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DR. EVANS'S

DISCOURSES

ON THE

CHRISTIAN TEMPER.

;

CHARACTERS OF THIS WORK.

IN the Preface to Dr. WATTS'S sermons in Octavo, the reader will find the following character of this work.—“Since I first published these discourses, “ the world has been furnished with a more compleat “ account of most of these subjects, in that excellent “ treatise called the CHRISTIAN TEMPER, which my “ worthy friend Dr. EVANS hath sent abroad, and “ which is, perhaps, the most compleat summary of “ those duties which make up the Christian life, that “ hath been published in our age.

Dr. JOHN EVANS'S CHRISTIAN TEMPER contains a course of excellent Sermons on that subject.— “ His Style is grave, plain, manly, and nervous—His Heads always distinct and well arranged ; the Scriptures well and properly collected.”

Vide Dr. Williams's Preacher,



PRACTICAL DISCOURSES
CONCERNING THE
CHRISTIAN TEMPER.
BEING
THIRTY-EIGHT SERMONS
UPON THE
PRINCIPAL HEADS OF PRACTICAL RELIGION.

Designed for the use of Families.

BY JOHN EVANS, D. D.

TO WHICH IS NOW PREFIXED,
A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF THE
AUTHOR,

BY JOHN ERSKINE, D. D.
ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF EDINBURGH.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

London:

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TO

THE CONGREGATION

WHICH

USUALLY ATTENDS UPON MY MINISTRY.

THE following Discourses, which have been the employment of several months in the pulpit, are now made public, with an eye principally to the service of you and your families; whose best interests your Minister hath the strongest obligations to consult, not only from special relation, but in gratitude for the long experience he has had of your candour and affection, which hath never been interrupted in the course of so many years.

The subject of these sermons is of the greatest and most general importance, *the spirit of Christianity*; to which all the doctrines of our religion are designed to form us, and without which the external practice of our duty is in God's account no better than a dead carcase.

For Christianity is neither a mere speculative science, intended only for the information or entertainment of the mind ; nor yet a flat system of precepts, without substantial and vital principles to support them : But it proposes many divine truths and doctrines to our faith, on purpose to influence and engage in the most forcible manner to a correspondent practice. And where it meets with a proper entertainment, it is neither so inward a thing, as to be altogether invisible ; nor yet such a mere outside, as leaves the heart and the life at variance, or recommends a man to his fellow-creatures, while he is utterly unacceptable to the heart-searching God : But the kingdom of God is first set up within us, and subjects the thoughts, the will, and affections to the obedience of Christ ; and so produces out of the abundance of the heart the natural and visible fruits of Christian practice.

A gospel-ministry is intended to represent faith and practice in connection. And there are two ways of prosecuting that design : When any doctrine of the gospel is the argument, to bring it down to practice by shewing the reasonable influence which it ought to have upon one or another virtue : Or when the dispositions and duties of a Christian are more directly insisted upon, to recommend them from Christian motives.

The Discourses, now offered to your perusal, are drawn up with the latter view : Wherein I have endeavoured to select those characters and ingredients of the Christian temper, which I apprehend to be of principal weight, and of the most frequent and extensive use in the course of our obedience. In the review, they are cast into that method and order which I thought most natural, and likely to be of the greatest service. The contents of the volume will shew

you the plan of the whole design at one view. I have taken the liberty of making such additions or other alterations, in transcribing them for the press, as appeared to me most conducive to serve the ends of practical religion.

They are designedly accommodated to the use of families, especially on the Lord's day evenings. For that purpose I have endeavoured, that they might not exceed in length; that in most of them a particular subject might be finished in a single discourse; or where that rule could not be well observed, that the matter might be so divided, as to make each sermon as entire and independent as possible.

If you shall think fit to make use of them in that way, I would hope that by the blessing of God the labour would not be in vain to your children and servants; and that at least it may be so far useful to yourselves, as to bring to remembrance the most necessary directions for Christian conduct, though ye know them, and be established in them.

I am persuaded upon a long knowledge of many of you, that I have your concurrence in hearty wishes, that the zeal of all good Christians might be chiefly spent about the unquestionable points of vital religion: that eager and unedifying contentions among them who hold the head, might give place to a holy ardour for promoting love and good works in themselves and others; and that the faith once delivered to the saints might be employed as a weapon in the Christian warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil, rather than be made the occasion of doubtful disputations, or of angry contests among brethren.

I have nothing to add, but my fervent prayers to God, that your love may abound yet more in knowledge, and in all judgment ; that ye may approve things that are excellent ; that ye may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. And it is my earnest desire of you, my brethren, that you will continue daily to pray for us who labour among you in the word and doctrine, that we may obtain mercy to be faithful and successful.

I am

Your affectionate Servant,

JOHN EVANS.

PRESCOT-STREET,
April 3d, 1723,

BRIEF ACCOUNT

OF

JOHN EVANS, D. D.

DR EVANS' SERMONS on the **CHRISTIAN TEMPER** have passed through so many editions, and have been so warmly recommended by clergymen of different denominations, and attached to very opposite religious systems, that the following short account of the excellent Author may perhaps be acceptable to many. In drawing it up, I have been chiefly indebted to Dr William Harris' Funeral Discourses, the Biographical Dictionary, London, 1798, Dr Toulmin's edition of Neal's History of the Puritans, Mr Samuel Palmer's Nonconformist's Memorial, (of which excellent work a much improved and enlarged edition is publishing in 3 vols.) and a Letter with which Mr Palmer kindly favoured me in answer to some querries I had sent him.—It is rather unaccountable, that not only Dr Campbell's edition of the Biographia Britannica, but even the new edition, though carried on by Dissenters, should not have honoured the Doctor with an article, though the last has thus honoured a pretended conjuror of the same name.

DR JOHN EVANS descended from a race of ministers, excepting one interruption, quite up to the Reformation. His great-grandfather, and his grandfather, were successively Rec-

tors of Penegus in Montgomeryshire. His father, Mr John Evans, of Baliol College, Oxford, was ordained Presbyter by Dr Manwaring, Bishop of St David's, 1648, but soon after altered his sentiments about conformity; on which occasion some papers passed betwixt him and his father, who was zealous for the hierarchy.—He was ejected from Oswastry in Salop by the Bartholomew Act, which reduced him and his family to such straits, that at one time he was forced to sell a considerable part of a large library for present maintenance. He was chosen pastor of a congregational church at Wrexham in Denbighshire, 1668. About 1681, the Bishop of the diocese earnestly pressed him to conform, and offered him a good living; but, on his refusal, persecuted him with severity. The hardships he suffered, and the frequent night journeys he was obliged to take, probably hastened that weakness, which laid him aside from public service for some time before his death in 1700.—He was esteemed a learned man, a serious and exemplary Christian, and a laborious and judicious minister.

His son John was born at Wrexham, 1679. His education for the ministry commenced at a Dissenting Academy, under Mr Thomas Rowe of London, where Dr Hart, afterwards Archbishop of Tuam, Mr Hughes the poet, Dr Isaac Watts, Mr Henry Grove, and other eminent men, were also educated. Thence he removed to the Academy of Mr Richard Frankland, at Rothmill, in Yorkshire. He enjoyed considerable advantages under both these tutors, and made great proficiency in several branches of useful literature. When his education was finished, he lived some time in the religious and agreeable family of Mrs Hant, of Boreaton, in Shropshire, and well improved the retirement, leisure, and conveniences for study and devotion, which he there enjoyed. Among other books, he read over entirely Poole's *Synopsis Criticorum*, which laid the foundation for his thoroughly understanding and properly applying the sacred oracles, and perused and made judicious extracts from the fathers of the three first centuries, which he afterwards found useful.—In 1704 he was

ordained a minister at Wrexham. Having declined an invitation to Dublin, he removed to London to assist the celebrated Dr Daniel Williams, pastor to a congregation in Strand Alley, Bishopsgate-street, which afterwards removed to New Bondstreet, Petty France. He maintained an endeared friendship with Dr Williams, notwithstanding the disparity of their years, and, in some matters, their different sentiments. After some years, at the Doctor's desire, he was made co-pastor with him, and succeeded him at his death, 1716. On taking the whole pastoral charge of the congregation, he employed a week in solemn retirement, and extraordinary devotional exercises.—I am well informed, that when he first came to London, in an early period of his life, he meant to have united with the Independents; but the rigidity of some of their ministers occasioned his joining the Presbyterians.

He discharged his duty as a pastor with great diligence and reputation. His prayers and labours were not in vain. God blessed his ministry to the good of many both old and young; and of this some instances were very singular and remarkable.

Many years before his death, he formed a design of writing a history of Nonconformity, from the beginning of the Reformation, to the times of the civil war. At great expense he procured from all quarters a vast variety of proper materials, perused an incredible number of books upon that subject, and filled several quires of paper with proper extracts and references under each year. At length he began to transcribe and finish the work, and has left fairly written about a sixth part of what he intended. His pastoral duty in a large congregation, the many public affairs in which his sagacity, prudence, and application, occasioned his being consulted; various disappointments and troubles in his private concerns, and the decay of his health, prevented in the later years of his life, that close attention which the nature of the work required, so that it was left unfinished. Happily, however, the diligent and judicious Mr Daniel Neal, who had intended to begin a history of the Puritans at the period where Dr Evans was to have left

off, enlarged his plan in consequence of the Doctor's death, so as to include their earlier history; though I think it probable, from the preface to his first volume, that he had not seen Dr Evans' papers. Dr Joshua Toulmin has lately published a new edition of Neal's history, with considerable additions, and encouraged us to hope for his continuation of that work from the Revolution.

Many of the friends of religion anxiously wish that Mr Palmer may live to publish the lives of the early Nonconformists; being deeply sensible how much such striking examples of holy conversation and godliness are calculated to edify.

I have heard, but cannot recollect from whom, that Dr Evans was a writer in the Occasional Paper, which was published in three volumes, 1716-18. In 1719 he was engaged in a controversy with the learned Mr John Cumming, on the importance of scripture consequences, and the propriety of subscription to confessions of faith; and it was generally allowed, even by such who did not espouse his side of the question, that he managed the debate with ability and candour. He published many sermons upon various occasions. A few of these, for the use of young people, have been collected in a small volume, and passed through three or four editions. They are, however, less generally known than they deserve. If they should be reprinted, either here or at London, it were well that some other of his sermons to young people, his sermon on occasion of the plague in France, &c. were subjoined.

All I have learned of Dr Evans' family, is, that he was married to a daughter of Mr John Quick, one of the ejected ministers, author of *Synodicon in Gallia Reformata*, of whom there is an account in Mr Palmer's *Nonconformist's Memorial*.

Excellencies were combined and conspicuous in Dr Evans, whose union or lustre, peculiarities in constitution, natural temper, education, and line of life, often prevent or obscure. His

fervent piety was sullied with no tincture of enthusiasm. His warmth of friendship did not blind or bias him, in matters of conscience. With meekness he endeavoured to instruct and convince such who opposed the fundamental articles of our holy religion, whose truth and importance he firmly believed. Zealous for what he accounted the cause of truth, and of civil and religious liberty; he honoured and esteemed good men, whose sentiments on some of these subjects were the reverse of his own. Slander, and ill-grounded, or unnecessary reflections, on men of any party, he abhorred and discouraged. His imagination and readiness of thought were guided and governed by a sound judgment. He so arranged his doctrinal exercises, pursuits of literature, and active duties, that none might be neglected in its proper time and place. Uprightness and integrity led him steadily to pursue the measures which he apprehended just, and conducive to the best interests of mankind: nor would he be turned aside from this, by selfish and interested prospects, or by fear of danger in conducting such measures. He could foresee difficulties, which his sagacity and prudence often suggested the properest plans for surmounting. I pretend not, however, that his character was free of every blemish and defect. The best of mere men, when they dwell on earth, have not already attained and are not already perfect. Perhaps he was more the man of feeling than suited the comfort of his life and the state of his finances. Pain and sickness he bore with manly fortitude and Christian resignation; but he did not support with the same magnanimity, trials, which equally affected others, near and justly dear to him. His worldly circumstances became straitened and embarrassed, from an income not adequate to his necessary expenses, not from extravagance. Many were the friends who could, and gladly would, have relieved him from the difficulties in which he was involved, had not an excessive delicacy hindered his making known to them his case. In the mean time, anxiety so preyed upon his spirits, as to bring on disorders which proved mortal. The benevolent Mr Isaac Toms, who died last year at Hadleigh in Suffolk, above 90 years of age, and who was, when young, a private tutor at Hackney, exerted

himself among his friends in Dr Evans' behalf, and procured him a considerable supply. But the worthy Doctor had received an incurable wound! What need have the most eminent Christians to keep their hearts with all diligence, since the most lovely propensities of human nature when not properly restrained, may have consequences so mournful!

Our author's last illness was a complication of the dropsy and other distempers. From the long continuance of his trouble, from its frequent intervals or relaxations, and from the fervent prayers put up for his recovery, many who knew his worth flattered themselves that the public would derive further blessings from his abilities and labours. But HE, who doth all things wisely and well, had otherwise determined, and the clouds returned after the rain. He told one, who visited him, that he was obliged to the friends who had expressed so great a desire for his life, yet it was not so much his own desire. If he might be continued for further usefulness in the church of Christ, he would be glad to live: if not, it was his earnest wish to finish at present. Burthensome, however, as he felt confinement from active service, and violent as the pain he often suffered, he discovered habitual serenity of mind, and a placid submission to the divine will. When he found himself tolerably easy, he would say, "Thank God for this:" when in exquisite agony of body, "Blessed be God for the peace of my mind,—I must not complain,—God is good,—The will of the Lord be done." Though he had not that full assurance of salvation, and those ravishing joys, with which dying saints are sometimes favoured, he said to one, "I have good hope through grace, and such as I am persuaded shall never make me ashamed." When looking on his body swollen with his distemper, he would often say with pleasure, "This corruptible shall put on incorruption." At one time he remarked with earnestness and tears, "I have reason to be thankful for an early sense of religion and dedication to God. I have endeavoured to order the main part of life as before him, and I have desired to be faithful in the ministry. I am conscious of many failings, both in public and in private life, but

I can rest on the gospel-covenant for mercy. I am fully persuaded of the truth of it, and desire no other salvation." At another time he said, "I die in the faith and hope of the gospel I have preached, and find much comfort in it." When he could not sleep, he spent whole nights in prayer for himself, his family, his friends, and the church of Christ. To an old and intimate friend he observed, that the greatest difficulty he felt in leaving this world, was the thought of parting from the company of his brethren, whom he had always loved, and with whom he had conversed with so much pleasure. While he was yet sensible, some of his last words were, "All is well, all is well." He died in the 51st year of his age, May 23d, 1730, according to Dr Toulmin's account, who probably had better access to be well informed, than the writers of the Biographical Dictionary, who make his age 54, and place his death in 1732.

Readers, quick-sighted in discerning blemishes, but blind to real beauties; object on different grounds to the merit of the book now republished. Some observe, that there are sermons and tracts on several graces and duties, superior to these on the same subjects which it contains. Others complain, that it equals not an Atterbury, or a Blair, in fine and elegant composition; a Shaftsbury, or a Hervey, in picturesque description; a Watts in tender address; a Butler in depth of thought; or a Baxter in speaking to the conscience with pathos and energy. Others desiderate in our author, the evangelical strain, and the improvement for Christian experience and direction, of the fundamental articles of our holy faith, for which they highly esteem a Cruso, a Traill, or a Bragge. I dispute not the premises in these exceptions; but the conclusions drawn from them are illogical. Can our writers point out the book, which gives a fuller, and yet more concise view of the Christian temper and conduct? Is it not desirable, that as the taste of readers, so the style of authors should be different? Ministers ought, indeed, to declare to the people of their charge, the whole counsel of God. But, will not publications bid fair to prove the most extensively useful, when the

authors follow the peculiar bent of their genius, and chiefly confine themselves to subjects which they are best qualified to illustrate and enforce? Let him be the second in accusing and condemning the Doctor's work, who can furnish the world with a better model of plainness and gravity of style, of heads always distinct and well arranged, and of thoughts properly adapted to the point discussed, and thrown close together; and let him be the first who writes a book, in which every excellency of style is equally conspicuous, and where every doctrine is explained and defended, and every duty illustrated and enforced, in a manner perfectly convincing and unexceptionable, so that no son of slander shall be able to make him an offender, even for one unguarded and incautious word.

JOHN ERSKINE.

Lauriston,
January 22d, 1802.

SERMON I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING WHAT SPIRIT WE ARE OF.

LUKE IX. 55.

But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

THE design of Christianity is to rectify the inward temper of our souls, and so to produce a change in our conversations. All the doctrines of it are revealed with this practical view; as well as the precepts, the promises and the threatenings, which directly carry that aspect. Though we should have the clearest notions of truth, and should seem to be most fully persuaded of the divine original and authority of the gospel; yet, if our faith be a mere speculation in the head, without making us *partakers of a divine nature*, it will neither be honourable to God, nor advantageous to ourselves. It is therefore a matter of the last consequence to us all, to discover, whether we are formed to the Christian temper, or, whether the dispositions of our souls be of a contrary character. I have chosen this admonition of Christ to his disciples, as a foundation for shewing you the importance of this inquiry, *What spirit we are of.*

Our blessed Lord delivers this reproof upon a particular occasion. As he was going up to the passover at Jerusalem, he sent some of his disciples before him, who *went and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him*, ver. 52. to provide some refreshments for him and his followers. But these Samaritans *did not receive him, because his face was, as though he would go up to Jerusalem*, ver. 53. There was an inveterate hatred between the Jews and Samaritans, ever since the Samaritans had set up a temple of their own at mount Gerizzim, and had forsaken the temple and true worship

of God at Jerusalem ; insomuch that they would scarcely have any dealings one with another, John iv. 9. For this reason they would have nothing to do with Christ ; they would not shew him or his followers, even common civility, when they found that they were going up to the temple at Jerusalem. Two of Christ's disciples, James and John, highly resenting this usage, say, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, as Elias did?" ver. 54. Here was an appearance of warm affection to their Master, of a mighty zeal for the true religion, and a seeming regard to a great and good precedent, that of Elijah. He had, by the special appointment of God, forbid some of king Ahaziah's servants to make application to Baulzebub, an idol of the Philistines, on behalf of their master, when he sent them for that purpose. Ahaziah thereupon ordered out a number of soldiers to apprehend the prophet : but when they came, Elijah said to the captain of the company, "If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty," 2 Kings i. 10. And it did so.

The disciples here ask Christ, whether they should not call for the like vengeance from heaven against the Samaritans. We have his answer in the text. "He turned and rebuked them, and said, *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*" This reproof might be designed, either for their not considering the difference between their case and that of Elijah, whose pattern they pretended to copy after ; or for not attending to the different spirit and genius of the dispensation of the Messiah from that of the Old Testament ; or, lastly, for their ignorance of the true frame of their own spirits.

1. Their case was different from that of Elijah, though they pretended to write after his copy ; and this they should have considered. His case was special, and not to be drawn into a common precedent. Before Elijah called for fire from heaven on those who came to seize him, he had, in a public contest between him and the prophets of Baal, called for fire from heaven to consume his sacrifice, which was offered to the true God, and his God, with whom Baal was set up for a competitor ; and fire was sent down accordingly. But after God had wrought that miracle, in vindication of his own honour against Baal, and of the character of Elijah as a true prophet ; these people assaulted him for a message he delivered in the name

of God, and would carry him by force to Samaria, where Jezebel was ready to put him to death. The prophet therefore, no doubt, under the influence of the same prophetic spirit as before, called for fire from heaven upon the messengers who made this presumptuous attempt. The whole transaction was extraordinary, for extraordinary ends, and under an extraordinary divine influence. The disciples would now pretend to imitate this as a pattern, which was never designed for such; nor had they any warrant to expect, that God would answer their call in this matter; and therefore it was presumption in them to attempt the extraordinary things which Elijah did.

Things done by an extraordinary spirit, are not to be drawn into precedents in ordinary cases. How many ridiculous, and even pernicious things have enthusiasts been led into on many occasions, on pretence of imitating the actions of extraordinary men? which would have been effectually prevented, if they had attended to this one rule; that we should not attempt to follow the actions of the greatest or best of men recorded in scripture, farther than it appears, either from plain directions of scripture, or from the nature of the case, that they can and should be imitated.

2. The spirit and genius of the dispensation of the Messiah was very different from that of the Old Testament; and the disciples were to be blamed, that they considered not the better spirit which now became them. As the legal dispensation is called *the spirit of bondage*, and that of the gospel, *the spirit of adoption*, Rom. viii. 15. because in the one God dealt with his church more like servants, and in the other more like sons: so here, when the disciples would have the Samaritans consumed by fire from heaven, as those were upon the application of the ancient prophet; they should have considered, that this was not suitable to the milder dispensation of the gospel. A spirit of rigour and severity was more apparent in the whole Mosaical economy, in the precepts, in the threatenings of temporal evils, during that period of the church, and so in the methods used to punish an indignity offered to a prophet of the Lord. But Christ came to introduce a more spiritual and a milder dispensation, wherein the main severities are reserved to be executed in another world, upon those who shall be found finally incorrigible. He came into the world breathing grace and truth: his doctrine proclaimed God's good will towards

men ; his miracles were miracles of beneficence : and in his example he was meek and lowly. Instead of teaching his disciples such a temper towards enemies, he had already taught them the most exalted charity, to *love their enemies, to bless them that cursed them, to do good to them that hated them, and to pray for them which should despitefully use them and persecute them*, Matt. v. 44. It became his followers rather to be of this evangelical spirit, a forbearing, forgiving, gentle spirit, than to imitate the rigour of Elias. This sense is countenanced by the words which immediately follow : *For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives ; but to save them*, ver. 56. So that we learn from hence,

That a fiery, wrathful spirit, even against men most erroneous in matters of religion, is very opposite to the spirit and genius of the gospel. Christ, after this, prayed for those who not only refused him, but crucified him ; and after his resurrection, ordered his apostles to *begin at Jerusalem*, in making the tenders of his gospel, Luke xxiv. 47. Nor would he have his religion propagated, or his most obstinate enemies suppressed by any methods of external violence. "The servant of the Lord must not strive ; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient : In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance unto the acknowledgement of the truth," 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. This is the spirit prescribed by the gospel to those who would serve the interests of Christ and his truth : those, who use other methods, know not what spirit they are of.

3. They seem to have been ignorant of the true frame and temper of their own spirits, when they made this motion. They would say, like Jehu, *Come see our zeal for the Lord* ; our love to our master, our concern for his honour, our indignation at those who treat him so unworthily. But Christ, who saw what was in man, probably discerned, that there was too much of private revenge and resentment firing them upon this occasion, or at least a defect of charity : and this he might justly blame in them, that they did not more carefully attend to the motions of their own spirits, and so were not sensible what spirit they were of.

This last is the view of the words, in which I propose to consider them, as introductory to several other practical discourses : and accordingly I observe from them,

That it is a very faulty thing in any, and especially in those, who profess to be the disciples of Christ, not to know what spirit they are of.

Upon which observation, I would *first* consider the matter to be known: and then *secondly*, the necessity and importance of this part of knowledge.

I. The matter to be known is a little more particularly to be inquired into. *What spirit we are of.* I will not absolutely confine myself to that particular inquiry about our spirits, the want of which Christ, as has been observed, had occasion to blame in his disciples; but shall take in that, and some other things too, which the words are apt enough to express, and which it will be no small disadvantage to us in our best interests to be unacquainted with. We are much concerned to know these *three* things;

What spirit we are eminently of by natural temper.

What principles and ends govern us in particular motions of our spirits and actions of life. And,

What is the prevailing and predominant disposition of our souls, whether the Christian temper, or that which is opposite to it.

1. What spirit we are eminently of *by natural temper.* Nothing is more obvious than the vast difference of tempers among mankind: and that not only arising from difference of education and of external impressions; which, without doubt, make no small change in the dispositions of men: nor yet owing merely to long habits and customs of vice on the one hand, or the peculiar grace of God, and to eminent holy diligence on the other; which certainly make the greatest distinctions between man and man; but also a difference founded in natural constitution. We may see this in childhood, before the mind is moulded by instruction, or example, or a course of practice; and on the contrary, it is hardly ever extinguished in riper years. Besides the general corruption of nature, apparent in some instance or other in all; some from the very first dawnings of reason discover more than others, either a sour and rugged disposition, or a hastiness of temper, or some such disagreeable bias; which grows up with them to men. And though this may be considerably abated by a good education, and especially is much rectified by the grace of God in good men; yet, where it is

the constitutional bent, it usually finds people more work for care and watchfulness all their days than it does to others. If we turn our view the other way, there is early visible in some an easiness and gentleness of disposition, an inclination to humanity and tenderness, or the like engaging turn of mind.

Now in this sense, it would be the wisdom of every man to know what spirit he is of, to study his own temper, which way that most naturally and readily carries him. For according to the tendencies of our constitution, if we carefully observe them, we may discover, what temptations in the ordinary course of life need most to be provided against, and in what way we are most likely to be useful. Those sins most easily beset men, and are hardest to be overcome, which have constitution strongly on their side: a man may justly esteem them to be eminently *his own iniquity*. And as every sort of natural temper has its particular disadvantages and dangers; so no sort is without some advantages, which, if carefully attended to and improved, may contribute to our serviceableness in life. Those of a sanguine make, are more exposed to the temptations of levity and sensuality, and therefore have most occasion to be there on their guard; but then they are better prepared for a cheerful activity in doing good, if they be right set. The heavy and phlegmatic, as they are more prone to indulge sloth and idleness, so, if they get over this temptation, they can with greater ease bear close and long application, than those of more quick and active spirits. The dark and the melancholy temper lays men open to unreasonable fears and despondencies, to malice and censoriousness; if the devil and a corrupt heart have the government of it; but under the direction of grace, it gives men a peculiar advantage for seriousness. The sweet and gentle disposition, as it exposes to more hazard from the impressions of ill company and seducing sinners; so it gives a truly good man no small advantage, above his neighbours, for recommending religion to those with whom he converses: such a man is well heard by every body. The knowledge then of our own spirits in this respect, as to the predominant natural temper, to which the body disposes, is well worth our cultivating.

2. What particular principles and ends govern us, in the particular motions of our spirits and actions of life: whether we act from a good or a bad principle, and whether the ends we propose to ourselves be right. The moral nature of actions in

the sight of God principally depends upon this. An unlawful action indeed will not be justified by a man's having a good end in it, as long as he hath sufficient opportunity to know that it is forbidden; for we must not *do evil that good may come*, Rom. iii. 8. Yet an action, ever so good, for the matter of it, loses all its value in God's account, who *searches the heart and tries the reins*, if it proceed from a bad principle, or is intended to serve a sinful or unworthy purpose. The same outward act may proceed from very different and contrary springs; of which the case in the text is an instance. A seeming expression of love to Christ, of zeal for the true religion, may be animated by no better principle than unchristian resentment, and animosity, and revenge, or at least there may be such a mixture of this bad principle with a better, as spoils the performance. Christ intimates, that men may fast and pray, and give alms, and all upon so low a view, as merely *to be seen of men*; but then plainly tells us, that they will lose their reward from God, Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16. And the apostle intimates it to be possible for a man to bestow *all his goods to feed the poor*, (the greatest instance in outward appearance of love to men) and to *give his body to be burned*, that is, as a martyr, the highest proof, one would think of love to God; and yet to have no charity, to be animated to such glaring actions by no true principle, either of love to God or man, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Solomon tells us, Prov. xxi. 27. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination," that is, God will not accept the sacrifices, the appearances of religious regard to him, that are offered up by a man who resolvedly goes on in a sinful course; he adds, "How much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?" How much more abominable must his sacrifice be, when that itself is profaned and poisoned by a vicious intention? when the all-seeing God, suppose, knows that a man offers it, either only to quiet conscience in other evil practices, or to enable him the more easily to impose upon his neighbour, by wearing the mask of religion? it is therefore a matter of the utmost consequence, that we take heed to our spirit in every action we perform, Mal. ii. 16. That we "keep our heart with all diligence," Prov. iv. 23. That we be well assured that the several deliberate steps we take, be agreeable to the dictates of a good spirit; and that that which

is indisputably good in itself be done upon right principles, and for right ends ; and so we may know what spirit we are of.

3. What is the prevailing and predominant disposition of our souls ; whether the Christian temper, or that which is opposite to it. The last inquiry is necessary to our passing a due judgment upon *particular actions*, and this to determine our state. The best natural temper is still but depraved nature, and the worst, if rectified by grace is in the way of cure, and that cure will be more and more advanced, till it arrive at the perfection of the spirits of just men above. Every man, then, is most highly concerned to know, what that spirit is which makes his character ; whether a holy and a heavenly temper has the ascendant in him, or a sinful and earthly mind ; or in other words, whether he is led by the Holy Spirit of God, as true Christians are, Rom. viii. 9, 14. or “by the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience,” Eph. ii. 2. These amount to the same thing ; for wherever there is a holy bent and turn of soul, the scripture teaches us to ascribe it to the gracious agency of the Spirit of God ; and on the other hand, all who are under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have their own spirits prevailingly recovered to the Christian temper. We are therefore concerned carefully to search the word of God, for the description given there of the Christian temper, and of that which is opposite to it ; and then diligently to prove our own selves as the apostle directs, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. that we may discern which of these spirits we are of. The scripture sometimes represents these different dispositions by way of summary. We have a very comprehensive one in Gal. v. 19—23. “The works of the flesh are manifest ; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” And what follows, ver. 24. “crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts.” So St Peter gives us a specimen what it is to be partakers of a divine nature ; namely, to partake of “Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity,” in which therefore he presses Christians to improve, 2 Pet. i. 4—7. But as these summaries are not designed to reckon up all the branches ; so we must consider the several graces mentioned in various parts of

scripture, as going to make up the Christian spirit. I intend to assist you in this view, by a distinct consideration of the descriptions of a good spirit given in scripture, either in its general nature or particular branches. It will lie upon you to prove your own selves as we go along, that you may behold your true face in the glass of the gospel. At present I go on to shew,

II. The usefulness and necessity of knowing what spirit we are of.

1. *As we are reasonable creatures*, the knowledge of ourselves is the most near and immediate concern we have. *Nosce teipsum, Know thyself*, was the celebrated oracle of old among the heathens; and *know ye not your own selves?* is a very strong expostulation of the apostle with Christians, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. No other part of knowledge for certain can be of such moment to us, as that which relates to ourselves; the most careful inquiries about other things if this be neglected, are no better than a busy idleness; or an application to that which though it may find our minds full employment, yet is nothing to our purpose. A man who can readily tell you the situation of places; and the state of things in distant lands, while he is a stranger to the nature, the history and the interests of his native country, would justly be thought to have ill employed his pains; or he who busies himself in the affairs of other men, and at the same time neglects his own. He is guilty of equal folly who takes pains to come at the knowledge of things foreign to him, but contentedly remains ignorant of himself. And no part of the knowledge of ourselves is so necessary as the knowledge of our spirits, which are the principal part of ourselves. The power of reflection is laid in our natures for this very purpose, that we should look into ourselves; and it should immediately, in the use of it, turn upon ourselves; for without self acquaintance, it is given us in vain.

2. *As we are professed Christians*, nothing deserves to have so much stress laid upon it.

It is represented as the very design of the gospel, beyond the former legal dispensation, to lead men to "serve God in newness of the spirit," or with a new spirit, Rom. vii. 6. Our great master began his public ministration, when he entered upon his prophetic office, with pronouncing blessedness principally to a

new and holy temper of soul. So the strain of his beatitudes runs in Mat. v. to *the poor in spirit* ; to *them that mourn* ; to *the meek* ; to such as *hunger and thirst after righteousness* ; to *the pure in heart* : plainly signifying at his setting out, the genius of his religion, to reach the spirits of men, and in that respect to make his disciples more excellent than their neighbours.

3. *As we aim at the favour of God*, this is the thing principally to be regarded by us, because it is principally regarded by God. Men cannot reach the hearts of their fellow-creatures ; but must judge only according to outward appearance. But God sees deeper ; and therefore the fairest outside, without a right temper of soul, cannot possibly meet with the divine acceptance. “ He desires truth in the inward parts,” Psal. li. 6. The hidden man of the heart, when that is godlike, is in the sight of God of great price, 1 Pet. iii. 4. And if our heart be removed far from him, though we should “ draw near to him with our mouth, and with our lips honour him ;” this will be of little account with God, Isa. xxix. 13. The apostle speaking directly to the Jews, who boasted of a peculiar relation to God, declares the same thing in language suited to them, but equally fit for our admonition, Rom. ii. 28, 29. “ He is not a Jew (not entitled to the special favour of God, as the Jews thought themselves to be) who is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision (such as shall avail to men’s partaking of the righteousness which is by faith) that is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly ; (who is in his inward temper, what one of the peculiar people of God should be) and circumcision (that which will turn to a saving account) is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men but of God.

4. *As we are obliged to a holy life*, it is necessary there should be a care of the inward temper, which is the principle of the other. “ Keep the heart ; for out of it are the issues of life,” or, of the life, Prov. iv. 23. As the heart is, so the life is like to be. To this purpose our Saviour speaks, Matth. xii. 33—35. “ Either make the tree good, and his fruit good ; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt ; for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things ? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things ; and an evil man out of the

evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things." As the most regular conversation and commendable actions, without a good heart to support and animate them, are in truth but vile hypocrisy, and a false disguise; so, while such an outward appearance of goodness is maintained, it must all be an unnatural and unpleasant force upon a man, and for that reason cannot be expected to last long.

5. *As ever we would secure inward peace and tranquillity of mind*, we should carefully attend to the tempers of our souls. A mind under the government of passion and appetite, has many springs of uneasiness and disquiet within itself: according to the elegant description of the prophet, Isa. lvii. 20. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." If they have nothing to trouble them from without, their own distempered spirits will not suffer them to be at rest. And if we consider inward peace farther, as resulting from reflection, and the approbation of conscience; there can be no room for it, without an acquaintance with our own spirits. We cannot justly approve a particular action, unless we are conscious to ourselves, that we were governed in it by good motives, as well as that it was good for the matter of it; nor can we entertain a safe hope of eternity, without being able to discern a congruity of temper to the happiness in reversion. "But let every man prove his own work, then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another," Gal. vi. 4.

6. *As we are in an ensnaring world*, we are concerned to know the bent of our souls. When we know the *sins which most easily beset us*, whether pride, or passion, or sensuality, or covetousness; we see, where our principal and most constant guard is necessary; what irregular inclination we should most set ourselves to mortify, where Satan is most like to gain an advantage over us. The more ignorant we are of our weak part, the more likely he is to prevail; for we have given that watchful enemy too many opportunities to discern this, though for want of attention we should remain ignorant of it ourselves. And indeed the general knowledge of the imperfection of our own hearts, of their instability, their constant proneness to one evil or other, is of great consequence to us in the Christian life; that we may not be confident in ourselves, but may maintain a constant dependence on divine grace to

keep us from falling, which is absolutely necessary to our safety: And God will probably take some way to make us sensible that it is so, if we forget it; as he “left Hezekiah to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart,” 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

7. *As ever we would attend on God's ordinances, and perform religious exercises with advantage,* it is necessary we should know the spirit we are of. For want of this, those instructions, which are most apposite to the case of men, lose their effect. Ill men escape conviction, and lose the benefit of the aptest means for their everlasting welfare, because they know not themselves. Christ is not entertained by them, because they see not their need of him: “For the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick,” Luke v. 31. As long as the Laodiceans continued to flatter themselves that they were rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, and knew not that they were wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; so long Christ's counsel would be little regarded by them, when he calls upon them, “to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they might be rich; and white raiment, that they might be clothed,” &c. Rev. iii. 17, 18. And sometimes even good men deny themselves the comfort offered them for want of a fuller acquaintance at home. This occasions a wrong application of the word of God, either to encourage presumption, or unreasonably to increase despondencies. The same self-ignorance, carried into our prayers or praises, or confessions, must prevent their being performed with understanding. How can we ask of God the blessings most proper for us, unless we are sensible of our present spiritual wants? How should we praise God in a right manner for spiritual benefits received, unless we know what he has done for our souls; or manage our confessions suitably to our own case, unless upon a search into our spirits we discern what is amiss there?

Let us all then be persuaded to make this our concern and business, to know what spirit we are of. This must decide the great question, whether we are in a state of acceptance with God, and whether we are tending towards heaven or hell? Here begins the great discrimination between good and bad men through the world, whether the disposition of their souls be prevailingly good or bad, Christian or unchristian. And yet,

though it be a matter of the greatest importance, men are apt to be mistaken in the case; to *think themselves to be something when they are nothing*, or at least to *think of themselves above what they ought to think*. But think a little, how prejudicial a mistake here must be; and that whether your state be good or bad.

If you are still in a state of sin, and alienated from God, you deceive yourselves with vain hopes, which must fail you. You judge differently of yourselves from what God does; and what must that issue in at last but dreadful disappointment, if you should come to see your mistake too late to rectify it? And by this self-flattery, you are prevailed upon to neglect the proper season, the present one, for rectifying that which is amiss. It is impossible, that at any time you should come to yourselves, and have your state made safe, without beginning here, at the knowledge of your spirits.

On the other hand, if your state should now be good, you are enemies to your own comfort, in neglecting the strictest scrutiny of yourselves; for that would give you a more satisfactory view of your sincerity, and scatter the doubts, which must remain, till you discern distinctly the work of God in your hearts. And you must greatly obstruct an improvement and progress in the divine life; while for want of a fuller acquaintance with yourselves, you are insensible of many wants which still need to be supplied, and of many infirmities to be outgrown.

I will close this discourse with the mention of *three* directions.

1. Be not afraid to *know the plague of your own heart*; the worst of your case, and whatever is amiss in your spirits. Our Saviour observes, John iii. 20. "That every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." To be averse to bring ourselves to the light, is at once a very bad symptom, and of dangerous tendency. It must either absolutely shut us up in a fatal self-ignorance, or prevent our being impartial in our searches.

2. Often take a view of yourselves in the glass of the gospel. A good and a bad spirit are very fully and plainly distinguished there. Bring your own tempers to the test by that rule. Do this with the utmost seriousness as under the eye of

God: and frequently review the matter, lest you should have committed a mistake.

3. Accompany all your rational inquiries with earnest prayer to God, that he would search and try you, and enable you by the grace of his holy Spirit to discern the true state of your own case. The apostle says in another case, 1 Cor. ii. 11. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." So I may say, in this case; no other man is conscious of what passes within our own spirits but ourselves; and therefore the review of that must be our own province; the Spirit of God on the other hand, who best knew the mind of God, has drawn the lineaments of that spirit and temper, which is truly pleasing to God in scripture. But in comparing these two, we need his gracious agency, in concurrence with the actings of our own spirits. That will produce the fullest satisfaction, when he "witnesseth with our spirits, that we are the children of God," Rom. viii. 16.

SERMON II.

THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT, A NEW SPIRIT.

EPH. iv. 23.

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

THE apostle had exhorted these Ephesians, in ver. 17. “not to walk as other Gentiles walked,” who had not embraced Christianity. He describes their sad case to the end of ver. 19. And expresses his better hope of those to whom he wrote, who had known and professed the Christian doctrine, ver. 20, 21. “But ye have not so learned Christ: If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.” Your temper and character is become quite of another kind from that of other Gentiles, and from that which was once your own in the days of your ignorance; if you have been well acquainted with the design of Christianity, and have heartily embraced it with that view.

Now what is the great design and scope of Christianity, which all, who hear of it, should learn; and which all who have been taught by Christ, as the truth is in Jesus, do learn? An account of that follows in the three next verses. It is, “to put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” ver. 22. It is to abandon the old corrupt practices, to which you were accustomed by the governing influence of depraved nature, while you pursued its irregular inclinations and lusts: “And to be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and thereupon to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,” ver. 23, 24.

That which I propose now to consider and to begin with, as the *first* general view of the Christian spirit is, That it is a new temper of mind. And the text leads us to observe,

That those who have learned Christ to good purpose, are renewed in the spirit of their minds.

The right disposition of the soul is represented both in the Old and New Testament by this character. The psalmist prays, that "a right spirit might be renewed within him," Psal. li. 10. So God expresses his promises of grace by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xi. 19. "I will put a new spirit within you." And chap. xxxvi. 26. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Divine calls to repentance, are expressed in the same language, Ezek. xviii. 31. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit." In the same manner the gospel itself speaks, 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new." We are said to be "delivered from the law, that we might serve in newness of the spirit," Rom. vii. 6. So the apostle's exhortation runs, Rom. xii. 2. "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind." Do not imitate the sinful customs of the world, but see there be a change in the temper of your mind, as a foundation for better practice. So in this context, we read of *the old and the new man*. This is therefore a frequent and familiar representation, which the scripture gives of the good disposition of the soul, that it is new.

I need not tell you, that this does not signify a change of our faculties themselves, as if in a strict and literal sense, our souls were to be made anew. But that which is intended, is the introducing of new and holy qualities, in opposition to the sinful disorders which once prevailed in them by the bias of corrupt nature and evil custom; to the *old leaven*, with which they were once deeply tinged. The main seat of these disorders is in the soul or mind; and therefore, there the cure and change is to begin, and there the greatest alteration is made; though wherever this inward change is genuine, it will descend in its influence and effects to the outward conversation. Conversation is principally a new modelling of the soul,

or a renovation of the spirit of the mind ; the rest will follow upon that.

In representing this alteration, it may be proper, *first*, 'To caution you against resting in some changes, which come not up to the renewing of the mind. And *secondly*, 'To give a more particular view of this renovation.

I. THERE are some changes in men which come not up to the renewed spirit, and yet are too often and too easily rested in.

1. The assuming of a new name and profession, is a very different thing from a saving change in the temper of the mind. I would charitably hope, that among the several denominations of Christians there are some truly renewed : but there is no doubt but we may be of any profession, and yet be unrenewed. We may "have a name to live, and yet be dead," Rev. iii. 1. Christianity would have been a very mean thing, and not worth all the solemn credentials, with which God introduced it into the world, if all the intention of it had been to separate a people from others by a new name, how great and excellent soever that name might be. To be called Heathens, or Jews, or Christians, if that were all, would neither be worthy of God to exert himself for, nor of a reasonable creature to take any great pleasure in. And much less can it be of any value, merely to herd one's self under any of the distinguishing names known among Christians. What signifies it what name we bear, if we have not a correspondent nature ? Christianity is a real, a distinguishing character of souls ; and if men bear not the proper character in the inward man, it would be more becoming to bear any other name than that of a Christian. I should not have mentioned this, but that I doubt it is a common delusion. People value themselves upon their wearing the Christian name, instead of that of Pagan, or Jew, or Mahometan ; or upon being stiled Papists or Protestants ; or upon their attaching themselves to one or another noted party, into which these are subdivided, and upon such a new appellation, they are too ready to imagine, that they are new men. Whereas we may go the round of all professions, and still have the old nature remaining in full force.

2. A bare restraint upon the corrupt spirit and temper, will not come up to this renovation, though the one may some-

times be mistaken for the other. The light of nature may possess conscience against many evils ; or a sober education lay such a bridle upon the corrupt inclination, as will keep it in for a season : the fear of punishment, or of shame and reproach, may suppress the outward criminal act, while the heart is full of ravening and wickedness. Or God in his providence may divert a temptation, or withhold the opportunity, which would try the inclination to an ill thing ; and in such a situation a man may imagine himself to abhor a sin, to which upon a proper temptation he plainly shews that he has no aversion : as Hazael said to the prophet, when he foretold the savage cruelty he would exercise upon Israel, 2 Kings viii. 13. “What ! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing ?” We read of some who had “escaped the pollutions that are in the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : who had so far entertained and been influenced by Christianity, that they were visibly reformed ; but this was not a saving change, for they “were again entangled therein, and overcome,” 2 Pet. ii. 20. And indeed that is commonly the issue of bare restraints without a new principle : the restraint is taken off, or the inclination grows too strong for it, and then men “return like the dog to his vomit.” Therefore, though it is a plain sign of an unrenewed mind, if a man live in any course of gross sin ; yet it is not safe to conclude merely from restraints, that a man is truly renewed.

3. A partial change in the temper itself will not amount to such a renovation, as makes a true Christian. Indeed in one sense the change is but partial in any in this life ; there will be remains of disorder in all the powers of the soul, so as to exclude a pretence to absolute perfection. But in another sense, the true Christian is universally renewed ; every power and faculty shares in the alteration ; and there is a prevailing inclination to all the branches of goodness and duty, without a stated exception against any, or in favour of any sin, as far as known. The apostle is express in this, 2 Cor. v. 17. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ;—all things are become new.”

It is not enough to have the mind filled with sound knowledge and useful notions, nor barely to give a dead assent to the doctrines of the gospel, unless we believe with the heart, and the will and affections be brought under the power of those truths : and even here, there may be some alteration, and yet

a man not be renewed. Balaam had strong desires to “die the death of the righteous,” but was still “alienated from the life of God.” Saul made some purposes of amendment, but they were faint and fading. Cain was terrified in his conscience for sin, and yet not a true penitent; and Judas also; notwithstanding which he has gone to his own place. A very bad people “sought God daily, and delighted to know his ways; they asked of him the ordinances of justice, they took delight in approaching to God,” Isa. lviii. 2. And those represented by the emblem of “the stony ground, hear the word of God, and with joy receive it,” but fall short of the character of true Christians, Matt. xiii. 20, 21. Such instances as these plainly shew, that the affections may receive a new turn, and yet leave a man far short of a saving change.

Nor is it sufficient, that we should find ourselves disposed to some parts of goodness, while our hearts are utterly averse to others which are equally plain. “The grace of God teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in the world,” Tit. ii. 12. And where the gospel has effect to renew the spirit of the mind, there is a disposition to all these; to the government of our appetites and passions, to all social virtues, and to the duties which we owe more immediately to God. And therefore, though we should be of a courteous, peaceable and kind temper towards men; though we should be inclined to practise justice, liberality, truth and honesty in our transactions with them, and to temperance and chastity in our personal conduct; though these are excellent branches of the Christian spirit: yet if there be not a right temper towards God also, if the fear and love of God are not the ruling principles of the soul there is an essential defect in the Christian spirit. And the contrary will equally hold true; whatever regard we seem disposed to pay to God, it cannot proceed from a right principle, unless our souls are formed also to the love and exercise of all moral and social virtues, which are evidently required from us by the same authority. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all, Jam. ii. 10. As if he had said, ‘Put the case, that a man should resolve upon obedience to all the commands of God, except one, which he desires to be excused from observing, though he knows it to be a command of God as well as the rest;

such a man is guilty of all ; that is, he will in such a case be as truly chargeable with disowning and insulting the authority of the lawgiver, as if he refused obedience to the rest ; and his seeming willingness to comply with the rest, cannot be a religious submission to the authority of God, but for some meaner reason.' For as the apostle goes on, ver. 11. " He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill." And therefore if a man hates the one out of a simple and sincere regard to God, he will for the same reason abhor the other also.

