaking with God*; just as here for preaching, if any man speak in that way, let him do it as *speaking from God*, that is, *as the oracles of God*. Under this, all the due qualifications of this holy work are comprised: I shall name but these three which are prime, and others may be easily reduced to these: 1. *Faithfully*. 2. *Holily*. 3. *Wisely*.

In the first, *Fidelity*, it is supposed that a man have competent insight and knowledge in these divine oracles, that first he learn before he teach. Which many of us do not; though we pass through the schools and classes, and through the books too, wherein these things are taught, and bring with us some provision, such as may be had there. He that would faithfully teach of God must be *taught of God*, be θεοδιδάκτος, *God-learned*; and this will help to all the rest; this will effectually engage him to be faithful in delivering the message as he receives it, not detracting or adding, nor altering; and as in setting forth that in general truths, so in the particular setting them home, declaring *to his people their sins*, and God's judgments following sin, especially in his own people.

2. A minister should speak *holily*: with the highest esteem and reverence of the great majesty whose message he carries, and the divinity of the message itself; those deep mysteries that no created spirits are able to fathom. Oh! this would make us tremble in the dispensing of these oracles, considering our impurities, and weaknesses, and unspeakable disproportion to so high a task. He had reason that said, "I am seized with amazement and horror as often as I begin to speak of God." And with this humble reverence is to be joined ardent love to our Lord, to his truth, to his glory and his people's souls. These holy affections stand opposite to our blind boldness in rushing on this sublime exercise, as

a common work: our dead coldness in speaking things which our hearts are not warmed with; and so no wonder though what we say seldom reaches further than the ear, or, at furthest than the understanding and memory, of our hearers. There is a correspondence; it is the heart speaks to the heart, and the understanding and memory the same; and the tongue speaks but to the ear. Further, this holy temper shuts out all private passion in delivering divine truths. It is high profaning of his name and holy things, to make them speak our private pleas and quarrels; yea, to reprove sin after this manner is a heinous sin; to fly out into invectives, that though not expressed so, yet are aimed as blows of self-revenge for injuries done to us, or fancied by us. This is to wind and draw the holy word of God to serve our unholy distempers, and make it speak not his meaning, but our own. Sure this is not to speak *as the oracles of God*, but basely to abuse the word, as impostors in religion of old did their images; speaking behind them and through them what might make for their advantage. It is indeed very true, that the word is to be particularly applied, to reprove most the particular sins which most abound amongst a people; but this is to be done, not in anger, but in love. Which leads to add,

3. That the word is to be spoken *wisely*. By this I mean, in the way of delivering it, that it be done gravely and decently; that light expressions, and affected flourishes, and unseemly gestures, be avoided; and that there be a sweet temper of authority and mildness: but *who is sufficient for these things*^a?

Now, you that hear would certainly meet and suit in this too. If any hear, let him hear *as the oracles of God*: not as a well tuned sound, to help you to sleep an hour: not as a human speech or oration, to displease or please you an hour, according to the suiting of its strain and your palate: not as a school

^a 2 Cor. ii. 16,

lesson, to add somewhat to your stock of knowledge; to tell you somewhat you knew not before, or as a feast of new notions. Thus the most relish a preacher, while they try his gift, and it is new with them, whereas a little time disgusts them. But hear *as the oracles of God*, the discovery of sin, and death lying on us, and the discovery of a Saviour, that takes these off: the sweet word of reconciliation, God wooing man; the great king entreating for peace with a company of rebels; not that they are too strong for him: Oh! no, but, on the contrary, he could utterly destroy in one moment. These are the things brought you in this word; therefore come to it with suitable reverence, with ardent desires, and hearts open to receive it *with meekness, as the ingrafted word that is able to save your souls*^b. It were well worth one day's pains of speaking and hearing, that we could learn somewhat, at least how to speak and hear henceforward; to speak and hear *as the oracles of God*.

In the other, of *ministering as of the ability that God giveth*, we may observe: 1. Ability, and that received from God; for other there is none for any good work, and least of all for the peculiar ministration of his spiritual affairs in his house. 2. The using of this ability received from him for them.

And this, truly, is a chief thing for ministers, and for each Christian, still to depend on the influence and strength of God; to do all his works in that strength; the humblest Christian, how weak soever, is the strongest. There is a natural wretched independency in us, that we would be the authors of our own works, and do all without Him, without whom indeed we can do nothing. Let us learn to go more out of ourselves, and we shall find more strength for our duties, and against our temptations. Faith's great work is, to renounce self-power, and to bring in the power of God to be ours. Happy they that

^b Ja. i. 21.

are weakest in themselves, most sensibly so. That word of the apostle is theirs; they know what it means, though a riddle to the world; *When I am weak then am I strong*^c. Now,

2. The end of all this appointment is, *that in all God may be glorified through Jesus Christ!* All meet in this, if they move in their straight line, here they centre: not only these two sorts specified in this verse, but all sorts of persons that use aright any gift of God, as they are generally comprehended in the former verse: for this end relates to all, as it is expressed universally, *That in all*, in all persons and all things; the word bears both, and the thing itself extends to both.

Here we have, like that of the heavens, a circular motion of all sanctified good; it comes forth from God, through Christ, unto Christians; and moving in them to the mutual good of each other, returns through Christ unto God again, and takes them along with it, in whom it was and had its motion.

All persons and things shall pay this tribute, even they that most wickedly seek to withhold it; but this is the happiness of the saints, that they move willingly thus, are sweetly drawn, not forced or driven. They are gained to seek and desire this, to set in with God in the intention of the same end; to have the same purpose with him, his glory in all, and to prosecute his end by his direction, the means and ways he appoints them.

This is his due, as God; and the declining from this, squinting from this view to self-ends, especially in God's own peculiar work, is high treason; yet the base heart of man leads naturally this way, to intend himself in all, to raise his own esteem or advantage in some way.

And in this the heart is so subtle, that it will deceive the most discerning, if they be not constant in suspecting and watching it. This is the great

^c 2 Cor. xii. 10.

task to overcome in this point. To have self under our feet, and God only in our eye and purpose in all.

It is most reasonable, his due as God, the author of all, not only of all supervenient good, but even of being itself, seeing all is from him, that all be for him^d: *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

As it is most just, so it is also most sweet to aim all at this, *that God be glorified*: it is the alone worthy and happy design, that fills the heart with heavenliness, and with a heavenly calmness; sets it above the clouds and storms of those passions that disquiet low self-seeking minds. He is a miserable unsettled wretch, that cleaves to himself and forgets God; is perplexed about his credit, and gain, and base ends, which are often broke; and which, when he attains, yet they and he must shortly perish together. When his estate, or designs, or any comforts fail, how can he look to him whom he looked so little at before? May not the Lord say, *Go to the gods whom thou hast served, and let them deliver and comfort thee?* Seek comfort from thyself, as thou didst all for thyself. What an appalment will this be? But he that hath resigned himself, and is all for God, may say confidently, that *the Lord is his portion*. This is the Christian's aim, to have nothing in himself, nor in any thing, but in this tenure; all for the glory of my God, my estate, family, abilities, my whole self, all I have and am. And as the love of God grows in the heart, this purpose grows; the higher the flame rises, the purer it is; the eye is daily more upon it; it is oftener in the mind in all actions than before. In common things, the very works of our callings, our very refreshments, to eat, and drink, and sleep, are all for this end; and with a particular aim at it as much as may be; even the thought of it often renewed throughout the day, and, at times, generally applied

^d Rom. xi. ult.

to all our ways and employments. It is that elixir that turns thy ordinary works into gold, into sacrifices, by touch of it.

Through Jesus Christ.] The Christian in covenant with God, receives all this way, and returns all this way; and Christ possesses, and hath equal right with the Father to this glory, as he is equally the spring of it with him, as God. But it is conveyed through him as Mediator, that obtains all the grace we receive; and all the glory we return, and all our praise, as our spiritual sacrifice, is put into his hand as our high-priest, to offer up for us, that they may be accepted.

Now the holy ardour of the apostle's affections, taken with the mention of this glory of God, carries him to a *doxology*, as we term it, a rendering of glory in the middle of his discourse. Thus often we find in St. Paul likewise. Poor and short-lived is the glory and grandeur of men; like themselves, it is a shadow, and nothing; but this is solid and lasting, it is supreme, and abideth *for ever*. And the apostles, full of divine affections, and admiring nothing but God, do delight in this, and cannot refrain from this at any time in their discourse; it is always sweet and seasonable, and they find it so. And thus are spiritual minds: a word of this nature falls on them as a spark on some matter that readily takes fire; they are straight inflamed with it. But alas! to us how much is it otherwise! The mention of the praises and glory of our God, is to our hearts as a spark falling either into a puddle of water, and foul water too, or at least as upon green timber, that much fire will not kindle: so much moisture of our humours and corruptions, that all dies out with us, and we remain cold and dead.

But were not this a high and blessed condition, to be in all estates in some willing readiness to bear a part in this song, to acknowledge the greatness and goodness of our God, and to wish him glory in all? What are the angels doing? This is their business without end. And seeing we hope to partake with

them, we should even here, though in a lower key, and not so tunably neither, yet as we may, begin it: and upon all occasions, our hearts should be often following in this sweet note, or offering at it, *To him be glory and dominion for ever.*

Ver. 12. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

13. *But rejoice, in as much as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

THIS fighting life! surely when we consider it aright, we need not be dissuaded from loving it, but have rather need to be strengthened with patience to go through, and to fight on with courage and assurance of victory; still combating in a higher strength than our own, against sin within, and troubles without. This is the great scope of this epistle, and the apostle often interchanges his advices and comforts in reference to these two. *Against sin* he instructs us in the beginning of this chapter, and here again, *against suffering*, and both in a like way; and urges us to be armed, *armed with the same mind* that was in Christ. After the same manner, in the mortifying of sin, *we suffer with him*, as there he teaches, verse 1. of this chapter; and in the encountering of affliction *we suffer with him*, as here we have it; and so the same mind in the same sufferings, will bring us to the same issue. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, &c. But rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye likewise may be glad with exceeding joy.*

The words to the end of the chapter contain grounds of encouragement and consolation for the children of God in sufferings, especially in suffering for God.

These two verses have these two things, (1.) The

close conjunction of sufferings with the estate of a Christian. 2. The due composure of a Christian towards suffering.

1. The connection of sufferings with the estate of a Christian; it is no new, and therefore no strange thing, that sufferings, hot sufferings, fiery ones, be the companions of religion; besides the common miseries of human life, there is an accession of troubles and hatreds for that holiness of life to which the children of God are called.

It was the lot of the Church from her wicked neighbours, and in the Church, the lot of the most holy and peculiar servants of God from the profane multitude. *Wo is my mother* (says Jeremiah), *thou hast born me a man of contentions^a*. And of all the Prophets, says not our Saviour, handling this same argument in his sermon, *So persecuted they the Prophets that were before you^b?* And after tells them what they might look for, *Behold*, says he, *I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves^c*. And, in general, there is no following of Christ, but with his badge and burden. Something is to be left, we ourselves are to be left; *whosoever will be my disciple, let him deny himself*; and somewhat to take; *take up my cross and follow me^d*. And doth not the Apostle give his scholars this universal lesson, as an infallible truth, *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution?* Look in the close of that roll of believers conquering in suffering, what a cluster of sufferings and torture you have^e. Thus in the primitive times, the trial and fiery trial, even literally so, continued long; these wicked emperors hated the very innocency of Christians; and the people, though they knew their blameless carriage, yet, when any evil came, would pick this quarrel and still cry, *Christianos ad leones*.

Now this, if we look to inferior causes, *is not strange*, the malignant ungodly world hating holi-

^a Jer. xv. 10.

^b Matth. v. 12.

^c Matth. x. 16.

^d Matth. xvi. 24,

^e Heb. xi. 36, 37, &c.

ness, *hating the light*, yea, the very shadow of it; and the more the children of God walk like their Father, and their home, the more unlike must they, of necessity, become to the world about them; and, therefore, become the very mark of all their enmities and malice.

And thus indeed the godly, though the *sons of peace*, are the improper causes, the occasion of much noise and disturbance in the world, as their Lord, the *Prince of Peace*, avows it openly of himself in that sense, *I came not to send peace, but a sword, to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against the mother, &c.*^f If a son in a family begin to inquire after God, and withdraw from their profane or dead way, Oh! what a clamour rises presently, Oh! my son, or daughter, or wife, is become a plain fool, &c. And then is all done that may be, to quell and vex them, and makè their life grievous to them.

The exact holy walking of a Christian really condemns the world about him; shews the disorder and foulness of their profane ways; and the life of religion, set by the side of dead formality, discovers it to be a carcase and lifeless appearance; and, for this, neither grossly wicked, civil, nor formal persons, can well digest it. There is in the life of a Christian a convincing light, that shews the deformity of the works of darkness, and a piercing heat, that scorches the ungodly, which stirs and troubles their consciences: This they cannot endure, and hence rises in them a contrary fire of wicked hatred; and hence the trials, the fiery trials of the godly. If they could get those precise persons removed out of their way, think they, then they might have more room, and live at more liberty, as it is^g, a *carousing* [*χαρῆσον*]. What a dance there was about the dead bodies of the two witnesses; *the people and nations rejoiced and made merry, and sent gifts one to another, because these two Prophets tormented them that dwelt on the*

^f Matth. x. 34.^g Rev. xi. 10.

earth. And from the same hearth, I mean the same wickedness of heart in the world, are the fires of persecution kindled against the saints in the world; and the bonfires of joy when they are rid of them.

And as this is an infernal fire of enmity against God, it is blown by that spirit whose element it is. Satan stirs up and blows the coal, and raises the hatred of the ungodly against Christians.

But while he, and they in whom he powerfully works, are thus working for their vile ends in the persecutions of the saints, HE that sovereignly orders all, is working in the same, his wise and gracious ends; and attains them, and makes the malice of his enemies serve his ends, and undo their own. It is true, that by the heat of persecution, many are scared from embracing religion; such as love themselves and their present ease, and others that seemed to have embraced it, are driven to let it go and fall from it; but yet, when all is well computed, it is still upon the gaining hand. Those that reject it, or revolt from it, are such as have no true knowledge of it, nor share in it, nor in that happiness in which it ends; but they that are indeed united to Jesus Christ, do cleave the closer to him, and seek to have their hearts more fastened to him, because of these trials, that they are, or likely may be, put to. And in their victorious patience appears the invincible power of religion where it hath once gained the heart, that it cannot be beaten nor burnt out; itself is a fire more mighty than all the fires kindled against it. The love of Christ conquers and triumphs in the hardest sufferings of life, and in death itself.

And this hath been the means of kindling it in other hearts which were strangers to it, when they beheld the victorious patience of the saints who conquered dying, as their Head did; who wearied their tormentors, and triumphed over their cruelty by a constancy far above it.

Thus, these fiery trials make the lustre of faith appear most, as gold shines brightest in the fur-

nace; and if any dross be mixed with it, it is refined and purged from it by these trials, and so it remains by the fire purer than before. And both these are in the resemblance here intended; that the fire of sufferings is the advantage of believers, both trying the excellency of faith, giving evidence of it, what it is, and also purifying it from earth and drossy mixtures, and making it more excellently what it is; raising it to a higher pitch of refinedness and worth. In these fires, as faith is tried, the word on which faith relies is tried, and is found *all gold*, most precious, no refuse in it. The truth and sweetness of the promises are much confirmed in the Christian's heart, upon his experiment of them in his sufferings; his God is found to be as good as his word, being *with him when he goes through the fire*^h; preserving him, that he loseth nothing except dross, which is a gainful loss, leaving only of his corruption behind him.

Oh! how much worth is it, and how doth it endear the heart to God, to have found him sensibly present in the times of trouble, to have found him refreshing the soul with dews of spiritual comfort, in the midst of the flames of fiery trial!

One special advantage of these fires, is the purging of a Christian's heart from the love of the world and of present things; it is true, the world at best is base and despicable, in respect of the high estate and hopes of a believer, yet still there is somewhat within him, which would bend him downwards, and draw him to too much complacency in outward things, if they were much to his mind: Too kind usage might sometimes make him forget himself, and think himself at home, at least so much, as not to entertain these longings after home, and that ardent progress homewards that become him: It is good for us certainly to find hardship, enmities and contempts here, and to find them frequent that we may not think them strange, but ourselves strangers, and think it were strange for us to be otherwise en-

^h Isa. xliii. 2.

tertained. This keeps the affections more clear and disengaged, sets them upward. Thus the Lord makes the world displeasing to his own, that they may turn in to him, and seek all their consolations in himself: Oh! unspeakable advantage.

2. *The composure of a Christian in reference to sufferings*, is prescribed in these two following, *resolving and rejoicing*; 1. Resolving to endure them, reckoning that he shall meet with them, *think it not strange*, $\mu\eta\ \xi\epsilon\iota\lambda\iota\zeta\epsilon\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$; 2. Rejoicing in them, $\chi\alpha\iota\rho\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon$, *be glad in as much*, &c.

Be not strangers in it.] Which yet naturally we would be: We are willing to hear of peace and ease, and would gladly believe what we extremely desire. It is a thing of prime concern to take at first a right notion of Christianity, which many do not, and so either fall off quickly, or walk on slowly and heavily; do not reckon right the cost, take not into the account the duties of doing and suffering; but think to perform some duties, if they may with ease, and have no other foresight; they do not consider that self-denial, that fighting against a man's self, and vehemently with the world, these trials, fiery trials, which a Christian must encounter with. As they observe of other points, Popery in this is very compliant with nature, which is a very bad sign in religion; we would be content it were true that the true Church of Christ had rather prosperity and pomp for her badge than the Cross, much ease and riches, and few or no crosses, except they were painted and gilded crosses, such as that church hath chosen, instead of real ones.

Most men would give religion a fair countenance, if it gave them fair weather; and they that do indeed acknowledge Christ to be the Son of God, as St. Peter did¹, yet are naturally as unwilling as he was to hear the hard news of suffering; and if their advice might have place, would readily be of his mind, *Be it far from the Lord*. His good confession was not, but this kind advice was, from

¹ Matth. xvi. 22, 23.

flesh and blood, and from an evil spirit, as the sharp answer tells, *Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me.*

You know what kind of Messiah the Jews generally dreamed of, and therefore took offence at the meanness and sufferings of Christ, expecting an earthly king, and an outward flourishing state; and the disciples themselves, after they had been long with him, were still in that same dream, when they were contesting about imaginary places; yea, they were scarce well out of it, even after his suffering and death; all the noise and trouble of that had not well awaked them^k; *We trusted it had been He which should have restored Israel.*

And, after all that we have read and heard of ancient times, and of Jesus Christ himself, his sufferings in the flesh, and of his Apostles and his saints, from one age to another, yet still we have our inclinations to this, of driving troubles far off from our thoughts, till they come upon our backs, and fancy nothing but rest and ease, till we be shaken rudely out of it.

How have we of late flattered ourselves, many of us one year after another, upon slight appearances! Oh! now it will be peace, and, behold, still trouble hath increased, and these thoughts have proved *the lying visions* of our own hearts, while *the Lord hath not spoken it*^l. And thus, of late, have we thought it at hand, and taken ways of our own to hasten it: That, I fear, will prove fools haste, as you say.

You that know the Lord, seek to him earnestly for the averting of further troubles and combustions; which, if you look aright, you will see do threaten us as much as ever: And withal, seek hearts, prepared and fixed for days of trial, *fiery trial*; yea, though we did obtain some breathing of our outward peace, yet shall not the followers of Christ want their trials from the hatred of the un-

^k Luke xxiv. 21.

^l Ezek. xiii. 7.

godly world, *If it persecuted me* (says he), *it will also persecute you*^m.

Acquaint therefore your thoughts and hearts with sufferings, that when they come, thou and they not being strangers, may agree and comply the better. Do not afflict yourselves with vain fears beforehand, of troubles to come, and so make uncertain evils a certain vexation by anticipation; but rather forethink the hardest trial you may probably be put to, for the name and cause of Christ, and labour for a holy stability of mind, for encountering it, if it should come upon you: Things certainly fall the lighter on us, when they fall first upon our thoughts. In this way, indeed, of an imagined suffering, the conquest beforehand may be but imaginary, and thou mayest fail in the trial: Therefore be still humble, and depend on the strength of Christ, and seek to be previously furnished with much distrust of thyself, and much trust in him, with much denial of thyself, and much love to him; and this preparing and training of the heart may prove useful, and make it more dexterous, when brought to a real conflict: In all, both beforehand, and in time of the trial, make thy Lord Jesus all thy strength; that is our only way in all to be conquerors, *to be more than conquerors, through him that loved us*ⁿ.

Think it not strange, for it is not; suit your thoughts to the experience and verdict of all times, and to the warnings that the Spirit of God in the Scriptures, and our Saviour himself hath given us from his own mouth, and in the example which he shewed in his own person. But the point goes higher.

Rejoice: Though we think not the sufferings strange, yet may we not well think that rule somewhat strange, to *rejoice* in them? No, it will be found as reasonable as the other, being duly considered: And it rests upon the same ground, which is well able to bear both, *In as much as you are partakers of the sufferings of Christ*.

^m John xv. 20.

ⁿ Rom. viii. 37.

If the children of God consider not their trials in their natural bitterness, but in the sweet love from whence they spring, and the sweet fruits that spring from them; that we are our Lord's gold, and he tries us in the furnace to purify us (as in the former verse), this may beget not only patience, but gladness even in the sufferings. But add we this, and truly it completes the reason of this way in our saddest sufferings, that *in them we are partakers of the sufferings of Christ.*

So then, 1. Consider this twofold connected participation of the sufferings of Christ, and of the after-glory. 2. The present joy even in sufferings springing from that participation.

I need not tell you, that this communion in sufferings is not in point of expiation, or satisfaction to divine justice, which was the peculiar end of the sufferings of Christ *personal*, not of the common sufferings of Christ *mystical*; *he bare our sins on his own body on the tree*^o, and, in bearing them, took them away; we bear his sufferings, as his body united to him by his Spirit. Those sufferings that were his personal burden, we partake the sweet fruits of; they are accounted ours, and we acquitted by them; but the endurance of them was his high and incommunicable task, in which none at all were with him; our communion in these, as fully completed by himself in his natural body, is the ground of our comfort and joy in these sufferings that are completed in his mystical body, the Church.

This is indeed our joy, that we have so light a burden, so sweet an exchange, the weight of sin quite taken off our backs, and all bound on his cross only, and our crosses, the badges of our conformity to him, laid indeed on our shoulders, but the great weight of them likewise held up by his hand, that they overpress us not. These fires of our trial may be corrective, and purgative of the remaining power of sin, and they are so intended; but Jesus Christ alone, in the sufferings of his own

^o 1 Pet. ii. 24.

cross, was the burnt-offering, *the propitiation for our sins.*

Now, although he hath perfectly satisfied for us, and saved us by his sufferings; yet this conformity with him in the way of suffering, is most reasonable. As our holiness doth not stand in point of law, nor come in at all in the matter of justifying us, yet we are called and appointed to holiness in Christ, as assimilating us to him our glorious Head; and we do really receive it from him, that we may be like him; so these our sufferings bear a very congruous likeness with him, though not as an accession to his in expiation, yet as a part of his image; and therefore the Apostle says, even in this respect, that we are *predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son*^p. Is it fit that we should not follow, where our Captain led, and went first, but that he should lead through ragged thorny ways, and we pass about to get away through flowery meadows? As his natural body shared with his head in his sufferings, so ought his mystical to share with him, as its Head. Consider the buffetings and spittings on his face, and thorny crown on his head, a pierced side, nailed hands and feet; and if we be parts of him, can we think that a body finding nothing but ease, and bathing in delights, can be truly united to a Head so tormented? I remember what that pious *Duke* is said to have declared at Jerusalem, when they offered to crown him king there, “I will have no crown of gold where Christ Jesus was crowned with thorns^q.”

This is the way we must follow, or else resolve to leave him; the way of the cross is the royal way to the crown. He said it, and put them in mind of it again, that they might take the deep impression of it. *Remember what I said unto you, the servant is not greater than the Lord: If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: If they*

^p Rom. viii. 29.

^q Nolo auream, ubi Christus spineam.

have kept my saying, they will keep yours also^r. And particularly in point of reproaches, *If they called the Master Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household*^s? A bitter scoff, an evil name, reproaches for Christ, why do these fret thee? they were a part of thy Lord's entertainment while he was here, thou art even in this a *partaker of his sufferings*; and, in this way is he bringing thee forward to the partaking of his glory: That is the other thing.

When his glory shall be revealed.] Now he is hid, little of his glory is seen; it was hid while he was on earth, and now it is hid in heaven, where he is, and for his body here, his Church, it hath no pompous dress, nor outward splendour; and the particular parts of it, the saints, are poor despised creatures, the very refuse of men in outward respects and common esteem; so he himself is not seen, and his followers, the more they are seen and looked on by the world's eye, the more meanness appears: As in the days of his humiliation, some rays were breaking forth through the veil of his flesh, and cloud of his low despicable condition; thus is it with his followers, sometimes a glance of his image strikes the very eye of the world, and forces some acknowledgment and a kind of reverence in the ungodly: But commonly Christ and his followers are covered with all the disgraces and ignominies the world can put on them. But there is a day wherein he will appear, and it is at hand; and then *he shall be glorious, even in his despised saints, and admired in them that believe*^t; how much more in the matchless brightness of his own glorious person.

In the mean time, he is hid, and they are hid in him; *our life is hid with Christ in God*^u. The world sees nothing of his glory and beauty, and even his own see not much here, they have but a little glimmering of him, and their own happiness in

^r John xv. 20.^s Matt. x. 24.^t 2 Thess. i. 10.^u Colos. iii. 3.

him; know little of their own high condition, and what they are born to. But in that bright day he shall shine forth in his royal dignity, and *every eye shall see him*^{*}, and be overcome with his splendour; terrible shall it be to those that formerly despised him and his saints; but to them the gladdest day that ever arose upon them, a day that shall never set or be benighted; the day they so much longed and looked out for, the full accomplishment of all their hopes and desires. Oh! how dark were all our days without the hope of this day!

Then, says the Apostle, *ye shall rejoice* with exceeding joy; and to the end you may not fall short of that joy in the participation of glory, fall not back from a cheerful progress in the communion of these sufferings that are so closely linked with it, and will so surely lead unto it, and end in it; for in this the Apostle's expression, this glory and joy is set before them, as the great matter of their desires and hopes, and the certain end of their present sufferings.

Now, upon these grounds the admonition will appear reasonable, and not too great a demand, *to rejoice even in the sufferings*.

It is true, that passage in the Epistle to the Heb. xii. 11. opposes present affliction to joy. But, 1. If you mark, it is but in the appearance or outward visage, *it seemeth not to be matter of joy, but of grief*. To look to it, it hath not a smiling countenance, yet joy may be under it. And, 2. Though to the flesh it is, what it seems, grief, and not joy, yet there may be under it spiritual joy; yea, the affliction itself may help and advance that joy. 3. Through the natural sense of it, there will be some alloy or mixture of grief, so that the joy cannot be pure and complete, but yet there may be joy even in it. This the Apostle here clearly grants, *rejoice now in suffering, that you may rejoice exceedingly after it*, ἀγαλλιώμενοι, *leaping for joy*: Doubtless, this joy, at present, is but a little parcel, a drop of that

* Rev. i. 7.

sea of joy. Now it is joy, but more reserved, than *they shall leap for joy*^y. Yet, even at present, rejoice in *trial*, yea, in *fiery trial*. This is possible; the children of God are not called to so bad a life as the world imagines; besides what is laid up for them in heaven, they have, even here, their rejoicings and songs in their distresses, as those prisoners had their psalms, even at midnight after their stripes, and in their chains^z, before they knew of a sudden deliverance: True, there may be a darkness within, clouding all the matter of their joy; but even that darkness is the seed-time of after joy, *and light is sown in that darkness*, and shall spring up; and not only shall they have a rich crop at full harvest, but even some first fruits of it here, in pledge of the harvest.

And this they ought to expect, and seek after with minds humble and submissive, as to the measure and time of it, that they may be partakers of spiritual joy, and may by it be enabled to go patiently, yea, cheerfully, through the tribulations and temptations that be in their way homeward; and for this end ought they to endeavour after a more clear discerning of their interest in Christ, that they may know they partake of him, and so, in suffering, are partakers of his sufferings, and shall be partakers of his glory.

Many afflictions will not cloud and obstruct this so much as one sin; therefore, if ye would walk cheerfully, be most careful to walk holily. All the winds about the earth make not an earthquake, but that within its bowels.

Now this joy is grounded on this communion; 1. In sufferings; then, 2. In glory. 1. Even in sufferings themselves: It is a sweet joyful thing to be a sharer with Christ in any thing; all enjoyments wherein he is not, are bitter to a soul that loves him, and all sufferings with him sweet. The worst things of Christ are more truly delightful than the best things of the world; his afflictions sweeter than

^y Luke vi. 23.

^z Acts xvi. 25.

their pleasures; his *reproaches* more glorious than their honours, and more *rich than their treasures*, as Moses accounted them^a. Love delights in likeness and communion, not only in things otherwise pleasant, but in the hardest and harshest things, which have not any thing in them desirable, but only that likeness: So that this thought is very sweet to a heart possessed with this love. What does the world by its hatred and persecutions, and revilings for Christ, but make me more like him, give me a greater share with him, in that which he did so willingly undergo for me? *When he was sought to be made a king, he escaped; but when he was sought to the cross, he freely yielded himself.* BERN. And shall I shrink and creep back from what he calls me to suffer for his sake; yea, even all my other troubles and sufferings I will desire to have stamped thus, with this conformity to the sufferings of Christ, in the humble, obedient, cheerful endurance of them, and the giving up my will to my father's.

The following of Christ makes any way pleasant; his faithful followers refuse no march after him, be it through desarts, and mountains, and storms, and hazards, that will affright self-pleasing easy spirits: Hearts kindled and actuated with the Spirit of Christ, will *follow him wheresoever he goeth*.

As he speaks it, for warning his Disciples, *If they persecuted me, they will persecute you*; so he speaks it for comforting them, and sufficient comfort it is, *If they hate you, they hated me before you*^b.

2. Then add the other; see whether it tends, *He shall be revealed in his glory*, and ye shall even overflow with joy in the partaking of that glory. Therefore rejoice now in the midst of all your sufferings: stand upon the advanced ground of the promises and Covenant of Grace, and by faith look beyond this moment, and all that is in it, to that day wherein *everlasting joy shall be upon your heads, a crown of it, and sorrow and mourning*

^a Heb. xi. 26.

^b John xv. 18. 20.

shall fly away^c. Believe this day, and the victory is won. Oh! that blessed hope, well fixed and exercised, would give other manner of spirits: What zeal for God would it not inspire? What invincible courage against all encounters? How soon will this pageant of the world vanish, that men are gazing on, these pictures and fancies of *pleasures* and *honours*, falsely so called, and give place to the real glory of the sons of God, when this blessed Son, who is God, shall be seen appearing in full majesty, and all his brethren in glory with him, all clothed in their robes? And if you ask, Who are they? Why, *these are they that came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb*^d.

Ver. 14. *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*

15. *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busy-body in other mens matters.*

16. *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*

THE *Word* is the Christian's *magazine*, both of instructions and encouragements, for *doing* or *suffering*, and this epistle is rich in both. Here what the Apostle had said concerning suffering in general, he specifies in the particular case of suffering *reproaches*; but this expression seems not to come up to the height of that which he hath used before; he spoke of *fiery trial*, but this of *reproach* seems rather fit to be called an *airy trial*, the blast of vanishing words. Yet, upon trial, it will be found to be (as here it is accounted) a very sharp, a *fiery trial*.

First, then, let us take a view of this particular kind of suffering. And, *2dly*, Of the comfort and advice furnished against it.

^c Isa. li. 11.

^d Rev. vii. 14.

If we consider both the nature of the thing and the strain of the scriptures, we will find that reproaches are amongst the sharpest sort of sufferings, and are indeed *fiery trials*. *The tongue is a fire*, says St. James, iii. 6. and reproaches are the flashes of that fire; they are a subtle kind of flame, like that lightning which, as naturalists say, crusheth the bones, and yet breaks not the flesh; they wound not the body, as do tortures and whips, but, through a whole skin, they reach the spirit of a man, and cut it. So Psal. xlii. 10. *As with a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me*. The fire of reproaches preys upon and dries up the *precious ointment*, to which Solomon compares *a good name*^a. A good name is in itself a good, a prime outward good; and, take us according to our natural temper and apprehensions, (according to which we feel things), most men are, and some more excessively, too tender and delicate in it. Although, truly, I take it rather to be a weakness than true greatness of spirit, as many fancy it, to depend much on the opinion of others, and feel it deep, yet, I say, considering that it is commonly thus with men, and that the remains of this, as of other frailties, are to be found in the children of God, it cannot well be but reproaches will ordinarily much afflict men, and to some kind of spirits, possibly, will be more grievous than great bodily pain or suffering.

And as they are thus, the scripture accounts them so, and very usually reckons them amongst sufferings, and names them rather more than any other kind of suffering, and that with good reason, not only for their piercing nature, (as we have said), but withal for their frequency and multitude; and some things we suffer do (as flies) more trouble by their number than by their weight.

Now, there is no one kind of suffering of such constancy, and commonness, and abundance, as reproaches are. When other persecutions cease, yet those continue; when all other fires of martyrdom

^a Eccles. vii. 1.

are put out, these burn still. In all times and places, the malignant world is ready to revile religion; not only avowed enemies of it do so, but the greatest part even of those that make a vulgar profession of it: They that putwardly receive the *form* of religion, yet are many of them inwardly haters of *the power of it*^b; and Christians, who are such only in name, will scorn and reproach those that are Christians indeed.

And this is done with such ease by every one, that these arrows fly thick; every one that hath a tongue can shoot them, even base abjects^c; and *the drunkards make songs*, as Jeremiah complains; the meanest sort can reach this point of persecution, and be active in it against *the children of God*: They that cannot, or dare not, offer them any other injury, will not fear, nor spare, to let fly a taunt or bitter word; so that whereas other sufferings are rarer, these meet them daily^d; *While they say daily unto me, where is thy God?*

We see how justly reproaches are often mentioned amongst, and beyond other trials, and accounted persecution^e: *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.* In the history of the casting out Hagar and her son^f, all we find laid to Ishmael's charge was, *Sarah saw him mocking.* And as *he that was born after the flesh* did then in this manner persecute him that *was born after the Spirit*^g, even so it is now. And thus are reproaches mentioned amongst the sufferings of Christ in the gospel, and not as the least; the railings and mockings that were darted at him, and fixed to the cross, are mentioned more than the very nails that fixed him. And Heb. xii. 2. the *shame* of the cross, though he was above it, and despised it, yet that shame added much to the burden of it; so ver. 3; *He endured the contradiction of sinners.*

^b 2 Tim. iii. 5.^c Psal. xxxv. 15.^d Psal. xlii. 10.^e Mat. v. 10, 11.^f Gen. xxi. 9.^g Gal. iv. 29.

Now, the other thing is, that this is the lot of Christians, as it was of Christ; and why should they look for more kindness and better usage, and think to find acclamations and applauses from the world, that so vilified their Lord? Oh no! The vain heart must be weaned from these to follow Christ, if we will indeed follow him; it must be tamed to share with him in this point of suffering, not only mistakes and misconstructions, but bitter scoffings and reproaches. Why should not our minds ply and fold to this upon that very reason, which he so reasonably presses again and again on his Disciples, *The servant is not greater than his master*; (and when giving them express warning to lay their account with reproaches), *If they called the Master Beelzebub, how much more will they speak so of the servants^h?*

Infer. 1. Seeing it is thus, I shall first press upon the followers of Christ, the Apostle's rule here, to keep their suffering spotless, that it may not be comfortless; resolve to endure it, but resolve, likewise, that it shall be on your part innocent suffering; *suffer not as evil doers*, ver. 15. Besides that, the ways of wickedness are most unsuitable to your holy calling; look to the enmity about you, and gain, even out of that evil, this great good, of more circumspect and holy walking; recollect who you are, and where you are, your own weakness, and the world's wickedness. This our Saviour represents, and upon it gives that suitable ruleⁱ, *Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves^k*. Know you not what exact eyes of others are upon you? Will you not thence learn, exactly to eye yourselves, and all your ways, and seek of God, with David, *to be led in righteousness, because of your enemies, your observers^l*.

This is the rule here, ver. 16. *suffer as Christians*, holily and blamelessly, that the enemy may not know

^h Mat. x. 24, 25.

ⁱ Mat. x. 16.

^k Prudens simplicitas.

^l Psal. xxvii. 11.

where to fasten his hold: As the wrestlers anointed their bodies, that the hands of their antagonists might not fasten upon them; thus, truly, they that walk and suffer as Christians anointed with the Spirit of Christ, their enemies cannot well fasten their hold upon them.

To you, therefore, that love the Lord Jesus, I recommend this especially, to be careful, that all your reproaches may be indeed for Christ, and not for any thing in you unlike to Christ, that there be nothing save the matter of your rod; keep the quarrel as clean and unmixed as you can, and this will advantage you much, both within and without, in the peace and firmness of your minds, and in the refutation of your enemies. This will make you *as a brazen wall*, as the Lord speaks to the Prophet, *they shall fight against you, but shall not prevail^m*.

Keep far off from all impure unholy ways; *suffer not as evil-doers*, no nor *as busy-bodies*, be much at home, setting things at rights within your own breast, where there is so much work, and such daily need of diligence, and then you will find no leisure for unnecessary idle prying into the ways and affairs of others; and further than your calling, and the rules of Christian charity, engage you, you will not interpose in any matters without you, nor be found proud and censorious, as the world is ready to call you.

2. Shun the appearances of evil; walk warily and prudently in all things; be not *heady nor self-willed*, no not in the best thing; walk not upon the utter brink and hedge of your liberty, for then you shall be in danger of overpassing it; things that are lawful may be inexpedient, and in case there is fear of scandal, ought either to be wholly forborne, or used with much prudence and circumspection. Oh! study in all things to adorn the gospel, and under a sense of your own unskilfulness and folly, beg wisdom from above, *that anointing, that will teach you all things*, much of that *holy Spirit, that will*

^m Jer. xv. 20.

lead you in the way of all truthⁿ, and then in that way, whatsoever may befall you, suffer it, and however you may be vilified and reproached, happy are you, for *the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.*

Inf. 2. But if such as are thus reproached be happy, then, certainly, their reproaches are no less unhappy; if on those resteth *the Spirit of glory and of God*, what spirit is in these but the spirit of Satan, and of shame and vileness? Who is the basest and most contemptible kind of person in the world? truly, I think an avowed contemner and mocker of holiness. Shall any such be found amongst us?

I charge you all in this name of Christ, that you do not entertain godless prejudices against the people of God. Let not your ears be open to, nor your hearts close with, the calumnies and lies, that may be flying abroad of them and their practices, much less open your mouths against them, or let any disgraceful word be heard from you: And when you meet with undeniable real frailties, know the *law of love*, and practice it: Think, “this is blame-worthy, yet let me not turn it to the reproach of those persons, who, notwithstanding, may be sincere, much less to the reproach of other persons professing religion, and then cast it upon religion itself.”

My brethren, beware of sharing with the ungodly in this tongue-persecution of Christians. There is a day at hand, wherein the Lord will make inquiry after those things; if we shall be made accountable for *idle words* (as we are warned^o,) how much more for bitter malicious words uttered against any, especially against the saints of God, whom, however the world may reckon, he esteems his precious ones, his treasure. You that now can look on them with a scornful eye, which way shall you look when they shall be beautiful and glorious, and all the ungodly *clothed with shame*? Oh! do not reproach them, but rather come in and share with them in the way of holiness, and in all the sufferings and re-

ⁿ John xvi. 13.

^o Matt. xii. 36.

proaches which follow it: For if you partake of their disgraces, you shall share in glory with them, in the day of their Lord's appearing.

The words have two things, The *evil* of these reproaches supposed, and the *good* expressed. The *evil* supposed is, that they are trials, and hot trials: Of this I have spoken already. Let us now,

edly; Consider the *good* expressed: Ye are happy, even at present, in the very midst of them; they do not trouble your happy estate, yea, they advance it.

So very solid indeed is the happiness of the saints, that, in the lowest condition, it remains the same: Cast them where you will, into disgraces, or caves, into prisons and chains, still they are happy: A diamond in the mire, sullied and trampled on, yet still retains its own worth.

But this is more, that the very things that seem to make them miserable, do not only not do that, but, on the contrary, do make them the more happy; they are gainers by their losses, and attain more liberty by their thraldoms, and more honour by their disgraces, and more peace by their troubles: The world, and all their enemies, are exceedingly befooled in striving against them; not only can they not undo them, but by all their enmity and practices, they do them pleasure, and raise them higher; with what weapons shall they fight? How shall a Christian's enemies set upon him? Where shall they hit him, seeing all the wrongs they do him, do indeed enrich and ennoble him; and the more he is depressed, he flourishes the more; certainly the blessedness of a Christian is matchless and invincible.

But how holds this, that a Christian is *happy in reproaches and by them*? it is not through their nature and virtue, for they are evil^p; but (1.) By reason of the cause. (2.) Of the accompanying and consequent comfort.

First, the cause. We have it negatively, ver. 15. *not as an evil doer*, that stains thy holy profession,

^p So Mat. v. 12.

damps thy comfort, clouds thy happiness, disprofits thee and dishonours thy Lord. We have it also positively, ver. 14. 16. *for the name of Christ*; and what is there so rough, which that will not make pleasant, to suffer with Christ and for Christ, who suffered so much and so willingly for thee? Hath he not gone through all before thee, and made all easy and lovely? hath he not sweetened poverty, and persecution, and hatred, and disgraces, and death itself, perfumed the grave, and turned it from a pit of horror into a sweet resting bed? And thus the love of Christ judgeth, it thinks all lovely which is endured for him, is glad to meet with difficulties, and ambitious of suffering for him: Scorn and contempt is a thing of hard digestion; but much inward heat of love digests it easily; reproaches are bitter, but the reproaches of Christ are sweet. Take their true value^a; *The reproaches of Christ are greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; his very worst things are better than the best of the world.* A touch of Christ turns all into gold; his reproaches are *riches*, as there, and *honour*, as here: Not only shall ye be happy afterwards, but happy are ye at present, and that not only in apprehension of that after happiness, as sure and as already present, faith realizing it; but even for that they possess the presence and comforts of the Spirit.

For the spirit of glory.] This accompanies disgraces for him; his Spirit, *the Spirit of glory and of God*; with your sufferings goes the name of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ: Take them thus, when reproaches are cast upon you for his name, do you bear them by his Spirit? And surely his Spirit is most fit to support you under them, yea, to raise you above them; they are ignominious and inglorious, he is the Spirit of glory; they are human reproaches, he the divine Spirit, *the Spirit of glory and of God*, that is, the glorious Spirit of God.

And this is the advantage, the less the Christian finds esteem and acceptance in the world, the more

^a Heb. xi. 26.

he turns his eye inward, to see what is there, and there he finds the world's contempt counterpoised by a weight of excellency and glory, even in this present condition, as the pledge of the glory before him. The reproaches be *fiery*; but the *Spirit of glory resteth upon you*, doth not give you a passing visit, but stays within you, and is indeed yours. And in this the Christian can take comfort, and let the foul weather blow over, let all the scoffs, and contempts abroad, pass as they come, having a glorious Spirit within, such a guest honouring him with his presence, abode, and sweet fellowship, and indeed one with him. So that rich miser at Athens could say, when they scorned him in the streets, he went home to his bags and hugs himself there at that sight, say they what they would^a. How much more reasonably may the Christian say, "Let them revile and bark, I have riches and honour enough that they see not." And this it is that makes the world, as they are a malicious party, so to be an incompetent judge of the Christian's estate. They see the rugged unpleasant outside only, the right inside their eye cannot reach. We were miserable indeed, were our comforts such as they could see.

And as this is the constant estate of a Christian, it is usually most manifested to him in the time of his greatest sufferings. Then (as we said) he naturally turns inward and sees it most, and accordingly finds it most. God making this happy supplement and compensation, that when they have least of the world, they have most of himself; when they are most covered with the world's disfavour, his favour shines brightest to them. As Moses, when he was in the cloud, had nearest access and speech with God; so when the Christian is most clouded with distresses and disgraces, then doth the Lord often shew himself most clearly to him.

^a ————— Populus me sibilat; at mihi plaudo
Ipse domi, simul ac nummos contemplor in arca.

If you be indeed Christians, you will not be so much thinking at any time, how you may be free from all sufferings and despisings; but rather how you may go strongly and cheerfully through them. Lo, here is the way, seek a real and firm interest in Christ, and the participation of Christ's Spirit, and then a look to him will make all easy and delightful. Thou wilt be ashamed within thyself, to start back, or yield one foot, at the encounter of a taunt or reproach for him. Thou wilt think, "For whom is it, is it not for him, who for my sake hid not his face from shame and spitting? and further, he died; now, how would I meet death for him, if I shrink at the blast of a scornful word?"

If you would know whether this his Spirit is and resteth in you, it cannot be better known, than, 1st, by that very love, ardent love to him, and high esteem of him; and from thence a willingness, yea, a gladness, to suffer any thing for him. 2. This *Spirit of glory* sets the heart on glory. True glory makes heavenly things excellent in our thoughts, and sets the world, the better and worse, the honour and dishonour of it, at a low rate.

The spirit of the world is a *base ignoble* spirit, even the highest pitch of it. Those that are projecting for kingdoms, form but poor designs, compared to those of the Christian, who ascends above all things under the sun, and above the sun itself, and therefore he is not shaken with the threats of the world, nor taken with its offers. Excellent is that answer St. Basil gives, in the person of those martyrs, to that emperor, who made them (as he thought) great proffers to draw them off, "Why, say they, dost thou bid us so low as pieces of the world, we have learned to despise it all?" This is not supidity nor an affected stoutness of spirit, but a humble sublimity, which the natural spirit of a man cannot reach unto.

But wilt thou say still, "This stops me, I do not find this Spirit in me; if I did, then I think I could be willing to suffer any thing." To this, for the

present, I say only, Dost thou desire that Christ may be glorified, and couldst thou be content, though it were by thy suffering in any kind, thou mayest be called to undergo for him? Art thou willing to give up thy own interest, to study and follow Christ's, and sacrifice thine own credit, and name, to advance his? Art thou unwilling to do any thing that may dishonour him? Art thou willing to suffer any thing that may honour him, or desirest thou to be thus? Then dispute not, but up and walk on in his strength.

Now, if any say, "but his name is dishonoured by these reproaches;" true, says the apostle, *on their part it is so, but not on yours.* They that reproach you do their best to reflect on Christ and his cause, but thus it is only *on their part*: you are sufferers for his name, and so you *glorify it*: your faith, and patience, and victory by these, do declare the power of divine grace, and the efficacy of the gospel. They have made torturers ashamed, and induced some beholders to share with those who were tortured. Thus, though the profane world intends, as far as it can, to fix dishonour upon the profession of Christ, yet it sticks not, but on the contrary he is glorified by your constancy.

And as the ignominy fastens not, but the glory from the endurance, so Christians are obliged, and certainly are ready, according to the apostle's zeal, *ver. 16. to glorify God on this behalf*; that as he is glorified in them, so they may glorify and bless him who hath dignified us so; that whereas we might have been left to a sad sinking task, to have suffered for various guilts, our God hath changed the tenor and nature of our sufferings, and makes them to be *for the name of Christ.*

Thus a spiritual mind doth not swell on a conceit of constancy and courage, which is the readiest way of self-undoing, but acknowledges all to be *gift*, even suffering, *To you it is given not only to believe, but to suffer,* and so *to bless him on that behalf*†.

† Phil. i. 29.

Oh! this love grows in suffering^s; *They went away, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.*

Consider, it is but a short while, and the wicked and their scoffs shall vanish; *they shall not be.* This shame is of short date, and will presently be over; but the glory, and *Spirit of glory*, are eternal. What though thou shouldst be poor, and defamed, and despised, and be the common mark of scorn and all injuries, yet the end of them all is at hand. This is now thy part, the scene shall be changed. Kings here, real ones, are in the deepest reality but stage kings; but when thou comest to alter the person thou now bearest, here is the odds, thou wast a fool in appearance, and for a moment, but thou shalt be truly a king for ever.

Ver. 17. *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

THERE is not only perfect equity, but also a comely proportion and beauty in all the ways of God, had we eyes sufficiently opened to discern, particularly in this point, of the sufferings and afflictions of the church. The apostle here sets it before his brethren, *For the time is come, &c.*

Where is, 1st, a parallel of the Lord's dealing with his own and with the wicked^a. 2. A persuasion of due compliance and confidence in his own upon that consideration.

The parallel is in the *order* and the *measure* of punishing; and it is so, that, for the *order*, it *begins at the house of God, ends upon the ungodly*; and that carries in it this great difference in the *measure*, that it passes from the one on whom it begins, and rests on the other on whom it ends, and on whom the full weight of it lies for ever. It is so expressed, *What shall be the end, &c.* which imports, not only that judgment shall overtake them in the end, but

^a So Acts v. 41.

^a Verse 17, 18.

that it shall be their end; they shall end in it, and it shall be endless upon them.

The time is.] Indeed the whole time of this present life is so; it is the time of suffering and purging for the church, compassed with enemies who will afflict her, and subject to these impurities which need affliction. The children of God are in their under age here; all their time they are children, and have their frailties and childish follies: and therefore, though they are not always under the stroke of the rod, for that they were not able to endure, yet they are under the discipline and use of the rod all their time. And whereas the wicked escape, till their day of full payment, the children of God are in this life chastised with frequent afflictions, and so *the time* [ὁ καιρὸς] may here be taken according as the Apostle St. Paul uses the same word ^b, παθήματα τῆ νῦν καιροῦ, *The sufferings of this present time.*

But withal it is true, and appears to be here implied, that there are particular set times, which the Lord chooses for correcting of his church. He hath the days prefixed and written in his Ephemerides, hath his days of correcting, wherein he goes round from one church to another; we thought it would never come to us, but we have now found the smart of it.

And here the apostle may probably mean the times of these hot persecutions that were begun and continued, though with some intervals, for two or three ages. Thus Apocal. vi. after the *white horse*, immediately follows at his heels *the red*, and *the black*, and *the pale horse*. And as it was upon the first publishing of the gospel, so usually, upon the restoring of it, or upon remarkable reformations of the church, and revivings of religion, follow sharp and searching trials. As the lower cause of this is the rage and malice of Satan, and the ungodly world, acted and stirred by him against the purity and prevalency of religion, so it is from a higher hand for better ends. The Lord will discover the

^b Rom. viii. 18.

multitudes of hypocrites, and empty professors, that will at such a time readily abound, when religion is upon an advancing way, and the stream of it runs strong. Now, by the counter current of troubles, such fall back and are carried away. And the truth of grace in the hearts of believers, receives advantage from these hazards and sufferings, they are put to fasten their hold the better on Christ, to seek more experience of the real and sweet consolations of the gospel, which may uphold them against the counter blasts of suffering. Thus is religion made a more real and solid thing in the hearts of true believers; they are entered to that way of receiving Christ and his cross together, that they may see their bargain, and not think it a surprise.

Judgment.] Though all sufferings are not such, yet, commonly, there is that unsuitable and unwary walking among Christians, that even their sufferings for the cause of God, though unjust from men, yet are from God just punishments of their miscarriages towards him, in their former ways; their self-pleasing and earthliness, having too high a relish for the delights of this world, forgetting their inheritance and home, and conforming themselves to the world, walking too like it.

Must begin.] The church of God is punished, while the wicked are free and flourish in the world, possibly all their days; or if judgment reach them here, yet it is later; it *begins at the house of God.*

1. This holds in them who profess his name, and are of the visible church, compared with them who are without the pale of it, and are its avowed enemies.
2. Those who profess a desire of a more religious and holy course of life within the church, compared with the profane multitude.
3. They who are indeed more spiritual and holy, and come nearer unto God, compared with others who fall short of that measure; in all these respects it holds, that the Lord doth more readily exercise them with afflictions, and correct their wanderings, than any other.

And this truly is most reasonable, and the reason lies in the very name given the church, *The House of God*.

1. There is *equity* in such a proceeding: the sins of the church have their peculiar aggravations, which fall not upon others; that which is simply a sin in strangers to God, is, in his people, the breach of a known and received law, and a law daily unfolded and set before them; yea, it is against their oath of allegiance; it is perfidy and breach of covenant, committed both against the clearest light, and strictest bonds, and highest mercies; and the more particular profession of his name, and testimonies of his love, which make sin the more sinful, and the punishment of it the more reasonable. The sins of the church are all twice dypt, *Dibapha*^c, *have a double dye*; they are both breaches of the law, and they are besides ungrateful and disloyal breaches of promise.

2. As there is unquestionable *equity*, so there is an evident *congruity* in it. God is ruler of all the world, but particularly of his church, therefore here called *his House*, wherein he hath a special residence and presence. And therefore it is most suitable that there he be specially observed and obeyed, and if disobeyed, that he take notice of it and punish it; that he suffer not himself to be dishonoured to his face by those of his own house. And therefore, whosoever escape, his own shall not; *You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities*^d. He that righteously judges and rules all nations, it is fit he make his justice most evident and exemplary in his own house, where it may best be remarked, and where it will best appear how impartial he is in punishing sin. So a king, as the Psalmist^e, that he may rule the land well, makes his *own house* exemplary. It is, you know, one special qualification of a bishop and pastor^f; *To be one that ruleth well*

^c Isa. i. 18.

^d Amos iii. 2.

^e Psal. ci. 2.

^f 1 Tim. iii. 4.

his own house, having his children in subjection; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? Now this, therefore, more eminently appears in the supreme Lord of the church; he rules it as his own house; and therefore, when he finds disobedience there, he will first punish that. So he clears himself; and the wicked world being afterwards punished, their mouths are stopped with the preceding punishment of the church: will he not spare his own; yea, shall they be first scourged; *What then shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel?*

And indeed the purity of his nature, if it be every where contrary to all sinful impurity, cannot but most appear in his peculiar dwelling-house; that he will be sure to have neat and clean. If he hate sin all the world over, he hates it most, and testifies his hatred of it most, where it is nearest to him. He will not endure it in his presence; as cleanly neat persons cannot well look upon any thing that is nasty, much less will they suffer it to come near them, or touch them, and to continue in their presence in the house where they dwell. The Lord *that is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity^e*, will not abide it within his own doors; and the nearer any comes to him, the less can he endure any unholiness, or sinful pollution, in them; *he will be sanctified in all that come nigh him^h*. So in his ministers: Oh! how pure ought they to be, and how provoking and hateful to him are their impurities! Therefore, in that commission to the destroyersⁱ, to which place the apostle here may have some eye, *Go*, says he, *slay the old and young; and begin at my sanctuary*. They were they who had polluted his worship, and there the first stroke lighted. And, in a spiritual sense, because all his people are his elect priesthood, and should be *holiness to the Lord*, and when they are not really so, and *do not sanctify him* in their walking, he sanc-

^e Hab. i. 17.^h Lev. x. 3.ⁱ Ezek. ix. 6.

tifies himself, and declares his holiness in his judgments on them.

3. There is mercy in this dispensation too; even under the habit of judgment, love walks secretly and works; so 'loving and so wise a Father will not undo his children by sparing the rod, but *because he loves; rebukes and chastens*^k. His church is his house; therefore, that he may delight in it, and take pleasure to dwell in it, and make it happy with his presence, he will have it often washed and made clean, and the filth and rubbish scoured and purged out of it: this argues his gracious purpose of abiding in it.

And as he doth it, that he may delight in his people, so, that they may delight in him, and in him alone, he embitters the breast of the world to wean them; makes the world hate them, that they may the more easily hate it; suffers them not to settle upon it, and fall into a complacency with it; but makes it unpleasant to them by many and sharp afflictions, that they may, with the more willingness, come off, and be untied from it, and that they may remember home the more, and seek their comforts above, that finding so little below, they may turn in to him, and delight themselves in communion with him. That the sweet incense of their prayers may ascend the more thick, he kindles these fires of trial to them; for though it should not be so, yet so it is, that, in times of ease, they would easily grow remiss and formal that way.

He is gracious and wise, knows what he does with them, and *the thoughts he thinks toward them*^l. All is for their advantage, purging their iniquities^m; purges out impatience and earthliness, and self-will, and carnal security; and thus refines them for vessels of honour. We see in a jeweller's shop, that as there are pearls and diamonds, and other precious stones, there are files, cutting instruments, and many sharp tools, for their polishing: and while

* Heb. xii. 6. Prov. iii. 11. Apoc. iii. 19. ^l Jer. xxix. 11.

^m Isa. xxvii.

they are in the work-house, they are continual neighbours to them, and come often under them. The church is God's jewellery, his work-house, where his jewels are a polishing for his palace and house; and those he especially esteems and means to make most resplendent, he hath oftenest his tools upon them.

Thus observe it, as in the church to other societies, so is it in a congregation or family belonging to it, if there be one more diligently seeking after God than the rest, he shall probably meet with more trials, and be oftener under affliction than any of the company; either under contempt and scorn, or poverty and sickness, or some one pressure or other, outward or inward; and those inward trials are the nearest and sharpest which the world sees least, and yet the soul feels most: and yet all these, both outward and inward, have love, unspeakable love in them all, to purge and polish them; and, by increasing of grace, do fit them for glory.

Inf. 1. Let us not be so foolish as to promise ourselves impunity on account of our relation to God, as his church in covenant with him. If once we thought so, sure our experience hath undeceived us. And let not what we have suffered harden us, as if the worst were past. We may rather fear its being a pledge, and beginning of sharper judgment. Why do we not consider our unhumbed and unpurged condition, and tremble before the Lord? Would we save him a labor, he would take it well. Let us purge our souls, that he may not be put to further purging by new judgments. Were we busy reading our present condition, we should see very legible fore-signs of further judgments; as for instance: 1. The Lord taking away his eminent and worthy servants, who are as the very pillars of the public peace and welfare; and taking away counsel and courage, and union, from the rest; forsaking us in our meetings, and leaving us in the dark to grope and rush one upon another. 2. The dissensions and jarrings in the state and church, are likely from

imagination to bring it to a reality. These unnatural burnings threaten new fires of public judgments to be kindled amongst us. 3. That general despising of the gospel, and abounding of profaneness throughout the land, not yet purged, but as our great sin remaining in us, calls for more fire and more boiling. 4. The general coldness and deadness of spirit, want of that zeal for God, that communion of saints, that mutual stirring up one another to holiness, and which is the source of all, the ceasing of prayer, that frozen benumbedness in that so necessary work, in that preventer of judgments, that binder of the hands of God from punishments, and opener of them unto us, for the pouring forth of mercies. Oh! this is a sad condition in itself, though it portended no further judgment, the Lord hiding himself, and the spirit of zeal and prayer withdrawn, and scarce any lamenting it, or so much as perceiving it. Where are our days either of solemn prayer or praises, as if there were cause of neither, and yet there is a clear cause of both. Truly, my brethren, we have need, if ever, to bestir ourselves; are not these kingdoms at this present brought to the extreme point of their highest hazard? and yet, who lays it to heart?

Inf. 2. Learn to put a right construction on all God's dealings with his church, and with thy soul. For his church, there may be a time wherein thou shalt see it not only tossed, but to thy thinking, covered and swallowed up with tears; but wait a little, it shall arrive safe. This is a common stumbling stone, but walk by the light of the word, and the eye of faith, looking on it, and thou shalt pass by and not stumble at it. The church mourns, and Babylon sings, *sits as a queen*ⁿ, but for how long? She shall *come down and sit in the dust*^o; and Sion shall be glorious, and *put on her beautiful garments*^p, while Babylon shall not look for another *Revelation*^q, to raise her again; no, she shall never

ⁿ Rev. xviii. 7.^o Isa. xlvi. 1.^p Isa. lii. 1.^q Perhaps the original reading might be *revolution*; but as Reve-

rise. The angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, *Thus, with violence, shall the great city Babylon, be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all*^r.

Be not sudden, take God's work together, and do not judge of it by parcels. It is indeed all wisdom and righteousness; but we shall best discern the beauty of it when we look on it in the frame, and when it shall be fully completed and finished, and our eyes enlightened to take a fuller and clearer view of it than we can have here. Oh! what wonder! what endless wondering will it then command!

We read of Joseph hated, and sold, and imprisoned, and all most unjustly; but because within a leaf or two, we find him freed and exalted, and his brethren coming supplicants to him, we are satisfied. But when we look on things which are for the present cloudy and dark, our impatient hasty spirits cannot learn to wait a little till we see the other side, and what *end the Lord makes*. We see *judgment beginning at the house of God*, and this perplexes us, while we consider not the rest, *What shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel?* God begins the judgment on his church for a little time, that it may end and rest upon his enemies for ever. And indeed he leaves the wicked last in the punishment; and defers it that he may make use of them for the punishment of his church. They are *his rod*^s. But, when he hath done that work with them, they are *broken and burnt*^t, and that when they are at the height of their insolence and boasting; not knowing what hand moves them, and smites his people with them for a while, *till the day of their consuming come*^u. Let the vile enemy that hath shed our blood, and insulted over us, rejoice in their present sparing, and in mens procuring

lation or Apocalypse will give some, though a less perspicuous sense, the Editor would not take the liberty to change it.

^r Rev. xviii. 20, 21.

^s Isa. x. 1.

^t Ver. 16.

^u Ver. 24, 25.

of it, and pleading for it*. There is another hand whence we may look for justice; and though it may be the judgment *begun at us* is not yet ended, and that we may yet further (and that justly) find them our scourge, yet, certainly, we may and ought to look beyond that unto the end of the Lord's work; which shall be the ruin of his enemies, and the peace of his people, and the glory of his name.

But we now come to consider God dealing with the wicked, *The end of them that obey not the gospel.* The end of all the ungodly is terrible; but especially of such as heard the gospel, and have not received and obeyed it.

The word ἀπειθέων hath in it both unbelief and disobedience, and these are inseparable. Unbelief is the grand point of disobedience in itself, and the spring of all other disobedience: and pity it is that men will not believe it to be thus.

They think it an easy and a common thing *to believe.* Who doth not believe? Oh! but rather, who does? *Who hath believed our report?* Were our own misery, and the happiness that is in Christ, believed, were the riches of Christ, and the love of Christ, believed, would not this persuade men to forsake their sins and the world, to embrace him?

But men run away with an extraordinary fancy of believing, and do not deeply consider what news the gospel brings, and how much it concerns them. Sometimes, it may be, they have a sudden thought of it, and they think, I will think on it better at some other time. But when comes that time? One business steps in after another, and shuffles it out. Men are not at leisure to be saved.

* I am ready to believe this refers to the escape of many who had deserved the severest punishments, for their part in the grand Irish rebellion, but were screened by the favour of some great men, in the reign of King Charles II.

† Isa. liii. 1.

Observe the phrase, *The gospel of God*. It is his embassy of peace to men, the riches of his mercy and free love opened and set forth; not simply to be looked on, but laid hold on. The glorious holy God declaring his mind of agreement with man in his own Son; his blood streaming forth in it to wash away uncleanness, and yet this gospel is not obeyed. Sure the conditions of it must be very hard, and the commands must be intolerably grievous, that they are not hearkened to. Why, judge you if they be. The great command is that, to receive that salvation; and the other is this, to love that Saviour; and there is no more. Perfect obedience is not now the thing. And the obedience which is required, that love makes sweet and easy to us, and acceptable to him. This is proclaimed to all that hear the gospel, and the greatest part refuse it; they love themselves, and their lusts, and this present world, and will not change, and so they perish.

They perish, What is that? What is their end? I will answer that but as the Apostle doth, and that is even asking the question over again, *What shall be their end?*

There is no speaking of it; a curtain is drawn; silent wonder expresses it best, telling it cannot be expressed. How then shall it be endured? It is true, that there be resemblances used in Scripture, giving us some glance of it; we hear of a *burning lake, a fire that is not quenched, and a worm that dies not*²; but these are but shadows to the real misery of them that obey not the gospel. Oh! to be filled with the wrath of God, the ever living God, for ever! What words or thoughts can reach it! Oh! eternity, eternity; Oh! that we did believe it.

This same parallel of the Lord's dealing with the righteous and the wicked, is continued in the following verse in other terms, for the clearer expression, and deeper impression of it.

² Isa. lxvi. 24. Mark ix. 44. Rev. xxi. 8.

Ver. 18. *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

It is true, then, that they are *scarce saved*, even they that endeavour to walk uprightly in the ways of God, that is, *the righteous*; they are *scarcely saved*. That imports not any uncertainty or hazard in the thing itself to the end, in respect of the purpose, and performance of God, but only the great difficulties, and hard encounters in the way; that they go through so many temptations and tribulations, so many *fightings without, and fears within*; the Christian being so simple and weak, and his enemies so crafty and powerful; and the oppositions of the wicked world being so many and great, their hatreds, and scorns, and molestations, the slights and violence of Satan, and, the worst of all, the strength of their own corruptions. Alas there is, by reason of abounding corruption, such frequent, almost continual, need of purging by afflictions and trials; to be still under physic; to be of necessity at some times drained and brought so low, that there is scarce strength or life remaining in them.

And, truly, all outward difficulties would be but matter of ease, would be as nothing, were it not the incumbrance of lusts and corruptions within. Were a man to meet disgraces and sufferings for Christ, how easily would he go through them, yea, and rejoice in them, were he rid of the fretting impatience, the pride, and self-love, of his own carnal heart. These clog and trouble him worst, and he cannot shake them off, nor prevail against them without much pains, many prayers and tears; and many times after much wrestling, he scarce finds that he hath gained any ground: Yea, sometimes he is foiled and cast down by them.

And so in all other duties, such a fighting and continual combat with a revolting backsliding heart, the flesh pulling, and dragging downwards; when he would mount up, he finds himself as a bird with

a stone tied to its foot; hath wings that flutter to be upwards, but is pressed down with the weight fastened to him. What struggling with wanderings and deadness in hearing, and reading, and prayer! and that which is most grievous is, that, by their unwary walking, and the prevailing of some corruption, they *grieve the Spirit of God*, and provoke him to *hide his face*, and withdraw his comforts! How much pain to attain any thing, any particular grace of humility, or meekness, or self-denial; and if any thing be attained, how hard to keep and maintain it against the contrary party! How often are they driven back to their old point! If they do but cease from striving a little, they are carried back by the stream: And what returns of doubtings and misbelief, after they thought they were got somewhat above them! in so much that sometimes they are at the point of giving over, and thinking it will never do for them. And yet through all these they are brought safe home. There is another strength which bears them up, and brings them through; but these things, and many more of this nature, argue the difficulty of their course, and that it is not so easy a thing to come to heaven as most imagine it.

Inf. Thou that findest so little stop and conflict in it, goest thy round of external duties, and all is well, art no more troubled; thou hast need to enquire, after a long time spent in that way, Am I right? Am I not yet to begin? Sure this looks not like the way to heaven, as it is described in the Scripture; it is too smooth and easy to be right.

And if the way of the righteous be so hard, then how hard shall be the end of the ungodly and sinner that walks in sin with delight. It were strange if they should be at such pains, and with great difficulty attain their end: And he should come in amongst them in the end. They were fools indeed, true! if it were so; but what if it be not so? Then the wicked is the fool, and shall find he is: When

he shall not be able to *stand in judgment, where shall he appear^a?* When to the end he might not appear, he would be glad to be smothered under the weight of the hills and mountains, if they could shelter him from appearing?

And what is the aim of all this which we have spoken, or can speak, on this subject, but that ye may be moved to take into deeper thoughts the concernment of your immortal souls. Oh! that you would be persuaded. Oh! that you would make in to Jesus Christ, and seek salvation in him. Seek to be covered with his righteousness, and to be led by his Spirit in the ways of righteousness. That will seal to you the happy certainty of the end, and overcome for you all the difficulties of the way. What is the gospel of Christ preached for? What was the blood of Christ shed for? Was it not, that by receiving him, we might escape condemnation? Nay, this drew him from heaven; *for he came that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly^b.*

Ver. 19. *Wherefore, 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.*

NOTHING doth so establish the mind amidst the rollings and turbulency of present things, as both a look above them, and a look beyond them; above them, to the steady and good hand by which they are ruled; and beyond them, to the sweet and beautiful end, to which, by that hand, they shall be brought. This the Apostle lays here as the foundation of that patience and peace in troubles, wherewith he would have his brethren furnished. And thus he closes this chapter in these words: *Wherefore, 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.*

The words contain the true principle of Christian

^a Psal. i. 5.

^b John x. 4.

patience and tranquillity of mind in the sufferings of this life, expressing both wherein it consists, and what are the grounds of it.

1. Wherein it consists: it lies in this, *committing the soul unto God*; the word *εἰ ἀγαθοποιῶν* added, is a true qualification of this, that it be *in well-doing*, according to the preceding doctrine, which the Apostle gives clearly and largely, ver. 15, 16. If men would have inward peace amidst outward trouble, they must walk by the rule of peace, and keep strictly to it. If you would commit your soul to the keeping of God, know he is a holy God; and an unholy soul that walks in any way of wickedness, known or secret, is no fit commodity to put into his pure hand to keep: Therefore, as you would have this confidence to give your holy God the keeping of your soul, and that he will accept of it, and take it off your hand, beware of wilful pollutions and unholy ways. Walk so as you may not discredit your Protector, and move him to be ashamed of you, and disclaim you. Shall it be said that you live under his shelter, and yet walk inordinately? As this cannot well be, you cannot well believe it to be. Loose ways will loosen your hold of him, and confidence in him. You will be driven to question your interest, and to think, "Sure, I do but delude myself; can I be under his safeguard, and yet follow the course of the world, and my corrupt heart?" Certainly, let who will be so, he will not be a guardian and patron of wickedness: No, *he is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with him*^a. If thou give thy soul to him to keep upon terms of liberty to sin, he will turn it out of his doors, and remit it back to thee to look to as thou wilt thyself. Yea, in the ways of sin, thou dost, indeed, steal it back, and carriest it out from him. Thou puttest thyself out of the compass of his defence, goest without the trenches, and art, at thine own hazard, exposed to armies of mischiefs and miseries.

^a Psal. v. 4

Inf. This, then, is principally to be looked to: you that would have safety in God in evil times, beware of evil ways; for in these it cannot be. If you will be safe in him, you must stay with him, and in all your ways keep within him *as your fortress*; now in the ways of sin you run out from him.

Hence it is we have so little established confidence in God in times of trial. We take ways of our own, and will be gadding, and so we are surprised and taken, as they that are often venturing out into the enemy's reach, and cannot stay within the walls. It is no idle repetition^b; *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* He that wanders not, but stays there, shall find himself there hid from danger; they that rove out from God in their ways, are disquieted and tossed with fears; this is the *fruit of their own ways*; but the soul that is indeed given to him to keep, keeps near him.

Study pure and holy walking, if you would have your confidence firm, and have boldness and joy in God. You will find that a little sin will shake your trust, and disturb your peace more than the greatest sufferings; yea, in the greatest extremity of sufferings, your assurance and joy in God will grow and abound most, if sin be kept out. That is the trouble-feast that disquiets the conscience, which, while it continues good, is *a continual feast*. So much sin as gets in, so much peace will go out; Afflictions cannot break in upon it to break it, but sin doth. All the winds which blow about the earth from all points stir it not, only that within the bowels of it makes the earthquake.

I do not mean that for infirmities a Christian ought to be discouraged; but take heed of walking in any way of sin; for that will unsettle thy confidence. Innocency and holy walking makes the soul of a sound constitution, that the counter-blasts of affliction wear not out, nor alter it. Sin makes it sickly and crazy, that it can endure nothing; therefore

^b Psal. xci. 1.

study to keep your consciences pure, and they shall be peaceable, yea, in the worst times commonly most peaceable, and best furnished with spiritual confidence and comfort.

Let such *commit the keeping of their souls to God*. The Lord is an entire protector, he keeps the bodies, yea, all that belongs to the believer, and as much as is good for him, makes all safe, *keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken^c*; yea, says our Saviour, *The very hairs of your head are numbered^d*, but that which, as in the believer's account, and in God's account, so is certainly in itself most precious, is principally committed and received into keeping, *their souls*.

They would most gladly be secured in that here, and that shall be safe in the midst of all hazards; their concern is, that whatsoever be lost, that may not; that is the jewel; therefore the prime care of that, if it be safe, all is well, it is riches enough. *What shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, says our Saviour, and lose his own soul^e?* and so, what shall it disprofit a man, though he lose the whole world, if he gain his soul? Nothing at all.

When times of trial come, Oh! what a bustle to hide this and that, to fly, and carry away, and make safe, that which is but trash and rubbish to the precious soul: but how few thoughts of that! Were we in our wits, that would be all at all times, not only in trouble, but in days of peace. Oh! how shall I make sure about my soul? Let all go as it may, can I be secured and persuaded in that point? I desire no more.

Now, the way is this, *commit them to God*; this many say, but few do, give them into his hand, lay them up there; so the word is, and they are safe, and may be quiet and composed.

In patience possess your souls, says our Saviour^f; impatient fretting souls are out of themselves, their

^c Psal. xxxiv. 18.

^d Matth. x. 30.

^e Mark viii. 36.

^f Luke xxiv. 19.

owners do not possess them. Now, the way to possess them ourselves in patience, is thus to commit them to him in confidence; then we only possess them, when he keeps them. They are easily disquieted and shaken in pieces while they are in our hands; but in his hand, they are above the reach of dangers and fears.

Inf. 2. Learn from hence, what is the proper act of faith; it rolls the soul over on God, ventures it in his hand, and rests satisfied concerning it, being there. And there is no way but this, to be quiet within, to be impregnable and immovable in all assaults, and fixed in all changes, believing on free love; therefore be persuaded to resolve in that, not doubting and disputing, whether shall I believe or not? Shall I think he will suffer me to lay my soul upon him to keep? so unworthy, so guilty a soul, were it not presumption? Oh! what sayest thou? why dost thou thus dishonour him, and disquiet thyself? if thou hast a purpose to walk in any way of wickedness, indeed thou art not for him; yea, thou comest not near him to give him thy soul. But wouldst thou have it delivered from sin, rather than from trouble, yea, rather than from hell; is that the chief safety thou seekest, to be kept from iniquity, *from thine iniquity*, thy beloved sins? Dost thou desire to dwell in him, and walk with him? then, whatsoever is thy guiltiness and unworthiness, come forward, and give him thy soul to keep. If he should seem to refuse it, press it on him; if he stretch not forth his hand, lay it down at his foot, and leave it there, and resolve not to take it back; say, "Lord thou hast made us those souls; thou callest for them again to be committed to thee: Here is one, It is unworthy; but what soul is not so? Is most unworthy; but therein will the riches of thy grace appear most in receiving it." And thus leave it with him, and know he will make thee a good account of it. Now, lose goods, or credit, or friends, or life itself, it imports not; the main concern is sure, if so be thy soul be out of hazard; *I suffer*

these things for the gospel, says the Apostle^g, nevertheless I am not ashamed; why? for I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.

2dly. We now proceed to consider the *ground* of this confidence; which is in these two things in him whom we trust, *ability* and *fidelity*. There is much in persuasion of the power of God; though few think they question that; there is in us secret undiscovered unbelief, even in that point; therefore the Lord so often makes mention of it in the prophets^h. And, in this point, the apostle particularly expresses, *I am persuaded that he is able to keep, &c.* So this apostleⁱ, *Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.* This is very needful to be considered in regard of the many and great oppositions and dangers, and powerful enemies that seek after our souls, *He is able to keep them, for he is stronger than all, and none can pluck them out of his hand,* says our Saviour^k. This the apostle here hath in that word, *Creator*; if he was able to give them being, sure he is able to keep them from perishing. This relation of a Creator implies likewise a benign propension and good-will to the works of his hands. If he gave them us at first, when once they were not, forming them of nothing, will he not give us them again, being put into his hand for safety?

And as he is powerful, he is no less faithful, *a faithful Creator*, truth itself. Them that believe on him he never deceives nor disappoints. Well might St. Paul say, *I know whom I have trusted*^l. Oh! the advantage of faith. It engages the truth and power of God, his royal word and honour lies upon it, to preserve the soul that faith gives him in keeping. If he remain able and faithful to perform his word, that soul shall not perish.

There be in the words other two grounds of quiet-

^g 2 Tim. i. 11, 12.

^h Isa. l. 3, &c.

ⁱ Chap. i. 5.

^k John x. 29.

^l 2 Tim. i. 12.

ness of spirit in sufferings: 1. It is according to the will of God. The believing soul subjected and levelled to that will, complying with his good pleasure in all, cannot have a more powerful persuasive than this, that all is ordered by his will. This settled in the heart, would settle it much, and make it even in all things, not only to know, but wisely and deeply to consider, that it is thus: that all is measured in heaven, every drachm of thy troubles weighed by that skilful hand, that doth all in weight, number, and measure.

And then, consider him as thy God and Father, who hath taken special charge of thee, and thy soul; thou hast given it to him, and he hath received it.

And, upon this consideration, study to follow his will in all, to have no will but his. This is thy duty and thy wisdom. Nothing is gained by spurning and struggling, but to hurt and vex thyself; but by complying, all is gained, sweet peace; it is the very secret, the mystery of solid peace within, to resign to his will, to be disposed at his pleasure, without the least contrary thought. And thus, as two-faced pictures, those sufferings and troubles, and whatsoever else, (while beheld on the one side, as painful to the flesh), hath an unpleasant visage, yet go about a little, and look upon it as thy Father's will, and then it is smiling, beautiful and lovely. This I would recommend to you not only for temporals, as easier there, but in spiritual things, your comforts and sensible enlargements, to love all he does. It is the sum of christianity, to have thy will crucified, and the will of thy Lord thy only desire; joy or sorrow, sickness or health, life or death, in all, *thy will be done.*

The other ground is in the first word, reflecting on the foregoing discourse, *wherefore*; what? seeing your reproaches and sufferings are not endless, yea, they are short, they shall end, quickly end, and end in glory, be not troubled about them, overlook them, the eye of faith will do it; it sees them to be

but for *a moment*. What are they? This is the great cause of our inquietness in present troubles and griefs, we forget their end. We are affected with our condition in this present life, as if it were all, and it is nothing. Oh! how quickly shall all the enjoyments, and all the sufferings of this life pass away, and be as if they had not been?

CHAP. V.

Ver. 1. *The elders which are among you I exhort, who are also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.*

THE church of Christ being one body, is interested in the condition and carriage of each particular Christian, as a part of it; but more eminently in those who are more eminent and organic parts of it. Therefore the apostle, after many excellent directions given to all his Christian brethren to whom he writes, doth most reasonably and fitly add this express exhortation to those who had oversight and charge of the rest, *The elders which are among you, &c.*

The words have, 1. A particular definition of the persons exhorted and exhorting. 2. The tenor of the exhortation itself.

The former of these we have in the first verse.

And, 1. The persons exhorted, *The elders among you.*

Elders here, as often in other places, is a name not of age, but of office; yet the office is named by that age, which is or ought to be most suitably qualified for it; and that appellation imports, that men though not aged, yet if called to that office, should be noted for such wisdom and gravity of mind and carriage as may give that authority, and command that respect, which is requisite for persons in their calling: not *novices*, as St. Paul speaks; not as a

light bladder, being easily blown up, as young unstable minds are, but such as young Timothy was in humility and diligence, as the apostle testifies of him^a, *I have none like minded, who will naturally care for your estate*; and such as the apostle Paul further exhorts him to be^b; *Let no man despise thy youth; but be an example of believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity.*

The name of *elders* indifferently signifies either their age or their calling; and the name of *ruling elders* sometimes denotes civil rulers, sometimes pastors of the church; as, amongst the Jews, both offices often met in the same person. Here it appears, *that pastors* are meant, as the exhortation of *feeding the flock* evidences; which, though it sometimes signify *ruling*, and here may comprise it, yet is chiefly by doctrine: and then the title given to Christ in the encouragement added, further confirms the interpretation, *The Chief Shepherd.*

A due frame of spirit and carriage in the elders, particularly the apostles of the church, is a thing of prime concern for the good of it. It is one of the heaviest threatenings, when the Lord declares, that he will give a rebellious people such teachers and prophets as they deserved, and indeed desired: *If there be a man to prophecy of wine and strong drink, such a one shall be a prophet*, says he to that people^c. And, on the other side, amongst the sweetest promises of mercy, this is not the least, to be furnished with plenty of faithful teachers. Though profane men make no reckoning of it, yet, were it in the hardest times, they who know the Lord will account of it as he doth, a sweet allay of all sufferings and hardship: *Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers*^d. Oh! how rich a promise is that^e; *I will give you pastors according to my own heart!*

^a Phil. ii. 20.^b 1 Tim. iv. 12.^c Micah ii. 11.^d Isa. xxx. 20.^e Jer. iii. 15.

This promise is to be pressed and suited for by earnest prayer. Were people much in this duty, pastors would find it, and so people themselves receive back their prayers, with much gain, into their own bosom; they would have the returned benefit of it, as the vapours that go up from below fall down upon the earth again in sweet showers, and make it fruitful. Thus, went there many prayers up for pastors, their doctrine would *drop as rain, and distil as dew*^f, and the sweet influence of it would make fruitful the valleys, humble hearts receiving it. And, at this time, it is very needful that the Lord be much importuned for the continuance and increase of his favour in this his church: as they who have power should be more careful of those due means, which in schools of learning, or otherwise, are needful for qualifying men for this service; so all in general, both people and pastors, and such as are offering themselves to that service, should chiefly beg from the higher academy, that teaching abundance of that Spirit to those employed in that work, that might make them *able ministers of the New Testament*.

Oh! it is an inestimable blessing to have the saving light of the gospel shining clear in the faithful and powerful ministry of it: they thought so who said of their worthy teacher, "They had rather for them the sun shall not shine, than he should not teach^g."

2. The person exhorting: *I, a co-presbyter or fellow-elder* with you. The duty of mutual exhorting lies on each Christian to another, though it be little known amongst the greatest part; but, truly, pastors should be, as in other duties, so particularly in this, eminent and exemplary in their intercourses and converse, saying often one to another, "Oh! let us remember to what we are called; to how high and heavy a charge; to what holiness and diligence: how great is the hazard of

^f Deut. xxxi. 2.

^g *Satius solem non lucere, quam Chrysostomum non docere.*

our miscarriage, and how great the reward of our fidelity!" They should be often whetting and sharpening one another by those weighty and holy considerations.

And a witness of the sufferings of Christ. He did indeed give witness to Christ, by suffering for him the hatred and persecutions of the world in the publishing of the gospel, and so was a witness and martyr before the time that he was put to death. And this I exclude not; but that which is more particularly here intended is, his certain knowledge of the sufferings of Christ, in his own person; as an eye-witness of them, and upon that knowledge a publisher of them^h. And thus these two suit, with the two motives urged, to bear home the exhortation. The one couched in that, *the flock of God*ⁱ, which he purchased with those his sufferings, whereof I was an eye witness. And the other of *a crown*^k, I may speak the more confidently of that, for I am one of those who have real interest in it, and firm belief of it, *a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed*.

And these indeed are the things which give weight to a man's words, make them powerful and pressing, *a witness of the sufferings of Christ*. The apostles had a singular advantage in this, that were *αἰτίοι*, *eye-witnesses*; and St. Paul, who wanted that, had it supplied by a vision of Christ, in his conversion. But, certainly, a spiritual view of Christ crucified is generally (I will not say absolutely) necessary to make a minister of Christ, but certainly very requisite for the due witnessing of him, and displaying the excellency and virtue of his sufferings; so to preach the gospel that there needs no other crucifix^l, after so clear and lively a way as that; it may in some measure suit the apostle's word^m; *Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you*.

^h Luke xxiv. 48.ⁱ ver. 2.^k ver. 4.^l Alluding to the custom of many Popish preachers, to carry a little crucifix into the pulpit with them.^m Gal. iii. 1.

Men commonly read and hear, and may possibly preach, of the sufferings of Christ as a common story, and that way it may a little move a man, and wring tears from his eyes; but faith hath another kind of sight of them, and so works other kind of affections, and without that, the very eye-sight of them availed the apostles nothing: for how many saw him suffer as they did, who reviled, or at least despised him? But by the eye of faith to see the only begotten Son of God, as *stricken and smitten of God, bearing our sorrows, and wounded for our transgression*, Jesus Christ *the righteous*, reckoned amongst the unrighteous and malefactors; to see him stripped naked, and scourged, and buffeted, and nailed, and dying, and all for us; this is the thing that will bind upon us most strongly all the duties of Christianity, and of our particular callings, and best enable us, according to our callings, to bind them upon others. But our slender view of these things makes light sense, and that, cold incitements to answerable duty; certainly deep impression would cause lively expression.

Would we willingly stir up our own hearts, and one another, to holy diligence in our station, study Christ as suffering and dying more thoroughly: that is the very life of the gospel and of our souls; it is all we have to learn, and all we have to teach and press on you, *I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified*ⁿ. To make Christ's cross the sum of all my learning.

The other motive is, that he was a *partaker of the glory to be revealed*. As a witness of those sufferings, so a partaker of the glory purchased by these sufferings; and therefore, as one insighted and interested in what he speaks, the apostle might fitly speak of that peculiar duty which these sufferings and glory do peculiarly persuade. This is the only way of speaking of those things, not as a discourser or contemplative student, but a partaker. There is another force of a pastor's exhortation either to his people or his brethren, who brings his message writ-

ⁿ 1 Cor. ii. 2.

ten upon his own heart; speaks of the guilt of sin, and sufferings of Christ for it, as particularly feeling his own guilt, and looking on these sufferings as taking it away; speaks of free grace, as one who either hath drunken of the refreshing streams of it, or at least is earnestly thirsting after it; of the love of Christ, from a heart kindled with it; of the glory to come, as one who looks to be a sharer in it, and longs earnestly for it, as one who hath all his joy and content laid up in the hopes of it.

And thus with respect to Christians conversing with each other in their mutual exhortings and comfortings, all is cold and dead that flows not from some inward persuasion and experimental knowledge of divine things; but that gives an edge and a sweetness to Christian conference. To be speaking of Jesus Christ, not only as a King and as a Redeemer, but their King and their Redeemer, in David's style, *My King and my God*^a; and of his sufferings as theirs, applied by faith, and acquitting them, in St. Paul's style^b, *Who loved me, and gave himself for me*. To speak of the glory to come as their inheritance, of which they are *partakers*, their home, as strangers meeting together abroad, in some foreign country, delighting to speak of their own land^c, and their parentage, their friends, and their rich patrimony, there abiding them: And this ought to be the entertainment of Christians when they meet. Away with trifling vain discourses, cause all to give place to these refreshing remembrances of our home. Were our hearts much on that rich inheritance above, it would be impossible to refrain our tongues, and to pass on so silent concerning it, to find matter of empty pratings, and be pleased with them, and to have no relish of this. Whither go your hearts? They are out of their way, and abase themselves, that turn so much downwards, and are not more above

^a Psal. lxxviii. 24.

^b Gal. ii. 20.

^c Peregrinis in terris nulla est jucundior recordatio quam suæ civitatis. AUG. in Psal. cxlv.

the sun; eyeing still that blessed land where our purchased inheritance lies.

Oh! seek after more clear knowledge of this glory, and of your interest in it, that your hearts may rejoice in the remembrance of it, that it be not to you as the description of a pleasant land, which men read of in history, and have no portion in. They like it well, and are pleased with it while they read, be it but some imagined country or commonwealth finely fancied. But know this country of yours to be real, and no device; and seek to know yourselves to be partakers of it.

This confidence depends not upon a singular revelation, but on the power of faith, and the light of the Spirit of God, which clears to his children *the things that he hath freely given them*, though some of them, at sometimes, yea some, it may be, all or most of their time, do want it: God so disposing it, they scarce clearly see their right, till they be in possession; see not their heaven and home, till they arrive at it, or are hard upon it. Yet, truly, this we may, and ought to seek after in humility and submission, that we may have the *pledge and earnest inheritance*^d; not so much for the comfort within us, though that is allowed, as that it may wean our hearts from things below; may rise us to higher and closer communion with God, and enable us more for his service, and excite us more to his praises, even here. What were a Christian without the hope of this glory, as one said, *Tolle religionem, et nullus eris, Take away religion, and you take away the man*. And, having this hope, what are all things here to him? how poor and despicable the better and worse of this life, and this life itself! how glad is he that it will quickly end! and what were the length of it to him, but a long continuance of his banishment, a long detainment from his home! and how sweet is the message that is sent for him to come home!

Justly it is called, *The glory that is to be revealed*. It is hid for present, wholly unknown to the children

^d Eph. i. 14.

of this world, and even but little known to the children of God, who are heirs of it. Yea, they who know themselves *partakers of it*, yet know not much what it is; only this, that it is above all they know or can imagine. They may see things which make a great shew here; they may hear of more than they see; they may think or imagine more than either they hear or see, or can distinctly conceive of; but still they must think of this glory as beyond it all. Do I see pompous shews, or read or hear of them? yet this I say of them, These are not as my inheritance: Oh! it is far beyond them. Yea, does my mind imagine things far beyond them, golden mountains and marble palaces? Yet those fall short of my inheritance, for it is such *as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive*^e. Oh! the brightness of that glory when *it shall be revealed!* How shall they be astonished who shall see it, and not partake of it! How shall they be filled with everlasting joy, who are heirs of it! Were the heart much upon the thoughts of that glory, what thing is there in this perishing world, which could either lift it up or cast it down?

Ver. 2. *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*

3. *Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock:*

4. *And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

IN these words we have, 1. The duty enjoined, *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight of it.* 2. The due qualifications of their duty negatively, *not by constraint, for filthy lucre, as lording it over God's heritage, but willingly, of a ready mind, and as being ensamples to the flock.* 3. The high advantage to be expected, *an unfading crown of glory, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear.*

^e 1 Cor. ii. 9.

1. The duty enjoined, *Feed the flock of God*: Every step of the way of our salvation hath on it the print of infinite majesty, wisdom and goodness; and this amongst the rest, that men, sinful weak men, are made subservient in that great work of bringing Christ and souls to meet; that by the *foolishness of preaching*, (or what appears so to carnal wisdom), the chosen of God are called, and come unto Jesus, and are made *wise unto salvation*; and that the life which is conveyed to them by the *word of life* in the hands of poor men, is by the same means preserved and advanced. And this is the standing work of the ministry, and this the thing here bound upon them that are employed in it, *to feed the flock of God that is among them*. Jesus Christ descended to purchase a Church, and ascended to provide and furnish it, to send down his Spirit: *He ascended and gave gifts*, particularly *for the work of the ministry*; and the great use of them is this, *to feed the flock of God*.

Not to say any more of this usual resemblance of a flock, importing the weakness and tenderness of the Church, the continual need she stands in of inspection, and guidance, and defence, and the tender care of the Chief Shepherd for these things; the phrase enforces the present duty of subordinate pastors, their care and diligence in feeding of that flock. The due rule of discipline not excluded, the main part of feeding is by doctrine, leading them into the wholesome and *green pastures* of saving truths revealed in the gospel, accommodating the way of teaching to their condition and capacity; to be, as much as may be, particularly acquainted with it, and suit diligently and prudently their doctrine to it; to *feed the sheep*, those more advanced; to *feed the lambs*, the younger and weaker; to have special care of the infirm; to learn of their Master the great Shepherd, to *bind up that which is broken*, and *strengthen that which is sick*^f; those that are broken in spirit, that are exercised with temptations, and *gently to lead those that are with young*^g, in whom the inward

^f Ezek. xxxiv. 16.

^g Isa. xl. 11.

work of grace is as in the conception, and they heavy and weak with the weight of it, and the many difficulties and doubtings which are frequent companions and symptoms of that work. Oh! what dexterity and skilfulness, what diligence, and, above all, what affection, and 'bowels of compassion, are needful for this task! *Who is sufficient for these things^c?* who would not faint and give over in it, were not our Lord *the Chief Shepherd*; were not all our sufficiency laid up in his rich fulness, and all our insufficiency covered in his gracious acceptance?

Inf. 1. This is the thing we have to eye and study, to set Him before us, and to apply ourselves in His strength to his work. Not to seek to *please*, but to *feed*; not to delight the ears, but to feed the souls, of his people; to see that the food be according to his appointment; not empty or subtle notions, not light-affected expressions, but wholesome truths, solid food, spiritual things, spiritually conceived and uttered, with holy understanding and affection.

And to consider this, wherein lies a very pressing motive, it is *the flock of God*, not our own, to use as we please, but committed to our custody by him, who loves highly and prizes his flock, and will require an account of us concerning it. It is his bought, his purchased flock, and at so dear a rate, as the Apostle St. Paul uses this same consideration, in the same argument^d, *The flock of God that he hath bought with his own blood*. How reasonable is it that we bestow our strength and life on that flock, which our Lord laid down his life for; that we be most ready to draw out our spirits for them, for whom he let out his blood? *Had I*, says that holy man^e, *some of that blood poured forth on the cross, how carefully would I carry it; and, ought I not to be as careful of those souls that it was shed for!* Oh! that price which was paid for souls, which he, who was no foolish merchant, but wisdom itself, gave for them! Were that price more in our eyes, and

^c 2 Cor. ii. 16.^d Acts xx. 28.^e BERN. Advent. Sermon. 3.

more in yours, nothing would so much take either you or us, as the matter of our souls. In this would our desires and endeavours meet, we to use, and you to improve, the means of saving your precious souls.

Inf. 2. This mainly concerns us indeed, who have charge of many, especially finding the right cure of one soul within us so hard: But you are concerned in it each for one: At least remember this is the end of the ministry, that you may be brought unto Christ, that you may be led to the sweet pastures and pleasant streams of the gospel; that you may be spiritually fed, and may grow in that heavenly life, which is here begun in all those in whom it shall hereafter be perfected.

And as we ought in preaching, so you in hearing, to propound this end to yourselves, that you may be spiritually refreshed, and walk in the strength of that divine nourishment. Is this your purpose when you come hither? Inquire of your own hearts, and see what you seek, and what you find, in the public ordinances of God's house. Certainly the most do not so much as think on the due intendment of them, aim at no end, and therefore can attain none; seek nothing, but sit out their hour, asleep or awake, as it may happen, or, possibly, some seek to be delighted for the time, as the Lord tells the Prophet, *to hear, as it were, a pleasant song*^f; if the gifts and strain of the speaker be any thing pleasing. Or, it may be, they want to gain some new notions, to add somewhat to their stock of knowledge, either that they may be enabled for discourse, or, simply, that they may know. Some, it may be, go a little further; they like to be stirred and moved for the time, and to have some touch of good affection kindled in them; but this lasts but *for a while*, till their other thoughts and affairs get in, and smother and quench it; they are not careful to blow it up and improve it. How many, when they have been a little affected with the word, go out and fall into other discourses and thoughts, and either take in their affairs secretly, as

^f Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

it were, under their cloak, and their hearts keep a conference with them; or if they forbear this, yet, as soon as they go out, plunge themselves over head and ears in the world, and lose all which might have any way advantaged their spiritual condition. It may be, one will say, It was a good sermon; is that to the purpose? But what think you it hath for your praise or dispraise? Instead of saying, "Oh! how well was that spoken!" you should say, "Oh! how hard is repentance! how sweet a thing is faith! how excellent the love of Jesus Christ!" That were your best and most real commendation of the sermon, with true benefit to yourselves.

If some of you be careful of repeating, yet rest not on that; if you be able to speak of it afterwards upon occasion, there is somewhat requisite beside and beyond this, to evidence that you are indeed fed by the word, as the flock of God. As when sheep, you know, or other creatures, are nourished by their pasture, the food they have eaten appears not in the same fashion upon them; not in grass, but in growth of flesh and fleece; thus the word would truly appear to feed you, not by the bare discoursing of the word over again, but by the temper of your spirits and actions; if in them you really grow more spiritual; if humility, self-denial, charity and holiness, are increased in you by it. Otherwise, whatsoever literal knowledge you attain, it avails you nothing, though you heard many sermons every day, and attained further light by them, and carried a plausible profession of religion; yet, unless by the gospel you be transformed into the likeness of Christ, and grace be indeed growing in you, you are but, as one says of the cypress trees, fair and tall, but fruitless^s.

Are you not grieved and afraid, or may not many of you be so, who have lived many years under a fruitful ministry, and yet are as earthly and selfish, as unacquainted with God, and his ways, as at the first? Consider this, that as the neglect of souls will

^s Καλοὶ καὶ ὑψηλοὶ καὶ κάρπειοι ἔκ ἔχουσι.

lie heavy on unholy or negligent ministers, so a great many souls are ruining themselves under some measure of fit means; and so the slighting of those means will make their condition far heavier than that of many others; remembering our Saviour's word^h, *Woe to thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.*

II. The discharge of this high task we have here duly qualified: the Apostle expresses the upright way of it, both negatively and positively.