II. I proceed to give a more particular view of this *renovation* in some principal acts of the mind.

1. The mind comes to have different apprehensions of things ; such as it had not before. The new creation, as hath been often observed, begins with light, as the old is represented to do. When Paul was sent to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, the divine mission he received is described to be on this design, " to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and so from the power of Satan unto God," Acts xxvi. 18. And the actual efficacy of his preaching upon some of those Gentiles, he thus expresses, Eph. v. 8. " Ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord." At conversion the mind comes out of darkness. I say not, that a man hath always at such a time some discovery made to his mind of a new truth, with which he was altogether unacquainted before : Sometimes that may be the case, when persons bred up in gross ignorance, are providentially brought to their first knowledge of the truth, and receive serious impressions from it at the same time. But it is not always so ; light may begin to be saving to a man, though there be not one new truth added to the stock of his former notions : and yet he may justly be said to have new apprehensions, because he sees the same things in another, a stronger and more convincing light ; his mind is fixed in more attention to them, they appear in fuller evidence ; and so the difference between former and present impression from them, is like that made by hearsay, and that which is founded upon sight. When apprehensions of divine things become thus lively and powerful, those counter apprehensions, by which the soul was kept before in bondage to sin, are dispelled ; or, at least, the influences of light prevails. Formerly a man fancied pleasure or advantage in sin ; and this persuasion was stronger and more in his eye, than any ap-

prehensions of its evil and danger : but now he is fully convinced, that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God. The world and its enjoyments once glared in his imagination ; now he is firmly persuaded, that they are so vain as to be unfit for his portion. He thought well of himself ; but now he sees, that he is “ poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked ;” Light bearing in, and the mind being fixed in attention, he discerns the great corruption of his heart, and the badness of the principles and ends which governed him in the appearances of goodness, upon which he valued himself before. And so the excellency and suitableness of Christ, in all his offices, and the necessity of real, inward holiness, appear in quite another manner to his soul than hitherto. And hereupon,

2. The practical judgment is altered. This light, shining with clearness and strength into the mind, unsettles and changes the whole practical judgment, by which a man suffered himself to be governed before, in the matters of his soul : He judges those truths of religion to be real, which once had no more force with him than doubtful conclusions ; and accordingly he cannot satisfy himself any longer barely not to disbelieve them, but gives a firm and lively assent to them. It may be heretofore he could not withhold a fluctuating, occasional assent to the evil of sin, and the vanity of the world, when he was forced to employ a thought about them ; but in truth his ordinary practical judgment was much stronger the other way : now he knows and feels the bitterness of sin, and that all the world cannot quiet conscience, or satisfy his desires, when he is become thoroughly awake : he sees those things to be most valuable, in which once he saw no comeliness, or none in comparison with other things ; for the scales are turned ; as the apostle says of himself, Phil. iii. 7. “ What things were gain to me, those have I counted loss for Christ.” The different view he hath of his own case, alters his value for the remedy : now he values a Saviour above all the world, as a man in miserable captivity would value a redeemer, or as a dying malefactor would esteem a pardon. Formerly he preferred those things, which would promote the interest of the body, or the gratification of the flesh ; and reckoned those the worst evils, which touched him in his bodily ease or pleasure, or worldly reputation ; but his estimate of things is now measured most by

the relation they bear to the interests of his soul. Instead of valuing most a day of diversion, or of worldly gain ; “ a day in God’s courts is better than a thousand elsewhere,” Psal. lxxxiv. 10. And he esteems the reproach of Christ, reproach with Christ, more than all the treasures of Egypt, Heb. xi. 26.

3. A new turn is given to the reasoning faculty, and a new use made of it. When the word of God is *mighty, it casts down imaginations* ; so we render the original word, 2 Cor. x. 5. It properly signifies *reasonings*. Not that the faculty itself is altered ; or that when men begin to be religious, they lay aside reasoning : then in truth they act with the highest reason ; they reason most justly and most worthy of their natures. But now the wrong bias, which was upon the reasoning faculty, from old prejudices and headstrong inclinations, is in a good measure taken off ; so that, instead of its being pressed at all adventures into the service of sin, it is employed a better way, and concludes with more truth and impartiality. The unrenewed mind is ready to catch at any plausible pretence, in favour of what is loved and liked ; and to take advantage even from the plainest truths of the gospel, which in their just consequence have the greatest influence upon holiness, to make conscience easier in sin. But when the soul begins to be released from its entanglements, the reasoning will be in a very different strain. The gospel proclaims these glad tidings, that “ where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,” Rom. v. 20. A presumptuous sinner is ready to draw this rash conclusion from it, “ Let us continue in sin that grace may abound,” Rom. vi. 1. “ God forbid,” says the enlightened mind, “ the grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts,” Tit. ii. 11, 12. “ The goodness of God leadeth to repentance,” Rom. ii. 4. Suppose this principle under consideration, “ that Christ Jesus came into the world to save even the chief of sinners :” The one infers some hope from this, though he should still go on in the way of his evil heart : the other considers Christ’s design, that he came to “ save us from our sins,” Matt. i. 21. and therefore infers his own obligation to “ live no longer the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God,” 1 Pet. iv. 2. When a resolved sinner meets with such a declaration as that, “ Many will seek

to enter in at the strait gate, and shall not be able," he may rashly collect that from it, which makes him more desperate in his rebellion : but a serious mind will make this proper improvement of it ; therefore I must " strive in earnest to enter in," Luke xiii. 24. and not content myself faintly to seek it. On the other hand, a presumptuous sinner, when he reads of the thief on the cross being made a monument of grace in his last moments, encourages himself in his present impenitency with the hope of a death-bed repentance : but a man, who is truly awakened, will make no farther conclusion from this instance, than that God can make an example of his grace, when and where he pleases : he will not presume, that he may depend upon the same grace in his last hours, if he shall continue to harden himself under a course of means to bring him to repentance ; or that one of the miracles of Christ's death shall be repeated for him in the ordinary state of things ; or that he shall certainly share in like mercy, when he knows not but death may surprise him without any notice, and without giving him opportunity to shew such an illustrious instance of faith, as the dying thief expressed.

4. There is an alteration in a man's governing aim, or chief end. This is like the centre, to which all inferior aims and particular pursuits tend. The original end of a reasonable creature must be to enjoy the favour of God as his supreme happiness, to be acceptable and pleasing to him. By the disposition of depraved nature we are gone off from this centre, and have changed our bias, from God to created good, to the pleasing of the flesh, to the gratification of our own humour, or to the obtaining of some present satisfaction, according to the prevailing dictate of fancy or appetite. This makes the greatest turn that can be in the spirit of the mind : all must be out of course, till this be set right. Now it is the most essential part of the new nature, to bring a sinner in this respect to himself, that is, to bring him back to God. All the light he receives, all the rectification of his judgment, is in order to this ; and when this is well settled, every thing else, which was out of course before, will return to its right channel. A man is not a true Christian, till it be become his highest ambition to be acceptable to his Lord, 2 Cor. v. 9. Then his soul will give suffrage to the Psalmist's choice, Psal. lxxiii. 25. " Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is

none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Others are wearying themselves in quest of happiness, from one thing to another, as uncertain where to fix for finding it: repeated disappointments lead them often to change their course and their aim; when one thing answers not expectation, they hope to make amends by a new pursuit; but still they continue within the enchanted circle of worldly good. A true Christian, on the contrary, writes vanity upon all things below; they will not satisfy him: and therefore he is come to a point where to fix his happiness: "The Lord is the portion of his inheritance." Here he rests, and is determined to pursue his favour as his supreme good and last end.

5. There is hereupon a new determination to such a course of acting, as will most effectually secure this end. As long as this world is the chief good, which a man has in view, he contrives the best ways he can think of, to promote his particular ends in it. But when the favour of God comes to have the principal share in his esteem, he carefully examines, and heartily consents to the prescribed terms of making that sure. Now he is desirous to be found in Christ upon any terms. He arises and returns to his Father, "with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord," Acts xi. 23. He engages in wisdom's ways in earnest, with a resolution like that of the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 106. "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." There is no known duty, but he determines to be found in the practice of it; even the most difficult and hazardous, the most self-denying and ungrateful to flesh and blood. Spiritual and holy exercises, for which he had no gust before, are chosen for his delightful employment, as most subservient to his new end. The language of his heart is, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever; I will call upon him, as long as I live." And his resolutions are equally firm and impartial against sin, every known sin. "I am purposed, that even my mouth shall not transgress," Psal. xvii. 3. This is a new temper of soul; either the reverse of his former resolutions, or very different from them in firmness and stability, being made in earnest and with his whole heart: whereas, before his goodness was as the morning cloud, or as the early dew, which passes away. And yet his purposes are not made in his own strength, which it may be, was one grand defect in those

that he formerly made under some ineffectual convictions ; but in dependence upon the grace of Christ.

6. The exercise of the affections becomes very different. A change will appear in this respect, through the different turns of his condition, as well as in the prevailing tenor of his practice. While a man is a stranger to God, and blind to the interests of his soul, he is little concerned how matters lie between God and him. But a sinner *come to himself*, is most tenderly concerned at any thing, that renders his interest in God doubtful, or brings his covenant-relation into question ; and nothing sets the springs of godly sorrow flowing so much, as the consciousness of guilt, or of any unworthy behaviour to God. And on the other hand, though he be not got above all relish for the comforts of a present life ; yet he has the most lively and lasting taste of spiritual blessings. He rejoices most in a solid hope of God's special favour through Christ, in any conquest he can discern over sin and temptation, in the progress of the divine life, and in the foretastes of glory. He reflects with satisfaction only upon those religious exercises, wherein he has found pious and devout affections in his own breast, and some testimonies that God has accepted his offering. The good laid up for him in the promises of God, yields more refreshment to his soul, than all the worldly good he has in possession. And when his outward circumstances can minister least to his satisfaction, yet he can find rest to his soul in his God, Hab. iii. 17, 18. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Those who have learned Christ to saving purpose, are not, as I apprehend, strangers to some such change in the spirit of their mind, as has been described. It will be our wisdom then to bring all home by proper reflections.

1. Let us seriously examine our own minds, whether we can discern such an alteration made in our spirit. I am far from saying, that it is necessary to the well-grounded hope of *all*, that they should be able to discern the time, when this change began to be made ; or that they can remember the

time, when the contrary to this renewed temper acted in its full force in them. There is a great difference in this matter, between those who, like Samuel, "grew up before the Lord," under the advantageous and successful influence of a pious education, and those converted from gross ignorance and a vicious course. The apostle in the text speaks to persons converted from heathenism, and from all the licentiousness which reigned with little controul in the pagan world; such could not but be sensible of the difference between their former state and their present, if they were now become true Christians; what a new thing the Christian temper was in them. And the same can hardly fail to be the case with those still, who are recovered from a very profligate and irreligious course. But though the Christian spirit be to all, who share in it, a new and a different spirit from the temper of depraved nature; yet in some, who have escaped the pollutions that are in the world, and been from their infancy under the means of grace, the change may have begun so early, and proceeded so gradually, that they are not able to trace the steps of their renovation, or to remember the time when the frame of their souls was entirely the reverse of what it is at present. The grand inquiry therefore, which lies upon all, is, whether we can discern in ourselves the change itself, or that temper of mind, which the scripture describes as a new spirit; and which we cannot but see to be a spirit very different from that which *works in the children of disobedience*? If we cannot remember, when it was entirely otherwise with us, or how our minds came to be thus formed anew; yet are our souls *now* prevailingly so set and bent, as the spirits of true Christians are? Does our governing temper answer the gospel description of a new creature?

2. If we must answer in the negative, or have just ground to fear it; yet let us not despair of a change still, but apply ourselves speedily in the appointed way to seek after it. It is observable that this renovation is made in scripture the subject of a precept, Ezek. xviii. 13. "Make you a new heart and a new spirit:" and in another place the subject of a promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "A new heart, (says God,) will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." These two views of the matter may plainly teach us: that on the one

hand there is duty incumbent upon us in order to this end, or else God would never have delivered such a command to a fallen creature; and yet on the other hand, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to produce such a change; otherwise God would not have interposed with a promise; but both laid together, carry an intimation that the grace of God, which will be sufficient for us, may be expected, when we apply ourselves to our duty in the case. The precept delivered by St Paul, backed with an answerable promise, runs parallel with this, Phil. ii. 12, 13. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: For it is God, which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure."

Our duty in this case we are concerned to mind, in hope of the divine blessing. And it lies upon us to set ourselves to serious consideration; to review our sins in their number and aggravations; to meditate on the indispensable necessity of a new nature, that "except we be born again we cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" to think of the good-will of God to sinners, and the encouragements he has given us to pray for his grace, if we are convinced of our need of it; to call to mind the kind aspect of Christ's death upon the salvation of mankind, and the general, promiscuous offer of the grace of the gospel, wherever it comes. These subjects of consideration we are in some measure capable of, as we are reasonable creatures and under the common influences of the divine Spirit accompanying the gospel; and though no such steps taken by us can deserve his renewing grace; yet they put our souls into the posture which he requires from us, and are a hopeful symptom of success. We should also diligently attend upon God's stated ordinances; remembering that *faith* usually comes by hearing: and continue instant in prayer to God, upon the foot of the convictions already impressed on our minds. It is worth our notice to this purpose, that after God had made the promise of giving a new heart, and of other covenant blessings, he adds, that "he would yet for this be enquired of, to do it for them," Ezek. xxxvi. 37. And we know the general encouragement left us to hope, that the "heavenly Father, (the common Father in heaven,) will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him," Luke xi. 13.

3. Let the best retain a sense of the imperfection of the new nature in them, and of their obligation still to cultivate it, till it arrive at perfection : that till they put off the body, there will be daily occasion to be “putting off the old man, and putting on the new.” If the change be begun, advance and improvement is a more easy thing, and what we have a covenant-security for in the way of duty.

SERMON III.

THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER, A DIVINE NATURE.

2 PET. i. 4.

—That by these, ye might be partakers of the
divine nature.—

I SHALL look no farther back into the context, than to observe, that the apostle takes notice in the beginning of this verse, that there *are given unto us* in the gospel, *exceeding great and precious promises* : Promises very great in themselves ; and such as deserve to be precious and of high esteem with us ; because they are quite contrary to what we had reason to expect, and yet perfectly suitable to our wants, and conducive to our happiness. And then, in the words chosen for my present subject, he acquaints us with the design of God, in giving out such excellent promises : “ That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.” Now,

I. This may be understood as a privilege : and so *the divine nature*, will mean God himself. *That by these promises*, by conferring on us the blessings promised in the gospel, *ye might have fellowship with the divine nature*. That construction may be put upon the words, γέννησις θείας κοινωνίας φύσεως ; and so they will contain a certain truth. It was the gracious purpose of God by the gospel, to raise sinful creatures to a sort of alliance with God, to a federal union with him by Christ, to the dignity of his children, to have his Spirit dwelling in them, and to be allowed fellowship and communion with him. In this view, the intention of God as represented here, would amount to much the same with that assigned by another apostle, 1 John i. 3. “ That which we

have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us ; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." "We apostles make known the gospel to you, that you may have a share along with us, in the blessings tendered in it : and it is no contemptible thing we offer you a share in ; it is no less than a share with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, that is, in the blessings and favours which come from the Father through his Son." But,

2. This is rather to be understood as bespeaking our duty ; the *divine nature* here, not signifying God himself, but rather divine qualities, or a divine temper and disposition. I incline to think, that this is the sense of the apostle ; partly, because in the original there is no article added, which should fix the construction to be, as in our translation, *the divine nature* ; and therefore, according to the genius of that language, it rather seems proper to translate it, a divine nature, that is, a temper of soul, which in a metaphorical sense may be called divine, because of the relation it has to God : and principally, because the apostle himself appears so to explain it in the words immediately following ; "Having escaped the corruptions that are in the world through lust ; and besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge," &c. Wherein he seems to give a description of that which he had before called a divine nature, in the two great branches of it ; the one, a purification from the corrupt lusts which prevail in the world ; and over and above that, the graces and virtues of the Christian life.

That which I propose in the consideration of these words, is, to treat of the Christian spirit or frame of mind, in this view of it,

That it is a divine nature.

And it may be so called,

1. In respect of its original and descent ; for it derives from God as the great author of it. If we partake of it, "we are therein God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. ii. 10. This in the import of those phrases so often found in St John's writings, and I think peculiar to them ; when he describes men of a holy disposition, that they are "of God, and born of God. He that is of God, heareth me," John viii. 47. This Christ says in op-

position to what he had just before declared to his unbelieving hearers, ver. 44. "ye are of your father the devil." To be *of the devil*, was to be of a disposition, in forming which he had a great agency; according to 2 Cor. iv. 4. So to be *of God* is to be of a temper of mind derived from him. "He that doth good is of God," 3 John 11. In the same sense, good men are so often described as born of God, 1 John iii. 9. "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin:" doth not make an ordinary practice and custom of any known sin; "for his seed remaineth in him," that is, that holy disposition, to which he has been formed by regeneration, governs in him; *and he cannot sin, cannot so sin, because he is born of God.* The same thing is expressed, by being *born of the Spirit*; as the work of sanctification is eminently the province of the Spirit, John iii. 5, 6. "except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh:" The nature or temper we bring with us into the world by natural generation, is no better than its original, carnal. "But that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit:" that nature or temper we receive by regeneration, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, is like its author, spiritual and divine.

2. In respect of its bent and tendency, the new nature is divine; it leads to God. By the apostacy we are turned off from God, and averse to him; but the new nature carries us back to God. It was the great intention of Christ in his humiliation and suffering for us, to recover us to this. "He suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," 1 Pet. iii. 18. And the scope of the gospel, containing the glad tidings of salvation, is the same, Acts xxvi. 18. "To open men's eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;" Indeed, the renewed temper cannot be more emphatically expressed in a few words than in these, being "dead unto sin, but alive unto God;" which the apostle would have all professed Christians to reckon themselves obliged to be, Rom. vi. 11.

3. In respect of resemblance and likeness, it is divine. It is the glory of it, that it is a *god-like* temper and disposition. And this, I take to be the main thing intended by the apostle in the character. God had it in design in all the methods of his grace, and all the blessed promises which he

has been pleased to make, to assimilate us to himself; so to renew us in the spirit of our minds, that we should bear his image again. This was the glory of man's state by creation, in order to which, God is represented as forming a consultation, "Let us make man after our own likeness," Gen. i. 26. And it was executed accordingly, ver. 27. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." And so the new spiritual man is "after God, or according to God," Eph. iv. 24. "and after his image," Col. iii. 10.

In treating of this argument, *that the Christian disposition is a godlike nature*, I shall, 1. Offer some things proper to be considered, for the due stating of this truth. And, 2. Point at some principal instances, wherein it appears to be so.

I. I would offer some things, which I apprehend necessary to be observed, in order to state aright the meaning of this truth. For it is not without its difficulties; and we may entertain such mistaken apprehensions about the matter, as would be both dishonourable to God, and prejudicial to ourselves. I would therefore observe the following particulars.

1. There are some parts of the renewed disposition, which do not connote any thing in God, that they properly resemble. Many things are excellencies in our nature, which would be imperfections in the blessed God. Reverential fear, humility, meekness, trust, subjection of soul, and a readiness to obey, are necessary virtues in a reasonable creature; but they can have no place in God, who is the supreme Being. Faith in Christ and repentance for our sins, are proper ingredients in the Christian temper, because we are all fallen creatures, and therefore cannot have access to God, but through a Mediator, and with a penitent acknowledgment of our revolt: but nothing like these are to be supposed in God. Many acts of the mind are truly excellent and becoming us in the present state of things, for which even we shall have no occasion when we arrive at our perfect state; such as suit the present imperfections of our souls, and are owing to the corrupt affections, and appetites, and passions, which have broke loose in us; and such as arise from the state of things in the world about us, the corruptions and follies of our fellow-creatures, the sufferings, or the temptations, to which we are liable. These are

only accidentally become a part of the temper needful to be found in ourselves, by reason of the change made for the worse, in our condition, from our original state ; and therefore for certain, nothing parallel to them can be found in God, “in whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.”

2. There are many perfections of God to which the divine nature in us, bears no proper likeness. To affect a resemblance of God in some of his perfections, is the greatest arrogance ; it would bespeak a devilish temper. To pretend to independance and supremacy, as if there were no Lord over us, or as if we would have it so, is to fly in the face of God, and to put off the creature. To aspire at omniscience, or the knowledge of things too sublime for our reach, or which God has forbidden us to search into, as the ordering of future events ; is no better than to repeat the folly of our first parents, who were taken by this bait of the serpent, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Gen. iii. 5. To set up ourselves for our chief good, as it is the perfection and glory of God to be his own happiness, is the very temper, which Christianity is designed to cure.

The divine nature in us, includes indeed such dispositions, as bear a *correspondence*, though not a *likeness*, to all the inimitable perfections of God ; that is, a temper of soul, becoming the belief and consideration of such divine excellencies. We therefore, place our supreme trust and dependance upon God, because he is the independent and all-sufficient being : we fear him, as the greatest and most powerful being, we love him, and centre in him as our portion, because of his infinite fulness and absolute perfection. These dispositions in us towards God, do aptly correspond to, and answer those excellencies of God, which are the reason of them : they are a proper regard to God, which is the strict notion of *godliness*, and so will be more fully considered hereafter ; but they cannot so justly be called *godlike*, as when we imitate God in his *moral* perfections, wherein we cannot aspire at too near a likeness.

God is pleased indeed, to put some faint resemblances of his *natural*, as well as of his *moral* perfections, upon his reasonable creatures ; and upon some of them, more than upon others. As we are intelligent beings, we resemble his spiritual nature, which the lower creation cannot do ; upon that account, he is called “the Father of spirits,” Heb. xii. 9. Some are placed

in a state of less dependance on their fellow-creatures, than others are. Some make far greater advances in wisdom and knowledge than others ; are comparatively *wise as an angel of God* ; and therein may be said in proportion, more to resemble divine wisdom. Earthly princes and rulers, have a much more extensive power and authority, than the body of mankind, and therein are a shadow of the divine power and sovereignty ; therefore the psalmist, says to such, Psal. lxxxii. 6. "Ye are gods, and all of you the children of the Most High," that is, bear some resemblance of his power and dominion.

And therefore, the common distinction of the divine attributes, into *communicable* and *incommunicable*, seems not to be exactly just. There are, we see, some faint resemblances in creatures, even of the *natural* perfections of God. Indeed, *necessity* of being, *absolute* independance, the knowledge of *all things*, a presence *every where*, *almighty* power, *supreme* dominion, are appropriate to Deity, and cannot be communicated to creatures ; for these characters plainly bespeak that most perfect manner, in which these excellencies belong to God, and so they cannot possibly belong to any creature. But then there is as much reason to call the *moral* perfections of God incommunicable too, that is, if you join with the general notion of them, that most perfect manner in which they belong to God : for so he is "the only wise God," 1 Tim. i. 17. "There is none good but one, that is God," Matt. xix. 17. "There is none holy as the Lord," 1 Sam. ii. 2. But if we separate the most perfect manner of attribution, from the general notion of the excellency ; it must be confessed, that creatures may bear some likeness to God, both in his natural and moral perfections.

Yet still it is only a transcript of his moral excellencies into the temper of our souls, that belongs to the new nature, of which the text speaks. Men's spiritual natures alone, though by them, they are capable of bearing God's holy image, yet make them capable also of such a conformity to devils, as the beasts cannot have. Men may have much more enlarged capacities, and extensive power than their neighbours, and yet be so far from partaking of a divine nature, that they are the more opposite and odious to God, and the greater plagues to the world. While on the other hand, those who are low in natural

capacity and acquired endowments, or in very mean outward circumstances, may shine in that image of God, which the gospel requires.

3. Where a holy disposition is a real likeness to God, we must ever humbly remember, the vast disproportion between the original and the copy. The image of God is very imperfect in the best in the present state, even in comparison of what they themselves will arrive at in a future world. "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all," 1 John i. 5. By which, as the following words lead us to understand the apostle, the thing principally intended is, that God is holy without any alloy, or mixture of impurity, or any possibility of it. How far is this from our present case? While the flesh is in us lusting against the spirit; while we have not yet attained, nor are already perfect in any grace, even to that degree of perfection to which we shall attain! And even when we shall be changed into the same image, *from glory to glory* when our refinement shall be after the heavenly measure; there will still be an infinite disproportion, between God and the most perfect creature. This is the ground of those strong figures, Job iv. 18. "His angels he charged with folly," and chap. xv. 15. "The heavens are not clean in his sight." Not that there is any actual impurity in heaven; but God is holy in a more perfect manner, than any creature is, or can be. His perfections are necessary in him; it is impossible from the nature of the thing, that they should be otherwise: but this cannot be ascribed to creatures; *some* angels have fallen, and *all* the race of mankind; and though, as they are now in heaven, they that are holy, shall be holy still, yet this is not from a necessity of nature, but from the grace of God. And while the divine perfection cannot admit of addition, we have reason to apprehend that the saints in glory will still be proceeding to higher and more complete degrees of conformity to God.

4. Those perfections of God, to which the divine nature in us, bears some likeness, may in many cases express themselves in different instances in God and us, according to the different state and condition wherein he and we stand. The general notion of goodness, mercy, justice, truth, &c. is the same when applied to God, or to a creature; or else there would be no room for arguing from the one to the other. But as God is most perfectly good and merciful, and just and true,

while we are imperfectly so ; so he displays these perfections by many ways, wherein we cannot pretend to imitate him, as he is infinitely exalted above us ; and he may do many things without impeachment of his perfections, as he is an absolute sovereign, which will by no means warrant us to do the like. To instance in the attribute of justice. God has a full right and property in all his creatures, and therefore an absolute authority to govern, and to dispose of them in any way he pleases ; they have no rights but what are borrowed from him, and therefore none that can justly be pleaded against him. He must be just to himself, in maintaining his own unalienable rights : but he may do what he will with his own, as far as his own wisdom and goodness will allow, or farther than he has been pleased to lay himself under engagements by promise. Justice in us requires our strict observance of all the rights which God or our fellow-creatures have from us, as he our Lord and lawgiver hath settled them.

The sum of all is this : As far as we are in a disposition to act like God, where we have allowance and ability to aspire at and express a conformity, so far we are partakers of a divine nature. I now proceed,

II. To point at some principal instances, wherein the new nature is a resemblance of God. I shall not so much enlarge upon particulars here, as I should otherwise do, because most of them will occur again more distinctly to be considered, when several branches of the Christian temper, come to be treated of in order.

1. As it is a *holy* disposition, it is a conformity to a *holy* God. Holiness comprehends all moral excellencies, and an aversion to all moral evil ; and therefore may be considered as including every particular excellence that can be mentioned. It bespeaks a general rectitude of nature, and a separation from moral evil of every kind. The new nature is said to be “created after God in true holiness,” Eph. iv. 24. God’s holiness is his possession of every moral excellence in the most perfect manner, and so as to be at an infinite distance from every moral evil, or what can be called sin. No attribute is more frequently ascribed to him in scripture ; and with peculiar marks of distinction. “Thou only art holy,” Rev. xv. 4. “He cannot be tempted with evil,” Jam. i. 13. “He

is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and he cannot look upon iniquity," Hab. i. 13. that is, without disapproving it. "He is glorious in holiness," Exod. xv. 13. He reckons it his peculiar glory. But though his holiness is so complete and absolute in the degree of it, and so necessary in the ground of it, that in that respect no creature can be like him; yet it is represented as a thing in his design, "that we should be partakers of his holiness," Heb. xii. 10. And it is a precept to us, that "as he which hath called us is holy, so we should be holy in all manner of conversation," 1 Pet. i. 15. This last passage may serve in some measure to explain, how we are required to bear God's image *in holiness*. We cannot perfectly be like him in this character in degree, but we should aspire to "be holy in all manner of conversation:" that is, As God's holiness, signifies the universal rectitude of his nature, and his utter aversion to all evil; so we should be adorned in heart and life, with the whole chain of graces and virtues becoming our nature, and abhor evil of every kind. We should not only be solicitous about one or another particular excellence, but an universal rectitude; nor satisfy ourselves with declaring war against a particular sin, but be at mortal enmity with every known sin. That, and that alone, is a gospel conformity to divine holiness; and where the divine nature is formed, there is that likeness, though not without imperfection in all.

2. As it is a disposition "founded in light and knowledge," it bears in our measure a resemblance of God. Thus, *the new man*, is said to be "renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10. It is the peculiar glory of the blessed God, that he sees all things, and all their relations in one entire unerring view; so that it is not possible that he should be mistaken or misled at any time, that he should do any thing rashly or at random. The acts of his will, (to speak of God after the manner of men, and in a way accommodated to our apprehension,) are always suitable to the perfect light of his understanding. Man in innocence, had light sufficient to discern all that was right and fit for him to do, and was disposed to follow that light: this was the rectitude, the orderly state of his nature. But by the apostacy, the light which was in him is become darkness; ignorance and error mislead him, or the light of his mind is ineffectual, and overpowered in its influence by headstrong appetites and pas-

sions. Now the first step towards a man's coming to himself again, and recovering the image of God upon him, is the re-entrance of light into the mind, and that with such efficacy, as to renew the dispositions of the soul by it. Hence, as God's perfect holiness is described by his being perfect light, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," 1 John i. 5. so our sinful state is described, by *walking in darkness*; and our renewed state, by "walking in the light, as he is in the light," ver. 6, 7.

3. As it is a disposition to *righteousness*, to do justice to all, it is a conformity to God. "The new man is after God, created in righteousness," Eph. iv. 24. This is a perfection often ascribed to God. "He is righteous in all his ways. Is there unrighteousness with God? (says the apostle;) God forbid," Rom. ix. 14. Though sometimes "clouds and darkness are round about him," so that we may not be able at present, to give a thorough account of the justice of his proceedings; "yet for certain, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne," Psal. xvii. 2. And as this is a necessary perfection of his own nature, so he cannot but love it in his creatures. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness," Psal. xi. 7. When the temper of our souls is to do righteousness, to give God his rights, and our fellow-creatures theirs, according to all the claims they have from us in our several stations and relations, this is a resemblance of God; and such a one as the scripture makes necessary to prove our relation to him. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" 1 John iii. 10. Which last character leads me to observe, that the Christian temper is eminently a godlike temper.

4. As it includes *goodness, love, and mercy*, in it. These are illustrious attributes of God, wherein he particularly glories, and of which he has given most bright and frequent instances. In these we are eminently called to imitate him. So great is the benignity of his nature, that it is said of him more than once, *God is love*: and correspondent to this divine excellence, St John calls upon us; "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love," 1 John iv. 7, 8. "God is

love ; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him, ver. 16. And the exhortation to imitate God, which another apostle gives, though expressed in general terms, yet plainly appears by the connection, to refer particularly to this excellence, Eph. iv. 31, 32. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice : and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Immediately it follows, chap. v. 1, 2. "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love." When we love all good men with a particular affection, because of God's holy image upon them, we write in our measure after his copy, for he does so too. But he is also good to all ; his tender mercies are over all his works ; creation, providence and redemption, are full of the displays of his good-will and grace ; he is rich in mercy to the miserable, to the unworthy, to his enemies. The evidences then of a godlike temper in us, will be the more conspicuous, by how much the more diffusive, and free, and disinterested our affections are ; by how much the readier we are to shew compassion to the miserable, forbearance to the injurious, and a hearty good-will to our enemies. This last instance of likeness to God, is prest upon us in the strongest terms by our blessed Saviour, Matth. v. 44, &c. "I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you : that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." (That is, Shew yourselves to be so by acting like him ;) For he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil, and upon the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust. For if ye love them [only] which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" And he closes all with those emphatical expressions, ver. 48. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." By which we may understand him to mean one of these two things : either that in this branch of imitation, every good man should aim at the fullest conformity to God possible : here be perfectly like God as far as you can ; there is no danger of over-doing : or that there is no part of the image of God, which we can bear in this life, that is more perfective of our natures.

5. As it comprehends *truth and faithfulness*. It is the

glory of God to be *a God of truth*, Deut. xxxii. 4. and of his people, that they “are children that will not lie,” Isa. lxiii. 8. God is faithful to all his promises and engagements; “faithful is he that hath promised.” And it becomes us to be so in all the engagements we lay ourselves under to God or man; when we “vow to pay unto the Lord; and if we have sworn to our own hurt, yet not to change;” that is, if we have engaged ourselves even to a disadvantageous bargain with our neighbours, we must stand to it; which is made one character of a citizen of Zion, Psal. xv. 4. God is sincere in his declarations; and so should we be in all our professions of respect either to God or man. If we profess *honour* and regard, either to God or man *with our lips*, while our heart is set a contrary way, this is altogether an ungodlike conduct.

I will conclude with some inferences.

1. We may collect, what we should esteem the most substantial part of religion; that which constitutes a divine nature in us. This is the end of religion; and I may say, the very soul of it. Some of the wiser heathens were sensible of this, and the scripture in the text, you see, makes it to be the design of the gospel. Would to God, that none who pretend to religion, would rest short of this, or substitute something else in the room of it; either that which is merely external, or those things which are rather the means of religion than religion itself. And indeed, we may have some light from this to discern what truths are of most importance in religion, and what errors are most fatal; those which most directly and evidently, tend either to the promoting or obstruction of the divine nature in us.

2. We may see with thankfulness, the advantages we have for a divine life beyond the heathen world, by the fuller notices given us in scripture of the divine perfections, after which we are to copy. If men can be sunk so low, as to *think God altogether such a one as themselves*, in their depraved inclinations, it is no wonder if this sets them loose from all the restraints of virtue and goodness, Psal. l. 21. This was the case of the heathen world. “They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things,” Rom. i. 21, 23. And along with this debasing of

the blessed God, by such mean and base images of him, they sunk so low, as to assign to those, they worshipped the vicious affections and passions which were found in men and beasts. And then no wonder that we find what follows in ver. 24. "that therefore God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts." God in just judgment, left them to pursue the natural tendency of those unworthy apprehensions which they had entertained concerning him, to sink into all manner of vice, and to become like those false gods which they had imagined to themselves. Blessed be God, that we have the knowledge of the living and true God; but we must be more inexcusable than they, if when we have righter notions of God, we should still continue unlike him, and bear more of the resemblance of the false gods which the heathen world worshipped.

3. We may see the necessity of the new nature, in order to our happiness in God, that "if we say, we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth," 1 John i. 5, 6. It would be altogether inconsistent with his honour to treat us with special favour and friendship, if our tempers are contrary to his blessed nature; for "he is not a God, that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him: therefore the foolish shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all workers of iniquity," Psal. v. 4, 5. Nor could we ourselves be happy in God, without a correspondence of temper by a divine nature in us. And therefore, "He that hath this hope purifieth himself, as God is pure," 1 John iii. 3.

4. Let that therefore, which is here represented to be the design of the gospel, be made the great aim and scope of every one of us, that we may be partakers of a divine nature. If we find another temper ruling, let us not rest till it be altered; if we feel somewhat of this godlike spirit working in us, let us daily cultivate it more and more. The apostle, I observed, in the following words, sums this up in two branches; escaping the pollutions which render us unlike God; and cultivating the graces, wherein his resemblance consists. Let it be our daily care to do both.

To overcome and deface those impressions, which make us unlike to God; or to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit," as in 2 Cor. vii. 1. To raze out the image

of the *beast*, in the government of unbridled appetite and of carnal affections ; and that, which is yet more directly contrary to God, the proper image of the *devil*, in hatred and malice, in rage and cruelty, in pride and impatience, and revenge.

And besides this, to have those dispositions formed in us, and in more legible characters wherein we are capable of the image of God ; or to be *perfecting holiness in his fear*.

In order to this,

We should carefully improve the consideration of gospel promises, as we are called to do in the text, and in 2 Cor. vii.

1. "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves," &c. We have the promise of the forgiveness of sins ; how should this excite us to forsake them in gratitude to the wonderful mercy of God, and as ever we would not remain under the guilt of our sins, when a way is opened for our escape ; the grace of the Holy Spirit is promised, by which it is become a practicable thing, how low soever we are fallen, to recover this blessed likeness ; it is his province thus to sanctify us ; and we are encouraged to pray for him to that purpose, and to apply ourselves to the mortification of the deeds of the body by his aids, as present with us, Rom. viii. 13. We have the great promise of eternal life, and of perfect holiness and happiness therein, to animate our endeavours, and quicken our pace, that if possible, we may "attain to the resurrection of the dead."

We should improve divine providences to the same purpose. His benefits, kindly to draw our hearts nearer to him ; and his chastisements, according to their friendly design and tendency, to make us "partakers of his holiness," Heb. xii. 10.

And his holy ordinances, meditation, and prayer, and praise, all our hearing and reading, and attendance at the Lord's table, should always be engaged in with this view. We should not rest in them as our ultimate end ; but consider them as rather the *means* of religion, than the *end* of it ; and account ourselves no farther the better for them, than as they promote our conformity to God.

If we make this our sincere scope and aim, God will accept our upright endeavours, though we must be sensible we have not yet attained, nor are already perfect : and he

will assist us by his Spirit to gain farther ground, and come nearer to our designed end. As we do so, our relation to God will become more evident, our present communion with him more full, and the heavenly perfection a more grateful, and a more certain prospect.

SERMON IV.

THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER THE SAME MIND WHICH WAS IN CHRIST.

PHIL. ii. 5.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

THE apostle had been exhorting Christians in the former verses of the chapter to mutual love, and humility, and a public spirit; and enforces his exhortation in the text by directing their eye to the example of Christ. ‘It becomes you to cultivate such a temper in your own minds, since Christ Jesus expressed the same temper, which I am recommending to you:’ of which St Paul gives an illustrious instance in the words following. But though his exhortation points particularly to those holy dispositions which we had just before had occasion to speak of; yet the argument from Christ’s example for those particular graces equally holds as to others; and indeed supposes, that, as far as we can, we should endeavour to be of the same mind with him in all cases; that our minds should have the same turn and bias, as Christ’s mind appeared to have.

Christianity, as was shewn in the last discourse, calls us to a temper resembling the blessed God: that is the greatest character which can be given of it. But it is a more familiar view of it, to consider it as a conformity to the Son of God in our nature and in this light I would now discourse of it, making this observation upon the words,

That the mind or temper of a Christian, should be conformable to the mind which Christ expressed.

In the prosecution of which, I would, first, offer some things which I judge necessary to be observed for the due

stating of this point. 2dly, Shew the reasons, why Christians should be like minded with Christ. And then conclude with some reflections.

I. I would offer some things needful to be taken notice of, in order to the due stating of this truth, that our minds and tempers should bear a resemblance to Christ's. We are neither to apprehend on the one hand, that Christ gave us an example of every thing which is amiable and necessary in our tempers according to the Christian rule; nor on the other hand, that we should aim at an imitation of Christ in every thing without distinction, which we find in the gospel-history related concerning him.

1. There are some things necessary to be found in the temper of a Christian, in which we cannot consider Christ as an example. In particular, all those graces in us, which suppose our personal guilt and our fallen state, could not be exemplified to us by our Saviour. He "knew no sin;" but was perfectly "holy, harmless, undefiled separate from sinners;" and therefore could not express the dispositions, which only become us, because we had lost our innocence. For this reason we cannot expect to find in Christ's pattern either of those things which the apostle mentions as the sum of his preaching, both to the Jews, and to the Greeks, and which are necessary and most amiable parts of the temper of a Christian; namely, "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," Acts xx. 21. He was so perfectly righteous a person, that he needed no repentance: and if he had needed a mediator to come to God, he could not have made reconciliation for us; but he is himself our mediator, in whom we as sinful creatures are required to believe and confide, in order to our acceptance with God. Faith and repentance suppose our revolt, and are necessary means and steps, in our present deplorable condition, to our coming to ourselves. But Christ is to be considered as our pattern in all the holy dispositions becoming our nature in its original and regular state: he had that mind in him, which man uncorrupted should have, and to which sinful men are recovered in the way of faith and repentance.

2. There are some things related of Christ, which were truly excellent and amiable in him, but we must not pretend to imitate, that is, not to do the same actions; though even in

them, the mind or temper, with which he did them, may be a subject of imitation to us. It is impossible for us to do some of the works which he did, and it would be impious to attempt others. One obvious distinction may carry us through this matter, namely, that we distinguish between what Christ did as Messiah and mediator, and what he did as a partaker of the human nature. What he did under the character of Messiah, was peculiar to himself, and not designed to put us upon doing likewise.

Some things he performed to qualify himself as man for his extraordinary work ; as for instance he fasted forty days and forty nights. This was done upon an extraordinary impulse of the Holy Spirit, Matt. iv. 1, 2. when he had newly been consecrated to his high office at his baptism ; and he must necessarily have had extraordinary supports in it. Moses and Elias, two extraordinary prophets and types of him, had been enabled to do the same before him ; as we read, Exod. xxiv. 18. 1 Kings xix. 8. Now we may consider this act of Christ, as thus far instructive to us, that when we are called out to any peculiar service, fasting and prayer and retirement are very good preparations for it : but if any should pretend, as some enthusiasts have done, without a like extraordinary call, and a reasonable prospect of effectual support, to fast as long as Christ did ; it would be tempting God to the last degree, and must end in their own confusion : or to call the observation of forty days, by fasting some part of every day, or by abstaining only from some sorts of food, an imitation of Christ's fasting, which was for forty days and nights entire without refreshment ; is but to ape one of his miracles, without any support from reason or scripture.

All those extraordinary works which he wrought himself, or enabled his apostles and first disciples to perform, in confirmation of his mission and gospel, must also be looked upon as things altogether above us, and which admit not of any imitation.

And the same is to be said of those things, which he did in execution of his peculiar offices. As the great prophet of the church he declared the hidden counsel of God ; as the king of it, he sent out extraordinary messengers to be his apostles and ministers, he abolished the Jewish institution, and set up a new one ; and as our high-priest, he offered himself a sacrifice.

It would be blasphemy for any to pretend to copy after him in these things, which were his peculiars.

And when we find him giving severe names to the Scribes and Pharisees, and censuring the hypocrisy and false disguises of others, who made a fair appearance, which for certain he always did most justly, because he knew perfectly what was in men; yet this will not justify us in calling men hypocrites, and fools, and blind, or in passing a damnatory sentence upon men, who appear conscientious, unless we had his knowledge of hearts, and his special and extraordinary commission.

And yet, as was hinted, the mind and disposition he expressed even in many of his most extraordinary actions, may justly be considered for our imitation in our ordinary state. A cheerful obedience to God and regard to his glory, an unwearied and vigorous application to his work, a zeal against sin and love to mankind, shone forth illustriously in his extraordinary as well as his ordinary actions, and should excite us to be like minded. It is observable to this purpose, that the very instance given by the apostle immediately after the text, is an action most peculiar to the Lord Jesus himself, and absolutely imitable in the same kind by us; that when he was "in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, [the Father] yet he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death." Here the action of Christ, which the apostle singles out for his instance, is only proposed to our faith; but the mind and temper he shewed in that wonderful course of action is proposed to our imitation, that is, the love to mankind, the humility, the public spirit, which did so signally appear in his voluntary abasement of himself from the highest glory to accomplish the work of our salvation.

The sum of all is this. It should be our endeavour, as near as we can, to resemble the mind of Christ, as we find it described in the gospel; to express the same mind in like instances, as far as we are in the same circumstances; or else to shew a conformity of spirit to him, in such other instances as our condition will admit, where we cannot shew it in the same. And so I come,

II. To propose some reasons, why Christians should eu-

deavour to copy after the mind and temper of Christ. And to that end will insist upon three general considerations.

1. It was evidently the design of God to set his son before us as the model of the Christian temper. This was one errand on which he came into the world, though not the only one, to give a living representation of those graces and virtues, which are truly pleasing to God in the human nature. He would not only set out our duty before us in his laws, but also in the more striking way of a living and a strong example. This was not so needful for us in the innocent state, while the mind was sufficiently clear to apprehend the will of God without any prepossessions against it, and the inclination regular, God's law being written in the heart. But in our fallen condition, God saw meet in his wisdom and grace, not only to grant us the light of a supernatural revelation, to revive the notices of our duty which were defaced, or greatly obscured by the apostacy; but also to set a fair transcript of that in our view in the living pattern of his own Son in our nature, that we might be brought thereby at once both to learn and love our duty.

We might reasonably conclude it to be the mind of God, that we should eye the pattern of Christ, when we find the scripture directing us to imitate inferior examples, as far as they are good: to "be followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises, Heb. vi. 22. To animate ourselves in our Christian race, by considering the great cloud of witnesses we have to the like course among the excellent of the earth," Heb. xii. 1. And to remember inferior pastors, who ministerially spoke to us *the word of the Lord*; and to "follow their faith, considering the end of their conversation," chap. xiii. 7. Much more therefore, for certain, would he have us attend to the more excellent and instructive pattern of the great shepherd of the sheep.

The care he has taken to make us acquainted with the temper and life of Christ, is a clear evidence how high a place the imitation of him was to bear in Christianity. It ought to be considered by us to this purpose, how great a part of the New Testament the life and actions of our blessed Saviour make. No less than four evangelists were employed and inspired by the Holy Ghost, to leave an account of this for the use of the church in all ages; that by the mouth of so many witnesses,

who had companied with him, all might be established : all of them joining in some things in the same testimony ; and in other matters one supplying what the other had omitted. They, who had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, as eye-witnesses, wrote these things in order, that we might know the certainty of them, Luke i. 3, 4. Now as the intention of writing any life should be principally directed to this view, to lead others to imitation as far as there is any excellency in it : so, when the Spirit of God has made so great a part of the New Testament to be a relation of the life of Christ, this is evidently his wise contrivance to draw Christians to a resemblance of him.

But this design is put out of question by the most express declarations to that purpose. Christ himself took care to lead his disciples to consider him as their teacher, not only by his doctrine but by his practice. "If any man will come after me, he plainly tells his hearers, he must follow me," Mat. xvi. 24. he must learn of Jesus to be meek and lowly ; not only because he inculcated these graces by his doctrine ; [Matt. v. 5, 8.] but because "he was meek and lowly himself," Matt. xi. 29. His disciples must "love one another, as he loved them," John xv. 12. Upon one occasion he chose to do a thing which in itself was not absolutely necessary to be done either by him or by them in the letter of it, to wash their feet ; on purpose by that emblem to convey this general instruction to them, that they should tread in his steps : that is the moral he gives of it himself, John xiii. 15. "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." And when his apostles, after his ascension, had converted people to the Christian faith, they refer them upon all occasions to the temper and actions of Christ, as a copy which they were expected by their Christianity to write after : and they make use of one passage or other in his history, as the most powerful engagement to a correspondent practice. We are declared to be "predestinated by God to be conformed to the image of his Son," Rom. viii. 29. Our Christian calling is reduced to this, that we should "follow Christ's steps," 1 Pet. ii. 21. Our abiding in him, in the faith and profession of Christianity, is to be proved by our walking as he also walked, 1 John ii. 6. And we are to have him in our eye, to look unto Jesus and his behaviour, in running the whole of the race set before us, Heb. xii. 2. And

certainly the design of God in giving us the benefit of such an example, claims our closest regard. Especially since,

2. He was a pattern admirably fit to be proposed to our imitation : and that upon the following accounts.

(1.) He was an example in our own nature. We are called to be followers of God ; and the new nature is, as hath been shewn, in many respects a godlike nature. But in several particulars of human excellence, God cannot be a proper pattern. The difference between God and the creature, between the relation on his part and on ours, will not allow him to be an example in any of the duties of creatures as such. An independent Being, as the blessed God necessarily is, cannot go before us in fear and reverence, in trust and confidence in another, in subjection and obedience to the authority and law of a superior. His perfect blessedness in himself makes it impossible, that we should have in him a pattern of the temper and behaviour proper for us under afflictions, because he is out of the reach of any. His majesty cannot stoop so low, as to teach us by his own practice our social duties to fellow-creatures, because they are all his subjects, and not his equals. And if the Son of God had appeared only in the glory of his divinity, he could not have been our example in these things : but since he is become partaker of flesh and blood his example is properly human, accommodate to our condition, fit to shew us how men ought to act.

Upon this account his pattern is more suitable, than an angelical one could have been. The scripture sometimes calls us to imitate the angels, in the purity of their natures, and their vigour and cheerfulness in the service of God : but they are not so apt to affect and influence us, as a pattern in our own nature. Christ had what they have not, like natural affections and passions with us by occasion of an earthly body ; he was subject to hunger and thirst, as well as we ; capable of weariness and pain, of joy and sorrow, of love and compassion, and anger ; and therefore was the more proper to teach us how to govern our appetites and regulate our passions. He was the fitter to be an example to men, as well as a sacrifice for them, in that " he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," Heb. ii. 16.

2. His circumstances and conduct in our nature adapted

his example to the most general use. He suited himself, as far as he could do without sin, to the common state of human nature, that his pattern might be the more extensively useful. The greatest part of mankind are placed by providence in a low condition: and Christ by exemplifying the graces suited especially to such a state, accommodated himself to the instruction and benefit of the greatest number of men; and yet since it was the result of his own gracious choice, that he appeared in such a condition, though he possessed originally the riches of the Godhead, he loudly speaks humility to the greatest.

His conversation was with all the freedom and familiarity that could be desired. We find no peculiar rigours or singularity in his way of living; in which he takes notice himself of the difference between him and *John the Baptist*, Mat. xi. 18, 19. He did not sequester himself from the world to live as a recluse; but led an active life upon the public stage, appeared in the places where people were used to come together, conversed freely with all sorts, and went about doing good. This conduct made his example the more grateful, and at the same time to appear such, that every one in common life might feel himself under engagements to imitate him.

Thirdly, His example was perfect, so that it hath the force of a rule. This cannot be said of the best men upon earth; their actions must be tried by a further rule, before we venture to follow them. But it is the character of Christ's example, that it hath the authority of a rule, as well as the advantage of an example: so that other examples are to be judged of by it, 1 Cor. xi. 1. "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ."