1. Negatively. There be three evils the Apostle would remove from this work, *constrainedness*, *covetousness*, and *ambition*; and the positive qualifications opposed to them, which I shall consider with them, are *willingness*, *a ready mind*, and an exemplary temper and behaviour. 1. We are cautioned against *constrainedness*, *μὴ ἀναγκασθεῖς*, either driven to the work by necessity, indigence, and want of other means of subsistence; as it is with too many, making a trade of it to live by, and setting to it as to any other calling for that end; yea, making it the refuge and forlorn resource of their insufficiency for other callings. And as men are not to undertake the work, driven to it by that hard weapon of necessity, so, being engaged in it, they are not to discharge the duties of it merely upon necessity, because of fines binding to it, and for fear of censure; this is a violent forced motion, and cannot but be both very unpleasant and unprofitable, as to the proper end and profiting of this work. And as the principle of the motion in this service should not be a compelling necessity of any kind, but true *willingness of heart*;

So, 2dly, This willingness should not arise from any other but pure affection to the work, not *for filthy gain*, but purely from the inward bent of the mind. As it should not be a compulsive or violent motion by necessity from without, so it should not be an artificial motion by weights of avarice, and love of gain, hung on within. The former motive, *necessity*,

^h Matt. xi.

makes the mind like a wheel, that is driven or drawn forcibly; the latter, *avarice*, makes it like a clock, which is kept going by art, and by weights hung to it. But there should be a natural motion, as that of the heavens in their course; a willing obedience to the Spirit of God within, moving a man in every part of this holy work; that is, *προθυμῶς*, his mind carried to it as the thing he delights in, and in which he loves to be exercised¹. There may be in a faithful pastor very great reluctancies in engaging and adhering to the work upon a sense of the excellency of it, and his unfitness, and the deep apprehension of those high interests, the glory of God, and the salvation of souls; and yet he enters into it, and continues in it, with this *readiness of mind* too, that is, with most single and earnest desires of doing all he can for God, and *the flock of God*; only grieved that there is in him so little suitableness of heart, so little holiness and acquaintance with God, for enabling him to it. But finding that, he is satisfied, and, in attendance upon that, goes on, and waits, and is doing according to his little skill and strength, and cannot leave it. He is *constrained* indeed, but all the constraint is that of *love to Jesus*^k; and for his sake to the souls he hath bought; and all the *gain* sought is to *gain* souls to Christ, which is far different from the constraint and the gain here prohibited; yea, is indeed that very willingness and readiness of mind which is opposed to that other constraint; that is without, this is within; that other gain is base filthy gain, *αιχροκέρδῃ*, this noble and divine.

Inf. 1. Far be it from us, that necessity and constraint should be the thing that moves us in so holy a work. The Lord whom we serve, sees into the heart; and if he find not that primely moving, accounts all our diligence nothing. And let not base earth within be the cause of our willingness, but a mind touched with heaven. It is true, the tempta-

¹ Timothy careth *γνησίως*, not artificially, but naturally, Phil. ii. 20.

^k 2 Cor. v. 14.

tions of earth with us, in matter of gain, are not great ; but yet the heart may cleave to them, as much as if they were much greater ; and if it do cleave to them, they shall ruin us, as well a poor stipend and glebe, if the affection be upon them, as a great deanry or bishopric. If a man fall into it, he may drown in a small brook, being under water, as well as in the great ocean. Oh ! the little time that remains, let us join our desires and endeavours in this work, bend our united strength to serve him, that we may have joy in that day of reckoning.

And, indeed, there is nothing moves us aright, nor shall we ever find comfort in this service, unless it be from a cheerful inward *readiness of mind*, and that from the *love of Christ*. Thus said he to his Apostle, *Lovest thou me ? then feed my sheep, and feed my lambs*¹. Love to Christ begets love to his people's souls, that are so precious to him, and a care of feeding them : He devolves the working of love towards him upon his flock for their good ; puts them in his room, to receive the benefit of our services, which cannot reach him considered in himself ; he can receive no other profit from it. Love, much love, gives much unwearied care, and much skill in this charge. How sweet is it to him that loves, to bestow himself, *to spend, and be spent*, upon His service whom he loves. Jacob, in the same kind of service, endured all that was imposed on him, and found it light by reason of love, the cold of the nights, and heat of the days ; seven years he served for his Rachel, *and they seemed to him but a few days, because he loved her*^m.

Love is the great endowment of a shepherd of Christ's flock. He says not to Peter, Art thou wise, or learned, or eloquent ; but, *Lovest thou me ? Then feed my sheep*.

The third evil is ambition, and that is either in the affecting of undue authority ; or the overstrained and tyrannical exercise of due authority ; or to seek those dignities that suit not with this charge, which is not *dominium*, but *ministerium*. This temper, there-

¹ John xxi.

^m Gen. xxix. 20.

fore is forbidden in Luke xxii. 25, 26. *The kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them, but ye shall not be so.* There is a ministerial authority to be used in discipline, and more sharpness with some than others; but still lowliness and moderation must be predominant, and not domineering with rigour; rather *being examples* to them in all holiness, and especially in humility and meekness, wherein our Lord Jesus particularly propounds his own example, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.*

Being ensamples, τυποί.] Such a pattern as they may stamp and print their spirits and carriage by; and be *followers of you, as you are of Christ.* And without this, there is little or no fruitful teaching. Well says Nazianzen, *Either teach not, or teach by living.* So the Apostle exhorteth Timothy to be an *example in word, but withal in conversation*ⁿ, that is *τύπος*, the best printed copy.

But this pares off, will some think, all encouragements of learning. No advantage, no respect, nor authority. Oh! no, it removes poor worthless encouragements out of the way, to make place for one great one, that is sufficient, which all the other together are not. That is,

III. The high advantage to be expected: *A crown of glory which fadeth not away, to be received when the chief Shepherd shall appear.* Thou shalt lose nothing by all that restraint from base gain, and vain glory, and worldly power. No matter, let them all go for *a crown*, that weighs them all down, that shall abide for ever. Oh! how far more excellent! *A crown of glory*, pure unmixed glory, without any ingrency of pride or sinful vanity, or any danger of it. And a crown *that fadeth not*, ἀμαράντινον, of such a flower as withers not; not a temporary garland of fading flowers, such as all here are, *No to the crown of pride*^o. Though it be made of flowers growing in a fat valley, yet their glorious beauty is a fading flower; but this will remain fresh and in perfect lustre to all eternity. May they not well trample

ⁿ 1 Tim. iv. 12.^o Isa. xxviii. 1.

on base gain, and vain applause, who have this crown to look to? They that will be content with those, let them be doing; but *they have their reward*, and it is done and gone, when faithful followers are to receive theirs. Joys of royal pomp, marriages and feasts, how soon do they vanish as a dream? That of Ahasuerus lasted about half a year, but then ended; and how many since that are gone and forgot! But this day begins a triumph and a feast, that shall never either end or weary, affording still fresh, ever new delights. All things here, the choicest pleasures, cloy, but satisfy not. Those above shall always satisfy and never cloy. *When the chief Shepherd shall appear*, and that shall shortly be, this moment will shortly be out.

What is to be refused in the way to this crown? All labour is sweet for it. And what is there here to be desired to stay your hearts, that we should not most willingly let go, to *rest from our labours and receive our crown*? Was ever any king sad to think that the day of his coronation drew nigh? There will be no envy, nor jealousies, but all kings, each with his crown, and each rejoicing in the glory of another; and all in his, who that day shall be *all in all*.

Ver. 5. *Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

SIN hath disordered all; so that nothing is to be found but distemper and crookedness in the condition and ways of men towards God, and towards one another, till a new Spirit come in and rectify all: And very much of that redress lies in this particular grace of *humility*, here recommended by the Apostle.

That regulates the carriage, 1. Of the *younger* towards the *elder*. 2. Of all men *one to another*. 3. Towards God.

1st, He enjoins the *younger to be subject to the elder*.

Which I take so to refer to difference of years, that it hath some aspect likewise to the relation of those that are under the discipline and government of the *elders*, *πρεσβυτεροις* ; who, though not always such in years, ought however to suit that name in exemplary gravity and wisdom. It is no seigniory, but a ministry ; yet there is a sacred authority in it, when rightly carried, which both duly challenges, and effectually commands, that respect and obedience which is fit for the right order and government of *the house of God* :

The Spirit of Christ in his ministers is the thing that makes them *truly elders*, and *truly worthy of double honour* ; and without that, men may hunt respect and credit by other parts ; and the more they follow it, the faster it flies from them ; or if they catch any thing of it, they only grasp a shadow.

Infer. Learn you, my brethren, that obedience which is due to the discipline of God's house. This is all we plead for in this point. And know, if you refuse it, and despise the ordinance of God, he will resent the indignity as done to him. And Oh ! that all who have that charge of his house upon them, would mind his interest wholly, and not rise in conceit of their power, but wholly employ and improve it for their Lord and Master, and look on no respect to themselves, as for its own sake desirable, but only so far as is needful for the profitable discharge and advancement of his work in their hands ! What are human differences and regards, how empty a vapour ? And whatsoever it is, nothing is lost by single and entire love of our Lord's glory, and total aiming at that : *Them that honour him he will honour ; and those that despise him, shall be despised*^a.

But though this (*likewise*) implies, I conceive, somewhat relative to the former subject, yet certainly its full scope is more extensive, and directs us, touching the difference of years, to yield the *subjection*, that is, the respect and reverence, which is due from younger to elder persons.

^a 1 Sam. ii. 30.

The presumption and unbridledness of youth requires the pressing and binding on of this rule: And it is of undeniable equity, even written in nature, due to aged persons. But, doubtless, those reap this due fruit in that season the most, who have ripened it most by the influence of their grave and holy carriage. *The hoary head is indeed a crown; but when? when found in the way of righteousness^b.* There it shines, and hath a kind of royalty over youth; otherwise a graceless old age, is a most despicable and lamentable sight. What gains an unholy old man or woman, by their scores of years, but the more scores of guiltiness and misery? And their white hairs speak nothing but ripeness for wrath. Oh! *to be as a tree planted in the house of the Lord, bringing forth fruit in old age^c.* Much experience in the ways of God, and much disdain of the world, and much desire of the love of God, a heavenly temper of mind and frame of life; this is the advantage of many years. But to have seen and felt the more misery, and *heaped up* the more sin, the greatest bundle of it *against the day of wrath*, a woful *treasure* of it, threescore, or *threescore and ten*, years a gathering, and with so much increase every day; no vacancy, no dead years, no, not a day wherein it was not growing! How deplorable a case!

A sad reflection to look back, what have I done for God? and to find nothing, but such a world of sin committed against him? How much better he that gets home betimes in his youth, if once delivered from sin and death, at one with God, and some way serviceable to him, or desiring to be so, and hath a quick voyage, having lived much in a little time.

2. The precept also regulates the carriage of all men to each other: *All of you be subject one to another.* This yet further dilates the duty, makes it universally mutual, one subject to another. This directly turns about the vain contest of men, that arises from the natural mischief of self-love; every one would carry it, and be best and highest. The

^b Prov. xvi. 31.

^c Psal. xcii. 12, 13.

very company of Christ, and his exemplary lowliness, and the meanness of himself and those his followers, all these did not bar out this frothy foolish question, *Who should be greatest*; and it was so far disputed, that it occasioned heat about it, *a strife amongst them*^d. Now, this rule is just opposite, each strive to be lowest, *subject one to another*.

This doth not annul either civil or church government, nor those differences that are grounded upon the law of nature, or of civil society; for we see immediately before, that such differences are allowed, and the particular duties of them recommended; but it only requires that all due respect, according to their station, be given by each Christian to another; and though there cannot be such a subjection of masters or parents to their servants and children, as is due to them from these, yet a lowly meek carrying of their authority, a tender respect of their youth, receiving of an admonition from them duly qualified, is that which suits with the rule. And, in general, not delighting in the trampling on, or abusing of any, but rather seeking the credit and good esteem of all as our own, taking notice of that good in them, wherein they are beyond us; for all have some advantage, and none hath all. And, in a word, and it is that of St. Paul, like this of our Apostle here^e; *In honour preferring one another, q. d.* Let this be all the strife, who shall put most respect each on another, according to the capacity and station of each one; *in giving honour, go each one before another*^f.

Now, that such carriage may be sincere, no empty compliment, or court holy water, (as they speak), but a part of the solid holiness of a Christian; the Apostle requires the true principle of such deportment, the grace of *humility*. That a Christian *put on that*, not the appearance of it, to act in as a stage-garment, but the truth of it, as their constant habit, *Be ye clothed with humility*. It must appear in your outward car-

^d Luke xxii. 24.^e Rom. xii. 10.^f Ἡ τιμὴ ἀλλήλους προηγμένοι.

riage; so the resemblance of clothing imports; but let it appear, as really it is, so the very name of it imports. It is not *ταπεινοφάνια*, but *ταπεινοφροσύνη*, not a *shew of humility*, but heart lowliness, *humility of mind*.

As it is the bent of humility to hide other graces, so far as piety to God, and our brethren will permit, so it would willingly hide itself; loves not to appear but as necessity urges: Appear it must, and doth somewhat more appear than many other graces do, though it seeks not to appear. It is seen as a modest man or woman's apparel, which they wear not for that end that it may be seen, and do not gaudily flaunt and delight in dressing; though there is a decency as well as necessity, which they do and may have respect to, yet that in so neat and unaffected a way, that they are a good example even in that point. Thus humility in carriage and words is as the decorum of this clothing, but the main is the real usefulness of it.

And therefore, a truly humble man desires not much to appear humble; yea, were it not for disedifying his brethren, he would rather disguise and hide not only other things by humility, but even humility itself; and would be content, upon mistake of some words or gestures, to pass for proud and vain, being humble within, rather than to be big in his own eyes, under a semblance of outward lowliness; Yea, were it not that charity and piety do both forbid it, he would not care to do some things on purpose that might seem arrogant, to carry humility unseen, that doth so naturally delight in covering of all graces, and is sorry that it cannot do so without being seen itself, as that garment that covers the rest must of necessity be seen itself. But seeing it must be so, it is with the least shew that may be, as a dark veil cast about rich attire hides their shew, and makes very little itself.

This therefore is mainly to be studied, that the seat of humility be *the heart*. Although it will be seen in the carriage, yet as little as it can; as few

words as may be concerning itself; and those it doth speak must be the real thoughts of the mind, and not an affected voice of it differing from the inward sense; otherwise humble speech and carriage only put on without, and not fastened in the inside, is the most refined and subtle, and indeed the most dangerous kind of pride. And this I would recommend as a safe way: Ever let thy thoughts concerning thyself be below what thou utterest; and what thou seest needful or fitting to say to thy own abasement, be not only content (which most are not) to be taken at thy word, and believed to be such by them that hear thee, but be desirous of it; and let that be the end of thy speech, to persuade them, and gain it of them, that they really take thee for as worthless and mean as thou dost express thyself.

Inf. 1. But how little are we acquainted with the real frame of Christianity? the most living without a rule, not laying it to their words and ways at all, nor yielding so much as a seeming obedience to the gospel; others take up a kind of profession, and think all consists in some religious performances, and do not study the inward reserve of their heart-evils, nor labour to have that temple purged; for the heart should be a temple, and it stands in much need of sweeping out the filthiness, and putting out idols. Some there be, who are much busied about the matter of their assurance, still upon that point, which is lawful indeed, and laudable to inquire after, yet not so as to neglect other things more needful. It were certainly better for many, when they find no issue that way, to turn somewhat of their diligence to the study of Christian graces and duties in their station, and to task themselves for a time, were it to the more special seeking, first of some one grace and then of another, as meekness and patience, and this particularly of humility. To be truly heart-humble, many men despise it in others, but some that will commend it in the general, or in some of those in whom they behold it, yet seek not to *put it on* themselves: They love to be more gay, and to seem to be somebody,

and will not abase themselves. It is the way, say they, to be undone: This clothing is too poor a stuff, and of too sad a colour for them. Oh! my brethren, you know not the excellency of it, ye look out at a distance, and judge according to your light, vain minds: But will you see it by the light of the word, and then you shall perceive much hidden richness and comeliness in it: and do not only approve it, and call it comely on others, but put it on, and so it is most comely. And as it is with respect to all graces, so particularly this clothing of humility, though it make least shew, yet come near, and you will see it both rich and comely; and though it hides other graces, yet when they do appear under it, as sometimes they will, a little glance of them so, makes them much more esteemed. Rebecca's beauty and her jewels were covered with a veil; but when they did appear, the veil set them off, and commended them, though at a distance it hid them.

2. In all, so particularly in this grace, take heed of a disguise or counterfeit of it; Oh! sincerity is all in all, and particularly in this, only be low in thine own eyes, and willing to be so in the eyes of others; that is the very upright nature of this heart-humility.

1. Not deluded with false conceit of advantages thou hast not. 2. Not swelled with a vain conceit of those thou really hast. 3. Not affecting to be esteemed by others, either upon their imagining thee to have some good that is not in thee, or discerning that which is. Is not the day at hand, when men will be taken off their false heights they stand on, and set on their own feet; and when all the esteem of others shall vanish and pass away like smoke, and thou shalt be just what God finds and accounts thee, and neither more nor less? Oh! the remembrance of that day, when a true estimate will be made of all: this would make men hang less upon the unstable conceits and opinions of one another, knowing our judgment and day shall shortly end. Be it little or much thou hast, the lower and closer thou carriest

it under this cloak, the safer shall it and thou be, the more shall it increase; and thou shalt be the liker Him in whom *all fulness* dwells; in this he hath most expressly set himself before us as our pattern; and one says well, "Sure man might now be constrained to be proud, for whom God himself became humble."

Now, to work the heart to a humble posture, 1. Look *into thyself* in earnest; and, truly, whosoever thou be that hast the highest conceit of thyself, and the highest causes of it, a real sight of thyself will lay thy crest. Men look on any good, or fancy of it, in themselves with both eyes, and skip over, as unpleasant, their real defects and deformities. Every man is naturally his own flatterer; otherwise flatteries, and false cryings up from others, would make little impression; but hence their success, they meet with the same conceit within. But will any man see his ignorance, and lay what he knows not, over against what he knows; the disorders in his heart and affections, over against any right motion in them; his secret follies and sins, against his outwardly blameless carriage; and this man shall not readily love and embrace himself; yea it shall be impossible for him not to abase and abhor himself. 2. Look on the good in others, and the evil in thyself. Make that the parallel, and then thou wilt walk humbly. Most men do just the contrary, and that foolish and unjust comparison puffs them up. 3. Thou art not required to be ignorant of that good, which really is so indeed: but beware of imagining *that* to be good which is not; yea, rather let something that is truly good pass thy view, and see it within rather than beyond its true size. And then, whatsoever it be, see it not as thine own, but God's, his free gift; and so the more thou hast, looking on it in that view, thou will certainly be the more humble, as having the more obligations: the weight of them will press thee down, and lay thee still lower; as you see it in Abraham, the clear visions and promises he had,

made him fall down flat to the ground^f. 4. Pray much for the spirit of humility, the Spirit of Christ; for that is it; otherwise all thy vileness will not humble thee. When men hear of this or other graces, and how reasonable they are, they think presently to have them, and do not consider the natural enmity and rebellion of their own hearts, and the necessity of receiving them from heaven; and therefore, in the use of all other means, be most dependent on that influence, and most in that mean which opens the heart most to that influence, and draws it down upon the heart, and that is prayer.

Of all the evils of our corrupt nature, there is none more connatural and universal than pride; the grand wickedness, self-exalting in our own and others opinion. Though I will not contest what was the first step in that complicated first sin, yet certainly this of pride was one, and a main ingredient in it; that which the unbelief conceived going before, and the disobedience following after, were both servants to; and ever since it sticks still deep in our nature. So that St. Augustine says truly, "That which first overcame man, is the last thing he overcomes." Some sins, comparatively, may die before us, but this hath life in it, sensibly, as long as we. It is as the heart of all, the first living, and the last dying; and hath this advantage, that, whereas other sins are fomented by one another, this feeds even on virtues and graces, as a moth that breeds in them, and consumes them; even in the finest of them, if it be not carefully looked to. This hydra, as one head of it is cut off, another rises up: it will secretly cleave to the best actions, and prey upon them: and therefore is there so much need that we continually watch and fight, and pray against it; and be restless in the pursuit of real and deep humiliation, daily seeking to advance further in it; to be nothing, and desire to be nothing; not only to bear, but to love

^f Gen. xv. 12.

our own abasement, and the things that procure and help it; to take pleasure in them, so far as may be without sin; yea, even of our sinful failings, when they are discovered, to love the bringing low of ourselves by them, while we hate, and grieve for the sin of them.

And, above all, it is necessary to watch ourselves in our best things, that self get not in; or if it break in, or steal in at any time, that it be presently found out and cast out again; to have that established within us, to do all for God! to intend him and his glory in all, and to be willing to advance his glory, were it by our own disgrace; not to make raising or pleasing thyself the rule of exercising thy parts and graces, when thou art called to use and bring them forth; but the good of thy brethren, and in that the glory of thy Lord. Now this is indeed to be severed from self, and united to him, to have self-love turned into the love of God. And this is his own work; it is above all other hands; therefore the main combat against pride, and the conquest of it, and gaining of humility, is certainly by prayer. God bestows himself most to them that are most abundant in prayer; and they to whom he shews himself most, are certainly the most humble.

Now, to stir us up to diligence in the study and exercise of this grace, take briefly a consideration or two.

1. Look on that above pointed at, the high example of lowliness set before us; Jesus Christ requiring our particular care to take this lesson from him. And is it not most reasonable? He the most fair, the most excellent and complete of all men, and yet the most humble: He more than a man, and yet willingly became, in some sort, less than a man, as it is expressed, *a worm and no man*⁶; and when majesty itself *emptied itself*, and descended so low, shall a worm swell and be high conceited?

Then, consider it was for us he humbled himself, to expiate our pride; and therefore it is evidently the

⁶ Psalm xxii. 6.

more just that we follow a pattern which is both so great in itself, and doth so nearly concern us. "O humility! the virtue of Christ, (that which he so peculiarly espoused), how dost thou confound the vanity of our pride?"

2. Consider the safety of grace under this clothing. It is that which keeps it unexposed to a thousand hazards. Humility doth grace no prejudice in covering it, but indeed shelters it from violence and wrong; therefore they do justly call it, *conseruatrice virtutum*, the preserver of grace; and one says well, "That he who carries other graces without humility, carries a precious powder in the wind without a cover."

3. Consider the increase of grace by it, and that is here expressed; the perfect enmity of God against pride, and his bounty towards humility; *He resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

1. The enmity of God against the *proud*, *he resisteth them*, ἀντιλέωνται; he singles it out for his grand enemy, and *sets himself in battle-array* against it, so the word is. It breaks the ranks of men in which he hath set them, when they are not subject, ἰποταυώμενοι, as the word is before; yea, it not only breaks rank, but rises up in rebellion against God, and doth what it can to dethrone him and usurp his place: therefore he orders his forces against it; and to be sure, if God be able to make his party good, pride shall not escape ruin. He will break it, and bring it low; for he is set upon that purpose, and will not be diverted.

2. The bounty of God to the humble; *But he giveth grace.* Pours it out plentifully upon humble hearts. His sweet dews and showers of grace slide off the mountains of pride, and fall on the low valleys of humble hearts, and make them pleasant and fertile. The swelling heart, puffed up with a fancy of fulness, hath no room for grace. It is lifted up, is not hollowed and fitted to receive and contain the graces that descend from above. And again, as the humble heart is most capricious, and as being emptied

and hollowed, can hold most, so it is most thankful, acknowledges all as received, but the proud cries, all is his own. The return of glory that is due from grace, comes most freely and plentifully from an humble heart: God delights to enrich it with grace, and it delights to return him glory. The more he bestows on it, the more it desires to honour him with all; and the more it doth so, the more readily he bestows still more upon it; and this is the sweet intercourse betwixt God and the humble soul. This is the noble ambition of humility, in respect whereof, all the aspirings of pride are low and base. When all is reckoned, the lowliest mind is truly the highest; and these two agree so well, that the more lowly it is, it is thus the higher; and the higher thus, it is still the more lowly.

Oh! my brethren, want of this is a great cause of all our wants. Why should our God bestow on us, what we would bestow on our idol-self; or if not to idolize thyself, yet to idolize the thing, the gift that grace bestowed, to fetch thy believing and comforts from that, which is to put it in his place that gave, and *to make Baal of it*, as some would render Hosea ii. 8^h. Now he will not furnish thee thus to his own prejudice therein; seek therefore to have thine heart on a high design, seeking grace still, not to rest in any gift, nor to grow vain and regardless of him upon it. If we had but this fixed with us; "What gift or grace I seek, what comfort I seek, it shall be no sooner mine, but it shall be all thine again, and myself with it. I desire nothing from thee but that it may come back to thee, and draw me with it unto thee. This is all my end, and all my desire:" the request thus presented would not come back so often unanswered.

This is the only way to grow quickly rich; come still poor to him that hath enough ever to enrich thee, and desire of his riches not for thyself, but for

^h The words *Gnasu Lebagnal* which we render, *which they prepared for Baal*, may, as the margin notes, be translated, *wherewith they made Baal*.

him. Mind entirely his glory in all thou hast and seekest to have. What thou hast, use so, and what thou wantest, vow that thou wilt use it so; let it be his in thy purpose, even before it be thine in possession, as Hannah did in her suit for a son¹, and thou shalt obtain as she did; and then, as she was, be thou faithful in the performance: *Him whom I received* (says she, ver. 27, 28.) *by petition, I have returned to the Lord.*

It is undoubtedly the secret pride and selfishness of our hearts that obstructs much of the bounty of God's hand in the measure of our graces, and the sweet embraces of his love, which we should otherwise find. The more that we let go of ourselves, still the more should we receive of himself. Oh, foolish we, that refuse so blessed an exchange!

To this humility, as in these words it is taken in the notion of our inward thoughts touching ourselves, and our carriage in relation to others, the apostle joins the other humility, in relation to God; being indeed the different actings of one and the same grace, and inseparably connected each with the other, which we are next to consider.

Ver. 6. *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*

THIS is prest by a reason, both of equity and necessity, in that word, *the mighty hand of God*. He is Sovereign Lord of all, and all things do obeisance to him; therefore it is just that you his people, professing loyalty and obedience to him, be most submissive and humble in your subjection to him in all things. Again the necessity, *his mighty hand*: there is no striving; it is a vain thing to flinch and struggle, for he doth what he will; and his hand is so mighty, that the greatest power of the creature is nothing to it. Yea, it is all indeed derived from him, and therefore cannot do any whit against him; if thou wilt not yield, thou must yield; if thou wilt not be led,

¹ 1 Sam. i. 11.

thou shalt be pulled and drawn ; therefore submission is your only course.

The third reason by which humility is pressed, is that of utility or certain advantage, as there is nothing to be gained, yea, rather as you are certainly ruined by reluctance, so this humble submission is the only way to gain, if gain be the point you aim at. What would you have under any affliction, but be delivered, and raised up ; thus alone you attain that, *humble yourselves, and he shall raise you up in due time.*

This is the end why he humbles you, lays weights upon you, that you may be depressed. Now, when it is gained, that you are willingly so, then the weights are taken off, and you are lifted up by his gracious hand. Otherwise, it is not enough, that he hath humbled you by his hand, unless *you humble yourselves under his hand.* Many have had great and many pressures, one affliction after another, and been humbled, and yet not made humble, as they commonly express the difference : humbled by force in regard of their outward condition, but not humbled in their inward temper ; and therefore, as soon as the weight is off, like heaps of wool, they rise up again, and grow as big as they were.

If we would consider this in our particular trials, and aim at this deponent, it were our wisdom. Are they not mad, that, under any stroke, quarrel or struggle against God ? What gain your children thus at you hands, but more blows ? Nor is this only an unseemly and unhappy way, openly to resist and strive, but even secretly to fret and grumble : for he hears the least whispering of the heart, and looks most how that behaves itself under his hand. Oh ! humble acceptance of his chastisement, is our duty and our peace ; that which gains most on the heart of our father, and makes the rod fall soonest out of his hand.

And not only should we learn this, in our outward things, but in our spiritual condition, as the thing the Lord is much pleased with in his children.

There is a stubbornness and fretting of heart concerning our souls, that arises from pride and the untamedness of our nature; and yet some take a pleasure in it, touching the matter of comfort and assurance, if it be withheld; or which they take more liberty in, if it be sanctification and victory over sin they seek; and yet find little or no success. But the Lord holding them under in these, they then vex themselves, and wax more discontented, and nothing pleases them; as peevish children upon the refusal of somewhat they would have, take displeasure, and make no account of the daily provision made for them, and all the other benefits they have by the care and love of their parents. This is a folly very unbeseeming the children that are the *children of wisdom*, and should walk as such: and till they learn more humble respect for their Father's will, they are still the farther off from their purpose. Were they once brought to submit the matter, and give him heartily his will, he would readily give them theirs, as far as were for their good; as you say to your children of any thing they are too stiff and earnest in, and make a noise for, "Cry not for it, and you shall have it."

And this is the thing we observe not, that the Lord often by his delays is aiming at this; and were this done, we cannot think how graciously he would deal with us. His gracious design is to make much room for grace by much humbling; especially in some spirits that need much trying, or when he means much to enable for some singular service: and thus the time is not lost, as we are apt to imagine, but it furthers our end, while we think the contrary. It is necessary time and pains that is given to the unballasting of a ship, casting out the earth and sand, when it is to be loaden with spices. We must be emptied more, if we would have of that fullness and riches which we are longing for.

So long as we foam and chase against his way, though it be in our best suits, we are not in a posture for a favourable answer. Would we wring things

out of his hand by fretfulness? that is not the way. No, but present humble submissive suits. "Lord, this is my desire, but thou art wise and gracious; I refer the matter to thy will for the thing, and for the measure, and time, and all." Were we moulded to this composure, then were mercy near. When he hath gained this, broke our will and tamed our stoutness, then he relents and pities. See Jer. xxx. 17, 18. *Because they called thee an outcast, &c. thus saith the Lord, behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, &c.*

This I would recommend in any estate, the humble folding under the Lord's hand, kissing the rod, and falling low before him. And this is the way *to be raised*. But one, perhaps, may think he hath tried this a while, and is still at the same point, hath gained nothing, and he may therefore be ready to fall back to his old repinings: Let such a one know his humbling and compliance was not upright. It was a fit of false constrained submission, and therefore lasts not; it was but a tempting of God, instead of submitting to him. "Oh! will he have a submission? I will try it, but with this reserve, that if after such a time I gain not what I seek, I shall think it is lost, and that I have reason to return to my discontent." Though the man says not thus, yet this temper is secretly under it. But wouldst thou have it right, it must be without condition, without reserve; no time, nor any thing, prescribed; and then he will make his word good, *He will raise thee up*.

And that in due time. Not thy fancied time, but his own wisely appointed time. Thou thinkest, now I am sinking, if he help not now, it will be too late; yet he sees it otherwise; he can let thee sink yet lower, and yet bring thee up again: he doth but stay till the most fit time. Thou canst not see it yet, but thou shalt see it, that his chosen time is absolutely best; *God waiteth to be gracious*^a. Doth he

^a Isa. xxx. 18.

wait, and wilt not thou? Oh! the firm belief of his wisdom, power and goodness, what difficulty will it not surmount? So then be humble under his hand; submit not only thy goods, thy health, thy life, but thy soul, Seek and wait for thy pardon as a condemned rebel, with thy rope about thy neck. Lay thyself low before him, stoop at his feet, and crave leave to look up, and speak, and say, "Lord, I am justly under the sentence of death. If I fall under it, thou art righteous, and I do here acknowledge it; but there is deliverance in Christ, thither I would have recourse: yet if I be beaten back, and held out, and faith with-held from me, and I perish, as it were, in view of salvation, if I see the rock, and yet cannot come at it, but drown; what have I to say? In this likewise thou art righteous. Only, if it seem good unto thee to save the vilest, most wretched, of sinners, and shew great mercy in pardoning so great debts, the higher will be the glory of that mercy. However, here I am resolved to wait, till either thou graciously receive me, or absolutely reject me. If thou do this, I have not a word to say against it; but because thou art gracious, I hope, I hope, thou wilt yet have mercy on me." I dare say that the promise in the text belongs to such a soul, and *it shall be raised up in due time.*

And what though most or all of our life should pass without much sensible taste even of spiritual comforts; a poor all it is. Let us not over-estimate this *moment*, and so think too much of our better or worse condition in it, either in temporals, yea, or in spirituals, such as are more arbitrary and accessory to the name of our spiritual life. Provided we can humbly wait for free grace, and depend on the word of promise, we are safe. If the Lord will clearly shine on us, and refresh us, this is much to be desired and prized; but if he so think fit, what if we should be all our days held at a distance, and under a cloud of wrath? It is but *a moment in his anger*^b.

^b Psal. xxx. 5.

Then follows a life-time in his favour, an endless life-time. It is *but weeping*, as it there follows, *for a night, and joy comes in the morning*, that clearer morning of eternity, to which no evening succeeds.

Ver. 7. *Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.*

AMONGST other spiritual secrets, this is one, and a prime one, the combination of lowliness and boldness, *humble confidence*: this is the true temper of a child of God, towards his great and good Father; nor can any other have it, but they that are indeed his children, and have within them that *spirit of adoption* which he *sends into their hearts*^a.

And these two the apostle here joins together, *Humble yourselves under the hand of God*, and yet *cast your care on him*; upon that same hand under which you ought to humble yourselves, must you withal cast over your care, all your care, *for he careth for you*.

Consider, 1. The nature of this confidence, *casting all your care on him*. 2. The ground or warrant of it, *for he careth for you*.

1. For the nature of it, every man hath some desires and purposes that are predominant with him, besides those that relate to the daily exigencies of life with which he is compassed; and in both according to their importance or his esteem, and the difficulties occurring in them, he is naturally carried to be proportionally thoughtful and careful in them. Now, the excess and distemper of this care is one of the great diseases and miseries of man's life. Moral men, perceiving and resenting it, have been tampering at the cure, and prescribing after their fashion, but with little success. Some present abatement and allay of the paroxism or extremity, their rules may reach; but they never go near the bottom, the cause of the evil; and therefore cannot work a thorough sound cure of it.

^a Gal. iv. 6.

Something they have spoken, somewhat fitly, of the surpassing nature's rule and size in the pursuit of superfluous needless things; but for the unavoidable care of things needful, they knew no redress, but refer men entirely to their own industry and diligence. They can tell how little will serve him, that seeks no more than what will serve; but how to be provided of the little, or to be assured of it, and freed from troubling care, they cannot tell.

Now, truly, it were a great point to be well instructed in the former; and it is necessary for the due practice of this rule here given, touching necessary cares, first to cut off cares unnecessary, to retrench all extravagant superfluous desires. For, certainly, a great part of the troubling cares of men relate merely to things that are such as have no other necessity in them, but what our disordered desires create, nor truly any real good in them, but what our fancy puts upon them. Some are indeed forced to labour hard for their daily bread; but, undoubtedly, a great deal of the sweat and toil of the greatest part of men is about unnecessaries^b. Such an estate, so much by the year, such a place, so much honour and esteem, and rank in the world; these are the things that make some slaves to the humours of others whom they court, and place their dependence on, for these ends; and those, possibly, to whom they are so enthralled, are themselves at as little liberty, but captivated to the humours of some others, either above them, or that being below them, may give accession and furtherance to their ends of enrichment, advancement, or popularity. Men set on these things forge necessities to themselves, and make vain things as necessary as food and raiment, resolving that they will have them, or fall in the chace, being wilfully and unavoidably bent on them. *They that will be rich*, says the apostle^c, that are resolved on it upon any terms, meet with terms

^b Ad supervacua sudatur.

^c 1 Tim. vi. 9.

hard enough; *they fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* There is no recovering, but still they are plunged deeper and deeper, and these are *foolish lusts* too unreasonable, childish desires; after one bargain, such another; and after one sin, another; to make even, and somewhat then to keep that whole; and so on without end. If their hearts are set upon purchase and land, still some house or neighbour-field, some *Naboth-vineyard* is in their eyes, and all the rest is nothing without that, which discovers the madness of this humour, this dropsy-thirst.

And this is the first thing indeed to be looked to, that our desires and cares be brought to a due compass; and what would we have? Do we think contentment lies in so much, and no less? Alas! when that is attained, it shall appear as far off as before. When children are at the foot of a high hill, they think it reaches the heavens; and yet, if they were there, they find themselves as far off as before, at least not sensibly nearer. Men think, Oh! had I this, I were well; and when it is reached, it is but an advanced standing to look higher, and spy out for some other thing.

We are indeed children in this, to think the good of our estate is in the greatness, and not in the fitness of it for us. He were a fool that would have his clothes so; and think the bigger and longer they were, they would please him the better. And certainly as in apparel, so in place and estate, and all outward things, their good lies not in their greatness, but in their fitness for us: as our Saviour tells us expressly, that *man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth*^d. Think you great and rich persons live more content; believe it not. If they will deal freely, they can tell you the contrary; that there is nothing but a shew in them; and that great estates and places have

^d Luke xii. 13.

great grief and cares attending them, as shadows are proportioned to their bodies.

And if they have no real crosses, luxury frames troubles to itself; variety of dishes corrupting the stomach, and causing variety of diseases; and for need, fantastic vain discontents that will trouble men as much as greater, be it but this hawk flies not well, or that dog runs not well, to men whose hearts are in those games.

So then, I say, this is first to be regulated; all childish vain needless cares are to be discharged, and, as being unfit to cast on thy God, are to be quite cast out of thy heart. Entertain no care at all but such as thou mayest put into God's hands, and make his on thy behalf; such as he will take off thy hand, and undertake for thee.

All needful lawful care, and that only will he receive; so then rid thyself quite of all that thou canst not take this course with, and then, without scruple, take confidently this course with all the rest. Seek a well regulated sober spirit. In the things of this life, *be content with food and raiment*, not delicates, but *food*, not ornament but *raiment*, τροφήν ἢ τρυφήν, σκεπάσματα ἢ κοσμήματα: and conclude, that what thy Father carves to thee, is best for thee; the fittest measure, for he knows it, and loves thee wisely. This course our Saviour would have thee take^c, first to cut off superfluous care, then to turn over on thy God the care of what is necessary; he will look to that; thou hast him engaged, and he can and will give thee beyond that, if he see it fit.

Only this is required of thee, to refer the matter to his discretion wholly. Now, in thy thus well regulated affairs and desires, there is a diligent care and study of thy duty. This he lays on thee; there is a care of support in the work, and the success of it; this thou oughtest to lay on him, and so indeed all the care is turned off from thee upon him, even that of duty, which from him lies on us. We

^c Matt. vi. 31.

offer our service, but for skill and strength to discharge it, that care we lay on him, and he allows us; and then for the event and success, with that we trust him entirely. And this is the way to walk contentedly and cheerfully homewards, leaning and resting all the way on him, who is both our *guide* and our *strength*, who hath us and all our good in his gracious hand. Much zeal for him, and desire of his glory, minding our duty in relation to that, is the thing he requires, and we bending our whole care to that, he undertakes the care of us and our condition. As that king said to his favourite, when persuading him to fidelity and diligence in his state-trust, "Do my affairs and I will do yours." Such a word directly hath St. Chrysostom, *Σὺ μερίμνησον τὰ τῶ θεῶ, καὶ αὐτὸς μερίμνησει τὸ σὸν.* "If thou have a concern for the things that are God's, he will also be careful of thee and thine."

The care of duty thus carried is sweet and light, doth not cut and divide the mind, it is united and gathered in God, and rests there, and walks in his hand all the way. He bears the weight of all our works, and *works them in us*, and for us, and therein lies our peace that *he ordains for us*^f. If thou wouldst shake off the yoke of obedience thou art likewise to be shaken off thyself; but if, in humble diligence in the ways of God, thou walk on in his strength, there is nothing concerns thee and thy work, but he will take the charge and care of it, thyself and all thine interests. Art thou troubled with fear, enemies and snares? untrouble thyself of that, for he is with thee. He hath promised to *lead thee in a straight and safe path*^g; and to rebuke all thine enemies, to *subdue thine iniquities for thee*^h, and to *fight against those that fight against thee*ⁱ. *No weapon formed against thee shall prosper*^k; *yea, when thou passest through the water, and through the fire, he will be with thee*^l. Doth thine own weakness discourage thee? hath he not engaged for

^f Isa. xxvi. 12.^g Psal. xxvii. 11.^h Micah vii. 19.ⁱ Psal. xxxv. 1.^k Isa. liv. 17.^l Isa. xliiii. 2.

that too? so lay over that care upon him: hath he not spoke of *strengthening the weak hands and feeble knees, and that the lame shall leap as an hart^m?* and though there is nothing in thyself but unrighteousness and weakness, yet there is in him for thee *righteousness and strengthⁿ*. *Righteousnesses*, to express the abundance of righteousness. When thou art ready to faint, a look to him will revive, a believing look draws in of his strength to thy soul, and renews it°. And know, the more tender and weak thou art, the more tender he is over thee, and the more strong will he be in thee. *He feeds his flock like a shepherd*, and the weakest is he the most careful of; *they are carried in his arms and bosom^p*; and it is easy for the feeblest to go so.

And as for the issue and success of thy way, let not that trouble thee at all; that is the care he would have thee wholly disburden thyself of, and lay it entirely upon him. Do not vex thyself with thinking, how will this and that be? what if this and the other fall out? This is his part wholly; and if thou meddle with it, thou at once displeasest him, and disquietest thyself. This sin carries the punishment of it close tied to it. If thou wilt be struggling with that which belongs not to thee, and poising at that burden that is not thine, what wonder, yea, I may say, what pity if thou fall under it? Art thou not well served? Is it not just, that if thou wilt do for thyself, and bear for thyself, what thy Lord calls for to bear for thee, thou feel the weight of it to thy cost:

But what is the way of this devolving of my burden? There is a faculty in it that every one hath not, though they would do thus with it, they cannot. It lies on them, and they are not able to cast it on God. The way is doubtless by praying and believing; those are the hands by which the soul can turn over to God what itself cannot bear, all

^m Isa. xxxv. 3. 6.

ⁿ Isa. xlv. 24

^o Isa. xl. 29.

^p Isa. xl. 11.

cares; the whole bundle is most dexterously translated thus^q, *Be careful in nothing*; a great word. Oh! but how shall it be? why, thus, says he, *In all things make your requests known unto God*; and in a confident cheerful way, *supplication* mixt with *thanksgiving*. It will be the more lively and active to carry forth, and carry up thy cares, and discharge thee of them, and lay them on God. Whatsoever it is that presses thee, go tell thy Father. Put over the matter into his hand, and so thou shalt be freed from *μερίμνα*, that dividing perplexing care, that the world is full of.

No more, but when thou art either to do or suffer any thing, when thou art about any purpose or business, go tell God of it, and acquaint him with it; yea burden him with it, and thou hast done for matter of caring: no more care, but quiet sweet diligence in thy duty, and dependence on him for the carriage of thy matters. And in this prayer, faith acts; it is a believing requesting; *ask in faith, not doubting*; so thou rollest over all on him, that is the very proper working of faith: the carrying the soul, and all its desires out of itself unto God, is so expressed^r, *Roll over on God*; make one bundle of all; roll thy cares and thyself with them as one burden, all on thy God.

Now, faith to do this stays itself on the promise. It cannot move but on firm ground, and the promises are its ground; and for this end is this added, *He careth for thee*.

This must be established in the heart. 1. The firm belief of the divine Providence, that all things are managed and ruled by it, and that in highest power and wisdom; that there is no breaking of his purposes, nor resisting of his power^s; *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations*. 2. The belief of his gracious Providence to his own people, that he orders all for their true advantage, and makes all different lines and ways concentre in their highest

^q Philip. iv. 6.^r Psal. xxxvii. 5.^s Psal. xxxiii. 11.

good; all to meet in that, how opposite soever in appearance¹. 3. A particular confidence of his goodwill towards thee, and undertaking for thee, Now, if this be the question, the promise resolves thee; trust him, and he takes on the trust, and there is no other. Cast on him thy care, and he takes it on, he cares for thee. His royal word is engaged not to give thee the slip, if thou do really lay it upon him², *Cast thy burden upon the Lord*. Hand it over, heave it upon him, *and he shall sustain thee*, shall bear both, if thou trust him with both; both thee and thy burden; *He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved*.

Inf. 1. The children of God have the only sweet life: The world thinks not so, rather looks on them as poor discontented lowering creatures; but they see not what an uncaring truly secure life they are called to. While others are turmoiling and wrestling each with his projects and burdens for himself, and at length crushed and sinking under them, (for that is the end of all that do for themselves), the child of God goes free from the pressure of all that concerns him; for it is laid over on his God. If he use his advantage he is not racked with musings, Oh! what will become of this and that; but goes on in the strength of his God as he may; offers up poor, but sincere, endeavours, to God, and is sure of one thing, *all shall be well*. He lays his affairs and himself on God, and so hath no pressing care: No care but the care of love, how to please, how to honour, his Lord; and in this he depends on him, too, both for skill and strength: and, touching the success of things, leaves that as none of his, to be burdened with; casts it on God, and he careth for it. They need not both care, his care alone is sufficient; hence peace, inconceivable peace³, *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which*

¹ Rom. viii. 28.² Psal. lv. 22.³ Phil. iv. 6, 7.

passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ.

Inf: 2. But, truly, the godly are much in the wrong to themselves, by not improving this their privilege. They too often forget this their sweet way, and fret themselves to no purpose; wrestle with their burdens themselves, and do not entirely and freely *roll them over on God*. They are surcharged with them, and he calls for them, and yet they will not give them him. They think to spare him, but indeed in this they disobey, and dishonour, and so grieve him; and they find the grief return on them, and yet cannot learn to be wise.

Why deal we thus with our God and with our souls, grieving both at once? Let it never be, that for any outward thing thou perplex thyself, and entangle thy thoughts, as in thickets, with the cares of this life. Oh! how unsuitable are these to a child of God, for whom a life so far more excellent is provided! Hath he *prepared a kingdom for thee*, and will he not bestow thy charges in the way to it? Think it not: *He knows you have need of these things*^y. Seek not vain things, nor great things, in the expression *these things*; for these, it is likely, are not fit for thee; but what is needful and convenient, in his judgment, he will give; and refer thyself cheerfully to that judgment.

Then, for thy spiritual estate, lay over upon God the care of that too: Be not so much in thorny questionings, doubting and disputing each step. Oh! is this accepted and that, and so much deadness, &c.; but apply more thyself simply to thy duty; lamely as it may be, halt on, and believe that he is gracious, and pities thee, and lay the care of bringing thee through upon him. Lie not complaining and arguing, but *up and be doing, and the Lord shall be with thee*^z. I am persuaded many a soul, that hath some truth of grace, falls much behind in the progress, by this accustomed way of endless questionings. Men can scarce be brought to

^y Matt. vi. 32.

^z 1 Chron. xxii. 16.

examine and suspect their own condition, being carnally secure, and satisfied that all is well; but then, when once they awaken and set to this, they are ready to entangle themselves in it, and neglect their way, by poring on their condition. They will not set cheerfully to any thing, because they want assurances and height of joy; and this course they take is the way to want it still. Walking humbly and sincerely, and offering at thy duty, and *waiting on the Lord*, is certainly the better way, and nearer that very purpose of thine; for *he meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember him in his ways*^a. One thing the Christian should endeavour to obtain, firm belief for the church; all the care of that must be cast on God, that he *will beautify Zion*, and perform all his word to her; and then think, Do I trust him for the whole church, and the great affairs concerning it, and shall I doubt him for myself, or any thing that concerns me? Do I confide in him for the steering and guidance of the whole ship, and shall I be peevishly doubting and distrusting about my pack in it?

Again, when to the present and past, thou callest in after evils by advance, and art still revolving the dangers before, and thy weakness; it is good, indeed, to entertain by these, holy fear and self-distrust: But by that be driven in to trust on thy undertaker, on him in whom thy strength lies; and be as sure and confident in him, as thou art, and justly art, distrustful of thyself.

Further, learn to prescribe nothing: Study entire resignation, for that is thy great duty and thy peace, that gives up all into the hand of thy Lord; and, can it be in a better hand? First, refer the carving of outward things to him, heartily and fully; then stay not there, but go higher: If we have renounced the comforts of this world for God, let us add this, renounce even spiritual comforts for him too. Put all in his will: "If I be in light, blessed be thou;

^a Isa. lxiv. 5.

and if in darkness, even there, blessed be thou too." As he saith of these, *Gold is mine, and silver is mine*; and this may satisfy a Christian in those too, to desire no more of them than his Father sees fit to give; knowing, that he, having all the mines and treasures of the world at his command, would not pinch and hold short his children, if it were good for them to have more: Even thus it is in respect to the other, the true riches, "Is not the Spirit (may he say) and all his comforts mine? I have them, and enough of them." And ought not this to allay thy afflicting care, and to quiet thy repinings, and establish thy heart, in referring it to his disposal, as touching thy comforts and supplies? The whole golden mines of all spiritual comfort and good are his, the Spirit itself. Then, will he not furnish what is fit for thee, if thou humbly attend on him, and lay the care of providing for thee upon his wisdom and love? This were the sure way to honour him with what we have, and to obtain much of what we have not; for certainly he deals best with those that do most absolutely refer all to him.

Ver. 8. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

9. *Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*

THE children of God, if they rightly take their Father's mind, are always disburdened of perplexing carefulness, but never exempted from diligent watchfulness. Thus we find here they are allowed, yea, enjoined, to cast all their care upon their wise and loving Father, and are secured by his care. He takes it well that they lay all over on him, yea, he takes it not well when they forbear him and burden themselves. He hath provided a sweet quiet life for them, could they improve and use it; a calm

and firm condition in all the storms and troubles that are about them. However things go, to find content, and *be careful for nothing*.

Now, upon this, a carnal heart would imagine straight, according to its sense and inclination, as it desires to have it, so would it dream that it is; that then a man, devolving his care on God, may give up all watch and ward, and need not apply himself to any kind of duty. But this is the ignorance and perverse mistake, the groundless reasoning of the flesh. You see these are here joined, not only as agreeable, but indeed inseparable. *Cast all your care on him, for he careth for you; and withal, be sober, be vigilant.*

And this is the scripture logic, *It is he that worketh in you to will and to do^a*. Then would you possibly think, I need not work at all, or if I do, it may be very easily and securely. No. *Therefore*, says the Apostle, because he worketh in you to will and to do, *work out your salvation, yea, and do it with fear and trembling; work you in humble obedience to his command, and in dependence on him that worketh all in you.*

Thus, here, *Cast your care on him*; not that you may be the more free to take your own pleasure and slothful ease, but, on the contrary, that you may be the more active and apt to watch: Being freed from the burden of vexing carefulness, which would press and incumber you, you are the more nimble, as one eased of a load, to walk and work, and watch as becomes a Christian. And for that purpose is that burden taken off from you, that you may be more able and disposed for every duty which is laid upon you.

Observe those two connected, and thence gather, *First*, There is no right believing without diligence and watchfulness joined with it. That slothful reliance of most souls on blind thoughts of mercy, will undo them. Their faith is *a dead faith*, and a deadly faith; they are perishing and will not consi-

^a Phil. ii. 13.

der it, do not duly *cast their care on God* for their souls, for indeed they have no such care. *Secondly*, The other thing is, that there is no right diligence without believing.

There is, as in other affairs, so even in spiritual things, an anxious perplexing care, which is a distemper and disturbance to the soul; seems to have a heat of zeal and affection in it: But is indeed not the natural right heat that is healthful, and enables for action, but a diseased feverish heat, that puts all out of frame, and unfits for duty. It seems to stir and further, but indeed it hinders; and does not hasten us, but so as to make us stumble; as if there was one behind a man, driving and thrusting him forward, and not suffering him to set and order his steps in his course; this were the ready way, instead of advancing him, to weary him, and possibly give him a fall.

Such is the distrustful care that many have in their spiritual course. A hundred questions about the way of their performances, and their acceptance, and their estate, and the issue of their endeavours. Indeed, we should endeavour to do all by our rule, and to walk exactly, and examine our ways, especially in holy things; to seek some insight and faculty in their performance suiting their nature and end, and his greatness and purity whom we worship. This should be minded diligently, and yet calmly and composedly; for diffident doubtings do retard and disorder all; but quiet stayedness of heart on God, dependence on him and his strength for performance, and his free love in Christ for acceptance, this makes the work go kindly and sweetly on, makes it pleasing to God, and refreshing to thy soul.

Inf. Certainly thou art a vexation to thyself, and displeasest thy Lord, when thou art questioning whether thou shalt go on or not; finding in thy service so much deadness and hardness; thinking, therefore, that it were as good to do nothing; that thou dost but dishonour him in all. Now, thou considerest not, that in these very thoughts thou

dost more wrong and dishonour him, than in thy worst services, for thou callest in question his lenity and goodness, takest him for a rigorous exactor, yea, representest to thyself him as a hard master, who is the most gentle and gracious of all masters. Do not use him so: indeed thou oughtest to take heed to thy foot; see how thy heart is affected in his worship, keep and watch it as thou canst; but doing so, or endeavouring to do, however thou find it, do not think he will use rigours with thee; but the more thou observest thine own miscarriages towards him, the less severely will he observe them; and to think otherwise, and fret and repine, that thy heart is not to his mind, nor indeed to thine own, to go on in a discontented impatience, this is certainly not this commanded watchfulness, but that forbidden carefulness.

Be sober.] This we have formerly spoke of; the apostle having formerly exhorted it once and again in this epistle. It were easy to entertain mens mind with new discourse, if our task were rather to please than to profit; for there be many things which with little labour might be brought forth as new and strange to ordinary hearers. But there be a few things which chiefly concern us to know and practise, and these are to be more frequently represented and pressed. This apostle, and other divine writers, drew from too full a spring to be ebb of matter; but they rather choose profitable iterations, than unprofitable variety, and so ought we.

This sobriety is not only temperance in meat and drink, but in all things that concern the flesh; even that of diet is, though not all, yet a very considerable part of it; and that not only hath in it, that one exceed not in the quantity or quality, but even requires a regulating ourselves in the manner of using our repast: as that we make not careful and studious provision, do not take up our thoughts how to please our palate, so even in the use of sober mean diet, we must endeavour the mortifying of our flesh, not to eat and drink merely to please ourselves, or

to satisfy our natural desire, but for God; even to propound this in our sitting down to it, in obedience to him; to use these helps of life, and the life itself, to be spent in his obedience, and endeavour of advancing his glory.

It is a most shameful idol, a dunghill-god indeed, to serve the belly, and to delight in feastings, or in our ordinary repast, laying the reins loose on our appetite to take its own career. And yet in this they most commonly offend, even persons that are not notably intemperate, neither gluttonous nor drunken, and yet, I say, have not that holy retained bridled way of using their repast, with an eye upon an higher end.

But this sobriety, in its ample sense, binds not only that sense of lust, but all the rest in the use of their several delights, yea and in the whole man; all the affections of the soul, in relation to this world, and the things of it, to be in it as weaned from it, and raised above it in the bent of our minds; *to use it as if we used it not*^b.

This we speak and hear of, but do not apply ourselves really to this rule. Each hath some trifle or earthly vanity, one or more, but especially some choice one, that they cannot be taken off from, as children readily have some toy that they set more by than the rest. We have childish hearts cleaving to vanity; one hankering after some preferment, another after some estate, lands, or houses, or money, and we are drunk in the pursuit of these; so that when our hearts should be fixed on divine exercises they cannot stand, but reel to and fro, or stumble down and fall asleep, roving after these thoughts of that which we affect, staggering ever and anon, or else so plunged in them all the time, that we are as asleep in them.

Therefore these two are here, and ordinarily joined, *Be sober and watchful*. Glutting ourselves either with the delights, or with the desires and cares of earth, makes us sleepy; the fumes that arise

^b 1 Cor. vii. 31.

from them surcharge us, and cast us into a deep sleep; a secure unminding of God and of ourselves, the interest of our immortal souls.

The pleasures of sense are too gross for the *divine soul*, divine I call it, for so by original it is; but we abase it, and make it flesh by those gross earthly things, and make it unfit to rise heavenwards. As insobriety, intemperance in diet, prejudices the very natural spirits, making them dull, clogs their passage, and makes them move as a coach in a miry way; thus doth all inordinate use and love of inferior things; it makes the soul of a low heavy constitution, that it cannot move freely in any thing that is spiritual. Yea, where there is some truth of grace, yet it is obstructed and dulled by taking in too much of the world, and feeding on it; which is no more proper for the finest part of the man, for the soul, than the coarse plowman's diet is for delicate tender bodies of higher breeding, yea, the disproportion is far greater.

If then you would have free spirits for spiritual things, keep them at a spare diet in all things temporal. Let not out your hearts to any thing here below. Learn to delight in God, and seek to taste of his transcendent sweetness, that will perfectly disrelish all lower delights; so your sobriety in abstaining from them shall be still further recompensed with more enjoyment of God; and you shall not lose pleasure by denying the pleasures of earth, but shall change them for those that are unspeakably better and purer in their stead; he shall communicate himself unto you, the *light of whose countenance* feeds and satisfies the glorified spirits that are about his throne.

Be vigilant.] This watchfulness, joined with sobriety, extends to all the estates and ways of a Christian, being surrounded with hazards and snares. *He that despiseth his way shall die*, says Solomon^a; the most do thus walk at random, give attendance on public worship, and have some customary way

^a Prov. xix. 16.

of private prayer; but further do not regard how they walk, what is their carriage all the day long, what they speak, how they are in company, and how alone, which way their hearts go early and late, what it is that steals away most of their affection from God.

Oh! my beloved, did we know our continual danger, it would shake us out of this miserable dead security that possesses us. We think not on it, but there are snares laid for us all the way, in each path we walk in, and each step of it; in our meat and drink; in our calling and labour; in our house at home; in our journeying abroad; yea, even in God's house, and in our spiritual exercises, both there and in private. Knew we, or, at least, considered we this, we would choose our steps more exactly, and look to our ways, to our words, our thoughts, which truly, whatsoever noise we make, we really do not. *Ponder the path of thy feet*, says Solomon; and before that, *Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee*^b. And further, *Put away a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee*. But first of all, as the main reason and spring of all, *Keep thy heart with all diligence, or above all keeping, for out of it are the issues of life*.

Because your adversary the devil.] An alarm to watchfulness is here given, from the watchfulness of our grand adversary. There be other two usually ranked with him, as the leading enemies of our souls, the world and our own flesh; but here he is expressly named who commands in chief, and orders and manages the war, uses the service of the other two against us, as prime officers, under which most of the forces of particular temptations are ranked. Some others there be which he immediately commands and leads on himself, a regiment of his own, some spiritual temptations.

And we have need to be put in mind of the hostility and practices of Satan against us; for if the

^b Prov. iv. 25, 26.

most were put to it, they would be forced to confess that they very seldom think on their spiritual danger from this hand: As we keep loose guard against the allurements of the world, and of our own corruption, we watch not against the devices of Satan, but go on by guess, and suspect nothing, and so are easily a prey to all.

The least enemy being despised and neglected, as men observe, proves often too great; the smallest appearances of evil, the least things that may prejudice our spiritual good, while we make no reckoning of them, may do us great mischief. Our not considering them makes them become considerable, especially being under the command of a vigilant and skilful leader, that knows how to improve advantages: Therefore, in things, which we many times account petty, and not worthy our notice, as having any evil in them, we should learn to suspect the address of this adversary, who usually hides himself, and couches under some covert, till he may appear irresistible, seize on us, and then indeed he roars.

And this seeking the destruction of souls, is, you see, marked as all his work. The prey he hunts is souls, that they may be as miserable as himself: Therefore he is justly called *our adversary*; the enemy of holiness, and of our souls, tempting to sin, and then accusing for sin, as his name here imports; appearing against us upon the advantages he hath gained. He studies our nature, and fits his temptations to it; knows the prevalency of lust, or earthliness, or that great and most general evil of pride, so like himself, and that is his throne in the heart. Sometimes *he boweth down*, as it is said of the lion^c. He waits his opportunity craftily, and then assaults fiercely; and the children of God find sometimes so much violence of his temptations, that they surprise them; and the most horrid thoughts are cast in, as poisoned arrows, or *fiery darts*, as the Apostle speaks^d. And this his enmity, though it is against man in general, yet is most enraged against

^c Psal. x. 9, 10.

^d Eph. vi. 16.

the children of God; he goes about and spies where we are weakest, and amongst them most against those that are most advanced in holiness, and nearest unto God.

They were once under his power, and now being escaped from him, he pursues them, as Pharaoh did the Israelites, with all his forces, raging and roaring after them, as a prey that was once in his den, and under his paw, and now is rescued.

The resemblance hath in it, his strength, his diligence, and his cruelty. His strength, *a lion*; his diligence, *going about and seeking*; his cruelty, *roaring*, and *seeking to devour*.

Inf. Is it not most reasonable hence to press watchfulness? and to keep continual watch, to see what comes in, and what goes out; to try what is under every offer of the world, every motion of our own natural hearts, whether there be not some treachery, some secret intelligence or not? especially after a time of some special seasons of grace, and some special new supplies of grace received in such seasons; as after the holy sacrament, then will he set on most eagerly, when he knows of the richest booty. The pirates that let the ships pass as they go by empty, watch them well when they return richly laden: So doth this great pirate. Did he not assault our Saviour straight after his baptism?
περιλάζων.

And, that we may *watch*, it concerns us *to be sober*. The instruction is military, and a drunk soldier is not fit to be on the watch. This most of us are with our several fancies and vanities, and so exposed to this adversary, yea, when we have gained some advantage in a conflict, or when the enemy seems to retire and be gone, yet even then are we to be watchful, yea, then especially. How many, presuming on false safeties that way, and sitting down to carouse, or lying down to sleep, have been re-assaulted and cut off^e. Oh! beware when you think yourselves most safe; that very thought

^e *Invadunt urbem somno vinoque sepultam.*

makes you least safe. Keep always your spirits free of surcharges, and lavish profusion upon the world, applying your hearts to any thing in it, sitting down to it. Oh! no. Be like Gideon's army^f, fit to follow God, and be victorious in him, not lying down to drink, but taking of it only, as for necessity, in passing. Take our Saviour's own word, *Take heed lest at any time your hearts be surcharged with surfeittings and drunkenness, and the cares of this life*^g. Those will overcharge you, and make you drunk, and cast you asleep.

Oh! mind your work and your warfare always, more than your ease and pleasure. Seek it not here, your rest is not here. Oh! poor short rest, if it were; but follow the Lord Jesus through conflicts and sufferings, a *little while*, and you shall have certain victory, and after it everlasting triumph; *rest and pleasure*, and a feast that shall not end, where there is neither danger of surfeiting nor wearying, but pure and perpetual delight. In this persuasion, you should be abstinent and watchful, and *endure hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ*, as the Apostle speaks, *not entangling yourselves with the affairs of this life*^h, and thus be ready for encounters, stand watching, and, if you be assaulted, resist.

Whom resist steadfast in the faith.] To watchfulness, courage should be joined. He that watches and yields, seems rather to watch to receive than to resist the enemy.

And this resistance should be continued even against multiplied assaults; for thou hast to deal with an enemy that will not easily give over, but will try several ways, and will redouble his onsetsⁱ; sometimes very thick, to weary thee out, sometimes after a little forbearance interposed, to catch thee unawares, when he is not expected; but in all faint not, but be steadfast in thy resistance.

^f Judges vii. 5. ^g Luke xxi. 34. ^h 2 Tim. xi. 4.

ⁱ Οὐ δίδωσι ἀνάπαυσιν, ἐδὲ νικῶν, ἐδὲ νικώμενος. PLAUT. in vita Marcel.

This is easily said, but how may it be? how shall I be able so to do? Thus:

Stedfast in the faith.] The most of men are under the power of one of these two evils, security or distrust, and out of the one we readily fall into the other: Therefore the Apostle frames his exhortations, and the arguments of it, in opposition to both these. First, against security in the former verse, *Be sober and watch*, and presses that by the proper argument of great and continuing danger. Here against distrust; *Whom resist, stedfast in the faith*; and adds an encouraging consideration of the common condition of the children of God in the world.

Stedfast, or solid, by faith. This is absolutely necessary for resistance; a man cannot fight upon a quagmire; there is no standing out without a standing, some firm ground to tread upon; and this, faith alone furnishes. It lifts the soul up to the firm advanced ground of the promises, and fastens it there, and there it is sure, even *as Mount Sion, that cannot be removed*. He says not, *stedfast by your own resolutions and purposes*, but *stedfast by faith*. The power of God by faith becomes ours, for that is contained and engaged in the Word of Promise; faith lays hold there, and there finds Almighty strength; *and this is our victory*, says the Apostle St. John, *whereby we overcome the world, even our faith*¹; so it is our victory, whereby we overcome *the prince of this world, whom resist stedfast in the faith*. And, universally, all difficulties, and all enemies, are overcome by *faith*. Faith sets the stronger *lion of the tribe of Judah* against this *roaring lion of the bottomless pit*; that delivering lion against this *devouring lion*.

When the soul is surrounded with enemies on all hands, so that there is no way of escape, faith flies above them, and carries up the soul to take refuge in Christ, where it is safe. That is the power of faith; it sets a soul in Christ, and there it looks down upon all temptations, as at the bottom of the

¹ 1 John v. 4.

rock, breaking themselves into foam. When the floods of temptations rise and gather, so great and many, that the soul is even ready to be swallowed up, then, by faith, it says, "Lord Jesus, thou art my strength, I look to thee for deliverance; now appear for my help!" And thus it overcomes the guilt of sin; that is answered by his blood, and the power of sin is conquered by his Spirit; and afflictions that arise are nothing to these. His love and gracious presence makes them sweet and easy.

We mistake, if we think to do any thing, or be any thing without him; and we mistake again, if we think any thing too hard to be done or suffered with him: *Without me you can do nothing*, says he^k. And *I am able to do all things, or can all things*, πάντα ἰσχύω, (so the Apostle's word is) *through Christ that strengthens me*^l. All things. Oh! that is a big word, yet it is a true word; and thus made good *through Christ empowering me*; that frees it both from falsehood and vanity. An humble confidence; for it is not in himself, but in Christ, and this boasting is good. *My soul shall make her boast in God*, says David^m. Oh! they have only warrant to boast, and to triumph even before the victory, that do it in this style; such may give a challenge to all the world, and to all adverse powers of earth and hell, as the Apostle doth in his own and every believer's nameⁿ, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ, &c.*? See the victory recorded in this same way^o, and *they overcame him*. But how! *by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony*. That blood, and the word of their testimony, believing that word concerning that blood: These are the strength and victory of a Christian.

Inf. Although, then, thou seest thyself the most witless and weak, and findest thyself nothing but a prey to the powers of darkness; yet know, that, by believing, the wisdom and strength of Christ is

^k John xv. 5.

^l Phil. iv. 13.

^m Psal. xxxiv. 2.

ⁿ Rom. viii. 35. 38.

^o Apocal. xii. 11.

thine. Thou art and oughtest to find thyself all weakness, but he is all strength, Almightyness itself. Learn to apply his victory, and so it is thine. Be strong, how? *In him, and the power of his might.* But thou wilt say, I am often foiled, yea, I cannot find that I prevail at all against mine enemies, but they still against me: Yet rely on him, he can turn the chace in an instant; still cleave to him, when the whole powers of thy soul are, as it were, scattered and routed. Rally them by believing. Draw thou but into the standard of Jesus Christ, and the day shall be thine: For victory follows that standard, and cannot be severed from it. Yea, though thou find the smart of divers strokes, yet think that often a wounded soldier hath won the day; believe, and it shall be so with thee.

And remember that thy foils, through the wisdom and love of thy God, may be ordered to advance the victory; to put courage and holy anger into thee against thine enemies; to humble thee, and drive thee from thine own imagined strength, to make use of his real strength. And be not hasty; think not at the very first to conquer; many a hard conflict must thou resolve upon, and often be brought very low, almost to a desperate point, that to thy sense it is past recovery; then it is his time to step in, even in the midst of their prevailing. *Let God but arise, and his enemies shall be scattered*^p. Thus the Church hath found it in her greatest extremities, and thus likewise the believing soul.

The Apostle adds in the close of the verse, *Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.* There is one thing that much troubles the patience, and weakens the faith, of some Christians; they are ready to think there is none, yea, there was never any beloved of God, in such a condition as theirs. Thus sometimes they swell, even their outward trials, in imagination, but oftener their inward, which are most heavy and pressing to themselves, and the parallel of them

^p Psal. lxxviii. 1.

least discernible by them in others. Therefore the Apostle St. Paul breaks this conceit^a, *No temptation hath taken you, but such as is common to men: And here is the same truth, The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren.*

But, alas! we had rather hear of ease, and cannot, after all that is said, bring our hearts to comply with this, that temptations and troubles are the saints portion here, and that this is the royal way to the kingdom. Our King led in it, and all his followers go the same way; and besides the happy end of it, is it not sweet, even for this simply, because He went in it? Yet this is the truth, and, taken altogether, is a most comfortable truth; the whole brotherhood, *all our brethren*, go in it, and our Eldest Brother went first.

Ver. 10. *But the God of all grace, who hath called us into his eternal joy by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

HIS divine doctrine and exhortations the Apostle closes with prayer, as we follow this rule in public after the word preached: So St. Paul frequently did, and so Christ himself^r, after that sermon in the preceding chapters. It were well if both ministers and people would follow the same way more in private, each for themselves, and each for the other; for the want of this is mainly the thing that makes our preaching and hearing so barren and fruitless. The ministers of the gospel should indeed be as the angels of God, going betwixt him and his people; not only bringing down useful instructions from God to them, but putting up earnest supplications to God for them. In the x. of St. Luke, the disciples are sent forth and appointed to preach; and in the xi. we have them desiring to be taught to pray; *Lord teach us to pray.* And without this there can be little answer or success in the other; little springing up of this seed, though ministers sow it

^a 1 Cor. x. 13.

^r John xvii.

plentifully in preaching, unless they secretly water it with their prayers and tears.

And people, truly, should keep some correspondence in this duty; and that, if other engagement will not persuade, even for their own advantage, for it returns unto them with abundant interest. If much of the Spirit be poured forth on ministers, are they not the more able to unfold the spiritual mysteries of the gospel, and build up their people in the knowledge of them? Oh! that both of us were more abundant in this rich and sweet exercise.

The prayer is addressed to the *God of all grace, who hath called us to eternal glory by Christ Jesus*; wherein it suits the Apostle St. Paul's word in his direction to the Philippians^s; it is *supplication with thanksgiving*, prayer with praise. In the prayer or petition, consider the matter and the style. The matter or thing requested is expressed in divers brief words, *Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you*; which, though they be much of the same sense, yet are not superfluously multiplied; for they both carry the great importance of the thing, and the earnest desire in asking it. And though it be a little light and unsolid to frame a different sense to each of them; nor are any of the ways that such kind of interpreters have taken in it very satisfactory to any discerning judgment; yet I conceive they are not altogether without some profitable difference. As the first, *Perfect*, implies more clearly than the rest, their advancement in victory over their remaining corruptions and infirmities, and their progress towards perfection. *Stablish*, hath more express reference to both the inward lightness and inconstancy that is natural to us, the counter-blasts of persecutions and temptations, and to outward oppositions; and imports the curing of the one, and support against the other. *Strengthen*, the growth of their graces, especially gaining of further measures of those graces wherein they are weakest and lowest. And *settle*, though it seems

^s Chap. iv. 6.

the same, and in substance is the same with the other word *stablish*, yet it adds somewhat to it very considerable; for it signifies to found or fix upon a sure foundation, and so indeed may have an aspect to Him who is *the foundation* and strength of believers, on whom they build by faith, even *Jesus Christ*, in whom we have all, both victory over sin, and increase of grace, establishment of spirit, and power to persevere against all difficulties and assaults: *He is that corner foundation-stone laid in Zion, that they that build upon him may not be ashamed*^t: *That rock that upholds the house founded on it in the midst of all winds and storms*^u.

From hence we may observe, 1st. That these expressions have in them that which is so earnestly and principally to be sought after by every Christian, *perseverance* and *progress* in grace. These two are here interwoven; for there be two words importing the one, and two the other, and they are interchangeably placed. This is often urged on Christians as their duty, and accordingly ought they to apply themselves to it, and use their highest diligence in it: Not to take the beginning of Christianity for the end of it; to think it enough, if they are entered into the way of it, and sit down upon the entry; but to walk on, to *go from strength to strength*^x; and even through the greatest difficulties and discouragements, to pass forward with unmoved stability and fixedness of mind. They ought to be aiming at perfection: It is true, we shall still fall exceedingly short of it; but the more we study it, the nearer shall we come to it; the higher we aim, the higher shall we shoot, though we shoot not so high as we aim.

It is an excellent life, and it is the proper life of a Christian, to be daily outstripping himself, to be spiritually wiser, holier, more heavenly-minded to-day than yesterday, and to-morrow (if it be added to his life) than to-day^y. Every day loving

^t Isa. xxviii. 16.^u Matt. vii. ult.^x Psal. lxxxiv. 7.^y *Suavissima vita est Indies sentire se fieri meliorem.*

the world less, and Christ more, than the former, and gaining every day some further victory over his secret corruptions, having his passions more subdued and mortified, his desires, in all temporal things, more cool and indifferent, and in spiritual things more ardent; that miserable lightness of spirit cured, and his heart rendered more solid and fixed upon God, aspiring to more near communion with him, labouring that particular graces may be made more lively and strong, by often exercising and stirring them up: Faith more confirmed and stayed, love more inflamed, composed meekness producing more deep humility. Oh! this were a worthy ambition indeed! you would have your estates growing, and your credit growing; how much rather should you seek to have your graces growing, and not be content with any thing you have attained to? But,

2dly, All our endeavours and diligence in this will be vain, unless we look for our perfecting and establishing from that *right hand*, without which we do nothing; thither the Apostle moves his desires for his brethren, and so teaches them the same address for themselves, *The God of all grace make you perfect.*

This prayer is grounded (as all prayer of faith must be) on the promise and covenant of God. He *is our rock, and his work is perfect*^a. He doth not begin a building, and then leave it off; none of his designs break in the middle, or fall short of their end. *He will perfect that good work which he hath begun, to the day of Jesus Christ*^b. And, how often is he called the *strength of those that trust on him*^c; *their buckler, and his way perfect.*

Hence is the stability of grace and perseverance of the saints; it is founded upon his unchangeableness. Not that they are so, though truly sanctified, if they and their graces were left to their own management; no, it is he who not only gives that rich portion to those he adopts to be his children, but

^a Deut. xxxii. 4.^b Phil. i. 6.^c Psal. xviii. 30.

keeps it for them, and them in the possession of it; He *maintains the lot of our inheritance*^d. And to build that persuasion of perseverance upon his truth and power engaged in it, is no presumption, yea, it is high dishonour to him to question it.

But when nature is set to judge of grace, it must speak according to itself; and, therefore, very unsuitably to that which it speaks of. Natural wits apprehend not the spiritual tenor of the Covenant of Grace, but model it to their own principles, and quite disguise it; and they think of nothing but their resolves and moral purposes: or, they take up with a confused notion of grace; they imagine it put into their own hands, to keep or lose it, and will not stoop to a continual dependence on the strength of another; rather choosing that game of hazard, though it is certain loss and undoing, to do for themselves.

But the humble believer is otherwise taught; he *hath not so learned Christ*. He sees himself beset with enemies without, and buckled to a treacherous heart within, that will betray him to them; and he dare no more trust himself to himself, than to his most professed enemies. Thus it ought to be, and the more the heart is brought to this humble petitioning for that ability, and strengthening and perfecting, from God, the more shall it find both stability and peace, from the assurance of that stability.

And certainly, the more the Christian is acquainted with himself, the more will he go out of himself for his perfecting and establishing. He finds that when he thinks to go forward, he is driven backward, and sin gets hold of him, oftentimes, when he thought to have smitten it. He finds that miserable inconstancy of his heart in spiritual things, the vanishing of his purposes and breaking off of his thoughts, that they usually die ere they be brought forth: so that when he hath thought, "I will pray more reverently, and set myself to behold God when I

^d Psal. xvi. 5.

speak to him, and watch more over my heart, that it fly not out and leave me;" possibly the first time he sets to it, thinking to be master of his intention, he finds himself more scattered, and disordered, and dead, than at any time before. When he hath conceived thoughts of humility and self-abasement, and thinks, "Now I am down, and laid low within myself, to rise and look big no more;" yet some vain fancy creeps in anon, and encourages him, and raises him up to his old estate: so that in this plight, had he not higher strength to look at, he would sit down and give over all, as utterly hopeless of ever attaining to his journey's end.

But when he considers whose work that is within him, even these small beginnings of desires, he is encouraged by the greatness of the work, not to despise and despair of the small appearance of it in its beginning; *not to despise the day of small things*^c; and knowing that it is *not by any power nor might, but by his Spirit*, that it shall be accomplished, he lays hold on that word^f, *Though thy beginning be small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase.*

The well instructed Christian *looks to Jesus*, ἀφορῶντες^g, *looks off* from all oppositions and difficulties; looks above them *to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; author, and therefore finisher.* Thus that royal dignity is interested in the maintenance and completing of what he hath wrought; notwithstanding all thy imperfections, and the strength of sin, he can and will subdue it; though thy condition should be so light and loose, that it were easy for any wind of temptation to blow thee away, yet he shall hold thee in his right hand, and there thou shalt be firm as the earth, that is so settled by his hand, that though *it hangs on nothing*, yet nothing can remove it. Though thou art weak, he is strong; and is *he that strengthens thee, and renews thy strength*^h; when it seems to be gone and quite spent, he makes it fresh, and greater than ever

^c Zech. iv. 10.^f Job viii. 7.^g Heb. xii. 2.^h Isa. xl. 28.

before. The word *Jeheliphu* which we render *renew*, signifies *change*; they shall have for their own, his strength; a weak believer, and his strong Saviour, will be too hard for all that can rise against them: it is here fit, *hominem cum basi metiri*, as in statues, to measure the man with the basis on which he stands; and there is no taking the right measure of a Christian but that way.

Thou art now, indeed, exposed to great storms and tempests, yet he builds thee on himself, makes thee, by believing, to *found on him*; and so, though *the winds blow and the rain fall*, yet thou standest, *being built on him thy rock*ⁱ. And this, indeed, is our safety, the more we cleave to our rock and fasten on him: this is the only thing that establishes us, and *perfects* and *strengthens* us; therefore, well is that word added *δεμελιώσαι*, *found you*, or *settle you*, on your foundation. This is the firmness of the *church against the gates of hell*; he is a strong foundation for establishment, and a living foundation; having influence into the building for perfecting it; for it is a living house, and the foundation is a root sending life to the stones, that *they grow up*, as this apostle speaks^k.

It is the want of this activity of faith on Jesus, that keeps us so imperfect, and wrestling still with our corruptions without any advancement. We wrestle in our own strength too often, and so are justly, yea necessarily, foiled; for it cannot be otherwise, till we make him our strength. This we are still forgetting, and we had need to be put in mind of it, and frequently to recollect it. We would be at doing for ourselves, and insensibly fall into this folly, even after much smarting; for it, if we be not watchful against it; there is this wretched natural independency in us, that is so hard to beat out. All our projectings are but castles in the air, imaginary buildings without a foundation, till once laid on Christ. But never shall we find heart peace;

ⁱ Matt. vii. 25.

^k 1 Epist. ii. 4, 5.

sweet peace, and progress in holiness, till we be driven from it, to make him all our strength; till we be brought to do nothing, to attempt nothing, to hope or expect nothing, but in him; and then shall we indeed find his fulness and all-sufficiency, and *be more than conquerors through him who hath loved us*¹.

But the God of all grace.] By reason of our many wants and great weakness, we had need to have a very full hand and a very strong hand to go to, for supplies and support. And such we have indeed; our Father is the *God of all grace*, a spring that cannot be drawn dry, no, nor so much as any whit diminished.

He is *the God of all grace*: the God of imputed grace, of infused and increased grace, of furnished and assisting grace. The work of salvation is all grace from beginning to end. Free grace in the plot of it, laid in the counsel of God, and performed by his own hand all of it. His Son sent in the flesh, and his Spirit sent into the hearts of his chosen, to apply Christ. All grace is in him, the living spring of it, and flows from him; all the various actings, and all the several degrees of grace; he is the God of pardoning grace, *that blots out the transgressions of his own children, for his own name's sake*^m, that takes up all quarrels, and makes one act of oblivion serve for all reckonings betwixt him and them. And, as the God of pardoning grace, so he is also the God of sanctifying grace, who refines and purifies all those he means to make up into vessels of glory, and hath in his hand all the fit means and ways of doing this; purges them by afflictions and outward trials, by the reproaches and hatreds of the world. The profane world little know how serviceable they are to the increase of the graces and comforts of a Christian, when they indignify and persecute him; yea, little doth a Christian himself sometimes think how great his advantage is by those things, till he find it, and wonders at his Father's

¹ Rom. viii. 37.

^m Isa. xliii. 25.

wisdom and love. But most powerfully are the children of God sanctified by the Spirit within them, without which, indeed, no other thing could be advantage to them in this. That divine fire kindled within them is daily refining and sublimating them; that Spirit of Christ is conquering sin, and, by the mighty flame of his love, consuming the earth and dross that is in them; making their affections more spiritual and disengaged from all created delights: and thus as they receive the beginnings of grace freely, so all the advances and increases of it. Life from their Lord still flowing and causing them to grow, abating the power of sin, strengthening a fainting faith, quickening a languishing love, teaching the soul the ways of wounding strong corruptions, and fortifying its weak graces: yea, in wonderful ways advancing the good of his children by things not only harsh to them, as afflictions and temptations, but by that which is directly opposite in its nature, sin itself, raising them by their falls, and strengthening them by their very troubles; working them up to humility and vigilance, and sending them to Christ for strength by the experience of their weaknesses and failings.

And as he is the God of pardoning grace, and sanctifying grace in the beginning and growth of it, so also the God of supporting grace; that supervenient influence, without which the graces placed within us would lie dead, and fail us in the time of greatest need. This is the immediate assisting power that bears up the soul under the hardest services, and backs it in the sharpest conflicts, communicating fresh auxiliary strength, when we and all the grace we have within, dwelling in us, is surcharged. Then he steps in, and opposes his strength to a prevailing and confident enemy, that is at the point of insulting and triumph. When temptations have made a breach, and enter with full force and violence, he lets in so much present help on a sudden, as makes them give back, and beats them out. *When the ene-*

my comes in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him^m; and no siege can be so close as to keep out this aid, for it comes from above.

And by this a Christian learns that his strength is in God; whereas if his received grace were always party enough, and able to make itself good against all incursions, though we know we have received it, yet being within us, we should possibly sometimes forget the receipt of it, and look on it more as ours than his; more as being within us than as flowing from him. But when all the forces we have, the standing garrison, is by far overmatched, and yet we find the assailants beaten back; then we must acknowledge him that sends such seasonable relief, to be, as the Psalmist speaks, *a very present help in troubleⁿ*.

All St. Paul's constant strength of grace inherent in him, could not fence him so well as to ward off the piercing point of that sharp temptation, whatsoever it was, which he records^o. The redoubled buffetings that he felt came so thick upon him, that he was driven to his knees by it, to cry for help to be sent down, without which he found he could not hold out, and he had an answer assuring him of help; a secret support that should maintain him, *My grace is sufficient for thee^p*, though thine own be not; that is, that which I have already given thee; yet *mine* is, that is, that grace which is in me, and which I will put forth for thy assistance.

And this is our great advantage and comfort, that we have a Protector who is Almighty, and is always at hand; who can and will hear us whensoever we are beset and straitened. That captain had reason who, being required to keep Milan for the king of France, went up to the highest turret, and cried three times, King of France, and refused the service, because the king heard him not, nor nobody answered for him; meaning the great distance, and so the dif-

^m Isa. lix. 11.ⁿ Psal. xlvi. 1.^o 2 Cor. xii. 7.^p ver. 8.

ficulty of sending aid, when need should require. But we may be confident of our supplies in the most sudden surprises. Our King can and will hear us when we call, and will send relief in due season. We may be in apparent hazards, but we shall not be wholly vanquished; it is but crying to him in our greatest straits, and help appears. Possibly we see the host of the enemies first, and that so great, that there is no likelihood of escaping; but then praying, we espy the fiery chariots and horsemen, and may say, *There are more with us than with them*^a.

The Apostle St. Paul calls our God, *the God of all consolation*^r, as here he is styled *the God of all grace*: And this is our rejoicing, that in his hand is all good; our sanctification and consolation, assistance and assurance, *grace and glory*. And this style suits most fitly with the present petition, that for our *perfecting and stablishing, and strengthening in grace*, we have recourse to *the God of all grace*, whose former gifts do not discourage us from seeking more, but indeed both encourage us, and engage him for the perfecting of it. It is his will that we have constant recourse to him for all we want. He is so rich, and withal so liberal, that he delights that we seek and draw much from him; and it is by believing and praying that we do draw from him. Were these plied, we would soon grow richer; but remember, all this grace, that we would receive from the God of all Grace, must be from *God in Christ*. There it flows for us, thither we are directed. *It was the Father's good pleasure, that in him should all fulness dwell*^s, and that for us, that we might know whither to go, and were to apply for it.

Now for the further opening up of his riches, expressed in this title, *the God of all Grace*, is added one great act of grace, which doth indeed include all the rest; for we have in it the beginning and end of the work linked together. The first effect of

^a 2 Kings vi. 16.

^r Rom. xv. 5.

^s Col. i. 19.

grace upon us, in *effectual calling*, and the last accomplishment of it, in *eternal glory*. *Who hath called us to his eternal glory.*

For that calling, I conceive, doth not simply mean the design of the gospel in its general publication, wherein the outward call lies, that it holds forth and sets before us eternal glory as the result of grace. But the *calling* here spoken of, is the real bringing of a Christian to, and uniting him with, Christ, and so giving him a real and firm title to glory. Such a call is here intended, as powerfully works grace in the soul, and secures glory to the soul; gives it right to that inheritance, and fits it for it; and sometimes gives it even the evident and sweet assurance of it. This assurance, indeed, all the heirs of glory have not ordinarily within them, and scarce any at all times equally clear. Some travel on in a covert cloudy day, and get home by it; having so much light as to know their way, and yet do not at all clearly see the bright and full sunshine of assurance; others have it breaking forth at some times, and anon under a cloud, and some more constantly. But as all meet in the end, so all agree in this in the beginning, that is, the reality of the thing; they are made unalterably sure heirs of it, in their effectual calling.

And by this the Apostle advances his petition for their support, and establishment, and advancement, in the way of grace. The way of our calling to so high and happy an estate, did we apply our thoughts more to it, would work on us, and persuade us to a more suitable temper of mind, and course of life; would give us more noble sublime thoughts and ways above the world; and the stronger were our persuasion of it, the more strongly should we be thus persuaded by it. And as it would thus prevail with us, so might we use it to prevail with God for all needful grace.

All you that hear the gospel, are in the general called to this glory. It is told you where and how you may lay hold on it. You are told, that if you

will let go your sins and embrace Jesus Christ, this glory shall be yours. It is his purchase, and the right of it lies in him, and not elsewhere; and right to him is the receiving him for a Saviour, and at the same time for Lord and King; to become his subjects, and so be made kings. This is our message to you, but you will not receive it. You give it a hearing, it may be, but do not indeed hearken to the motion: And this must of necessity, proceed from unbelief. Were you indeed persuaded, that in coming unto Christ, you were presently not only set free from a sentence of death, which is still standing over your head while you are out of him, but withal entitled to a crown, made heirs of a kingdom, an eternal kingdom, I say, if this were believed, were it possible to slight him as the most do, and turn back the bargain, and bestow their money elsewhere upon trifles of no value, children's commodities, rattles, and painted toys? Such are your greatest projects, were it even for earthly kingdoms, in respect of Christ, and this glory provided in him. What a wonder is it, that where this happiness is daily proclaimed, and you are not only informed of it but entreated to receive it, where it is not only offered you, but pressed and urged upon you, and you say, you believe the matter; yet still the false glory and other vanities of this world amuse and entangle you, that you close not with this rich offer of *eternal glory!*

But where any do close with it, it is indeed by a call that goes deeper than the ear; a word spoken home to within, a touch of the Spirit of God upon the heart, which hath a magnetic virtue to draw it, so that it cannot chuse but follow; and yet chooses it most freely and sweetly: Doth most gladly open to let in Jesus Christ and his sweet government upon his own terms, takes him and all the reproaches and troubles that can come with him. And well it may, seeing, beyond a little passing trouble, abiding eternal glory.

The state, to which a Christian is called, is not a poor and sad estate, as the world judges; it is to no

less than *eternal glory*. The world thinks strange to see the believer abridge himself in the delights of sin, their common pursuits and eager graspings after gains or honours, or pleasures of sense; but they know not the infinite gain that he hath made, in that he hath exchanged this dross for down-weight of pure gold. The world sees what the Christian leaves, but they see not what he comes to; what his new purchase is, in another place; they see what he suffers, but not what he expects, and shall attain as the end of these sufferings, which shall shortly end. But he knowing well upon what conditions all these things run, may well say, "How small is what I forsake, how great that which I follow after^t."

It is glory, eternal glory, *his eternal glory*. *Glory*, true real glory. All that is here so named, is no more but a name, a shadow of glory, cannot endure the balance, but is found too light: As was said of a great Monarch^u, and so many principalities and provinces put into the scale one after another, still added no weight; yea, possibly, as a late politic writer wittily observes of a certain monarch, "The more kingdoms you cast in, the scale is still the lighter." Men are naturally desirous of glory, and gape after it; but they are naturally ignorant of the true nature and place of it; they seek it where it is not, and, as Solomon says of riches, *set their hearts on that which is not*^x, hath no subsistence nor reality. But the glory above is true real glory, and bears weight; and so bears aright the name of glory, which in the Hebrew *Kebud* signifies *weight*; and the Apostle's expression seems to allude to that sense: speaking of this same glory to come, he calls it *a far more excellent weight of glory*^y. It weighs down all labour and sufferings in the way, so far, that they are not once worth the speaking of in respect of it. It is the *hyperbole*, καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν, other glory is overspoke, but this glory, over-glorious

^t Non magna relinquo, magna sequor.

^u Dan. v.

^x Prov. xxiii. 5.

^y 2 Cor. iv. 17.

to be duly spoke, it exceeds and rises above all that can be spoke of it.

Eternal. Oh! that adds much! Men would have some more reason so to affect and pursue the glory of the present world, such as it is; if it were lasting, if it stayed with them when they have caught it, and they stayed with it to enjoy it. But how soon do they part! they pass away, and the glory passes away, both as smoke, as a vapour. Our life, and all the pomp and magnificence of those that have the greatest outward glory, and make the fairest shew, it is but a shew, a *pageant*, *παράδεισι*, which goes through the street, and is seen no more. But this hath length of days with it, *eternal glory*. Oh! a thought of that swallows up all the grandeur of the world, and the noise of reckoning years and ages. Had one man continued from the creation to the end of the world, in the top of earthly dignity and glory, admired by all; yet, at the end, everlasting oblivion being the close, what nothing were it to *eternal glory*! But, alas! we cannot be brought to believe, and deeply take the impression of eternity; and that is our undoing.

By Jesus Christ.] Your portion out of him was eternal shame and misery; but by him, it is even all glory. And this hath likewise an evidence of the greatness of this glory; it can be no small estate, which the blood of the Son of God was let out to purchase.

His glory.] It is that which he gives, and gives as his choice of all, to his chosen, his children: and if there be any thing here that hath delight or worth in the things which he gives in common even to his enemies; if there be such a world and variety of good things for them that hate him, oh! how excellent must those things be he hath reserved for his friends, for those he loves, and causes to love him!

As it is his gift, it is indeed himself; the beholding and enjoying of himself. This we cannot now conceive. But, oh! that blessed day, when the

soul shall be full of God, shall be satisfied and ravished with full vision! should we not admire that such a condition is provided for man, wretched sinful man: *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*² And is it provided for me, as wretched as any that are left, and fallen short of this glory! a base worm taken out of the mire, and washed in the blood of Christ, and within a while set to shine in glory without sin!" Oh! the wonder of this! how should it excite us to praise, when we think of such an one there, who will bring us up in the way to this crown, how will this hope sweeten the short sufferings of this life! and death itself, which is otherwise the bitterest in itself, is most of all sweetened by this, as being nearest it, and setting us into it. What though thou art poor, diseased, and despised here. Oh! consider what is there, how worthy the affection, worthy the earnest eye and fixed look of an heir of this glory! What can he either desire or fear, whose heart is thus deeply fixed? Who would refuse this other clause, *to suffer a while*, a little while, any thing outward, or inward, he thinks fit? how soon shall all this be overpast, and then overpaid in the very entry, at the beginning of this glory that shall never end!

Ver. 11. *To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.*
Amen.

THEY know little of their own wants and emptiness, that are not much in prayer; and they know little of the greatness and goodness of God, that are not much in praises. The humble Christian hath a heart in some measure framed to both. He hath within him the best schoolmaster, that teaches him how to pray, and how to praise, and makes him delight in the exercise of them both.

The apostle having added prayer to his doctrine,

² Psal. viii. 3.

adds here, you see, praise to his prayer. *To him be glory and dominion for ever.*

The living praises of God spring from much holy affection, and that affection springs from a divine light in the understanding. So says the Psalmist, *Sing ye praises with understanding, or you that have understanding*^a.

It is a spiritual knowledge of God that sets the soul in tune for his praises; and therefore the most can bear no part in this song: they mistune it quite, through their ignorance of God, and unacquaintance with him. Praise is unseemly in the mouth of fools; they spoil and mistune it.

Obs. 1. The thing ascribed. 2. The term or endurance of it. 1. The former is expressed in two words, *glory and power*. *Glory*, when ascribed to God, imports the shining forth of his dignity, the knowledge and acknowledgment of it by his creatures; that his excellency may be confessed and praised, his name exalted, that service and homage may be done to him; which all adds nothing to him; for how can that be! But as it is the duty of such creatures as he hath fitted for it, to render praise to him, so it is their happiness. All the creatures, indeed, declare and speak his glory; the heavens sound it forth, and the earth and sea resound and echo it back. But his reasonable creatures hath he peculiarly framed, both to take notice of glory in all the rest, and to return it from and for all the rest, in a more express and lively way.

And in this lower world, it is man alone that is made capable of observing the glory of God, and offering him praises. He expresses it well, that calls man the *world's high priest*; all the creatures bring their oblations of praise to him, to offer up for them and for himself, for whose use and comfort they are made. The light and motion of the heavens, and all the variety of creatures below them, speak this to man: "He that made us and you, and

^a Psal. xlvii. 7.

made us for you, is great and wise, and worthy to be praised; and you are better able to say this than we; therefore praise him on our behalf and your own. Oh! he is great and mighty, he is the Lord our Maker.”

Power is also ascribed to God, which here expresses not only ability, but authority and royal sovereignty; that as he can do all things, he rules and governs all things, is king of all the world, lord paramount; so that all hold their crowns of him, and *the shields of the earth belong unto God, he is greatly to be exalted*^b; disposeth of states and kingdoms at his pleasure, establisheth or changeth, turns and overturns, as seems him good, and hath not only might, but right to do so. *He is the Most High, ruling in the kingdoms of the children of men, and giving them to whomsoever he will*^c, and seldom fails to pour contempt upon princes when they contemn his power.

2. The term or endurance of this glory, is also worthy of our remark, *for ever*. Even in the short life of man, men that are raised very high in place and popular esteem, may, and often do, outlive their own glory; but the glory of God lasteth as long as himself, for he is unchangeable, his *throne is for ever*, and his wrath for ever, and *his mercy for ever*; and therefore his glory for ever.

Reflection 1. Is it not to be lamented, that he is so little glorified and praised? that the *earth being so full of his goodness*, is so empty of his praise from them that enjoy and live upon it?

How far are the greatest part from making this their great work, to exalt God, and ascribe power and glory to his name? so far, that all their ways are his dishonour; they seek to advance and raise themselves, to serve their own lusts and pleasures, while they are altogether mindless of his glory! yea, the apostle's complaint holds good against us all, we are *seeking our own things, and none the things of*

^b Psm. xlvii. 9.^c Dan. iv. 32.

the Lord Jesus Christ^d. It is true, some there are, but as his meaning is, they are so few, that they are, as it were, drowned and smothered in the crowd of self-seekers, so that they appear not. After all the judgments of God upon us, how doth still luxury and excess, uncleanness, and all kind of profaneness, outdare the very light of the gospel, and the rule of holiness shining in it! scarce any thing is a matter of common shame and scorn, but the *power of godliness*; *turning* indeed *our true glory into shame*, and *glorying in* that which is indeed *our shame*: yet holiness is not only our truest glory, but that wherein the ever glorious God doth especially glory, and hath made known himself particularly by that name, *The holy God*. And the express style of his glorious praises uttered by *seraphims*^e, is, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory*.