It is perfect also in another respect, as it exemplifies to us all the graces and duties of the human nature, as it came out of the hands of God; it was a living plan of the regards due from man by the divine law to God, to his fellow-creatures, and to himself. I intend not here to go over the particulars of this great example; it may be more proper, as we go along in considering the several branches of the Christian temper, to recommend each by the example he gave of it. To any one who attends to the gospel-history, it must appear, that humility and self denial, zeal for God's glory and compassion to

souls, usefulness to all and disinterested goodness, contempt of this world and heavenly-mindedness, patience under sufferings and resignation to the will of God in all things, eminently shone out in the man Christ Jesus : that he redeemed his time, improved all opportunities for service, sought the honour of God in all his actions, fervently prayed to him in all difficulties, trusted in him in all dangers ; counted no service, no suffering too hard to which he called him ; and was obedient even down to death. In a word, he acted just as men are obliged to act : and in all the parts of the Christian temper, excepting those which suppose personal guilt, we may derive light and warmth from the steady contemplation of Christ's example.

3. The relations, in which we stand to Christ, and the concern we have with him, lay us under the strongest engagements to endeavour a resemblance.

He is our best friend, vouchsafes to call us *his friends*, and has engaged us by the most endearing acts of kindness : and how easily do intimate friends run into a similitude of mind and manners ?

He is our Lord and Master, and we profess to be his disciples ; and certainly the disciple should be like his master. " If any man will come after me, (says Christ,) let him follow me," Matt. xvi. 24. Christ presses this argument with the greatest force upon his disciples, in the days of his abode below, John xiii. 13—16. " Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well ; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord ; neither he that is sent, greater than he that hath sent him." In the several sects of philosophers among the heathen, the practice as well as the precepts of their masters, had a mighty influence upon those who called themselves their disciples : they were used carefully to record the actions of their founders, and to be censured or applauded, by friends or enemies, as they degenerated from their virtues, or copied after them. Christ is *the author and finisher of our faith*, the head of our religion ; and should we not resemble him, if we suffer ourselves to be called Christians from his name ? Some of those among the

heathen, who delivered the best precepts, were very far from recommending them by a suitable practice ; and they did more hurt to the world by their ill examples, than service by their wholesome instructions. This was too much the case among the Jewish teachers in Christ's own time : he could say no more in their favor than this, Matth. xxiii. 2, 3. "The scribes and the pharisees sit in Moses' seat ; (they are your stated public instructors :) All therefore, whatsoever they bid, you observe, that observe and do." We must for certain understand him with a limitation, as far as they spoke agreeably to "the law and the testimony ;" for he had admonished his hearers more than once, that sometimes they were *blind guides* even in their doctrine, and not to be followed absolutely in that. And still he was forced to add farther ; "but do not ye after their works ; for they say, and do not." While their doctrine was amiss in some things, their practice was much more irregular. But Christ was a master, whose doctrine and practice was perfectly harmonious ; and therefore his professed disciples should hear him and follow him in both.

He is our head, and we are his members ; and there should be a symmetry of parts. If we are Christians indeed, we are animated by the same spirit : and therefore like fruits of the spirit should be conspicuous in us.

He is to be our final Judge, who will unalterably determine our state for ever : and whatever profession we make of his name, and of relation to him, he will own none for his who are destitute of his likeness. While "many will say to him in that day, Lord, Lord ; he will profess to them, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity," Matt. vii. 22, 23.

He is to be the model of our final happiness. It is promised us, that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. That must refer principally to the holiness and happiness of our souls then. And certainly if we take real delight in the prospect of that future conformity, we cannot forbear aspiring after it, and tending towards it now. So the apostle immediately adds, ver. 3. "And every man that hath this hope in him, [to be like Christ, when he shall appear,] purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Our future happiness is often described by being with the Lord : and how can we dwell and converse together

for ever, with comfort and satisfaction, unless there be agreement and similitude?

I would add a few reflections.

1. We may plainly learn, that Christianity in its main design, is a practical thing, and not a mere speculation. As it might be made to appear many other ways, that this is a true character of it; so it is evident, in that the great head of this religion first lived it himself; and the scope of this religion is described in the gospel, to be our copying after that living pattern.

2. We may see the advantages we have by the gospel, beyond any other dispensation, for true goodness. *Moses*, by whom God delivered his law to the *Jews*, was not a perfect pattern of obedience to the will of God, as far as it was then made known. But Christ, as he made a fuller revelation of the mind of God to the world, than ever was done before, so he never failed in any one instance of exemplifying the proper duty of man.

3. How inexcusable then must they be, who are not recovered to a godlike temper and conversation by this most excellent dispensation? Where we have not only the most perfect and plain precepts, and the most exceeding great and precious promises, but also the most full and lively, the most suitable and engaging example. "If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?" Heb. ii. 2, 3. Or, if we neglect to comply with so excellent a constitution, which the Son of God himself not only taught us, but exemplified to us?

4. With what care and attention should we study the life of Christ, as it is drawn in the gospel-history? Indeed every thing which God hath thought fit to reveal, must be worthy of our diligent and serious consideration. "All scripture is written by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2 Tim. iii. 16. And no part of scripture must be magnified to the depreciating of others. But certainly none can be more useful and necessary, more fit for our frequent search and meditation, than that which gives us the picture of the mind and

life of our Master ; that while we stedfastly “ behold in the glass of the gospel the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Cor. iii. 18. And that leads me to infer,

5. We should earnestly pray for the grace of the same divine Spirit, with which Christ was anointed *without measure*, in order to our being formed to the same mind in our measure. In vain will the bright representation of the holy mind of Christ, be set before us in the gospel, unless the blessed Spirit open our eyes, and cause the light of the glorious gospel of Christ to shine into our hearts. But this we are directed to ask for, and encouraged to hope we shall not be denied, if we cry to the common Father for this great gift, Luke xi. 13.

6. Let us never allow ourselves to rest in any thing short of a real and a growing conformity to our Lord. By this we should judge of our relation to him, and of his complacency in us ; and not merely by the name we bear, or the notions that fill our minds. “ If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,” Rom. viii. 9. “ Study then so to know him, as to be made conformable to him,” Phil. iii. 10. Reckon every view you take of him, every thought you have of him, occasioned by reading or hearing concerning him, to be indeed of little service to you, if it has no transforming influence. Go on then, still “ following after this, if that you may apprehend that, for which also you are apprehended of Christ Jesus,” ver. 12.

7. As far as this is our aim and scope, we may take comfort from the discovery of his present glory. For, as his heavenly mind and conversation ended in the heavenly glory ; so a present imitation of him by us, as he was upon earth, is indeed a pledge of our future conformity to him in the upper world. As “ if we suffer with him,” so especially if we live with him and like him, “ we shall also reign with him.” If, as he did, we live to God, are dead to sin, overcome the world, serve our generation, and persevere to the end in the exercise of Christian graces and virtues, suitable to the conditions and circumstances of life, through which we pass ; we shall, at the end of such a course, follow him into his kingdom.

SERMON V.

A CARNAL AND A SPIRITUAL MIND.



ROM. viii. 6.

For to be carnally minded, is death : but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace.

IN the former part of this epistle, the apostle describes the sinful state, in which the whole world is involved, whether Gentiles or Jews : they are all become guilty before God, and obnoxious to his wrath. He then shews, that the way of salvation for both, which was always designed in the counsel of God, and gradually made known to the world, but now most fully in the gospel, was not to be by the works of the law, or by any merit of our own, but by the gracious and free pardon of our sins for Christ's sake, and upon faith in him.

But lest this way of justification by faith should be misinterpreted, and abused to encourage men in sin, and in the neglect of holiness ; the apostle in the *sixth* chapter comes to treat of sanctification ; and to shew, that the gospel lays us under the strictest engagements to universal holiness ; that our faith in Christ, and our baptismal dedication in his name, bind us indispensably to this.

And in the first verse of the *eighth chapter*, he sums up both the great blessings, of which he had been treating, and the holiness that he had been inculcating ; and represents them as inseparably connected. "There is therefore now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This is a certain truth, that the sentence of condemnation no longer holds against real Christians, but all their sins are pardoned,

But who are so in Christ, that they may take the comfort of this privilege? They, and they only, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And after the apostle hath shewn, how effectual a provision is made by the gift of *the Spirit of life*, and by *God's sending his own Son* into the world, both in order to our pardon, and our recovery to holiness, ver. 2—4. he proceeds more fully to explain the character, which he had given of Christians, and to urge the necessity of it.

Would you know, whether you are in Christ, and may be esteemed in the sense of the gospel to walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit? The apostle tells you ver. 5. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit." And to shew, that it is of the utmost consequence to us, as ever we would escape condemnation, to see that we mind not the things of the flesh, but those of the spirit; he adds in the text, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace."

In the words we have,

I. Two very opposite characters; to be *carnally minded*, and to be *spiritually minded*. Characters, which divide all mankind into two parties. Every man must be denominated either the one or the other of these. However people may agree or disagree in other things, here is the most essential and wide difference that can be between man and man, that some are *carnally*, and others *spiritually minded*. And yet on the other hand, there is often such a mixture in the temper of those, to whom these very different characters belong, that contributes not a little on both sides to darken the character, unless diligent care and serious consideration be used to know, which in truth is our own. But then, to excite our concern for making this discovery, and to convince us of the great preference due to the one above the other;

II. The horrid evil and miserable effects of the one, and the excellence and good consequences of the other are set before us. The one is *death*, and, as it follows in the next verse, *enmity against God*: but the other is *life and peace*,

I shall pursue the subject under these two general heads, into which it has been branched.

I. I am to explain the different tempers of mind, which are expressed here, and opposed the one to the other, viz. *the minding of the flesh, and the minding of the spirit.*

The *flesh* and the *spirit*, may be understood here, either as principles, or as objects of those exercises of the mind meant by the word, *φρόνημα*. Either such a disposition and exercise of the mind, as has its original and rise from the flesh or the spirit; or else an addictedness in the temper and actings of the mind, toward the one or the other. Indeed both of these will come to much the same at last: whether flesh or spirit be our governing principle, still there will be an answerable bias upon the actings of the mind toward those things, which suit either the one or the other. But the *fifth* verse, plainly leads us to consider them as different objects of the mind's exercise: and accordingly I shall treat of them in that view; and it will be needful more particularly to explain, 1. The two opposite objects, about one of which the mind is supposed to be conversant; the *flesh*, and the *spirit*. 2. That temper of mind, with reference to the one or the other, which the apostle's expression denotes, and which makes the difference between men; upon which some may be stiled *carnally* and others *spiritually minded*.

First, For the meaning of the terms, *flesh* and *spirit*, which are here, and in many other places, especially of St Paul's epistles, opposed one to the other; it may be proper to observe two or three things.

1. The ground of the distinction is plainly laid in the original frame of human nature, as it consists both of body and soul. These two parts of man are of a nature very unlike, and yet linked together by our great Creator, in a very close and intimate union. By the one, we are nearly allied to earth and sensible things; by the other, to God, and things spiritual and heavenly. Now though all thought, and inclination, and affection, are properly seated in the soul, and not in the body; yet the body has wants and interests of its own, as well as the soul has others peculiar to itself. And the soul has many thoughts and inclinations, many gratifications and uneasinesses, which are only owing to its union with the body, and for which

there would be no room, if it were a pure spirit : such are appetites and affections to sensible good, and joys and sorrows, upon account of present good and evil. On the other hand, beside these, the soul is capable of thoughts and inclinations much more sublime, and worthy of the superior excellence of its nature above the body. It is capable of bearing the image of God, in all moral excellencies and perfections, and of enjoying the favour of God, and a happiness in that, far above all which can be derived from worldly good. With such capacities man was made ; and at first he was actually disposed and bent, to regard most these best and noblest interests of man, and the concerns of the body only in a subservience to the other. But it was possible, that the soul might turn off its attention from its own proper interests, and mind those of the body supremely : man might, if he would be so foolish, give up reason and his higher powers, to the sway of appetite and passion. And so we find by scripture, and sad experience that he did. “ Man that was in honour, understood not ; but became like the beasts that perish.” Psal. xlix. 20. In this distinction between the different interests of body and soul, the distinction between flesh and spirit is founded. But then,

2. These terms in the common language of the New Testament, directly and commonly signify the human nature, either as actually depraved, or as rectified and recovered.

By *the flesh* is meant, not only the body and its interests ; but the mind, as actually sunk into body ; enslaved by it in its actings ; inordinately addicted to it, even to the neglect of its own proper and peculiar interests : which is the very heart of the apostacy. The *flesh* signifies the mind along with its carnal bias, as it is become disaffected to God and holiness, indifferent for his favour, but strongly bent to sensible good, to the indulgence of affections upon earth, and to the gratification of appetite and passion. In this sense we must understand the apostle, when he speaks of “ walking after the flesh,” ver. 1, 4. when he says, ver. 8. “ that they that are in the flesh, cannot please God ;” and to the converted Romans, “ ye are not in the flesh,” ver. 9. It is evident that he cannot mean in these places, by being in the flesh, merely being in the body ; but being under the power and dominion of depraved nature.

On the other hand, by *the spirit*, is meant not only the soul in distinction from the body ; but the soul, as recovered by the

grace and Spirit of God, from the dominion and prevailing power of inordinate appetites and affections, and restored to its right turn, and bent in righteousness and true holiness. Thus we must understand, *walking after the spirit*, that is, according to the dictates of a sanctified mind ; or, which is the same thing, under the conduct of the Spirit of God, whose workmanship and image, the sanctified mind is. And so in ver. 9. “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.”

3. These phrases, as they are used in the text to express the object of that exercise of mind, by which the different characters of men are drawn, must be understood agreeably to the foregoing observations. The *flesh* signifies the things of the flesh ; or which are suited to the body ; and to the depraved inclinations of the mind ; sensible present things, the interests of this life and world ; which suit the inclinations we have, merely by occasion of the body ; and which are most suitable to the soul, only as far as it is become of a carnal disposition. On the contrary, by *the spirit*, are meant the things of the spirit ; things of a spiritual nature, which are most directly suited to the interests of the soul itself ; which conduce to refine and regulate its actings now, and to secure a happiness agreeably to its immortal nature.

The things intended by *the flesh and the spirit* here, are the very same as this apostle writing to the Colossians, expresses by “the things on earth, and things above,” Col. iii. 2. as will appear by comparing the original.

The *flesh* is the same with *things on earth*. Either such as directly interfere with the interests of our souls, as irregular appetites and passions, sinful habits and customs. These so generally prevail in the world, that the apostle John sums up all its contents, in words importing our depraved affections, 1 John ii. 16. “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” Or even other things, which in their places, and in a regulated measure, we may lawfully be conversant about, may be included in *the things of the flesh*, or *the things on earth*, by an undue regard to which, we may justly be pronounced carnally minded : the advantages, and honours, and pleasures of this life ; riches and dignities, ease and health, friends and agreeable relations : ay, and the entertainments of knowledge and learning, as far as

they have a reference only to our well-being or satisfaction, in the present state.

The *spirit* on the other hand, as the object of the mind's exercise, runs parallel with the other phrase, *of the things above*; that is, a happiness as immortal as our souls, and all those things which have a relation to it. The bent of a good man's heart, is toward heaven, as his complete felicity: and to all those things by the way, which conduce to his final happiness: all those graces and duties here, which either in the nature of the thing, or by the constitution of God, are the necessary means and qualifications for the heavenly blessedness. The scope and end of these is our everlasting welfare, though they are to be pursued and practised by us in time. Thus a divine temper, and disposition conformable to God; a holy course and conversation; an acceptance and use of the Lord Jesus Christ in all his offices; a participation of the blessings of the covenant by the way, which will entitle us to, and prepare us for heaven; and such an acquaintance and communion with God now, as will be a presage of our everlasting enjoyment of him, and a meetness for it: all these things go to make up that object of the mind's employment, which is here called *the spirit*.

Secondly, I am to consider the different temper of mind toward carnal and spiritual things, which is here made the distinguishing character of one man from another; expressed by *φρόνημα*, *mind*ing the flesh or the spirit.

This word, and the verb *φρονεῖν*, from which it is derived, and which was used just before, in ver. 5. are of an extensive meaning, sufficient to comprehend all the actions, both of the understanding and will; but ordinarily in scripture, they denote the motions of the will and affections. The verb in one place signifies *to think* or *judge*. So in Acts xxviii. 22. "We desire to hear of thee, what thou thinkest;" or what thy judgment is in the matter. At other times it means *to relish*, or *have an affection for a thing*. Matth. xvi. 23. "Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." And Rom. xii. 16. "Mind not high things;" affect them not, desire them not. Or, to give preference to one thing before another, to pay it a distinguishing regard. So the sense of the word is justly expressed by our translation, in Rom. xiv. 6. "He that regardeth a day, regardeth

it to the Lord," that is, He who regards one day above another, so as to observe it in a manner in which he does not observe other days, makes such a distinction out of a conscientious regard to a supposed divine authority in the case. Sometimes the term denotes care and concern, and an application of thought, and endeavour suitable to it. So Phil. iv. 10. "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last, your care of me hath flourished again;" that you have made your care and concern for me, to be conspicuous in its proper fruits.

I have taken notice of these several uses of the word in scripture, because I think they are proper to be laid together in the present case, and so will fitly describe the temper of the mind in the full compass, in which the apostle would represent it to us.

But because he makes this temper of the mind towards the things of the flesh and of the spirit, opposite characters of men, it may be fit to observe a few things beforehand.

1. There is a regard to our outward interests, as well as to those which are spiritual, which is not only lawful, but required of us in the present state. God does not command us to lay aside all affection to present good, or to use no care and pains about the welfare of our bodies. Though some precepts in scripture, for minding the interests of our souls, may appear at first sight, to exclude all concern for our bodies; yet it is certain, they are not to be understood absolutely, but in a comparative sense. Such as, Col. iii. 2. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth," Mat. vi. 25. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink:" and ver. 19, 20. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth:—but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," John vi. 27. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." While we are in the body, God expects our regular care of it; he commands all to be diligent in their worldly business; and as he has given us all things richly to enjoy, allows our moderate and thankful use of them. All minding of the flesh, is not unworthy of those who are spiritually minded.

2. There is too much of a sinful minding of the flesh, by

all good men in this imperfect state : which yet is not inconsistent with having the other justly made their denominating character. The best men find reason too often to complain of the remains of a carnal mind. St Paul himself, saw occasion for this in the seventh chapter of this epistle, where I think he speaks of himself when actually renewed, ver. 18. "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," ver. 19. "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that do I," that is, this is too often my case, ver. 23. "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." This drew out the lively complaint in the following verse; "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Good men in all ages, who have been acquainted with their own hearts, have often joined with the apostle in the same mournful cry.

3. These characters belong to men therefore, not as if they were perfectly, and entirely either the one or the other; but according to that temper which prevails and has the ascendant. Persons may be carnally minded, and yet sometimes think of better things, form some desires after them, and take some pains about them. And on the other hand, men may in a gospel-sense be spiritually minded, and yet not have their disorderly appetites and affections entirely mortified. Prevalence is the great inquiry we are concerned to make; upon that the character of our state depends. And yet it must be remembered, that it will be unavoidable, that by how much the more strength the carnal mind hath, the more frequent and impetuous its actings are, and the less it is mortified; so much the more doubtful in proportion must our judgment be about our state, or which of these characters really belongs to us. And therefore it is necessary for our comfort, as well as it is our duty to see, that the bias the right way, become every day stronger.

Having premised these remarks, I would endeavour to shew, how the prevailing temper of the mind, towards the flesh, or spirit, will express itself.

1. We are to consider this matter in the deliberate judgment and choice of the soul, with reference to the one or the other. The end men chiefly propose to themselves, has an influence

upon all the other spiritual distinctions which can be between them. That man is carnally-minded, who centers in any thing for his happiness short of God, the chief good : but he is spiritually minded, the language of whose heart is, "The Lord is my portion." The interests of the body and of the soul, of this and of another world, cannot have an equal share in the esteem of any man, but one of them must have the preference. "No man can serve two masters" with equal zeal ; or pursue these two ends, which are so vastly different, as things equally worth his care. The ruling judgment in a carnal mind, is in favour of this world, whatever spiritual notions may be in his head, or light in his conscience. But a spiritual mind, upon a serious balancing of matters, is fully convinced of the reality and worth of spiritual and eternal blessings, above all worldly good. He is sensible, that earthly things which are often leaving us, and which we must soon entirely leave, cannot be a portion for an immortal spirit ; but that an endless happiness is set in his view ; which is every way suited to his most raised desires ; and therefore he judges, that this deserves an unspeakable preference. He esteems heaven *a better country* than this, and God the best portion, and Christ and holiness, the only way to come at the enjoyment of God for ever ; and therefore is determined at any rate to make sure of these.

2. The temper of the mind is discovered in the more fixed employment of the thoughts. That which we fix upon for our great business, will be very frequently present to our thoughts. A carnal mind has his thoughts most turned according to his bias ; when better thoughts occur to him, they are rather forced upon him than chosen, or intended rather for speculation than practical improvement. The spiritual mind will set itself frequently and seriously to meditate on spiritual things ; to make God present to the mind ; to ruminate on the excellency, the grace, and the work of a Redeemer, on the glorious employments and entertainments of the heavenly world, on the several branches of his duty, and the state of his soul. He loves to have his thoughts exercised upon such deserving subjects, and cannot be content to have them entirely taken up with the world. He will appropriate some time, as far as his circumstances will admit, on purpose for holy meditation : "Through desire he separates himself, and seeks and

intermeddles with this wisdom," Prov. xviii. 1. Even in the midst of worldly business, he will find opportunities to mix some serious thoughts; to lift up his heart to God in an ejaculation, when he has not leisure to pursue a train of thoughts. He is jealous, lest vain and worldly thoughts should gain too firm a possession, or give his mind too deep a tincture; and therefore will have times to recollect himself. This may be expected from such a man ordinarily on every day more or less; and especially that he will gladly improve the greater leisure of the Lord's day to clear his mind of vain thoughts, and employ it fixedly in those of the best tendency.

3. It will appear in the bent of the heart and affections, either to carnal or spiritual things; whether "we savour most the things of God, or the things of men," Matt. xvi. 23. Whether we "set our affections most on things above, or on things below," Col. iii. 2. In both which places the Greek word is the same with that in the text. The current of desire runs strongest in the carnal mind towards some worldly good or other; while the Psalmist speaks the very soul of the spiritual mind, Psalm xxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." The delight and joy of those who are addicted to the flesh, is in the increase of corn, and wine, and such things: but the delight of the other is much more in the light of God's countenance, Psal. iv. 6, 7. The one rejoices, if the body prospers and is in health; the other mainly upon evidence of the prosperity of his soul. He who minds the flesh, fears nothing so much as worldly exercises, or the loss of outward comforts: but he who minds the spirit, is most apprehensive of sin against God, and God's displeasure for sin. The one is most sensibly struck with sorrow and concern when he meets with afflictions and trials, which are grievous to the flesh: the other, when he is conscious that he hath offended God, wounded his own conscience, lost ground in his holy course, given way to temptation, and done something which tends to separate between God and him. When the carnally minded are necessitated to make some reflections on their past sins, they fasten only on those which are gross and generally hateful; and they are most affected with the shame, or censure, or other temporal inconvenience that they suffer by them: but the spiritually minded are truly sorry for every known sin

that they remember, though it should be ever so fashionable, though it has been invisible to men ; and that which chiefly affects them in all sins, is their offensiveness to God.

4. In the activity shewn in pursuit of these several ends. If we act as in earnest to gain some earthly good, repine at no pains, but can contentedly sit up late, and rise up early, and eat the bread of carefulness for that purpose ; while we proceed with negligence and indifference in pursuit of the prize of glory : if here we can satisfy ourselves with good words, cold wishes, faint endeavours, and very uncertain hopes : such conduct is too plain a sign of the prevalence of the carnal mind. “ Many will thus seek to enter into heaven, but shall not be able,” Luke xiii. 24. The spiritually minded will act at another rate ; they will *take heaven by violence* : and be especially *fervent in spirit*, when they are *servng the Lord* ; as such who are determined to gain their point, whatever it costs them, and to *run* their Christian race *so as to obtain*.

5. In the balance given to the several interests of flesh and spirit, when they come in competition. This comparative view sets men in the clearest light for discovery to themselves and others. Thus Christ put Peter upon the trial of himself, “ Lovest thou me, more than these ?” John xxi. 15. And in this Christ only called Peter to examine the state of his soul ; by a rule which had been more generally delivered before, for the use of all his disciples, Matt. x. 37. “ He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me : and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.” The same thing is expressed in stronger terms, Luke xiv. 26. “ If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also ; he cannot be my disciple. This *hating* of them can mean no more than a readiness so to behave in reference to them, if Christ and they come in competition, as without such a reason would look like *hating one’s own flesh*. There may be occasions wherein we cannot maintain a good conscience, without going contrary to the judgments, and resisting the importunities of intimate friends and dear relations ; or without losing the favor of those, to whom otherwise it would be our interest and inclination to approve ourselves. Or the trial may go farther : unless we

will forbear what we apprehend to be our duty, or do something which we judge sinful, we shall not only run great hazards in our own persons ; but also the present interests of our families are like to suffer, and those who are dear and near to us, to be involved in great temporal inconveniences.

This is a very pressing difficulty, when God in his providence brings any to it ; but after all, these are no better than fleshly motives, when set against duty and conscience : and here the carnally minded are like to break with Christ ; but the spiritually minded will shew that their love to their master is supreme.

The improvement I would call you to make of this first branch of the subject, which I have gone through, *viz.* an explication of the two opposite tempers mentioned in the text ; is, to press you carefully to examine yourselves upon this important and distinguishing head of religion.

It will be a very melancholy case, if those can make a shift to evade a conviction, that the bent of their hearts is wrong and ruinous, who bear undeniable marks of a carnal mind reigning in them : such for instance, as give themselves up to *work all uncleanness with greediness* ; who live in a course of sensuality, making provision for the flesh *to fulfil the lusts thereof*.

But yet others should not conclude hastily, that they belong to the class of the spiritually minded, merely because they have escaped the gross pollutions that are in the world. It should be remembered that the young man in the gospel could say this ; and yet had that love of present things predominate in him, though unperceived by himself till the trial ; which induced him to leave Christ, when he must either abandon him or his portion in this life, *Matt. xix. 20—22*.

Let none think themselves freed from the ascendant of a carnal mind, barely because they stately attend on the outward means, which are appointed for their spiritual advantage. Christ has intimated that men may “pray and fast, and give alms, only to be seen of men,” *Matt. vi.* which is a mere carnal aim : and that they may eat and drink in his presence, and yet be pronounced by him *workers of iniquity*.

Esteem not yourselves among the spiritual, barely because you are right in your opinions, or because you receive the truths of the gospel with a flash of affection. *The devils believe the*

most important truths, *and tremble* at them. And we find, *the stony ground received the word with joy.*

In truth, you should rest upon nothing as a foundation for a favorable judgment concerning yourselves, short of what will prove a prevailing bent of heart to the spirit, more than to the flesh : that is, that commonly the bias turns this way ; that this is your allowed and approved temper ; that your relish of spiritual things has a suitable practical influence ; and that you are upon the advance in such a disposition, tending toward the perfect day.

SERMON VI.

A CARNAL AND A SPIRITUAL MIND.

ROM. viii. 6.

For to be carnally minded, is death : but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace.

THE different tempers of mind, which are here expressed by the phrases of being *carnally minded*, and *spiritually minded*, have been distinctly explained in a former discourse. I am now,

II. To consider what the apostle affixes to each character to shew the evil and hatefulness of being *carnally minded*, and the goodness and excellence of being *spiritually minded*. The characters are not more opposite than their attendants and consequences. *To be carnally minded, is death ; but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace.*

A lively and moving description this is of that, which stands inseparably connected with these different tempers of soul, though expressed in a few words.

Life is the most desirable thing that can be to most people. "Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life." And accordingly this word is used in scripture metaphorically, to express the greatest good. Death, on the other hand, is naturally the dread of mankind ; and therefore the greatest evils are in scripture-language expressed by it. *Peace* joined with *life*, if we should take it in the latitude, in which it is often to be understood in the Hebrew stile, comprehends all that is good and desirable. That was the Jewish salutation, *peace be unto you* ; as if it were said, all happiness to

you. But the sense of the word here seems rather more confined, and to stand opposed to that which is declared of the carnal mind in the verse following the text. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* It carries in it direct hostility against him : and therefore cannot fail to entail upon a man the dreadful misery of having God for his enemy ; so it follows, ver. 8. “They that are in the flesh, cannot please God.”

And how unavoidable is it in such a case, if a man has any sense left, that he cannot be at peace with himself? In opposition to this, a spiritual mind is peace. He, who is of that temper, is at peace with God ; and has a solid foundation for peace in his own breast.

I shall directly insist upon the former characters, of *death* and *life* ; in the consideration of which the other will be comprehended. *Death* and *life* stand most certainly and unalterably annexed to these different dispositions of the soul, the *carnal* and the *spiritual mind* : which is true, both in the nature of the thing, and by the sentence and constitution of God.

1. In the very nature of the thing, to be carnally minded is death, spiritual death. But to be spiritually minded is life, the truest life of the soul. He who is carnally minded is truly *dead while he lives*, as is said of a person devoted to pleasure, 1 Tim. v. 6. “dead in trespasses and sins,” Eph. ii. 1. But the spiritually minded man is “dead unto sin, but alive unto God,” Rom. vi. 11. This is a frequent method in scripture of representing the case ; and a very just and proper one ; for, as far as the bent is toward spiritual things, so far the soul is alive in the truest and noblest sense. Life capacitates for action and enjoyment ; death disables for both. And for this reason we esteem human life in this world most perfect, in that period which we call the state of manhood, in opposition to infancy and childhood on the one hand, and to enfeebled age on the other ; because at maturity it is more capable of the actions becoming the reasonable capacities, than in tender years ; and more fit to enjoy the delights and satisfactions, which are suitable to our nature, than in the decline of life, when indeed we rather sigh and groan than live. Upon the same account to be spiritually minded is life, the truest and most suitable life of a reasonable creature ; whereby he

is capacitated for the most exalted actings and enjoyments, or for the holiness and happiness of a spiritual life. And on the contrary, to be carnally minded is death ; because it is opposite to both, and indisposes for both.

First, Spiritual mindedness is life ; for a man of this temper is disposed to the proper *acts of a spiritual life*. He is not insensible of spiritual objects ; but “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ shines into his heart,” 2 Cor. iv. 6. He apprehends the reality, the moment and worth of that which is contained in it. Before, he understood as a child, he thought as a child of these matters, being diverted from a close attention by the poor trifles of a present evil world : but now he puts away childish things. He is sensible of the peculiar wants of the soul itself, and most desirous to have them supplied. His heart breathes after God, and Christ, and holiness, and heaven. He endeavours to know his duty, and applies himself vigorously to the practice of it : and his greatest concern is for his imperfection in it, for his acting in any instance contrary to it. His great conflict is against the remains of sin, the snares of life, and the opposition of Satan in his Christian course. This is life ; these are indications that a man is spiritually alive, and come to himself, for now he lives unto God.

The carnal mind is the reverse of all this. He is under the power of death ; having the understanding darkened, and prejudiced against the admission of heavenly light. He is insensible of the wants and interests, of the rectitude and depravity of the soul ; or unaffected with these things. He is either wholly, or predominantly, set upon earthly things, and such as tend farther to vitiate and enslave the soul. His mind is shut up against divine instructions and admonitions ; and his will opposes the will of God, and exalts itself against the knowledge of him and obedience to him. For *the carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be*, till it is altered, ver. 8. This is spiritual death ; a governing temper of soul, which bespeaks it dead to all true goodness.

Secondly, Spiritual mindedness is life ; because a man of this disposition is fitted for the enjoyments and happiness of the spiritual life. The soul has peculiar pleasures of its own, independent on the body ; and they are the most sublime, and

excellent and satisfying of all others, of which we are capable. These pleasures of the soul result from the sense of God's favour; from the apprehension of the pardon of sin, and the hope of immortal blessedness; from a consciousness of the regularity of its own actings, and of victory gained over disorderly appetites and affections and passions; from the approbation of his own mind upon serious examination and reflection; from the pleasure of doing good, of honouring God, and of serving a man's generation; from the joyful sense of the light of God's countenance, and of communion with him in holy meditation, and in the various exercises of religion. Such things as these are the justest entertainments of the soul: and he who is spiritually minded, seeks chiefly after these; and has a principal relish and delight in these, when he can perceive them: and in proportion to the degree of his renovation, he is fitted for them, and has his share in them at present. This is life indeed. "A good man is thus satisfied from himself," Prov. iv. 14. While "a stranger intermeddles not with his joy," ver. 10.

But a man under the power of a carnal mind, is incapable of that peace and pleasure which are so relishing to a spiritual mind.

He is but ill disposed to discern and take in that, which is fit to administer the highest delight to the soul. Such a mind has scarce any room for spiritual joys to enter; and no inclination to perform those acts, by which communion with God is maintained, and the foretastes of heaven are received. The frame of his mind is set quite otherwise. He wants such a principle of lively faith, as gives that realizing view of spiritual objects, which fills with joy unspeakable, 1 Pet. i. 8. Nor is he acquainted with that life and fervour in religious exercises, or that purity of heart, which are necessary to prepare for God's gracious manifestations to the soul.

Or, suppose he should be able to discern the grounds of spiritual pleasure, yet he is no way disposed to relish them, or to be made happy by them. Instead of delighting himself in God, "he says unto God, depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that I should serve him? and what profit should I have, if I pray unto him?" Job xxi. 14, 15. He tastes not the sweetness of a pardon: he values not the dignity of being a child of God.

A Saviour has no form or comeliness, in his eye, that he should desire him ; nor are all the glad tidings of the gospel so welcome to him, as it would be to hear of an estate fallen to him, of a successful bargain, or any other present gratification which his heart is set upon. The very vision and enjoyment of the blessed God in heaven, would be an insipid thing to a man, the turn of whose soul is wholly to earth. Carnal minds account it no better than folly in other people, when they express a delight in God's ordinances, or speak of such a thing as *hungering and thirsting after righteousness*. The reason is ; that either matters of a spiritual nature are in their account merely imaginary, without substance and reality ; or some present good is much more suitable to their taste and inclination. Thus "folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom," Prov. xv. 21.

In the nature of the thing then, and at present, what the apostle says evidently holds true.

2. This is farther true in respect of God's sentence and constitution. *To be carnally minded, is death* ; or the way to death, to everlasting wrath and misery : *but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace*, or the way to eternal life and happiness.

1st, The carnal mind must issue in everlasting death. Not that the future punishment will be an extinction of being ; happy would it be in comparison for the men of this world, if that were the case ; but while they continue in being and sense, their condition will justly deserve the character of death, *the second death*. In the future state their spiritual death will be fixed and consummated. The enmity against God, which is now the prevailing character of a carnal mind, will then rise to its utmost height. All the remains of virtuous inclination or of good nature, as we call it, which might seem to be in men here, will be totally extinguished, when they leave the world in their sins : and "he that was filthy, will be filthy still." There will be an entire end of all that looks like felicity. For they will be stripped of all the sensual employments, in which they placed their happiness on earth : not so much as a drop of *water to cool the tongue* will be found there, Luke xvi. 24. And for the true happiness of the heavenly state, they neither will be admitted to a share in it ; nor will have any taste for it, if it were within their reach. And be-

side this, all which can make misery consummate, will be inflicted. The wrath of a living God, the fire of hell, the worm of an accusing conscience, and the society of devils and wicked men, then ungrateful enough, shall concur to their everlasting destruction. The scripture uses many phrases and emblems to describe that misery in its horrible nature: and among the rest, this of death in particular, as the most formidable thing to nature. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," Jam. i. 15. "The end of these things is death," Rom. vi. 21. "The wages of sin is death," ver. 23. So here, *to be carnally minded is death.* That is,

Without repentance and a change before they leave the world, men of this character are doomed to eternal death by God, the judge of all. "If ye live after the flesh, (says the apostle in this chapter, ver. 13.) ye shall die." This is the sentence, which God has published against all such; which he will never reverse, and none else can.

Such indeed, by their present temper, are fit for no other issue of things than this. They are "vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction:" In no fitness to take delight in a better world, if they should be allowed a place there, where all is holy and heavenly; but of a temper already prepared for the miserable world, for they breathe a disaffection to God, which in the height of it is the very temper of devils.

And sometimes men of this make, have the beginnings of this second death, even while they continue in the body. This is evidently the case of some, when they are given up to "strong delusions, to their own hearts' lusts." And sometimes they are made to feel the lively forerunners of divine wrath in their consciences, and leave the world with the blackest presages of approaching misery. On the other hand.

2dly, The spiritual mind shall issue in everlasting life and peace: that which deserves indeed to be stiled life. The spiritual life is to be perfected. There is a "perfect day, to which the path of the just, like the shining light, is tending more and more," Prov. iv. 18. What the author of "a good work had begun, will then be performed," Phil. i. 6. "All tears shall be wiped away from saints, and every uneasiness cease, for they shall enter into rest; and be admitted to fulness of joy in God's presence, and to pleasures for ever

more at his right hand," Psal. xvi. 11. This is to be the end of a spiritual mind ; and therefore it may justly be said to *be life and peace.*

By the tenor of the gospel-covenant, all of this character are entitled to this life. "There is no condemnation to such as walk after the spirit," ver. 1. "If ye by the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live," ver. 13. And to the same purpose our apostle bespeaks the Colossians, Col. iii. 2—4. "Set your affections on things above, not on things below. For ye are dead, (you profess to be dead to the world,) and, (if you are really so,) your life (your better life,) is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

The spiritual mind is itself a meetness for heaven. As it is of heavenly descent, so it tends towards heaven. While the carnal mind in its progress is ripening for hell, the renewed temper, makes a man "meet for the inheritance among the saints in light." Such a man has his heart, and thoughts, and pursuits, directed to the same objects, which make the happiness of heaven ; only they are seen and enjoyed in the other world after the manner of heaven. The same God, the same Redeemer, the same holiness, which the Christian chiefly pursues now, will make the felicity of the future state ; only we shall then "know these objects, even as we are known," 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

And those, who have their minds thus set, have the beginnings and pledges of everlasting life. The "Spirit is in them as a well of water springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14. "He is an earnest of the inheritance," Eph. i. 13, 14. As far as they are spiritualized, they have heaven brought down into their souls ; the same temper formed there in part, which gloriously shines in the inhabitants of the upper world ; and therefore may properly be called glory begun : besides which, to some of his servants God has vouchsafed such foretastes of the land of Canaan, while they were in this wilderness ; such refreshing views of his love and favour, as have carried them for a while in appearance above the world, enabled them to rejoice in tribulation, and to long to depart and to be with Christ.

Now certainly a mind entitled to life by divine promise, made meet for it by divine grace, and into which God is

used to let down somewhat of heaven now, cannot fail to issue in everlasting life.

I will close with some reflections.

1. We may justly fix this in our minds, as the principal and most important distinction, which can be among men; the carnal and the spiritual mind. Other differences make a far louder sound, and draw more general attention. Distinctions made by wealth and honour, by beauty or wit, by learning or by party-names, have many more observers and admirers. But though "the kingdom of God come without observation, and is chiefly within men;" yet as far as its authority and power over the minds of men, is discovered by the genuine fruits, it deserves more regard and esteem, than any other peculiarity wherein one can excel another. The question for divine approbation will not be, whether men are high or low, learned or unlearned, whether of this or that dividing name among Christians; but whether they mind "earthly things, or seek those which are above." A man of low capacities and circumstances may be rich in faith, eminently partake of the divine nature, and be an assured heir of the promise: and how much more excellent and happy is such a man, than any of those who make the most shining figure in life, if by choice and title they have their portion only in this world?

2. We may consider this farther as the principal thing, wherein one Christian is better than another. People of all parties are apt to value others most, when they agree with themselves in bearing the same name of distinction, in observing the same outward forms of religion, or in maintaining the same speculative notions. And without doubt, though any mere name among Christians signifies little; yet it will not pass for a small matter with those who are truly devoted to Christ, that they and others should form the justest notions they can of every divine truth, and observe the externals of religion in the nearest conformity they can to the rule given them: so far they, who agree best with the standard, certainly excel others. But still it is a more vital and important difference, which is made by the degrees of spiritual mindedness. He is the best Christian, whose soul is most fully attuned to spiritual things, and hath gone farthest in overcoming the remains of a carnal mind. This is the most essential mark of growth in grace.

3. If we are ready to entertain some high thoughts of ourselves, because we are reasonable creatures, and have the capacities of mind which those of the lower creation are strangers to ; it is enough to mortify our pride, to think that this very mind of ours is become carnal. What can the nobler capacity serve for, but our greater disgrace, and aggravated condemnation, without a suitable improvement ? Better had it been for us, that we had been placed at first in the lowest rank of beings, instead of the rational, if we debase ourselves into the beast, when God has made us men : if our minds are only employed to make provision for the flesh, or to refine upon the gratifications of the body, instead of reaching after, and relishing the proper glory and happiness of an immortal spirit.

4. What reason is there to be thankful for that, which we commonly call *restraining grace* ? When a carnal mind is so natural to all, is still predominant in most people, and wherever it prevails, has so strong a bias in itself to all that is evil ; in what a dismal state would this world be for the present, if it were not for such things, as the bias of a good education, the admonitions of natural conscience, the awe of civil magistracy ; the sense of shame from men ; the providential preventions of opportunity for doing many evils, or staying off temptations to them : Such things as these, where a religious fear of God is wanting, are of great service to keep the world in tolerable order at present : without them, we should live in a constant hell upon earth, and one man of a carnal mind would be a devil to another.

5. When the human nature was sunk so low, it was unspeakable grace in the great and Holy God, to take in hand, creatures so carnalized in order to their cure. That he should form a design of their recovery from such a degenerate state : and in order to it, he should send his only begotten Son to atone for this horrid apostacy, and restore his Holy Spirit, to recover lost souls, to their true taste and primitive disposition. He saw the disorders of our nature to be so great and inveterate, that they would never be set to rights by any hand inferior to his own ; that our case was desperate, and past retrieve, if he did not undertake it himself. And therefore, notwithstanding the heinousness of the crime, though he might justly have given up for ever, creatures who had

ruined themselves ; yet out of his abundant grace, he makes our recovery practicable, sets up an all-sufficient physician, and invites us to commit ourselves into his hands for healing. There is glory to God in the highest upon this account ; let us who are directly concerned, heartily join in the song of praise, for this *good-will toward men*.

6. When a method of cure is settled by a gracious and all-wise God, how much does it lie upon every one of us in particular to see, that the carnal mind is subdued in ourselves ! that at least, the mortal symptoms are taken away, that it has no longer the dominion in us. Without this change, all our profession of religion is a vain thing ; we shall only “have a name to live, while really we are dead.” Without this, we shall find in the great day of account, that it had been better for us, if we had never been born, or never possessed of higher capacities than the brutes, or never favoured with the discoveries of the gospel, which shew us our disease, and the way of cure. Under a conviction therefore of our need, let us earnestly apply to God through Jesus Christ, for the enlightening, quickening, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, to make us “dead unto sin, but alive unto God :” and under his gracious influences, which are readily granted to the humble and hearty seeker, let us resolve upon a vigorous and persevering warfare, against the carnal mind which *wars against the soul*.

7. How thankful should every true Christian be, that he is delivered from so great a death ! Much more than for any temporal deliverance, that he has received or can receive. The evil here was the greatest that we could escape, spiritual death at present, and eternal death in prospect ; we were fast bound in the chains of this death, so that none but God could have opened us a way of escape ; and notwithstanding the discovery of such a way, thousands in every age still remain in the same miserable condition. Let all that is within us then bless the Lord, who has made us to differ.

8. Let Christians behave as sensible of their remaining carnality, and of its deadly nature, as far as it does remain. Let them live in the daily sense of this, that though the change in them be real and great, compared with the bent of depraved nature, yet it is incomplete in the best in this life : and as far as carnality remains, so much death remains. Let

us all therefore walk humbly with our God, as sensible that he has still much against us, if he would be strict to mark iniquity. Let us watch against indwelling sin, the new actings of it, and the temptations which may excite it; because we have not yet put off the harness, nor can justly apprehend ourselves out of danger. We should use habitual endeavours "to mortify our affections which are upon earth," Col. iii. 5. and to "perfect holiness in the fear of God;" as those who have not yet attained, nor are already perfect. And whenever by neglect and the force of temptation, carnality breaks out afresh, or recovers new strength, there should be an immediate care to repair and strengthen dying graces, Rev. iii. 2. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die." And since we must have occasion for this conflict more or less, while we sojourn in the body, it must ever be worthy of a real Christian, to look forward with longing expectations to the perfect life before him, where he will be entirely spiritually minded, "like the angels of God in heaven," Matt. xxii. 30.

9. Let the consideration of the sad condition of carnal minds, engage all true Christians in their proper places, to use their utmost endeavours for the recovery of others out of such a state. This becomes heads of families towards those under their immediate care, and one friend towards another, and every one according to his influence and talents. We, who are ministers, should especially *be instant in season and out of season* to this very purpose; since it is the direct design and scope of a gospel-ministry. And sure we need not a stronger motive to animate us all, than that which is left us by the apostle James, chap. v. 19, 20. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

SERMON VII.

FAITH THE MAIN PRINCIPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER.

2 COR. v. 7.

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

IT is plain from the context, that the apostle's main design in these words is to express a disadvantage in a Christian's present state, compared with that which he hath in prospect. He observes, that he and such other primitive servants of Christ, "having the earnest of the Spirit," or the Spirit as the earnest of the promised inheritance: "therefore were always confident," ver. 5, 6. that is, undaunted in their work, whatever difficulties they met with, whatever dangers they were exposed to, even of life itself: "knowing (as he adds,) that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." Or as we may render it more agreeably to the emphasis of the original; 'knowing, that whilst we sojourn in the body, we are absent from our home with the Lord.' "For we walk by faith, not by sight." That is, "While we are in the body, the main things by which we govern and conduct ourselves as Christians, are only perceived by faith; not by sight, as they will be, when we come to be present with the Lord."

Faith is represented here as a way of perception, which falls short of *sight*: and so it certainly is. But then on the other hand, it is intimated to be the best and most extensive principle we have in our state of trial: a principle of force and influence sufficient to regulate our walk and conduct: a principle strong enough at that time, to inspire the apostle himself and the

primitive Christians with boldness and courage in the face of danger ; sufficient to make them willing to leave the body, that they might arrive at the higher dispensation of *sight*. So that the greatest heights of Christianity in this world are set out here as flowing from faith.

I have therefore chosen this passage to shew the eminent place, which faith holds in forming and animating the whole Christian temper and life. “ We walk by faith, and not by sight.” We Christians conduct ourselves by faith, as the best principle of action we have, till we arrive at sight, and as esteeming it our wisdom to walk under the influence of it through our passage state.

In the prosecution of this subject, I shall,

I. Endeavour to give you some account of *faith*, the Christian’s principle. And,

II. Shew the fitness of it to have a most powerful and commanding influence upon the whole of the Christian temper and life.

Which will make way for some serious exhortations.

I. The nature of *faith* is to be explained, which is eminently the Christian principle.

When we find it distinguished from *sight*, this at once points us, both to the special objects about which it is conversant, and to that kind of persuasion which is implied in the term, *faith*.

1. The special objects, about which faith is conversant, are things not seen. This is intimated, when it is opposed to sight. And so they are expressly called more than once in the New Testament, 2 Cor. iv. 18. “ We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.” And Heb. xi. 1. “ Faith is the evidence of things not seen.” By this representation of the things which the Christian believes,

1st, They are plainly distinguished from the concerns and interests of this visible world. The generality of people have their main regard to seen things, that is to present things, which come within the notice of sense ; they govern themselves chiefly by a respect to these ; and have their hopes and fears, which are the immediate principles of action, principally raised

by the apprehension of outward good and evil. Bodily ease and pleasure, external advantages and interests, honour and reputation among men, are the chief things they desire and hope for : and the contrary to these are what they principally fear. They “ walk in the sight of their eyes,” as is said of sensual youth, Eccl. xi. 9. But the thoughts of a true Christian have another turn ; he hath obtained the notice of other things, beyond the reach of sense, and which relate to interests beyond this seen world ; and these appear to him of such reality and weight, as to command his principal attention. Present sensible things, have in themselves no farther reference than to our well or ill-being in the present life ; but the things of which a Christian is persuaded, and by the belief of which he walks, are either the eternal state itself, or such things as in their tendency and consequence have an aspect on his everlasting well or ill-being. “ The things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal,” 2 Cor. iv. 18.