Instead of sanctifying and glorifying this holy name, how doth the language of hell, oaths and curses, abound in our streets and houses! How is that blessed name, that angels are blessing and praising, abused by base worms! Again, notwithstanding all the mercies multiplied upon us in this land, where are our praises, our *songs of deliverance*, our ascribing glory and power to our God, who hath prevented us with loving kindness, and tender mercies; hath removed the strokes of his hand, and made cities and villages populous again, that were *left desolate without inhabitants*?

Oh! why do we not stir up our hearts, and one another, to extol the name of our God, and say, *Give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name*^f. Have we not seen the pride and glory of all flesh stained and abased! Were there ever affairs and times that more discovered the folly and weakness of men, and the wisdom and power of God! Oh! that our hearts were set to magnify him, according to that word, so

^d Phil. ii. 21.^e Isa. vi. 3.^f Psal. xxix. 1, 2.

often repeated in Psal. cvii. *Oh! that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and his wonderful works to the children of men.*

Reflection 2. But what wonder is it that the Lord loses the revenue of his praises at the hands of the common ungodly world, when even his own people fall so far behind it, as usually they do! *The dead cannot praise him*⁵. But that they whom he hath quickened by his Spirit, should yet be so surprised with deadness and dulness as to this exercise of exalting God; this is very strange. For help of this, take the three following directions.

Direct. I. We should seek after a fit temper, and labour to have our hearts brought to a due disposition for his praises. And in this view: 1. See that they be spiritual. All spiritual services require that, but this most, as being indeed the most spiritual of all. Affection to the things of this earth draw down the soul, and make it so low set, that it cannot rise to the height of a song of praise: and thus, if we observed ourselves, we should find, that when we let our hearts fall, and entangle themselves in any inferior desires and delights, as they are unfitted generally for holy things, so, especially, for the praises of our holy God. Creature loves abase the soul, and turn it to earth, and praise is altogether heavenly. 2. Seek a heart purified from self-love, and possessed with the love of God. The heart which is ruled by its own interest, is scarce ever content, still subject to new disquiet. Self is a vexing thing, for all things do not readily suit our humours and wills; and the least touch that is wrong to a selfish mind distempers it, and disrelishes all the good things about it. A childish condition it is, if crossed but in a toy, to throw away all. Whence are our frequent frettings and grumbings, and why is it that we can drown a hundred high favours in one little displeasure; so that still our finger is upon that string; and there is more malcontent and repining for one little cross, than praises for all the mercies we have received?

⁵ Psal. cxv. 17.

Is not this evidently the self-love that abounds in us? Whereas, were the love of God predominant in us, we should love his doings and disposals, and bless his name in all: Whatsoever were his will, would, in that view, be amiable and sweet to us, however in itself harsh and unpleasant. Thus would we say in all, "This is the will and the hand of my Father, who doth all wisely and well; blessed be his name."

The soul thus framed would praise *in the deeps of* troubles; not only in outward afflictions, but in the saddest inward condition, would be still extolling God, and saying, "However he deal with me, he is worthy to be loved and praised. He is great and holy, he is good and gracious; and whatsoever be his way and thoughts towards me, I wish him glory. If he will be pleased to give me light and refreshment, blessed be he; and if he will have me to be in darkness again, blessed be he, glory to his name! yea, what though he should utterly reject me, is he not for that to be accounted infinitely merciful in the saving of others? must he cease to be praiseworthy for my sake? If he condemn, yet he is to be praised, being merciful to so many others; yea, even in so dealing with me, he is to be praised, for in that he is just."

Thus would pure love reason for him, and render praise to him; but our ordinary way is most unto-ward and unbecoming his creatures, the best of them, much more such worms as we are; that things must rather be to our mind than his; and we must either have all our will, or else, for our part, he shall have none of his praises.

3. Labour for that which, on these two, will follow, a *fixed heart*. If it be refined from creature-love and self-love, spirituality and love of God will fix it, and then shall it be fit to praise, which an unstable uncomposed heart can never be, any more than an instrument can be harmonious and fit to play on, that hath loose pins, still slipping and letting down the strings, pins that never fasten. And thus are the most; they cannot fix to divine thoughts, to consider

God, to behold and admire his excellency and goodness, and his free love. Oh! that happy word of David, worthy to be twice repeated, when shall we say it? *O God, my heart is fixed; well might he add, I will sing and give praise^h.* Oh! that we would pray much that he would fix our hearts; and then he having fixed them, we would praise him much.

Direct. II. If any due disposition be once attained for praises, then must the heart, so disposed, be set to study the matter of praises.

And that, 1. The infinite excellency of God in himself; which though we know little of, yet this we know, and should consider it, that it is far beyond what all the creatures and all his works are able to testify of him; that he transcends all we can speak, or hear, or know of him. 2. Look on him in his works. Can we behold the vast heavens above, or the firm earth beneath us, or all the variety of his works in both, without holy wonder stirred in us, and that stirring us up to sing praises? Oh! his greatness, and might, and wisdom shining in these, *Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them allⁱ.* But above all, that work, that marvel of his works, the sending of his Son forth of his bosom. This is the mystery which the apostles do so much magnify in their writings, this is the chief incentive whereby our apostle was induced to close this epistle with praise, ascribing glory to him. This praise looks particularly back to the style in the prayer, *The God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ.* So many other mercies are not to be forgotten, but chiefly is he to be praised for that choice of mercies, *to his glory, who hath called us to his glory.* Then look through the work of saving his chosen, so redeemed by the blood of his Son, his maintaining his own work in them, against all surrounding enemies and oppositions; the advancing it in the midst of them, and even by those oppositions, and bringing them safe to glory; that *perfecting and establishment*, as in the

^h Psm. lvii. 7.

ⁱ Psm. civ. 24.

foregoing words; it is that which so affects the apostle in the very entry of this epistle, that there he must break forth into praise^k; *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* He begins there in praise, and here ends in it, and so incloses all within that divine circle. And as we should consider these things in general, so should we also reflect on his particular dealing with us; his good providence in spirituals and temporals. Would we search, oh! what a surcharge of innumerable mercies should each of us find! and were we better acquainted with the holy scriptures, had we more our delight in them, they would acquaint us better with all these things, and give us light to see them, and warm our hearts, and excite them to his praises, who is the God of all our mercies.

Direct. III. The heart being somewhat disposed to praise, and then studying the matter of it, should be applied actually to render praise; and in order to this we must be careful, 1. To aim at God in all, which is continued praise, to eye his glory in every thing, and chiefly to desire that as the great end of all, that his name may be exalted. This is *the excellent way* indeed; whereas most are either wholly for their self-ends, or often squinting out to them. That soul is most noble that singly and fixedly aims at exalting God, and seeks this stamp on all it speaks and does, and desires; all to the greater glory of my God. 2. To abound in the express and solemn return of praise this way. *To him be glory*, not a customary dead saying of it over, as is usual with us, but the heart offering it up. What is so pure and high as this exercise, the praises of the ever glorious Deity? What is heaven but these? and were it not best as we can, to begin it here, and long to be there, where it shall never end? *To him be glory, and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.

^k chap. i. ver. 3.

Ver. 12. *By Sylvanus, a faithful brother unto you, (as I suppose), I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.*

13. *The Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.*

14. *Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

This is a kind of postscript, and contains its testimony of the bearer, and the apostolic form of saluting. Withal, he expresses the measure of his writing, that it was *brief*, and the end of it, *that it was to testify the true grace of God*. And this is, indeed, the end of our preaching; and we ought each to seek it by the word, and by mutual exhortations; and sometimes a few words may avail much to this purpose, to our hearty establishment in the faith; and not only are we to believe, but to remember that we have the best of it; that there is truth in our hopes, and they shall not deceive us. They are no fancy, as the world thinks, *but the true grace of God*; yea, when all things else shall vanish, their truth shall most appear in their full accomplishment.

The entertainment and increase of Christian love, of due esteem of one another, and affection one to another, is no matter of empty compliment, but is the very stamp and badge of Jesus Christ upon his followers: It is, therefore, most carefully to be preserved entire, and unhappy are they that do by any means willingly break it. Oh! let us beware of doing so, and *follow peace*, even when it seems to fly from us.

This *peace* that is the portion of those in Christ, is indeed within them, and with God; but through Him it is likewise *one with another*, and in that notion to be desired and wished jointly with the other.

They that are in Christ are the only children and heirs of true peace. Others may dream of it, and have a false peace for a time, and wicked men may wish it to themselves and one another; but it is a

most vain and insignificant hope: but to wish it to them that are in Christ, hath good ground; for all solid peace is founded in him, and flows from him. *Now the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

A

FRAGMENT

ON PART OF THE

EIGHTH PSALM.

THAT which is needful and competent for us to know concerning God, he hath been pleased to reveal, and our most excellent and happy employment in this world, is to learn it.

The third verse of this Psalm affords us clearly the doctrine of the creation. That part in the Psalmist's eye, *the Heavens*, being the highest and largest of the visible world, surrounding and containing all the rest, is mentioned;—*the work of thy fingers*, importing the curious embellishments of them; *The moon and stars which thou hast ordained*, placed them in their orbs, and set them a going, and appointed their periods and revolutions which they observe. So, the same hand hath fetched all other things out of the same nothing as we have it in the beginning of this Book. *In the beginning God created, &c.* And, therefore, to be believed, because we find it there.

Can the Worker, and his operation, be discovered by strength of reason? Certainly they that have been of most confest and famous ability that way, have been partly of another mind, and we see it reduced to its truest principle^a; *By faith, &c.* Yet this we may boldly affirm, that there is not only nothing in sound reason crossing it; but that all the

^a Heb. xi. 4.

cavils alledged against it are most weak of themselves: and there be many things in nature that plead strongly for it, which we may, yea we should, take notice of.

The continual turnings and changes of things, the passing of one thing to another, the destruction of some things, and production of others, and the general decaying of all; the very Heavens waxing old as a garment, declare that the whole frame is mutable and corruptible, and therefore not from eternity, but terminable in their beginning.

There is in this a very strong appearance of the beginning of the world, and of time according to the sacred history we have of it, and which faith receives; that there are not any records nor memoirs or history of time, or things produceable in the world that go higher up, no nor any human histories, that go near so high. Now if there were thousands of ages before, whence is so deep a silence of what passed in them?

They that can conceive it may take this reason into consideration, that if the world had been from eternity, then certainly the number of revolutions would be infinite; now to that which is so, nothing can be added, so it were impossible there could be any new days or years, &c. But above all dispute we believe it upon HIS word, who by his word gave all things a being. The whole Trinity as in all works without, they are together equally concerned, so in that first and great work of making all things.

As by the Father, so by the Word were all things made^b. And the Spirit moved upon the face of the deep, BARAH ELOHIM; "Trinity, in unity, created."

It is most vain to enquire why not sooner, *in tempore*; yea it is nonsense, for the same question might equally be moved whensoever the world had been made, though it lasted now millions of years; for still there would have been an eternity preceding, wherein it was *not*; and time itself was con-

^b Gen. i.

created: nor was there any pre-existent unformed matter of it. It is a poor shallow conceit of any such thing needful to the Almighty. It is even a monstrous absurd conceit of any such thing possible, and destroys itself; for if this framed world could not have a being from eternity, much less frameless matter, so of necessity all things were made of nothing; received a being from the infinite being as the spring of all being. His hands stretched forth the Heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. His fingers set them all in this sweet and admirable order, in a beautiful frame.

Now these expressions are suited to our reach, but the truth is his finger and whole hand are all one, and his hand is his word^c. And his word is his all powerful and eternal will; that is the breath of his mouth, and his stretched out arm. He said, *i. e.* He willed it, and it was so. When as there was no man nor angel, no Heaven nor earth, no time nor being, but the alone blessed Trinity, eternally self happy; upon the simple act of his absolute will came forth this whole frame, out of the womb of omnipotence. And this is that certain truth we believe under the name of *Creation*.

This supposed, it is very easy to conceive; yea it is impossible to question it, that it had been as easy for that power to have brought forth all in complete perfection at one instant, as to have divided the work into six days. And as we cannot think it easier, so we cannot but think it better, since he chose; yea, because he chose it as for that reason better. Well may his will be sufficient cause why that way of his production of all was better, seeing his will was purely the cause of the production and being of all.

But in part we may observe some advantage in that way, that he made so many days work of it, and proceeded by degrees to bring it to perfection; that we might the more clearly perceive and more distinctly consider the greatness and excellency of

^c Psalm xxxiii. 6. Gen. i. 3.

the work, and wise contrivance of it in the parts and progress; which we could not so well comprehend altogether. Now we consider him first framing one great mass, and then proceeding to beautify it, first with that which is indeed the first beautifier of all things, *light*; and then ordering the successive interchange of it with its opposite darkness, that sets it off and makes its beauty appear the more, giving them their terms in *day* and *night*: then proportioning and dividing the rooms of the great house into upper and lower according to his model and design, then decorating them with rich furniture and providing all kind of store in great variety and abundance. And thus, having first prepared all, having built, beautified and replenished so stately a palace, then framed he the guest for whom he intended it, and appointed to dwell in it. *Then he said, let us make man after our image.* Thus the work of itself and the order of it, and all the parts carry on them HIS name that formed them. How do his power and wisdom and goodness, appear in them! and yet how little do we see and observe it! It shines bright in all his works, but we are blind, we look on *them* and see *him* not. O! what a childish trifling thing is man in all his ways, till he learn to remark God in all, and have his soul upon all occasions musing and admiring, and sweetly losing itself in God that immense sea of excellencies. What a bottomless wonder is that power, from which by a simple act of will issued forth all being! This vast fabric and all things in it He willed they should be, and where never any thing was, *there* appeared on a sudden Heaven and earth. The earth settled upon his word that it cannot be moved, and enriched with such a variety of plants, and flowers, and fruits growing forth, and springs and mines within the bowels of it; the seas fitted for navigation, and the multitudes of creatures in it, small and great, and the impetuousness of it, yet confined and forced to roll in its channel, but cannot go forth; the small

sands giving check to the great waters. Oh! how strong and large that hand, that without help expands the Heaven as a curtain. Look up and see, consider their height and roundness, such a glorious canopy set with such sparkling diamonds; then think how swift is their motion and yet imperceptible to us, no motion here below comparable, and yet seem not to stir at all. And in all, their great Lord and ours, so conspicuous! And yet who looks on them with such an eye, as to behold him as David here, "*When I consider thy Heavens the work, &c.*" He is admirable in all, the very lowest and smallest creatures have their wonders of divine wisdom in their frame, more than we are able to think; *Magnus in minimis*. He is great in the least of his works—the smallest flies, how strange the fashioning of organs of life and use in so little room. The man who is still in search of wisdom will find a school and a lesson in all places, and see every where the greatness and goodness of his God. If he walk forth in the evening when this lower world is clothed with the dark mantle of the night, yet still he can look upwards to the pavement of the throne of God, and think how glorious it is on the other side, when the moon and stars make this side even in the night so beautiful. And this of David's looks like a night meditation by the view of moon and stars; *thy Heavens*, these thy works so glorious, thou therefore infinitely more glorious; then can I not but increase in wonder, that, dwelling above these Heavens, thou regarded so poor a worm as man creeping on this earth.

What is man? "*Enosh,*" *weak, mortal man*; "*Ben-Adam,*" *the son of earth*; the earthly man. David was so taught to look on his mean part and low condition, and on his better as follows, *ver. 5.* a sort of divinity being freely conferred upon him.

Thus men should learn in all to view themselves in this twofold light, *by the grace of God I am that I am*, saith St. Paul, &c. Truly man is a

wretched and proud creature, a bundle of vanity and vileness; and yet thinks himself some great matter, while God is hid from him, and he is ignorant of HIS greatness.

No discourse, nor reasoning, will humble the foolish heart of man, though he be even of the most worthless and basest sort of men, and hath in this condition nothing but what is despicable; yet he flatters himself with some fancy or other; some imagined advantage that swells him, and he cannot be truly vile in his own eyes till they look up to the excellency of God; and return from that down upon himself. Then he is forced to bow and fall low, and abhor himself in dust and ashes. Once he was wise, and powerful, or some way deserving (as he thought) to be respected; but now the glory and sublimity of God makes him to be as nothing in his own eyes. *What is man!* &c. &c. David, a great and good man, a king, and a prophet, and yet a man viewing and comparing himself with his own eyes, in respect of the great king of all the world, he cries out, *what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?* These words deserve to be considered; mindest him in all these things, the works above him, even the framing these heavens, the moon and stars, designing his good, makest all attend and serve him. It is not an empty visiting of him, but see'st all his necessities, and providest for them. He sets his heart on man^a, and all his delight with man^b.

But, above all visits, that visit is to be remarked and admired, when the Eternal Word, by whom this world was made, came down, and was made flesh; came from his glorious palace, from the bosom of the Father, to visit man in that deep and profound abyss of misery into which he was fallen; and to lift him out of it, and cleanse, and cloath and dignify him; to make slaves of Satan sons of

^a Prov. viii. 7.

^b Prov. viii.

God. And the Psalmist points at Christ, as the following words are applied^c. This is a descending indeed that the angels are still prying into, looking into for the bottom, and cannot see it, for it hath none. Oh! disregarded Christ, and his love slighted^d! *He was in the world*, &c. He, the same who became like us, and united our flesh to his blessed deity; did give a being to all things, and by him all things consist.

Our Head and Saviour is no less than the mighty power of the world. He, who is our flesh, had his arms wrapped up in swaddling cloaths, and afterwards stretched upon the cross. He it was that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth. The weight of the love of so great a king should press us low; and then the persuasion of his almighty power assures us of complete redemption; for our salvation is in a sure and strong hand. We have a mighty Redeemer; *Thy maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer the holy one of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called.*

“*When I behold,*” says the Psalmist.

The carnal mind sees God in nothing, not in spiritual things, his word and ordinances. The spiritual mind sees him in all, even in natural things; in looking on the heavens and the earth, and all the creatures; *Thy heavens*, sees all in that notion; their relation to God, his work, and in them his glory appearing; stands in awe to abuse his creatures, and his favours to his dishonour. *The day is thine, and the night also is thine*, therefore ought not I to forget thee through the day, nor in the night.

All that I use, and all that I have, is not mine, but thine; and therefore all *for* thee. Thou art my aim and scope in all; therefore, God quarrels with his people, because they had forgot this^e. The most are strangers to these thoughts; can eat, drink, and sleep, lie down and rise up, and pass one day after

^c Heb. ii.

^d John i. 10.

^e Hos. ii. 8, &c.

another, without one reverend or affectionate thought of God; may give him a formal good morrow, and then farewell for all the day long; offer up their prayers, (as they speak), and think they have done enough; and afterwards that their hearts may go whither they will, provided they escape grosser sins, never check themselves in wandering from God all the day, if they fall not into some deep mire.

But even they that are somewhat more mindful of God, and see him in his works; and consider them so as to observe him in them, yet are very faulty in thinking of him seldom, and in the slightness of such thoughts; they are not deep in them. We do not accustom ourselves to walk with God, to a continued and delightful converse with him, to be still with him. We can turn our eyes noway but he is visible and legible; and if he were our delight, and his name sweet to us, we would eye that more in every thing, than the things themselves.

The heart will readily espy and take hold of every small occasion of remembering that which it loves, that which carries any impression of the person on whom the affection is set. It is more looked upon on that side, and in that reference, than any other.

Certainly, were God the choice of our hearts, our natural use and enjoyment of things would not relish so much with us, nor take us up so much as the viewing of him in them all. In our affairs and refreshments, in company and apart, in the beholding of heaven and earth, and all that is round about us, our eye would be most on him whom our soul loveth. What a pity, and what a shame is it, that we, who profess ourselves to be his children, and even they that truly are so, should so little mind our Father and his greatness and glory, who is continually minding us, and our good! It is indeed a double standing wonder in the world which he hath made, that God should take so much notice of man, and man should take so little notice of God.

Were this known truth of the creation wisely

improved, we should find much in it that we commonly observe not, at least that we use not. This one thing sure, it might gain upon us to fear his displeasure who is so great, and so powerful, who hath the whole host of heaven, and the great army of all creatures at his command.

What he commands they must obey, for he commanded, and they were made; they have their being from his command. How quickly can he crush those that proudly rebel against him? How easily can he shake them to pieces, the greatest and the strongest of them. He poureth contempt upon princes, yea, what are they! base potsherds of earth striving with their Maker, though somewhat bigger than others, yet as easily broken by his sceptre. Oh! you that after all warnings, dare walk on in your wicked ways, in drunkenness, or swearing, or any secret heart wickedness; you know not, who is your party; the great God, the former of all things. *Who would not fear thee, O! king of nations?* You that do not fear him, are in a fearful estate. Learn to know him, and seek unto him. *Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; Seek him who hath the seven stars, and Orion; who turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night*^g.

There is in this a strong ground of spiritual confidence, both for the Church's concernment and our own in every estate. This first work of God rightly looked on, answers all the difficulties of the greatest works we can expect at his hands. Let Zion's enemies grow to their highest, they cannot rise so high as to be above this Almighty God, that framed the heavens. Let the Church be brought to the lowest deeps of distress, yet cannot fall so low, but this everlasting arm is long enough to reach her, and draw her out of it, that drew the whole world out of nothing. He doth, therefore, often represent, by his prophet, this very work as a certain evidence of

^g Amos v. 8.

his unbounded power^h. What task can be so great as to surcharge him, that so easily brought forth a world? What number can be too small; what instrument too weak in his hand, for the greatest work, who, without either working instrument or materials, built such a palace?

Fear not worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; why, wherefore, have they no reason to fear? they being but as a worm, &c. I will help thee, saith the Lordⁱ, &c. and I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument with teeth, and thou shalt thresh the mountains, and make the hills chaff. A worm in thyself, but in my hand a threshing instrument. Weak Jacob and his strong God, too hard for all the world.

On the other side, what serve multitudes without him, all originally nothing; and, when HE WILLS, they prove as nothing. Severed from his concurrence, as cyphers, multiply them as you will, still they signify nothing. Ten thousand men, without God, are ten thousand *nothings*. We have had very late, and very clear experiment of this, both to our grief and to our comfort, but both forgotten, and indeed never duly considered; for if they had, they would not so soon, yea, they truly would never be forgotten by us. Well, however, it grieveth us, by reason of our own continuing hard in wickedness; yet this I am sure of, the strong arm of the Lord is engaged in this work; he hath already appeared in it, and therefore will not let it fall; and though we were at a lower ebb than lately we were, yet should we rise again by his strength. Doubt it not, the enemies of our peace shall be ashamed, and God shall be yet more glorious in the world than ever, not only in our outward deliverance, but in that which is far richer, and of higher beauty, the power and glory of his ordinances. He shall make things that are *not*, to *be*, by the mighty power of his mouth, and throughout

^h Isa. xliii. 13. xliv. 24. and li. 12, 13.—Jer. li. 19, 20. Zach. xii. 18.

ⁱ Isa. xli. 14.

the world, Jesus Christ shall go on conquering. In his name lies the reason of his prevailing. His name is called the Word of God, that same word, by which all things were made; therefore, no opposite power is able to stand before him. It is a great work to ruin great Babel, but his strength is enough for it. Mighty is the Lord God who judgeth. A great work to restore his Church, but here is power enough for it, and it is spoken of under the resemblance of the creation^k.

For the estate of thy soul, thou that art thoughtful of that, what causeth thou to suspect, is there any plea left for distrust in thy lowest condition? Thou art about great things, and findest all, not only difficulties, but impossibilities to thee. Good is it that thou findest it so, and be emptied of all fancy of self strength. But then look up above thyself, and all *created*, to a *creating*, power; if thou canst not subdue thy lusts, and iniquities, resolve to wrestle. Wrestle as thou wilt, still they are too hard for thee: but look to him who came to destroy the works of Satan. Hath not thy Almighty Lord resolved to do it for thee? Thou findest nothing within but blindness and hardness, canst not repent nor believe, nor think a right thought of God. It is so; but one word from him can do all this, and make all those to subsist that now are not; therefore, lay thyself before him as *dead*, yea, as very nothing. "Lord, I am nothing of all that which is the being of a Christian in holiness, in faith, in love, but speak thou the word, and I shall be a new creature, to thy praise. There is nothing upon my soul but darkness. But art not thou he that said, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' that word, again, Lord, say it to my soul, and it shall be so." Think not to bring any thing with thee. Renovation is as absolute and free a work, as creation. Could his creature oblige him to make it, before it had a being? no more can it oblige him to save it, or to give it a new being

^k Isa. li. 16.

in Christ; all is free. The miracles of Christ, signs of power and goodness, are preludes to his greater work. It is most senseless to have a thought of preventing *him*, from whom all good and all being flow. And this he does; if any be in Christ, he is a new creature, and the word is, *all made new*, new delights and desires, and thoughts new—a new heaven, and a new earth; a new soul, and a new body, renewed in holiness, sanctified, and made conformable to Jesus Christ. And when thou findest some work of grace, which thou canst not wholly deny, and yet wantest that peace and joy which thou desirest, look to him for that too, thou that findest it not from the word preached, yet he can speak it, and even by that word wherein formerly thou didst not find it. It is the fruit of the lips, but so withal, that it is his creation; he only causes it to be. *I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace.* The Father wrought by the Son in the first creation, but in a new and special manner works by him in this second. He is that word made flesh, who is the life and the spring of all, the grace and comfort thou desirest or redest of. Go to him; he delights to let forth his mercies to thirsting souls; to revive them, to restore or turn them again, when they are in a swoon, as the word is Psal. xxiii. The more thou puttest him to it, the more shalt thou find his prevailing power, and fulness of grace that dwells in him, which is no more diminished by all he shews forth, than his divine power, which was not weakened by framing of the world. There is no scarcity of spirit in him; therefore, he proclaimed it as plural: *If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink. He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow RIVERS of living water.*

How manifold are thy works, O Lord! says the Psalmist¹; and then adds, that wherein all the variety of them agrees, the holding forth of his incomparable wisdom, from whose wisdom they are; *In wisdom thou hast made them all.* As there are some of them

¹ Psal. civ.

more excellent than others, they certainly do, in a clearer and more eminent degree, glorify God. In the great fabric, that part which hath the highest place, the heavens, hath also this advantage. The greatness of the Great Architect appears somewhat more bright in them; therefore, are they singled out from the rest for that purpose, both here, ver. 3, and Psal. xix. ver. 1. But, beyond all the rest, and even beyond them, is the wisdom and goodness of God displayed in framing of his reasonable creatures.

There are of them two stages, the one higher, the angels; the other lower, yet but a little lower, man; as here, we have them together.

Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, &c.;—the nature of a spirit, a rational, intelligent spirit, &c.

EXPOSITORY LECTURES

ON

PSALM XXXIX.

LECTURE I.

Ver. 1. *I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.*

CERTAINLY it is an high dignity that is conferred upon man, that he may as freely and frequently as he will, converse with Him that made him, the great King of Heaven and earth. It is indeed a wonder that God should honour poor creatures so much; but it is no less strange that men having so great privileges, the most part of them do use them so little. Seldom do we come to him in times of ease. And when we are spurred to it by afflictions and pains, commonly we try all other means rather than this, that is the alone true and unfailing comfort. But such as have learned this way of laying their pained head and heart in his bosom, they are truly happy, though in the world's language they be never so miserable.

This is the recourse of this holy man in the time of his affliction, whatever it was, prayer and tears, bemoaning himself before his God and Father, and that the more fervently, in that he finds his speaking to men so unprofitable; and therefore he refrains from it.

The Psalm consists of two parts; his silence to men, and his speech to God; and both of them are set with such sweet notes of music, though they be sad, that they deserve well to be committed to the *Chief Musician*.

I said; I will take heed to my ways.] It was to himself that he said it; and it is impossible for any other to prove a good or a wise man, without much of this kind of speech to himself. It is one of the most excellent and distinguishing faculties of a reasonable creature, much beyond vocal speech, for in that some birds may imitate us; but neither bird nor beast have any thing of this kind of language, of reflecting or discoursing with itself. It is a wonderful brutality in the greatest part of men, who are so little conversant in this kind of speech, being framed and disposed for it, and which is not only of itself excellent, but of continual use and advantage; but it is a common evil among men, to go abroad, and out of themselves, which is a madness and a true distraction. It is true a man hath need of a well set mind, when he speaks to himself; for otherwise he may be worse company to himself than if he were with others; but he ought to endeavour to have a better with him, to call in God to his heart to dwell with him. If thus we did, we should find how sweet this were to speak to ourselves, by now and then intermixing our speech with discourses unto God. For want of this, the most part not only lose their time in vanity, in their converse abroad with others, but do carry in heaps of that vanity to the stock which is in their own hearts, and do converse with that in secret, which is the greatest and the deepest folly in the world.

Other solitary employments, as reading the disputes and controversies that are among men, are things not unuseful, yet all turns to waste, if we read not our own heart, and study that: This is the study of every holy man, and between this and the consideration of God, he spends his hours and endeavours. Some have recommended the reading of men more than books: But what is in the one, or both of them, or all the world beside, without this? a man shall find himself out of his proper business, if he acquaint not himself with this, to speak much with

God and with himself, concerning the ordering of his own ways.

It is true, it is necessary for some men, in some particular charges and stations, to regard the ways of others; and besides, something also there may be of a wise observing others, to improve the good and evil we see in them, to our own advantage, and bettering our own ways, looking on them to make the repercussion the stronger on ourselves: but except it be out of charity and wisdom, it flows either from uncharitable malice, or else a curious and vain spirit, to look much and narrowly into the ways of others, and to know the manner of living of persons about us, and so to know every thing but ourselves; like travellers, that are well seen in foreign and remote parts, but strangers in the affairs of their own country at home. The check that Christ gave to Peter is due to such, *What is that to thee? follow thou me*^a. “Look thou to thine own feet, that they be set in the right way.” It is a strange thing that men should lay out their diligence abroad to their loss, when their pains might be bestowed to their advantage nearer at hand, at home within themselves.

This that the Psalmist speaks here of, *taking heed to his ways*, as it imports his present diligence, so also it hath in it a reflection on his ways past, and these two do mutually assist one another; for he shall never regulate his ways before him, that has not wisely considered his ways past; for there is wisdom gathered from the observation of what is gone to the choosing where to walk in time to come, to see where he is weakest, and lies exposed to the greatest hazard, and there to guard. Thus David expresses it in another Psalm, *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies*^b. And this would not be done only in the great change of one's first conversion from sin, but this double observance still continued every day, looking to his rule, and laying that rule to his way,

^a John xxi. 22.

^b Psal. cxix. 59.

and observing where the balk and nonconformity to the rule is, and renewing his repentance for that, and amending it the next day, that still the present day may be the better for yesterday's error.

And surely there is much need of this, if we consider how we are encompassed about with hazards and snares, and a variety of temptations, and how little we have, either of strength to overcome, or wisdom to avoid them, especially they being secretly set and unseen (which makes them the more dangerous) every where in the way in which we must walk, and even in those ways where we least think. Every where does the enemy of our souls lay traps and snares for us; in our table, in our bed, in our company, and alone. If the heart be earthly and carnal, there is the snare of riches and gains, or pleasures, present, to think upon; and if they delight in spiritual things, that walk is not exempted neither; there are snares of doubtings, presumption, and pride; and in converse of one Christian with another, where spiritual affection hath been stirred, it turns often to carnal passions, as the Apostle says of the Galatians, *They begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh*.*

This observing and watching, as it is needful, so it is a very delightful thing, though it will be hard and painful to the unexperienced, to have a man's actions and words continually curbed; so that he cannot speak or do what he would: These are fetters and bonds, yet, to those that know it, it is a pleasure to gain experience, and to be more skilled in preventing the surprises of our enemies, and upon that to have something added to our own art, and to be more able to resist upon new occasions, and to find ourselves every day outstripping ourselves; that is the sweetest life in the world; the soul to be dressing itself for the espousals of the Great King, putting on more of the ornaments and beauties of holiness; that is our glory, *to be made conformable to the image of God and of Jesus Christ*. If an

* Gal. iii. 3.

image had sense, it would desire nothing so much as to look on the original whence it received its name, and to become more and more like it: So it is the pleasure of renewed souls to be looking on him, and so growing daily more like him, whose living image they are, and to be fitting themselves for that day of glory, wherein they shall be like him in the perfection they are capable of: And this makes death more pleasant than life to the believer; that which seems so bitter to the most of men, is sweetened to them most wonderfully: The continual observance of a man's ways, keeping a watch continually over them; this casts a light upon the dark passage of death, which is at the end of that walk, and conveys him through to the fulness of life: So that man who observes himself and his ways through his life, hath little to do in examining them when he comes to die. That is a piece of strange folly, that we defer the whole, or a great part of our day's work to the twilight of the evening, and are so cruel to ourselves, as to keep the great load of our life, for a few hours or days, and for a painted sickly body. He who makess it his daily work to observe his ways, is not astonished when that day comes, which long before was familiar to him every day.

That I sin not with my tongue.] It is the wise man's advice, *Keep thy heart with all diligence*, or above all keeping, and he gives the satisfying reason of it, *for out of it are the issues of life*^d. Such as the spring is, so will the streams be; the heart is the spring from whence all the natural life and vital spirits flow through the body, and, in the Scripture sense, it is the spring of all our actions and conversation; for it sends out emissaries through all, through the eye, hand, and all the senses and organs of the body, but through none more constantly and abundantly than the tongue: and therefore Solomon after these words, immediately adds, *Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put*

^d Prov. iv. 23.

far from thee. The current of the heart runs in that channel; for it is the organ of societies, and is commonly employed in all the converse of men; and we can still, when all the other members are useless, use our tongues in regretting their unfitness for their offices; so sick and old persons: thus David here, as it seems under some bodily sickness, labours to refrain his tongue; and, lest it should prove too strong for him, he puts a curb upon it; though it did not free him from inward frettings of his heart, yet he lays a restraint upon his tongue, to stay the progress of sin, that grows in vigour by going out, and produces and begets sin of the same kind in the hearts and mouths of others, when it passes from the heart to the tongue. The Apostle James does amply and excellently teach the great importance of ordering the tongue in all a Christian's life; but we are ever learning and never taught. We hear how excellent a guard this is to our lives, to keep a watch over our tongue; but I fear few of us gain the real advantage of this rule, and are far from the serious thoughts that a religious person had of this scripture, who, when he heard it read, retired himself for many years to the study of this precept, and made very good proficiency in it.

In all the disorders of the world, the tongue hath a great share; to let pass those irruptions of infernal furies, blasphemies and cursing, lying and uncharitable speeches; how much have we to account for unprofitable talking? It is a lamentable thing, that there is nothing, for the most part, in common entertainments and societies of men together, but refuse and trash, as if their tongues were given them for no other end but to be their shame, by discovering their folly and weakness. As likewise that of impatient speech in trouble and affliction, which certainly springs from an unmortified spirit, that hath learned nothing of that great lesson of submission to the will of God; but for all the disorders of the tongue, the remedy must begin at the heart,

purge the fountain, and then the streams will be clean; *keep thy heart*, and then it will be easy to keep thy tongue. It is a great help in the quality of speech, to abate in the quantity; not to speak rashly, but to ponder what we are going to say, *Set a watch before the door of thy lips*^e. He bids us not build it up like a stone wall, that nothing go in or come out; but he speaks of a door, which may be sometimes open, oft-times shut, but withal to have a watch standing before it continually. A Christian must labour to have his speech as contracted as can be, in the things of this earth; and even in divine things, our words should be few and wary. In speaking of the greatest things, it is a great point of wisdom not to speak much; that is David's resolution, to keep *silence*, especially *before the wicked*, who came to visit him, probably, when he was sick; while they were there, he *held a watch before his lips*, to speak nothing of God's hand on him, lest they should have mistaken him; and a man may have some thoughts of divine things, that were very impertinent to speak out indifferently to all sorts, even of good persons. This is a talkative age, and people contract a faculty to speak much in matters of religion, though their words for the most part be only the productions of their own brain, little of these things in their hearts. Surely these kind of speeches are as bad as any, when holy things are spoken of with a national freedom, where there is nothing but empty words. They who take themselves to solitude, choose the best and easiest part, if they have a warrant so to do: for this world is a tempestuous sea, in which there are many rocks, and a great difficulty it is to steer this little helm aright amidst them: however, the apostle James makes it a great character of a Christian's perfection, *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*^f. But where is that man? Seeing we find men generally, and most of all ourselves, so far

^e Psal. cxli. 3.

^f Chap. iii. 2.

from this, it cannot choose but work this, to stir up ardent desires in us, to be removed to that blessed society, where there shall be never a word amiss, nor a word too much.

LECTURE II.

Ver. 2. I was dumb with silence: I held my peace even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.

3. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue.

It is a very useful and profitable thing to observe the motions and deportments of the spirits of wise and holy men, in all the various postures and conditions they are in; it is for that purpose they are drawn out to us in the Scriptures. There are some graces that are more proper, and come more in action in times of ease and prosperity, such as temperance, moderation of mind, humility, and compassion. Others are more proper for times of distress, as faith, fortitude, patience, and resignation. It is very expedient, if not necessary, that affliction have its turns, and frequently in the lives of the children of God: it is the tempest that gives evidence of the pilot's skill; and as the Lord delighteth in all his works, looks on the frame and conduct in all things with pleasure, so he is delighted to look on this part, on this low sea of troubles, to see his champions meet with hard and pressing trials, such as sometimes do not only make them feel them, but do often make the conflict dubious to them, that they seem to be almost foiled; yet do they acquit themselves, and come off with honour. It is not the excellency of grace to be insensible in trouble, (as some philosophers would have their wise men), but to overcome and be victorious.

Among the rest of this holy man's troubles, this was one, that the wicked did reproach him: this is a sharp arrow, that flies thick in the world. It is

one of the sharpest stings of poverty, that as it is pinched with wants at home, so it is met with scorn abroad. It is reckoned among the sharp sufferings of holy men^a, that they suffered *bitter mockings*. Now, men commonly return these in the same kind, that is, by the tongue, whereof David is here aware; he refrains himself even *from good*, not only from his just defence, but even from good and pious discourses. We do so easily exceed in our words, that it is better sometimes to be wholly silent, than to speak that which is good; for our good borders so near upon evil, and so easy is the transition from the one to the other, that though we begin to speak of God and good things, with a good intention, yet how quickly run we into another channel; passion and self having stolen in, turn us quite from the first design of our speech; and this chiefly in disputes and debates about religion, wherein though we begin with zeal for God, yet oft-times in the end, we testify nothing but our own passion, and sometimes we do lie one against another in defence of what we call the truth.

It cannot be denied, that, to an holy heart, it is a great violence to be shut up altogether from the speech of God. It burns within, especially in the time of affliction, as was the case of Jeremiah; *Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: but his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I was weary with forbearing, and could not stay^b*; so is it here with David; therefore he breaks out; the fire burns upward, and he speaks to God,

Let this be our way, when we cannot find ease among men, to seek it in God; he knows the language of his children, and will not mistake it; yea, where there may be somewhat of weakness and distemper, he will bear with it. In all your distresses, in all your moanings, go to him, pour out your tears to him; not only fire, but even water, where it

^a Heb. i.

^b Jerem. xx. 9.

wants a vent, will break upward; these tears drop not in our own lap, but they fall on his, and he hath a bottle to put them in; if ye empty them there, they shall return in wine of strong consolation.

Ver. 4. Now David's request is, *Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.*] In which he does not desire a response from God, about the day of his death, but instruction concerning the frailty and shortness of his life: but did not David know this? Yes, he knew it, and yet he desires to know it. It is very fit we ask of God that he would make us to know the things that we know, I mean, that what we know emptily and barely, we may know spiritually and fruitfully: if there be any measure of this knowledge, that it may increase and grow more. We know that we are sinners, but that knowledge commonly produces nothing but cold, dry, and senseless confusion; but the right knowledge of sin would prick our hearts, and cause us to pour them out before the Lord. We know that Jesus is the Saviour of sinners; it were fit to pray, that we knew more of him, so much of him as might make us shape and fashion our hearts to his likeness. We know we must die, and that it is no long course to the utmost period of life, yet our hearts are little instructed by this knowledge; how great need have we to pray this prayer with David here, or that with Moses, *Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*^c. Did we indeed know and consider how quickly we shall pass from hence, it were not possible for us to cleave so fast to the things of this life; and, as foolish children, to wade in ditches, and fill our laps with mire and dirt; to prefer base earth and flesh to immortality and glory.

That I may know how frail I am.] Most part of men are foolish inconsiderate creatures, *like unto the very beasts that perish*^d, only they are capable of greater vanity and misery; but, in as irrational a

^c Psal. xc. 12.^d Psal. xlix. 12.

way, they toil on and hurry themselves in a multitude of business, by multitudes of desires, fears, and hopes, and know not whither all tends; but one well advised thought of this one thing would temper them in their hottest pursuits, if they would but think how frail they are, how vain a passing thing, not only these their particular desires and projects are, but they themselves, and their whole life. David prays that he may *know his end*: and his prayer is answered, *Behold thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth*^e. If we were more in requests of this kind, we should receive more speedy and certain answers. If this be our request, to know ourselves, our frailties and vanity, we shall know that our *days are few and evil*, both the brevity and vanity of them.

Ver. 5. *Thou hast measured out my days as an hand-breadth.*] That is one of the shortest measures; we need not long lines to measure our lives by, each one carries a measure about with him, his own hand, that is the longest and fullest measure. It is not so much as a span; that might possibly have been the measure of old age in the infancy of the world, but now it is contracted to an hand-breadth, and that is the longest; but how many fall short of that? many attain not to a finger-breadth; multitudes pass from the womb to the grave; and how many end their course within the compass of childhood?

Whether we take this hand-breadth for the four-score years, that is ordinarily the utmost extent of man's life in our days, or for the four times of our age, in which we use to distinguish it, childhood, youth, manhood, and old age; there are great numbers we see take up their lodging ere they come near the last of any of these, and few attain to the utmost border of them. All of us are but a hand-breadth from death, and not so much: for many of us have passed a great part of that hand-breadth already, and we know not how little of it is behind. We use commonly to divide our lives by years,

^e Verse 5.

months, weeks and days, but it is all but one day; there is the morning, noon, afternoon and evening; *Man is as the grass that springs in the morning*^f, as for all the days that are past of our life, death hath them rather than we, and they are already in its possession; when we look back on them, they appear but as a shadow or dream, and if they be so to us, how much more short are they in the sight of God? So says David here, When I look on thee and thy eternity, *mine age is as nothing before thee*; what is our life, being compared to God, before whom *a thousand years are but as one day*, and less, like yesterday, when it is past, and that is but a thought! The whole duration of the world is but a point in respect of eternity; and how small a point is the life of man, even in comparison with that!

The brevity of our life is a very useful consideration; from it we may learn patience under all our crosses and troubles; they may be shorter than life, but they can be no longer. There are few that an affliction hath lain on all the days of their life; but though that were the case, yet a little time, and how quickly is it done! While thou art asleep there is a cessation of thy trouble; and, when awake, bemoaning and weeping for it, and for sin that is the cause of it, in the mean time it is sliding away. In all the bitter blasts that blow on thy face, thou who art a Christian indeed, mayst comfort thyself, in the thought of the good lodging that is before thee. To others it were the greatest comfort, that their afflictions in this life were lengthened out to eternity.

Likewise, this may teach us temperance in these things that are called *the good things of this world*. Though a man had a lease of all these fine things the world can afford for his whole life, (which yet never any man that I know of had), what is it? a feigned dream of an hour long. None of these things that now it takes so much delight in, will

^f Psal. xc. 5.

accompany the cold lump of clay to the grave. Within a little while, those *that are married and rejoice, shall be as if they rejoiced not*^b, nor ever had done it; and if they shall be so quickly, a wise man makes little difference, in these things, betwixt their presence and their absence.

This thought should also teach us diligence in our business. We have a short day, and much to do; it were fit to be up early, to *remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth*; and ye that are come to riper years, be advised to lay hold on what remains, ye know not how little it is.

The more you fill yourselves with the things of this life, the less desires you will have after *those rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand*; those shall never run dry, but all these other things shall be dried up within a little space; at the furthest, when old age and death come, if not sooner. And on the other side, the more we deny ourselves the sensual enjoyments of a present world, we grow the liker to that divine estate, and are made the surer of it; and I am sure all will grant that this is a very gainful exchange.

Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.] It is no wonder that the generality of men are strangers to God, for they are strangers to themselves. The cure of both these evils is from the same hand. He alone can teach us what he is, and what we are ourselves. All know and see that their life is short, and themselves vanity. But this holy man thought it needful to ask the true notion of it from above, and he receives the measure of his life, *even an hand-breadth*. There is a common imposture among people, to read their fortunes by their hands; but this is true palmestry indeed, to read the shortness of our life upon the palms of our hands.

Our days are not only few, but we ourselves are *vanity*. *Every man*, even a godly man, as he is a partaker of this life, is not exempted from vanity,

^d 1 Cor. vii. 29.

may, he knows it better than any other: but this thought comforts him, that he hath begun that life that is above, and beyond all vanity. The words are weighty and full. It is not a problem, or a doubtful thing; but surely *every man is vanity*, I may call it a definition, and so it is proved^b, *What is man? He is like to vanity, and his days are as a shadow that passes away.* His days do not only soon decline and pass away as a shadow, but also they are *like vanity*. While he appears to be something, he is nothing but the figure and picture of vanity. He is like it, not the copy of it, but rather the original and idea of it; for he hath derived vanity to the whole creation; he hath *subjected the creatures* to it, and hath thrown such a load of it upon them, that they groan under it; and so vanity agrees to him properly, constantly, and universally. *Every man*, and that *at his best estate*, as the word is, in his settled and fixed state; set him as sure and high as you will, yet he is not above that, he carries it about with him as he does his nature.

This is a very profitable truth to think on, though some kind of hearers, even of the better sort, would judge it more profitable to hear of cases of conscience; but this is a great case of conscience, to consider it well, and carry the impression of it home with you on your hearts. The extreme vanity of ourselves, that we are nothing but vanity; and the note that is added here, *Selah*, if it import any thing to the sense and confirmation of what it is added to, it agrees well to this: but if it be only a musical note, to direct, as some think, the elevation, or, according to others, the falling of the voice, it fits the sense very well. For you have man here lifted up and cast down again; lifted up *man at his best estate*, and from that thrown down to nothing, even in that estate *he is altogether vanity*. What is that? It is, as the word signifies, *an earthly vapour*, and it is generally used to signify things of the least and meanest use, the most empty airy

^b Psal. cxliv. 2, 3.

things. So idols are oft called by that name; they are nothing in respect of what is attributed to them by the children of men; and such a thing is man, he seems to be something, and is indeed nothing, as it is Psal. lxii. 9. *Men of low degree are vanity*: possibly that may be granted for a truth, and they pass for such; and he adds, *Men of high degree are a lie*: they promise something, and look bigger like, but they are nothing more, except this, *a lie*, and the greater they are, the louder lie.

This it is, then, that we should acquaint ourselves with, that man, in this present life, in all the high advantages of it, is an empty, feeble, fading thing. If we look to the frame of man's body, what is he but a muddy wall, *an house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust*. If we look within, there is nothing there but a sink and heap of filth. The body of man is not only subject to fevers, hectic, &c. that makes the wall to moulder down; but, take him in his health and strength, what is he but a bag of rottenness; and why should he take delight in his beauty? which is but the appearance of a thing, which a fit of sickness will so easily deface, or the running of a few years spoil the fashion of; a great heat or a cold puts that frame into disorder; a few days sickness lays him in the dust, or much blood gathered within gathers fevers and pleurisies, and so destroys that life it should maintain; or a fly or a crumb of bread may stop his breath, and so end his days.

If we consider men in societies, in cities and towns, often hath the overflowing scourge of famine and pestilence laid them waste, and from those they cannot secure themselves in their greatest plenty and health, but they come in a sudden, and unlooked for. If we could see all the parts and persons in a great city at once, how many woes and miseries should we behold there? how many either want bread, or scarcely have it by hard labour? then, to hear the groans of dying persons, and the sighs and weepings of those about them; how many

of these things are within the walls of great cities at all times? Great palaces cannot hold out death, but it breaks through and enters there, and thither oft-times the most painful and shameful diseases that are incident to the sons of men resort. Death, by vermin, hath seized on some of the greatest of kings that have ever been in the world. If we look on generals who have commanded the greatest armies, they carry about with them poor frail bodies, as well as others; they may be killed with one small wound, as well as the meanest soldier; and a few days intemperance hath taken some of the most gallant and courageous of them away in the midst of their success. And, sure I am, he who believes and considers the life to come, and looks on this, and sees what it is, makes little account of those things that have so big a sound in the world, the revolutions of states, crowns, kingdoms, cities, towns; how poor inconsiderable things are they, being compared with eternity! And he that looks not on them as such is a *fool*.