2dly, They are justly described in their true and proper nature by this character, that they are things not seen. There is scarce a more comprehensive account to be given of them in a few words, than this character contains.

Many of them are in themselves *of a spiritual nature*, and so not capable of being objects of sense. God himself is so : no man hath seen him at any time, with his bodily eyes ; and yet Moses is said by faith, to have “ seen him that is invisible,” Heb. xi. 27. And it is the concern of a good man to “ set the Lord always before him,” Psal. xvi. 8. that is, to consider him as a near and constant spectator of his actions, and therefore to live and act as in his presence.

The *providence* of God is out of sight, while outward events themselves are obvious to sense ; and therefore most people have little regard to the one, while they have their heads and hearts full of the other : but a saint principally attends to the invisible hand of providence in all events, whether prosperous or afflictive. The *blessings* which are of principal account with a Christian, come not within the verge of sense ; such as, an interest in the favour of God, the privilege of being admitted among his children, the pardon of sin, the graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit. And his most formidable enemies are invisible too : indwelling corruption,

and the power and policy of the evil spirits ; yet these are objects of faith, which excite his daily vigilance.

Several things which the Christian believes, are *above his comprehension* ; not only not to be perceived by sense, but not to be seen through with the closest application of the eye of the mind ; which are attended with many difficulties he cannot solve, as to the manner of their being, and yet he firmly believes them. This is the case of many of the divine perfections, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body ; and the distinction of the blessed three, Father, Son, and Spirit, which plainly runs through the œconomy of our salvation.

Some of the objects of faith, are *things past and gone*. Though they were once seen by some, yet they are only offered to the faith of after generations, and yet of the utmost importance to be believed. Such are the creation of the world, the dispensations of providence in former ages : and above all, the Son of God manifested in flesh, his life and death and resurrection and ascension into heaven ; and the divine testimonies borne to the gospel-revelation. Only a few in one age and part of the world, had opportunity to see these things ; they are matters of faith to such as come after them.

Other things are at a distance from us, beyond our world, too far for us to have any immediate perception of them. Of this kind is the present state of the invisible world, the happiness of holy angels, and of departed saints with Christ in paradise, and the misery and torments of those dead in sin.

And lastly, many of them are *future*. They are now only to be discerned by faith, but hereafter will be seen. Such are the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the rewards and punishments which will ensue upon it. “ Every eye shall see the Redeemer, when he comes in the glory of his Father, even those who must wail because of him.” And the great transactions, for which he comes, shall be managed upon the public stage in the view of all. But now we see them only through a glass, darkly and at a distance.

2. The kind of persuasion, which a Christian hath concerning these things, is expressed by *faith*, in opposition to *sight*. Now,

1. In a larger sense, this may signify a persuasion upon

any other ground beside the evidence of sense : so as to take in *reason* and *testimony* too. So it is sometimes taken in scripture. Some of the instances of faith given by the apostle, Heb. xi. are to be known by reason as well as revelation. Thus the creation of the world may be demonstrated by reason, and yet we are said to “understand it by faith,” ver. 3. God’s being and bounty are capable of the same proof, and yet the apostle mentions them as objects of faith, ver. 6. “Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” The perfections of God may be proved from the nature and reason of things, Rom. i. 20. “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things, that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” Indeed if these could not be known antecedent to faith, there could be no foundation of faith, no means of proving the credibility and authority of revelation.

Now a Christian, in many articles of his persuasion, walks by faith in this larger meaning of the word, in distinction from sense. He is far from renouncing the evidence of reason, as far as that will go. For truths within its province, he is glad of all the assistance and light that he can have this way : and for truths, which he finds in scripture, he endeavours to strengthen his faith by arguments from reason, as far as that can help him. But,

2. More strictly and eminently, faith in scripture signifies a persuasion founded upon the testimony of God; upon a conviction that “the testimony of the Lord is sure,” Psal. xix. 7. That God’s declaring a thing to be true or good, is a sufficient proof of its being so, separate from any other argument. Now for those truths, of which reason can make some discovery, a Christian believes them also in the proper sense, if he finds them in the word of God. Yea, he mainly walks by faith for most of these : because he finds them set in a fuller and more satisfying light in scripture, than they could be by bare unassisted reason. And other truths, of which he could know nothing but by scripture, he believes upon the sole testimony of God, as far as he hath made them known : as well as those truths, to which reason gives concurring evidence. Upon this foundation, spiritual objects appear real and

substantial, though they come not within the notice of sense ; an assent is given to the most sublime and mysterious doctrines, as far as he can discern God's testimony, though reason cannot account for them ; past transactions which God hath recorded for our use, are made present to the mind, and influential according to their nature and end ; the most distant objects are brought down to the heart and affections ; and the things which are to be hereafter, are confidently expected. " Faith is the substance, or the confident expectation of things hoped for," Heb. xi. 1.

II. I am to shew the fitness of faith to have a most powerful and commanding influence upon the whole of the Christian temper and life: to be the principle of our *walk*.

1. The *objects* of faith are admirably suited to have the most universal influence: as they are things of the greatest importance and suitableness to us. Every part of divine revelation tends one way or other to promote practical godliness. All the discoveries made therein of God himself, either point out to us a subject of direct imitation, or some correspondent temper or duty, which is truly perfective of our natures. The precepts it contains are holy, just and good; and taken together, are *exceeding broad*, sufficient for our direction in every relation and circumstance of life. The motives it proposes are of the largest extent; fit to strike upon all the springs of human action, to move gratitude, to animate hope, to awaken fear, to impress a sense of duty. And these motives in every kind are of the greatest weight and moment in themselves. The highest and most undoubted authority prescribes our duty, the one supreme law-giver. The most endearing engagements are proposed to our gratitude: we are persuaded by *the infinite and innumerable mercies of God*, in creation, providence and redemption. The most *exceeding great and precious promises*, are set in our view for both worlds, to encourage our obedience: while the ways of sin are fenced up with the most awful and terrible threatenings. So that it may very justly be apprehended, that "if men hear not Moses and the prophets," Christ and his apostles, "neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," Luke xvi. 31.

2. The reason of faith is very strong and forcible, the testimony of God. We are often greatly and justly influenced by the testimony of credible men: but *if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, infinitely greater*, 1 John v. 9. All men, who believe a God, agree in this principle, that what he says must be true, because he is *a God that cannot lie*. And if there is sufficient and satisfactory evidence, indeed all that can reasonably be desired, that the scriptures are the word of God; a persuasion so founded will bring the truths of the gospel with full power upon conscience. Some of the objects of faith, as the everlasting recompences of another life, are of that vast moment to us; that if there were no more than a probability, or even a possibility of their truth, they ought in reason to determine our course on the safest side: but what force and weight are they fit to have, when considered as made certain by revelation? When we look upon eternal life, as ‘the promise which God hath promised us; And the wrath of God, as revealed from heaven against all sin and unrighteousness of men.’ What a means of establishment may it be in an hour of temptation, to be able immediately to turn our thoughts to an *it is written*, that such a practice is undoubtedly sinful, that it will exclude from the kingdom of heaven! This is a weapon at hand in the greatest exigence, in the most sudden assault, when a man hath not time or inclination for a long and laboured train of thoughts.

3. The institution of faith to be the main principle of the divine life, makes it especially successful for that purpose. What hath been hitherto said, shews its aptitude in its own nature; that the wisdom of God, in this, as in other cases, usually chooses proper means to serve the end he intends by them. But his blessing is necessary to success; and accordingly we have the encouragement of his appointment in this case. He hath prescribed faith as the principle of vital religion; as the means of “purifying our hearts,” Acts xv. 9. of “resisting the devil,” 1 Pet. v. 9. and of “overcoming the world,” 1 John v. 4. As the foundation, upon which every other grace and virtue are to be built: they are to be “added to it,” 2 Pet. i. 5. By this we abide in Christ, and derive *grace out of his fulness* for our constant supply: and in the exercise of it may expect the continued influences of the Spirit according

to all the occasions of the Christian life. For these two stand connected together in God's saving design, 2 Thess. ii. 13. "He hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." It is God's constitution, that "the just shall live by faith," Heb. x. 38. that the beginning and progress of his spiritual life shall be under the sway of this principle; and that all, which is to be expected from God to maintain and cultivate it, is to be obtained in the way of believing.

The *Application* I would make of this subject, shall be in three general exhortations from it.

1. We should be concerned to see, that we are possessed of such a faith, as is fit to be an effectual principle of the Christian temper and life. All faith will not be so. But to this purpose,

Let us be very careful, that what we believe hath a foundation in the word of God. That we take not up with the mere imaginations of our own minds, or the mere dictates of men, for objects of faith. Erroneous persuasions, as far as they are entertained, and by how much the firmer the persuasion is, are the more likely to have a bad influence upon the spiritual life. Or if men should be preserved in a good measure from their bad practical tendency; yet if afterwards the falsehood of them comes to be discerned, this too often proves an occasion of shaking men's faith in truths which are better grounded. Which shews of what consequence it is, that we search the scriptures diligently, and bring our sentiments to the test by them, that we may be able to see our foundation there.

Let it be our endeavour to extend our faith in what God hath revealed, as far as we can. That our faith take as wide a compass as may be, and that we gain more clear and distinct apprehensions of divine truths. All the discoveries made in the word of God, are one way or other subservient to practice; either for direction, or encouragement, or admonition; though all are not equally useful; and in some or other circumstance of life, we shall find the serviceableness of every object of faith. Therefore we should carefully study the rule of faith; and by that means, joined with prayer to God, pur-

sue the same aim for ourselves, which the apostle had so much at heart for the "Thessalonians, to perfect that which is lacking in our faith," 1 Thess. iii. 10.

Let it be our daily concern and prayer, to have a more full and lively persuasion of those truths, with which we are acquainted. Though we should be concerned to grow in the extent of our faith, because nothing, which God hath seen fit to reveal, is without its use one way or another, at one time or another, in the Christian life: yet I take it to be of more consequence of the two, to have our faith to grow intensively, though it should not take so wide a compass. He is the better scholar, and like to make more profitable use of his learning, who hath carefully and well digested a few books in comparison; than he, that hath cursorily run over a far greater number: so a Christian, of smaller attainments in knowledge, if he hath but a firm and lively faith in the fewer principles of religion with which his mind is furnished, will far exceed a more knowing Christian, who gives but a weak assent to his larger store of divine truths. Above all things, therefore, labour to have an assurance of faith, as far as you go: to "receive the word with much assurance, then it will be, in power," 1 Thess. i. 5. To have a realizing, presentiating faith of the unseen things which God reveals: that though it be a distinct way of perception both from sight and knowledge, yet it may come as near as may be in its proper province, to the strength of persuasion which they give in theirs. Hence strong faith is sometimes expressed by sight. "Moses saw him that is invisible," Heb. xi. 27. "Abraham saw Christ's day," John viii. 56. "We behold the glory of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. And at other times "by knowledge," John vi. 69. "We believe, and are sure, or know, that thou art the Christ," 2 Cor. v. 1. "We know that if our earthly house were dissolved, we have a building of God," &c. 1 John iii. 2. "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him," that is, we firmly believe these things. We should be solicitous, that our faith may thus "grow exceedingly," 2 Thess. i. 3. And to that end along with a continued search into the grounds of our faith nothing is more necessary than earnest prayer; "I believe, Lord, help mine unbelief," Mark ix. 24. Such a strong faith is fit to live by, and fit to die by.

2. Hereupon let it be our constant care to *walk by faith*. That is,

That faith be the prevailing principle, which discriminates and governs our tempers and lives. Let us shew the world by proper fruits, that we are not mainly swayed by the same things by which they are governed, neither by the impulse of appetite, nor by prevailing custom, nor by the authority of men, nor by worldly prospects, either of hope or fear: but that God's authority in his word is allowed principally to give law to us; that we live by rule, as under God's eye now, and in view of a life to come.

That we reduce every object of our faith one way or other to practice. Every truth we entertain is useless, if it be not thus employed; and therefore we should not content ourselves with the bare speculation of any of them, but consider what influence each of them hath upon practice; either for the immediate direction and regulation of it, or to dispose us to the performance of it; either as a motive to ingenuity, or a pattern for imitation, or as representing the danger of neglecting our duty, or of acting contrary to it, or as a foundation of hope of assistance or acceptance in our course of obedience. A right apprehension of the practical tendency of particular truths, will be a good preparation for the actual use of them, as there shall be occasion. And that is the next thing I would press, as included in this exhortation.

That in the various particular occasions of the Christian life, we actually make use of the several objects of faith to their proper purposes, as *a word in season*. For instance,

1. Every known precept of God should be carefully reduced to practice, as occasions offer to make one or another our present duty. That is to walk by our belief of his commands.

2. The perfections of God should severally be called to mind and considered by us, as each of them may be most suitable to our present case, to promote our conscientious and comfortable walking with God. In an hour of temptation from secrecy, we should especially recollect his all-seeing eye. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. In great distresses and troubles, it is peculiarly seasonable to think of his almighty power to support or

to deliver us ; and of his infinite goodness and compassion, which assures us, that he doth not willingly afflict, that he hath gracious ends in his corrections, and that, if we trust in him and keep his way, he will not suffer them to be insupportable either in degree or continuance. When we are injuriously treated by men, we should turn our thoughts to his justice : that he righteously punishes us, how much soever men may be blame-worthy, as David reflected in the case of Shimei ; and that he will right us in his own time, as far as is necessary : and to his goodness ; how much “better it is to fall into the hands of God than of men,” 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. Are we in pressing dangers ? His power and wisdom should be our relief, as they were Jehoshaphat’s, 2 Chron. xx. 6. “In thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee ?” And ver. 12. “We know not what to do, but our eyes are up unto thee.” Under the penitent sense of sin, his infinite mercy is our refuge: “With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption,” Psal. cxxx. 7. Ay, and his justice and faithfulness in Christ, 1 John i. 9. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”

3. His providence should be eyed and owned according to our circumstances from time to time. Praise and thanksgiving should be kept alive by the believing view of his gracious hand in all our mercies : and every one of them should be represented to our minds, as an engagement to cheerful obedience ; that as they are new every morning, and fresh every moment, there should ever be a new and fresh zeal and fervour in our grateful returns. Our afflictions and exercises should not be past over, as if they *arose out of the dust* ; but God’s hand should be acknowledged, and his end attended to in them, and faithfully answered in them, as far as it can be discovered. His sovereign pleasure is patiently to be submitted to. In any desires and hopes we entertain of present good things, there should be mixed with them a resignation to his holy will ; *if the Lord will*. And in every difficulty and distress of life, our trust should be in his all-sufficiency, and our cares cast upon him. This is walking by faith in God’s providence.

4. His promises should be suitably applied for our encouragement through our course. These should have a prevail-

ing influence upon us beyond all temporal motives ; and in case of a competition with such motives, be allowed to carry the day. And the promises particularly suitable to our present case, ought to be called to mind from time to time, and lived upon ; the promises of divine conduct, in the sense of the weakness of our understanding and judgment ; of strength, when we think of our inability for service or suffering ; of grace answerable to our day and work, when we are called out to hard services : of proper supplies, when we are in our outward burthens and wants ; of acceptance and pardon upon our sincerity, when we are proceeding in our way, and yet cannot but be sensible of our imperfections ; and of grace to enable us to persevere, while we are endeavouring it, and yet think of the oppositions in our way. Hereby we shall make the proper use of God's promises, according to God's intention in delivering them, and our own occasion for the relief they contain. The worth and excellence of the promises, should also excite our care to have the terms of them fulfilled in us ; and those of *grace and glory*, as the greatest and the best, should have the main influence upon us. This is walking by faith in the promises.

5. The terrors of the Lord should be represented to our minds for our admonition and caution. They are left upon record to keep saints awake, as well as to rouse sinners out of their lethargy ; and we should attend to them, to quicken us when we are apt to be remiss : to excite our care and caution, lest after our profession and hopes, we should "at last be cast away," 1 Cor. ix. 27. Or to recover us to repentance, when we have fallen ; or to fortify us against compliance in an hour of temptation.

6. Christ should be made use of and applied to, in his several offices, through the whole course of the Christian life, for the several purposes for which he is offered. We are to "live the life we live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God," Gal. ii. 20. His doctrine and example should often be set in our view by faith, as our great teacher and pattern. Under the sense of our guilt and unworthiness, our reliance ought to be on the perfection of his sacrifice, and the prevalence of his intercession ; and the acceptance of our persons and services, is only to be expected for his sake. And we are to rely upon his grace as our head for constant supplies.

Another necessary exhortation from our present subject remains,

3. Let us persevere in walking by faith, till we arrive at sight. "Believing to the saving of the soul, stands opposed to drawing back, which is declared to be unto perdition." Heb. x. 39. Faith comes short of sight; but if we are governed by it, it brings us every day nearer to sight. And by how much the nearer we see the day approaching, so much the more should faith take wing, entering into that which is within the veil. If our hands hang down, when the shadows of the evening come upon us, our hope must sink too; and if we have any faith left, it must reproach us, that when we are in nearer view of Canaan than formerly, we flag, and suffer ourselves more to be carried away by sense. Let us not abate or decline in the life, which is animated by faith; but "knowing the time, let us awake out of sleep," if we have suffered meaner principles to gain the ascendant over us; and if we are yet pressing forward with full sails toward the haven, let it be our care that we do not relax our zeal and application; but live as faith dictates, till the rewards of faith are obtained.

To enforce all this, it may be proper to consider, that--

A life of faith is highly reasonable. It is to govern ourselves by matters which are at once of the highest importance and reality: the greatest concerns we can have in view; with the testimony of God, to support and warrant our concern about them.

It is at present the most satisfactory and comfortable life. To have no view beyond sense, must ever make this world a howling wilderness; and we cannot have any satisfactory view of a future rest, by any other light than that of faith. This therefore alone can minister to us the great solace of life. And besides that, to *live by rule*, is a rest to the mind; which we shall most securely do, by living under the conduct of faith. And in all turns the divine perfections, providence and promises, are a fountain of peace and serenity, which cannot be equalled either by the most agreeable present enjoyments, or by the best prospects we can form on the measures of human policy.

To walk by faith, bears the nearest resemblance to the life of heaven, of any thing we can attain, while we are pro-

bationers. A believer lives upon the same objects, as those above live upon in full happiness; the same God and Redeemer; only these objects are very differently perceived above and here. "Now we see them through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as we are known," 1 Cor. xiii. 12. The Christian's portion is the same in both worlds; but now he hath it in title, and there will have it in possession: now he sees it afar off; then he will have it at hand, and in full enjoyment.

Whatever imperfection attends this life now, will soon be over and at an end. Though faith is not sight, yet it will very quickly be turned into sight. It is as sure a presage of the perfect light of heaven, as the morning light is of the clear shining of noon-day.

And this walk upon the foundation of believing, has been the walk of "the excellent of the earth," in every age of the world. As many of them as successively have arrived at glory, have "through faith and patience inherited the promises," Heb. vi. 12. It is the design of the apostle, in the whole eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, to shew that faith conducted the principal worthies of the Old Testament, to all their commendable actions in life, and to the heavenly rewards at the end of it. And the apostle in the text declares, that this was the animating principle of himself and other servants of God, under the New Testament; so he had before observed, chap. iv. 13. "that we have the same spirit of faith," with good men, under the Mosaical dispensation. We have the same principle of faith to rule in us, which inspired them with all their excellencies: but we have fuller discoveries to employ and support our faith; and therefore should be stronger in it, and perform greater things under its influence.

SERMON VIII.

GODLINESS; OR, THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER TOWARDS GOD.



2 PET. i. 6.

—*And to patience, godliness.*

THE Christian spirit has been considered in several *general* representations: I would now enter upon the *particular* branches, which constitute it; and this of *godliness* naturally comes first to be treated of, or the religious regard we owe to the blessed God. The mention of this is so introduced in the words before us, that it will directly suit my design, which is to recommend it as a most important part of that temper, to which we are called by Christianity.

The apostle had observed ver. 3. what great and good things are conferred upon us by the divine power, even “all things that pertain unto life and godliness; meaning probably all things pertaining to a godly life: and then in ver. 4. that we have “exceeding great and precious promises given us, for this very end, that by them we might be partakers of a divine or godlike nature.” In the following verses he presses those, who professed Christianity, to pursue this end; to exercise and cultivate the various graces of the Christian life, ver. 5, &c. *And besides this*; or rather, as such benefits, such promises are given you for such an end; so do ye “also for this reason, or in like manner giving all diligence on your part,” add, or join together as in a choir, the following excellencies. “Add to your faith,” to your inward persuasion of these good tidings of the gospel, *virtue*,

or boldness and resolution in maintaining faith and a good conscience. "And to virtue, knowledge;" a gradual advance in the knowledge of the truths and duties of Christianity, with which you are in some measure already acquainted. "And to knowledge, temperance;" in the moderate use of the good things of this present life. "And to temperance, patience;" in bearing cheerfully the evils of life. "And to patience, godliness;" such a regard to God, as will carry you through the whole of your course. Here we are now to stop, in the account which the apostle gives of this chain of graces.

Ἐυσεβεία, which in this place, as well as in many others, is translated *godliness*, most strictly signifies *right worship* or *devotion*; and on the other hand in some places, it is taken so largely, as to import the whole of practical religion, or a disposition to universal goodness. But here I apprehend it is to be understood in a middle sense; neither to be confined to mere acts of worship, nor to be extended to the whole compass of our duty; but plainly to signify such a temper and behaviour towards God, as becomes his excellencies, and our relations to him: or more briefly, a disposition to pay all proper regards to God. It is often used in the same sense in other places of the New Testament. So it stands distinguished from *honesty*, when the apostle sums up a good life in this, "to live in all godliness and honesty," 1 Tim. ii. 2. And the grace of God is said to teach us, "to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," Tit. ii. 11, 12. Where *sobriety* includes all our personal duties and self-government; *righteousness* all that we ought to do, as we stand related to our fellow-creatures; and *godliness* our inclination to all that which is more immediately due to God. And just in the same sense I understand it here. We are then to observe,

That godliness is a temper of mind, to which we are particularly called by Christianity.

Upon which head I would shew, 1. Wherein godliness or piety consists. 2. The indispensable obligations, under which Christians lie to this.

I. We are to inquire, what are the regards due from us to the blessed God, or wherein the right temper of the soul towards God consists.

1. *A reverential fear of God*, is an essential branch of godliness. This is so necessary a part of a good man's frame, that there is no single phrase more frequently made use of in scripture to express religion in general, than the fear of God. It is a temper arising from an apprehension of his Majesty and supreme excellence. "Shall not his excellency make you afraid, and his dread fall upon you?" Job xiii. 11. From the infinite distance that there is between him and us; not only as he is "in heaven, while we are upon earth; but as all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity." Isa. xl. 17. It is founded in his absolute superiority over us, and our entire dependence upon him; that there is none we have so much to hope or to fear from, as we stand upon good or ill terms with him; because he hath a sovereign and irresistible power over us, and over every thing that concerns us. And it results from those relations wherein we stand to him: which bespeak authority and rightful claims on his part, and profound submission and awe on ours. We should have such a regard to God, as a subject hath to his sovereign, a servant for his master, a child for his father. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts," Mal. i. 6. But as the distance between God and us in all these relations, infinitely exceeds the distance, that can be between any such relations upon earth: so our awe and reverence should proportionably be higher.

Upon such grounds as these, a reverential fear of God is due from all intelligent creatures. It was so from man in innocence; it is so from the highest angels in heaven; and will be the temper of holy men, and holy angels to all eternity. In token of this, those above, "fall before the throne on their faces worshipping God," Rev. vii. 11. And so the seraphims are represented, "as covering their faces with their wings, and saying one to another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." Isa. vi. 2, 3. They who know God most, and bear most of his likeness, and share most fully in his favour, have the profoundest reverence for him, arising from the sense of his infinite perfection, unparalleled glory, and sovereign dominion; while they are above all such fear as gives uneasiness and anxiety; for their perfect love prevents that. Those who

sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, express themselves as if they could hardly suppose it possible there should be any without this fear; "Great and marvellous, (say they,) are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O King of saints: Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy," Rev. xv. 3, 4. And if the saints and angels above, reverence the glorious Majesty in the heavens, certainly we should cultivate such a frame on earth. The apostle calls us to it upon the foot of the gospel, Heb. xii. 28, 29. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved," the spiritual kingdom of Christ, which is set up upon the dissolution of the Jewish economy, and is to continue to the end of time; "let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." He is so represented even by the gospel itself.

As we are sinners, our fear justly goes farther; from the holiness of his nature, the justice of his government, and the threatenings of his law. In such a state, we have room to apprehend the severe marks of his displeasure in time; and especially to "fear him, as able and ready to destroy both soul and body in hell," Matt. x. 28.

We are relieved indeed against these fears by the grace of the gospel, and the mediation of Christ: so that the greatest of sinners ought not so to dread the wrath of an offended God, as to despair of his mercy upon repentance. But still as long as they remain in their sins, they ought to represent to their minds the terrors of the Lord, as well as the riches of his grace, to excite them to return to their Father. The gospel, along with the good tidings it brings, makes a fuller representation, than ever was made before, of the severity of God's wrath against sinners: "The wrath of God is there revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men," Rom. i. 28. And a sorer punishment is threatened in many places to those who reject the gospel, than to other sinners, John iii. 19. Matt. xi. 24. Heb. x. 28, 29. Surely this is done to awaken answerable fears in the minds of sinners. And no man can upon good reason get above such fears, farther than he hath evidence of his own sincere return to God. For good men themselves, while the divine nature in them is so very imperfect, it may be expected, that the generality of them

will have a mixture of hope and fear about their own sincerity ; and this mixture can hardly fail to produce some fears of God's wrath, along with their hopes of his mercy in Christ. And indeed the scripture represents it as useful for the best men in this life to entertain some apprehensions of their own apostacy, and upon that supposition, of their final ruin. St Paul tells us in his own case, that "he kept his body in subjection, lest after his preaching to others, he himself should be a cast-away," 1 Cor. ix. 27. And it is his advice to Christians in general, Heb. iv. 1. "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." One eminent way, whereby "he who hath begun a good work in us, performeth it to the day of Christ," is by keeping alive an apprehension of the danger of apostacy, and so awakening our constant diligence and caution in our duty. But there will be no occasion for this in heaven ; no fear, but that which is reverential, will follow us thither.

2. *A supreme love to God*, is another eminent branch of godliness. This is of such importance, that Christ sums up all the first table in it, Matth. xxii. 37, 38. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." This supposes an apprehension of God as most amiable and good ; for we love any thing under that notion ; and God deserves our highest love, as being supremely good. He is in himself most excellent ; fit to be our chief happiness ; and hath actually shewn himself our best friend ; upon all which accounts our supreme love is due to him.

1. There should be the highest esteem and veneration for God, as he is in himself possessed of all possible excellencies. We feel ourselves ready to esteem real worth, when we see it, even though we are not ourselves direct gainers by it ; we should justly blame ourselves, if we did not secretly value a man of steady virtue, a public benefactor, a wise and a good prince, though we are not like to be the better for him ourselves, and have no knowledge of him but by fame or history. And if we love and esteem a worthy man, shall we not have the highest veneration for that blessed being, who "is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all?" 1 John i. 5. In whom all excellencies meet together, which can any where be found scattered among creatures ; and who possesseth them all

in the most perfect manner, without any mixture or alloy, and without a possibility of losing them. His goodness and excellency tarnishes all the beauty and excellence of creatures; because he is good in such a sense as none can be acknowledged good besides. "There is none good but one, that is God," Matth. xix. 17. He alone is perfectly, originally, necessarily, and unchangeably good. He has every excellence in the highest degree; almighty power, unerring wisdom, infinite goodness unblemished truth, spotless holiness; every thing fit to raise the wonder, and engage the delight of an intelligent being. His glory shines out in the works of creation and providence, and so is laid open to every eye: and in the dispensation of grace, it is farther manifested to us so, "as eye had not seen before, nor ear heard, nor had entered into the heart of man." We love God then, when we entertain high and admiring thoughts of him, according to these discoveries which he hath made of himself: when we venerate him as the most perfect being; and give him the glory of his several excellencies, as we turn our thoughts either to the works of nature, or to the wonders of grace, or the prospects of glory. This love of God for his own perfection, though it is not ordinarily the first act of love to be discerned in a recovered sinner: yet is indeed the greatest and the most noble of all others: the new nature disposes to it, and will certainly rise to it; if not at first, yet in its consequent acts: it may sometimes be discerned in good men, even while they are in doubt about their own interest in God; they yet esteem and value him, and are careful to speak well of him. This for certain will be the main temper of heaven, where "the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sits on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are, and were created," Rev. iv. 10, 11.

2. There should be a supreme affection for God, as the most suitable good to us. Though a mind rightly disposed, will esteem real excellence, even where there is no apprehension of self-interest; yet doubtless it gives new life to affection, when we can consider such excellence, as some way or other conducing to our own happiness; and by how much the more completely an object is suited to our interest and advantage, so

much the more will our hearts be united to it. Accordingly love to God includes this, that we centre in him as our chief good : that we are of the Psalmist's temper, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon earth, that I can desire besides thee." When any thing is judged a suitable good to us, love will act differently, according as that good is apprehended either to be yet only attainable, or as in actual possession. And so here,

Love to God expresses itself in strong desires of his favour, while an interest in him is doubtful, or the contrary feared. Such a soul will say, I see that God alone can be a satisfying portion to me ; in his favour is my life ; without that, though I had all the world, I should still be destitute and miserable. This engages to earnest desires, that he may have God for his reconciled God and Father, and that he may share in his pardoning mercy, and covenant-love. He is content to part with all for this, rather than miss of it, and it is his resolved aim and business to secure this, more than any thing else. He can say with David, Psal. cxix. 58. "I intreated thy favour with my whole heart. Lord lift up the light of thy countenance upon me," Psal. iv. 6. He cannot be easy, while a cloud remains upon his Father's face : It is as death to him to apprehend him displeased ; nor can he be satisfied, till he is reconciled. He cries with earnestness like David, in Psal. li. 11, 12. "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; and uphold me with thy free Spirit."

On the other hand, love to God acts in a way of delight, as far as a man can hope, that he may call God his. He can be at rest in God, when he has such views of him ; and rejoices in divine favour, more than if he could call the whole world his. Nothing animates his praises more, than that God has inclined him to centre in such a portion, Psal. xvi. 5, 6, 7. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup : thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage, I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel ;" this counsel, to fix upon so good a portion. In this he can rejoice in the darkest hours for outward things. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ;

yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab. iii. 17, 18. Nothing is so delightful to him in the view of heaven itself, as that he shall be there in the blissful presence of God, and that "he shall be satisfied, when he awakes with his likeness."

And indeed, either of these are true expressions of love to God; desires of him under doubts of reconciliation, and delight in the sense of his favour. But it is more usually expressed in the former way by good men in this life. Few Christians here are got entirely above all doubts about their state; through the darkness of their apprehensions and infirmity of their faith, or the disorders of a melancholy body; and especially from the imperfection of the new nature, and the defects of their obedience; the love of most Christians to their God shews itself more now, in desires to make their peace with him, and to clear up their interest, and in mourning for their offences, and his displeasure, than in the acts of delight and joy.

3. There ought to be the affection of *gratitude* from the sense of God's actual benignity and love to us. In esteeming him for his own excellency, we love him for his own sake; in centering in him as a suitable good to us, we love him for our sakes: but in gratitude for his benignity and love, there is a mixture of both. His love to us affects us from a sense of our own interests, and that sets us upon thoughts of becoming returns. This love is the acting of ingenuity from the sense of benefits. It is like the filial love of an ingenuous child to a tender and indulgent parent, upon a review of his care and kindness, in preserving him, providing for him, doing him all the good that lay in his power; which engages him to study to requite his parents in the best manner he can. Such love to God there is in a holy soul. All the expressions of God's good-will to him; all his mercies in the sphere of nature, grace and glory; as they are the greatest that can be, so they fix this for the sense of his soul, that God is his great benefactor? and "he will sing unto the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with him," Psal. xiii. 6. It is his solicitous inquiry, "What shall I render?" Psal. cxvi. 12. From a principle of gratitude, as well as of interest, he renders himself to God. He repels temptation with this powerful thought, "how shall I do this evil, and sin against God?"

And his course of obedience is designed to be a thankful memorial.

3. *Trust in God*, is another eminent part of godliness. It is an homage due from us to the great God, that we place our supreme confidence in him. It is founded in a persuasion of his all-sufficiency, and of his inviolable faithfulness in performing his word and engagements. As far as I trust a man, I suppose him able to do what I trust him for, that he hath given me some encouragement to believe his willingness, and that he will not deceive me. It must be so in any regular trust in God. We must be firmly persuaded of his all-sufficiency, that he is "able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." But then it is of the utmost concern to us, that we admit not expectations from God for things which he hath never promised, nor in any other way, than according to the tenor of his promises; but that we "hope in his word," Psal. cxxx. 5. Our trust should run parallel with his promises. Where he has been pleased positively to declare what he will do, we should firmly depend, believing that "he is faithful who hath promised;" whatever difficulties or discouragements may lie in the way of our hopes. Thus we should "commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator," 1 Pet. iv. 19. relying upon a good event and issue, while we maintain such a course, whatever we may be called to do or suffer; because on such terms he hath undertaken for it. But where his promises are made with a reserve for his own sovereignty, or the riches of his superior wisdom, as he knows far better than we "what is good for man in this life;" there we should not allow ourselves to be positive and determinate in our expectations of particular events; but cast our cares upon him in a more general manner; relying upon this, that in the way of duty, he will do that which upon the whole is best for us: or that "he will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly," Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

4. *Giving credit to his testimony*, in all that he reveals for truth, is near akin to the former; and a proper homage to God upon the foot of his infallible truth, that he neither can be mistaken himself, nor is under any temptation to deceive us. Whatever he says, must be true, and accordingly claims our firm assent, though we should have no other evidence

for it besides his testimony, though we should not be able to account for the manner of it, or to solve every difficulty that may arise in the mind against it. We should indeed be very careful, that we have the testimony of God to support our persuasion, that we have used the best means in our power, both natural and appointed, to understand his meaning: when we have done this, it is an essential branch of true godliness to believe upon the sole authority of God: in so doing, we “set to our seal, that God is true,” John iii. 33.

5. *A readiness to obey him without reserve*, in all that he requires, is a principal part of piety; that we are brought to such a disposition as Saul’s at his conversion, when he said, “What wilt thou have me to do?” Acts ix. 6. That we are sincerely desirous to discover his will for every part of our duty, and then absolutely to govern ourselves by it: though it should be ever so contrary to our former inclinations and practices, or to the custom of the world about us, or to our secular interests. This is true Christian piety, to resolve upon cheerful and universal obedience to the divine will, as far as we can discern it. And it is a frame of spirit, resulting from an apprehension of his perfect wisdom, justice, and goodness, and his sovereign authority over us.

6. *A submission of soul to all his providential disposals*, is another branch of godliness, and founded upon a belief of the same perfections of God as the former: that we not only assent to this as a truth, that our times and all our affairs are in his hands; but that we give a hearty complacential consent, that so, they should be; and accordingly from time to time, through all particular events, acquiesce in his pleasure, when it is signified to us by the course of his providence; without murmuring complaints, because he is the sovereign Lord of all: “who shall say unto him, what dost thou? Shall he not do what he will with his own?” without impeaching the justice of his proceedings; for “shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” With a firm persuasion of his good and gracious intentions even in the use of his rod, being in subjection to him, as to the Father of our spirits, who chastens us not merely upon will and pleasure, but “for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness,” Heb. xii. 9, 10. And with a persuasion at the same time, that his infinite wisdom can direct the darkest dispensations to reach such gracious de-

signs ; that he sees not as man sees, and his ways are not as our ways ; but that he can make those things signally to work together for our good, which from their sensible aspect seem all against us. A great deal of true piety lies in such a placid subjection of soul to God.

7. *Designing his glory* as the great scope of our actions. This arises from an apprehension of his fitness to be made the last end of intelligent creatures, by reason of his supreme excellence and dominion. "Whether therefore we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. We should choose to do or forbear a thing, which may otherwise be indifferent, according as in particular circumstances the one or the other may appear most likely to promote his honour, and to lead others about us to high and honourable thoughts of God and religion ; and we should make every lower aim to give place to this as our last and greatest. Such a temper of mind is essential to vital Christianity. "None of us [Christians,] (says the apostle,) liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord ; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's," Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

8. *A studious concern to approve ourselves to him* in our whole conduct, is a necessary ingredient of true godliness. That we "study to shew ourselves approved to him." 2 Tim. ii. 15. "And whatever we do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men," Col. iii. 23. This is a temper resulting from the consideration of God, as the being with whom principally we have to do ; by whose sentence not only our present lot must be ordered, but our condition to all eternity. Hence the apostle says, 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. "With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment ; yea, I judge not my ownself," that is, not with an apprehension, that my own judgment is definitive : "but he that judgeth me, is the Lord." We should be concerned for his approbation in all things, because he is a constant spectator of our actions, and of our very hearts themselves. It should be a frequent turn of thought with us, "Thou, God, seest me ; thou understandest my thoughts afar off ; there is not a word in my tongue but thou knowest it altogether : " And therefore we should "set the Lord always before us," Psal. xvi. 8.

9. *A care to imitate him*, as far as he proposes himself to our imitation, enters into the notion of godliness. Which is a regard we owe to God upon account of his supreme excellence, because we cannot copy after a better pattern. It was the original glory of our natures, to be made after the image of God; and therefore the more we recover his likeness again, the more we come back to ourselves. But I enlarge not on this here, since an entire discourse hath been employed upon it.

10. *A disposition to serve God in spirit and in truth*, in all the ways of his instituted worship, is farther included in a godly temper; an inclination and bent of soul to the proper exercises of godliness, and to the performance of these in a godly manner. Prayer and praise, and the confession of sin, reading and hearing God's word, and the celebration of the sacraments, are services wherein he requires us to be employed; by social worship to pay him a visible homage; and both in public and private devotions to exercise the several inward pious dispositions, of which I have been speaking, fear and love, and trust, and submission. In these we are to draw near to God, and then may expect him to draw near to us. Godliness will engage us to "walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, blameless," Luke i. 6. and to love the habitation of his house, and all the exercises wherein he appoints us to honour him, and allows us to converse with him. But then piety will not suffer us to rest in the mere external services, but will make us especially careful of the inward part, that they be truly spiritual sacrifices; in which our spirits are intently engaged, pious and devout affections offered up; and that they may be "acceptable to God through Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. ii. 5.

These particulars will explain that branch of the Christian temper, which is strictly called *godliness*. The special obligations of Christians to it, will be the subject of another discourse.

I would only now desire you to examine yourselves upon this first and leading head of all true godliness, your temper toward God. Do you "live without God in the world?" Or without paying a supreme regard to him? Or else, though you are obliged to reside at present in a sensible world, and to converse with sensible things, do you chiefly "eye him who is

invisible? Do you walk with God?" as the character of a truly good man is sometimes drawn in scripture. Can you say with David, "mine eyes are ever towards the Lord?" Psal. xxv. 15. That you "walk in his fear all the day long? That your hearts are directed into the love of God? That you trust in him at all times?" That you can take his word in any case? That you are willing to obey him without exception, and to submit to him without a murmur? That his honor and approbation are the scope you propose to yourselves? That you would gladly be as like him, as he allows you to be? That a day in his courts, or an hour spent in converse with him, is better than a thousand elsewhere? That you cannot content yourselves with appearing to men to perform religious duties in an unexceptionable manner, unless you can have hope, that the God who sees in secret will approve you openly; This is real godliness, that to which Christianity was designed to recover us. Such worshippers God desireth; and if this be our temper, it is a good presage whither we are going, even to a world, where "God shall be all in all;" where the highest regards will be paid him by all the inhabitants, but after the manner of that perfect state, and freed from all the imperfections of ours.

SERMON IX.

GODLINESS; OR, THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER TOWARDS GOD.

2 PET. i. 6.

—*And to patience, godliness.*

IN the last discourse the nature of godliness, in the most strict sense of the word was considered; or the right temper of the soul toward God. I am now in the second place to shew—

II. The obligations, which lie upon Christians to exercise themselves unto godliness: or to maintain and exercise a constant pious regard to God.

1. This is one principal end of the gospel. As the bias of innocent nature was in the first place to the performance of that duty which is owing to God; so any designs of man's recovery from the apostacy, could not fail to take in this as a principal part, his restoration to godliness. The sin and the misery too, from which above all things we needed relief, was our alienation from God. It was impossible for the rational nature to be set right, and yet remain disaffected to God. When therefore he set a saving design on foot, this must be his first intention and scope, to bring man back to his due affection and allegiance to his own blessed self, and to have the mind of man cured of all hostility and unsuitableness of temper towards the God that made him. For this end "Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," 1 Pet. iii. 18. We were gone off from him, prone to live without him, unmindful of the relations and obligations

wherein we stood to him, and destitute of impressions and afflictions correspondent to his perfections and to the concern we have with him. Now the great intention of the blessed Jesus, in submitting to suffer for us, was to atone for this horrid provocation, to procure the divine Spirit to renew us, and to encourage and dispose us by all "to arise and return to our Father." The good will of God to us, his readiness to receive us upon our return, his gracious intentions for those who do return, are all manifested in the gospel for this very purpose, to revive godliness in creatures who had lost it. We are allowed to know, that "there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, Psal. cxxx. 4. that he may be religiously feared again by apostate creatures. "The grace of God bringing salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us on the one hand to deny all ungodliness, and on the other to live godly in this world," Tit. ii. 11, 12. that is, to live in the exercise of the fear and love of God, and of all these holy dispositions toward him, wherein godliness consists. The whole gospel is "a doctrine according to godliness," 1 Tim. vi. 3. and tending to form that temper in us. All the truths it reveals, the precepts it contains, and the promises and threatenings with which they are enforced, have this for their chief scope and aim, to recal us to live to God.

2. All other seeming virtues, without godliness, can never be acceptable to God; and then they will be of little service to us. It will be a poor reward of them, to secure thereby a fair character among men, or to obtain the highest ends which can be served by them in this short and momentary life; if they will turn to no good account in the future world; if our judge after all shall give us our portion with hypocrites, and rank us among the workers of iniquity. And he will certainly do so, if true godliness be wanting, whatever splendid appearances may be in our character; and that upon two accounts.

Because of the partiality of such seeming goodness. While regard appears to be paid to some parts of duty, a most important part to God himself is neglected. "He that keeps the whole law, and offends in one point, is guilty of all," says St James, chap. ii. 10. Though a man should observe many points of his duty, and yet stately and allowedly neglect others, which are equally plain and obvious; this cannot be a

genuine or acceptable obedience. What he attends to and performs, though in fact it is his duty, yet he cannot be supposed to do it merely for that reason; otherwise he would mind the other branches of his duty also. Thus, let men be ever so sober and regular in the conduct of themselves, let their behaviour be ever so unexceptionable to their fellow-creatures; yet, if they remember not their Creator, if they live without God in the world, their goodness is all partial, and therefore insincere. Can you think that the great God will dispense with the neglect and contempt of himself, because people maintain a decency in their behaviour to their fellow-creatures? If he will not accept him, who “breaks [with a stated allowance] one of the least of his commandments,” Matt. v. 19. shall any one flatter himself, that he will overlook the open contempt of *the first and great commandment*, the fear and love and service of himself? You value yourselves, it may be, upon doing nobody wrong; but will you *rob God*, and yet hope to be guiltless? Your first and greatest regards are due to him; your obligations to these are written in nature and scripture, as with the point of a diamond. And therefore in any nation, especially in a Christian one, he that feareth not God whatever righteousness he seemeth to work, is not accepted with him. This is farther evident,

Because there is no religion in any appearances of goodness, farther than they proceed from a regard to God, as the principle of them. The regularity and usefulness of men’s outward actions is all that can recommend them to other men, because they are not capable judges of the springs and principles that animate them: But God sees not as man sees; he judges not according to outward appearance; but mainly regards the temper of mind, from which men’s actions flow, and particularly the respect they have to himself in all they do; and he proceeds by that measure in his acceptance. We are required to “do, whatever we do, as unto the Lord, and not as unto men,” Col. iii. 23. Now when we restrain our appetites and passions, when we are just and meek, and charitable and beneficial to others; out of a respect to God, obedience to his will, in imitation of his example, with an eye to his glory: this consecrates every moral duty, and makes it truly an act of religion, so that it “is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour,” 1 Tim. ii. 3. But if godliness

be not the foundation and principle of such actions, they are but the body without the soul ; when God comes to pass his judgment on them, he may say, *did ye these things at all unto me ?* You did them out of humour, or to be seen of men, or to serve some wordly aim ; and then verily you have your reward : expect no reward from me, since you did them not to me.

3. Godliness is a necessary foundation of all the other branches of the Christian temper, and the only principle which can carry it through. Therefore we find *the fear of God* so often made use of in scripture to express the whole of religion and goodness ; and it is said to be “the beginning of wisdom,” Prov. ix. 10. Hence, as the whole chain of graces and duties enters into the character of a true Christian, so he is under the strongest obligations to cultivate a right temper of mind towards God, as the necessary principle of all the rest. And that it is such a principle, may appear from several considerations.

A sincere regard to God, and that only, will engage us to make conscience of every Christian duty. Other motives may sway in particular instances ; but nothing will be sufficient to carry us through the whole of the Christian life, besides religion properly so called. A submission to God’s authority, an aim at his glory, a belief of his eye upon us, an expectation of his judgment, a sense of his love to us, and a strong affection to him in our souls thereupon, will have a vital influence upon every part of duty. If we go upon this ground, “of esteeming all his precepts concerning all things to be right,” as David did, Psal. cxix. 128. that will carry us through the whole compass of duty ; for his commandment is exceeding broad, and reaches to every case, wherein we can be concerned to act. A supreme regard to God’s honour, will engage us to be of this temper “that whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest,” or honourable, “whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, we shall think on these things,” Phil. iv. 8. An apprehension of his constant observation, will quicken our endeavours, will reach to every place, and frame, and duty, and animate us to preform it in the best manner we can. And the love of God ruling in us will

make us to esteem "none of his commandments grievous," 1 John v. 3. We shall run the way of his precepts, with alacrity, with speed, "hasting and not delaying to keep them, when our heart is so enlarged," Psal. cxix. 32.

A respect to God, and that only, will effectually obviate all the discouragements and temptations, which lie in the way of our duty. Whatever care and caution men may be led to use, when they are seen by other men; an agreeable temptation to sin, backed with the circumstance of secrecy, will hardly be overcome without an eye to the invisible God. This secured Joseph in all his youthful prime against the criminal and repeated solicitations of his mistress, though he might have expected considerable advantages from her favour and interest upon a compliance: yet says he, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. When a duty is unfashionable, and will rather procure contempt than reputation; what beside a religious respect to God's authority, and approbation, can make a man *stedfast and unmoveable* in it? But when godliness has the ascendant, a man will judge a general esteem among men of little weight, when set in balance with the judgment of God. This thought, that "that which is highly esteemed among men, is often abomination in the sight of God," Luke xvi. 15. will suspend a good man's regard for their judgment, till he has searched into the mind of God; and when once he is satisfied what God would have him to do, he will be content to pass *through honour or dishonour, through good report or bad report*, in obedience to God. Ungrateful returns for what was well meant, for good offices done, will soon dishearten and cool the zeal of those, who act upon a lower principle than the fear of God; while a devoted soul will go on in his way, and be fully satisfied with the prospect of God's approbation and gracious reward. But the force of this principle will appear especially in such cases, where our duty may expose us to danger and sufferings, to the loss of outward enjoyments, of friends, of estate, of liberty, of life itself. He that fears and loves any thing more than God, will break with him upon such an occasion. But a man, whose profession is supported by true religion, will behave like the three Jewish youths when they were sentenced by Nebuchadnezzar to the fiery furnace; "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us:—

But if not, be it known unto thee, that we will not serve thy gods," Dan. iii. 17, 18. He will trust God, either to preserve the comforts which are most threatened for God's sake, or to preserve his soul to his heavenly kingdom.