LECTURE III.

Ver. 6. Surely every man walks in a vain shew; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

THERE is a part of our hand-breadth past since we last left this place, and, as we are saying this, we are wearing out some portion of the rest of it: it were well, if we considered this so as to make a better improvement of what remains, than, I believe, we shall find, upon examining of our ways, of what is past. Let us see if we can gain the space of an hour, that we may be excited to a better management of the latter part of our time than we have made of the former.

We are all, I think, convinced of the vanity of man, as to his outside, that he is a feeble, weak, poor

creature; but we may have hope of somewhat better, in that which is the man indeed, his mind and intellectual part. It is true, that that was originally excellent, and that there is somewhat of a radical excellency still in the soul of man; yet it is so desperately degenerate, that, naturally, man, even in that consideration, *is altogether vanity*, in all the pieces of him; his mind is but a heap of vanity, nothing there but ignorance, folly and disorder; and if we think not so, we are the more foolish and ignorant. That which passes with great pomp, under the title of *learning* and *science*, it is commonly nothing else but a rhapsody of words and empty terms, which have nothing in them to make known the internal nature of things.

But even those who have the improvement of learning and education, who understand the model and government of affairs, that see their defects, and entertain themselves with various shapes of amending and reforming them, even in those we shall find nothing but a sadder and more serious vanity. It is a tormenting and vexing thing for men to promise to themselves great reformatations and bettering of things; that thought usually deludes the wisest of men; they must at length come to that of Solomon, after much labour to little purpose, that *crooked things cannot be made straight*^a, yea, many things grow worse, by labouring to rectify them; therefore he adds, but *he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow*.

As for knowledge in religion, we see the greatest part of the world lying in gross darkness: and even amongst Christians, how much ignorance of these things! which appears in this, that there are such swarms and productions of debates and contentions, that they are grown past number, and each party confident that truth is on his side, and ordinarily, the most ignorant and erroneous, the most confident and most imperious in their determinations; surely it were a great part of our wisdom to free our spirits

^a Eccles. i. 15.

from these empty fruitless janglings, that abound in the Christian world.

It were an endless toil to go through all degrees, professions and employments of men in the world; we may go through nations, countries, crafts, schools, colleges, courts, camps, councils of state, and parliaments, and find nothing in all these, but still more of this trouble and vexation in a more fine dress and fashion, *altogether vanity.*

Every man walks in a vain shew.] His walk is nothing but a going on in continual vanity, adding a new stock of vanity, of his own coining, to what he has already within, and vexation of spirit woven all along in with it. He walks in an image, as the word is, converses with things of no reality, and which have no solidity in them, and he himself as little. He himself is a walking image, in the midst of these images. They that are taken with the conceit of images and pictures, that is an emblem of their own life, and of all other means also. Every man's fancy is to himself a gallery of pictures, and there he walks up and down, and considers not how vain these are, and how vain a thing he himself is.

My brethren, they are happy persons, (but few are they in number), that are truly weaned from all those images and fancies the world doats so much upon. If many of the children of men would turn their own thoughts backwards in the evening but of one day, what would they find for the most part, but that they have been walking among these pictures, and passing from one vanity to another, and back again to and fro; to as little purpose as the running up and down of children at their play! He who runs after honour, pleasure, popular esteem, what do you think? does not that man walk in an image, pursuing after that, that hath no other being but what the opinion and fancy of men give to it, especially the last, which is a thing so fluctuating, uncertain and inconstant, that while he hath it, he hath nothing? The other image that man follows

and worships is that in the text, that wretched madness of *heaping up riches*: this is the great foolishness and disease, especially of old age, that the less way a man has to go, he makes the greater provision for it; when the hands are stiff, and for no other labour, they are fitted and composed for scraping together. But for what end dost thou take all this pains? If for thyself, a little sober care will do thy turn, if thy desires be sober; and if not so, thy diligence were better bestowed in impairing and diminishing of these, and that is the easier way a great deal. And if it be for others, why dost thou take a certain unease to thyself for the uncertain ease of others? And who these are thou dost not know; may be, such as thou never intended them for. It were good we used more easy and undistracting diligence, for increasing of these treasures, which we cannot deny are far better, and whosoever hath them, may abound therein with increase; he knows well for whom he gathers them; he himself shall possess them through all eternity.

If there were not a hope beyond this life, there were reason for that passionate word in Psal. lxxxix. 47. *Why hast thou made all men in vain?* To what purpose were it for poor wretched man, to have been all his days tossed upon the waves of vanity, and then to lie down in the grave and be no more heard of? But it is not so, he is made capable of a noble and blessed life beyond this; and our forgetfulness of this, is the cause of all our misery and vanity here.

It is a great folly to complain of the shortness of our life, and yet to lavish it out so prodigally on trifles and shadows: if it were well managed, it would be sufficient for all we have to do. The only way to live indeed, is to be doing service to God, and good to men: this is to live much in a little time. But when we play the fools in mispending our time, it may be indeed a sad thought to us, when we find it gone, and we are benighted in the dark so far from our home. But those that have their

souls untied from this world and knit to God, they need not complain of the shortness of it, having laid hold on eternal life; for this life is flying away, there is no laying hold on it; it is no matter how soon it go away, the sooner the better, for to such persons it seems rather to go too slow.

LECTURE IV.

Ver. 7. *And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.*

To entertain the minds of men with thoughts of their own vanity, and discourses of their own misery, seems to be sad and unpleasant; but certainly it is not unprofitable, unless it be our own choice to make it so; and that were the greatest vanity and misery of all. Indeed, if there were no help for this *sore evil*, then the common shift were not to be blamed, yea, it were to be chosen as the only help in such a desperate case, not to think on it, to forget our misery, and to divert our thoughts from it, by all possible means, rather than to increase it, and torment ourselves, by insisting and poring on it; and in that case, shallow minds would have the advantage, that could not converse with these sad thoughts; for to *increase this knowledge* were but to *increase sorrow*. But far be it from us thus to determine; there is a hope which is a help to this evil, and this is it that this holy man fixes on, *And now, Lord, &c.* otherwise it were strange, that the most excellent piece of the visible creation should be made subject to the most incurable unhappiness, to feel misery which he cannot shun, and to be tormented with desires that cannot be satisfied. But there is some better expectation for the souls of men, and it is no other but *himself* who made them.

The wisest natural men have discoursed of man's vanity, and passionately bemoaned it, but in this they have fallen short, how to remedy it. They

have aimed at it and come near it, but were not able to work it; they still laboured to be satisfied in themselves; they speak somewhat of reason, but that will not do it, for man being fallen under the curse of God, there is nothing but darkness and folly in himself. The only way to blessedness is by going out of ourselves unto God.

All our discourses of our own vanity will but further disquiet us, if they do not terminate here, if they do not fix on his eternal happiness, goodness and verity.

I am persuaded, if many would ask this question at themselves, *What wait I for?* they would puzzle themselves and not find an answer: there are a great many things that men desire and are gaping after, but few after one thing chiefly and stayedly; they float up and down, and are carried about without any certain motion, but by fancy, and by guess; and no wind can be fair for such persons, that aim at no certain haven.

If we put this question to ourselves, What would I have? It were easy for many to answer, I would have an easy, quiet, peaceable life in this world; so would an ox or a horse; and, is that all? may be, you would have a greater height of pleasure and honour; but think on this one thing, that there is this one crack and vanity that spoils all these things, that they will not bear you up when you lean to them in times of distress; and besides, when you have them, they may be pulled from you, and if not, you must be plucked away from them within a little while; there is much seeming content in the pursuit of these things, but they are lost with greater discontent. It is God's goodness to men, to blast all things in the world to them, and to break their fairest hopes, that they may be constrained to look about to Himself; he beats them from all shores, that he may *bring them to the Rock that is higher than they*^a.

O! that God would once touch some of your

^a Psal. lxi. 2.

hearts, that are under the *chains of darkness*, that ye might once bethink where to rest your heads in the midst of all our confusions; and here is the resting-place, hope in God. *Now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.* Blessed soul that can say, "Lord, thou seest I desire nothing but thyself, (as Peter said, *Lord, thou knowest I love thee*) all the corners of my heart stand open in thy sight; thou seest if there be any other desire or expectation but to please thee, and if there be any such thing in me (for I see it not), I pray thee discover it to me, and through thy grace it shall lodge no longer. My heart is thine alone, it is consecrated to thee; and if any thing would profane thy temple, if it will not go forth by fair warning, let it be scourged out by thy rod, yea, any rod whatsoever it pleaseth thee to choose."

My hope is in thee.] This holy man, seeing the vanity of all other expectations and pursuits of men, at length runs to this; *And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee:* he finds nothing but moving sand every where else; but he finds this eternal Rock to be a strong foundation, as the Hebrew word, by which he is styled, doth signify. It is true, the union of the heart with God is made up by faith and love, but yet both these in this our present condition of our absence and distance from God, do act themselves much by the third grace, which is joined with them, and that is *hope*. For faith is conversant about *things that are not seen*, and in a great part that are not yet, but are to come; and the spirit of faith choosing things that are to come, is called hope. It is true, they are not so wholly deferred, as that they possess nothing, but yet the utmost they possess is but a pledge and earnest penny, a small thing in respect of that eternal inheritance they look for. What they have here, is of the same kind with what they expect; but it is but a little portion of it, the smiles and glances of their Father's face, foretastes of heaven,

which their souls are refreshed with; but these are but rare, and for a short time.

Hope is the great stock of believers, it is that which upholds them under all the faintings and sorrows of their mind in this life, and in their going *through the valley and shadow of death*. It is the *helmet of their salvation*, which, while they are looking over to eternity, beyond this present time, covers and keeps their head safe amidst all the darts that fly round about them. In the present discomfort and darkness of mind, and the saddest hours they meet with in this life, hope is that which keeps up the soul, and is that which David cheered up his soul with^b, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance*. And even in this point the *children of the world* have no great advantage of the *children of God*, as to the things of this life; for much of their satisfaction, such as it is, does hang, for the most part, on their hope; the happiest and richest of them do still piece it out with some further expectation, something they look for beyond what they have, and the expectation of that pleases them more than all their present possessions. But this great disadvantage they have, all their hopes are but heaps of delusions and lies, and either they die and obtain them not, or if they obtain them, yet they obtain them not, they are so far short of what they fancied and imagined of them beforehand. But the hope of the children of God, as it is without fail sure, so it is inconceivably full and satisfying, far beyond what the largest apprehension of any man is able to reach. *Hope in God!* what is wanting there?

This hope lodges only in the pure heart; it is a precious liquor that can only be kept in a clean vessel, and that which is not so, cannot receive it; but what it seems to receive, it corrupts and destroys.

^c Psal. xlii. 5.

It is a confidence arising from peace, agreement, and friendship, which cannot be betwixt the God of purity, and those who allow unholiness in themselves. It is a strange impudence for men to talk of their *trust and hope in God*, who are in perfect hostility against him; bold fellows go through dangers here, but it will not be so hereafter^c, *They turn to me the back, and not the face; yet, in their trouble, they say, Arise and save us; they do it as confidently as if they never had despised God; but they mistake the matter, it is not so. Go and cry, says he, to the Gods whom ye have chosen*^d. When men come to die, then they catch hold of the mercy of God; but from that their filthy hands are beat off, there is no help for them there, and so they fall down to the pit. An holy fear of God, and a happy hope in him, are commonly linked together; *Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy*^e.

And even in those who are more purified from sin, yet too large draughts of lawful pleasures do clog the spirits, and make this hope grow exceeding weak; surely the more we fill ourselves with these things, we leave the less appetite for the consolations of this blessed hope. They cannot know the excellency of this hope, who labour not to keep it unmixed; it is best alone, as the richest wines and oils, which are the worse of mixtures. *Be sober and hope*^f; keep your mind sober, and your hope shall be pure. Any thing or person that leans on two supporters, whereof the one is whole and sound, and the other broken or crooked, that which is unsound breaks, though the other remain whole, and they fall; whereas the one that was whole had been sufficient: Thus it is, when we divide our hopes betwixt God and this present world, or any other good, those that place their whole hopes on God, they gather in all their desires to him: the streams of their affections are not scattered and left in the

^c Jer. ii. 27.^d Judg. x. 14.^e Psal. xxxiii. 18.^f 1 Pet. i. 13.

muddy ditches of the world, they do not fall into sinking pools, but being gathered into one main torrent, they run on in that channel to the sea of his eternal goodness.

My hope is in thee.] We cannot choose but all of us think that God is immensely good in himself; but that which is nearer, whereon our hearts most rise, is a relative goodness, that he is good to us, and that he is so perfectly and completely good, that having made choice of him, and obtained union with him, we need no more. Were once the hearts of the children of men persuaded of this, all their deliberations were at an end, they would not only choose no other, but defer no longer to fix on him. And what can trouble the soul that is thus established? No change or overturning of outward things; though the frame of the world itself were shaken to pieces, yet still the bottom of this hope is Him that *changeth not*: And whatever thy pressures be, poverty, sickness, or disquiet of mind, thou mayest draw abundant consolation from Him in whom thou hast placed thy hope. There is only one thing that cruelly assaults it by the way, and that is the guilt of sin. All afflictions and troubles we meet with are not able to mar this hope or quench it; for where it is strong, it either breaks through them, or flies "above them: They cannot overcome it, for there is no affliction inconsistent with the love of God, yea, the sharpest affliction may sometimes have the clearest characters of his love upon it; but it is sin that presents him as angry to the view of the soul. When he looks through that cloud, he seems to be an enemy; and when we apprehend him in that aspect, we are affrighted, and presently apprehend a storm; but even in this case, this hope apprehends his mercy. And thus David here,

LECTURE V.

Ver. 8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions : make me not the reproach of the foolish.*

THIS is indeed the basis and foundation of all our other hopes, the free pardon of our sins; but none must entertain these sins, if they desire to be pardoned. *Repentance* and *remission of sins* are still linked together in the Scriptures; and he that would have sin pardoned, and yet live in it, or retain the love of it, would have God and sin reconciled together, and that can never be. David finds his sins pressing him down; he sees them as an army of men set in battle array about him; and whither flies he for a deliverance? even to Him whom he had offended.

Ver. 10, 11. *Remove thy stroke away from me ; I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth : Surely every man is vanity. Selah.]* We are naturally very partial judges of ourselves; and, as if we were not sufficiently able by nature, we study and devise by art to deceive ourselves. We are ready to reckon any good that is in us to the full, nay, to multiply it beyond what it is; and yet to help this, we use commonly to look on those who have less goodness in them, who are weaker, more foolish and worse than ourselves; and so we magnify the sense of our own worth and goodness by that comparison. And as in the goodness we have, or imagine we have, so likewise in the evils we suffer, we use to extol them very much in conceit. We account our lightest afflictions very great; and to heighten our thoughts of them, we do readily take a view of those who are more at ease, and less afflicted than ourselves; and, by these devices, we nourish in ourselves pride, by the overweening conceit of our goodness; and impatience, by the overfeeling sense of our evils. But if we would help

ourselves by comparison, we should do well to view these persons who are, or have been, eminent for holiness, recorded in holy writ, or whom we know in our own times, or have heard of in former; and by this means we should lessen the great opinion we have of our own worth; and so likewise should we consider the many instances of great calamities and sorrows, which would tend to quiet our minds, and enable us to *possess our souls in patience*, under the little burden of trials that lies upon us: And, especially, we shall find those instances to fall in together, that as persons have been very eminent in holiness, they have also been eminent in suffering very sore strokes and sharp scourges from the hand of God. If we would think on their consuming blows and broken bones, their *bones burnt as an hearth*, and their *flesh withered as grass*; certainly we should entertain our thoughts sometimes with wonder of God's indulgence to us, that we are so little afflicted, when so many of the children of men, and so many of the children of God, suffer so many and so hard things; and this would very much add to the stock of our praises. We should not think that we are more innocent in not deserving those things that are inflicted on others, but rather, that He who thus measures out to them and to us, knows our size, and sees how weak we are in comparison of them; and that therefore he is indulgent to us, not because we are better, but because we are weaker, and are not able to bear so much as he lays on the stronger shoulders. Even in the sharpest of these rods there is mercy. It is a privilege to the sheep that is ready to wander, to be beaten into the right way. When thou art corrected, think that thereby thy sins are to be purged out, thy passions and lusts to be crucified by these pains; and certainly he that finds any cure of the evils of his spirit by the hardest sufferings of his flesh, gets a very gainful bargain. If thou account sin thy greatest unhappiness and mischief, thou wilt be glad to have it removed on any terms. There is at least in

the time of affliction a cessation from some sins; the raging lust of ambition and pride do cease, when a man is laid upon his back; and these very cessations are some advantages. But there is one great benefit of affliction, which follows in the text, that it gives him the true measure of himself.

When with rebukes thou dost correct man, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: Surely every man is vanity. Selah.] Man at his best estate is altogether vanity; but at his lowest estate it appears best unto him, how much vanity he is, and how much vanity he was at his best estate, seeing he was then capable of such a change, to fall so low from such a height. As that great man who was seeking new conquests, when he fell upon the sand, and saw the print of his own body, "Why, says he, so small a parcel of earth will serve me, who am seeking after new kingdoms." Thus it is, when a man is brought down, then he hath the right measure of himself, when he sees how vain a thing he is.

Thus the Psalmist represents it here, both as an argument to move God to compassion, and to instruct himself and other men. So Job xiii. 25. *Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro with the wind? and wilt thou pursue dry stubble? For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust* ^s. And his beauty, which seemed to be his perfection, yet, when the hand of God is on him, it is blasted as a moth-eaten garment; this should teach us humility, and to beware of sin, which provokes God to pour out his heavy judgments upon us. If any be proud of honour, let him remember Nebuchadnezzar and Herod; or of riches, or of wit and endowments of mind, let him think how soon God can make all these to wither and melt away. *Surely every man is vanity.*

Ver. 12. *Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all*

^s Psal. ciii. 14.

my fathers were.] What is this life we cleave so fast to, and are so uneasy to hear of parting with; what is it but a trance, and a succession of sorrows, a weary tossing and tottering upon the waves of vanity and misery? No estate or course of life is exempted from the causes of this complaint; the poorer and meaner sort are troubled with wants, and the richer with the care of what they have, and sometimes with the loss of it; and the middle sort betwixt the two, they partake, in common, of the vexations of both, for their life is spent in care for keeping what they have, and in turmoil for purchasing more. Besides a world of miseries and evils that are incident equally to all sorts of men, such as sickness and pain of body, which is both a sharp affliction, and sit close to a man, and which he is least able, either by strength of mind, or by any art or rule, to bear; and this guest does as oft haunt palaces as poor cottages; as many groans of sick and diseased bodies within silken curtains as in the meanest lodging. Neither does godliness exempt the best of men from the sufferings of this life. David, who was both a great man and a good man, did share deeply in these; so that his conclusion still holds true; no instance can be found to infringe it; *Surely every man is altogether vanity.*

It remains only to inquire, what manner of men they are who are furnished with the best helps, and with the most comfortable mitigations of their trouble, and with the strongest additions of support and strength to bear them up under it? And it will certainly be found that godliness alone hath this advantage. And among the many consolations godly men have under their trouble, this is one, and the chief one, their recourse unto prayer. So here, and Psal. cxlii. 4, 5. ^h *Hezekiah turned his face towards the wall*; he turns his back on all worldly councils and vain helps, and betakes himself to prayer; and prayer brings ease and support, and seasonable deliverance to the godly man; but *their*

^h Isa. xxxviii. 2.

sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after other godsⁱ; and this all ungodly men do when they are afflicted; they run to other imaginary helps of their own, and they prove but the multipliers of sorrows, and add to their torment: They are *miserable* or troublesome *comforters*; like unskilful physicians, that add to the patient's pain, by nauseous, ill chosen, and, it may be, pernicious drugs.

Now, in this prayer of David, we find three things, which are the chief qualifications of all acceptable prayers: the first is, *humility*. He humbly confesses his sins, and his own weakness and worthlessness. We are not to put on a stoical flinty kind of spirit under our afflictions, that so we may seem to shun womanish repinings and complaints, lest we run into the other evil, of *despising the hand of God*, but we are to humble our proud hearts, and break our unruly passions. There is something of this in the nature of affliction itself; as in the day-time men are abroad, but the night draws them home, so in the day of prosperity men run out after vanities and pleasures, and when the dark night of affliction comes, then men should come home, and wisely lay the matter to heart. It is meet we *humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God*. It is meet to say unto him, as Job, xxxiv. 31. *I have been chastised, or have borne chastisement, and I will not offend any more*: That is a kind of language that makes the rod fall out of his hand; that prayer ascends highest that comes from the lowest depth of an humbled heart. But God *resists the proud*, he proclaims himself an enemy to pride and stiffness of spirit, but his grace seeks the humble heart, as water does the low ground.

If an holy heart be the *temple of God*, and therefore an *house of prayer*, certainly when it is framed and builded for such, the foundation of that temple is laid in deep humility, otherwise no prayers that are offered up in it have the smell of pleasing incense to him.

ⁱ Psal. xvi. 4.

The second qualification of this prayer is, *fervency* and *importunity*, which appears in the elegant gradation of the words, *hear my prayer*; my words; if not that, yet, *give ear to my cry*, which is louder; and if that prevail not, yet, *hold not thy peace at my tears*, which is the loudest of all: So David, elsewhere, calls it *the voice of his weeping*. Though this gift of tears doth often flow from the natural temper, yet where that temper becomes spiritual and religious, it proves a singular instrument of repentance and prayer. But yet there may be a very great height of piety and godly affections where tears are wanting; yea, this defect may proceed from a singular sublimity of religion in their souls, being acted more in the upper region of the intellectual mind, and so not communicating much with the lower affections, or these expressions of them. We are not to judge of our spiritual proficiency by the *gift of prayer*, for the heart may be very spiritually affected, where there is no readiness or volubility of words; the sure measure of our growth is to be had from our holiness, which stands in this, to see how our hearts are crucified to the world, and how we are possessed with the love of God, and with ardent longings after union with him, and dwelling in his presence hereafter, and in being conformed to his will here.

It is the greatest folly imaginable in some to shed tears for their sins, and within a little while to return to them again; they think there is some kind of absolution in this way of easy venting themselves by tears in prayer, and when a new temptation returns, they easily yield to it. This is lightness and foolishness, like the inconstancy of a woman, who entertains new lovers in her mourning apparel, having expressed much sorrow and grief for her former husband.

Now, fervency in prayer hath in it, *1st*, Attentiveness of mind. If the mind be not present, it is impossible that much of the heart and affections can be there. How shall we think that God shall

hear these prayers which we do not hear ourselves? And shall we think them worthy of his acceptance, that are not worthy of our thoughts? Yet we should not leave off prayer because of the wanderings of our hearts in it, for that is the very design of the devil, but still we must continue in it, and amend this fault as much as we can; by remembering, in the entry, with whom we have to do, by freeing our minds as much as may be from the entanglements and multiplicity of business, and by labouring to have our thoughts often in heaven; for where the heart is much, it will be ever and anon turning thitherward, without any difficulty.

2dly, Fervency of prayer hath in it an intense bent of the affections, to have our desires as ardent as can be for the pardon of sin, for the mortifying our lusts and passions, for the delivering us from the love of ourselves and this present world; and for such spiritual things to pray often, and to follow it with importunity, that is, to pray fervently, never to rest till an answer come.

The *third* qualification is *faith*^k; *He who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of all that diligently seek him.* And certainly, as he that comes to God must believe this, so he that believes this cannot but come to God; and if he be not presently answered, he that believes makes no haste, he resolves patiently to wait for the Lord, and to go to no other.

Surely there is much to be had in prayer, all good may be obtained, and all evil averted by it, yea, it is a reward to itself. It is the greatest dignity of the creature to be admitted to converse with God; and certainly the soul that is much in prayer, grows in purity, and is raised by prayer to the despising of all these things that the world admires, and is in love with, and by a wonderful way is conformed to the likeness of God.

For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.] In the law, God recom-

^k Heb. xi. 6.

mends strangers to the care and compassion of his people: Now David returns the argument to him, to persuade him to deal kindly with him; *for I am a stranger with thee, that is, before thee*, "in this world wherein thou hast appointed me to sojourn a few days, and I betake myself to thy protection in this strange country; I seek shelter under the shadow of thy wings, therefore have compassion upon me." He that looks on himself as a stranger, and is sensible of the darkness both round about him in this wilderness, and also within him, he will often put up that request with David^k, *I am a stranger on this earth; hide not thy commandments from me; do not let me lose my way.* And as we should use this argument to persuade God to look down upon us, so likewise to persuade ourselves to send up our hearts and desires to him. What is the joy of our life, but the thoughts of that other life, our home, before us? And, certainly, he that lives much in these thoughts, set him where you will here, he is not much pleased nor displeased; but if his Father call him home, that word gives him his heart's desire.

LECTURE VI.

Ver. 13. *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.*

WHY is it that we do not extremely hate that which we so desperately love, sin? For the deformity of itself is unspeakable; and, besides, it is the cause of all our woes: Sin hath opened the sluices, and lets in all the deluges of sorrows, which makes the life of poor man nothing else but vanity and misery; so that the meanest orator in the world may be eloquent enough on that subject. What is our life, but a continual succession of many deaths? Though we should say nothing of all the bitternesses and vexations that are hatched under the sweetest pleasures in the world, this one thing is

^k Psal. cxix. 19.

enough, the multitudes of diseases and pains, the variety of distempers, that those houses we are lodged in are exposed to. Poor creatures are oft-times tossed betwixt two, the fear of death, and the tediousness of life; and under these fears they cannot tell which to choose. Holy men are not exempted from some apprehensions of God's displeasure because of their sins; and that may make them cry out with David, *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.* Or, perhaps, this may be a desire, not so much simply for the prolonging of life, as for the intermitting of his pain; to have ease from the present smart; the extreme torment of some sickness may draw the most fixed and confident spirits to cry out very earnestly for a little breathing; or rather, if it be the desire of a recovery, and the spinning out of the thread of his life a little longer, surely he intended to employ it for God and his service; but long life was suitable to the promises of that time; so Hezekiah¹. There is no doubt these holy men, under the law, knew somewhat of the state of immortality^m; they, calling themselves *strangers on earth*, argued that they were no strangers to these thoughts; but it cannot be denied, that that doctrine was but darkly laid out in these times; it is Christ Jesus that *hath brought life and immortality to light*, who did illuminate life and immortality, that before stood in the dark.

Surely the desire of life is, for the most part, sensual and base, when men desire that they may still enjoy their animal pleasures, and are loath to be parted from them. They are pleased to term it, a desire to live and repent; and yet few do it when they are spared; like evil debtors, who desire forbearance from one term to another, but with no design at all to pay. But there is a natural desire of life, something of abhorrence of nature against the dissolution of these tabernacles. We are loath to go forth, like children who are afraid to walk in the

¹ Isa. xxxviii.^m Heb. xi.

dark, not knowing what may be there. In some, such a desire of life may be very reasonable; being surprised by sickness, and apprehensions of death, and sin unpardoned, they may desire a little time before they enter into eternity; for that change is not a thing to be hazarded upon a few days or hours preparation: I will not say that death-bed repentance is altogether desperate, but certainly it is very dangerous, and to be suspected; and, therefore, the desire of a little time longer, in such a case, may be very allowable.

I will not deny but it is possible, even for a believer, to be taken in such a posture, that it may be very uncomfortable to him to be carried off so, through the affrightments of death, and his darkness as to his after-state. On the other hand, it is an argument of a good measure of spirituality and height of the love of God, *to desire to depart, and be dissolved*, in the midst of health, and the affluence of worldly comforts; but for men to desire and wish to be dead, when they are troubled and vexed with any thing, is but a childish folly, flowing from a discontented mind, which being over, they desire nothing less than to die. It is true there may be a natural desire of death, which at sometimes hath shined in the spirits of some natural men; and there is much reason for it, not only to be freed from the evils and troubles of this life, but even from those things which many of this foolish world account their happiness, sensual pleasures, to eat and drink, and to be hungry again; and still to round that same course, which, to souls that are raised above sensual things, are burdensome and grievous.

But there is a spiritual desire of death, which is very becoming a Christian; for Jesus Christ hath not only opened very clearly the doctrine of eternal life, but he himself hath passed through death, and lain down in the grave; he hath perfumed that passage, and warmed that bed for us; so that it is sweet and amiable for a Christian to pass through and follow him, and to be where he is. It is a

strange thing, that the souls of Christians have not a continual desire to go to that company which is above (finding so much discord and disagreement among the best of men that are here), to go to *the spirits of just men made perfect*, where there is light and love, and nothing else, to go to the *company of angels*, an higher rank of blessed spirits, but, most of all, to go to *God, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament*. And, to say nothing positively of that glory, (for the truth is, we can say nothing of it), the very evils that death delivers the true Christian from, may make him long for it; for such an one may say, “I shall die, and go to a more excellent country, where I shall be happy for ever, that is, I shall die no more, I shall sorrow no more, I shall be sick no more; and, which is yet more considerable, I shall doubt no more, and shall be tempted no more; and, which is the chiefest of all, I shall sin no more.”

EXPOSITORY LECTURES

ON

ISAIAH VI.

LECTURE I. on Ver. 1—5.

THE division of this chapter (were that to any great purpose) may be stated thus:

I. The prophet's vision, from ver. 1 to 3. *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.*

II. The effects of it upon him, relating to his calling, from ver. 4—13. *And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke, &c.*

In the vision, besides the circumstances of time and place specified, ver. 1. we have a glorious representation of the majesty of God, ver. 2. A suitable acclamation, a voice of praise being joined with it, ver. 3, 4.

The effects of it on the prophet towards his calling are three, viz. I. His preparation; II. His mission: III. His message. I. The preparation, in these two particulars: 1. Humiliation: 2. Purification, ver. 6, 7. a deep conviction, and then effectual removal of pollution.

II. In his mission we have three things: 1. God's

inquiry for a messenger, ver. 8. former part. 2. The prophet's offer of himself, the latter part of ver. 8. 3. God's acceptance, ver. 9. former part. III. His message, a heavy commination, from ver. 9—12. yet allayed with a gracious mitigation, ver. 13. The judgment very lasting and wasting, yet a remnant reserved.

Ver. 1. *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*

I saw.] Observe the freedom of God in his choice of men to be near him and know him; and in the measuring out the degrees of discovery unto those men differently, some had extraordinary revelations; and though prophetic visions now cease, yet there are certainly higher and clearer corruscations of God upon some souls, than many others, that yet are children of light, and partake of a measure of that light shining within them; thus we are not carvers and choosers, and therefore are not peremptorily to desire any thing in kind or measure that is singular, that were pride and folly; but above all things we are to esteem, and submissively desire still more and more knowledge of God, and humbly to wait and keep open the passage of light, not to close the windows, not to be indulgent to any known sin, or impure affection, that will soon obstruct it: into a filthy soul wisdom will not enter.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord on his throne.] There is another king named here, to denote the time by, but he was a diseased and a dying king, who lived some years a leper, and then died. Men may speak in a court style of vain wishes, *O king live for ever*: but this king here on the throne, is indeed the king immortal, the ever living God.

God measures and proportions all his means to their ends. When he calls men to high services, he furnishes them with suitable preparations and enable-

ments: thus here with the prophet, he was to denounce heavy things against his own nation, *a proud stubborn people*, to deal boldly and freely with the highest, yea, with the king himself^a, and he is prepared by a *vision of God*. What can a man fear after that? All regal majesty and pomp looks petty and poor after that sight. Two kings together on their thrones in robes royal, (1 Kings 22.) did no whit astonish him that had seen a greater; *I saw* (says Micajah) *the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing by*. Much like this is the vision of Isaiah, here before us.

Eyes dazzled with the sun, see not the glittering of drops of dew on the earth, and these are quickly gone with all their faint and fading glory, to a soul taken with the contemplation of God. How meanly do they spend their days, that bestow them on counting money, or courting little earthen idols in ambition or love. From how high a stand doth he look down on those, that looks on God, and admires his greatness, wonders at what he sees, and still seeks after more; these two are therefore joined together, *Beholding the beauty of the Lord, and inquiring in his temple*^b. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple*.

Ver. 2. *Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.*] These glorious courtiers, flaming spirits, are light and love, whose very feet are too bright for us, as his face is too bright for them, and they cry, *Holy, holy, holy, thrice holy, most holy three, one God, Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory*. This they cry one to another, echoing it, and returning it incessantly; they that praise him most, come nearest their life. When we are to pray, or offer any worship to the great God thus on his

^a Chap. vii.^b Psal. xxvii. 4.

throne above, and the diffusion of his glory there, in the sanctuary, especially in solemn worship there, let us think of his train filling the upper temple, and so stoop low and fall down before him, (*Holy, holy, holy*). This is the main thing wherein he is glorious, and we are to know and adore him in this view, and abhor ourselves as in his sight.

Ver. 3. *And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.*

The whole earth. So many creatures and various works and affairs, fruits and plants, and rich commodities, and so many calamities and miseries, that kingdoms and people are afflicted with, as by turns, and so many disorders, and such wickedness of men in public and private matters; and yet in all these varieties and contrarieties of things, this one is the sum of all, and all taken up in it, *the whole earth is full of his glory*, in framing and upholding, in ruling and ordering all, what a depth of power and wisdom!

Ver. 4. *The posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.*

How true must that be, that at his voice *the earth quakes*, and *the mountains tremble*, when, at the voice of an angel, crying or proclaiming his name, the very threshold of the temple (the then holiest part of the earth) moves: this in the vision was intended to represent the dreadfulness of his great name, that vile men dare baffle in vain oaths, and can speak thereof without sense: but hearts that are indeed his *living temples*, will find this resentment, when his name is proclaimed, or when they mention or think of it, *the post will be moved with an awful trembling*.

And the house was filled with smoke.] This was

here a symbol of the presence and majesty of God^c, *Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitations of his throne*, not a signal of displeasure as some take it. *He dwells in light that is inaccessible*, and round about is *thick darkness*, shutting out the weak eyes of men, that were not able to abide the brightness of his glory: much of our knowledge here lies in this, to know that we know him not, and much of our praise, to confess that we cannot praise him; *silentium tibi laus*, as they read^d.

Ver. 5. *Then said I, Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.*

Then said I, Wo is me.] He is not lifted up with the indignation, that he should be honoured with such a vision of God; but, on the contrary, struck with humble holy fear, *Oh, I am undone!* This is much of the exercise of souls admitted nearest to God, even this astonishment and admiration, that such as they should be regarded and raised to that height, and holy fear in a sense of their unholiness. When the blessed virgin heard a voice very much to her own advantage^e, (*And the angel came in unto her, and said, hail, thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be*), instead of rising in her own conceit upon it, she was troubled, and marvelled what manner of salutation it should be, and was struck with fear; so that the angel found it needful to say, *Fear not.*

Illusions and deceits of spirit of this kind cannot be better differenced from true manifestations of God, than by this, that they may breed pride and

^c Psal. xcvi. 2.

^d Psal. lxxv. 1.

^e Luke i. 28, 29.

presumption in the heart, make it vain and haughty, but true senses, and joys, and discoveries of love, in what kind soever, do most powerfully humble. *Is est, qui superbire non potest, cui Deus ostendit misericordiam suam.* Aug.

Then said I, Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.] The mother and nurse of pride is ignorance of God. A small glance of him will make the best of men abhor themselves, and still the nearer sight of him, the lower conceit will there be of self, and the deeper sense of impurity and vileness: this tells us, though we hear and speak of God, alas! we know him not.

I am a man of polluted lips.] He mentions this the rather, because he heard that song which he would have joined with, but durst not, because of *polluted lips*: thus we must confess we are polluted all over; but much of our pollution breaks out by the lips, yet commonly we think not on it.

I am undone.] We could not indeed bear much, not see God and live; therefore he veils himself; but sure we might see much more than we do, and live the better for it, the more humbly and holily. Our pollutions hinder and unfit us, as he implies, when he says, *a man of polluted lips*: But oh! that we saw so much of him as to see this pollution, that makes us so unworthy and so unfit to see him.

He first cries, *I am a man of polluted lips*, and then adds, *I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.*] This is the true method; there can be no right sense of pollutions about us, but that which begins with a sense of those within us. Few men reflect much on themselves, or if they do, they view themselves by a false light.

Polluted lips.] This he says in regard of the voice he heard; and with regard to the much irreverence with which we mention God, both ministers and people, as also much of all our heart pollutions, have their vent this way; so the promise of sancti-

fyng his people runs much on this^f. They of a *pure lip* shall offer; all are of the holy order, a *royal priesthood*, and through sanctified lips, as the censer, still they offer incense of prayer and praise. *He is a perfect man that offends not in word^g*. Commonly by much speaking there is much pollution; *in many words there wants not sin^h*, therefore, *let your speech be always seasoned with-saltⁱ*. Now, many speeches need much salt, otherwise some part will be rotten, at least unsavoury; much of the sin of the land consists in this; there are few companies where God is not dishonoured and provoked by your communication; and till this be laid to heart, judgment will multiply, and grow instead of decreasing. Few, even of these *that fear the Lord*, *speak often one to another*, in a strain that God delights, not only hearken to, but to write down, and register for their good.

And dwell amidst a people of unclean lips.] We infect each other when we meet; little converse that a man returns the better by, yea, by the most is the worse; he brings back often more pollution, more folly and vanity by most companies and discourses; but we see here, that impurity humbly acknowledged is graciously removed.

LECTURE II.

On Ver. 6—8.

Ver. 6. *Then flew one of the Seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar.*

IMPURITY well discovered to a man is half cured; whensoever God graciously shews a man his own un sanctifiedness, there he goes on to cleanse and sanctify him; the light that discovers is followed with a *burning coal* that purges away.

^f Zeph. iii. 9. and 12.

^g James iii. 2.

^h Prov. x. 19.

ⁱ Col. iv. 6.

The Holy Spirit is that purifying fire; a touch of it cleanseth the hearts and lips, and all, and kindles that affection in the soul that cannot die out, that many, that no *waters can quench again*. It doth this to all that are sanctified, but eminently (it doth it, or at least they desire it may) to these that are to be the instruments of enlightening, purging and kindling others: so, in the resemblance of *fiery tongues*, came down this Spirit on the Apostles, and thence they themselves were as *burning coals* scattered through the nations, blest incendiaries of the world, setting it on fire with the love of Christ, *tanquam ligna ardentia dispersa*. Aug.

Ver. 7. *And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged,*

Thine iniquity is taken away.] How impure soever before. This free grace is wonderful, to make some that have been notoriously unclean, by the change wrought by this fire, the touch of a coal, to become eminently gracious, and messengers of grace to others, carrying this and spreading it. They, though originally of dark clay, are by this fire made transparent glass, through which the light of the gospel shines into the church.

This *coal, taken from the altar*, may denote the deriving of the Spirit from Jesus Christ, our Priest, Altar, Sacrifice, and all, by which we are purged and made fit for his service; he is the fountain of light, and life, and purity, and all grace to his messengers and all his followers. His grace is indeed a *live coal*, where heavenly heat is mixed with earth, the fulness of the Godhead with our nature in human flesh: thence we draw near, and especially they that bear his name to men, in a sense of their own impurity, intreat his touch, as devout Bernard, and in a holy hyperbole, "Had the prophet need of a coal; Oh then grant for me a whole globe of fire, to purge

away my filthiness, and make me a fit messenger to this people!"

Thy sin is purged.] The children of God are a wonder to themselves, when that Spirit comes in that conquers and purges so suddenly and easily what they before groan under, and wrestle with very long to little or no purpose. It is a change of *the right hand of the Most High*, as the *Latin* reads that word in Psal. lxxvii. 10. *I said, This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High; mutatio dextræ Excelsi:* a touch of that will cleanse and heal; the all-purifying virtue of his Spirit, whereof this baptism of the prophet's lips was a symbol, takes away the dross, which by other means than that *fire* cannot be purged: so in metals much pains may be taken, and strength of hand used with little effect, at most that does but scratch the superficies, makes the outside a little bright and shining, but severs not the dross from within; that cannot be done without fire. Have we not found how vainly we attempt, while God withholds his hands? yea, while a man fancies self-pureness, he is the more impure, as Job ix. 30, 31. *If I wash myself with snow-water, and make myself ever so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me:* therefore prayer is the great resource of a soul under a sense of uncleanness, begging a new creation; so it is indeed; *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*^a; following God with this suit, and resolving to follow him till he grant it; for we well know he is able, and may say, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

This *fire* hath two effects; it works purity and activity, it takes away sin, and puts in spirit and life for obedience; and so here, *thy sin is purged*; and then, says he, *Here am I; send me:* and the former is effectual towards the latter; the more the

^a Psal. li. 10.

soul is cleansed, the more alive and able it is made for service. The purging out of those sickly humours makes it more vigorous and able, whereas they abounding, clog the spirits, and make the vital operations heavy and weak. A soul well cleansed from the love of sin and the world, and self, is in a healthful temper, and goes nimbly to any work; outward discouragements and difficulties are then nothing: a feverish distemper within, hinders and makes one lazy and unwiely, unwilling and unable to labour; but that well purged and cured, he cares less for the hot weather without; strength of nature endures that more easily. Oh! how sweet to be thus acted by love! pure intention and desire of doing God service, and bringing him in glory! Other motives, or the mixtures of them, are base; and though God may make use sometimes of such, yet he sees within, and knows what spring makes the wheels go, and he gives them their reward here, somewhat possibly of that they seek, (success, and credit, and a name), but the after reward of faithful servants they need not look for in that work; for they receive their reward, and can they expect more? Many an *Here am I*, comes from other incentives than an *altar coal*; and so they may burn and shine a while, but they soon consume and die out in a snuff; the heavenly altar fire alone keeps in, and returns to heaven where it was kindled.

There is many a hot furious march under the semblance and name of zeal for God, that loves to be seen, as Jehu^b, *Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord*. Such persons may flatter themselves into that conceit in the heat of action, to think it is for God, while he sees through it, and judges it as it is, zeal for self and their own interest; and he gives them accordingly some hireling journeyman's wages, and then turns them off. But Oh! where the heart is purely acted by a desire of this glory, and seeks nothing else; for such remains that blessed

^b 2 Kings x. 16.

word, *Well done good and faithful servant, enter into thy master's joy.*

This then, is to be sought for by ministers and eminent servants in public affairs, yea, by all that offer any service to God, a readiness from love; something of this there is in all that are truly his, though held down in many, and almost smothered with rubbish; and in these there is some mixture of flesh drawing back, *The spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak*, and a load to it, hindering its working; and this strife is often found as a horse to an unskilful rider, at once pricked with the spur, and checked with the bridle: but where this spirit of love is, it doth prevail, and wastes that opposition daily, and groweth in strength, more quick and ready, more freed from self, and acted by the will of God; attaining somewhat further in that conformity with heaven, where shall be no will striving but His alone, where those glorious bright spirits stand ready for all commands, *that excel in strength*, and employ it all *to do his commandments*^c; and the more like them we be here, the more lively hope have we to be shortly with them, and to be wholly as they are.

Ver. 8. *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*

THIS inquiry imports not a doubtful deliberation in God, but a purpose to send. He is represented as a king, advising with himself or council; and this is by some conceived as an intimation of the mystery of the Trinity, as Gen. i. 26. *And God said, Let us make man in our own image. Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* But were there not ready millions of these winged messengers; what need then such a word? True, angels were ready, but a man was sought; God, vouchsafing to send an embassy to men, will send one that might

^c Psal. ciii. 20.

speaking their language to them, and might stay and treat with them in a familiar friendly way, (an ambassador in ordinary to lie still and treat with them); and in this condescension much wisdom and love appears; he will take men subject to the like infirmities and pollutions with the people, as the prophet here acknowledges, but one purged from these pollutions, made holy, though not perfectly, yet eminently holy. This is very suitable, were not men invincibly obstinate, more suitable than that God should send by angels, that one of themselves should come and deal with men for God, and bear witness of this graciousness and readiness to forgive, so as to give himself for an instance of it, and say, "I have found him so." And they being changed and sanctified, show really that the thing may be done; that it is feasible to sanctify a sinner; and so sinful men appear to be fitter for this service than embodied angels.

I said, Here am I; send me.] What a blessed change on Paul cast to the ground! his own will was broke all to pieces, and now he is only for His service, whose name he so hated, and persecuted his servants; *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do^d?* these are the very words and characters of a true convert, and thus the soul turned to Christ may in some cases doubt what is his will, but that once resolved, there is no deliberation whatever to do it or not. He says not, if the service be honourable or profitable, that is, carrying worldly credit or profit in it, then will I do it; no, but whatever it is, if it be thine, and thou appoint me to it, *here am I*; and this makes the meanest work of this station excellent.

Then said I, here am I.] A strange change in the Prophet, even now an *undone man*, and here presently a ready messenger, and so turned an angel. Something of this most find that are truly called to this high work of delivering messages from God; sometimes a sense of pollution benumbs and strikes

^d Acts ix. 6.

them dead, and anon again, they feel the flame of love kindled with that coal, quickening them to such a readiness, and such free offers of themselves to service, as to those that understand not the reason of it, would seem presumptuous forwardness; and there may be in some minds, at one and the same time, a strange mixture and counterworking of these two together; a sense of unfitness and unworthiness drawing back, and yet the strength of love driving forward, thinking thus, "How can I, who am so filthy, so vile, speak of God? yet hath he shown me mercy, how then can I be silent?"

Send me.] Moses' reluctance, this same Prophet would have vented too before the touch of the coal, while he said, *Wo is me, I am undone*, or struck down, as the word may signify, cannot speak with such unholy lips of so holy a God. Isaiah cries out of *polluted lips*, as Moses complained of *stammering lips*; and this is fit to precede, first, a sense of extreme inability and indignity, and then, upon a change and call, ready obedience. A man once undone and dead, and then recovered, is the only fit messenger for God; in such an one love overcomes all difficulties without and within, and in his work no constraint is he feeling but that of love, and where that is, no other will be needed; the sweet all-powerful constraint of love will send thee all-cheerful, though it were through the fire or water: *No water can quench it*, nor fire out-burn it; it burns hotter than any other kindled against it; after the touch of that *coal*, no forbearing. (^a *But his word was in my heart as a burning fire, shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, I could not stay.* ^b *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.*) Yet, he says, *send me*; though he had so ardent a desire and readiness to go, yet he will not go unent, but humbly of-

^a Jer. xx. 9.

^b 1 Pet. v. 2.

fers himself, and waits both for his commission and instructions; and how awful are they!

LECTURE III.

Ver. 9. *And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.*

10. *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*

HIS message you see is most sad, and so he is put to it, put to the trial of his obedience, as men usually are according to the degree of their fitness. Nothing is more sweet to a messenger, than to have good news to carry. Oh! it is a blessed sweet thing to convert souls! But, how heavy to harden them by preaching! Yet thus it is to many, at some times, and almost generally to all; certainly before this much had been heard and despised; they had been hardening their own hearts, and now they shall have enough of it; their very sin shall be their plague, a plague of all others the most terrible; yet, as was said above, there are times of the height of this plague, as of others, and this was one of those times of its raging mortality. The Prophet did nothing but preach, and yet they were stupified by it; and indeed wherever the word does not soften and quicken, it hardens and kills; and the more lively the ministry of the word is where it works this effect, the more deeply doth it work it.

This was verified on the Jews; though then God's own people, yet it was verified on them to the utmost: and this context is often cited against them in the New Testament, no place so often. So excellent a preacher as Isaiah, and so well reputed amongst his people, yet was sent to preach them blind, and deaf, and dead; and this same does the gospel to most of many a congregation in Scotland:

and the more of Christ that is spoken, the more are unbelievers hardened. Isaiah, the most evangelical of all the prophets, was yet brought to that, *Who hath believed our report?* Yea, this was fulfilled in the preaching of Christ himself; as the hotter the sun, the more is the clay hardened.