A regard to God alone will reach our inward temper in all we do : and that is of principal account with him, in reference to every grace and virtue. This principle alone will make us concerned to cultivate purity of heart, as well as of conversation ; to suppress malice and hatred and envy in our breasts, as well as the outward expressions of them ; to guard against the thought of foolishness. An eye to God as the searcher of hearts, as desiring truth in the inward parts, will induce a man to look principally to the disposition of the heart : but a fair outside will serve a man, who lives without God in the world.

4. A godly temper is eminently recommended to Christians by the example of their Lord and Master. The man Christ Jesus was the greatest pattern of genuine piety, that ever was shewn to the world. And in this respect, as well as others, the same mind should be in us, as was in Christ.

The blessed Jesus ever shewed through his whole course the most deep and fixed sense of God upon his mind. It never was true of any in such an eminent degree as it was of him, that he was in the fear of the Lord all the day long. All his actions, all his motions, the minutest steps of life, bespoke an eye directed to God.

He testified his love to his Father in the most expensive instances. This was a principle of his obedience unto death, even superior to his love to mankind. When he knew the time of his sufferings was just at hand, instead of endeavouring to evade them, he hastens into the fatal garden, that he might testify his affection to his Father and his interests. "That the world may know (says he) that I love the Father ; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do ; arise, let us go hence," John xiv. 31. Let us quit this place, and go into the garden, where the scene of my agonies is to begin.

His trust in God was very conspicuous through his course. This made him unconcerned in all the dangers of his life. When his disciples expostulated with him about his intention of returning into Judea, because the Jews there had so lately sought to stone him ; Jesus answered, John xi. 9, 10. "Are

there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world : but if a man walketh in the night, he stumbleth. The meaning of which I take to be this : “ The day in the course of nature is a safe time for business ; a man is in no great danger of falling, while he has the advantage of day-light : so while my appointed day for the exercise of my ministry lasts in the course of providence, I am not afraid of my enemies, how malicious and watchful soever they may be against me. While I have work to do, I am immortal.” When his last sufferings were actually approaching, and he foresaw that his disciples would all be scattered from him ; yet he supported himself with the thought of his Father’s presence, John xvi. 32. “ Ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and shall leave me alone ; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” When one of his disciples drew a sword in his defence ; after he had expressed his dislike of that action in his circumstances, he declares his full confidence of his Father’s readiness to assist him, if there were occasion, Matt. xxvi. 54. “ Thinkest thou, that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ?” If those words of his upon the cross should appear to intimate some distrust, when he cries out, “ Why hast thou forsaken me ?” It may be observed, that in the same breath he claims his interest in God ; beginning his complaint with this, “ My God, my God :” and since he applies himself to God at the time, as to one in whom he had a sure interest, I question whether, we are to understand the complaint, as bespeaking his apprehension of any real desertion of his Father. He rather seems to complain of the great contempt and reproach cast upon him by his enemies, when they had just before insulted him, as if he were forsaken of God, because he was not rescued from the cross, Matth. xxvii. 43. “ He trusted in God ; let him deliver him, if he will have him.” And the thieves, it is said, “ cast the same in his teeth,” ver. 44. Now, in his cry, which follows in ver. 46. “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” his design seems to be, to express the stedfast continuance of his trust in God ; and at the same time to intimate, that he esteemed this one of the bitterest taunts which his enemies had thrown out upon him, that God should be thought to have abandoned him, and a very

cutting part of his sufferings, that they should be made the occasion of such a thought. So that this is indeed an illustrious instance of his trust in God, when he was most derided for it. The same confidence in God, he discovered to the last. When he was near his end, he was confident that he should be *that day in paradise*; and not only so, but also that the dying thief who was converted to a surprizing faith in him in his lowest condition, should be with him there, Luke xxiii. 43. And with his expiring breath he committed his departing soul to his Father: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," ver. 46. How strongly is trust in God recommended to all his followers, by his fixed exercise of it through life down to death!

He was equally a pattern to us in *ready obedience* to his Father's will. Having undertaken to be his servant in the work of our redemption, he came into the world to do his will, Heb. x. 7. And when he was actually entered upon it, it "was his meat to do the will of him that sent him," John iv. 34. He took more pleasure in any action of service to God, than in partaking of the necessary recruits of nature. The work assigned him was kept perpetually in his eye; and he reckoned a necessity to lie upon him to perform it, John ix. 4. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day." In the performance of that work, he exactly observed the instructions given him, in all that he spoke or did: whence he could say, John viii. 28. "I do nothing of myself." And chap. xii. 50. "Whatsoever I speak, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." He did not refuse the most difficult and self-denying services, but was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 8. How would our obedience shine, if it were formed upon this model!

He cheerfully *submitted to divine disposal* in all circumstances of his condition. He had his eye to the providence of God, more than the hand of man, in his sufferings: so he tells Pilate, John xix. 11. "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." And to this disposal of God he entirely submits. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," Matt. xxvi. 39. "The cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

God's glory was his constant end. He "sought not his own glory," John vii. 50. And therefore was content to

undergo the lowest abasement to advance the divine honour. Nothing awakened his zeal so much, as dishonour cast upon God, or that which belonged to him. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," John ii. 17. This was so uniformly his design, and the scope of all his life and actions, that he could solemnly appeal to his Father at the close of his work, chap. xvii. 4. "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work, which thou gavest me to do."

He was very exemplary in *the worship of God*, and in the observance of all the sacred institutions in force under that dispensation. He was careful to *fulfil all righteousness*, Matt. iii. 15. It appears from several passages of St John's gospel, that he used to attend the public worship of the temple upon all proper occasions; and the worship of the synagogue every sabbath-day in the places where he came. Luke observes, chap. iv. 16, that "as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day; where the usual exercises of praying, and reading, and expounding the word of God were performed. And for secret prayer, we find him retiring for that purpose, where he might enjoy the greatest freedom, Matt. xiv. 23. Or rising up early for that exercise, Mark i. 35. And upon extraordinary occasions, carrying on his devotions to a great length; as once, "continuing all night in prayer to God," Luke vi. 12. Or with peculiar earnestness, when he had special difficulties before him; as in his agony in the garden. And the gospel history sometimes takes notice of the outward marks of reverence he used; that he "kneeled," Luke xxii. 41. that he "fell on his face," Matth. xxvi. 39. that he "lift up his eyes to heaven," John xvii. 1. Which are recorded no doubt as exemplary indications of the reverence of his spirit. And for the other institutions then in use, they were all observed in his case. He was circumcised by his parents at the time appointed by the law; he submitted to be baptized by John, when he had an extraordinary commission to dispense that ordinance; and stately celebrated the passover. Without doubt, one intention of his performance of these things, and of their being recorded concerning him, was to dispose all his followers to a resemblance of the captain of their salvation in piety towards God.

And now to close this subject,

1. We may see one peculiar excellence of the Christian re-

ligion, that it has the most direct tendency to promote godliness. It would be indeed an undeniable evidence, that it had not a divine original, if it gave us an unworthy representation of the blessed God, or did not make a full provision for securing his rights and claims from mankind. But it is the glory of Christianity, that it sets out God, his perfections, relations, and authority in the most clear and amiable view; and at the same time calls us by the most express precepts and the strongest motives to a becoming temper and practice.

2. Let us then who wear the Christian name, make it our business to *live godly in Christ Jesus*. We find that phrase used in 2 Tim. iii. 12. and it imports something peculiar in the godliness to be exercised by Christians.

Let the respect we pay to God be agreeable to the revelation made of him by Christ. While "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father hath declared him," John i. 18. And hath declared him in such a manner, as he was scarce manifested to the world before. Let our regards for him be correspondent to this discovery. Let them be spiritual and not only bodily; as he is now more fully revealed in his spiritual nature, and requiring spiritual worshippers, John iv. 23, 24. He is now manifested, not only as our Creator, but as at the head of a saving design, reconciling an apostate *world to himself in his Son*: Our homage therefore should be paid him, not as if we were innocent creatures, but as it becomes redeemed sinners, through a mediator; honouring him in the way established by wise grace for lapsed creatures to have access to him. And yet as his grace and good-will are set in a clearer light than in any former dispensation, and as there is a more comfortable effusion of his Spirit, as *a Spirit of adoption*; our service to him should be, not with a slavish, but a child-like temper.

Let us animate ourselves in the practice by the great example of piety which Christ has given us. Looking unto Jesus, let us have grace to serve God acceptably; remembering that while in one nature he was himself, *the true God*, yet as man, he was the most godly man that ever was in the world.

Let us apply ourselves to the exercise of godliness in a dependence on the grace and strength of Christ. If we are united to Christ as his living members, and partakers of his Holy

Spirit, godliness will thrive under such blessed culture and influence ; but separate from him as our head, we, apostate creatures “ can do nothing,” John xv. 5.

Let us expect God’s favourable regard to the poor and imperfect respects we pay to him, only for the sake of Christ. As our goodness, on supposition it were perfect, cannot extend to him to profit him ; so in the present imperfection of it, it could not please him or be accepted by him but in his beloved Son.

3. As godliness is profitable to all things, and peculiarly subserves the other duties of the Christian life ; so let the fruits of it appear in all the rest of a Christian temper and practice. Let our faith be shewn by our works : our piety by our sobriety, and righteousness, and charity : and our love to God, whom we have not seen, by our love to our brother, whom we have seen. That superstructure the apostle calls us to add to godliness, in the words immediately following the text, ver. 7. “ And to godliness, brotherly-kindness ; and to brotherly-kindness, charity.”

SERMON X.

FAITH IN CHRIST.

1 PET. i. 8.

Whom, having not seen, ye love : in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

NEXT to the regards we owe to God, the Christian temper towards Christ, as the Saviour and Mediator, naturally comes under consideration. As the Saviour is himself God, that which hath been said already of the respect due to God, belongs to him in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost ; but the scripture leads us to another view of him as the Messiah and Mediator, and claims from us distinct practical regards to him as such. These are what I now propose to consider, for which the words read give us a proper foundation.

St Peter wrote this epistle, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, &c. ver. 1. that is, to those of the Jewish nation who lived out of Judea in foreign parts, as many of them had done long before Christ's time ; and who were already converted to the Christian faith. Several churches were early planted in Asia, consisting chiefly of these Jewish converts. The apostle describes the nature of their change, whence it had its original, and how it was brought about, in ver 2. And then expresses the happiness of it, offering a solemn thanksgiving to God upon that account, because they were new-born to the heavenly inheritance, and preserved by divine power in the way that led to possession, ver. 3, 4, 5. In this their happy state, he says, they could rejoice, even in the midst of various

sufferings which attended them; for they knew that those sufferings were only trials of their faith, and upon their acquitting themselves well in the trial, would redound to their own, as well as to their master's "praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," ver. 6, 7. Upon the mention of Christ's name, the apostle adds an elegant representation, how they stood affected to him.—"Whom, having not seen," &c. Wherein we may observe,

1. Their temper itself towards the Lord Jesus. They *believed* in him; that was fundamental to all the rest. And their *faith wrought by love*; they *loved* him, upon the sentiments they entertained concerning him with a faith unfeigned. And this faith and love produced a *joy* in him. The disposition of mind toward our blessed Lord, to which Christianity calls us, may be summed up in these three things. But then we are to observe,

2. A circumstance of seeming disadvantage taken notice of in the case of these converts, beyond the case of some others. Some had *seen the Lord*; had had the advantage of being spectators of his life and miracles, of his death and resurrection, and ascension into heaven, and had heard the gracious words which proceeded out of his lips. This was the privilege of Peter himself, and of the other disciples during Christ's abode below. But the Christians in the text had not had the same opportunity; they had not seen him, because he was withdrawn into heaven before they came to the knowledge of him or of his gospel. Herein their circumstances were parallel to ours; the same with all those who, after Christ's entrance into glory, are called to believe in him through the word of the gospel.

I intend to discourse particularly of the three several branches of the disposition of Christians here mentioned; and shall keep in view this circumstance of his being unseen, in the consideration of each.

I. FAITH in Christ, is an essential branch of the Christian temper, and necessary to be cultivated in us who see him not. This is the peculiar and the first call of the gospel wherever it comes, next to a belief of the gospel-revelation in general, that men believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is made the grand term of our interest in the various blessings of

grace and glory, which are offered to sinners: we have no encouragement given us to expect the acceptance of our persons or of any of our services without it; and we are directed to it, as the principle of the whole divine life. So the apostle tells us, Gal. ii. 20. "The life which I now live in the flesh (which in the verse before, he says, was a "living unto God;" this life) I live by the faith of the Son of God." His whole life of godliness was influenced and animated by this: hence he derived his principal motives to it, and his main supports and encouragements under the difficulties attending it; hereby he was furnished with strength and grace sufficient for it; and by this means the whole was acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And of the same importance is faith in Christ to every one of us. Upon this therefore I would,

1. Give you a brief account of the nature of faith in Christ.

2. Consider it as that which we are called to exercise in our present circumstances, without seeing him.

I. The nature of *faith in Christ* is briefly to be explained. And it must be understood to comprehend these two things.

1. A firm persuasion of the truth of what the gospel testifies concerning him.

The whole compass of the divine revelation concerning this blessed person, is the thing to be believed. The discovery of him was made gradually, the light not breaking in all at once. Some notices were given of him immediately upon the fall, as a necessary foundation of hope to apostate creatures: and through the several periods of God's ancient church, "to him gave all the prophets witness. But all the prophets and the law only prophesied until John," Matt. xi. 13. that is, though they described or prefigured the Messiah in his principle characters, yet there was a degree of obscurity attending all this; as a matter is not equally clear in a prophecy to what it is in the accomplishment; till John the Baptist came, and directly pointed out the person. When Christ himself entered upon his public ministry, the main thing which he took care to inculcate and give evidence of, was his being the true Messiah, and the great prophet sent by God, promised under the Old Testament, and expected by good men from age to age. He gave indeed many intimations of the dignity of his person, of

his priestly and regal offices, and of the great design of his death ; yet it is plain, that these things were but darkly apprehended by his own disciples, till the descent of the Spirit, who was to lead them into all truth. But now in the New Testament, we have the whole testimony of God concerning him completed. And all that taken together, is the object of the Christian faith : his divine person, “ as God over all blessed for evermore ; as the Word, who was in the beginning, who was with God [the Father,] and who was God : his incarnation, or that he was the Word made flesh, God manifested in the flesh :” his life, and actions, and sufferings, in the human nature : the doctrine he preached, and the mighty works he did ; the propitiation he made for our sins, by dying, the just for the unjust : his resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven, and constant intercession for us there at God’s right hand : the universal kingdom and dominion committed to him as Mediator ; his claims from us as such ; the fulness of grace dwelling in him for our supply ; and the many blessings he hath authority to bestow upon us in his appointed way ; and his second coming at the end of the world, to complete the designs of his Mediatorial kingdom. All and every part of the discovery made in scripture concerning Christ, is the matter of a Christian’s faith, as far as he can perceive it to be revealed there.

Now the first act of faith, is a firm persuasion of the truth of his testimony. A doubtful and wavering opinion will have little practical influence. Nothing can effectually animate and engage to that divine temper, to which faith in Christ is intended to raise us ; nothing can furnish us out a constant supply and nourishment for maintaining such a spirit ; nothing can carry through the exercise of it in all weathers and trials, short of a lively and stedfast conviction of the truth of the gospel. The practice of most nominal Christians, is a proof of this ; and the unevenness and inconstancy which we all find in our own frames from the infirmity of our faith, shews of what importance it is to be daily confirming the assenting act of faith. Many of Christ’s disciples, while he was below, having but a faint and weak persuasion about his character, “ went back, and walked no more with him,” John vi. 66. But that, which under the influence of divine grace secured the rest who continued with him, was this, that “ they believed,

and were sure, that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God," ver. 69.

2. A personal acceptance of Christ according to his character in the gospel, or a consent that he shall be such to us, enters into the nature of saving faith in him. A Christian's faith is not only a general assent to gospel declarations, but it includes a personal application, from a consideration of our own concern in them. There is not only an act of the understanding, but correspondent acts of will and affections. Therefore we read more than once of "believing with the heart," Acts viii. 37. Rom. x. 9. We must deliberately consent to own and accept him in all the characters he bears, and have our spirits impressed suitably to the nature and importance of what we assent to concerning him. We must deliberately recognise him with Thomas, "for our Lord and our God," John xx. 28. As he is the only Saviour of sinners; and set forth in the gospel for a propitiation, through whom pardon and acceptance with God may be had: so our belief of these general truths must be attended with the committing of ourselves to him, to be saved by him in his own way, and a firm reliance upon him as able and willing to perform all the kind offices for us, which are included in the character of a Saviour, Heb. vii. 25. 2 Tim. i. 12. There must be a *faith in his blood*, for the pardon of our sins in the virtue of it. Are we persuaded, that he is the great prophet sent of God, "the faithful and true witness?" We believe not this in a gospel sense, unless our souls entirely bow to his instructions, and are determined to hear him, and credit him, and obey him in all that he says, as far as we can discover his mind, Matt. xvii. 5. We own his authority to be the universal Lord and Sovereign; but then only the belief of this is genuine, when we are truly willing that he shall be in all things so to us, and fully resolved to be *under law to Christ*, 1 Cor. ix. 21. As soon as Saul became a believer, the language of his heart was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. Our belief of his all-sufficient grace must be accompanied with a fixed dependance upon it for ourselves; being "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," 2 Tim. ii. 1. And when we contemplate his holy and heavenly, and most useful life and behaviour, as recorded in the gospel, a right faith eyes this as our pattern, and forms the mind to sincere purposes of imitation.

These two things are to be understood as necessarily included in a genuine faith in Christ. The fruits of it will farther appear, when we consider the other particulars mentioned in the text. I proceed,

2. To consider faith in Christ, as now to be exercised by us with this circumstance attending it, that we see him not. "Though now ye see him not, yet believing." The apostle plainly fixes an emphasis upon this circumstance in the character of those to whom he wrote. And the main body of believers; all, except a few in Judea at the very beginning of Christianity, are in the same circumstance. Some may be ready to magnify over much the disadvantageousness of their condition in this respect; to esteem the case of those, who knew Christ after the flesh, heard his doctrine and saw his miracles, far happier than their own; and to think, that they have a far harder part to maintain a lively faith in Christ, than those most primitive disciples had.

In answer to which, it might be sufficient to return the words of our Lord to Thomas. After he had expressed an unreasonable distrust of Christ's resurrection, though he had the testimony of so many credible persons for it; Christ condescended so far as to offer him sensible evidence of it; "Reach hither, (says the Lord) thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, [my pierced side:] and be not faithless but believing," John xx. 27. Thomas struck with admiration, cries out, "My Lord and my God," ver. 28. Jesus saith unto him, ver. 29. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." But as the apostle takes notice again in the text of this circumstance with commendation; and as I think it may lead us to some useful thoughts in our own condition, I choose to consider the matter more particularly, and to offer the following things to observation.

1. An actual converse with Christ in the flesh, did not produce faith in all, or even in the generality of those who had that advantage. This appears through the history of the gospel. Though the doctrine of Christ was so divine and excellent, as often to raise the admiration of his hearers, insonuch, "that they were astonished at his doctrine," Matth. vii. 28. and sometimes owned, that "never man spake like this man,"

John vii. 46. yet it was ineffectual to most of them for any saving purpose. His miracles, though so great as were never before performed, though the spectators were dazzled with him, and sometimes forced to own that God was with him, yet generally failed to persuade men to become his disciples in earnest. It is emphatically observed of the people of one place, John xii. 37, 38. "that though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Elsewhere we find Christ, "upbraiding the cities [of Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum,] wherein many of his mighty works were done, because they repented not," Matt. xi. 20. The number of his disciples in the days of his flesh was but few: probably the five hundred brethren, of whom he is said to have been seen at once after his resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 6. made up the main body of the disciples he had during his personal ministry. Judas who stately attended him as one of his twelve apostles, proved the most treacherous enemy to his master, notwithstanding that advantage. These are plain evidences, how insufficient the bare sight of Christ, and personal converse with him were of themselves to produce faith, and may prevent all repining that we lived not in those days.

2. Faith in Christ is as reasonably claimed from us, as it was from those who actually saw him.

For on the one hand, those who lived in the time of Christ's sojourning on earth, had many disadvantages for their faith which we have not, to balance some advantages which they had above us. A very general prejudice prevailed among the Jews at that time, that the Messiah was to set up a temporal kingdom; with which the disciples themselves appear from several passages to have been deeply tainted. This was a notion most opposite to the true character of Christ, and which made his appearance in the world in a state of meanness, to be the reverse of the common expectations from the Messiah. Hereupon he was generally "despised and rejected of men:" and his death, while as yet the blessed ends and uses of it were apprehended by very few, was the greatest damp to men's faith and hope. We are released from all these disadvantages by the full revelation of the gospel: wherein we see how ill-

founded that expectation of a temporal kingdom was; and that his kingdom was not to be of this world, but of a spiritual and heavenly nature; and Christ crucified is manifested in the light of the New Testament, to be the wisdom and the power of God; though it were to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

On the other hand, though, the first disciples had immediate sensible evidence of Christ's miracles, which we have not; and they who beheld him after his resurrection, and saw him ascending into heaven, had a proof of these facts more infallible in the nature of the thing, than can be pretended in our case; yet we have proofs every way sufficient. Eye and ear-witnesses, of most undoubted credit, have given testimony to these things, and have sealed their testimony with their blood, and were enabled to add farther attestations by a variety of miracles, and the several gifts of the Holy Ghost, 1 John i. 1, 3. "That which was from the beginning," (says St John,) in the name of himself and of the other primitive disciples, "which we have heard (with our own ears from Christ himself,) which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, (with a just care and concern that we might not be mistaken in a matter of such importance,) which our hands have handled of the word of life," that is, concerning Christ: referring probably to that evidence already mentioned, which Christ was pleased to offer to Thomas and the rest of his disciples of the truth of his resurrection; which, though it were occasioned by an unreasonable incredulity in Thomas, yet was made by providence an occasion of giving a considerable assistance to the faith of after-Christians. "That (says the apostle,) which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you." And this testimony given by the first disciples, is conveyed down to us in the written records of the New Testament, which have been witnessed to, for the substance of the facts contained in them, by friends and enemies from age to age.

If yet it should be said, that we stand not however just upon the same foot of these things, as the first Christians did; yet while we fall short one way, we gain another. We have several evidences of the truth of the Christian religion, which they of the first age could not have, in the accomplishment of many prophecies contained in the New Testament; such as the

destruction of Jerusalem, with all the minute circumstances of agreement between the prophecy and execution: the rejection of the Jewish nation for so many ages, and with the most eminent marks of distinction: the extensive and quick propagation of the gospel answerable to what was foretold, notwithstanding the greatest oppositions, and by instruments very unlikely to conquer the world to the obedience of faith: the many sufferings of the professors of it, their courage and constancy, and yet the growth of Christianity under all: the rise and progress of the man of sin: and other such proofs.

We have also the standing evidence of the power of the gospel, in the mighty change it produces in the tempers and lives of some in every age: would to God there were more such instances in our degenerate times, to strike the world around with conviction and admiration! Blessed be God, that there are some. Those who actually feel the virtue of it, "have the witness in themselves."

These things may shew that in our present circumstances, faith in Christ is most reasonably claimed from us, though we have never seen him.

3. Faith in Christ, upon the foundations we now have, is sufficient to supply the want of sight, for all practical purposes. If we are willing to believe the testimony of God, upon as full attestations that it comes from him as we are entirely satisfied with in other cases, we cannot want considerations fit to influence us to every part of the Christian life. The object of faith, the doctrine of the gospel, contains abundant evidence of things not seen; a full proof of them, though we see them not: by faith we receive that evidence or proof as God's testimony: and if we do it sincerely, we shall act and govern ourselves by it. We have those truths recorded in the scripture, which our Lord delivered by word of mouth; and the same credentials enrolled there for the use of all ages, which Christ then gave. If we are insensible of the obligations arising from these things in our present circumstances: whatever we may imagine, it may justly be concluded, that we should have been among the unbelievers in Christ's own time; that the same prejudices and corrupt affections would have prevailed with us to reject Christ in person, which hinder us from entertaining him as offered in the gospel.

4. We are called to believe many things concerning Christ,

which none ever saw ; and therefore for those things at least, we are upon a level with those who conversed with him in our world. His life and death, and resurrection, and ascension, were indeed made objects of sense to some ; but his divine nature, and the designs of his death, were entirely matters of faith to them as well as to us. What Christ is now in heaven, what he is doing there, and what he will do when he shall come again the second time, ever were things out of the reach of sense, as they are now : eye hath not seen them, though the ear hath heard them ; they were believed upon the word of Christ, and of his inspired apostles, and so they should be by us. These things which are as important in Christianity as those which were once obvious to sense, and which have as great an influence upon the Christian temper, were solely matters of faith to the first Christians as well as to us.

5. There is a peculiar excellence in the faith of Christians, as thus circumstanced ; that it is a faith in a Saviour whom they have not seen. The goodness of faith consists in a readiness to believe and govern ourselves by the testimony of God, as far as we can discern it. There was nothing commendable in persons believing that such and such facts came to pass, that such mighty works were done, which they saw with their eyes, and therefore could not but believe : but all that was morally good in their faith was, that they were led by these evidences to believe unseen things upon the testimony of God. The case is the same now ; the grace of faith is altogether a different thing from sight ; and if our sensible evidence be less than that of the first Christians ; yet as long as it is sufficient, our faith thus circumstanced shews a more prompt inclination to take God's word, where we have ground enough to believe that he speaks, though we should not have such over-bearing evidences as some have had. The language of it is ; ' I am willing to know the mind of God, howsoever he pleases to make it known to me ; I prescribe not to him the way ; I acquiesce in the method, which his wisdom, and goodness, and sovereignty chooses, for making me acquainted with it ; as long as I am convinced that I have his testimony, I would fall in with it, and guide myself by it ; and therefore I receive a Saviour, who I am well assured comes from him, though I have never seen him as some did.' This is a temper of mind honourable to God, becoming a reasonable creature,

and one who is in earnest concerned for the interests of his soul.

6. We have encouragement to hope, that our faith in an unseen Saviour will be peculiarly acceptable. We not only find Christ praying before his sufferings for those *who should afterwards believe in him through the word* of his apostles, as well as for his present disciples; John xvii. 20. but also after his resurrection pronouncing a peculiar blessedness upon those who should "believe in him, though they saw him not," John xx. 29. Hereby we give glory to God, as strong in faith; and God will accordingly honour such a faith. The apostle writing to the Thessalonians, who were called into the kingdom and fellowship of the Lord Jesus after his leaving the world tells them, 2 Thess. i. 10. that "he should come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, because (says the apostle) our testimony among you was believed."

INFERENCES.—1. We may see the wisdom of divine providence, in adjusting the circumstances of those in his visible church in so equitable proportion on one another. It is true he is a sovereign, and does not give to all advantages alike. In this as well as in other respects, to some he gives ten talents, to others five, and to others one. But then he requires from none any more than in proportion to their talents. And besides that in relation to the state of the church from one age to another, there may be observed a remarkable ballancing of advantages and of disadvantages: of which the case before us is one instance, th state of those who saw Christ in the flesh, and of those who have not seen him.

2. We may see the necessity of divine grace in order to saving faith in every age of the church. During Christ's ministry, and since also, the gospel is *to some a savour of life unto life*, and to others, *of death unto death*: and in both periods, faith is to be considered as "the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. When the gospel was effectual to produce saving faith in the primitive times, it was "the power of God unto salvation," Rom. i. 16. *mighty through God*; and so it is still. And therefore, while we are considering the excellencies of gospel-discoveries in themselves, and the evidences given us of their truth, we should earnestly apply to God for his grace to form

our minds to a faith unfeigned, a faith of the operation of God ; and through the whole course of the Christian life, which is animated by faith, we should make it our daily prayer, “ Lord, increase our faith,” Luke xvii. 5.

3. We may collect the usefulness of a standing ministry in the church. Since Christ has left the world, and was a preacher of his gospel in person, only for a few years, and to one country ; it was fit, that there should be some in every age and in all places, as far as may be, to preach the gospel to every creature. “ How shall men call on him, whom they have not believed ? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without a preacher ?” Rom. x. 14. For this purpose the apostles were employed to propagate the gospel ; but they did not leave the matter there, but appointed “ elders (standing presbyters,) to be ordained in every city,” Tit. i. 5. And Paul enjoins Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 3. “ The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” If it should be said, that the need of such is now superseded by the gospel’s being committed to writing ; I answer, the writings of the New Testament appoint this farther provision, as in the place just mentioned, and therefore for certain do not supersede it. All our doctrine indeed must be tried by the written word ; we are *not lords of men’s faith, but helpers of their joy* ; and nothing which we deliver hath any authority, farther than we can support it by evidence from the scriptures. But the business of ministers is to help you to understand the scriptures, and to represent to your consciences the truths contained there. If there were no such provision, I believe religion would be at a far lower ebb in the world than it is. It is God’s appointed and usual way for bringing men to the obedience of faith, and for the perfecting of the saints, to instruct, admonish and exhort men by men like themselves, who have the same everlasting interests to mind, and need the same Saviour as they do.

4. We have reason to be content with the circumstances of that age of the world, wherein our lot is cast. We are favoured with sufficient advantages, and are encouraged to apply for the same grace to make them effectual. And indeed the condition we are in, that we see not the Saviour in whom we believe, is entirely of a piece with the rest of the Christian’s state

in this world. The main objects of our attention and concern, as Christians, are things invisible. "We walk by faith, and not by sight," 2 Cor. v. 7. We "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," chap. iv. 18. Our chief concern is with an invisible God, Heb. xi. 27. The principal benefits we have to value are spiritual blessings, Eph. i. 3. And the inheritance we are born to is out of sight. It is suitable therefore to all the rest, that our Redeemer should be so too. This is a circumstance, which may greatly contribute to promote one principal branch of the Christian disposition, to aspire after a heavenly country when we must consider our dear Saviour, as already there at "the right hand of God," Col. iii. 1. It facilitates to a Christian the work of dying, to think that his death is not a removal from his Lord, but going to him.

5. Let us be very solicitous, that under our many advantages, and by the help of that grace so ready to be bestowed, we may *believe to the saving of our souls*. That every part of the testimony, which God hath borne to his Son, be readily entertained by us; and that we receive and appropriate him to ourselves for all the uses and purposes, for which he is offered in the gospel.

6. Let our faith in him be allowed its proper practical influence upon the whole Christian temper and life. More immediately upon those holy dispositions toward Christ himself, of which the text speaks? love to him, and joy in him. If our faith thus *work by love*, and work us up to the genuine joy of living Christians, this cannot fail to animate the whole of the divine life.

SERMON XI.

LOVE TO CHRIST.

1 PET. i. 8.

Whom, having not seen, ye love : in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

THE practical regards we owe to the Lord Jesus himself, make an eminent and distinguishing part of the Christian temper ; of which regards these words may be understood as a summary. How should christians stand affected to their master ? Just as these ancient Christians in the text were affected towards him. Their first concern should be, that they may have a genuine, a firm and lively faith in him ; so they had, whom St Peter celebrates, though they had never seen him in the flesh, any more than we. Then their faith in him kindled in their breasts a holy and strong affection to him : and upon the foundation of *faith* and *love*, they were able to rise up to a triumphant joy in him.

The first of these, *faith in him*, has been the subject of a former discourse. This is to be employed in the second branch.

II. LOVE to Christ, as the fruit of faith in him, though he is unseen, is a necessary part of the Christian disposition. It is so necessary, that on the one hand, all those who are destitute of it lie under a dreadful curse ; a curse pronounced by an apostle under the Spirit of inspiration, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. " If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha ;" accursed till the Lord comes. And on

the other hand, all who are truly of this disposition, are encouraged by the apostle's benediction to expect all the fruits of divine favour, Eph. vi. 25. "Grace be with all them, that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

In the prosecution of this, I shall shew, *1st*, The grounds of a Christian's affection to Christ. *2dly*, The characters of it. And *3dly*, The ways, in which it is to be expressed.

I. The grounds of a Christian's affection to Christ.

In general, the foundation is laid in his faith. Though *faith* is only mentioned expressly in the latter part of the verse, as the ground of a Christian's *joy*: yet it must equally be presupposed to his *love*. Having not seen him, the people in the text could have no other ground for their love: and, if they had seen him, and personally conversed with him; yet, without believing more concerning him than sight could inform them of, they could never have had the affection required by the gospel. But a firm assent to the testimony of God concerning Christ will furnish us with all the motives to affection, which personal converse could suggest; and superadd all those, which sight and sense could never furnish. Now he, who truly believes in Christ, loves him,

1. *For his own personal excellencies, or, because of what he is in himself*: both as God and man. "We beheld, (says St John,) his glory; the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. His disciples who conversed with him in the days of his flesh, had some view of his glorious perfections shining out through all the cloud of his meanness, while they heard his divine discourses, and beheld his mighty works, worthy of the Son of God: *Full of grace and truth*; breathing out the richest grace and good-will to sinful men; and publishing those divine and heavenly truths, which none but God could reveal, none but "he who came out of the bosom of the Father," ver. 18. They had some manifestations of his glory: we have the same discoveries which were made to them, proposed to our faith in the gospel-relation; and a great deal more than they were particularly instructed in, till Jesus was removed out of their sight. The gospel represents him to us, as one in whose blessed person all uncreated and created excellencies meet; as one, *in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*: who by his divine perfections deserves our highest veneration; and

yet by condescending to partake of our nature prevents the terror which would arise from unveiled divinity. *The Lord of glory* is become our brother, *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*. He is proposed to us, as possessed of the all-sufficiency of God, and yet *found in fashion as a man*; as having a divine fulness, with a human way of communicating it. And his human nature itself is such, as hath all the excellencies of our nature, without any of the defiling stains: such as makes him most familiar to us, because *in all things made like unto us*, and yet he was full of wisdom, grace and sufficiency to the utmost capacity of a finite limited nature, because *anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows*. Such is the representation made to our faith of his personal excellencies; which makes him upon that account worthy of our adoring thoughts and uniting affections.

2. *Because of the near resemblance he bears to God, as man and mediator, and the high esteem which God hath expressed for him as such.* The supreme affection of a Christian is to the blessed God: he looks upon him as the best of beings, and the standard of excellence; and his love to God is the regulating measure of his love to other things. This was the original temper of innocence; God was loved above all, and other things only in subordination to him. Sin was the breach of this rule of righteousness: and all is out of order with us, till we return to our first measure; to love God with all our hearts, so as to have no competitor with him; and thereupon to give other things a share in our affection according to God's allowance, according to the degrees of his image which they bear, and according to the esteem which he discovers for them. Our value and affection for all other things in the whole order of beings, should rise or fall by this rule. Now a true Christian proceeds by this measure in the prevailing bent of his heart. Hence he "delights in the excellent of the earth," more than in other men, Psal. xvi. 2. And for the same reason the blessed Jesus is raised in his esteem above all other things. Not only as in his divine nature "he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. but as, even in his human nature and in his mediatorial character, he bears more of the divine image than any other creature; as perfectly holy, entirely obedient, and the most faithful servant to his

Father. And therefore God has highly honoured him, as he has honoured God more than any other has done. Hence the Christian pays a higher regard to him also. The testimonies, which God has given, of his complacency in him ; by voices from heaven, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; ” by raising him from the dead ; by highly exalting him, and giving him a name above every name ; dispose a Christian to be well-pleased with him also, and to reverence his name. The mediator as such has the next interest in his affections to God himself ; because God has put a greater character of distinction upon him, than upon any other.

3. *Because of the excellence of his work, and the unspeakable love and benignity he has expressed in it.* This may all pass for nothing with a stupid inconsiderate sinner : he may go on in an ungrateful forgetfulness and disregard of all the kindness, which the Redeemer has shewn. But a true Christian has his soul fixed in attention to his wonderful works ; and the springs of gratitude are set afloat by the consideration of them. His love and value are drawn out by the contemplation of the Son of God’s early compassion for us ; when in the counsel of peace he engaged to veil his glory, to assume the form of a servant, and to make his soul an offering for sin, that he might reconcile the honour of heaven with the happiness of fallen men. He views him actually executing his engagement in the fulness of time ; taking part of our nature ; becoming a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself ; and, after a life of continual abasement, feeling the extremest agonies of soul and anguish of body, suffering from every quarter and in every part ; in a word, *giving himself for us*, that he might bring us to God. The love conspicuous in every part of his sufferings kindles a lively affection and gratitude in the heart of a Christian. The more he thinks of it, the more he sees himself to be infinitely indebted. When he follows him up from his cross to his crown of glory, he sees him there still minding our interests, acting for our welfare, and with a heart as tenderly affected towards us as ever. The present glories of his human nature do not extinguish his concern for us, or his sympathy with us here on earth. Unbelieving minds can hear such things as these frequently concern-

ing him, without the least spark of ingenuity excited in their breasts : but a Christian, who believes them with the heart, feels a disposition to receive kindly and becoming impressions from the Redeemer's grace, and to study what he shall render.

4. *As the most necessary medium of our happiness.* The men of the world place their happiness wrong ; not in the favor of God, but in worldly good. They are not sensible, that though they had all the world, they are still as much as ever to seek for happiness, without an interest in God. Or if they have some apprehension, that it must be a miserable case to have God for an enemy ; yet they hope for his favor at random, or think they can establish a righteousness of their own to recommend them to God : they are not thoroughly touched with an apprehension of the value of a Saviour ; but either imagine themselves whole, and to have no need of a physician ; or that they can be their own physicians ; or that they can find out some other expedient for relief, besides that proposed to sinners in the gospel. But a true Christian sees, that in himself he is a necessitous, miserable creature ; that nothing can restore him to happiness, short of God as his portion ; and that he has no other way of coming at God, but by Christ. He esteems Christ therefore the most necessary means to his chief good, the only suitable physician to his dying soul : and upon that account values him as his *all in all*. *In him he has righteousness and strength.* However others make a shift to pass easy hours without a pardon, he cannot ; for he knows that all his guilt must remain upon him, unless he has an interest in Christ's propitiation. He wants many blessings at the hand of God ; but he has no merit of his own to plead for obtaining them ; and therefore he prizes Christ in whose name God has promised to hear all his proper requests. He is sensible, that he needs constant supplies of grace for the various parts of the Christian life ; and believes, " that it hath pleased the Father that in Christ all fulness should dwell," as in a treasury, from which his children are to receive all their supplies. He perceives himself to be frail, and still liable to break the peace by new offences, and therefore prizes Christ as his constant advocate with the Father. He is looking for his principal happiness in a

world to come; and Christ's entrance thither is the main security for it; he has that eternal life to give, and from him he waits to receive the inheritance. Upon such accounts as these, he loves and esteems the Redeemer, as worth infinitely more to him than all the world; as the person by whom alone he comes to God, through whom God is favorable to him, and by whom his final expectations are to be accomplished.

II. I proceed to offer some scripture-characters of a true Christian's love to Christ upon such grounds as these.

In the general, they may all be summed up in this, that it is sincere and unfeigned. "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," Eph. vi. 24. Which, on the one hand, distinguishes it from absolute perfection; no Christian in this world loves Christ in the degree that he ought to do, or that he would do, or that the saints in glory arrive at: but on the other hand, every acceptable Christian loves him truly, that is,--

It is the temper of his soul, and not a mere outward appearance. We read of some, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. who with their mouth shewed much love, but their heart went after their covetousness. So it may be with reference to the Lord Jesus. Men may speak honourably of him, his person, his offices, his laws; and so they ought to do: but yet all this may be without any sincere affection to him; his enemies may still be on the throne in the heart. A true Christian satisfies not himself with professions of respect without correspondent affections of soul.

He loves Christ in his whole character. If Christ could be divided, ungodly men might entertain some liking of him: If they could be excused from wrath to come by virtue of his sufferings without forsaking their sins, they might be content so far to be beholden to him; but they have a fixed enmity to the main design of his coming; to save them from their sins. Now here is an essential difference in the character of a real Christian from that of others: Christ entirely is amiable and acceptable to such a man. He values Christ as his teacher and lawgiver; and not only the atonement for his sins, and his advocate with the Father. He esteems his yoke easy as well as his promises precious; and sees a glory in his pattern, as well as his propitiation. He loves him, because a conquest over the body of death is begun, and shall be completed

through Jesus Christ, as well as because he will deliver him from the wrath to come.

He loves Christ more than any thing else. Great stress is laid upon this in scripture. "He that loveth (saith Christ,) father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me," Matt. x. 37. And therefore, when Christ would set Peter upon the examination of his sincere affection to his Lord, he expresses the question thus, John xxi. 15. "Lovest thou me more than these?" either than these thy friends and companions, or these thy nets, (for he was then fishing) that is, thy secular gains and advantages?

And lastly, genuine love to Christ is productive of proper fruit. As faith produces love, so it "works by love," Gal. v. 6. Thence we read of "the work of faith, and labour of love," 1 Thess. i. 3. A Christian expresses his high esteem and sincere affection, in the natural effects of such a temper of mind. And this leads me to the third general head I proposed, *viz.*

III. To shew the ways, in which a Christian is to express his affection to Christ.

Now the circumstance observed in the text, of the present state of our case, that "now we see him not," naturally leads us to such expressions of affection as are suitable to that state, wherein we know him not after the flesh. Those who lived in the time of his abode upon earth, had opportunities to shew their love to him in some ways of personal respect and outward civilities, wherein we can bear no part with them: but indeed such marks of affection were not of so great account with Christ then, as many of those, wherein we in this state of separation may evidence our love to him, as well as his disciples at that time could do. Some principal instances of that kind I would now mention. Our love to an unseen Saviour should express itself,

1. In frequent thoughts of him. Our thoughts will often present a dear friend to our remembrance, when he is absent in body. So they should frequently bring to our minds our peculiar friend, the Lord Jesus; and so they will, if we truly value him as our best friend. "If our delight be in the law of God, we shall meditate therein day and night," Psal. i. 2. And so the Son of God will be a chosen, pleasing theme of

frequent meditation, if he be really the object of our affection. We shall often think with enlarged hearts what he is, what he has done for us, what his present state is. We shall desire to "know nothing so much as him," 1 Cor. ii. 2. "to grow in the knowledge of him," 2 Pet. iii. 18. as a subject, of which we can never have too much.

2. In a careful observance of what he has left us in charge. Love will make a friend's desires as binding as commands; and we shall not forget, when he is out of sight, any intimations he has given of his mind. Indeed this is the principal way, wherein Christ expects his disciples to testify their love to him; so he signified to those, who attended him on earth. "If ye love me keep my commandments," John xiv. 15. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," John xv. 14. The gospel comprehends the charge he has left behind him; and the last words we find of his, when he was leaving the world, contain a general admonition to observe his instructions. His parting charge to his apostles was, that they should "teach men to observe all things, whatsoever he had commanded them," Matt. xxviii. 20. Love to him will enforce all this, will sweeten his yoke, and write his laws in our hearts with an indelible character.

3. In maintaining our fidelity during his bodily absence. Christ is gone above "to receive for himself a kingdom," and we are by his rightful claim the subjects of it. There are many enemies, who would usurp his throne, and draw off our allegiance; and they have the advantage of presence: and therefore without a firm affection to our Lord, we are in danger of proving unfaithful. A deceitful world is ensnaring us; the old serpent manages the snares of it, to remove us from our stedfastness; and we have deceitful lusts within ourselves, ready to side with the opposite party. Here is the great trial of our affection: whether we maintain hearts loyal to the Lord Jesus, in opposition to these enemies of his. In every snare we meet with, we should remember that there is a plot of treason against our chosen Sovereign, our rightful Head and Lord: and our affection to Christ will be shewn, in maintaining a resolute conflict against them all, in the strength of his grace. We may be exposed to sufferings of various kinds in the course of our adherence to him, to the loss of the most valuable comforts of this life, or even of life itself, unless we

will be unfaithful to him : now in case of such a trial, if we love Christ supremely, we shall “not love our lives unto the death,” as is said of the martyrs, Rev. xii. 11.

4. In a dutiful regard to the Holy Spirit, whom he has left to supply his room. If a prince have the hearts of his subjects, when his occasions call him away from them for a season, they will shew their love to him by subjection and respect to such as he leaves behind to fill his place. Now Christ has told us, that “it was expedient, and for us too, that he should go away ; for if he went not away, the Comforter would not come ; but if he went, he would send him,” John xvi. 7. He has sent him accordingly, to take care of his concerns and interest in the world : and by him he is still graciously present with us. The Holy Spirit deserves our love and subjection, not only upon his own account, as he is God ; but also upon account of the character he sustains, as sent to supply Christ’s room. We should therefore shew our affection to Christ, by a care that we “grieve not his Holy Spirit,” Eph. iv. 30. that we quench him not, by neglecting his kind motions ; but that we thankfully accept and improve so gracious and suitable a provision ; which our exalted Head has made to carry us through our state of trial.

5. In respect to his friends and favourites for his sake. It is always an acceptable piece of affection to a friend, when he is out of our reach himself, if yet we are kind to his friends or relations upon his account. Christ himself is above receiving in his own person, any acts of beneficence from us : but he has left friends and relations in our world, who are capable of receiving the sensible effects of our love, and to whom we may shew kindness for his sake. And he has pointed us to them as such, who would always be at hand to receive our kind offices, when he was himself about to be advanced above all need of any such thing, John xii. 8. “The poor always ye have with you ; but me ye have not always.” He has condescended to say, that what we do to them for his sake, he will take as done to himself, Matt. xxv. 40. And they, who cannot find in their hearts, upon such a declaration of Christ, to shew kindness to his members according to their power, would hardly do it to Christ himself, if he were among them, and needed their assistance.

6. In a concern for his interest, and endeavours to promote

it, according to our stations and capacities. Though he is gone in person above ; yet he has still a cause and interest below, which he has much at heart. The salvation of lost sinners, the refining and enlargement of his church, the propagation of truth, and charity, and holiness, the reformation of manners, and the overthrow of Satan's kingdom, make the interest of Christ in our world. And for promoting these ends, he is pleased to make use of his servants on earth ; and in order to it, furnishes them with various talents, which he expects them "to occupy till he comes," for the advancement of his service. Now the principle, which should animate us to do this in good earnest, is love to Christ. That will induce us to lift our gifts and graces, our interest and substance, our time and furniture, in the service of the cause of Christ around us ; and will make us unwearied in well doing. When Christ put the question to Peter, "lovest thou me?" he directs him to shew it by vigilance, in his proper sphere for his master's service, by "feeding his sheep and lambs," John xxi. 15, &c. And the case is the same as to any other capacities or opportunities of service, with which he has intrusted us.

7. In a delightful regard for those things, by which we may be helped to remember him, or to converse with him in our present state. We take pleasure in any thing, that is the memorial of a valuable friend, when he has left us ; or in conversing by letter, when we cannot do so in person. Some of the ordinances of the gospel are memorials of Christ ; and all of them are ways, whereby we are directed to maintain a spiritual converse with him, while he is absent in body. He has appointed all his disciples to observe his "supper in remembrance of him," Luke xxii. 19. How then can a lively affection for him consist with an indisposition to comply with his call herein? The weekly day of our public worship has his name fixed upon it by St John, *the Lord's day*, Rev. i. 10. It was the day, when his exaltation commenced by his discharge from the prison of the grave, and therefore was made the accustomed season of the solemn assemblies of his disciples from the most primitive times, John xx. 19, 26. Acts xx. 7. 1 Cor. xvi. 2. And shall not our love to him induce us to esteem that day our delight, and cheerfully to employ it in thinking of him, in hearing from him, in serving him, and converse with him? He has promised his presence in every gospel-

institution, Mat. xviii. 20. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Shall we not gladly embrace such opportunities, as those who have ardent desires to meet our blessed Lord?

8. In strong desires after the nearest and fullest enjoyment of him in heaven. Indeed the belief of his love to us, may justly make a Christian satisfied to stay his Master's time for this: but a true love to him can hardly consist with an absolute contentment to be here always in this state of separation, or of very imperfect and inconstant enjoyment: no, there will be aspirings to be with him where he is, as far better than any thing of earth, or even than the most of God, and Christ, and heaven, that is to be enjoyed upon earth. Want, or weakness of affection to Christ is the ordinary reason, why that is the temper of so few Christians in our time, which the apostle declares to have been his own, 2 Cor. v. 8. "Willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord."

Now it will be our wisdom impartially to examine our love to Christ, the sincerity or the strength of it, by such plain scripture marks as these. It is not our calling him *Lord, Lord*, without these practical and genuine expressions of a sincere and supreme value for him, that will either secure his acknowledgement of us at the great day, or rise up to joy unspeakable now.