Go tell this people.] Observe the mighty power of the word, to whatsoever it is sent; as it is wonderfully efficacious for softening, melting, reducing to God; so, if it be sent, to harden, to seal to judgment, to bring in and hasten it; and therefore spoke of, as effecting the things it speaks; as in *Jer. i. 10.* "See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant;" ^a "And it was according to the appearance of the vision, which I saw when I came to destroy the city;" ^b "Therefore have I hewed them by the Prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth." Therefore despise it not, spiritual judgments are the heaviest of all; though least felt for a time, yet they stick closest, and prove saddest in the end: The not feeling is a great part of the plague; in this is the nature and malignity of the disease, that it takes away the sight and sense of other things, and of itself. The plague is a disease seizing on the spirits, and therefore is so dangerous; but this only seizes on the spirit of the mind; and is any thing so dreadful? Oh! any plague but that of the heart. People think it a good thing not to feel the word, not to be troubled: Well, as they love this, they are filled with it, and shall have enough of it; so in self-love, *sui amator sibi dat.* God is righteous and pure in this; there are many vain cavils about his working on the heart to harden, which arise from an ignorant low conceit of God, as of a dependent being, or tied to laws, or to give account. We ought rather to tremble before him; *he doth no iniquity*; and we shall be forced to confess it. Many ways of his are obscure, but none are unjust. Find we not this peo-

^a Ezek. xliiii. 3.

^b Hoseah vi. 5.

ple sit under the sound, and are many of them as if absent, as if they had never heard such things spoke of; so grossly ignorant of all these; *hearing hear, but understand not*: others are yet worse; they get a kind of knowledge, but it is dead, and works nothing; these *see*, and yet *perceive* not, and know not even what they know; most are of this sort, and they are of all others the worst to convince. When they are told of Christ, and forgiveness of sins, and are entreated to believe these mysteries, they cry out, Oh! we do, we know them, and can answer, if you ask us, what these doctrines are. But the heart is not changed, no sin is forsaken, no study of holiness, no flame of love. This not perceiving is the great judgment of this land, this the great cause of lamentation, that Christ is so much known and yet so little: People do not think whither it tends, and what the importance of this message is; they hear it as a *passing tale*, or, at the best, as for the present, a pleasing sound, a *lovely song*; and if by an able minister, sung by a good voice, but no impression is made, it dies out in the air, it enters not into their hearts to quicken them, and so their evil is the more deadly. Oh! bemoan this, beg the removal of it above all judgments, and the sending forth of that Spirit, that causes *the mountains to flow down*^d. Many of you, my brethren, may be under somewhat of this, as there are divers degrees of it, ere it come to be incurable. Oh! pray to be delivered, lest it grow so far that it be in vain to bid you do so. Better to be cast into extreme terrors for a time, than to continue thus; better to fall into a fever than into this lethargy, which makes you sleep to death.

Convert, and be healed.] These two go together; all miseries are healed, and grace and favour flow forth, when once the soul is stirred up to seek after God, and turn in to him: other courses of healing, public or private evils, are but mountebank cures, that vex and torment, as unapt physic does, and do no good; yea, make things worse than before.

^e Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

^d Isa. lxiv. 1.

^e *When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound; then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to King Jareb, yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. † Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.*

There is much in a custom of fruitless hearing to stupify and make hard; to make men sermon-proof; and the hearing of the most excellent, hardens most, both against them, and against all others that are their inferiors; for being accustomed to hear the most moving strains, unmoved, makes them scorn, and easily beat back, that which is less pressing. A largely endued, and very spiritual minister, is either one of the highest blessings, or heaviest curses, that can come upon a people.

Hearing hear.] This even the ministers themselves may fall under: speakers may have no ears; as the Italian says of preachers, they do not hear their own voice: They may grow hard, by custom of speaking of divine things without divine affection; so that nothing themselves, or others, say, can work on them: Hence it is that so few formal dead ministers are converted, that one said, *raro vidi clericum pœnitentem*; so hardened are they against the means of conviction, in which they have been so long conversant, and not converted by them. They have been speaking so often of heaven and hell, and of Jesus Christ, and feeling nothing of them, that the words have lost their power, and they are grown hard as the skin of leviathan, *esteeming iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood*. And this, by the way, beside that God's dispensation is so fixed, may be a reason why that sin, mentioned in the sixth of the Hebrews, is unpardonable; it is, in the nature of things, and without such a miracle as God will not exert, *impossible*, that they who have stood out such things in vain, *should be renewed*: This should make us that are ministers especially, to tremble at an unholy life, or at the thought of declining from those

^e Hosea v. 13.

[†] Compared with chap. vi. ver. 1.

ways of religion, of which we have known so much, and for which we have so many means of improvement.

Ver. 11. *Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitants, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate;*

12. *And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.*

Now this judgment fastening, was sure to draw on all other judgments; therefore the Prophet, touched with compassion, inquires, *How long?* and receives a very sad answer, *Until the cities be wasted.* God is sovereignly free in this; but usually he keeps that course, that long continued and spared sinning makes long continued calamities when they come: Judgments, as the ancients thought comets to be, are as lasting as the matter is they are kindled with; and truly, upon this account, we may justly apprehend that our troubles are but just beginning, rather than near their end; yet, repentance might prevail for the shortening them; these sweet showers soonest lay the stormy winds.

And this consideration may have something hopeful in it, that in these latter times things move something more speedily, as natural motions do towards their end; for *a short work will God make upon the earth*, as the Apostle's word is; and we see in our particular straits that were greatest, that the Lord hath made them short even beyond our expectation; and what remains, is in his hand. I trust he will hasten the defeat of the plots, and power of his enemies; and doubt not all the late and present commotions of these poor kingdoms, are the birth-pangs of a happy deliverance and peace; and, when they grow thickest, it is nearest the birth.

How long?] Observe the compassion of the messengers of God, not desiring the evil day, but mourning for it, pitying those they denounce judgement against, and melting for those they harden.

Till the cities be wasted.] This intimates there would be no relenting under all these judgments. but that these, as well as the word, and together with it, would harden them more, till they were almost quite consumed; and this is usual; men think it would be otherwise; but it is found, times of great plagues and judgments are no times of great conversion; but men are more hardened both against word and rod; their spirits grow stiff and obdured in a kind of desperation; but mercy, coming as the spring sun-shine, mollifies and dissolves, and makes fruitful; therefore, such a day is to be longed for. I suspect we shall not see much done by the gospel till then; and before that, we may suffer yet more dismal things, and be wasted with pestilence, sword, and famine; yet there is comfort in this, the Lord will not make a full end of us; a *tenth* shall be left; and if not we, yet at least our posterity shall reap the sweet fruits of our bitter calamities, that are the just fruits of our iniquities.

Ver. 13. *But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten; as a teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.*

There is still a remnant holy to God, the preservers of a land from utter ruin. Profane persons despise the children of God, and know not that they are beholden to them for the subsistence of the land, and of the world; they are as these oaks, whose roots did bear up the earth of that high-way that went between the king's house and the temple, as the resemblance is taken by some.

In judgments, the Lord remembers that; *Destroy it not, there is a blessing in it.* As for the personal condition of believers, there may be a great decay; a winter visage may be upon it; but yet the holy seed abideth in them, and is their stability; and still that word is true that is borrowed hence, *semen*

sanctum, statumen terræ; “the holy seed, the subsistence or establishment of the earth.” When their number is completed, time shall end, and this visible world shall be set on fire: and this day is hastening forward, though most of us think but little, if at all, of it.

EXPOSITORY LECTURES

ON

ROMANS XII. 3—12.

Ver. 3. *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

BESIDES the common word of edification implying it, we find often, in the Scriptures, *teaching* compared to *building*; and, amongst other things, the resemblance holds in this, that in both, of necessity, there is a foundation first to be laid, and then the structure to be raised upon it. He that gives rules of life, without first fixing principles of faith, offers preposterously at building a house without laying a foundation; and he that instructs what to believe, and directs not withal a believer how to live, doth in vain lay a foundation, without following out the building: But the Apostles were not so *foolish builders*, as to sever these two in their labours in the Church. In this epistle, we find our Apostle excellently acquitting himself in both these. He first largely and firmly lays the ground-work, in the foregoing part of the epistle; now he adds exhortations and directions touching the particular duties of Christians.

The first thing, certainly, to be done with a soul, is to convince it of sin and death, then to address and lead it in to Christ, our righteousness and life; this done, it should be taught to follow him: This is Christianity, *to live in Christ*, and *to live to Christ*; to live in him by faith, and to live to him in holiness; these our Apostle joined in his doctrine^a; *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in*

^a Chap. viii. 1.

Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The exhortation that begins this chapter, hath in it the whole sum of Christian obedience, fitly expressed, and strongly urged; and in that are all particular rules comprised.

But because of our ignorance and our sloth, we do not always readily draw forth particulars from these comprehensive general rules wherein they lie; we need therefore to be assisted in this; and to this the Scriptures descend, particularly the Apostles, in their Epistles, and that usually in the latter part of them; and this is a main part of our duty in preaching the word, often to represent these rules to you, not so much that you may understand them better, though somewhat of this likewise may be needful, as that you may remember them, and eye them more, and walk according to them; and there is no more in these things truly known, than what is known after this manner. I have endeavoured, in the course of my teaching, to reach this end: My design, and I hope yours likewise, hath been, not to pass so much time, nor to pass it with empty delight, which in other things might be done at an easy rate, but that you be really built up heavenwards, and increase with the increase of God; that the truth and power of Christianity may possess our hearts, and grow there, and may be evident in our lives, to the glory of our Lord Jesus.

We shall endeavour to lay before you the particular graces that are the ornaments of Christians; and this, not that you may look on them simply, and commend them, but may pursue them, and be clothed with them, and then they will be much more comely and commendable; as a robe of rich apparel, if it seem fine while it hangs or lies by, it appears far better when it is put on.

The rules the Apostle is to give, he prefaces thus, *For I say, through the grace given to me, I speak as the Messenger or Apostle of Christ, according to that knowledge and experience that he hath given*

me of these things; and so take it, as from one that hath some interest in, and share of, these graces I recommend to you: And this, indeed, makes recommendations carry home. Oh! that we could truly say this. Alas! it is an uncomfortable, and commonly an unprofitable thing, to speak of Christ, and the graces of his Spirit, only as having heard of them, or read of them, as men that travel, in their studies, do of foreign countries.

Διὰ τῆς χάριτος. The Apostle represents this, to add the more authority, and gain the more acceptance, to what he had to say; and for this end, some care is to be had of the good opinion of people, so far as their interest is concerned, that the message we bring be not prejudged; otherwise, this truly set aside, it were little matter how we were mistaken or despised; yea, it were a thing some way desirable; only provided nothing be done on purpose, that may justly, yea, or that may probably, procure it; for that both piety and charity forbids.

To every man.] This is more pressing than if he had said simply, *to you*, or generally, *to you all*: for in men's talking of things, it proves often too true, *quod omnibus, nemini*; but to *every one*, that each one suppose it spoke to him, as an ingenious picture looking to each in the room. Thus we ought to speak, and thus ye ought to hear. We to speak, not as telling some unconcerning stories, but as having business with you; and you to hear, not each for another, as you often do, "Oh! such a passage touched such an one," but each for ourselves.

The first particular the Apostle recommends, is that gracing grace of humility, the ornament and the safety of all other graces, and which is so peculiarly Christian. Somewhat philosophers speak of temperance, justice, and other like virtues, but these tend rather to blow up and swell the mind with big conceit and confidence of itself, than to dwell together with self-abasement and humility: But in the school of Christ, the first lesson of all is, *self-denial*

and humility; yea, it is written above the door, as the rule of entry or admission, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart*^b. And, out of all question, that is truly the humblest heart that hath most of Christ in it.

Not to think highly.] Not aspiring and intending in things too high: And a great point of humility is subjection to God in the point of knowledge: in this was our first climbing that proved our fall; and yet still, amidst all our ignorance and darkness, we are catching and gaping after the deadly fruit of unallowed knowledge.

This, withal, hath in it the attempering of our thoughts and practices to our measure and station; to know ourselves truly and thoroughly; for that will certainly beget a very low esteem of ourselves, to judge ourselves the unworthiest and meanest of all.

And having truly this estimate of ourselves, we shall not vainly attempt any thing above our reach, nor disdainfully neglect any thing that is within the compass of our calling and duty, which are the two evils so common among men, yea, even amongst Christians, and in the church of God, and are the cause of most of the enormities and disorders that fall out in it; it is a strange blindness, that they that do grossly miscarry in the duties of their own station, yet so readily fancy themselves capable of somewhat higher, and think themselves wronged, if it be refused them.

The self-knowing Christian would rather descend, and find himself very disproportioned to his present station, be it never so mean; he can say with David, *Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me*^c. But vain minds would still be tampering with the greatest affairs, and dwell not with themselves. Oh! my brethren, be entreated to study your own hearts better; be less abroad in things that concern you not; there is work

^b Matth. xi. 29.

^c Psal. cxxxii. 1.

enough within you; heaps of base lusts, and self-deceits, and follies, that you see not yet; and many advantages of good things you seem to see in yourselves, that indeed are not there: Self-love is a flattering glass, which represents us to ourselves much fairer than we are; therefore, turn from it, if you desire a true account of yourselves, and look into the pure and faithful mirror of God's law. Oh! what deformities will that discover, that you never saw nor thought of before, and will make you the lowest of all persons in your own eyes.

The low self-esteem doth not wholly take away the simple knowledge of what gifts and graces God hath bestowed on a man; for that were to make him both unthankful and unuseful. He that doth not know what God hath freely given him, cannot return praise to God, nor make use of himself for God in his station^d; yea, the Apostle's caution intimates a sober, humble reflection on the *measure* God hath given a man, which he not only allows but requires; and himself gives example of it in his own present expression, declaring, that he speaks these things *through the grace that is given to him*.

But this knowledge of a man's own gifts and graces, that it may not prejudice him of more, but help him to more, in the humble acknowledgment and use of what he hath, would have these two qualifications; 1. That he beware of over-weening, rather that he take his *measure* much below, than any whit beyond, what he truly hath. 2. That whatsoever it is, that he always look on it not as his own, but as God's, having his superscription on it, and all the glory of it being his peculiar tribute; nothing of that to be interrupted or retained: *Not unto us, Lord; not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory*^a; still all the glory entirely sent up to him: Thus, here, the Apostle sets all grace in that view, *as God hath dispensed the measure*; and so speaks of his own, *through the grace given to me*; still so to be looked

^d Qui se nescit, nescit se uti.

^a Psal. cxv. 1.

on, not as that we have, but that he hath given; that is, the gospel style, *grace, free gifts*, *χαρις χαρίσματα*; whereas philosophy speaks of all as habits, or havings, or possessions.

Now, in that relative dependent notion of freely given, a man shall never be puffed up by any endowments, though he see and know them; yea, the more he knows them thus, will be the more humble still, as being the more obliged. The more he hath received, the greater they are; the lower he bows, pressed down under the weight of his engagements to God; as Abraham^b, *fell on his face*, when God talked with him, and made so rich promises to him. See David's strain^c; *But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee*. This, the Apostle gives, as the sovereign preservative against the swelling poison of self-conceit, *What hast thou that thou didst not receive^d?*

He that is thus regulated in his own esteem, will by this certainly be moderated in his desire of esteem from others, and cannot well meet with any thing that way, that will either puff him up, or cast him down; if over-prized by others, he takes that as their mistake; if undervalued, he rejoices in that, having set himself so low in himself, that others cannot well set him lower: So when men account meanly of him, they are really of his own opinion; and you know that offends none, but pleases them rather, to have others agree with their opinions, and be of their mind.

They that are busy after reputation, and would be esteemed, are but begging voices; would have others think with them, and confirm the conclusion they have already resolved on, in favour of themselves; and this is a most foolish thing; for, disappointed in this, men are discontented, and so their peace hangs on others fancies; and, if satisfied with it, they surfeit and undo themselves with the delight of it. Bees

^b Gen. xvii. 3.^c 1 Chron. xxix. 15.^d 1 Cor. iv. 7.

sometimes kill themselves with their own honey, and there is such a word to this purpose^c, *It is not good to eat much honey; so for men to search their own glory, is not glory.*

Ver. 4, 5. *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

In this consideration we have God's wisdom manifested, and are instructed what is our wisdom. He, in the great world, made all in weight, number, and measure; so in the lesser world, man, and in the new world, his Church, he proportions all to the use he hath designed them for. He could give more to them that have least than the very greatest have, but he thought this unfit; it might be some advantage to them, yet to the whole body not so; and therefore not truly so to them neither, being parts of it, and having their good involved in the good of the body.

This resemblance is often used in Scripture, and holds excellently well, but is little learned. Our temper and carriage correspond not to it. Who is there almost that finds it, the Spirit of Christ in them, knitting them to him as the common head, and one to another, as one in him, each busy to advance him, and so seek his glory, and to promote the good of one another? But, alas! rather each for self, accursed self, as of an independent divided substance; yea, worse, hating and tearing one another; a monstrous sight, as if one limb of the same body should be pulling another to pieces. It signifies little to tell men what mutual tenderness is in nature; that for a thorn in the foot the back bows, the head stoops, the eyes look, the hands feel, and seek it, to pull it out^b. Christians are still so rigid, so unchristian to each other, they drive one another with the thorn sticking in, forcing their brethren to ways against the persuasions of their consciences.

In the following verses, viz. 6, 7, 8, we have a

^c Prov. xxv. 27.

^b Spinam calcat pes, &c. AUG.

specification of divers offices, and the duties of them; the due observance of which is the peace and growth of the Church, makes all go on sweetly and fruitfully: but men are either presumptuously or preposterously busy out of their own station, or slothfully negligent in it; and both these, instead of edifying, are discomposing and destroying things.

Not to insist on the distinction of offices, it is evident, in all enumerations of this kind, the same word sometimes means divers things, and divers words the same things, as *ministry* may comprise all, though sometimes peculiar to deacons, sometimes taken for teachers or pastors: here it is general, and the particulars following distribute it; some are *to teach*, which is doctorial; some *to exhort*, which is more pastoral; some are *to give*, which is proper to deacons; some have their whole charge *to rule*, as elders: some are particularly for attendance on the sick.

But in all, fidelity and sedulity are requisite: how high so ever men are placed, if they are unfaithful, the higher judgment awaits them; how low so ever, if thou be sincere and studious of thy duty, thou shalt sustain no loss by thy low station, but rather thy faithfulness will be the more set off by it; *he that is faithful in little shall be made ruler over much*. Oh! that we were more eat up with zeal of our Lord's House, and winning of souls, whom he deposes to that. Oh! that they that rule, would study more rule of their own houses, that shall go before, and your own hearts, that should be first of all. Alas! how shall men, whose passions and lusts rule them, well rule the house of God! Be afraid and wise ye that are called to that, and know at length what is so generally either unknown or unconsidered, the exemplary holiness required in your persons, and the diligent watchfulness over the *stock of God*. There are many debates, and troubles, and pains, about these our liberties, but little diligence in the use of them; congregations are still as full of impiety and profaneness as ever. Oh! take heed,

lest we thus forfeit them after all they have cost, and provoke God to bereave us of them. Men are busy that we know are not friends to the Church of God; but oh! that we were more careful to be in good terms with him: *If he be for us, who can be against us?* It is no matter who be, he is too wise and too strong for them all.

Ver. 9. *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.*

THE whole sum of the law is love; love to God, and love to man, these two contain all, and the former of the two contains the latter: love to God is the only true principle and spring of all due love to man; and all love that begins there, returns thither likewise, and ends there.

The engaging the whole mind and soul to the love of God, does not engross it so, that there should be no kind of love communicable to man; on the contrary, it is to refine it, that it may flow forth the purer and better. All love should be once called in to God, to be sublimated and purified there, and then set in its right channel and motion, so as man be loved in him and for him; not to impair our love to him, but indeed to extend and act it as he allows; and so to love man is to love God, that love taking its rise from him, and terminating in him; and in this circle is the proper motion of celestial divine love.

The duty, then, here meant and commanded, is this, *that we love one another*; and our love must be thus qualified, it must be unhypocritical and sincere; such as, though it may consist with, yet doth not wholly consist in, civilities of expression and behaviour, but a real benevolence of soul, and good will to all; a love, disposing readily to forgive evil, and do good upon all occasions.

Yet this is not such a tenderness of complacency, as to partake with any in any evil ways; Oh! no; *abhorring that which is evil*, flying from it with in-

dignation, with a kind of antipathy. And thus it will be from the new nature in a Christian, the holy spirit of Christ, which cannot endure the unholiness or impurity of the world, but is chased away, as doves with noisome smells, or bees with smoke: this delicacy of spirit profane men laugh at, as a weak foolish meanness; but, fools as they are, they know not that it arises from that highest *wisdom which is from above*, which indeed is *peaceable*, but first is *pure*, and can admit of no peace nor agreement with any persons or things that are impure; this is to be like the all-wise God, *with whom wickedness cannot dwell*; his pure *eyes* cannot pleasantly *behold any iniquity*.

Oh! much of the love of God would work more hatred of sin; but if thy hatred of evil be right, know, it will begin at home, as we feel aversions and abhorrences most when the things are nearest us. It is not the upright nature of holiness to hate sin in others, and to hug it, or spare it in thyself, either the same kind of sin, or any other; for if this abhorrence be right, it is against all sin, the whole, as natural contrarieties are, and it is most against it, where nearest in thyself; it is the true divine fire of zeal, kindled by the love of God, that burns up sin, but first that which is nearest it, as a fire in the hearth does, and so reaches what is further off. But if thy zeal fly most abroad upon others, it is an unruly disordered wild-fire, cracking and squibing up and down, good for nothing but to set houses and towns on fire.

Cleave to that which is good.] This expresses a vehement and inseparable affection; loving and rejoicing in all the good thou seest in others; desiring and seeking after all the good thou canst attain unto thyself; and more pleased with the society of godly persons than any other; such as will put thee and keep thee most in mind of thy home, and the way thither, and admonish and reduce thee from any declining steps; their reproofs are more sweet to thee, than the laughter and flattery of profane men, as one

said to his master, "Thou shalt find no staff hard enough to beat me from thee^a." Though they seem harsh to thee, yet wilt thou say, *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness^b*; and no opposition will drive thee from the truth of God, and his ways, which are only good, if thy heart be once glued by love and fastened to them; yea, thou wilt cleave the closer to it, the more thou art persecuted for the truth; and the more thou sufferest for it, wilt love it the better: the word that is used in marriage, of the husband cleaving to the wife, holds true in the soul once married to that which is good; all violence will be too weak to sever thee. Learn to know what this is that is truly *good*, to know the excellency and sweetness of holiness, and it will be impossible to part thy affection from it; but this is the reason why men are so soon shaken, and the slender hold they have removed, the superficies of the soul only, is tied to the outside of religion, by some external relations and engagements, and those are a running knot, that easily slips. Few *receive the truth in the love of it*, and have their hearts united to Jesus Christ, who is indeed all that good we have to seek after, and to cleave to.

Ver. 10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*

Now, in this way of holy spiritual affection, seeking the true good one of another, be kind in *brotherly love*, not upon design or particular interest, but by a natural propension; such as in creatures to their young; such a tenderness as is amongst men of nearest relations, parents and children, and brethren; and know that you are indeed brethren of the highest birth and parentage; and so, beyond all brethren, Christians are obliged to love one another: alas! that in them, likewise, it should prove so unhappily true, that the love of brethren is rare^c; that they

^a ἕκ τὸ ξυλον ἐυρήσεις, &c.

^b Psal. cxli. 5.

^c Fratrum quoque gratia rara est.

should be so hardly drawn to acts of love, and so easily stirred to fits of anger and bitterness, one towards another. My beloved, are we Christians? Oh! where is the spirit of Christ? Where that great law of his, that badge of his followers, *Love one another!* that by which the Christians of the first times astonished the Pagans about them? Yea, their very enemies and persecutors were amazed at it. It were well, and would be one considerable gain by our enemies, if their combinations and malice against the godly might drive them close together, and unite them more to one another in love.

In honour preferring one another.] Putting all possible respect on one another; this not in ceremony or compliment, though these civilities, that are due, and done without feignedness or affectation, are not disallowed, yea, are, I conceive, included; but in matter of real esteem, each *preferring one another*; for though a man may see the weakness of those he converses with, yet passing, and what he can, covering these, he ought to take notice of what is good. All have something commendable, and none hath all; so the meanest may in something be preferable to the highest; and Christian humility and charity will seek out for, and espy that, and for it put all respect upon them, that their quality and station is able to bear; and in this one should prevent another, and strive who shall do most in this kind, as a good and happy contention.

And the source of this is *love to God*, that so mortifies the heart to all outward advantages, that, further than a man is tied by place and calling, he would not receive, much less desire, any kind of respect from any, but had rather be slighted and disregarded. What cares a soul, enamoured with the glory to come, for the vain passing air of preference and honour here! That it can easily bate to any, and, so far as a man has any power of it, would put it upon others, far rather than own it himself; such an one can sweetly please himself in being the meanest in all companies where he comes, and passing for

such; and he is glad of respect done to others, still looking homeward, where there is no prejudging one another at all, but perfect unenvying and unenvied glory. Glory here is to be shunned rather than pursued; and, if it will follow, yet is it less to be regarded than thy shadow. Oh! how light and vanishing is it, and even things more solid than it; *the fashion of this world passeth away*^d.

Ver. 11. *Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*

Not slothful in business. These condensed rules have much in them, and this is very needful, for often a listless indisposed weariness overtakes even good men; seeing so little to be done to any purpose, they are almost ready to give over all; yet they ought to bestir themselves, and apply to diligence in their place, not unduly stickling and busy in things improper, but inclosing thy diligence within thy sphere. Suffer it not to stand, but keep it there in motion: as to thy worldly affairs, be so diligent as to give them good dispatch, when thou art about them, but have thy heart as little in them, as much disengaged as may be; yet, so acquitting them wisely, they shall trouble thee the less, when thou art in higher and better employments. As to thyself, be often examining thy heart and ways, striving constantly against sin; though little sensible advantage be gained, yet if thou yield, it will be worse. If it prevail so much amidst all thy opposition, what would it do if thou shouldst sit still! Use all holy means, how fruitless soever they seem for the present, and *wait on God*. *We have toiled all night*, said Simon, *and taken nothing*^e; and yet at his command, essaying again, they took more at once, than if, after their ordinary way, they had been taking all night. So as to others, give not up because thou seest no present success, but, in thy place, *admonish, exhort and rebuke*, with all meekness and patience. Doth

^d 1 Cor. vii. 31.

^e Luke v. 5.

God wait on sinners, and wilt not thou wait a little for others?

Fervent in spirit. Beware of a fretful impatience; that is a sickly distempered heat, as that of a fever, that makes a man unfit for work; and men commonly in this break away from their business: but much healthful natural heat makes a man strong, and able to endure labour, and continue in it. This is the thing here recommended. To be so hot and *fervent in spirit* is a great advantage; it is the very strength of the soul in all employments: much love to God, and desire of his glory; this is the heat that will not weary, will cheerfully go through all discouragements; *many waters will not quench it.* This fervour of spirit, wrought by the Spirit of God, doth clearly difference itself from that inordinate heat of our spirits, which may sometimes either act alone, or mingle itself with the other in the best causes and affairs. That holy fervour is composed and regular in working, runs not headily to unadvised or disorderly ways; it is a sweet delightful heat, not painful and vexing as the other; it carries on to duty, and is not disturbed about events.

Serving the Lord.] Some copies have it, *-serving the time*; which though it may bear a fair construction, of taking present occasions of good, and being useful in our generation, and accommodating ourselves in all lawful things to times and persons, for their good, as our Apostle *became all things to all, to win some*; yet, this kind of expression not being found elsewhere in Scripture, and the most copies having it as we read it, and some mistake of letters in transcribers seeming to have occasioned it, it is much rather to be taken as in our version.

But, out of all question, some do follow that mistaken reading in its worst sense; instead of *-serving the Lord*, serving the times: and this some even in evil ways; others, in ways that are good; yet following upon trust, and complying, though unwillingly, because the times carry things so; but where times change to the worse, these men are discovered;

for still they serve their master, the times, and their own advantage in them; which way soever that goes, they follow: so that their following the better side, in better times, is but accidental.

But this *serv'ing the Lord* is more even and lasting: serving him still in all times, doing all for him, having no aim but his glory; such a heart cannot be diverted from its course by any counterblast of times.

Would you be stedfast in times of approaching trial, seek hearts acquainted with God, and fixed on him; for others will be shaken; but such will follow him through all hazards, and *fear no ill* while he is with them.

Ver. 12. *Rejoicing in hope.*] Oh! this we seldom do. When are our hearts as transported with the blessed *hope of our inheritance*? this would make us what follows,

Patient in tribulation.] People would hear much of this, of preparing for suffering: there may be a distemper in desiring to hear and speak so much of that. What though trials be coming, as it is likely they are, we should account too much of ourselves, and this present world, to dwell expressly on that subject. We see the Apostles do not so, though they lived and wrote in times of other sort of persecution than we have yet seen; and they, to whom the Apostle here writes, lived where it was most violent and potent, and yet they spend not all on this: some brief words of it, interspersed with the discourse, thrown as it were into a parenthesis; but still the main is, the doctrine of faith and rules of holiness; and these are indeed the great furniture for all sufferings: I know no other. To see much the excellency and worth of Jesus Christ, the riches of our hope in him; to have these in our view, much in our hearts and in our mouths; these drown all the little fears of present things. See how, in passing, our Apostle speaks, as it were in a slighting way, of all sufferings for him: I have cast it up, says he; and *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time* (of this

now) are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Again, the other thing is the rules of holiness; these powerfully enable for suffering any thing, rather than unholiness: the sickness of the soul, these corrupt humours of sin, make it crazy, that it can endure no blasts of air; but when it is purged and free from these, and in communion with God in his ways, then it is healthful and strong; and so is able to endure any thing. The mortifying of our affections to the world, that is it that enables for suffering. Whither reaches the cruelty of man, but to thy goods or body? And what makes any faint, but an over-esteem of these, by which they are filled with desires to preserve, and fears to lose them? Now, when the heart is disengaged from these, and hath taken up in God, is rich and content in him, it stands not much to the courtesy of any; let them take the rest; it *suffers with joy the spoiling of goods, having in Heaven a more enduring substance*^f. And for the utmost, killing them, they look on it as the highest favour; it is to them but the making a hole for them in their prison-wall to get out at. Therefore, I say, there is nothing doth so fit for all encounters, as to be much instructed in that which is the substance of Christianity, hearts purified, and lives holily and spiritually regulated. In a word, much study of Christ, and much study of thyself, for ought I know, are the wisest and strongest preparatives for all possible sufferings.

How sweetly can the soul retire into him, and repose in him, in the greatest storms. I know nothing that can much dismay him that can believe and pray^g. That you see is added,

Continuing instant in prayer.] If afraid of fainting, yea, if at the point of fainting, this revives the soul, draws in no less than the strength of God to support it: and what then can surcharge it?

Thy access to him all the enemies in the world

^f Heb. x. 34.

^g Nempe tenens quod amo, nihil, illum amplexus, timebo.

cannot hinder ; the closest prison shuts not out thy God ; yea, rather it shuts out other things and companies, that thou mayest have the more leisure for him, and the sweeter converse with him. Oh ! acquaint yourselves with this exercise of prayer, and by it with God, that if days of trouble come, you may know whither to go, and what way ; and if you know this way, whatever befalls you, you are not much to be bemoaned.

CHARGES, &c.

To the Clergy of the Diocesan Synod of Dunblane, by Bishop LEIGHTON.

I. *Bishop Leighton's Charge to his Clergy,*
September 1662.

FOR DISCIPLINE.

FIRST, That all diligence be used for the repressing of profaneness, and for the advancement of solid piety.

Secondly, That not only scandals of unchastity, but drunkenness, swearing, cursing, filthy-speaking, and mocking of religion, and all other gross offences, be brought under church-censure.

Thirdly, That scandalous offenders be not absolved, till there appear in them very probable signs of true repentance.

Fourthly, That inquiry be made, by the minister, not only into the knowledge, but the practice and track of life, of those who are to be admitted to the holy communion; and all profane, and evidently impenitent, persons be secluded, till their better conversation, and obedience to the gospel, be more apparent.

Fifthly, That family-prayer be inquired after; and they that can, be exhorted to join with it reading of the Scriptures.

FOR WORSHIP.

First, That, instead of lecturing and preaching both at one meeting, larger portions of the Holy Scriptures, one whole chapter at least of each Testa-

ment, and psalms withal, be constantly read; and this not as a by-work, while they are convening, but after the people are well convened, and the worship solemnly begun with confession of sins and prayer, either by the minister or some fit person by him appointed.

Secondly, That the Lord's prayer be restored to more frequent use; likewise, the doxology and the creed.

Thirdly, That daily public prayer, in churches, morning and evening, with reading of the Scriptures, be used, where it can be had conveniently, and the people be exhorted to frequent them; not so as to think that this should excuse them from daily private prayer, in their families and in secret, but rather as a help to enable them, and dispose them the more for both these: and let the constant use of secret prayer be recommended to all persons, as the great instrument of sanctifying the soul, and of entertaining and increasing in it the love of God.

Fourthly, That the younger sort, and the ignorant, be diligently catechised, at fit times, all the year through; and that work not wholly laid over on some days or weeks before the celebration of the communion; but that the inquiry, at that time, be rather of their good conversation, and due disposition for partaking of that holy ordinance, as was said before in an article touching discipline.

Fifthly. That ministers use some short form of catechism, such as they may require account of, till a common form be agreed on.

Sixthly, That preaching be plain, and useful for all capacities; not entangled with useless questions and disputes, nor continued to a wearisome length. The great and most necessary principles of religion, most frequently treated upon; and oftentime larger portions of Scripture explained, and suitable instructions and exhortations thence deduced; and let that be the sermon at that time; which will doubtless be as truly preaching and useful, if not more so,

than insisting, for a whole sermon or more, upon one short verse or sentence.

The Bishop propounded to the brethren, that it was to be reminded, by himself and them both, to how eminent degrees of purity of heart and life their holy calling doth engage them; to how great contempt of this present world, and inflamed affections toward Heaven, springing from deep persuasions within them of those things they preach to others, and from the daily meditation of them, and fervent prayer: and that we consider how ill it becomes us to be much in the trivial conversation of the world; but, when our duty or necessity involves us in company, that our speech and deportment be exemplarily holy, ministering grace to those with whom we converse; and, (to add but this one thing, so suitable to ministers of the gospel of peace), that we be meek and gentle, and lovers and exhorters of peace, private and public, amongst all ranks of men; endeavouring rather to quench, than to increase, the useless debates and contentions that abound in the world; and be always more studious of pacific than polemic divinity; that certainly being much diviner than this, for the students of it are called the sons of God.

II. *The Bishop's Address after the business was over, October 1665.*

AFTER the affairs of the Synod were ended, the Bishop shewed the brethren he had somewhat to impart to them that concerned himself, which, though it imported little or nothing, either to them or the church, yet he judged it his duty to acquaint them with: and it was, the resolution he had taken of retiring from this public charge; and that all the account he could give of the reasons moving him to it, was briefly this: the sense he had of his own unworthiness of so high a station in the church, and

his weariness of the contentions of this church, which seemed rather to be growing than abating; and, by their growth, did make so great abatements of that Christian meekness and mutual charity, that is so much more worth than the whole sum of all that we contend about. He thanked the brethren for all their undeserved respect and kindness manifested to himself all along; and desired their good construction of the poor endeavours he had used to serve them, and to assist them in promoting the work of the ministry, and the great designs of the gospel, in their bounds; and if, in any thing, in word or deed, he had offended them, or any of them, he very earnestly and humbly craved their pardon: and having recommended to them to continue in the study of peace and holiness, and of ardent love to our great Lord and Master, and to the souls he hath so dearly bought, he closed with these words of the Apostle: "Finally, brethren, farewell: be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, and live in peace; and the God of peace and love shall be with you."

III. *The Bishop's Charge, October 1666.*

1. It was enacted, That all the ministers do endeavour to bring their people to a high esteem of the Holy Scriptures, and of the reading of them in public; and to give evidence thereof, by reverent and attentive hearing, none being permitted to stand about the doors, or lie in the kirk-yard, during the time of reading; and if, after warning given them of this, any shall be found to continue in the same disorder, they are, by due rebukes and censures, to be brought to obedience.

2. That the ministers be careful to direct the readers what parts of the Scriptures are most frequently to be read: as, the histories of the gospel, and the epistles; and of the Old Testament, the most intelligible and practical parts, particularly,

large portions of the Psalms at all times, being both so excellently instructive, and withal so divine forms of prayers and praises, and therefore have been so much used by the Christian churches in all ages, and always made so great a part of their public service.

3. That no readers be permitted, but such as are tried and approved by the Presbytery.

4. That, besides the reading betwixt the second and third bell, which is but as in the interval for those that are come, till the rest do convene, some part of the Scriptures be read after the last bell is rung out, and the congregation more fully met, and the minister is come in; either by himself, or by the reader at his appointment; one chapter at least, together with some of the Psalms, one or more, as they are of length, and of which some part afterwards may be sung, and so the people shall the better understand what they sing. Thus shall this so useful ordinance of public reading of the Scriptures be performed with more solemnity, and brought into greater respect and veneration, and the people be more universally and plentifully edified by it. But, together with this, the reciting of the ten commandments, and the belief, according to the acts of former Synods, is no Lord's day to be omitted; nor is this only or mainly meant as a help to the people learning the words of them, and so being able to repeat them, but as a solemn publication of the law of God, as the rule of our life, and a solemn profession of our believing the articles of our Christian faith, and for the quickening of our affections towards both.

And as to that exercise of reading the Scriptures, it cannot be imagined that any well-instructed and solid-minded Christian can question the great expediency and usefulness of it for all ranks of people: for, besides that many of our commons cannot read, and so cannot use the Scriptures in private, and too many that can, yet do neglect it, even they that use them most in private, will not only no whit

the less, but so much the more, be well satisfied and edified with hearing them read in public, and will more reverently and religiously attend to them, and, with the blessing of God upon them so doing, not fail to find (what others can say they have often found) divers passages and sentences falling frequently in upon their hearts in public reading, with particular warmth and divine force, nothing below, if not sometimes beyond, what they usually find in private.

If the minister think fit to make his sermon for the time, upon some part of what, by himself, or by his appointment, hath been read, it may do well; and possibly so much the better, the longer the text be, and the shorter the sermon be; for, it is greatly to be suspected, that our usual way of very short texts, and very long sermons, is apt to weary people more, and profit them less.

But, whatsoever they do in this, they would beware of returning to their long expositions, besides their sermon, at one and the same meeting; which, besides the tediousness and other inconveniences, is apt to foment in peoples minds, the foolish prejudice and proud disdain they have taken against the Scriptures read without a superadded discourse, in which conceit, for all their zeal against Popery, they seem to be too much of the Romish opinion, as accounting the Holy Scriptures so obscure in themselves, that it is someway dangerous, or at least altogether unprofitable, to intrust the common people either with reading or hearing any part of them at any time, unless they be backed with continual expositions.

5. That ministers do endeavour to reduce the people from the irreverent deportment they have generally contracted in the public worship; particularly, from their most indecent sitting at prayer; to kneel or stand, as conveniently they may, that we may worship, both with our bodies and with our souls, Him that made both, and made them for that very end. Oh! how needful is that invita-

tory to be often rung in our ears, that seem wholly to have forgot it, "Oh! come, and let us worship, and bow down and kneel before the Lord our Maker."

6. That people be frequently and earnestly exhorted to morning and evening prayer in their families, especially the prime families in parishes, as most exemplary.

7. That the way of catechising be more adapted to the capacity of our rude and ignorant people; and that our sermons, particularly those of the afternoon, may be more frequently bestowed on the most plain and intelligible way of explaining some point of catechetical doctrine.

8. It was recommended, That convenient utensils be provided in every kirk, for the administration of the holy sacraments.

9. That, according to our great and standing duty, we be still more and more zealous and careful, by doctrine and discipline, to purge out all profaneness; particularly, the most common and crying sins, as drunkenness, cursing, swearing, railing, and bitter speaking, and rotten filthy speaking, so usual amongst the common sort, in their house or field labour together, particularly in harvest: and that it be by all ministers recommended to the owners of the crops, and overseers of the reapers, to range them so to their work, and in such divisions, as may give least occasion to any thing of that kind.

10. That, as we ourselves would be exemplary in holiness, we would endeavour that our *seniores plebis*, or elders of the people, be so too: and, for that end, rather to have them well chosen, though fewer, than a great number of such as too often they are.

11. That the Presbyteries do inquire of each one of their number concerning the celebration of the communion, that at least our usual returns of it be neglected by none; for, it is one of the great defects and reproaches of our church, that that great

ordinance, being so useful for the increase of holiness, should be so seldom administered, as with us it is, even where it is oftenest. For the way of examination in order to it, somewhat is set down in our first Synod, which may be looked at, if possibly it may prove to be of any use.

IV. *Paper given in by the Bishop to the Synod, April 1667.*

I CONFESS that my own inactive and unmeddling temper may be too apt to prevail against the known duty of my station, and may incline me rather to inquire too little than too much into the department of others; and rather to be deficient, than to exceed in admonitions and advices to my brethren, in matters of their duty: and, besides this natural aversion, the sense of my own great unworthiness and filthiness, may give me check, and be a very strong curb upon me, in censuring others for what may be amiss, or in offering any rules for the redress of it: And there is yet another consideration, that bends still further that way; for I am so desirous to keep far off from the reach of that prejudice, that abounds in these parts, against the very name of my sacred function, as apt to command and domineer too much, that I may possibly err on the other hand, and scarce perform the duty of the lowest and most moderate kind of moderator; so that I am forced to spur and drive up myself against all these retardments, to suggest any thing, how useful soever, beyond our road or accustomed way, especially, finding how little any thing of that kind takes, and prevails to any real effect.

However, when any thing appears to me of evident reason and usefulness, and that easily joins in, and paceth with, our standing customs, I judge it my duty to offer it to you; and I hope, if that ye shall find it of any use, ye will not reject it, but ra-

ther improve it to somewhat better, that by occasion of it may arise in your own thoughts.

Something of this kind I have formerly moved, concerning the way of dealing with persons fallen into scandalous sin: frequent speaking with them in private, to the convincing and awakening their consciences to a lively sense of sin, and directing them in the exercises of repentance, and exhorting them to set apart some time for the solid humbling of their souls in fasting and prayer; and not to admit them to public confession, until they have to our best discerning, some real heart-sense of sin, and remorse for it, and serious purposes of newness of life.

Likewise, I suggested somewhat touching the way of examining of all persons, toward their admission to the holy communion, besides the ordinary way of catechising the younger and more ignorant sort; and some other particulars much like these, that now I will not repeat.

That which I would recommend at this time, relates to the business of Privy trials (as they are called) of ministers in their Presbyteries, toward the time of the Synod; in which I have perceived, in some places, (if I may be pardoned that free word), very much of superficial empty form; for the help of which, besides other ways which may be thought on, that which occurs to me at present, is this: that some certain questions be asked of every minister before he withdraws; and these be much the same with those that usually are, or fitly may be, propounded to the elders and people concerning their minister, at the visitation of particular kirks. For, though, in the case we now speak of, we can have nothing but every man's own word concerning himself, yet this does not render it an useless thing; for, besides that divers of the questions will be of things so obvious to public knowledge, that no man will readily adventure to give an untrue answer, where it may be so easily traced, there is much to be given to the presumed ingenuity and veracity of a minister. especially in what is solemnly and punc-

tually inquired of him; and whatsoever, formerly, hath been, or hath not been, his former degree of diligence in the particulars, the very inquiry and asking concerning them, will be apt to awake, in every man, a more serious reflection upon himself touching each point; and the drawing forth such an express answer to each before his brethren, will probably excite and engage him to higher exactness in all of them for the time to come.

The particulars I conceive may be these, and such others, like them, as may be further thought fit.

1. Whether he be constantly assiduous in plain and profitable preaching, instructing, and exhorting, and reproof, most expressly and frequently, those sins that abound most among his people; and in all things, to his best skill, fitting his doctrine to the capacities, necessities, and edification of all sorts within his charge?

2. Whether he be diligent in catechising, employing throughout the year such seasons and times for it, as may be easiest and fittest for the people to attend it, and not wholly casting it over upon some few days or weeks near the time of the communion?

3. How often in the year he celebrates the holy communion? for I am ashamed to say, whether, at least, once every year?

4. Whether he does faithfully and impartially exercise discipline, and bring all known scandals to due censure; and does speak privately, and that oftener than once, with the persons convicted, and admits them not to public acknowledgment, till he sees in them some probable signs of true repentance.

5. Whether he be diligent, by himself and his elders, in all convenient ways, to know the deportment of the several families and persons of his flock; and do frequently visit the families, and not only ask, but do his best certainly to inform himself, whether they constantly use morning and evening prayer, together with reading of the Scriptures, if

they have any that can do it; and whether this point of family exercise be specially provided for in the choice families in the parish.

6. Whether he be careful of the relief of the poor, and of visiting the sick, whensoever he knows of any, even though they neglect to send for him; and for this end make inquiry, and the rather prevent their sending, because they commonly defer that, till it can be of little or no use to them.

7. Whether he does in private plainly and freely admonish those he knows, or hath cause to suspect, to be given to uncleanness, or drunkenness, or swearing, or any kind of inordinate walking, especially if they be of that quality that engages him frequently to converse with them; and if they continue such, leaves off that converse; and if their miscarriage be public, brings them to public censure.

8. Whether he watches exactly over his own conversation in all things, that he not only give no offence, but be an example to the flock, and preach by living.

9. Whether he spend the greatest portions of his time in private, in reading, and prayer, and meditation,—a thing so necessary to enable him for all the other parts of his duty.

10. Whether he makes it the great business, and withal the great pleasure, of his life, to fulfil the work of his ministry, in the several parts and duties of it, out of love to God, and to the souls of his people.

11. If he does not only avoid gross offences, (which, in a guide of souls, were intolerable), but studies daily to mortify pride, and rash anger, and vain-glory, and covetousness, and love of this world and of sensual pleasures, and self-love, and all inordinate passions and affections, even in those instances wherein they are subtilest and least discernible by others, and commonly too little discerned by ourselves.

12. If he not only lives in peace with his brethren and flock, and withal as much as is possible, but is

an ardent lover and promoter of it, reconciling differences, and preserving good agreement, all he can, amongst his people.

It hath not escaped my thoughts, that some of these questions, being of things more inward, may seem less fit to be publicly propounded to any; and that the best observers of them, will, both out of modesty, and real humility, and severe judging of themselves, be aptest to charge themselves with deficiency in them, and will only own, as most, sincere desires and endeavour, which, likewise, they that practise and mind them least, may, in general, profess; neither is there any more particular and punctual account to be expected of such things from any man in public; but the main intent in these, (as was said before), is serious reflection, and that each of us may be stirred up, to ask ourselves over again these and more of the like questions, in our most private trials, and our secret scrutinies of our own hearts and lives, and may redouble our diligence in purging ourselves; that we may be in the house of God vessels of honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared to every good work: and, for those other things more exposed to the knowledge of others, if any brother hears of any faultiness in any of the number he shall not do well to think rudely to vent it in the meeting, till first he have made all due inquiry after the truth of it; yea, though he hath it upon inquiry to be true, yet ought he not, even then, to make his first essay of rectifying his brother, by a declaration to the full meeting, without having formerly admonished him, first alone, and then (according to our Saviour's rule) in the presence of one or two more; but having done so, if neither of these reclaim him, then follows of necessity to tell the church: but that is likewise to be done with great singleness of heart, and charity, and compassion; and the whole procedure of the whole company, with the person so delated, is to be managed with the same temper,

according to the excellent advice of the Apostle^a.
“ My brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault,
ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the
spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also
be tempted.”

*V. Paper given in by the Bishop to the Synod,
October 1667, containing Proposals touching the
following things :*

1. Solemn reading of the Scriptures.
2. Reducing of the people to a reverend gesture
in prayer.
3. Plain and practical, and catechetical, preach-
ing.
5. A weekly day for catechising, and the reading
of the Scriptures joined with it.
5. A short and plain form of catechism.
6. A more exact and spiritual way of dealing with
public penitents.
7. As likewise of preparing people for the com-
munion; more frequent celebration whereof is so
much to be wished, but so little, or scarce at all, to
be hoped in this church.
8. That, in preaching, the most abounding and
crying sins be more sharply and frequently reprov-
ed, particularly cursing and swearing; and the worship
of God in families more urged.
9. The due educating and moulding the minds of
young students in presbyteries.
10. More frequent and more exact visitation of
churches; and the visiting of families by each mi-
nister in his own charge.

The words of the Paper were as follow :

1. That the reading of the Holy Scriptures in our
public meetings, when they are solemnest and fullest,
be constantly used, and that we endeavour to bring

^a Gal. vi. 2.

our people to a reverend and affectionate esteem of that ordinance, and attention to it.