SERMON XII.

REJOICING IN CHRIST.

1 PET. i. 8.

Whom, having not seen, ye love : in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

TWO branches of the Christian disposition toward the blessed Jesus, have been particularly discoursed of from this passage ; *believing* in him, and *love* to him. One yet remains to be considered.

III. REJOICING in Christ ; which as well as the other, is affirmed here by the apostle, to have been the frame of the primitive Christians. “ In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Joy in him is an advance upon our faith and love. It imports a rest and satisfaction of mind, upon the apprehension we have of his real excellence, and of the benefits accruing to us by him. The word used in another place, Phil. iii. 3. to express this temper, *καυχῆσθαι*, signifies to *glory*, or *triumph* in Christ : and so our translators render it, in Gal. vi. 14. “ God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ.” The apostle observes of the Jews, that they “ rested in the law, the Mosaical law, and they made their boast of God,” Rom. ii. 17. The same word is there used ; they *gloried in God* ; that is, they gloried in their visible relation to God, as eminently their God, beyond what he was to the heathen world, by virtue of the covenant of peculiarity made with

their nation, upon their consent to observe the law of Moses, Exod. xix. These Christians on the other hand, of whom the apostle speaks in the text, upon their conversion from Judaism to Christianity, gloried and rejoiced in Christ, as opening the way to a more distinguishing relation to God, than that to which the Jewish nation was admitted by virtue of the Mosaical covenant. They esteemed Christ to bring glad tidings of greater joy than Moses did, to be more full of grace and truth; and therefore rejoiced in him, as having found the best treasure.

The two characters given of their joy, intimate the high degree of it. It was joy unspeakable, more than they could express; they could hardly apprise others what a joy they felt. And it was full of glory. The word exactly rendered, is *glorified* joy; it was akin to the joy felt by those in the glorified state.

But it may be said, though these primitive believers thus rejoiced in Christ, is this to be esteemed a necessary part of every true Christian's character?

I answer, The gospel gives reason to all who entertain it for such a high degree of joy; certainly it may be attained, and is a frame fit to be aspired at by all Christians, since it is left upon record, as the actual character of these primitive examples. But I am far from thinking it in such a large measure, to be an essential character of a Christian. And yet a prevalence of this temper, as well as of faith and love, must be understood as a discriminating mark of every sincere Christian: for so St Paul represents it, Phil. iii. 3. "We are the circumcision, (the true people of God,) which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus."

I shall therefore consider, 1. The grounds which a Christian has for joy in Christ. And, 2. How far it may be esteemed the necessary temper of every true Christian. And then make some reflections.

First, I am to consider the grounds, which a Christian has for rejoicing in Christ.

And upon this head I would observe, that,

1. The gospel revelation furnishes the materials of his joy.
 2dly, His faith in that revelation is the principle of his joy.
 3dly, The efficacy of his faith, as working by love, gives him ground for still a more special joy.

I. The gospel-revelation furnishes the materials of his joy;

the good news, the glad tidings contained in the blessed gospel. For instance,

1. The kind and gracious design upon which Jesus came into the world. One, which had the most comfortable aspect upon mankind, of any thing which was ever manifested since the apostacy. It was to testify the good will of an offended God toward men, and to open a way for the free communication of it; which was accordingly proclaimed at his birth by the heavenly host, Luke ii. 14. "God sent his Son not to condemn the world;" as our guilty fears might have surmised, if notice had been given of his approach, without any account of the design of it; "but that through him the world might be saved," John iii. 17. "To seek and save them that were lost," Luke xix. 10. And not only such as had been guilty of less offences, but even the "chief of sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15. "To save them from their sins themselves," Mat. i. 21. "And from the wrath to come," due upon that account, 2 Thess. i. 10.

What a subject of joy is this! considering the greatness of the evils in which we were involved, and to which we were farther liable. We were alienated from God, under the sentence of condemnation, ready to fall into the hands of the living God. And at the same time we were utterly unable to help ourselves. We had destroyed ourselves; but in God alone, if any where, our help must be found. We could neither resist his Almighty vengeance, nor atone his just displeasure. All other ways which carried an air of relief, were insufficient to reach their end. There were sacrifices under the law to put away sin; but they were not sufficient to purify, as pertaining to the conscience. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, (says the Son of God :) Then I said, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," Heb. x. 5, 7. And yet when this grace was intended us, we were altogether unworthy of any instance of compassion; and therefore have the more abundant reason to rejoice, that notwithstanding that, a saving design is set on foot.

2. The capacity and fitness of Jesus to accomplish this gracious design, is a farther ground of joy in him. "Help, is laid upon one mighty to save, able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him."

The constitution of his person admirably qualified him for

this province. The dignity of his divine nature ennobled his offering, so that "the church was fully redeemed by his blood," Acts xx. 28. By his having been in the bosom of the Father, he was every way furnished to reveal him, his will and grace to the world, John i. 18. On the other hand, by his condescending to be made flesh, "he had wherewith to offer," Heb. viii. 3. A body was prepared him, that he might "bear our sins in his own body on the tree." By the same means, when he became our instructor, the terrors which must have seized us, had God himself in his glory spoke to us, were prevented. And his government is become more suitable, as he is "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh."

The full commission which he received to be our Mediator, enters into his capacity to be a Saviour. None but God our ruler and judge, could authorise and make valid any expedient for our relief: he might have insisted on our bearing in our own persons, the punishment we had deserved. It is therefore matter of great joy, that he hath commissioned the Saviour, sent him on the errand, and laid himself under engagements, that when he should make his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed.

The furniture and qualifications of his human nature for the performance of his undertaking, are a most grateful discovery of his meetness: that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" and that he received the most perfect unction of the Holy Spirit; for "such an high priest became us," Heb. vii. 26.

He was invested in all the offices, which our condition required. That of a prophet, to relieve our ignorance: of a priest, to remove our guilt: and of a king, to subdue our enmity, and by his power to overcome the many enemies of our souls. By his priestly office to procure our salvation, in his prophetic to reveal it, and by his regal to confer it.

This is a foundation of joy, that a person is sent to be the Saviour, who was fully capable of the province.

3. The several parts of his work in prosecution of this design, one way or other subserve it, and so may heighten the Christian's joy. By his doctrine he acquainted us with the counsel of God, explained the spirituality and perfection of his law, introduced a more reasonable service, and opened a door of hope for us, *simmers of the Gentiles*. By his holy and use-

ful life, he gave us a perfect and a moving pattern. By his miracles he proved his divine mission. His death was a full propitiation for our sins, the price of our redemption, a foundation for conquest over all our enemies, and a necessary step to all the advantage we can hope for from his exaltation and kingdom. Surely then we have reason to "glory in the cross of Christ," Gal. vi. 14. His resurrection succeeded, to open all the springs of joy, as the great evidence of his divine character, and of the sufficiency of his death. His going away into the unseen world, "was expedient for us," John xvi. 7. He entered heaven as our forerunner: and his work there from his entrance to the end of time, is of the most signal advantage to his church. When he ascended into the heavenly places, he sent down his Spirit; not only to give the last attestations to the gospel, and to enable the apostles to complete the revelation of it; but to carry on the saving design, and to supply all remaining wants, which he had not provided for in person. He ever lives above, as our advocate with the Father to make intercession for us. And as "all power in heaven and earth is committed to him," so he exercises it for the good of his servants; for he is head over all things to the church, or for the benefit of his church. "He can be touched above with the feeling of our infirmities" on earth. And when we have served our generation, he is ready to receive our departing spirits. But while we may look back with complacency upon his past work on earth, and look up with pleasure upon his present work in heaven; how much more may we look forward with joy to his future work, when "he shall come the second time without a sin-offering to salvation," to the final and complete salvation of all his followers? when he "shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe?"

4. The privileges, with which he hath invested his church at present, are reasons for rejoicing in him. These exceed all that were afforded in any former dispensation.

A more spiritual and rational worship is set up by him; more worthy of God, and conducive to our edification. And we are discharged from that yoke, which the fathers were not able to bear.

We are allowed a freer access to God. Every Christian has a fuller liberty of coming to God, than the high priest him-

self had in the former dispensation ; being allowed to come in the prevailing name of Christ, and with a spirit of adoption. But this is so considerable a branch of the Christian temper, that I intend to treat of it hereafter distinctly ; and therefore prosecute it no farther here.

And beside all this, a clearer view is given us of the future happiness, by this finishing revelation, to raise our joy to a higher pitch. Which leads me to observe in the last place,

5. The promises given us by Christ are most comfortable and joyful. God has given us by the gospel, “ exceeding great and precious promises,” 2 Pet. i. 4. “ This better covenant is established upon better promises,” than the Jewish covenant, Heb. viii. 6. Upon promises better in their nature, than that as a national covenant was ratified by ; for those were only temporal promises ; and upon promises, better in respect of clearness and fulness, than the promises of grace under the Old Testament reached to.

The promise of pardon is more clear, and full, and extensive than before, to all sins and sinners. “ By Christ, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses,” Acts xiii. 39.

The felicity of the intermediate state before the resurrection for all good men, is a thing we hear not so much of under the Old Testament, as in the New. And the greatness and certainty of the final happiness, is much more clearly brought to light, 2 Tim. i. 10.

And the same must be said of the influences of the Holy Spirit. Though good men before the coming of Christ, were not utter strangers to any of these things, yet they saw them but in a glass darkly, in comparison of our light about them. And then, all the promises of God have had such a peculiar ratification by the blood of Christ, as makes the comfort of them exceedingly greater ; for they are “ yea, and amen in him,” 2 Cor. i. 20. They are become God’s New Testament to us, or his covenant with us “ in Christ’s blood,” Luke xxii. 10.

These are some of the principal materials of a Christian’s joy in Christ. Now,

II. His *faith* in this revelation of the gospel concerning Christ, is the principle of his joy. “ In whom believing ye rejoice.” Unless credit is given to the testimony of the gos-

pel, all this blessed discovery will not affect the soul ; and the degrees of our joy can only be in proportion to the strength or weakness of our faith. Because the faith of the primitive Christians was at a higher pitch, than that of the generality of Christians now ; therefore their joy in him was more elevated. But equal faith would produce equal joy : such a faith ; as shall answer the apostle's description, Heb. xi. 1. " that it is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Such a firm reliance upon the testimony of God in the gospel, that what is related there concerning Christ's past work on earth, and his present employment in heaven, and what is foretold of his second appearance, is esteemed as real, and sure, and substantial, as if we had the evidence of sense or reason in the case : a faith that gives present existence in our minds to the things revealed of him, whether invisible in their nature, or long since past and gone, or now doing beyond the bounds of our world, or not to be accomplished till the end of time. The nearer approaches our faith makes to this height, so much the more will our joy rise. When St Paul would wish a singular enlargement to the joy of the Romans, he prays for it as attainable only by the mediation of faith, Rom. xv. 13. " The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost."

3. The efficacy of his faith, as *working by love*, gives a Christian reason for the most *special* and appropriating joy.

Indeed a faith in the general revelation, may justly produce a lively joy in the breast of a convinced sinner. To have the good will of God to lost sinners proclaimed, by sending his Son to save them ; to be assured that all things are ready in virtue of what he hath done and suffered, that the greatest benefits are offered to all without distinction, that we are encouraged to ask for the Holy Spirit ; in a word, that our salvation is made possible, and we are yet in a state of trial : such discoveries may justly set open the springs of joy ; though it should be certain, that we are not yet in a state of salvation : and especially, though it should be doubtful, whether we are so or not. What gladness may we suppose it would produce in damned spirits, could the same things be proposed to them, with the same degrees of hope in their case ? We find such general notices were entertained by many of the Gentiles with

great pleasure of mind, even before they were arrived at a complete faith. When St Paul acquainted them, Acts xiii. 47, 48. that the Lord commanded him and the other apostles to let them know, that "Christ was set to be a light to the Gentiles, that he should be for salvation to the ends of the earth. (We are told that,) when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained, or disposed, and fitted to eternal life, believed." They entertained the first tidings with gladness, which by the grace of God prepared and disposed the minds of many to believe to the saving of their souls.

But then there is a higher and more satisfying joy, resulting from the sense of actual interest in Christ, and a hope that we are already in the way of salvation by him. Now in order to this, not only the general assenting act of faith is necessary, but the consenting acts also, that Christ shall be all that to us, for which he is offered in the gospel: our faith must produce love, and that love prove itself genuine by such proper fruits of it as were mentioned in the last discourse. This is the way, under the influences of the divine Spirit, to arrive at a special and distinguishing joy in Christ. Our rejoicing in ourselves is not inconsistent with this appropriating joy in Christ, but necessary to it, that is, a joy in the grace of God found in ourselves, Gal. vi. 4. "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."

III. I proceed to shew, how far it may be esteemed the essential temper of a true Christian, that he rejoices in Christ.

1. A special and appropriating joy is not necessary to the being of a Christian; though it is very needful to his well-being and usefulness. It is every Christian's duty, as well as his interest, to "give all diligence to make his calling and election sure," 2 Pet. i. 10. So he will be able to walk more cheerfully and comfortably with God, the duties of the Christian life will be more pleasant, and death more welcome. "So an entrance will be ministered to him abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," ver. 11. By this means he will adorn the gospel, and recommend it to the esteem and acceptance of an observing world.

But yet this peculiar joy cannot be pronounced essential

to a Christian, without excluding many from that character, whom I doubt not our Lord will receive; who cannot so rejoice in Christ, because they are not assured that he is theirs.

Some are full of doubts about their state, "from mistaken apprehensions of the terms of the gospel-covenant," when in truth they have good reason for better hopes. They are really in Christ, or true Christians, whose faith in him hath such a measure of strength, as engages them heartily to give up themselves to his instruction and conduct, and to rely upon him as an all-sufficient Saviour; whose love is unfeigned, superior to their affection to other things, so as to make them willing to do his commandments, fearful of offending him, grieved when they do so, and resolved to part with any thing rather than lose his favour: who make conscience of every part of his will as far as they know it, without a stated reserve for the chosen practice of any known sin, or an allowed deliberate exception against any known duty. All such are true Christians, and certainly accepted of God. But there are many, to whom these characters belong, and whose consciences upon the strictest examination bear witness to thus much, who yet cannot be satisfied through the weakness of their judgment, and their fears of being mistaken in a matter of such importance. If they are asked the grounds of their doubts and fears, they appear to be no more than the ordinary imperfections, which more or less attend all good men in this life: they cannot be so lively and fixed in holy duties as they would; they are not always in the same devout frame; vain and evil thoughts dart into their minds: their love to God and Christ are not at the pitch they would have them; they find remains of sin still in being, to occasion their daily watchfulness and warfare. But the gospel-covenant doth not exclude men from a relation to Christ for such things as these; it is the fruit of a pious mind, that they are so burdensome; but a weakness attending them if that concern so far prevails, as to make them overlook the substantial evidences, they might discern of a sincere devotedness to God. Yet while their weakness induces them to exclude themselves out of the number of God's children, God forbid we should imagine that for that reason he will exclude them.

Others have much more reason for their fears. Their grace and holiness, in the substantial parts of it, is really so

imperfect, if indeed they are in a state of acceptance with God, that it is justly a matter of doubt whether their hearts are right with God. The balance is so near even, between the interest of God and the world in their hearts: every good disposition is so weak, and the opposite corruptions so strong; there are so great interruptions and frequent breaches in the course of their obedience, that it is not easy to discern to what master they yield themselves servants to obey, whether sin or righteousness. Now in such a case, though if grace really prevail, they are in a state of acceptance, yet they cannot justly conclude this positively, till the prevalence becomes more conspicuous; nor is it their immediate duty to entertain this appropriating joy, but to use more diligence for making their sincerity unquestionable; and then with the improvement of grace and mortification of sin, they will have a clearer foundation for a favourable conclusion concerning their state. In the meanwhile, doubting may do them good, by quickening their diligence to clear their title. It is not fit that men should stifle their consciences, or think themselves better than they are, or determine that they are in a safe case, while really it is very hard to decide, whether sin or holiness have the ascendant.

Besides all this, actual joy in Christ may be obstructed in the best men by a constitutional or occasional melancholy. When the body is oppressed with black and heavy humours, and the due circulation of the blood obstructed; the mind is unavoidably indisposed for any sort of cheerfulness. And when men plainly appear unapt to take pleasure in other things, in the enjoyments of life, in agreeable friends and relations; it is no more an evidence that they are not true Christians, because they cannot think of Christ and his benefits with such pleasure and satisfaction as some other Christians do, than it is to be esteemed an evidence, that they are not sensible or reasonable creatures, because they seem to have no relish for sensible good or suitable society. Both are the effects of bodily distemper; and that must be removed, before they will be capable of any sort of cheerful affection. Yet,

2. There are some expressions of a mind truly rejoicing in Christ Jesus, in every sincere Christian, even under his clouds and fears. That is, expressions of that value for Christ, which would shew itself in cheerful joy, if that were not

obstructed by tender fears about his state, or by bodily distemper.

It is the habitual and fixed judgment of his mind, that Christ and his benefits are more fit to be rejoiced in, than all worldly good. If he does not actually rejoice in him, this is not owing to a low opinion of Christ, but of himself. And that is a very different thing from the temper of carnal minds. If his fears chill his joy, they do not abate his esteem. While he cannot take the comfort of relation, yet it is the sense of his soul, 'Happy is the people that is in such a case: I had rather be in their condition, the condition of the meanest that belong to Christ, than change states with the most prosperous sinner upon earth. It would fill me with more joy to have my doubts scattered, and to be well assured that Christ is mine, and I am his, than to have the highest certainty of the most advantageous friendship amongst men, or of the possession of the richest inheritance in the world.' Now this is as truly rejoicing in Christ, as far as the apprehension of his own present circumstances will allow, as the highest transports of an assured soul.

Accordingly, with all his fears and doubts, he relies upon Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, and ventures the weight of his salvation upon him. He dares not fly to any other refuge, or take up with any other method of life; but here he casts anchor, living and dying, as the only name under heaven whereby men may be saved. He *trusts in Christ*, Eph. i. 12. It is indeed with a trembling heart, lest he should not be found one who has a right by the gospel declaration to lay claim to his benefits. But the distrust he hath is of himself, rather than of Christ. The measure of confidence he entertains, is in the sufficiency of Christ: and it is such a confidence, as he dares to place in no other. Now though this may not bring him to a full rest of mind, yet it is all the rest he hath for his salvation.

When he cannot rejoice in Christ as actually his, yet he would not quit his general hope upon any terms. When he is most jealous of himself, and fearful of his interest; should he be tried with the strongest allurements, or the most affrighting terrors to deny Christ, to abandon any farther hope from him, or concern with him, he would shew his superior esteem for him by a resolute adherence. Many desponding Christians,

as they have acquitted themselves well in such trials, so they have been enabled by that means to discern the place their master had in their hearts, beyond what they could ever do before, and so to strengthen their hopes, and rise up to a more comfortable joy in him. They have shewn the world and themselves at the same time, the sincerity of their affection, when they are content to forego any worldly good, or suffer any temporal inconvenience, upon trial, rather than break with Christ.

We may make the following reflections upon this subject.

1. The Christian religion is certainly a doctrine worthy of all acceptance; for it contains glad tidings of great joy: and who is not willing to entertain such a message? It opens a door for joy to creatures in the most deplorable condition, who by sin had the most dismal prospect; such, upon which, "Adam endeavoured to hide himself from the presence of the Lord;" such as would otherwise embitter every hour of life to a convinced mind, and overspread the face of death with blackness of darkness. Instead of that, the gospel sets in view for every returning sinner, the favour of an offended God, the fulness of the promises; all that is necessary to make him safe by the way, and happy at the end of it, as freely given him in and with Christ. The gospel, agreeable to its name, contains no other than good tidings to those who give it a proper reception; the declarations of terror made in it, shall reach only to those who reject or neglect the salvation offered by Christ.

2. We may infer the folly of suffering ourselves to be mainly taken up with worldly joy, when we have so much better. It is a most reasonable expostulation which the prophet uses with sinners, upon a prediction of the grace of the gospel, Isa. lv. 2. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" when you may have so much better. "As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of fools," Eccl. vii. 6. The carnal joy of sinners is a blaze, and no more; it soon leaves them as it found them, if no worse. "I said, (says the wise man,) of laughter it is mad, (but a short fit of madness;) and of mirth what doth it?" Eccl. ii. 2. Forbidden delights leave a sting behind them in remorse of conscience: to rejoice or glory in them, is to glory in our shame, in that of

which we ourselves shall certainly sooner or latter be ashamed. But to rejoice in Christ Jesus, is to take pleasure in the most valuable object, in the most complete spring of happiness, in the best treasure; in that which is sufficient to support under all other uneasinesses, and in the most distressing hours: it is a joy full of glory, and to be perfected in glory.

3. Let all those therefore, who have heard the gospel-message hitherto with negligence and contempt, be persuaded to consider the blessedness it contains, and to give it a suitable entertainment. Think seriously, what a mournful condition you are in without Christ: in a state of enmity with your Creator, under his wrath and curse, liable every moment to death, and to hell after it. Can joy in such circumstances be wiser or better, than the drunken revels of a condemned malefactor? Think, how suitable to your case and wants the discovery is, which the gospel makes of a Saviour: it is just such, as a convinced sinner would reasonably desire; only it far exceeds what the heart of man could conceive. Consider how willing he is to perform the kind office of a Saviour to you; the abasement and sorrows he cheerfully underwent to capacitate him for it; the breathings of his good-will to sinners in the gracious words that proceeded out of his lips, in the many invitations to them which are left upon record, in his instituting a ministry of reconciliation to beseech you in his stead to be reconciled to God. Think what benefits await you, as soon as you receive him: you will be justified by faith, and have peace with God; be admitted among his children, be entitled to his promises, and become heirs of his kingdom. But on the other hand, your sorrows must be far more extreme, if you should finally reject him, after he is discovered to you. God hath a sorer punishment in store for such, and your own consciences will produce weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Lay such thoughts as these, O sinner, to heart, and pray in earnest for his effectual grace, to dispose you to a willing compliance with the call of the gospel.

4. Let Christians endeavour to rise up to the height of this character of rejoicing in Christ. To that end,

Use diligence to improve and confirm your faith in the

gospel-testimony : that you may be the better able to say with Peter, John vi. 69. "We believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Your joy cannot rise beyond the proportion of faith. Therefore frequently review the various evidences of the truth and divine original of the gospel revelation ; and along with it pray to God to increase your faith, Luke xvii. 51.

Do your utmost to clear your own interest in him. Carefully inform yourselves of the tenor of the gospel-constitution, that you may not wrongfully exclude yourselves from the comfort of a covenant-relation. Let the uniting acts of faith in him, and love to him, have a frequent and lively exercise. And especially cultivate his image and resemblance, both in heart and life.

Hereupon set yourselves often to meditate on the gospel discovery concerning him. "Consider the apostle and high priest of your profession, Christ Jesus," Heb. iii. 1. If you make him and his grace familiar, and frequently present to your thoughts, it will make joy spring up in your hearts, and keep it fresh and lively.

Let the work of thanksgiving for Christ and his benefits be your daily exercise. This will keep your souls in a cheerful frame.

Aim at having this for your prevailing and habitual temper. "Rejoice in the Lord always ; and again I say rejoice," Phil. iv. 4. Recollect the grace of Christ for your support in every uneasy circumstance of life. When you are lamenting the body of death, turn your thoughts hither with Paul, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vii. 24, 25. 'Blessed be God, that through Christ it shall not issue in my condemnation, as long as it hath not the dominion : that by his grace it is become my burden ; and that before he has done with me, I shall be delivered from it.' In the troubles of life, think, blessed be God, these "shall not separate me from the love of Christ. Yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." If death looks formidable, eye Christ as having by his own death frustrated him who had the power of death ; and say, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Endeavour to have joy in Christ as your governing disposition

and principle in the performance of every duty, and in your whole course of Christian obedience.

Finally, endeavour to shew the world about you, how you rejoice in him. By your stedfastness to him, in opposition to all inducements to unfaithfulness. And by a cheerful demeanour strive to convince those who observe you, that you find his ways to be ways of pleasantness, and his paths paths of peace.

SERMON XIII.

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

EPH. v. 18.

—*Be filled with the Spirit.*

THE right disposition of our souls to God, which hath been insisted on already, concerns all the sacred Three in common; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But the gospel represents each of them, as sustaining different parts in the work of saving lost sinners; and accordingly directs us to distinct practical regards to each. We are taught on the one hand to have “access to the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit;” and on the other, to expect all benefits from the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit.

I have already discoursed of the Christian frame towards the Lord Jesus, or to the Son as Mediator: and would now shew, how Christianity requires us to be disposed with reference to the blessed Spirit, according to the account given us in scripture of his peculiar province; and have chosen to make this passage my foundation.

The precept in the text stands connected with several practical exhortations laid down in this and the fourth chapter; and is directly opposed to a caution given in the beginning of the verse. “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess: but be filled with the Spirit.”

Intemperance greatly prevailed in the heathen world; and even in some of the feasts of their gods, particularly in the feast of Bacchus; wherein it was commonly esteemed not only lawful, but commendable, to indulge to gluttony and drunkenness. The converts at Ephesus, saw this practice among

their neighbours, and possibly might formerly be themselves associates in it: and therefore the apostle warns them against their old sins, and enforces the caution by putting them in mind of the farther bad effects, which used to follow intemperance. “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.” The Greek word signifies *dissoluteness*, all manner of impurities.

These were used to follow the heathen excesses in their festivals, as they are too often the attendants of intemperance in common life. Now in opposition to this, the apostle exhorts Christians to be filled with the Spirit. Instead of the jollity and criminal pleasures, which sensual men are led to by the unrestrained indulgence of their appetites; you Christians should aim at the sacred and solid pleasure, which is to be had by means of the Holy Spirit.

This exhortation is addressed to those, who were supposed to be already Christians, and consequently to have the Spirit of Christ in some measure; and therefore must directly mean, that they should aim at a participation of him in a larger and fuller measure. But yet, as it is directed to the professors of Christianity at Ephesus, promiscuously, who, for ought that any but God and themselves knew, might some of them be still destitute of the renewing influences of the Spirit; so the exhortation may reasonably be taken in such a latitude, as to excite all who name the name of Christ to labour after a farther participation of the Spirit than they have already, according as their present state is; either to begin or to perform a good work in them. Those who are not yet made truly good by him, though it is not the immediate concern incumbent upon them to be filled with the Spirit, yet they are remotely obliged even to that; and in order to it, to take the necessary preceding steps.

I shall then discourse of this proposition.

That we are called by Christianity to be filled with the Spirit.

In the prosecution of which, I shall consider,

I. THE meaning of this phrase of *being filled with the Spirit*. Which will be some account of what the gospel reveals concerning the province of the Spirit in the work of our

salvation ; and so will shew the foundation of the temper required toward him.

II. What is implied in this being made a matter of exhortation to us. Which will lead me directly to explain the dispositions required by Christianity in relation to the Spirit.

III. The obligations which lie upon all who profess Christianity to be filled with the Spirit.

I. I am to consider the meaning of this phrase, being *filled with the Spirit*. Wherein two things are to be distinctly explained ; *the Spirit* ; and then being *filled with the Spirit*.

First, What are we to understand by *the Spirit*, with which we are to be filled ? The observation of three things may give sufficient light upon this head.

1. That divine person, the *third* of the sacred Three, is plainly intended. He, in whose name we are baptized, as well as the Father and Son. He is sometimes described in scripture by additional characters ; as the *Holy Spirit*, or *Holy Ghost* ; the *eternal Spirit*, Heb. ix. 14. The Spirit of God ; and the Spirit of Christ, as he was purchased and sent by Christ to bear the part he sustains in the work of our salvation. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ," Rom. viii. 9. "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son," Gal. iv. 6. And frequently, as in the text, he is called absolutely, and in a way of emphasis by the name of the *Spirit*, without any addition, in places too numerous to need reciting. And that he is meant in this exhortation, may appear from a parallel phrase, which is frequently used concerning some in the New Testament that they were full of the holy Ghost, or Spirit : which is said of Christ himself, Luke iv. 1. And of Stephen, Acts vi. 5. chap. vii. 55. And of Barnabas, Acts xi. 24. Now we shall most reasonably understand the apostle here to exhort Christians to be filled with the same Spirit, which those persons are declared to be full of.

2. The gracious influences and operations of this blessed agent upon our minds, in order to our holiness and happiness, are that participation of the Spirit, which we are to seek after.

It is not his bare essential presence with us. So he necessarily is every where ; he filleth heaven and earth. "Whither

shall I go from thy Spirit?" Psal. cxxxix. 7. Though by the way, I cannot see how all Christians through the world could be directed to expect his influences, without supposing him to be possessed of that divine perfection of omnipresence. I can by no means apprehend it possible, that a finite being should have access at once to all minds.

Nor are his extraordinary influences and operations in miraculous gifts the things intended. He acted as a Spirit of prophecy under the Old Testament. "Holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. i. 21. The Spirit of Christ was in them, testifying the things which they delivered, 1 Pet. i. 11. And in the primitive age of the Christian church, his extraordinary influences in various kinds were very extensive and surprising. God revealed the things, which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had entered into the heart of man, by his Spirit to the apostles and first publishers of the gospel, and enabled them infallibly to make them known to the world, 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. He immediately endowed them with supernatural qualifications for the services to which they were called, so that their enemies, were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which they spake, Acts vi. 10. He gave miraculous attestations to the truth of Christianity, by the gift of tongues, and by many other signs and wonders.

These were peculiar to that first age, and necessary to lay the foundations of the Christian church; but not designed or needful to be continued in after times. The revelation of God's will was then completed, so as neither to need or admit of any addition, Rev. xxii. 18. And sufficient attestations were then given to the truth of the gospel in the first age, and sufficient provision made for conveying the notice of them down to all after ages in an ordinary way, so that nothing more of this kind is to be expected, as far as I can perceive from the gospel.

All these influences of the Spirit were more directly intended for the good of others, than of the persons themselves who partook of them. Indeed in those days, while such extraordinary gifts were dispensed, the apostle exhorted Christians to desire a share in them, in order to their greater usefulness, 1 Cor. xii. 31. "Covet earnestly the best gifts." But even then, he directed them to the gracious influences of the Spirit,

as much more valuable : And yet, says he, shew I unto you a more excellent way. What that more excellent way was, he immediately lets them know in the next chapter ; namely, the holy dispositions, which the Spirit produces by his sanctifying grace ; one of which he singles out suitably to his present occasion, *charity*. And he gives a very plain reason for this preference ; because the most excellent gifts of the Spirit might be without this grace ; and if they were so separated, they would not turn to their final account. If a man could speak with the tongue of men and of angels ; if he had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries and all knowledge, and had all faith, that is, to work miracles ; this might be without charity, or the other graces of the Spirit, and if so, a man would be nothing after all ; or if any thing, only as “ sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal,” 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. If he were enabled by such gifts to be pleasing or profitable to others ; yet whatever agreeable sound he might make in their ears, he would have no more share in relishing the harmony, than a musical instrument hath.

Such gifts may aggravate men’s condemnation, but can never of themselves bring them to heaven. The apostle seems to speak mainly of the participation of these extraordinary gifts when he says, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. “ It is impossible for those, who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,” that is, as I think, the miraculous powers displayed in the evangelical state, which the same apostle declares to be the world to come, whereof he spake, chap. ii. 5. “ If these (says he,) shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.” It was next to impossible, that is, extremely difficult to recover such, if they should become apostates, because they had such evidences for Christianity already, as could hardly be out-done ; and yet they might leave their hearts unchanged.

These things therefore were not the operations of the Spirit, which were most valuable then : but his direct agency as a Spirit of holiness. And it was plainly the apostle’s intention in the text to direct the Ephesians to this latter kind of his influences ; if we consider what effect he intimates their being filled with the Spirit, would have upon them, in the words

following the text. "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God," ver. 19, 20, 21. Which is in effect to say, 'Be filled with the Spirit, that so you may be disposed to all the acts of devotion toward God, and to perform them in a spiritual manner, as unto God; and that you may be formed also to behave aright towards men.' Now they would be furnished by these things by the sanctifying influences, not by the gifts of the Spirit. And therefore the apostle must be understood of the former.

These operations were necessary to any spiritual good, in fallen creatures from the beginning. We find some promises of them under the Old Testament, and good men then sometimes expressly praying for them. But they were reserved for a fuller discovery under the New. When Christ engaged in his public ministry, he directed the eyes of his followers to the blessed Spirit as the fountain of spiritual good, and encouraged them to hope and ask for his grace from their heavenly Father, Luke xi. 13. And as his gracious agency will be still needed for the same purposes to the end of time, we should still have a constant eye to it.

3. The genuine fruits, which the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit tend to produce in us, must also be taken in, as a part of the object of pursuit here recommended to us; and indeed as that, for the sake of which his influences are to be desired. All his gracious operations tend to make us like God, and happy in God; they have that effect, as far as they are complied with; and they are only desirable in order to that; and as far as any fallen creatures arrive at true holiness or well-grounded comfort, they owe it principally to his having been at work in them. Hence the new nature in us, or a holy and heavenly disposition, is often called in scripture *the Spirit*; not only because such a temper is more suitable to the nobler part of ourselves, our souls; but also because it is the effect of the agency of the blessed Spirit of God. The words of the text, may as properly be rendered, *Be filled by or through the Spirit, as be filled with him*. As if it were said, be filled *by means of* the Spirit; not directly specifying

with *what*, and yet sufficiently intimating that: Be filled with that, with which the good Spirit of God is used to fill souls. And what should that be, but his own fruits? Now "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," Gal. v. 22, 23. Or, as in Eph. v. 6. "The fruit of the Spirit, is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." To be filled with the Spirit then, and to be filled with all holy qualities and well grounded consolations thereupon, are one and the same thing.

Having thus stated the meaning of the Spirit, I proceed to consider,

II. What is implied by our *being filled* with the Spirit. And it imports both a greatness in his agency, and a largeness in our participation.

I. It supposes a sufficiency and fulness in the blessed Spirit and his influences, every way to fill our souls: to supply all our spiritual wants, and to help all our infirmities.

Not that we are to expect from him the discovery of any new truths distinct from those which he has already revealed in the Scriptures. He promised indeed to guide the apostles into all truths; even such truths as were not before revealed, the many things which Christ had to say to them, but they could not bear till after his ascension, John xvi. 12, 13. But this was a promise peculiar to them; and fully accomplished before the canon of scripture was completed. Nor does he move men to any thing as their duty, which was not already made so by the word of God. His agency is only to be considered, as in a way of powerful assistance to the due consideration, apprehension, and belief of the mind of God as already revealed in scripture. We have no other way to distinguish his influences from delusion of fancy, or the irregular inclinations of our own hearts, or the suggestions of the devil, but by trying their agreement with the revelation already made of truth and duty. Every good thought is of God, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Every motion to that which is good, we justly conceive to be from the Spirit. But every thought, every motion, which varies from the rule of goodness, or cannot be supported by clear reason or revelation, must necessarily proceed from another original. The Spirit's agency is always agreeable to his word, and by his word.

Nor are we to apprehend his influence to be perceivable by itself; but we know it to be from him purely by revelation. We believe his agency in all the good we find in ourselves, because the scripture ascribes it to him. He works upon us, in and by the natural actings of our own minds, and usually in a very familiar way; so that we should not be able to distinguish his agency from our own, if we were not assured by revelation, from whom every good motion in fallen creatures hath its rise; that "every good and perfect gift comes from above," James i. 17. and all good things in the sphere of grace by the Spirit. Therefore the two evangelists, Matthew and Luke, make these two expressions to be of the like import. Our heavenly Father's giving us such good things, and his giving us his Holy Spirit, Matt. vii. 11. compared with Luke xi. 13. because he gives us all such good things by his Spirit. But his acting is in a way so connatural to the actings of our own faculties, that we should not be able merely by feeling, to discern from whence it came, or that it had any other rise than from our own spirits, if the scripture did not point us to the Spirit of all grace as the fountain of it. This seems to be Christ's meaning, when he represents to Nicodemus the operations of the Spirit by an allusion to the wind, John iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." He acts really and powerfully upon the minds of men, and they are conscious of the good motion, but could not of themselves know the original of it.

But though his agency be always suitable to the rational nature he has given us; yet it is of that general extent through all our faculties; and of that powerful and sufficient influence, that it is every way fit to relieve us under all inward necessities and weaknesses which attend us in our fallen state, and against all the outward snares, oppositions and discouragements we can meet with in the way to heaven. It is sufficient to recover a dead sinner to life; to enable a Christian to do or to bear all things, to which he is called; in a word, to begin and to perform a good work in him to the day of Christ.

He is called in general "the Spirit of grace," Zech. xii. 10. Heb. x. 29. The person promised and eminently com-

nunciated under the gospel, to apply the fruits of divine grace to men. There is scarce any want of considerable importance to our spiritual interests, wherein we do not find particular mention of his agency in Scripture. He is moving many ways in the minds of sinners, while they remain estranged from God, to restrain them from evil, and to make way for saving good; which may be intended by his striving with them, Gen. vi. 3. The gospel where it comes, is more or less to all, a "ministration of the Spirit," 2 Cor. iii. 8. He is the author of regeneration, John iii. 5, 6. And he has made signal examples of such a change in the greatest sinners, Tit. iii. 3, 4, 5. 1 Cor. vi. 11. He has washed Ethiopians white. His operations for producing sanctification in general, both in the beginning and progress of it; and his influence upon the several graces and virtues in particular, of which sanctification consists, are often mentioned. His gracious aids in religious exercises, his seasonable supplies in our various exigencies, Rom. viii. 26, 27. Phil. i. 19. He is also stiled the Comforter. And many ways are expressed, whereby he is so to particular Christians. By "witnessing with their spirits, that they are the children of God," Rom. viii. 16. "Enabling them to cry, Abba, Father," Gal. iv. 6. "Sealing them to the day of redemption," Eph. iv. 30. "Shedding abroad God's love in their hearts," 2 Cor. v. 5. Enabling them to "wait for the hope of righteousness through faith," Gal. v. 5. And granting them suitable supports under their sufferings, 1 Pet. iv. 14.

If after all, these things should not comprehend every spiritual good desirable, yet we may extend our view to all that God has promised, and expect it to be communicated by the Holy Spirit. For it is by him alone, that we can be filled with all the fulness of God that is communicable to us, Eph. iii. 19.

Whatever spiritual blessings we find prayed for in scripture to Christians in ordinary cases, were actually to be given by the Spirit, though he should not be particularly mentioned in the prayer. And in the way of duty, according to our wants, we may expect the like.

Finally, whatever is needful for us in every case and circumstance, to furnish us for any service or trial or conflict appointed us, the Spirit hath it to give, and we are encouraged

to ask it from our heavenly Father. There is therefore a fulness in him, every way sufficient to fill our souls, which is supposed in the phrase of our *being filled with him*.

2. It imports an actual participation of his influences and fruits, in a large and plentiful measure.

It does not imply an absolute and perfect fulness. No mere man was ever so filled with the Holy Ghost ; though to Christ, who was more than man, "God gave the Spirit without measure," John iii. 34. But we must understand it in a way accommodate to a state of imperfection : as Dorcas is said to have "been full of good works," Acts ix. 36. not as if she were complete in them, but she had performed many, and was conspicuous for them : or as the heathen world are declared to have been "filled with all unrighteousness," Rom. i. 29. not as full of sin as it was possible for them to be ; nor that every one, included under that character, was equally vile ; but, as the worst of them might possibly still be worse, so some among them were worse than others. Thus, being filled with the Spirit, neither bespeaks so full a participation of him, as admits of no increase ; nor excludes all from having this pronounced of them in a gospel sense, who yet may be out-stripped by some other Christians.

But this may be more or less men's character in the following respects.

(1.) As they come to have *every power and faculty* of their souls more subject to the Spirit's authority, and under the influence proper to it. As the light of the gospel by his means shines more strongly upon their minds, and at the same time his powerful grace makes them more willing and obedient, and the representation he makes of the great things of the gospel more powerfully attracts their affections, and in like manner every other power receives the just impression from his influence, like the wax from the seal. A man may proportionably be said to be full of the Spirit, as that character comes to be true of him, that "all things are become new in him," 2 Cor. v. 17. When according to the apostle's prayer for the Thessalonians, first Epistle, v. 23. "The very God of peace sanctifies him wholly, in his whole spirit, and soul, and body."

(2.) As they grow on to experience his operations *in all the several kinds of them*. Not only one or another particu-

lar method of his operation, but all the sorts of gracious influence, for which he is promised and given to Christians. Men advance nearer towards being filled with the Spirit, when they partake of his special, as well as his common grace; when they find him enlightening them in their darkness, and quickening them in their remissness, and pushing them forward to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to add one virtue or one branch of the Christian temper to another; when they come to experience his lively energy, leading them on both to holiness and to comfort also.

(3.) As his agency comes to be more *stated and constant in them*. When his motions are not only transient and occasional, but frequent and fixed. This is imported by a phrase often used, of the Spirit's dwelling in us, Rom. viii. 9. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." And in ver. 11. the phrase is repeated. So, 1 Cor. iii. 16. "Know ye not, that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" In this respect Christians are said to be "built together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit," Eph. ii. 23. These phrases are a plain allusion to God's presence among his ancient people the Jews by the constant abode of the Shechinah, or the glorious symbol of his presence in the most holy place within the veil of the tabernacle and temple. That was a standing pledge of his favor towards them as his peculiar people, of his dwelling with them, as always ready to bestow on them the blessings they needed, and to defend them from their enemies, and to accept their offerings. But even under that dispensation God promised to dwell also with particular good men, Isa. lvii. 15. "I dwell in the high and holy place: with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." This was a promise of his constant presence with particular persons, and that for spiritual purposes. In the New Testament he is represented as thus dwelling with every good man by his Spirit; which imports a continued presence of his grace, whereby we are constantly put into a capacity for mortifying the deeds of the body; as it follows in the 13th verse of the viiith to the Romans: wherein, as I observed, the Spirit is spoken of in the 9th and 11th verses, as dwelling in believers. Now, though this is the common

privilege of all true Christians, in comparison of those who are not yet become obedient to the faith; yet his dwelling in them admits of degrees; his gracious influences are more constant and uninterrupted in some than in others; for they may in part be withheld or suspended upon provocation. And men may be said to be more or less filled with the Spirit, as his motions in their souls are more or less constant, for exciting them to good and to the mortification of sin.

(4.) As his grace becomes more *mighty* and *operative in them*, so as actually to produce its proper and genuine effects. The more his operations reach their end in us, in forming holy dispositions of soul, and shining out in their visible efficacy in the life; the more we “purify our souls in obeying the truth by the Spirit,” 1 Pet. i. 22. so much the higher advance is made towards a fulness of the Spirit. And this may be said of men, either in respect of their growth in some particular graces and virtues, or in respect of the variety of his fruits appearing in them.

Men may approach towards a fulness of the Spirit more than formerly, as any particular grace or virtue gathers strength in them, and appears in more frequent and conspicuous exercise. If they become strong in faith, or, (as the apostle thanks God in the case of the Thessalonians,) “their faith groweth exceedingly, and their charity towards each other aboundeth,” 2 Thess. i. 3. If a man, who once struggled hard with his tumultuous passions, or unruly appetites, and was sometimes led captive by them, becomes a signal conqueror, eminently meek and mortified. When a man hath not only the grace of patience ordinarily prevailing, though too often breaking out in expressions of impatience; but *patience hath its perfect work*. The apostle exhorts to that, with this addition, “that ye may be perfect, and entire, wanting nothing,” Jam. i. 4. To have such a measure of that blessed temper, as comes up to a fulness of it; such as is ready for exercise in every trial of patience, and to express itself in all the proper marks of patience. As far as this is attained, so far there is a fulness of the Spirit in respect of that grace. And the same is to be said of any other particular virtue.

But a fulness of the Spirit most eminently denotes the *variety of his fruits* appearing in men. When they “add

to their faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge," &c. 2 Pet. i. 5, &c. When their tempers are prevailingly formed to every holy disposition, and their lives "filled with the fruits of righteousness," Phil. i. 11. St Paul tells the Corinthians, 2 Cor. ix. 8. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you ; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Glorious proficients they are, who out of the abundant fulness of God have derived such a sufficiency as the apostle speaks of, and thereupon abound in such things as divine grace has made them sufficient for : Who being "filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,——walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work ;——Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness," Col. i. 9—11. When they are called out to special duties and services, they shew that they have their hand filled for those services, (as the phrase is in the margin of Exod. xxviii. 41.) by their readiness to engage in them, and their performance of them to the glory of God. They honor their teacher and guide, and the fountain of their supplies, by a becoming behaviour through changing conditions and circumstances of life. St Paul had such a blessed furniture, Phil. iv. 12, 13. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound ; every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Happy souls, who are thus filled !

(5.) As they taste such a sweetness and delight in the measure of participation attained, that they reach forward with the greater ardour toward perfection. This is a sign indeed, that their fulness is not complete ; but it is one of the best signs of growing approaches toward the fulness attainable on earth. The larger share saints below have of the influences, and graces, and comforts of the Spirit, they have the quicker sight of remaining defects ; and, instead of being at full rest, they are the more eager in desires and pursuits after more. It was a sure mark of uncommon attainments in blessed Paul, when "this one thing he did, forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of

the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. iii. 13, 14.

A reflection or two may be made on this subject as far as we have proceeded.

1. We see the excellence of the gospel-revelation, in proposing so suitable and sufficient relief for the necessities of fallen creatures. The most distinguishing glory of the gospel lies, in the discovery it makes of a better way for fallen sinners to come to God, than was fully made known before ; and that upon a double foot : upon the foundation of a better atonement, the precious blood of Christ : and by such gracious influences of the Spirit, as were neither so clearly revealed, nor so plentifully communicated before.

2. We have here one instance, wherein Christianity teaches us to live by faith, and not by sight. The God, with whom we have to do, is himself among the invisibles : the Mediator, through whom we come to him, is now so too : and the blessed Spirit, who is the principle of all that is good in us, is not only an invisible agent, but his agency is itself entirely a matter of faith. And the world he is training us up for, is out of sight also.

3. That which hath been shewn from scripture, both of the suitableness of the Spirit's operations to our wants, and of the blessed effects of them, may be hoped to excite some desires in every breast after a share : especially, since this gospel which is preached to you is a ministration of the Spirit ; and by this way of representing his grace, he is used to kindle such desires in the minds of men, which he delights to satisfy. But more of this in the next discourse.

SERMON XIV.

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

—
EPH. v. 18.

—*Be filled with the Spirit.*

IN the prosecution of this subject, I have already considered the sense and import of the phrase, *being filled with the Spirit*. I now proceed,

II. To enquire, what may be implied in its being made the matter of an exhortation to us; as by the structure of the words and the context you plainly see it is. And in that view, the words plainly intimate three things, which all deserve a distinct and careful consideration; the desirableness of being filled with the Spirit: the attainableness of it: and that something is incumbent on us in order to our being filled with him.

1. That every one should esteem it a most desirable thing. So the apostle recommends it, in opposition to what the loose and libertine heathens were exceeding fond of, the mirth and jollity raised by wine. But while “they think it strange, that you run not with them into the same excess of riot;” you know the way to much better and truer satisfaction. A fulness of the divine Spirit is a blessing of that unspeakable goodness and excellence, that one would think the bare knowledge and consideration of it should raise in every breast ardent desires after it. And it is as undoubted a mark as any other, of the general distemper which hath overspread human nature, and that the taste and relish of men is strangely vitiated; that wherever the gospel comes, and makes known the

influences of the Spirit for such beneficial purposes, any should be found insensible of their need of them, and of the blessedness of being filled with them. Let us take a brief view of its excellence.

It is in itself most directly perfective of our natures. For it is to be filled with every grace and virtue; and indeed is the only way by which we can possibly be so, since the distemper and death of sin has gained such a power over us by the apostacy. As far as we are partakers of the Spirit, and no farther, we come to ourselves.

This would make us the objects of divine complacency. There is nothing in man in which a Holy God can take so much delight as the produce of his own Spirit in him. That must be godlike, comporting with his nature and design. And therefore he, who shares most largely in that, must be in the most eminent sense greatly beloved; as is said of Daniel.

Nothing can form men to a "fitness for bringing much honour to God," or for being singularly useful to the world, especially to the interests of virtue and religion, but this. We shall never design great things for God or our generation, much less execute them well, unless we are under the influence of a better spirit than our own. But under the instigation, direction, and powerful assistance of the divine Spirit, we shall be able and ready to do all things which we are called to: "The weak will be as David, and David as an angel of the Lord."

This would make us proof against the most powerful temptations. If we are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, (which is communicated to us by the grace of the Spirit;) we shall be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand, Eph. vi. 10, 13. All the terrors of life will be little things to a man full of the Holy Ghost; as was plainly seen in Stephen's case, and in many of the noble army of martyrs. Satan will gain little advantage by all his vigilance and subtilty, where the all-wise and gracious Spirit is present as a constant monitor, and where a soul is ready to listen to his counter-motions. And the allurements, which appear strong to a carnal mind from the pleasures of sin, will soon lose all its power in a man, when the divine Spirit is freely

allowed to represent the motives of the gospel to the mind, with his own light and energy.

This would *put us into a fit posture of soul for daily communion with God*. Under the Spirit's lively agency, every institution of divine worship would be attended on with pleasure and delight; we should engage in it in the most spiritual frame, and every pious disposition suitable to it would be in a ready and a lively exercise. When this "wind blows upon the garden, the spices thereof will flow out; and then our beloved will come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits," Cant. iv. 16.

This would *settle our souls in the truest pleasure and peace*. If we partake of a large measure of the Spirit's graces, we shall hardly fail of a liberal share in his consolations. The more we walk in the fear of the Lord, the more we may expect to walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost; as both were united in the case of the primitive churches, Acts ix. 31. By this means, in tribulation, in distress, in peril, in famine, in nakedness, we shall "have meat to eat which the world knows not of; and be able to joy in the Lord, though the fig-tree doth not blossom," Hab. iii. 17, 18.

Finally, this is no less than heaven begun; heaven brought down into the soul, in title, in meetness, in cheerful prospects, in refreshing foretastes. A man who is full of the Spirit, hath "the earnest of the inheritance," Eph. i. 14.

And is not this a most desirable good? What can justly claim an equal share in your esteem and value?

Is not this better than the filling of your treasures on earth? "To be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." You may have your barns and your chests full, and yet your souls entirely empty; empty of their proper ornament, and of any stable satisfaction. You may soon have your stores of worldly treasure emptied by a thousand accidents; and then if you have not the Spirit of God, you must be forced to say, "My gods are taken away, and what have I more?" But for certain, one stroke of death will strip you of all at once; none of the furniture of worldly good can be carried along with you into the other world: and in what a destitute case must the separate soul be, when it hath dropped the body and all the enjoyments suitable to that, and never was possessed of the happiness proper to itself?

Are sensual delights preferred by you before such a blessing as being filled with the Spirit? Intemperance, and the criminal indulgences of the flesh? Do you take pleasure in "being filled with wine, wherein is excess," and all manner of looseness? But do you consider, that hereby you are filled with guilt, with shame, with folly? That the devil and his train take possession, when you give up yourselves to rioting and drunkenness, to chambering and wantonness? Do you remember, that by these things people commonly are filled with distempers, with poverty, with various miseries in this life? and above all, that in the end, without bitter repentance, you can look for no better from such a course, than to be "filled with your own ways?" And what is the satisfaction, for which you run all these risks? How very short the pleasure of a licentious revel! How quickly is it succeeded with a grating remorse for your folly, if not for your sin! Must you not say of the laughter which springs from the fumes of wine, "It is mad? And of that mirth, what doth it?" Eccl. ii. 2. "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes?—They that tarry long at the wine," Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. How many, who have given a loose to unbridled appetites, to work all uncleanness with greediness, have mourned at the last, when their flesh and their body have been consumed; and said, "how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof!" Prov. v. 12. Had you been filled with the Spirit, you had kept at the remotest distance from all this.

But possibly some, who have lived free from such enormities, and even have a detestation of them, yet find little relish for that which I am recommending, though they are raised vastly above the sensualist. They have a lively taste for some entertainments of the mind, and are eager to be filled with many parts of knowledge, which are useful in their kind. They are insatiable in pursuit of learning, can travel the globe and not be weary, employ wakeful nights in surveying the heavens, search indefatigably into the nature of things about them, look with the strictest scrutiny into the history of ancient and modern times, and traverse the whole field of arts and sciences with a continual thirst remaining. The generality of the world are far from being so well employed; a pleasure, much

more innocent and manly, springs from these improvements of knowledge, than from the luxury and licentiousness, in which too many spend their time; and they may contribute under the direction of piety and goodness, to make men eminently serviceable to their fellow-creatures. But after all, to be filled with the Spirit, excels the highest advances in learning, much more than they do the entertainments of sensual men.

All the learning in the world will not change the heart, or recommend a man to God, or secure his everlasting interest, or enable him to give up his account with joy. Though he should be able to speak with all the tongues of men, and understood all knowledge in the full compass of it; yet he is nothing in the account of God, and in respect of the truest wisdom, without the grace of God.

Learning will not always dispose men to be useful, however it may improve their capacity. It often makes them proud and arrogant, and the more pernicious instruments in serving the devil's kingdom. But the graces of the Spirit always make men humble, and incline them to list their capacities, whether natural or acquired, whether greater or less, in the service of God and their generation.

The highest attainments we can arrive at in learning and speculative knowledge, can be of use to ourselves only upon earth. In the other world, as for knowledge, it shall vanish away, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. So many uncertainties and mistakes attend us in a great part of that which is esteemed knowledge here, that if ever we come to see things in the perfect light of heaven, we shall be obliged to give up as falsehoods many curious speculations, with which we entertained ourselves here. And if we miss of heaven, the pleasure we might take in such amusements will vanish away; and be succeeded by eternal regret, that we suffered ourselves, by too close an attendance to less necessary employments of thought, however innocent in themselves, to be diverted from minding our better and more important interests. But a participation of the Spirit qualifies for heaven, and will be consummated in heaven; and all knowledge, that can contribute to our happiness, along with it. If by the grace of God we arrive at that world of light, we shall find the saint, who was most illiterate on earth, to know more of all which is worth knowing, than the wisest philosopher could do below; and this without any laborious toil. We

shall understand more above, of the wonders of nature and providence, as well as of the mystery of redemption, than we could reach here with the closest study and application.

To be filled with the Spirit then, deserves to be esteemed by us the most desirable good ; whether we consider it in itself, or compare it with the chief objects of pursuit, which men are aiming at according to their different tastes. But it may be said, is not this a blessing too big for me to expect ? have I any just reason to hope, that a creature so mean, so corrupt as I am, should ever reach to such a height of honour and blessedness, as is included in being filled with the Spirit ? Yes, it is farther intimated in this exhortation being addressed to us.

2. That we should look upon it as an attainable good. When the apostle directs this, as well as the other practical advices in the context, to the body of professed Christians ; it plainly bespeaks that which he so recommends to be a thing, which none of them should apprehend to be quite out of their reach, but a blessing to be come at. Those, who were already by his grace prevailed upon to believe and obey the gospel, should not esteem themselves stinted to the lower measure of the Spirit which they had received, or despair of coming up to be filled with him, in the gospel-sense of the expression. And those, who might yet be no more than professors of Christianity at large, were allowed and obliged, to believe it possible to obtain the Spirit, and even a plentiful participation of him, how unlike, how different soever, they might find their present frame and temper from such an attainment. They lived under the gospel, which made known to them the dispensation of the Spirit : and they heard such an exhortation directed to them as this in the text, without any exclusive distinction of themselves. No such address could reasonably be made to damned spirits, who are absolutely concluded in a remediless state : nor could it be directed to the body of the Ephesian professors at large, by a God who will not trifle with men, if it were as impracticable for any of them to obtain such a blessing, as for the fallen spirits. Now wherever the word of the gospel comes, this exhortation should be attended to in the same latitude, as of general obligation, and general encouragement at the same time. And to encourage you all to entertain hopes

of this blessing as attainable, I would represent the foundations we have for such a hope.

(1.) From the Spirit's own gracious benignity, and his declared inclination to fill souls. We find not only the grace of the Father, and the grace of the Son, celebrated in the work of our salvation ; but the grace of the Spirit also. The Psalmist fastens upon this character of him, as a plea for obtaining his conduct, Psal. cxliii. 10. "Thy Spirit is good ; lead me." He is stiled the Spirit of grace ; not only as he is the hand by which all grace is communicated to us ; but as he is himself full of grace and benignity. His compassion to a lost and vitiated world, induced him to come into the design of curing souls, and to bear a signal part in it himself. He hath published this to the world by the holy men of God whom he inspired, on purpose to excite the sons of men to employ him, and to admit his kind offices ; that as they are sufficient to supply the wants of all, so all might have encouragement to put in for a share, according to his free and spreading benignity. He is never better pleased than when he is made use of ; and from his kind propensions towards us ; he is represented after the manner of men, as one grieved, when his influences are neglected or opposed, Eph. iv. 30.

(2.) From the purchase and intercession of Christ, we may derive yet farther encouragement. Upon our forfeiture by sin, divine wisdom judged it proper, that though every benefit should be grace to us, yet it should be purchased by Christ for us ; and the grace of the Spirit particularly among the rest, Gal. iii. 13, 14. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ;—That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." This purchase of Christ gives a security to all who are already true believers, which they may plead with God, for the continued influences of the Spirit, according to their wants in the Christian life. And it looks with a kind aspect upon all at large, who are planted in his vineyard, in the visible church, and not yet cut down. He intercedes on behalf of an unfruitful tree, Luke xiii. 8, 9. for some farther time "to dig about it, and dung it," to cast farther manure about it in order to its fruitfulness ; though it is supposed, that after all, this tree might be finally unfruitful, and so cut down at last. The

culture he designed it, we have no reason to understand merely of the outward ministration of the gospel, but also of some kindly influences of the Spirit accompanying that ministration. This intercession of Christ was by way of office, as he was the dresser of the vineyard; and he carries his intercession no farther, than his purchase will bear him out. If then you should have reason to fear, that your advantages in the vineyard have not hitherto been successful to bring you heartily to obey the gospel; yet here is encouragement to hope, that through the intercession of Christ, that culture may yet be had, which will be sufficient to enable you to bear genuine fruit; though you cannot tell when this reprieve and day of salvation will be out.

(3.) From the nature of the Spirit's work, in consequence of redemption. The province of the Spirit toward men begins where Christ left off. His work is to apply what Christ purchased. Now the saving design, on which Christ came, will not begin to take effect upon any particular souls without the Spirit's operation; nor yet will it be completed, till "Christ can present his church to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish," Eph. v. 27. And certainly it is no small encouragement both to sinners and saints, that in their hope of his influences, they expect nothing from him but that which is his declared province; his powerful aids effectually to bring us to God, when we have thoughts of arising and returning to our Father, and then to lead us on toward perfection. This is the work for which we need him, and for which the gospel directs our eye particularly to him. Now we should by no means despair of attaining that, for which he is declared to be set up.

(4.) From the gospel's being described as the ministration of the Spirit. So it is by the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 8. in opposition to the Mosaical law. That is called the ministration of death, ver. 7. because, though written and engraven on stones, so as to give a clear discovery of the will of God; yet it did not point to the grace of the Spirit to enable men to perform it, nor was ordinarily attended with such a measure of his influences. But the gospel is eminently the ministration of the Spirit. While it prescribes men's duty, it fully and frequently acquaints them with the provision made of the Spirit, to capacitate them for it, as writing the law of God, "in the

fleshly tables of the heart," ver. 3. And where it comes, the Spirit attends it : and while men are " beholding the glory of the Lord in this glass, they are often changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of God," ver. 18. When we are therefore under this gospel, there is room to entertain hope, that it may be an effectual ministration of the Spirit to us.

(5.) From the declarations of God concerning the Spirit.

There are many promises of his first saving operations, which run in an absolute strain, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. " A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments," Jer. xxiv. 7. " I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord ; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God," Jer. xxxi. 33. " After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their heart ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." And many other promises there are of the like tenor. These were directly delivered to the Jews, either after threatenings of their captivity, but before they were executed ; or when they were actually in captivity : but the apostle proves in Heb. viii. from the words, with which the last mentioned promise in Jeremiah is introduced, that the promises of this sort were to have their main accomplishment in gospel-times. These could not properly be said to be made to particular persons ; for they are not described by names and characters, unless in one it is said to be " a covenant made with the house of Israel," Jer. xxxi. 31, 33. that is, the visible church. They are rather to be considered as divine declarations, deposited with his church in general, that he would make monuments of his efficacious grace. Now awakened sinners in the gospel state, to which state the apostle assures us that these promises principally belong, may justly take encouragement from such indeterminate promises. Is it no relief to hear, that God is not only able, but resolved to give distinguishing grace to some apostate creatures? Though we should have no notice to whom, yet who would not hope and try? Especially, as such declarations are only lodged with the visible church, who have the oracles of God among them,

it gives them who are acquainted with this joyful sound, room for hope in this matter, far beyond what there can be for those who enjoy not the gospel.

Other declarations of God seem to carry the matter farther; so Prov. i. 23. "Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." The persons to whom these words of wisdom are directed, are plainly described to be unconverted sinners, and great sinners; as may be seen in the expostulation with them, in ver. 22. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" This is followed with the call to them, "Turn at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you." But how could they turn at the reproof, before the Spirit was poured out? I answer, the nature of the case necessarily obliges us to understand the turning, to which they are exhorted, as something short of a thorough turn or conversion; some likely tendencies toward it, framing their doings thitherwards. And yet even that supposes, that the Spirit was some way at work with them already by his common grace, accompanying the expostulations of wisdom, striving with them. Without that, a fallen creature would not be capable of any tendencies toward conversion. But thereupon they are encouraged to hope for a farther and more liberal effusion of the Spirit.

Our Saviour's general declaration, in Luke xi. 13. is yet farther encouraging. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" The Father from heaven, the common Father. I cannot but apprehend this designed for encouragement to convinced sinners, as well as to real saints.

(6.) From the instances of his grace already made in others. Every convert in former ages and in the present, that comes to the notice of a sinner, is some encouragement to him to hope, that his own recovery is practicable. The same power can effect it, the same grace can surmount all his unworthiness, and put him also among the children. And all those, who have already shined as the excellent of the earth, eminent in grace, and full of the Holy Ghost, should not only shame Christians of lower attainments into emulation; but

animate them in their aspirings after the greatest heights of grace and goodness. Some, who were once "the chief of sinners," blasphemers, persecutors, and injurious, yet by the grace of God, mounted up to the first rank of saints on earth: shone in every excellence, and laboured for God more abundantly than all about them: And others by the same grace, may arrive at a like conspicuous change. Some, though but few old sinners, and late converts, have far outstripped those that were in Christ before them: therefore those who are called in late, should not despair of high advances. Some of very mean capacities in other respects, and of low circumstances in the world, yet have had their faces made to shine by eminent holiness, have made a visible proficiency in divine knowledge and in every virtue, and greatly adorned the doctrine of God their Saviour: Therefore the weakest and the meanest Christians should not despair of eminent improvements and usefulness, if they put themselves under divine culture.

(7.) From the beginnings of his saving work in themselves, good men may conclude the greatest heights attainable by them, if they be not wanting to themselves. They may "be confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in them, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 6. The change made in conversion may truly be said to be a greater instance of the power of the divine Spirit, than the finishing of such beginnings afterward. And it was a more illustrious proof of his grace, to undertake the cleansing of their impure souls, when sin had the dominion in them, than to proceed in carrying on his work, when he hath already made them partakers of a divine nature.

The third particular implied in the exhortation, *viz*: *That something is incumbent upon us in order to our being filled with the Spirit*; must be reserved to another discourse.

At present we may see, by way of reflection,

1. The inexcusableness of sinners, if they still persist in their sins. If we had been condemned for our first apostacy, we must have been speechless; but we shall have far less excuse to make for ourselves, when the merits of a Saviour, and the grace of the Spirit are revealed and offered to us.

2. That good men have constant reason, highly to blame

themselves for their small proficiencie and low attainments. When they have such a monitor, such a guide, such a fountain of all grace, not only revealed in general as attainable ; but actually present with them, and dwelling in them. They should be deeply grieved themselves, if they so grieve the good Spirit of God.

SERMON XV.

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

—
EPIH. v. 18.

—*Be filled with the Spirit.*

I CAME in my last discourse on these words to consider, *what may be implied in its being made the matter of an exhortation to us*, that we should be filled with the Spirit. It plainly intimates,

I. *The desirableness of it.*

II. *The attainableness of it.*

I now proceed to a third thing implied,

III. That *something is incumbent upon us as our duty*, in order to our being filled with the Spirit. That it is a blessing attainable, but ordinarily in the use of means. God requires some things on our part; without which we have no reason to expect such a participation of the Spirit; but upon which we are encouraged to hope for it. When the apostle speaks in the form of an exhortation, it evidently supposes this: and an exhortation to the end, is the same thing as an exhortation to use some means in order to that end.

This may be illustrated by some cautions, which are given by the same apostle. One is to the Romans, Rom. xiv. 16. "Let not your good be evil spoken of." And another is to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 12. "Let no man despise thy youth." It might be said in either case; the tongues or contempt of other people are not things in our power; how then come such exhortations to be addressed to us? The context in both places shews the meaning to be this: take heed of giving occasion to

have your good evil spoken of, or your youth despised : and on the other hand, do all you can toward securing the reputation of your profession, and a just respect. So here, *Be ye filled with the Spirit*, that is, use the means proper on your part, in order to be so.

Now the persons, who hear this exhortation, may be of two sorts ; either such, who are not yet partakers of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit : or such, in whom a good work is begun. And I reckon it proper to consider these cases distinctly ; and to shew, I. That there are duties incumbent even upon unconverted sinners, in order to their participation of the saving influences of the Spirit. II. That something farther is incumbent upon real Christians, in order to their being *filled* with the Spirit.

The present discourse shall be on the former head, *That there are duties required by God even of those, who are not yet in a state of grace, in order to their partaking of the saving influences of the Spirit.*

Though the words are directly addressed to those who are supposed to be Christians, and are a call to them to aim at higher degrees of participation ; yet sinners who enjoy the gospel, are not free from the obligation of them. It is not indeed their first and immediate duty to be filled with the Spirit ; but to seek after his first sanctifying operations, and so to proceed on to greater advances.

But a difficulty may immediately arise in the minds of many upon this occasion. It may be said, ‘ How is this consistent with the freeness of the grace of the Spirit ? Is he not a free and voluntary agent ? Can men do any thing that shall render them worthy of the Spirit, or procure his grace ? And how can a fallen creature, before he is renewed make use of any means to a good purpose ? How then can any thing done by us be considered as a means of obtaining the Spirit ?’

This difficulty, unless it be removed out of the way, I doubt, may hinder many from attending to proper directions, or from setting themselves in earnest, as they might, to put them in practice. I shall therefore, *1st*, Offer some things for stating this point. And then, *2dly*, Propose the duties incumbent upon you.

I. It will be proper to offer some things for the stating

of this point. Three observations may suffice for that purpose.

1. Nothing which sinners can do, can in the least deserve the communications of the divine Spirit: but as far as any duties to be performed by them are means of grace, it is merely owing to God's free and gracious constitution.

There is no such intrinsic worth and goodness in any endeavours that sinners can use, or in any steps that they can take, as to lay an obligation upon the blessed God, in a way of merit to give his Holy Spirit. Far be such an arrogant, presumptuous thought from the minds of us all. The utmost that sinners can do, is so very little, and mixed with so much imperfection, and they who do it have sin so predominant as yet in their hearts; that on supposition they did it to their utmost, they could not merit the grace of God. If they should apply seriously to read and hear the word of God, if they should bethink themselves, and walk softly, restraining themselves from open enormities, if they should cry ever so loud for mercy; this could not of itself give them the least right to God's help for bringing them out of their miserable case. He might justly if he had not been pleased in free grace to give better hope, reject their prayers, and still leave them in the state of impotence and distance from him, into which sin had cast them. It is little less presumption to think, that the grace of the Spirit can be purchased by any of our endeavours, than that of Simon Magus was, when he thought that his gifts might be purchased with money, Acts viii. 20. Indeed the better and more lively endeavours of real Christians to obtain a fuller participation of him, deserve not the blessing.

And as there is not such intrinsic value in any thing sinners can do, so there is no natural connection between it and the grace of the Spirit. If there be any connection between them, it must be made by the free mercy and goodness of God. For the influences of the Spirit are entirely a supernatural gift, a provision of sovereign grace for lost sinners: a blessing which the light of nature could not have descried; and made known to us only by divine revelation. When we had destroyed ourselves, and were reduced to an utter inability to help and relieve ourselves; supposing we should have come to a sense of this, and that it was out of the power of any but

God to help us ; yet we could have no foundation for asking his help, unless he had made the discovery first, that he was ready to help us. Without that, he might justly have charged it upon us as arrogance and presumption to expect any such thing at his hands. All our hope is built on this, that while we have destroyed ourselves, he hath graciously let us know, that “in him is our help,” Hos. xiii. 9.

So then, as the apostle says, Rom. ix. 16. “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” That any come to be of the true spiritual Israel (of which the apostle seems to be there speaking,) are effectually called by the Holy Spirit, and so introduced into a covenant state ; is not owing merely to the towardly disposition of men, or to the virtue of any means which they make use of. Those means would never effect a change without the Spirit, nor would their best use of them deserve the Spirit. Therefore it is entirely owing to the sovereign mercy of God, that any are recovered ; even though they should be found in the ordinary way of his grace, more than others. To the same purpose the apostle speaks to the Ephesians, Eph. ii. 8, 9. “By grace are ye saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.” All our salvation is owing to grace ; not only the blessings, to which we are admitted upon believing ; but even our faith itself ; for that is not of ourselves : but by the operation of God’s Spirit ; as well as the benefits consequent upon it, follow upon faith by the constitution of his grace. And that operation of the Spirit is not owing to any worthiness in us, or in any of our works before faith ; but it is the free gift of God, which he might justly have refused, if he had pleased. And therefore there can be no room for boasting.

But all this carries no inconsistency in it with God’s having freely and graciously established a constitution wherein he encourages us to hope for the grace of his Spirit in a stated way.

It is not one jot the less grace, because he directs us to be found in the use of means. To pretend merit in any of our endeavours, or that the gift of the spirit is tied down to them from an intrinsic worth in them, would indeed be exceedingly disparaging to the grace of God and to the truth of the gos-

pel. But it is not in the least so to assert, that he hath directed even sinners to a course, wherein they may hope that he will be found of them ; when the hope of success in such a course is founded, neither upon an apprehension of their own sufficiency to change their hearts by those means without the Spirit, nor upon a conceit of value in their endeavours to procure the Spirit, but merely upon God's own free intimations of his mind. It was as much grace in God to the Israelites, to throw down the walls of Jericho upon their compassing the city with the sound of ram's horns, as if he had done it without any such means intervening : And as much grace in Christ to cure the blind man by spitting on the ground, and making clay of the spittle, and anointing his eyes, and bidding him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, as if he had done it immediately. And why should it be esteemed any diminution of the free grace of God to maintain, that in order to sinners' expectation of his saving grace, he will have them to apply themselves to such and such means ? When those things are not pretended to have a natural efficacy for producing or procuring a new nature ; but only to be appointed means, or God's prescribed way, wherein he ordinarily chooses to be gracious ; and means worthy of the wisdom of God to prescribe.

To me, divine mercy shines more illustriously, in having left directions to sinners, to what course to betake themselves and in what way to hope for his grace : than if he had left them altogether at an uncertainty, till they feel that grace itself actually surprizing them.

God in the whole work of our salvation hath not only signalized "the riches of his grace, but therein hath abounded, toward us in all wisdom and prudence," Eph. i. 7, 8. He has chosen to display his mercy in harmony with his other blessed perfections. Therefore he grants us not a pardon absolutely, but upon an atonement ; nor interests us in that, without faith. And why should it be thought strange, that he should have the same regards in his constitution of grace published to sinners in common ? That he should therein treat them according to the reasonable natures he hath given them, striking upon the main principles of human action, hope, and fear, and putting them upon exercises suitable to their present condition, with encouraging intimations of success by his grace ?

2. Nothing required from sinners in order to their participation of the Spirit, is expected to be done by their mere natural power ; but the preventing grace of the same Spirit is supposed even to this. Men indeed are generally represented in scripture, as destitute of the Spirit, till their effectual turn from sin to God. So Jude 19. "Sensual, having not the Spirit." The same is given as the character of all who are not in a saving relation to Christ, Rom. viii. 6. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." These and other scriptures speak of men as without the Spirit, till they partake of his influences so far as to be actually renewed by them, and to become obedient to the faith. Till they become a willing people in the day of his power, they have not the Spirit dwelling in them, as in his temples ; he is not a vital, prevailing principle of action to them ; he is not in them as the earnest of the inheritance. But this blessed agent has a great deal to do with the minds of sinners before that. There are his common, as well as his special operations. There is an agency of his as promiscuously and extensively afforded as the gospel is ; this indeed is the spring and source of any good thought or motion in the mind of a fallen creature. Every good and perfect gift, in the sphere of moral goodness in opposition to sin, of which the apostle is here speaking, "is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights," Jam. i. 17. And all the good of this kind that comes to men from God, we are taught to consider as immediately conveyed by his Spirit. We are not sufficient, in our lapsed state, to think any thing is good, "as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. iii. 5. And therefore, as in order to the old creation, so in order to the new, the Spirit of God is beforehand moving upon the waters, and so far relieving the natural weakness of sinners, that they are made capable of a rational and serious use of appointed means. Upon this foot gospel-exhortations are fitly addressed to them ; and peculiar threatenings are most justly added to those who shall neglect or reject the salvation offered in it. God promises to give a new heart ; that shews the necessity of his grace to produce it. In another place he exhorts sinners, Ezek. xviii. 31. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make you a new heart, and a new Spirit ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" That shews, that some

duty lies upon them in order to it; and they are capable of performing that duty, not of themselves, but by virtue of the preparatory grace of the Spirit.

3. It is not asserted, that God never makes any partakers of the effectual grace of his Spirit, who are not found in the use of appointed means: but that this is his ordinary way of acting, and the only rule we have for our expectation.

There are miracles of sovereign grace in every age. That, which was said of the Gentile world, is sometimes accomplished also in the case of particular persons, Rom. x. 20. "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." God hath graciously arrested sinners in the height of their rebellion and opposition to him, when they had not one serious thought about their souls, and were quite out of the way of ordinary means. By such surprizes of mercy he is pleased now and then to give a striking proof, that conversion is his work, and that he hath not limited himself to the means which he hath prescribed to us; or he brings a prodigal home by some extraordinary method, for the sake of some great purposes which he has to serve by him, who would otherwise scarce ever be in any likely way of recovery. But this is not God's usual method. And it would be the highest folly and presumption in other sinners, who have the stated means and calls of the gospel, to neglect a serious attendance on them, upon a vain hope that God may go out of his way to meet with them: as much folly, as it would be for a man to neglect a prudential care for his daily bread, in hope that God will feed him with manna from heaven, as he did the Israelites; or by ravens, as he did Elijah: as much presumption, as to expect an immediate voice from heaven to bring them home, because God took such a course in order to Saul's conversion, who was afterward the blessed apostle Paul.

The sum of all is this. Though a sinner can do nothing to deserve the grace of the Holy Spirit, though in his fallen state, he would not of himself do any thing that hath the least tendency towards a saving change; though God sometimes makes monuments of his grace in an extraordinary way: yet in his wise grace he hath directed sinners to a course and way of acting, wherein they may hope to be made partakers of his saving influences; and they are capable of applying themselves

to this course and way of acting by the help of his common grace ; and in that course alone, he hath given them ground to hope, that he will effectually work in them both to will and to do. I now proceed,

II. To represent to you what is incumbent upon sinners, in order to their entertaining hope of being born of the Spirit.

1. They should apply themselves diligently to attain Christian knowledge. "My people perish for lack of knowledge," was God's declaration of old concerning the people of the Jews, Hos. iv. 6. Till the minds of men are competently furnished with knowledge, the first step is not taken in the way toward life ; for without this, there is nothing for the Spirit of God to work upon in the ordinary way. When he causes "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, to shine into the heart," he is not wont miraculously to convey new notions, different from those already revealed in his word, and which men were unacquainted with before ; but he affects the heart in another and more powerful manner with the truths, which they are supposed to have learned already out of the word of God.

This makes a religious education, in places where the profession of Christianity is already settled, to be so eminent and frequent a means of saving impressions. Persons by that means have their minds stored with the principles of religion in the most teachable age, are led betimes to converse with their Bibles, have the help of good parents, pious acquaintances, and serious books for understanding the scriptures, and are trained up in a frequent attendance upon the ministry of the gospel. These things serve to possess them with the materials, which the Spirit ordinarily makes use of for real conversion. And therefore all those, who have young people under their care, are concerned to give them the best assistances they can this way : and it must be either an insincere pretence, or the effect of a very wild enthusiasm, for any to seem desirous of the salvation of their children, or to pray to God for it, while they are negligent in their own endeavours to furnish their minds with useful instruction.

As ever therefore you would obtain the Spirit ; if you have the advantage of a religious education, see that you improve it, and the several means it puts in your hands, to lay up a good treasure of knowledge. Or if you should have been so un-

happy as to miss of that blessing in your younger years, you have the more occasion for a close application to all the means of knowledge, which the providence of God now gives you. You should be very diligent in reading and hearing the word of God. "Faith usually comes by hearing," Rom. x. 17. which is peculiarly the sense of discipline and instruction, and at the same time an attendance on God's special ordinance the ministry of reconciliation. If you do this with an intention and desire to learn the mind of God, and to become wise unto salvation, you may take encouragement from such a declaration as that, Prov. ii. 1, &c. "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: Yea, if thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

2. They should often turn in upon their own minds, and seriously consider how the several truths, with which they are acquainted concern themselves, and are applicable to their own case. Personal application gives life and force to every truth; and for want of it, the general knowledge which most people receive, makes little or no impression. What they read or hear, they know it not for themselves, and therefore not for their good, Job v. 27. But if you would frequently bring the word of God and yourselves together, there might be hope of a good effect.

You know for instance, the large extent of God's commands, and the spirituality of his law, as Christ hath explained it. Bring this home, and say, 'O my soul, what obedience have I paid to this law? Have there been no open violations of it? Or, though I should be able to say, "All these have I kept from my youth up," so as to escape gross sins; yet in how many things have I offended in word? and in how many more in thoughts of foolishness? I am then a sinful creature; and I know the soul that sinneth, is liable to die. But the gospel brings the joyful news of a Saviour; and have not I, as a poor sinful dying wretch, absolute need of him? Yet I find none intitled by the gospel to the salvation he brings without faith in him, and repentance towards God: Can I then lay claim to him as a penitent believer?' This is the apostle's ex-

hortation, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your ownelves. Know ye not your ownelves; how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" that is, that he dwells in you by his Spirit, and so has his holy resemblance formed in you, unless you are yet in a state of disapprobation and non-acceptance with God? If sinners would be persuaded to turn their own face to the glass of the gospel, it might be hoped under the common influences of the Spirit, to produce convictions in their minds, of their miserable state, which would be a promising step.

When you read or hear of the unspeakable blessings that come by Christ, of the happiness of those who are in him, and the promises for time and eternity, which are made to them: if you would but turn inward and think how much happier a creature should I be than now I am, or than all this world can make me, if I were but a Christian indeed; this would kindle some desire after a change of condition.

Do you hear of the riches of divine grace, of the goodwill of God to men, or the monuments he hath made of his grace in others? Would it not yield some reviving hope to animate your endeavours, if you would apply the thought to your own case, and say, why should I despair, as if there were none of the same grace for me?

When you hear the particular subject I am upon discoursed of; so kind and effectual a provision, as the grace of the Spirit, discovered for the relief of human weakness and corruption; his readiness to take sinners under his charge; and the blessedness of being filled with him: think how you are concerned in it. 'I am one of those who greatly need his grace; if I had it, it would be sufficient for me; and how happy would my soul be, would he but take up his residence there, and dispossess the sinful thoughts and irregular inclinations and feverish passions which govern me; and fill me with his own train of graces! Have I reason to despair of it? No, he has cured souls as distempered as mine; the gospel reveals him as the physician of souls, without discouraging the greatest sinners from applying to him for help, indeed with strong encouragements to all who hear of him, to seek his kind offices; I will therefore wish, and hope, and try, and wait. Have I not had many kind motions from him in my breast already? Fool that I was, not to attend to them, and fall in

with them ! But while I am yet making this reflection, it is a sign he is still striving with me ; he has put me upon it : And shall I not then pursue the motion with farther humble applications to him ? Was but this thy frame, O sinner, he who heard and regarded Ephraim bemoaning himself, Jer. xxxi. 18. might be hoped to hear and regard thee.

3. They should carefully abstain from all the plain and known obstructions to his gracious influences. Such are gross sins, as intemperance and sensualities. In this sense we may consider what the apostle deports from, and what he exhorts to in the text, as directly opposite : “ Be not filled with wine,” which leads to all excess, if you would desire to *be filled with the Spirit*. Nothing can be a greater impediment to the influences of the Spirit, or to the success of them, than drunkenness and the unbridled indulgence of appetite. The great aim of the Spirit is to lead us to spiritual-mindedness : while acts of sensuality directly feed and strengthen the carnal mind. If good men fall by the surprise of temptation into any such thing, they cause the Spirit eminently to withdraw. The Psalmist was sensible of this, when he came to himself out of his great sin : he recollected the long stupidity and hardness into which that sin had cast him, which could not have been of so long continuance in one born of God, under such a lively and vigorous agency of the Spirit, as he had enjoyed in former times ; and being convinced how justly the Spirit was provoked to leave him, he now cries “ Take not thy Holy Spirit from me,” Psal. li. 11. And as such sins are an unspeakable hinderance to the progress of saints, and indeed set them a great way back in the Christian life : so nothing can put sinners farther out of the way of the Spirit’s first saving impressions. Any hopeful convictions, already excited in their minds, are shaken off and stifled ; the actings of reason and thought are disordered : they are not fit to be applied to as men, and therefore most unlikely to partake of sanctifying grace. Though mere sobriety, and temperance, and chastity, do not intitle men to the grace of God ; yet certainly it must be said, that men of such a character are not so “ far from the kingdom of God,” in the usual methods of grace, as those who are openly dissolute. The spirit is more likely to be a monitor to those who shew themselves men ; and they have their natural faculties more open to give him some hearing,

than men drowned in wine, and wholly carried away with the torrent of impetuous lusts. Now there are none of you, whose consciences must not tell you, that you can if you will, abstain from these excesses.

4. It much concerns sinners diligently to observe and improve all tender seasons. All men, unless we must except some who have run prodigious lengths of sin, and so have their hearts hardened like the nether millstone, have some times of peculiar softness; when thoughts about their souls are stronger than usual, when conscience admonishes with some life and freedom, when convictions stare them in the face, when they are in a disposition to make some good purposes and resolutions. Now these are happy gales of the Spirit, which if carefully attended to, might be improved to good purposes. Too many set themselves to shake them off by casual diversions; others neglect them. When they have "beheld their natural face as in a glass, they go their way, and straightway forget what manner of men they were," Jam. i. 23, 24. But, as ever you would hope that the Spirit should carry on his work with effect, you should carefully watch these favourable opportunities, and endeavour so far to fall in with them, as not to rest till you can find the happy effect.

5. They should above all, earnestly and frequently pray to God for his sanctifying grace. It is indeed supposed to this, that the good Spirit has already proceeded so far with you under the light of the gospel, as to give you some sense, that a change of your present condition is highly necessary, that his grace is needful to produce that change, and that you have some encouragement to ask for it. What shouldst thou do, sinner, under these impressions, but lie at the footstool of his mercy, and resolve that if thou perish, thou wilt perish there. If thou art still afraid of success, let it be some revival to thy hope, that thou art certainly in the way of thy present duty; quite in another manner, than if thou wast bidding him defiance, contemning his grace, and endeavouring to stifle thy convictions. Thou art in the way, which he declares that he expects ordinarily to be taken before he accomplishes his designs of grace. It is observable, that after the most absolute promises of that grace, which we find in all the scriptures, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, &c. he concludes them with this solemn declaration, ver. 37. "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for

this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Thou art in the way, which Christ prescribed to his hearers, for obtaining the Spirit from the common Father in heaven, with strong encouragement to hope for success, Luke xi. 13.

Be not affrighted with such a declaration as that, Prov. xv. 8. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." As if, because you apprehend yourselves not yet to be thorough converts, therefore your prayers for converting grace are abomination to God. If you take the words in that sense, you utterly mistake them. Solomon speaks only of the professions of respect to God, made by men resolved in wickedness. But God forbid, that we should apprehend him, to place in the same class, the earnest prayers of men under serious convictions for God's saving grace. These last are acts of obedience to his command, which he puts them upon in scripture. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: call ye upon him, while he is near," Isa. lv. 6. Where do you find in the word of God any discouragements to sinners, when they made such applications? On the contrary, we have there many comfortable instances of success. When such a prodigy of a sinner as Manasseh was, "besought the Lord, and prayed unto him, he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication," 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13. When Ephraim bemoaned himself, confessed his past obstinacy, and put up this hearty prayer, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God:" instead of a repulse, God declares, "I will surely have mercy on him," Jer. xxxi. 18, 20. When the prodigal son bethought himself, made serious reflections, and resolved to arise and return to his Father, and with confession of his sin, to beg that he would "make him as one of his hired servants;" how pathetically is the grace of God represented upon that occasion, after the manner of men; Luke xv. 20. "While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." These things are certainly left upon record for the encouragement of convinced sinners, no longer to keep away from God, but earnestly to sue for his grace.

6. They should hereupon attempt an entire surrender of themselves to God in Christ, upon the terms of the gospel, not doubting of his grace to accompany them herein.

If you have endeavoured to pursue the first direction, that

is, to set yourselves diligently to attain Christian knowledge ; I suppose you have especially made it your business to be acquainted with the tenor of the covenant, or what in the sense of the gospel is acceptable religion ; that without which, men have no title to the blessings and privileges of the children of God ; but upon which they are in a state of acceptance. This is expressed sometimes by regeneration, or being born again, sometimes by conversion : by faith, or by faith and repentance joined together, as in Acts xx. 21. “ by yielding ourselves to God,” &c. It is very plain, that sincerity, and not absolute perfection, is intended by these or any the like phrases. I would offer my apprehension in a few words, concerning the claim of the gospel in this matter. Then a man is truly born again, and in a state of acceptance, “ when he hath such a persuasion of the truth of the gospel, as engages him to accept Jesus Christ, as he is proposed there ; and upon the motives of the gospel, to renounce the practice of every known sin, in hearty purpose and resolution, and to devote himself in upright design to the service of God, and to the practice of universal holiness.” Now that which I would exhort convinced sinners to, is, not to stop short when they have taken the former steps, as if they must leave the matter there ; but still to proceed on, in the strength of grace received, and not doubting of more, to exert the several acts of a solemn surrender to God in Christ. It was prophesied that sinful Israel should take such a course upon their return from captivity, Jer. l. 5. “ They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten.” If you find your hearts consenting, doubt not but this is the special grace of the Spirit, making you a willing people in the day of his power.

I shall make at present but two reflections.

1. All true converts have reason to magnify the grace of God in making them to differ from others. Some are met with in the very high road to destruction. And even those, who were found in the use of means, must ever own, that grace and not desert, gave success. And they must be conscious to themselves, of many great defects in the use they made of the means in their power. So that they will ever have reason to say, “ By the grace of God, I am what I am,” 1 Cor. xv. 10.

2. Every unreclaimed sinner will be absolutely inexcusable.

God would be justified in the ruin of sinners, if he had made no proposals of mercy. But sinners under the gospel must be much more speechless, since a prize was put in their hands, but they had not a heart to make use of it. When Naaman expressed a resentment at Elijah's sending him to wash seven times in Jordan, in order to the cure of his leprosy, his servants expostulated with him thus, 2 Kings v. 13. "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, wash and be clean?" So may not I say, had more difficult means been prescribed by God, should not you, sinners, seriously attempt and try? How much more inexcusable must you be, when there is a visible way, wherein you may hope to come at the greatest blessing; if you shall live in a proud contempt of it, as if it were not worth seeking, or in a lazy supine negligence, when promising means are within reach?

SERMON XVI.

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

EPH. v. 18.

—*Be filled with the Spirit.*

FOR the three general heads proposed at the first entrance upon this subject.

I. The sense and import of the terms hath been distinctly explained ; what we are to understand by *the Spirit*, and then by *being filled with the Spirit*.

II. A considerable progress hath been made upon the next head ; *viz.* What is implied in such an exhortation being addressed to us. *Be ye filled with the Spirit.* This intimates the *desirableness* of it ; the *attainableness* of it ; and that something is incumbent upon us as *our duty in order to it*.

In the last discourse it was shewn, That *there are duties incumbent even upon those who are not yet in a state of acceptance, in order to their partaking of the Spirit so far as to introduce them into a state of grace.*

I now proceed to the case of those, who are already in such a state, to whom the exhortation in the text, is most directly addressed ; and to shew,

That something farther is incumbent upon those who are born again, in order to their being filled with the Spirit.

And certainly the rule of their expectation is more clear

and explicit, than in the case of unconverted sinners. I know no sober divines, who are not ready to own, that the promises of improvement and progress in holiness, to those in whom a good work is begun, are conditional. If this were not allowed, in their case at least, I could not put any tolerable sense upon that maxim, which Christ more than once delivers; "that whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath," Matt. xiii. 12. chap. xxv. 29. It is plain that by *having*, is not meant merely having in possession; but having so, as to use and improve what a man hath. The scope of both the places necessarily fixes this sense. In the former passage, the disciples asked Christ, why he spake to the multitude only in parables, without giving the explication of them, ver. 10. Christ answers, ver. 11. "Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, &c. As if he had said, 'This practice of mine is agreeable to a stated rule: That they, who with honesty and simplicity receive instruction, and improve the advantages which God hath given them, to the ends of religion and the increase of goodness, shall have farther instruction and greater assistances still afforded them; but they, who make no improvement of the advantages they have, may rather expect to be deprived of what they have, than to obtain more.' In the following verses he shews, that this latter was the case of the greatest part of his common hearers, ver. 13. "Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing, see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand." Though they see the greatest miracles, yet they are not convinced; and when they hear the plainest doctrines, they do not attend to them, or set themselves to understand them. On the other hand, to his disciples he says, ver. 16. "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." You are convinced by what you see, and are desirous to understand what you hear. And so he goes on to explain to them the parable he had delivered. It is equally plain, that we are to understand *having*, in the same sense of a conscientious improvement, in the parable of the talents, chap. xxv. For this is the whole scope of that parable; wherein men's characters are drawn by their improve-

ment or non-improvement of talents received, and sentence is pronounced upon them accordingly; and then this rule is annexed. The improvements indeed made by good men, deserve not farther grace, yet the gift of it is plainly connected with them by divine promise; and they have the greatest reason to expect eminent decays in every part of the renewed temper, and that the Spirit will in a great measure withdraw, if they are negligent in the duties required of them, in order to their being filled with him. What these are, I am now to represent?

1. Christians are concerned to maintain strong and habitual desires of the Spirit's farther influences and fruits. He never acts with such pleasure and power in any soul, as where he is a welcome guest; and enlarged desires make way for enlarged communications: whereas indifference damps his motions. The rule is, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," Psal. lxxxix. 10. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," Matt. v. 6. "He filleth the hungry with good things, but sendeth the rich empty away," Luke i. 53. When a Christian hath his heart full of the world, or fondly apprehends himself to have so large a share of the Spirit already, as to have no need of more; he is in a very unlikely posture to receive much from above. The Spirit of God loves to act in a soul, neither conceitedly full of itself, nor contentedly full of inferior good; but that sees an emptiness in every thing else without him; and such an inexhaustible fulness in him, as keeps desire fresh and lively. If we "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," he will be ready at hand to such a seeker: for earthly things are the great rivals with the Spirit for our affections, and strong affections one way will blunt the edge of the other. To keep under our earthly affections therefore, is the way to have much of the Spirit. And we should frequently meditate on the blessedness of being filled with him, how worthy he is of our most ardent desires. All the representation made of him in scripture shews him to be so, his benignity, his all-sufficiency, the gracious tendency of all his operations, and their suitableness to our wants: And our own experience already, "if we have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious," confirms this. What pleasant hours have those been, when he has come and blown upon his garden? How

easy, how delightful has duty been at such times? *How did our hearts burn within us?* What advances were we able to make in the Christian life? But when we were left to our own spirits, how dull, how dead our performances? how little could we do or bear for God? Like Samson with his locks cut, we found ourselves feeble and good for little, if we thought to go out and do as at other times. We should often call these things to remembrance, to invigorate our desires. By such means evil desires are produced and fed in the minds of sinners, by ruminating on the agreeableness of tempting objects to sense; so they make provision for the works of the flesh. Therefore Solomon cautions those addicted to intemperance, “not to look upon the wine, when it is red, when it gives its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright,” Prov. xiii. 31. And Christ forbids “looking upon a woman to lust after her,” Matth. v. 28. Christians should make such provision for the works of the Spirit, kindling their desires by frequent and steady contemplation of the worth and excellence of the object.

2. All the sacred institutions, wherein the Spirit hath encouraged us to expect he will meet us, must be diligently attended.

They who vainly think themselves above ordinances, really put themselves out of the way of the Spirit; for he acts principally in and by these. Here he increases the light of his saints, strengthens their faith, enflames their love, and excites their graces to proper exercise, and is used to dispense his most refreshing consolations. Though his communications are not confined to them, yet they are his stated ways of intercourse. There are peculiar promises of his presence in them, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you,” James iv. 8. They have a special aptitude to our reasonable nature. And good men are supposed, when they engage in such exercises, to be eminently in a frame to wait for him, and to give him entertainment: that is the very language of their approach, and their regular business there is neither with small nor great, but with the king of Israel. If they come to them in obedience to his institution, “through desire they separate themselves, to seek and intermeddle with heavenly wisdom,” Prov. xviii. 1. And then they may hope to find what they come for.

If we are frequent and serious in our private retirements,

conversing with God and his word, and our own souls ; our Father which sees in secret, will be with us by his Spirit ; and by making this our daily exercise, we may hope to secure him with us all the day long.

Public ordinances are equally necessary to the improvement of Christians. To them Israel of old was directed for meeting with God, *Exod. xx. 24.* "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." When the church, full of longing affection, desires to know where she may meet her Lord, he points her to the same course, *Cant. i. 7, 8.* "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon : for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" She is full of solicitude to be under the kind influences and improving care of her shepherd. His direction is, "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds tents." Christ himself guides our expectation the same way, when he declares, *Matth. xviii. 20.* "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," that is, by his Spirit. It is observable, that when the dispensation of the Spirit was more eminently to commence upon Christ's ascension, his extraordinary influences were first manifested, when "the disciples were all with one accord in one place," *Acts ii. 1.* As if he intended by that circumstance to shew Christians, where they were chiefly to expect him. As ever we would have our souls to prosper, we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of too many is now, as well as it was in the apostle's days, *Heb. x. 25.*

And as the Lord's day is the most stated season by divine appointment under the gospel for religious exercises, so it claims a peculiar regard from all who desire a plentiful share of the Spirit. It should not be forgotten, that St John was eminently "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," *Rev. i. 10.* And though that phrase included in his case the extraordinary influences of the Spirit in a way of inspiration, yet it signified his being in a very pious frame also : and so common Christians may hope to be too, if they endeavour to leave their worldly cares and thoughts behind them, and to employ that sacred time in the public and private exercises of religion.

All God's sacred institutions are apt means of obtaining the Spirit's influence. As,

A diligent and continued study of the holy scriptures. They are sufficient, as a rule, "to make us perfect," 2 Tim. iii. 16. They contain the mind of the Spirit; and he is not used to carry on his work in saints any more than to begin it in sinners, by immediate revelation; but to assist their increase in the knowledge of God, by accompanying their own search of the scriptures with his delight and grace to discern the deep things of God.

A careful attendance on the ministry of the gospel, is another of his appointments.

Those, who are born of God, should "desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2. Those two exhortations stand together, 1 Thess. v. 19, 20. "*Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesying.*" Prophesying there is probably understood to signify one of the methods of public instruction in use in the primitive times, for explaining the scriptures. The apostle, by connecting these two exhortations, may intimate to us, that to despise prophesying is one way of quenching the Spirit.