2. That, both by our own example, and by frequent instruction and exhortation, we study to reform that extreme irreverence and indecency that hath generally prevailed in peoples deportment in time of public worship, and particularly of prayer: and that they be reduced to such a gesture, as may signify that we are acknowledging and adoring the great Majesty of God.

3. That we endeavour to adapt our way of preaching, with all evidence and plainness, to the informing of the people's minds, and quickening their affections, and raising in them renewed purposes of a Christian life; and that some part of our sermons be designed for the plain and practical explication of the great principles of religion.

4. That we fix some certain times, at least one day in the week, throughout the year, for catechising, and that, withal, there be reading of the Scriptures, and prayer at the same time; to which, besides that part of the people that are for each time particularly warned to be present, those others that are near the church, and at leisure, may resort; for, the work of the ministry is a husbandry of more continual labour and attendance than that of our country people that labour the ground, and therefore cannot well be duly discharged if it be wholly cast over upon the Lord's day, without ever meeting with them, or bringing any considerable part of them together, all the week long.

5. It seems absolutely necessary that each minister would resolve on some short and plain form of catechism, for the use of his people; for, it is not, I think, to be imagined, that ever people, will have any fixed knowledge of the articles of religion, by lax, and continually varied, discourses and forms, or by catechisms too long and too hard for them: and would some draw up several short forms, they might be revised at the next Synod, and possibly

one framed out of them, which, by consent, might be appointed for the use of this diocess for the interim, till one shall be published for the whole church.

6. That which hath been formerly proposed would be reminded, of a more exact and spiritual way of dealing with public offenders, that their reception might be both more apt to recover the penitents themselves, and to edify the church.

7. For more frequent communion, (if it could be had), or, however, for the better improving it, when we have it, seldom as it is, what hath been formerly suggested, touching the way of examining and preparing people to it, and other particulars relating thereto, need not be repeated, but need very much to be really practised, if they can be of any use.

8. Likewise, enough hath been formerly said, (it were well if any thing might once appear to be done), touching the worship of God in families, especially the prime ones within our bounds: as likewise touching the exercise of discipline, for the repressing of swearing and drunkenness, and all profaneness, so much abounding every where; and that our doctrine be likewise, more particularly and frequently applied to that purpose.

9. Something hath likewise been said concerning the training up of such young men amongst us as intend the ministry, not only as to their strain of preaching, but the moulding of their minds to more inward thoughts, and the study of a devout life, and more acquaintance with the exercises of mortification, and purging of their own hearts, by those divine truths which they are to preach to others, for the same purpose; for how shall they teach what they have not learned?

10. That churches be more frequently and exactly visited, and by each minister the families of his congregation.

This paper being publicly read, and consented

to, and approved by the unanimous vote of the Synod, conform to it was framed the following act:

The Bishop and Synod having seriously considered the height of profaneness, and gross sins abounding among their people, particularly drunkenness and uncleanness, and most universally the heinous sin of cursing and swearing, and, that which foments and increases those, and all sins, the great contempt of the Lord's holy day and ordinances; and the gross and almost incredible ignorance of the common sort, under so much assiduous preaching and catechising: for the more effectual redress of all these evils, have agreed and resolved, through the Lord's help, each one, within himself, to stir the grace and zeal of God that is within him, to renewed vigour and fervour, and more earnest endeavours in the use of all due means for that effect; and particularly,

1. The applying of their sermons and doctrines more expressly and frequently to the reproof of those wickednesses, especially of that horrible sin, which almost all ranks of men do more easily and frequently commit than they can possibly do other gross sins, and that with less sense and remorse—cursing and swearing: And that they will, by God's assistance, not only use short and frequent reproofs of this and other sins, but at sometimes more largely insist in representing the exceeding sinfulness and vileness of such a particular sin, and the great danger of the Lord's wrath and heaviest judgments upon those that persist in it.

2. That with this they will join constant private inspection over the lives of their people, and, by all due means, particularly inquire into them; and when they find any one guilty of any gross sin, privately to admonish him, meekly and affectionately, but yet with all freedom and plainness; and if upon that they mend not, to proceed in the regular way of discipline and censure within their own charge; and if they be not by that reclaimed, but prove

obstinate, then to delate them to the higher judicature, in the usual order of this church.

3. To use more frequent catechising, and that in so plain a method and way, as may be most apt, both to inform the minds of the most ignorant, and, through the blessing of God, to make more deep impression upon their hearts.

4. That, as much as is competent for ministers, they will endeavour to procure the executing of these penal laws made against cursing and swearing, and other scandalous offences, in such a way as may be most convenient and feasible in each of their respective parishes.

5. That they will endeavour, both by exhortation, and, where need is, by use of discipline, to bring their people to more careful and constant attendance on all the ordinances of God, at all times of the accustomed public meetings, and to a more religious and reverend deportment in them throughout the whole, but particularly in time of prayer.

6. That they be particularly careful to inquire after the daily performance of the worship of God in families, and, where they find it wanting, to enjoin it, and make inquiry again after it; and this would be especially provided for, in the choice and most eminent families in the several congregations, as exemplary to all the rest.

VI. *Concluding Paragraph, April 1668.*

The Bishop having commended the Brethren for their unity and concord, and good conversation, exhorted them to continue therein, and to be more and more exemplary in holiness, and in modesty and gravity, even in the externals of their hair and habit, and their whole deportment; and to the regulating of their children, and their whole families, to be patterns of religion and sobriety to all about them; and that they themselves aspire daily to

greater abstraction from the world, and contempt of things below; giving themselves wholly to their great work of watching over souls, for which they must give account; and to reading and meditation; and to prayer, that draws continual fresh supplies from heaven, to enable them for all these duties.

VII. *Paragraph respecting Baptismal Vows,*
October 1668.

That which had been sometimes spoke of before, the Bishop now again recommended to the Brethren, that, at their set times of catechising and examining their people, they would take particular notice of young persons, towards their first admission to the holy communion; and, having before taken account of their knowledge of the grounds of religion, would then cause them, each one particularly and expressly, to declare their belief of the Christian faith, into which, in their infancy, they were baptized; and, reminding them of that their baptismal vow, and the great engagements it lays upon them to a holy and Christian life, would require of them an explicit owning of that vow and engagement, and their solemn promise accordingly, to endeavour the observing and performance of it, in the whole course of their following life: And then, in their prayer with which they use to conclude those meetings, would recommend the said young persons, now thus engaged, to the effectual blessing of God, beseeching him to own them for his, and to bestow on them the sanctifying and strengthening grace of his Holy Spirit, as his signature upon them, sealing them to the day of redemption.

And this practice, as it hath nothing in it that can offend any, even the most scrupulous minds, so it may be a very fit suppletory of that defect in infant baptism, which the enemies of it do mainly object against it, and may, through the blessing of God,

make a lasting impression of religion upon the hearts of those young persons towards whom it is used, and effectually engage them to a Christian life; and if they swerve from it, make them the more inexcusable, and clearly convincible of their unfaithfulness, and breach of that great promise, and sacred vow, they have so renewed to God before his people. And for authority of divines, if we regard it, it hath the general approbation of the most famous reformers, and of the most pious and learned that have followed them since their time; and, being performed in that evangelical simplicity, as it is here propounded, they do not only allow it as lawful, but desire it, and advise it as laudable and profitable, and of very good use, in all Christian churches.

LETTER to the SYNOD of DUNBLANE.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

Glasgow, April 6, 1671.

THE superadded burden that I have here sits so hard upon me, that I cannot escape from under it, to be with you at this time; but my heart and desires shall be with you, for a blessing from above upon your meeting. I have nothing to recommend to you, but (if you please) to take a review of things formerly agreed upon; and such as you judge most useful, to renew the appointment of putting them in practice; and to add whatsoever further shall occur to your thoughts, that may promote the happy discharge of your ministry, and the good of your peoples souls. I know I need not remind you, for I am confident you daily think of it, that the great principle of fidelity and diligence, and good success, in that great work, is love; and the great spring of love to souls, is love to Him that bought them. He knew it well himself; and gave us to know it, when he said, *Simon, lovest thou*

me? *Feed my sheep, feed my lambs.* Deep impression of his blessed name upon our hearts will not fail to produce lively expression of it, not only in our words and discourses in private and public, but will make the whole tract of our lives to be a true copy and transcript of his holy life: And, if there be within us any sparks of that divine love, you know the best way not only to preserve them, but to excite them, and blow them up into a flame, is by the breath of prayer. Oh! prayer, the converse of the soul with God, the breath of God in man returning to its original, frequent and fervent prayer, the better half of our whole work, and that which makes the other half lively and effectual; as that holy company tells us, when designing deacons to serve the tables, they add, *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word.* And is it not, brethren, our unspeakable advantage, beyond all the gainful and honourable employments of the world, that the whole work of our particular calling is a kind of living in heaven, and, besides its tendency to the saving of the souls of others, is all along so proper and adapted to the purifying and saving of our own? But you will possibly say, what does he himself that speaks these things unto us? Alas! I am ashamed to tell you. All I dare say is this, I think I see the beauty of holiness, and am enamoured with it, though I attain it not; and how little soever I attain, would rather live and die in the pursuit of it, than in the pursuit, yea, or in the possession and enjoyment, though unpursued, of all the advantages that this world affords. And I trust, dear Brethren, you are of the same opinion, and have the same desire and design, and follow it both more diligently, and with better success. But I will stop here, lest I should forget myself, and possibly run on till I have wearied you, if I have not done that already; and yet, if it be so, I will hope for easy pardon at your hands, as of a fault I have not been accus-

tomed heretofore, nor am likely hereafter often to commit. To the all-powerful grace of our great Lord and Master, I recommend you and your flocks, and your whole work amongst them; and do earnestly entreat your prayers for

Your unworthiest, but most affectionate,

Brother and Servant,

R. LEIGHTON.

SEVEN LETTERS

Written by Bishop LEIGHTON on different Occasions: the first, taken from an Authentic Copy; the rest, from the Author's Originals. [Edit. 1748.]

LETTER to the Synod of GLASGOW, convened
April 1673.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

IT is neither a matter of much importance, nor can I yet give you a particular and satisfying account of the reasons of my absence from your meeting, which, I trust, with the help of a little time, will clear itself: But, I can assure you, I am present with you in my most affectionate wishes of the gracious presence of that Holy Spirit amongst you, and within you all, who alone can make this and all your meetings, and the whole work of your ministry, happy and successful, to the good of souls, and His glory that *bought them with his own blood*. And I doubt not, that your own great desire, each for yourself, and all for one another, is the same; and that your daily and great employment is, by incessant and fervent prayer, to draw down from above large supplies and increases of that blessed Spirit, which our Lord and Master hath assured us that *our heavenly Father will not fail to give to them that ask it*. And how extreme a negligence and folly were it to want so rich a gift for want of asking, especially in those devoted to so high and holy a service, that requires so great degrees of that spirit of holiness and divine love to purify their minds, and to raise them above their senses and this present world! Oh! my dear

Brethren, what are we doing, that suffer our souls to creep and grovel on this earth, and do so little aspire to the heavenly life of Christians, and more eminently of the messengers and ministers of God, as stars, yea, as angels, which he *hath made spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire!* Oh! where are souls to be found amongst us, that represent their own original, that are possessed with pure and sublime apprehensions of God, the Father of spirits, and are often raised to the astonishing contemplation of his eternal and blessed being, and his infinite holiness, and greatness, and goodness; and are accordingly burnt up with ardent love! And where that holy fire is wanting, there can be no sacrifice, whatsoever our invention, or utterance, or gifts may be, and how blameless soever the externals of our life may be, and even our hearts free from gross pollutions; for it is scarce to be suspected, that any of us will suffer any of those strange, yea, infernal fires of ambition, or avarice, or malice, or impure lusts and sensualities, to burn within us, which would render us priests of idols, of airy nothings, and of dung-hill gods, yea, of the very *god of this world, the prince of darkness.* Let men judge us and revile us as they please, that imports nothing at all; but God forbid any thing should possess our hearts but He that loved us, and gave himself for us; for we know we cannot be *vessels of honour meet for the Master's use,* unless we *purge ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit,* and empty our hearts of all things beside him, and even of ourselves and our own will, and have no more any desires nor delights, but his will alone, and his glory, who is our peace, and our life, and our all. And truly, I think it were our best and wisest reflection, upon the many difficulties and discouragements without us, to be driven by them to live more within; as they observe of the bees, that when it is foul weather abroad, they are busy in their hives. If the power of external discipline be enervated in our hands,

yet, who can hinder us to try, and judge, and censure ourselves; and to purge the inner temples, our own hearts, with the more severity and exactness? And if we be dashed and bespattered with reproaches abroad, to study to be the cleaner at home: And the less we find of meekness and charity in the world about us, to preserve so much the more of that sweet temper within our own hearts; *blessing them that curse us, and praying for them that persecute us*; so shall we most effectually prove ourselves to be *the children of our heavenly Father*, even to their conviction, that will scarce allow us, in any sense, to be called *his servants*.

As for the confusions and contentions that still abound and increase in this Church, and threaten to undo it, I think our wisdom shall be, to *cease from man*, and look for no help till we look more upwards, and dispute and discourse less, and fast and pray more; and so draw down our relief from the God of order and peace, who made the heavens and the earth.

Concerning myself, I have nothing to say, but humbly to entreat you to pass by the many failings and weaknesses you may have perceived in me during my abode amongst you; and if in any thing I have injured or offended you, or any of you, in the management of my public charge, or in private converse, I do sincerely beg your pardon: Though, I confess, I cannot make any requittal in that kind; for I do not know of any thing towards me, from any of you, that needs a pardon in the least; having generally paid me more kindness and respect, than a much better or wiser man could either have expected or deserved. Nor am I only a suitor for your pardon, but for the addition of a further charity, and that so great a one, that I have nothing to plead for it, but that I need it much—your prayers. And I am hopeful as to that, to make you some little, though very disproportioned return; for whatsoever becomes of me, (through the help

of God), while I live, you shall be no one day of my life be forgotten by,

*Your most unworthy, but most affectionate,
Brother and Servant,*

R. LEIGHTON.

P. S. I do not see whom it can offend, or how any shall disapprove of it, if you will appoint a fast throughout your bounds, to entreat a blessing on the seed committed to the ground, and for the other grave causes that are still the same they were the last year, and the urgency of them no whit abated, but rather increased: but in this I prescribe nothing; but leave it to your discretion and the direction of God.

*The two following Letters were written to Persons
under Trouble of Mind.*

CHRISTIAN FRIEND,

THOUGH I had very little vacant time for it, yet I would have seen you, if I could have presumed it might have been any way useful for the quieting of your mind; however, since I heard of your condition, I cease not daily, as I can, to present it to Him, who alone can effectually speak peace to your heart; and I am confident, in due time, will do so. It is he that *stilleth the raging of the sea*; and, by a word, can turn the violentest storm into a great calm. What the particular thoughts or temptations are that disquiet you, I know not; but whatsoever they are, look above them, and labour to fix your eye on that infinite goodness, which never faileth them, that, by naked faith, do absolutely rely, and rest upon it, and patiently wait upon Him, who hath pronounced them all, without exception, blessed that do so. Say often within your own heart, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*; and if, after some intervals, your troubled thoughts

do return, check them still with the holy Psalmist's words, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? &c.* If you can thoroughly sink yourself down, through your own nothingness, into Him who is all, and, entirely renouncing your own will, embrace that blest and holy will in all things, there, I am sure, you shall find that rest, which all your own distempers, and all the powers of darkness, shall not be able to bereave you of. I incline not to multiply words; and, indeed, other advice than this I have none to give you. The Lord of peace, by the sprinkling of the blood of his Son Jesus, and the sweet breathings of the great Comforter, his own Holy Spirit, give you peace in himself. *Amen.*

MADAM,

THOUGH I have not the honour to be acquainted with your Ladyship, yet a friend of yours has acquainted me with your condition, though I confess the unfittest of all men to minister any thing of spiritual relief to any person, either by prayer or advice to you; but he could have imparted such a thing to none of greater secrecy, and withal of greater sympathy and tender compassion towards such as are exercised with those kind of conflicts; as, having been formerly acquainted with the like myself, all sorts of sceptical and doubtful thoughts, touching those great points, having not only past through my head, but some of them have for some time sat more fast and painfully upon my mind; but, in the name of the Lord, they were at length quite dispelled and scattered. And, oh! that I could love and bless Him, who is my deliverer and strength, my rock and fortress, where I have now found safety from these incursions; and I am very confident you shall very shortly find the same; only wait patiently on the Lord, and hope in him, for you shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance; and it is that alone that can enlighten you, and clear your mind of all those fogs and mists that now possess it,

and calm the storms that are raised within it. You do well to read good books that are proper for your help, but rather the shortest and plainest, than the more tedious and voluminous, that sometimes entangle a perplexed mind yet more, by grasping many more questions, and answers, and arguments, than is needful: But, above all, still cleave to the incomparable spring of light and divine comfort, the Holy Scriptures, even in despite of all doubts concerning them; and when you find your thoughts in disorder, and at a loss, entertain no dispute with them, by any means, at that time, but rather divert from them to short prayer, or to other thoughts, and sometimes to well chosen company, or the best you can have where you are; and at some other time, when you find yourself in a calmer and serener temper, and upon the vantage ground of a little more confidence in God, then you may resume your reasons against unbelief, yet so as to beware of casting yourself into new disturbance; for when your mind is in a sober temper, there is nothing so suitable to its strongest reason, nothing so wise and noble, as religion; and believe it is so rational, that, as now I am framed, I am afraid that my belief proceeds too much from reason, and is not so divine and spiritual as I would have it; only when I find (as in some measure through the grace of God I do) that it hath some real virtue and influence upon my affections and track of life, I hope there is somewhat of a higher tincture in it; but, in point of reason, I am well assured, that all that I have heard from the wittiest atheists and libertines in the world, is nothing but bold revery and madness, and their whole discourse a heap of folly and ridiculous nonsense: for, what probable account can they give of the wonderful frame of the visible world, without the supposition of an eternal and infinite power, and wisdom and goodness, that formed it and themselves, and all things in it? And what can they think of the many thousands of martyrs in the first age of Christianity, that endured not

simple death, but all the inventions of the most exquisite tortures, for their belief of that most holy faith; which, if the miracles that confirmed it had not persuaded them to, they themselves had been thought the most prodigious miracles of madness in all the world? It is not want of reason on the side of religion that makes fools disbelieve it, but the interest of their brutish lusts and dissolute lives makes them wish it were not true; and there is the vast difference betwixt you and them; they would gladly believe less than they do, and you would also gladly believe more than they do: They are sometimes pained and tormented with apprehensions, that the doctrine of religion is or may be true; and you are perplexed with suggestions to doubt of it, which are to you as unwilling and unwelcome, as these apprehensions of its truth are to them. Believe it, Madam, these different thoughts of yours are not yours, but his that inserts them, and throws them, as fiery darts, into your mind; and they shall assuredly be laid to his charge, and not to yours. Think you, that infinite goodness is ready to take advantage of his poor creatures, and to reject and condemn those, that, against all the assaults made upon them, desire to keep their heart for him, and to acknowledge him, and to love him, and live to him. He made us, and knows our mould, and, as a father, pities his children, and pities them that fear him; for he is their father, and the tenderest and kindest of all fathers; and, as a father pities his child when it is sick, and in the rage and revery of a fever, though it even utter reproachful words against himself, shall not our dearest Father both forgive and pity those thoughts in any child of his, that arise not from any wilful hatred of him, but are kindled in hell within them? And no temptation hath befallen you in this, but that which has been incident to men, and to the best of men; and their heavenly Father hath not only forgiven them, but in due time hath given them an happy issue out of them, and so he will assuredly do to you; in the mean

time, when these assaults come thickest and violentest upon you, throw yourself down at his footstool, and say, "O! God, Father of mercies, save me from this hell within me. I acknowledge, I adore, I bless thee, whose throne is in heaven, with thy blessed Son and crucified Jesus, and thy Holy Spirit, and also, though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee: But I cannot think thou canst hate and reject a poor soul that desires to love thee, and cleave to thee, so long as I can hold by the skirts of thy garment, until thou violently shake me off, which I am confident thou would not do, because thou art love and goodness itself, and thy *mercies endure for ever.*" Thus, or in what other frame your soul shall be carried to vent itself into his bosom, be assured, your words, yea, your silent sighs and breathings, shall not be lost, but shall have a most powerful voice, and ascend into his ear, and shall return to you with messages of peace and love, in due time, and, in the mean time, with secret supports, that you faint not, nor sink in these deeps that threaten to swallow you up. But I have wearied you, instead of refreshing you. I will add no more, but that the poor prayers of one of the unworthiest caitiffs in the world, such as they be, shall not be wanting on your behalf, and he begs a share in yours; for neither you nor any in the world, needs that charity more than he does. *Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.*

LETTER to the Heritors of the Parish of
STRATON.

Worthy Gentlemen and Friends,

BEING informed that it is my duty to present a person fit for the charge of the ministry now vacant with you, I have thought of one, whose integrity and piety I am so fully persuaded of, that I dare confidently recommend him to you as one who, if

the hand of God do bind that work upon him amongst you, is likely, through the blessing of the same hand, to be very serviceable to the building up of your souls heavenwards, but is as far from suffering himself to be obtruded, as I am for obtruding any upon you: so that unless you invite him to preach, and after hearing of him, declare your consent and desire towards his embracing of the call, you may be secure from the trouble of hearing any further concerning him, either from himself or me; and if you please to let me know your mind, your reasonable satisfaction shall be to my utmost power endeavoured by,

*Your affectionate Friend,
and humble Servant,
R. LEIGHTON.*

The person's name is Mr. James Aird; he was minister at Ingram in Northumberland, and is lately removed from thence, and is now at Edinburgh. If you write to him, direct it to be delivered to Hugh Paterson, writer in Edinburgh, near the Cross, on the north side of the street.

This, if you please, may be communicated to such of the inhabitants of the parish as you shall think fit.

*This and the two following Letters were wrote to the
Rev. Mr. James Aird, Minister at Torry.*

Dear Friend,

I DID receive your letter, which I would have known to be yours, though it had no other sign but the piety and affectionate kindness expressed in it.

I will offer you no apology (nor I hope I need not) for not writing since that; yea, I will confess, that if the surprising and unexpected occasion of the bearer had not drawn it from me, I should hardly for a long time to come have done what I am now doing; and yet still love you, more than they do one an-

other that interchange letters, even of kindness, as often as the gazettes come forth, and as long as they are too. And now I have begun, I would end just here; for I have nothing to say, nothing of affairs (to be sure) private nor public; and to strike up to discourses of devotion, alas! what is there to be said, but what you sufficiently know, and daily read, and daily think, and, I am confident, daily endeavour to do? And I am beaten back, if I had a great mind to speak of such things, by the sense of so great deficiency in doing those things, that the most ignorant among Christians cannot choose but know. Instead of all fine notions, I fly to *κύειε ἐλέησον, Χειρὲ ἐλέησον*. I think them the great heroes and excellent persons of the world that attain to high degrees of pure contemplation and divine love; but next to those, them, that, in aspiring to that, and falling short of it, fall down into deep humility and self-contempt, and a real desire to be despised and trampled on by all the world. And I believe, that they that sink lowest into that depth, stand nearest to advancement to those other heights: for the great King, who is the fountain of that honour, hath given us this character of himself, that *he resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble*. Farewell, my dear friend, and be so charitable as sometimes, in your addresses upwards, to remember a poor caitiff, who no day forgets you.

13th December 1676.

R. L.

Dear Friend,

I TRUST you enjoy that same calm of mind, touching your present concernment, that I do on your behalf. I dare not promise to see you at Edinburgh at this time, but it is possible I may. I know you will endeavour to set yourself on as strong a guard as you can, against the assaults you may meet with there from divers well meaning persons, but of weak understandings and strong passions; and will maintain the liberty of your own mind both firmly and meekly. Our business is the study of sincerity and pure intention; and then, certainly, our blessed guide will

not suffer us to lose our way for want of light ; we have his promise, that if *in all our ways we acknowledge him, he will direct our paths.* While we are consulting about the turns and new motions of life, it is sliding away, but if our great work in it be going on, all is well. Pray for

Your poor Friend,

Dunblaine, Jan. 13th.

R. L.

My Dear Friend,

I HAVE received from you the kindest letter that ever you writ me ; and, that you may know I take it so, I return you the free and friendly advice, never to judge any man before you hear him, nor any business by one side of it. Were you here to see the other, I am confident your thoughts and mine would be the same. You have both too much knowledge of me, and too much charity to think, that either such little contemptible scraps of honour or riches sought in that part of the world, with so much reproach, or any human complacency in the world, will be admitted to decide so grave a question, or that I would sell (to speak no higher) the very sensual pleasure of my retirement for a rattle, far less deliberately do any thing that I judge offends God. For the offence of good people, in cases indifferent in themselves, but not accounted so by them ; whatsoever you do or do not, you shall offend some good people on the one side or other : And for those with you, the great fallacy in this business is, that they have misreckoned themselves in taking my silence and their zeals to have been consent and participation, which, how great a mistake it is, few know better or so well as yourself ; and the truth is, I did see approaching an inevitable necessity to strain with them in divers practices, in what station soever, remaining in Britain, and to have escaped further off (which hath been in my thoughts) would have been the greatest scandal of all. And what will you say, if there be in this thing somewhat of that you mention, and would allow, of reconciling the devout on different

sides, and of enlarging those good souls you meet with from their little fetters, though possibly with little success? yet the design is commendable, pardonable at least. However, one comfort I have, that in what is pressed on me, there is the least of my own choice, yea, on the contrary, the strongest aversion that ever I had in any thing in all my life; the difficulty, in short, lies in a necessity, of either owning a scruple which I have not, or the rudest disobedience to authority that may be. The truth is, I am yet importuning and struggling for a liberation, and look upward for it^a; but whatsoever be the issue, I look beyond it, and this weary weary wretched life, through which the hand I have resigned to, I trust, will lead me in the paths of his own choosing; and so I may please him, I am satisfied. I hope, if ever we meet, you shall find me in the love of solitude and a devout life.

Your unalter'd Brother and Friend,

R. L.

When I set pen to paper, I intended not to exceed half-a-dozen lines, but slid on insensibly thus far; but though I should fill the paper on all sides, still the right view of this business would be necessarily suspended till meeting. Meanwhile hope well of me, and pray for me. This word I will add, that as there hath been nothing of my choice in the thing, so I undergo it (if it must me) as a mortification, and that greater than a cell and hair-cloth; and whether any will believe this or no, I am not careful.

^a It is highly probable this has been wrote when he was deliberating about accepting a bishoprick.

RULES AND INSTRUCTIONS

FOR A

HOLY LIFE.

FOR disposing you the better to observe these rules and profit by them, be pleased to take the following advices :

1. Put all your trust in the special and singular mercy of God, that he, for his mercy's sake, and of his only goodness, will help and bring you to perfection ; not that absolute perfection is attainable here, but the meaning is, to high degrees of that spiritual and divine life, which is always growing, and tending towards the absolute perfection above ; but in some persons comes nearer to that, and riseth higher, even here, than in the most. If you, with hearty and fervent desires, do continually wish and long for it, and with most humble devotion, daily pray unto God, and call for it, and with all diligence do busily labour and travel to come to it, undoubtedly it shall be given you ; for you must not think it sufficient to use exercises, as though they had such virtues in them, that, of themselves alone, they could make such as do use them perfect ; for neither those, nor any other, whatever they be, can of themselves (by their use only) bring unto perfection. But our merciful Lord God, of his own goodness, when you seek with hearty desires and fervent sighings, maketh you to find it : When you ask daily with devout prayer, then he giveth it to you ; and when you continually, with unwearied labour and travel, knock perseveringly, then he doth mercifully open unto you : and because that those exercises do teach you to seek, ask, and knock ; yea, they are none other but very

devout petitions, seekings, and spiritual pulsations, for the merciful help of God; therefore they are very profitable means to come to perfection by God's grace.

2. Let no particular exercise hinder your public and standing duties to God and your neighbours; but for these, rather intermit the other for a time, and then return to it as soon as you can.

3. If, in time of your spiritual exercise, you find yourself drawn to any better, or to as good a contemplation as that is, follow the track of that good motion so long as it shall last.

4. Always take care to follow such exercises of devout thoughts, withal putting in practice such lessons as they contain and excite to.

5. Though at first ye feel no sweetness in such exercises, yet be not discouraged, nor induced to leave them, but continue in them faithfully, whatsoever pain or spiritual trouble ye feel; for, doing them for God and his honour, and finding none other present fruit, yet you shall have an excellent reward for your diligent labour and your pure intentions: and let not your falling short of these models and rules, nor your daily manifold imperfections and faults, dishearten you; but continue stedfast in your desires, purposes and endeavours; and ever ask the best, aim at the best, and hope the best, being sorry that you can do no better; and they shall be a most acceptable sacrifice in the sight of God, *and in due time you shall reap if you faint not*: And of all such instructions, let your rule be to follow them as much as you can; but not too scrupulously thinking your labour lost if you do not exactly and strictly answer them in every thing: purpose still better, and by God's grace all shall be well.

SECT. I.

Rule 1. Exercise thyself in the knowledge and deep consideration of our Lord God, calling humbly to mind how excellent and incomprehensible he is;

and this knowledge shalt thou rather endeavour to obtain by fervent desire and devout prayer, than by high study and outward labour: It is the singular gift of God, and certainly very precious. Pray then,

2. "Most gracious Lord, whom to know is the very bliss and felicity of man's soul, and yet none can know thee, unless thou wilt open and shew thyself unto him, vouchsafe of thy infinite mercy, now and ever, to enlighten my heart and mind to know thee, and thy most holy and perfect will, to the honour and glory of thy name. Amen."

3. Then lift up thy heart to consider (not with too great violence, but soberly) the eternal and infinite power of God, who created all things by his excellent wisdom; his unmeasurable goodness, and incomprehensible love: for he is very and only God, most excellent, most high, most glorious, the everlasting and unchangeable goodness, an eternal substance, a charity infinite, so excellent and ineffable in himself, that all dignity, perfection and goodness, that is possible to be spoken or thought of, cannot sufficiently express the smallest part thereof.

4. Consider that he is the natural place, the centre and rest of thy soul: if thou then think of the most blessed Trinity, muse not too much thereon, but with devout and obedient faith, meekly and lowly adore and worship.

5. Consider Jesus, the Redeemer and Husband of thy soul, and walk with him as becomes a chaste spouse, with reverence and lowly shamefulness, obedience and submission.

6. Then turn to the deep, profound consideration of thyself, thine own nothingness, and thy extreme defilement and pollution, thy natural aversion from God, and that thou must, by conversion to him again, and union with him, be made happy.

7. Consider thyself and all creatures as nothing, in comparison of thy Lord; that so thou mayest not only be content, but desirous to be unknown,

or, being known, to be contemned and despised of all men, yet without thy faults or deservings, as much as thou canst.

8. "O God, infuse into my heart thy heavenly light and blessed charity, that I may know and love thee above all things; and above all things loath and abhor myself. Grant that I may be so ravished in the wonder and love of thee, that I may forget myself, and all things; feel neither prosperity nor adversity; may not fear to suffer all the pains of this world, rather than to be parted and pulled away from thee, whose perfections infinitely exceed all thought and understanding. O! let me find thee more inwardly and verily present with me, than I am with myself; and make me most circumspect how I do use myself in the presence of thee, my holy Lord.

"Cause me always to remember how everlasting and constant is the love thou bearest towards me, and such a charity and continual care, as though thou hadst no more creatures in Heaven or earth besides me. What am I? A vile worm and filth."

9. Then aspire to a great contrition for thy sins, and hatred of them, and abhorring of thyself for them; then crave pardon in the blood of Jesus Christ; and then offer up thyself, soul and body, an oblation or sacrifice, in and through him, as they did of old, laying wood on the altar, and then burning up all; so this shall be a sacrifice of sweet savour, and very acceptable to God.

10. Offer all that thou hast, to be nothing, to use nothing of all that thou hast about thee, and is called thine, but to his honour and glory; and resolve, through his grace, to use all the powers of thy soul, and every member of thy body, to his service, as formerly thou hast done to sin.

11. Consider the passion of thy Lord, how he was buffeted, scourged, reviled, stretched with nails on the cross, and hung on it three long hours; suffered all the contempt and shame, and all the inconceivable pain of it, for thy sake.

12. Then turn thy heart to him, humbly saying,

“ Lord Jesus, whereas I daily fall, and am ready to sin, vouchsafe me grace, as oft as I shall, to rise again ; let me never presume, but always most meekly and humbly acknowledge my wretchedness and frailty, and repent, with a firm purpose to amend ; and let me not despair because of my great frailty, but ever trust in thy most loving mercy, and readiness to forgive.”

SECT. II.

1. Thou shalt have much to do in mortifying of thy five senses, which must be all shut up in the crucified humility of Jesus Christ, and be as they were, plainly dead.

2. Thou must now learn to have a continual eye inwardly to thy soul and spiritual life, as thou hast used heretofore to have all thy mind and regard to outward pleasure and worldly things.

3. Thou must submit and give thyself up unto the discipline of Jesus, and become his scholar, resigning and compelling thyself altogether to obey him in all things ; so that thy willing and nilling, thou utterly and perfectly do cast away from thee, and do nothing without his license : at every word thou wilt speak, at every morsel thou wilt eat, at every stirring or moving of every article or member of thy body, thou must ask leave of him in thy heart, and ask thyself, whether, having so done, that be according to his will, and holy example, and with sincere intention of his glory. Hence;

4. Even the most necessary actions of thy life, though lawful, yet must thus be offered up with a true intention unto God, in the union of the most holy works, and blessed merits of Christ ; saying, “ Lord Jesus, bind up in the merits of thy blessed senses, all my feeling and sensation, and all my wits and senses, that I never hereafter use them to any sensuality !”

5. Thus labour to come to this union and knitting up of thy senses in God, and thy Lord Jesus, and remain so fast to the cross, that thou never part

from it, and still behave thy body, and all thy senses, as in the presence of thy Lord God, and commit all things to the most trusty providence of thy loving Lord, who will then order all things delectably and sweetly for thee; reckon all things besides for right nought; and thus mayest thou come unto wonderful illuminations, and spiritual influence from the Lord thy God.

6. If, for his love, thou canst crucify, renounce and forsake perfectly thyself, and all things; thou must so crucify thyself to all things, and love and desire God only, with thy care and whole heart, that in this most stedfast and strong knot and union unto the will of God, if he would create hell in thee here, thou mightest be ready to offer thyself, by his grace, for his eternal honour and glory, to suffer it, and that purely for his will and pleasure.

7. Thou must keep thy memory clean and pure, as it were a wedlock chamber, from all strange thoughts, fancies and imaginations; and it must be trimmed and adorned with holy meditations and virtues of Christ's life and passion, that God may continually and ever rest therein.

PRAYER.

S. "Lord, instead of knowing thee, I have sought to know wickedness and sin; and whereas my will and desire were created to love thee, I have lost that love, and declined to the creatures; while my memory ought to be filled with thee, I have painted it with the imagery of innumerable fancies, not only of all creatures, but of all sinful wickedness. Oh! blot out these by thy blood, and imprint thine own blessed image in my soul, blessed Jesus, by that blood that issued out from thy most loving heart, when thou hangedst on the cross; so knit my will to thy most holy will, that I may have no other will but thine, and may be most heartily and fully content with whatsoever thou would do to me in this world; yea, if thou wilt, so that I hate thee not, nor sin against thee, but retain thy love, make me suffer the greatest pains."

SECT. III.

Rule 1. Exercise thyself to the perfect abnegation of all things which may let or impede this union; mortify in thee every thing that is not God, nor for God, or which he willeth and loveth not: resigning and yielding up to the high pleasure of God, all love and affection for transitory things; desire neither to have nor hold them, nor bestow or give them, but only for the pure love and honour of God: put away superfluous and unnecessary things, and affect not even things necessary.

2. Mortify all affection to, and seeking of thyself, which is so natural to men, in all the good they desire, and in all the good they do, and in all the evil they suffer; yea, by the inordinate love of the gifts and graces of God, instead of himself, they fall into spiritual pride, gluttony and greediness.

3. Mortify all affection to, and delectation in, meat and drink, and vain thoughts and fancies, which though they proceed not to consent, yet they defile the soul, and grieve the Holy Ghost, and do great damage to the spiritual life.

4. Imprint on thy heart the image of Jesus crucified; the impressions of his humility, poverty, mildness, and all his holy virtues; let thy thoughts of him turn into affection, and thy knowledge into love; for the love of God doth most purely work in the mortification of nature; the life of the spirit, purifying the higher powers of the soul, begets the solitariness and departure from all creatures, and the influence and flowing into God.

5. Solitude, silence, and the strait keeping of the heart, are the foundations and grounds of a spiritual life.

6. Do all thy necessary and outward works without any trouble or carefulness of mind, and bear thy mind amidst all, always inwardly lifted up, and elevated to God, following always more the inward exercise of love, than the outward acts of virtue.

7. To this can no man come, unless he be rid and

delivered from all things under God, and be so swallowed up in God, that he can contemn and despise himself and all things; for the pure love of God maketh the spirit pure and simple, and so free, that without any pain and labour, it can at all times turn and recollect itself in God.

8. Mortify all bitterness of heart towards thy neighbours, and all vain complacency in thyself; all vain glory and desire of esteem, in words and deeds, in gifts and graces. To this thou shalt come by a more clear and perfect knowledge and consideration of thy own vileness, and by knowing God to be the fountain of all grace and goodness.

9. Mortify all affection towards inward, sensible, spiritual delight in grace, and the following devotion with sensible sweetness in the lower faculties, or powers of the soul, which are nowise real sanctity and holiness in themselves, but certain gifts of God to help our infirmity.

10. Mortify all curious investigation or search, all speculation and knowledge of unnecessary things, human or divine; for the perfect life of a Christian consisteth not in high knowledge, but profound meekness; in holy simplicity, and in the ardent love of God; wherein we ought to desire to die to all affection to ourselves, and all things below God; yea, to sustain pain and dereliction, that we may be perfectly knit and united to God, and be perfectly swallowed up in him.

11. Mortify all undue scrupulousness of conscience, and trust in the goodness of God; for our doubting and scruples oft-times arise from inordinate self-love, and therefore vex us; they do no good, neither work any real amendment in us; they cloud the soul, and darken faith, and cool love; and it is only the stronger beams of these that can dispel them, and the stronger that faith and divine confidence is in us, and the hotter divine love is, the soul is so much the more excited and enabled to all the parts of holiness, to mortifications of passions and lusts, to more patience in adversity, and to more thankfulness in all estates.

12. Mortify all impatience in all pains and troubles, whether from the hands of God or men, all desire of revenge, all resentment of injuries, and by the pure love of God, love thy very persecutors, as if they were thy dearest friends.

13. Finally, Mortify thy own will in all things, with full resignation of thyself to suffer all dereliction, outward and inward, all pain and pressures, and desolations, and that for the pure love of God: for, from self-love, and self-will, spring all sin, and all pain.

A PRAYER.

14. "O! Jesus, my Saviour, thy blessed humility! impress it on my heart; make me most sensible of thy infinite dignity, and of my own vileness, that I may hate myself as a thing of nought, and be willing to be despised, and trodden upon by all, as the vilest mire of the streets, that I may still retain these words, I AM NOTHING, I HAVE NOTHING, I CAN DO NOTHING, AND I DESIRE NOTHING BUT ONE."

SECT. IV.

1. Never do any thing with propriety and singular affection, being too earnest, or too much given to it; but with continual meekness of heart and mind, lie at the foot of God, and say, "Lord, I desire nothing; neither in myself, nor in any creature save only to know and execute thy blessed will, (saying alway in thy heart), Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Transform my will into thine; fill full, and swallow up as it were, my affections with thy love, and with an insatiable desire to honour thee, and despise myself."

2. If thou aspire to attain to the perfect knitting and union with God, know that it requireth a perfect expoliation, and denundation, or bare nakedness, and utter forsaking of all sin, yea, of all creatures, and of thyself particularly: even that thy mind and understanding, thy affections and desires,

thy memory and fancy, be made bare of all things in the world, and all sensual pleasures in them, so as thou wouldst be content that the bread, which thou eatest, had no more savour than a stone, and yet, for his honour and glory that created bread, thou art pleased that it savoureth well: but yet from the delectation thou feelest in it, turn thy heart to his praises and love that made it.

3. The more perfectly thou livest in the abstraction and departure, and bare nakedness of thy mind, from all creatures, the more nakedly and purely shalt thou have the fruition of the Lord thy God, and shalt live the more heavenly and angelical a life. Therefore,

4. Labour, above all things, most exactly to forsake all for him; and chiefly to forsake and contemn thyself, purely loving him, and in a manner forgetting thyself and all things, for the vehement burning love of him: thus thy mind will run so much upon him, that thou wilt take no heed what is sweet or bitter, neither wilt thou consider time or place, nor mark one person from another, for the wonder and love of thy Lord God, and the desire of his blessed will, pleasure, and honour in all things; and whatsoever good thou dost, know and think that God doth it, and not thou.

5. Choose always (to the best of thy skill) what is most to God's honour, and most like unto Christ and his example, and most profitable to thy neighbour, and most against thy own proper will, and least serviceable to thy own praise and exaltation.

6. If thou continue faithful in this spiritual work and travel, God at length, without doubt, will hear thy knocking, and will deliver thee from all thy spiritual trouble, from all the tumults, noise, and incumbrance of cogitations and fancies, and from all earthly affections, which thou canst by no better means put away, than by continual and fervent desire of the love of God.

7. Do not at any time let or hinder his working, by following thine own will; for, behold, how much thou dost the more perfectly forsake thine

own will, and the love of thyself, and of all worldly things, so much the more deeply and safely shalt thou be knit unto God, and increase in his true and pure love.

SECT. V.

1. If thou still above all things, seek that union, thou must transfund and pour thy whole will into the high pleasure of God; and whatsoever befalls thee, thou must be without murmuring and retraction of heart, accepting it most joyfully for his love whose will and work it is.

2. Let thy great joy and comfort evermore be, to have his pleasure done in thee, though in pains, sickness, persecutions, oppressions, or inward griefs and pressures of heart, coldness, or barrenness of mind, darkening of thy will and senses, or any temptations, spiritual or bodily. And,

3. Under any of these, be always wary thou turn not to sinful delights, nor to sensual and carnal pleasures, nor set thy heart on vain things, seeking comfort thereby, nor in any wise be idle, but always, as thou canst, compel and force thyself to some good spiritual exercise or bodily work: and though they be then unsavoury to thee, yet are they not the less, but the more, acceptable to God.

4. Take all afflictions as tokens of God's love to thee, and trials of thy love to him, and purposes of kindness to enrich thee, and increase more plentifully in thee his blessed gifts and spiritual graces, if thou persevere faithfully unto the end; not leaving off the vehement desire of his love, and thy own perfection.

5. Offer up thyself wholly to him, and fix the point of thy love upon his most blessed increated love; and there let thy soul and heart rest and delight, and be, as it were, resolved and melted, most happily, into the blessed Godhead; and then take that as a token, and be assured by it, that God will grant thy lovely and holy desire; then shalt thou feel, in a manner, no difference betwixt honour and shame, joy and

sorrow: but whatsoever thou perceivest to appertain to the honour of thy Lord, be it ever so hard and unpleasant to thyself, thou wilt heartily embrace it, yea, with all thy might, follow and desire it; yet, when thou hast done what is possible for thee, thou wilt think thou hast done nothing at all, yea, thou shalt be ashamed, and detest thyself, that thou hast so wretchedly and imperfectly served so noble and worthy a Lord; and therefore, thou wilt desire and endeavour every hour to do and suffer greater and more perfect things than hitherto thou hast done, forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing forward, &c.

6. If thou hast in any measure attained to love, and abide in, God, then mayest thou keep the power of thy soul and thy senses, as it were, shut up in God, from gadding out to any worldly thing or vanity, as much as possible, where they have so joyfully a security and safeness: satiate thy soul in him, and in all other things still see his blessed presence.

7. Whatsoever befalleth thee, receive it not from the hand of any creature, but from him alone, and render back all to him, seeking in all things his pleasure and honour, the purifying and subduing thyself. What can harm thee, when all must first touch God, within whom thou hast inclosed thyself.

8. When thou perceivest thyself thus knit to God, and thy soul more fast and joined nearer to him than to thine own body, then shalt thou know his everlasting, and incomprehensible and ineffable goodness, and the true nobleness of thy soul, that came from him, and was made to be reunited to him.

9. If thou wouldst ascend and come up to thy Lord God, thou must climb up by the wounds of his blessed humanity, that remain as it were for that use; and when thou art got up there, thou wouldst rather suffer death than willingly commit any sin.

10. Entering into Jesus, thou castest thyself into an infinite sea of goodness, that more easily drowns and happily swallows thee up, than the ocean does a drop of water. Then shalt thou be hid and transformed in him, and shalt often be as thinking without

thought, and knowing without knowledge, and loving without love, comprehended of him whom thou canst not comprehend.

SECT. VI.

1. Too much desire to please men mightily prejudgeth the pleasing of God.

2. Too great earnestness and vehemency, and too greedy delight, and bodily work and external doings, scattereth and loseth the tranquillity and calmness of the mind.

3. Cast all thy care on God, and commit all to his good pleasure; laud and praise, and applaud him in all things, small and great; forsake thy own will, and deliver up thyself freely and cheerfully to the will of God, without reserve or exception, in prosperity and adversity, sweet or sour, to have or to want, to live or to die.

4. Disunite thy heart from all things, and unite it only to God.

5. Remember, often and devoutly, the life and passion, the death and resurrection, of our Saviour Jesus.

6. Descant not on other men's deeds, but consider thine own: forget other men's faults, and remember thine own.

7. Never think highly of thyself, nor despise any other man.

8. Keep silence and retirement as much as thou canst, and, through God's grace, they will keep thee from snares and offences.

9. Lift up thy heart often to God, and desire in all things his assistance.

10. Let thy heart be filled, and wholly taken up, with the love of God, and of thy neighbour, and do all that thou dost in that sincere charity and love.

The sum is:

1. Remember always the presence of God.
2. Rejoice always in the will of God. And,
3. Direct all to the glory of God.

SECT. VII.

1. Little love, little trust; but a great love brings a great confidence.

2. That is a blessed hope that doth not slacken us in our duty, nor maketh us secure, but increaseth both a cheerful will, and gives greater strength to mortification and all obedience.

3. What needest thou, or why travellest thou about so many things? think upon one, desire and love one, and thou shalt find great rest. Therefore,

4. Wherever thou be, let this voice of God be still in thine ear; My son, return inwardly to thy heart; abstract thyself from all things, and mind me only: Thus,

5. With a pure mind in God, clean and bare from the memory of all things, remaining unmoveably in him, thou shalt think and desire nothing but him alone; as though there were nothing else in the world but he and thou only together; that all thy faculties and powers being thus recollected into God, thou mayest become one spirit with him.

6. Fix thy mind on thy crucified Saviour, and remember continually his great meekness, love and obedience, his pure chastity, his unspeakable patience, and all the holy virtues of his humanity.

7. Think on his mighty power and infinite goodness; how he created and redeemed thee; how he justifieth thee, and worketh in thee all virtues, graces, and goodness; and thus remember Him, until thy memory turn into love and affection. Therefore,

8. Draw thy mind thus from all creatures, unto a certain silence, and rest from the jangling and company of all things below God; and when thou canst come to this, then is thy heart a place meet and ready for thy Lord God to abide in, there to talk with thy soul.

9. True humility gaineth and overcometh God

Almighty, and maketh thee also apt and meet to receive all graces and gifts; but alas! who can say that he hath this blessed meekness, it being so hard, so uncertain, so secret and unknown a thing; to forsake and mortify perfectly and exactly thyself, and that most venomous worm of all goodness, vain-glory?

10. Commit all to the high providence of God, and suffer nothing to rest or enter into thy heart, save only God; all things in the earth are too base to take up thy love or care, or to trouble thy noble heart, thy immortal and heavenly mind: let them care and sorrow, or rejoice, about these things, who are of the world, for whom Christ would not pray.

11. Thou canst not please nor serve two masters at once; thou canst not love divers and contrary things: if then thou wouldst know what thou lovest, mark well what thou thinkest most upon; leave earth, and have Heaven; leave the world, and have God.

12. All sin and vice springeth from the property of our own will: all virtue and perfection cometh and groweth from the mortifying of it, and the resigning of it wholly to the pleasure and will of God.

END OF VOL. II.