Close and fixed meditation on divine things is an exercise wherein he has often met his servants. The Psalmist presaged, that "his soul should be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when he remembered God upon his bed, and meditated on him in the night watches," Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6. And when a good man, from his delight in the law of God, meditates on it day and night; that, along with his being planted by the rivers of water, will contribute to his bringing forth fruit in season, Psal. i. 2, 3.

Singing of Psalms is recommended for the same end. So the verse after the text may be understood as prescribing a means of farther participation of the Spirit. "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." While you are endeavouring this way to raise devout affections, you may hope he will come into your aid, and blow up the holy spark into a flame.

Prayer is an exercise more frequently mentioned, than any one in particular, wherein his agency may be expected. On

that account he is stiled "the spirit of grace and supplication," Zech. xii. 10. Though he helps our infirmities in other cases, yet the apostle directly speaks of his doing so in prayer, Rom. viii. 26. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Here are two eminent branches of his help in prayer intimated; direction what to pray for, by convincing us of our wants, and of that in the divine promises which is suitable to them; and then exciting those sincere and fervent affections, those lively and vigorous desires, which are the soul of prayer. We are directed also to "pray always (that is, frequently) with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," Eph. vi. 18. to "pray in the Holy Ghost," Jude 20. which plainly intimates, that Christians in the performance of the duty of prayer, may hope to find him ready at hand with his gracious aids.

And when the Lord's supper is instituted for purposes every way serviceable to our spiritual interests, our conscientious attendance upon that must lay us directly under the province of the Spirit.

Those, who would be filled with the Spirit, should live in the neglect of none of these, but walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, as each of them claims our regard upon his authority. If we live in the customary neglect of any, we may have just reason to fear lest he should withhold his presence in others.

3. All things, which have a direct tendency to quench his motions, should be carefully guarded against.

Such are eminently all fleshly lusts. These are directly opposite to the characters by which he hath made himself known, as the Holy Spirit, the Spirit sent down from heaven, whither nothing that defiles can enter. Sensual, having not the Spirit, are characters closely connected, Jude 19. Sensuality reigning is a sure sign, that men have not the Spirit in his saving operations; and acts of sensuality are the greatest obstructions, in any who have received him, to his progressive influences. Would to God there were no occasion to offer such a caution to the disciples of Christ, but that the use of it were confined only to those who have not tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious. But offences of this kind,

God knows, have too often been given by some of a better character : and cautions even against such evils are addressed in scripture to visible saints. The apostle calls the church of Colosse to "mortify their affections which were upon earth, fornication, uncleanness, evil concupiscence," Col. iii. 3. And Christ saw it needful to charge his own disciples, Luke xxi. 34. "to take heed to themselves, lest at any time their hearts should be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." And in the text St Paul warns Christians against being filled with wine, as not only a great evil in itself, but which stands in direct opposition to being filled with the Spirit. The same is to be said of impurity, in any degree of it ; it is not only highly unworthy of those, who are become the temple of the Holy Ghost, but defiles that temple, and is like to make God withdraw. The scripture represents the flesh and the spirit as in a struggle even in good men, Gal. v. 17. Now, though the first motions of the flesh may be in the best ; yet if they "walk in the Spirit, they shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," ver. 16. If they listen to his gracious suggestions, and set themselves to oppose depraved inclinations, under the aids he is at hand to dispense ; they shall get the mastery of them, and the heavenly guest will with complacency continue still to assist them in farther conflicts ; but if his motions are neglected, and the flesh indulged, they must expect a great suspension of his influences : it may be for a long time, as in the case of David.

Diabolical sins equally silence him : such as wrath and malice, and envy and uncharitableness, which eminently grieve him ; as is intimated by the connection of the two exhortations, not to grieve him ; and to put away those vices, Eph. iv. 30, 31. The spirit of love chooses to reside and act freely in a soul that breathes the same heavenly temper.

4. The Spirit should be directly eyed and employed by us, according to the province which he is revealed to sustain. Since his agency is so particularly revealed in the gospel, he justly expects that Christians should more explicitly direct their eye to him, and acknowledge their need of him, through the course of the Christian life, than the saints of former ages usually did. It is true, when we pray for any spiritual good, for any Christian virtue, it is in effect praying for the Spirit, because God confers it upon us by his Spirit : and in former

ages, when the economy of the sacred three in the work of our salvation was but very darkly intimated, this might be sufficient; as Old Testament saints did not directly pray in the name of Christ, before his mediation was clearly made known, though they were then beholden to that for their acceptance. But now we cannot hope for the answer of our prayers, unless we offer them explicitly in the name of Christ, and actually depend on his mediation according to the express revelation of it. So it will justly be displeasing to the blessed Spirit now, if an actual acknowledgment of him in his special province be neglected, when that province of his is fully brought to light. As now we must live the life we live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God; so also by the faith of his Spirit. He expects, that his grace should be actually owned by Christians in all the good they have already received or done; and without it he is like to be provoked to suspend it for the future, till they are made becomingly sensible, to whom they are indebted. And he will be actually depended on for the grace we farther need. An habitual and lively sense of our own insufficiency for that which is good should be maintained, and a fixed persuasion of his ability and readiness to help our infirmities: and accordingly we should often apply to God, not only for those spiritual blessings, which the Spirit confers; but directly for the Spirit to confer them. This is the way to obtain his most enlarged supplies, when he is expressly honored as the Spirit of all grace.

5. We should carefully improve and fall in with his influences, as they are afforded. This is the thing imported by the phrase of "being led by the Spirit," Rom. viii. 14. Gal. v. 18.

It implies a care to observe his motions. And every good motion is from him. We are not blindly to pursue every thought started in our minds, and therefore not even his suggestions without examination: otherwise very evil motions, from the devil or our own deluding imaginations, may be mistaken for his: too many under pretence of the Spirit's impulse have run into the greatest extravagancies, to the disgrace of the Spirit, the prejudice of others, and their own great misery. But any suggestion that occurs, must be tried by the rule of his own word. "To the law and to the testimony; if it be not according to this word, there is no light," no good-

ness in it, Isa. viii. 20. But if it appear unquestionably good by that rule, then we should fall in with it. And indeed this may be one way of cherishing his influences, which cannot fail to be exceeding pleasing to him. When we find our hearts smite us for some frame or action as amiss, or for the omission of something we have hitherto neglected or done little in ; let us turn to the sacred oracles, and endeavour to learn thence the mind of God in such a case ; and if conscience has been excited by the Spirit to give us such an admonition, we shall find something in scripture to confirm the conviction, to shew us more fully the evil of a practice we are reflecting upon, or the excellence of a grace or duty, to which he is moving us : and so we shall by his word cultivate and cherish his gracious motion.

And when we are convinced that the suggestion is good, and therefore from him, our business is ready compliance ; that we suffer not corrupt inclinations to stifle it, nor allow excuses from humour or any temporal inconveniences ; that we be not slothful, but immediately set ourselves to amend what is amiss, and to practice the duty we are convinced of. Happy they, who immediately obey the heavenly motion, as soon as they are convinced of its original ! Who are led by him, wherever they perceive him to be their guide ! And give up themselves to be conducted by him to the utmost heights of goodness, to which he would carry them. This is walking after the Spirit in the most excellent sense. Such souls shall not fail to be filled with him in an eminent measure.

The *third* general head remains to be considered, *viz.*

III. The obligations which lie upon Christians to aim at this.

I have prevented myself, in much that might have been offered upon this head, by what hath been already suggested concerning the desirableness of it. I shall only now propose the following considerations.

1. The clear revelation we have received concerning his agency, beyond the former ages of the church, lays us under a further engagement to seek after him, and a large share of his influences and fruits. When such a benefit is set in full view, shall it not excite desire and ambition to obtain the most of him that we can ? hath he discovered so much goodness of himself in

his own revelation, and of his willingness to do the kindest offices for us? Must not the design of this be to attract our hearts? And shall he be neglected and made light of in any part of the offers he hath made us? Shall we know more of the Spirit, and yet have less of him, than many saints under the Old Testament? How unworthy and unbecoming will this be?

2. The dignity of his person should make us ambitious of such a guest, when he is willing to dwell with us. He is no less than *the Spirit of God*; and the apostle tells us in what sense he is so; just as our souls are the spirit of a man; and as perfectly conscious of the things of God, as the spirit of a man is of the things of a man; and therefore entirely furnished to make us know the singular gifts of his rich grace, which were hidden before, but now made manifest in the gospel, 1 Cor. ii. 10—12. ‘God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.’ St Paul here tells us, that the things of God made known in the gospel, were such as none but God was privy to, till he revealed them by his Spirit. But his Spirit as fully knew them, as a man’s spirit is conscious of that which passes within him, which no other man knows; and he revealed those deep things of God to the apostles, and by them to the world. Now it is this same Spirit of God, that is proposed to us as the divine agent in our breasts, who is as intimately conscious of the things of God, as the spirit of a man is conscious of the things in a man. If he dwell in us, God dwells in us; we are the habitation of God, as far as we are the habitation of the Spirit. How should every saint aspire then to be full of God, of his light, and love, and likeness?

3. His relation to Christ obliges Christians to aim at the fullest participation of him. He is eminently stiled “the Spirit of Christ,” Rom. viii. 9. Gal. iv. 6. For he is one of the most eminent fruits of his purchase; one of the principal blessings which it was in his kind heart to obtain for us,

when he stooped to the lowest abasement for our sakes. "He was made a curse for us, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith," Gal. iii. 13, 14. He esteemed the Spirit more advantageous for us, than the continuance of his own bodily presence with his church, John xvi. 7. And as he undertook to pray the Father at his entrance into heaven, for the actual sending of this comforter, John xiv. 16. So when he was ascended on high, he gave this gift unto men. And the Spirit's province is directly to supply Christ's room, to be another Comforter; to pursue Christ's work, applying the benefits of his purchase to souls; and so to glorify him, John xvi. 14. "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." If then we have a value for our blessed Master, if we think that he has provided well for our interest; we should desire to be filled with the Spirit, which will be most pleasing and honourable to him, and he assures us will be most profitable to ourselves.

4. Our relation to Christ will be most clearly proved by this. If we are destitute of this grace of the Spirit prevailing in us, Christ will not own us for his, Rom. viii. 9. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He cannot be his, for our union with Christ is by his Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, (being animated with one soul;) so also is Christ; for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Alluding to the two Christian sacraments, which all Christians are commanded to observe in token of their union to Christ the head, and to all the other members of his body. What those signs do figuratively, the one Spirit that animates them all, does really. Our relation to Christ will be more or less evident, in proportion to the degrees of our participation of his Spirit. A solid joy in Christ cannot be full, unless we are filled with the Spirit; because where that joy is right, it is one of the Spirit's fruits; and therefore must rise or fall in proportion to his influences. And he is not used to give strong consolation, where he has not formed eminent graces. Confident assurance without this, is indeed a very suspicious thing.

5. By this means we shall be “vessels of honor, sanctified and meet for our Master’s use,” 2 Tim. ii. 21. And we can never be so otherwise. We shall be like the vessels of the temple, fit to be employed by him for sacred uses: furnished to every good work under his light, quickening, and culture; and prepared to bear any suffering well, if the Spirit of God rest upon us, animating us with fortitude and comfort answerable to our day. This has carried the feeble sex and tender youth, triumphant through death in all its terrors, and the most exquisite contrivances to shock flesh and blood. And should it not be the point of honor, to which every servant of Christ should aspire, that he may acquit himself to the fullest approbation and glory of his blessed Lord?

6. “So an entrance will be ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” 2 Pet. i. 11. We shall be in a good measure ripe for heaven, by the time that we come thither: able to look forward to it as a blessed hope, and to comfort ourselves with the prospect in all the uneasinesses to nature and grace, which now attend us. Our actual passage from one world to the other, is like to be serene and joyful; for what evil have we to fear, if God be with us in that valley by his Spirit? That will almost make it a valley of vision, as the gate of heaven. And when we come there distinguishing rewards will be conferred. Those eminently filled with the Spirit now, will be capable of receiving a greater fulness of glory, as the scripture most frequently assures us, that it is prepared for them.

Upon the whole then,

1. We are led by this subject, as indeed we may be almost by every theme of divine meditation, to admire the wisdom and the grace of the evangelical dispensation. It excites both sinners and saints, to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; (but yet with hope,) because it is God worketh in them, both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure,” Phil. ii. 12, 13. It provides effectually for the honor of free and powerful grace, and yet at the same time for the encouragement of reasonable creatures to shew themselves men, and to exert all the powers which their Maker has given them.

2. The imperfection of saints ought to be no disparagement to Christianity, but it is a great disgrace and shame to themselves. The gospel contains the most perfect precepts, and exhibits to us a complete example, and furnishes us with every motive fit to strike any affection which God has given us. But no motive is stronger, or more distinguishing from every other institution, than the discovery of the blessed Spirit, able and willing to aid our weakness, and supply our wants for every part of obedience, and never unready to furnish an upright mind for the highest possible advances in universal goodness. He would fill us, but we will not be filled by him. We too often neglect him, and grieve him, and quench him, and resist him: and were it not for his singular grace, should be given over by him for ten thousand misbehaviours, so as never to have "the good pleasure of divine goodness fulfilled in us, or the work of faith with power." Our faces should be overspread with a penitent confusion at the thought; while our mouths are filled with praise for his condescension and grace, that he will yet continue a teacher to such unapt scholars, a guide to such heedless followers, a principle of perfection, and an earnest of the inheritance to souls so unlike him, and so unmeet for the promised reward.

3. The proper temper prescribed by Christianity toward the Holy Spirit, is evident from these discourses. To own him with thankfulness as the author of all spiritual good found in man in his fallen state. To believe his ability and readiness to help us according to our wants. To receive his testimony in his word, and hearken to every good motion in our minds conformable to it, as proceeding from him. To pray for and depend upon his grace in the whole course of life, in the performance of every duty, in our conflict with every sin, and in our endeavours to cultivate every grace and virtue. To be deeply humbled, wherever we have treated him unworthily. And under his gracious influences, to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and Spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God."

SERMON XVII.

THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE, AND THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION.

ROM. VIII. 15.

For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear : but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

CHRISTIANS are described in the former part of this chapter by several phrases, which bespeak their relation to the blessed Spirit. They “walk after the Spirit,” ver. 1, 4. “They are after him, and mind the things of the Spirit,” ver. 5. “They are in the Spirit,” ver. 9. “And he dwells in them,” ver. 9, 11. “Through him they mortify the deeds of the body,” ver. 11. And they “are led by him,” ver. 14. Which various phrases, intimate on the one hand, a special presence and stated agency of the divine Spirit, in the minds of believers ; and on the other hand, that the prevailing temper of their spirits and tenor of their lives, are moulded and fashioned into a holy conformity to him ; they are after him in disposition, and walk after him in course ; they mind and relish most the things which he dictates and is pleased with ; they make use of his aids for carrying on the purposes of the divine life ; and are willingly led by him as their guide, whether he would carry them.

Blessed souls ! who partake of such a guest and guide, and are disposed by his grace so to treat and use him. For they “are in Christ Jesus, and so there is no condemnation to them,” ver. 1. They *shall live*, live eternally, ver. 13.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” ver. 14. Their participation of him brings them into a filial relation to God; and their being led in so kindly a manner by him, is a proof of that relation, and consequently of their being heirs to the heavenly inheritance. In confirmation of which, the words of the text are added: “For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Which is a proof of their being admitted for the sons of God, from the free and liberal manner of the Spirit’s influence upon them, and the correspondent temper produced in them. If they had received the spirit of bondage, that would not evidence their being sons, but only servants: but now it was plain, that they were adopted by God for his sons, because they had received the Spirit of adoption, and not of bondage.

But what are we to understand by *the spirit of bondage unto fear, and the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father?*

For the general nature of them; by the spirit of bondage, is plainly meant such a temper and spirit toward God, as slaves usually have to their masters, which leads them chiefly to be influenced by fear, or by an apprehension of the severity of their masters, and of the rod always hanging over them. Slaves are commonly good for nothing, but when they are handled with rigour, and swayed to subjection and obedience by the terror of present punishment. To this the apostle opposes the Spirit of adoption. He thought it not enough to say, the spirit of liberty, which the opposition seemed to require; but more emphatically the Spirit of adoption. Servants might be made free, and often were so among the Romans, without being taken for sons; but Christians are made more than bare freemen, even sons: And therefore they have a filial spirit, such as sons have; a spirit, which sways them not only or mainly by fear, but by love to God as their Father: an ingenious disposition, and a liberal boldness and confidence. By virtue of this, “they cry, Abba, Father.” The two words signify the same thing. Abba in Syriac, is father, or my father; *πατήρ*, the same in Greek. Christ had used both these words in his agony, Mark xiv. 36. and possibly the apostle chose to use both in conformity to him, to bespeak the more fully, that it was “the

Spirit of his Son, which God sent into their hearts," as in Gal. iv. 6. Or when he was speaking of the common privilege of believing Jews and Gentiles, he would signify that glory of the evangelical state, by repeating it in both languages; in the Syriac, which was the common language of the Jews at that time in Judea; and in Greek, which was so much used in the Gentile world. Or it may be, he only doubles the word for the greater emphasis. I need not say, that by their crying Abba, Father, under the influence of the Spirit, the bare pronouncing of the words is not all intended; but all that disposition of mind toward him, which becomes the relation; a filial affection and manner of application, and a childlike frame in the performance of duty.

But still it may be inquired, what sort of persons, or what period of time the apostle refers to, wherein the servile spirit prevailed, in distinction from the filial spirit.

And I think it is plain, that he designs the one eminently for the character of those under the law, and the other of those under the gospel. When he says in general to the believing Romans, that they had not received, the one but the other; he must be understood to speak of a thing belonging to Christians in common, and not of that which is peculiar to some. In the spirit of bondage, he would express the state of the Jewish church under the discipline of the Mosaical law. That dispensation is upon many accounts in the New Testament, represented as a state of bondage, and as leading to a servile spirit. But the greater grace of the gospel more directly leads to a filial spirit. And so the participation of the Spirit, whereby we cry, Abba, Father, is directly opposed by this same apostle writing to the Galatians, to the state of the church under the law; as we shall see presently.

The sense of the words may be included in this observation.

That the temper to which we are led by Christianity, is not such a servile spirit, as that which prevailed under the law: but a spirit of adoption, leading us to consider God, and to act toward him as a Father.

In the consideration of this truth, I shall shew,

I. IN what sense it is made the character of those under

the law, to have received the spirit of bondage : and of those under the gospel, to have received the spirit of adoption.

II. How the Old Testament dispensation contributed to a servile spirit : and how on the contrary, the gospel leads to a filial temper.

III. How therefore our deliverance from the one, and our participation of the other, should influence us.

I. It will be proper to shew, in what sense it is made the character of those under the law, to have received the spirit of bondage ; and of those under the gospel, to have received the Spirit of adoption. It is needful the sense of this should be stated ; for,

We must not suppose, that the sincere members of the church of God under the Old Testament, were destitute of the agency of the same Spirit of God, as is communicated under the New : He was the author and spring of sanctification to all good men then, as well as now. Nor were the saints of those times altogether without a share in his influences, to produce in them a filial temper. David in his psalms, plainly shews a great deal of such a disposition.

On the other hand, it cannot be said, that all under the gospel, even all sincere Christians, express a more filial temper, than some saints did under the Old Testament. Nor is all fear unsuitable to the evangelical spirit. We are required by the gospel itself, to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear,” Heb. xii. 28. “to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, and that because we call on the Father,” 1 Pet. i. 17. “to work out our salvation with fear and trembling,” Phil. ii. 12. “and because a promise is left us of entering into rest, therefore to fear, lest we should seem to come short of it,” Heb. iv. 1. There is still room for a reverential fear, and no small use to a Christian of some fear of punishment, as long as he sojourns below.

But when the apostle mentions these as the distinguishing characters of the two dispensations, I apprehend he intends two things.

1. To express, what the two dispensations mainly and most naturally lead to : or, what I may call the most proper and distinguishing genius of each. The covenant into which God entered with the Jews on mount Sinai, “gendered unto bond-

age," Gal. iv. 24. This was its proper tendency. But the gospel most directly leads men to a childlike temper, and lays in sufficient provision for it. As far as any thing of a filial disposition, appeared in some saints under the Old Testament, it was not owing to the influence of the Mosaical law : but to the view they had beyond their neighbours of the grace of the gospel, by the light of the promise. And though the gospel be not intended to extinguish fear, yet it more strongly leads to love : and as far as a mere servile spirit governs in any good men under the gospel ; this arises not from any defect in the gospel, to inspire them with more generous principles ; but either is owing to their mistaken apprehensions about the gospel, or about themselves, or to the weakness of their faith in the revelation they have, or to such an imperfection in their obedience as makes their sincerity questionable, or to the distemper of their bodies. The law in its nature terrified ; the gospel contains what is fit to relieve every upright mind against those terrors.

2. To describe the dispositions ordinarily prevailing in fact, under both dispensations. A servile spirit more usually governed people under the law ; but a spirit of adoption is more generally, and in larger measures communicated to believers now, suitable to the more exalted and refreshing discoveries of the gospel. The apostle very elegantly represents this in Gal. iv. wherein he makes the difference between believers before Christ's coming, and those since to be like that of an heir in his non-age, and an heir grown up to maturity, ver. 1, 2. " Now I say, that the heir as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors, till the time appointed of the father." Though the child in his minority may be intitled to an estate by the will of his father ; yet he is not actually master of it, but kept in subjection to those to whom the management of him is left, till the time comes which was fixed by his father's will, for his receiving the possession and management of the estate himself. " Even so (ver. 3.) we when we were children," we Jews, when we were under the legal dispensation, were in bondage under the elements of the world ; as in a servile state, under the law as our school-master. Ver. 4. " But when the fulness of time was come," the time designed by our heavenly Father, for bringing his church to its fullest

liberty, and greatest perfection in this world: then “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” To what end? “To redeem them that were under the law;” to redeem the Jews upon their faith in Christ, from the rigour and servitude of the law: “That we might receive the adoption of sons,” ver. 5. That we Christians, whether Jew or Gentile, might be admitted to the privileges of the sons of God. And ver. 6. “because ye are sons, (just as in the text,) God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, (or disposing us to cry,) Abba, Father.” Here the ancient church, though declared to be heirs of the same promises, yet are described as under age, and in a state liker to that of servants than that of children; but in opposition to that, by Christ’s actual coming and being made under the law, provision is made, that we should receive the privileges which belong to sons come of age. So the apostle’s argument requires that we should understand him, and so he expressly sums up the case himself, ver. 7. “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.” It is observable, that we find not the saints before Christ’s coming, ordinarily and directly calling God Father, in their applications to him, but addressing him as Lord or God, or by some such appellation. But Christ directs us to this as the ordinary view we are to take of him under the gospel, “Our Father, who art in heaven.”

We see then, in what sense we Christians may be said not to have received the spirit of bondage, but the spirit of adoption. All who are favoured with the gospel-revelation, have therein received such a discovery of the mind of God, as is fit to cure them of a servile spirit, and to dispose them to the temper of sons: and in proportion to the advances of this latter disposition in us, so much the more we correspond with the evangelical state, and act worthy of the children of God.

II. I am to shew, how the dispensation of the Mosaical law contributed to a servile spirit; and how on the contrary, the gospel leads us to a filial temper. The following instances will abundantly manifest this,

1. The manner of introducing both dispensations, was a natural prelude to the different tendencies of them.

The Mosaical dispensation was ushered in, in a way apt to produce dread and terror. If we look so far back as to the first credentials given to Moses in Egypt, in the miracles he was enabled to work there to prove his mission from God; we shall find them miracles of terrible punishment and vengeance. But the miracles of Jesus, all breathed grace and benignity to mankind, highly suitable to the glad tidings which he was to publish.

If we come nearer to the actual delivery of the law on mount Sinai, the apostle has summed up the circumstances of terror accompanying it, in Heb. xii. 18, 19. It was given out from "a mount that could not be touched, and that burned with fire; with blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet; and the voice of words, which they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more." A chain of circumstances, proper to introduce a law of bondage. The author and finisher of our faith, though so much greater than Moses, chose not with his terrors to make us afraid; but veiled the glory of his divinity, and spoke to men in fashion as a man, in the most familiar way, and without any thing apt to make such affrighting impressions. This was perfectly agreeable to the kind and gracious subject of his errand, as the giving of the law, was with a pomp of terror suitable to its nature: For,

2. The law was the ministration of condemnation; but the gospel the ministration of righteousness. So the apostle opposes them, 2 Cor. iii. 9. "The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," John i. 17.

In the Mosaical law, God was pleased to revive and represent anew to the people of Israel that original law, for the substance of it, which had been delivered at first to mankind; and that in all the strictness of its terms, and with all the rigour of its sanctions; and so to make it a part of their national covenant. Such the moral law was, of which the ten commands are a summary. And promises and threatenings were annexed, in such a strain as if man had been still innocent. Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law, says St Paul, Rom. x. 5. "that the man which doth these things, shall live by them;" (referring to Lev. xviii. 5.) that is, he who doth them perfectly. On the other hand, the

threatenings were in the same rigorous strain, Gal. iii. 10. "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them:" referring to Deut. xxvii. 26.

The church indeed had then a promise of the Messiah, which might relieve them against this condemning sentence of the law. This promise had been given out upon the fall, and often renewed afterwards, particularly to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law; and therefore, as the apostle argues from this priority of the promise, "the law could not disannul the covenant [with Abraham] that it should make the promise of none effect," Gal. iii. 17. If it should then be asked, wherefore then served the law? The same apostle answers, ver. 19. It was added to the promise, "because of transgressions:" to shew men their transgressions and the desert of them, and so to lead them to value the promise; and to put some check and restraint upon all in the practice of sin from the terror of punishment.

Now, where the law had the most kindly effect, to recommend the promise, yet it was only by being first the administration of condemnation to them, that is, convincing them of their miserable state without the relief of the promise. The law itself could go no farther. But it had quite another effect upon the generality; they so attended to this new constitution of the law, as to lose sight of the promise; and to them it was a ministration of condemnation in the worst sense, Rom. ix. 31, 32. "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." While they looked upon the law as a practicable method of sinners' justification before God, they missed their end: Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, in the promised Messiah, who was the end of the law for righteousness; but as it were by the works of the law; that is, merely by such imperfect obedience as they performed to the demands of the law. And though the law might lay some restraint upon them in their sins, yet this could proceed only from a servile spirit.

But while the gospel explains the rule of man's duty in the greatest strictness and spirituality, it most expressly brings in view an everlasting righteousness. It discovers Christ "re-

deeming us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. The gospel confirms the truth of this, that the moral law was holy, just and good, and denounced no more than was due for sin: the highest honor is paid to the law and the law-giver, by Christ's perfect obedience to it, and bearing the extremest sufferings for our violations of it. But at the same time provision is made by his perfect righteousness and satisfaction for our justification by faith, and for the acceptance of our sincere, though imperfect obedience. This has the greatest tendency to produce an ingenuous disposition.

3. The manner and way of access to God under the two dispensations, must be understood to contribute to these different tempers.

There is another sort of freedom and liberty, to come at God under the gospel, than was allowed under the law. All Christians are made "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. ii. 5. Every Christian hath a greater freedom of access to God now, than even the priests had under the law. The Levites might come nearer than the people: while the Levites were to pitch around the tabernacle in their marches in the wilderness, the body of the people must take care that they keep their distance, "lest wrath should come upon the congregation," Numb. i. 52, 53. The priests might come nearer than the Levites: For the "Levites must not go in to see, when the holy things were covered, lest they should die," Numb. iv. 20. The ordinary priests might approach to the altar of burnt-offering to minister, Exod. xxx. 20, 22. But the high-priest only was allowed to enter into the holiest of all: and that, not whenever he pleased, or at all times, on pain of death, Lev. xvi. 2. He had that liberty only once a year. At such a servile distance did God keep his church in those days, which would not fail to produce much of a servile spirit in them: The Holy Ghost, as the apostle tells us, Heb. ix. 8. "hereby signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing;" that the way of the freest and nearest access to God was not discovered and laid open to all under the Jewish dispensation. But every Christian now, has a privilege above the high priest then. We have boldness, the

same apostle affirms, Heb. x. 19. to enter into the holiest ; to pierce heaven with our prayers, and come near to God at all times, as children to their father. We are exhorted to “ come with boldness to the throne of grace in every time of need,” Heb. iv. 16.

And no wonder, that there should be such a difference in the freedom of access, when it is in a way so much more excellent ; for it is the glory and the comfort of the gospel dispensation, that we are taught to “ have access unto the Father through Christ by one Spirit,” Eph. ii. 18.

The most solemn way of access to God under the law, was by sacrifices : but by what sacrifices ? Not by such as could be supposed to have intrinsic value to atone for sin, to propitiate the deity, or merit any favour at the hands of God. The gifts and sacrifices then offered, could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience,” Heb. ix. 9. The blood of bulls and of goats was a low compensation for the sin of man. The offering of such sacrifices by a priest, who must first offer for his own sins, was a poor acknowledgment of the rights of injured God-head ; and an awakened mind could hardly be satisfied with the intercession made by the offering of incense upon the altar by a priest that had infirmity. It is not strange, that a spirit of doubting and fear about the divine acceptance, should prevail under such a dispensation, where men could not look through the shadow to the substance, through the figures to the true sacrifice. “ But we have boldness to enter into the holiest, because by the blood of Jesus,” Heb. x. 19. Who “ through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God ;” which is a sacrifice sufficient “ to purge our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God,” chap. ix. 14. And because we have “ such an high-priest as became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,” chap. vii. 26. “ And being come an high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle,” than that in which the legal high-priest officiated, namely, his own body ; which was a tabernacle not made with hands, but immediately prepared by God : “ neither by the blood of goats and of calves, but by his own blood, entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us,” chap. ix. 11, 12. and “ appears in the presence of God for us,” in heaven the true holy place, ver. 24.

“having much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne,” Rev. viii. 3. This is a very different sort of encouragement to come to God as a Father, from what Old Testament saints had ; when we are to ask in such a name, and to transmit our addresses by such a hand.

The discovery of the Spirit, as another medium of access, farther contributes to our freedom in it. That his powerful assistances to help our infirmities are made known, is itself a great evidence of God’s willingness to hold a correspondence with us. These were neither so clearly revealed, nor so generally granted, before the coming of Christ. But all the parts of his office, as described in the gospel, serve either to animate us to draw near to God, or to furnish us for it and aid us in it.

4. The difference between the law and gospel, as to burdensome rites and ceremonies, and the rigour of their injunction, is to be considered as having an influence upon these different tempers.

Under the law, a vast multitude of ceremonial observances were prescribed, which from the number and nature of them were very difficult to be observed. Many of them were arbitrary precepts, which had no intrinsic goodness, nor any tendency in themselves to spiritual advantage. Others were obscure and figurative ; shadows indeed of good things to come, but the substance and design of which was hid from the generality. And yet the observance of these was enjoined in a very awful manner. The omission of what was prescribed by these laws, or even a defect in observing the minute circumstances of some of them was made a capital crime, or exposed them to be cut off from the congregation. This could hardly fail to keep those who were conscientious, in much anxiety and solicitude, when it was extremely hard to observe them in every punctilio, and even to know when they had observed some of them aright. The apostle stiles one of them circumcision, a yoke which the fathers were not able to bear, Acts xv. 10. And the whole together, “a yoke of bondage,” Gal. v. 1. And he tells us, that before the fulness of time, they “were in bondage under the elements of the world,” chap. iv. 3. which he farther calls in ver. 9. “weak and beggarly elements.”

But Christians are called to liberty, by an entire release from this heavy burden ; a “liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free,” Gal. v. 1. “He hath blotted out his hand writing of ordinances, which was against us ; and took it away, nailing it to his cross,” Col. ii. 14. Instead of such a cumbersome form of rituals, we are called to worship God in spirit and in truth, in a way more agreeable to his nature as a spirit, John iv. 24. and directly perfective of our own. Christ’s whole religion is a reasonable service ; the things which he directs us to lay a stress upon, are evidently for his honour and our happiness. And for positive institutions, he hath enjoined but two, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper ; plain in their design, instructive in their nature, easy in their observance, pledges of his grace, and engagements to our duty. An admirable state of things, to lead to an ingenious disposition.

5. The difference in the motives to obedience, principally made use of in the two dispensations, contributed to make a difference in temper.

The representations made of God by the law, were more in characters of majesty, of power and justice, than of grace and mercy ; as ready to cut them off, and denouncing death for every disobedience ; which awakened their dread, and set them upon action to escape his severity. And what rewards were proposed for their encouragement, were of present temporal blessings, of the enjoyment of good things in the land of Canaan. Good men indeed all along had higher and better prospects of a future happiness ; but they were much more obscure and imperfect, left more to be collected by a train of consequences ; and not so directly proposed by the Mosaical law, or inculcated in it, as the present bounties of providence to the obedient. This naturally fed the earthly mind of that people, who were principally influenced by the motives most conspicuous in the body of the law itself.

But the gospel sets God before us in the brightest displays of his grace, giving his Son for us, and with him freely giving us all things ; extending his good will to mankind in general, and exercising his sovereignty in full harmony with every other beautiful perfection ; especially making them all to consist with the richest instances of mercy. He excites our gratitude by delivering us from a bondage, unspeakably worse than that of Israel in Egypt ; and animates our obedience by the clear

prospect of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. This is the chief motive of the gospel, shining in every page of it, and its most proper sanction; temporal motives being only proposed in it as on the by and at second hand. The reverse of which was the case under the law. Now this has the most direct tendency to promote the obedience of sons, when we are called to perform it in the immediate view of the inheritance belonging to us as sons.

6. The different light afforded as to the main privileges of saints, made those of the Old Testament comparatively under a spirit of bondage, and makes those of the new under the spirit of adoption. The heir, says the apostle, while a child, differeth nothing from a servant; possibly he knows not what an estate he is heir to; at least he has yet but a very imperfect apprehension of it, in comparison of what he will have at maturity. Such is the difference between saints under the two dispensations; somewhat like the difference between saints on earth and saints in heaven; as the apostle John describes those on earth, 1 John iii. 2. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Now we stand in that relation, but in this world we cannot discern the full blessedness included in it. So also to look backward, it might be said of saints of old, compared with us: they were the sons of God, the substantial privileges of the covenant belonged to them; but they had not such a distinct knowledge of them as we have. Many righteous men desired to see them more fully, but could not. Even the prophets themselves searched diligently to understand the meaning of their own prophecies, but they were left much in the dark about them; for "it was revealed to them, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto us by them that have preached the gospel," 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. The least Christian in the kingdom of Christ hath opportunity to know these matters more distinctly, than even such a man as John the Baptist. Herein God treats us more suitably to the filial relation, and so in a way more apt to produce filial affection. Upon this account Christ tells his disciples, that he treated them as friends rather than servants, John xv. 15. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called

you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."

7. The agency of the divine Spirit was and is more generally correspondent to these different dispensations. His actings upon the minds of men, where he has given a revelation, are by means of that revelation, and suitableness to it. And therefore, as the law delivered to the Jews gendered more to bondage, his influences might be expected to promote a temper less filial, agreeable to the materials which then were to be made use of. But now, when he hath made known to the world, by the standing revelation of the gospel, "the things which God had laid up for them that love him, which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had entered into the heart of man" before; his most frequent operations in the hearts of good men, are conformable to that greater light and love, as a Comforter, as the earnest of the inheritance, as the Spirit of grace. When the external veil, that was upon the law, is taken off by the full revelation of the gospel; then it is no wonder, that where the Spirit of the Lord is, in his inward agency, there is liberty, 2 Cor. iii. 13, 17.

And now, the advantages of the evangelical state, both for holiness and comfort, appear from what has been said, to be exceeding great and worthy of enlarged thankfulness.

Those, who have hitherto received the joyful sound only with the hearing of the ear, and not with the obedience of faith, surely should lay to heart their advantageous circumstances, not only beyond the blind state of the heathen world, but even the more servile condition of God's ancient visible church. The cords of divine love, with which you are drawn, are much more numerous and forcible: and if you should be still insensible, and resolved to continue in the chains of sin; by how much the richer the offers of grace are, so much the darker must be your prospect, because they bespeak you to be beyond all hopeful methods of cure. "If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation," Heb. ii. 2, 3.

But if you have by the gospel received the Spirit to saving purposes, it becomes you often to think of the improved state

of the church in which you are placed, and studiously to act up to the privilege you are admitted to, in being released from the legal Spirit of bondage, and made partakers of the Spirit of adoption. How that is to be done, will be the subject of the next discourse.

SERMON XVIII.

THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE, AND THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION.

ROM. VIII. 15.

For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear : but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

I PROCEED to the third general head proposed on these words,

III. To shew, how our deliverance from the Spirit of bondage, and our having received the Spirit of adoption by the gospel, should influence us. We are released from the bonds of that legal dispensation, which had a visible tendency to promote a servile spirit ; and have received the discoveries of gospel grace, representing the love of God as our heavenly Father, and leading us to a more filial disposition. Now to what does this consideration of our case engage us ? What should be the effect of this change of circumstances to the church of God ?

The apostle may be understood as summing this up in the words that close the verse. " Hereby we cry, Abba, Father." That is, we consider God hereupon chiefly in the endearing relation of a Father, and our temper and behaviour is filial. We are concerned to see, that we have a filial disposition, and then that we exercise and express it in proper instances.

1. We are concerned to see, that we have a filial temper : or that an ingenuous affection to God as a Father, be the pre-

vailing disposition of our souls, suitable to the genius of the gospel; rather than a mere servile fear, suited to a state of bondage. Though all, upon whom gospel light shines, have advantages for a filial temper, yet how many receive this grace of God in vain?

This is evidently the case of all, who still continue under the bondage of sin. They are destitute of any kindly love to the God of love, though the riches of his grace are set in their view. If conscience force them to pay some regards to God, it is only as the most abject slave regards his master, with disaffection and ill-will, merely from the terror of vengeance; with injurious thoughts of God, and a dislike of him and his service. If they could help it, if they could rid themselves of the fear of punishment, they would have nothing to do with him. The carnal mind which governs them, is enmity against God, and they are alienated from the life of God. Indeed the respect they pay with such an heart, is little better than the poor Indians worshipping the devil, for fear lest he should hurt them. The judge will pronounce to their confusion in the great day, as he did of many of his Jewish hearers during his abode below, "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you," John v. 42. A soul altogether destitute of the love of God, could not be acceptable to him in any dispensation; for it was "the first and great commandment (of the moral law,) that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind."

But to have the true spirit of adoption, suitable to the discoveries of divine grace in the gospel, is not only to have an affection to God; but to have this prevailing above uneasy and tormenting fears of him.

I say not to be altogether without fear. For,

A reverential fear of him, importing a high regard and veneration for his excellencies, for his authority and government, is a natural duty. It was the temper of man in innocence; it is the proper disposition of a son, and will be the unchangeable frame of the blessed in heaven. The New as well as the Old Testament, often sums up religion in it. While there is an infinite distance between God and us, this must ever become us, for it is nothing else but a practical acknowledgement of that distance.

Nor are the fears of God's fatherly displeasure in this life, either in outward corrections, or in spiritual judgments, to be extinguished in the minds of Christians. The New Testament leads us to expect these, if we turn again to folly; and without doubt, on purpose to keep awake a fear of caution.

Nor are we discharged in this imperfect state from all fear of hell itself. Amidst the various temptations of life, and while our love to God and conformity to him are very incomplete, we shall have reason, though we have hope that we are in the way to heaven, to entertain such a sense of danger, as there will be no room for, when our warfare is accomplished. The threatenings left upon record in the gospel to apostates, are intended for the admonition of the best; and frequent thoughts of such threatenings are means of their security, and of exciting the caution and diligence necessary to their perseverance. To consider that if we should draw back, it would be unto perdition; to think of the importance of the matter, of the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and the instability of our resolutions, justly raises and maintains some fear in the best during their state of probation: such a fear as can have no place in those who are lodged past all danger.

But reverential fear and filial affection are things perfectly harmonious. And for the fear of threatened evils, though neither the obligation, nor the usefulness of it to Christians on earth, is entirely set aside by the gospel, yet there is sufficient provision made against its being tormenting, and for overbalancing it with the sense of God's fatherly love. Such a fear, as arises from a distrust of God and his promises, as if it were a doubtful thing whether God loves a soul that loves him, whether his grace will be sufficient for us, or whether he will give eternal life to every persevering believer? such a fear I say, is injurious to God, and most unsuitable to the love of God revealed in the gospel. In order to get above such fears, we should often contemplate the riches of his grace in Christ, and look up to him to kindle and inflame in our breasts, an ingenuous affection answerable to such discoveries. And then the more a love to God, founded upon such views of him, grows up in us, the more we shall have of the true spirit of adoption; and all uneasy fears will proportionably abate, till they be entirely extinguished by the advance

of our love to perfection. This is elegantly represented by St John, 1 John iv. 16. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us," his love and grace manifested to us in Christ. Here is the foundation; for hence we know that God is love, not a hard Master, but a loving Father, full of unspeakable good-will and benignity; "and he that dwelleth in love," in the believing view of this love of God, and in the ingenuous actings of love to him thereupon, "dwelleth in God, and God in him." There is a sweet society between God and such a soul, he dwelleth in God by delightful contemplation, and God dwells in him by the Spirit of his grace. If you would know what effect this will have upon tormenting fears, it may be seen in ver. 18. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love." A Christian's love being founded on the sense of God's great love to us in Christ, as far as that prevails, it will cast out tormenting fear; for such a fear arises from a sense of guilt and of God's just anger for it, against which the love of God in the gospel, gives sufficient relief to all those who sincerely love him. If then we loved God perfectly, we should be free from any dismal and affrighting suspicions of his penal displeasure, the soul would be quieted by it: so it is in heaven, perfect love there casts out all uneasy fear. And it is a sign of the great imperfection of our love now, that our doubts and fears, and black apprehensions of God are so many. But yet in proportion to the advance of our love, it will lessen our dread. And this temper, correspondent to the present liberal state of the church, we should be concerned to have.

2. We should see that we exercise and express such a temper; or that we act from ingenuous love to God as our principle, rather than from a servile dread and terror, in the course of the Christian life. That our temper and walk may shew, that we are governed by a spirit of adoption, and not of bondage. St Paul exhorts, Col. iii. 15. "Let the peace of God rule in your heart." Let it be the grand principle of action with you. Particularly we should discover a filial spirit, instead of the servile.

(1.) In acts of worship. In our coming to God, which is most directly pointed at in the text.

By the frequency of our approaches. A slave cares not

how seldom he comes near his master, but would rather be from under his eye. An ingenuous son, who has found his father kind and indulgent, loves to be in his company. Such should be the temper of Christians to God. Servile fear drives men from him, so that they care not to come at him. Such an effect it had upon our first parents, as soon as they were fallen, Gen. iii. 8. "They heard the voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of the garden." They would gladly have avoided converse with him, which in innocence was their highest delight. But a soul animated with the lively sense of divine grace to sinners, and attracted thereby to uniting affection, cannot live without God in the world. He inquires where he may meet with God, and gladly embraces every opportunity of converse.

By delight and pleasure when we approach the servile spirit, when pushed on by conscience to some acts of seeming devotion, is like "Doeg detained before the Lord," 1 Sam. xxi. 7. But the filial is then in its proper element; and most of all, when there are the most lively actings of pious and devout affections.

By freedom and confidence in our approaches. Not indeed forgetting our distance. The ingenuity of a son maintains reverence; and most of all, when nearest his Father. "If I be a Father, where is mine honor?" Mal. i. 6. Not forgetting our own unworthiness. The clearest and most impressive apprehensions of grace, will keep that freshest in our minds. But a freedom and confidence arising from the belief of his fatherly benignity, of the sufficiency of Christ's mediation to recommend us, and to obtain any thing we need from God, and of the fulness and firmness of his promises. Upon such a foundation, we should go to God as children to a father. In all our wants, believing his ability and willingness to supply us, and therefore "being careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, making our requests known unto God," Phil. iv. 6. With a persuasion of his superior wisdom; as ingenuous children will reckon their father, is a more competent judge than they are, what is best for them; so in cases where God hath not taught us to think that a thing is necessarily and immutably

good for us, which is the case in all temporal concerns, we should leave it to him to judge what answer shall be given to our desires, with a full resignation. We should come expecting welcome from our father. "This is the confidence, that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know, that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him," 1 John v. 14, 15. The encouragement a loving father gives his child to come to him, the success he has met with on former occasions animate him to a growing freedom. So it should be with us toward our heavenly Father. "Having liberty [allowed us] to enter into the holiest, [we should thankfully make use of it, by] drawing near with a true heart, and then with full assurance of faith," Heb. x. 22. "Coming with boldness to him, as on a throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need," chap. iv. 16.

(2.) In acts of obedience and service.

The slave has commonly hard thoughts of his master, and no liking to his work. Either he despairs of pleasing him, because he has found him rigid and unkind; or injuriously thinks him so; and therefore is sullen and will do nothing; as the wicked and slothful servant is described in the parable, Matt. xxv. 24, 25. "Lord, I know thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth." Utter despair will have the same effect in God's service. When the slave does any thing, he does it with an ill-will, merely because he is forced to it, and cannot expect to escape punishment without it. Hence the apostle saw it necessary to exhort Christian converts, who were in a state of servitude to their earthly masters, "with good will to do service, as to the Lord, and not to men," Eph. vi. 5. And ordinarily the slave will do as little as he can, consistent with hopes of escaping the lash; for he loves neither his master nor his service.

The very reverse of this should be the temper of Christians in their obedience to their heavenly Father. They should engage in it with good and honourable thoughts of God, agreeable to the discoveries made by the gospel, that he is most easily pleased by an upright mind; "that if there be

first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not," 2 Cor. viii. 12. With a firm persuasion of their acceptance in it through Christ, and of the glorious rewards of grace which he has promised to confer. They should "be stedfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58. Acting with an eye to the recompense of reward, is not a servile or mercenary principle, but the very filial temper prescribed by the gospel: which leads us to the love of God upon the discovery of his paternal love in providing us the inheritance of sons.

Every duty hereupon should be performed with cheerfulness and delight. "God loves a cheerful giver," 2 Cor. ix. 7. And so a cheerful servant in any other instance of obedience. No constraint should be so strong, as the constraints of love, as Paul speaks, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." We should act in his service, as those who esteem it perfect freedom: So it will be reckoned, in proportion to the advances of divine love in us, 1 John v. 3. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." This displays true love to God, not only that we are from some principle or other obedient, but that his commands are not accounted grievous.

We should prosecute our father's interest, as esteeming it our own. That is not the temper of a slave, but it is the disposition of a wise and ingenuous son; he has an interest in his father's interests, and he pursues them accordingly with the greater alacrity and diligence upon that consideration. So should it be with a Christian as to God's interests in the world.

And what our hands find to do, we should do it with our might; "Heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men," Col. iii. 23. do our utmost in it. Not content ourselves just with so much goodness and duty, as we may imagine will secure from hell; but aspire at the utmost heights of grace and obedience, and aim at performing every service in the best manner

we can, so that God may take the fullest complacency in it. This is filial obedience.

(3.) In sorrow for sin. This should be filial, and not merely servile, both in the reason and extent of it.

In the reason of it. When a slave has offended his master, he is only concerned for the punishment he receives or fears. If he escapes that, he is easy. But an ingenuous child is affected, not only because of the resentment his father has expressed, or may express at his offence; but he is grieved that he has done a thing displeasing to a kind and loving father. This touches his heart, more than the punishment; if his father passes it by, this makes the deeper impression; and even when the father is reconciled, he knows not how to forgive himself. So should it be with Christians; "The goodness of God should lead them to repentance," Rom. ii. 4. This especially should melt their hearts, and open the springs of godly sorrow. God declares himself to discover pardoning mercy for this very purpose, Ezek. xvi. 63. "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee." And we have this ingenuous temper exemplified in the representation made of the prodigal son. After his father had shewn the greatest forwardness to be reconciled, and had given the most tender marks of actual reconciliation; "While the son was yet a great way off, the father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him:" yet after this, the next thing we read of the son is, that "he said to his father, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," Luke xv. 20, 21. Nothing shewed more the temper of a son than his sense of unworthiness to be called so.

And then in the extent of our sorrow. There should be a hearty concern for every known offence, even those which may be esteemed inconsiderable by men, and which are hardly resented by many of a good character: yet if conscience tells a man they are against the mind of God, if he does but fear it, filial ingenuity will make his heart ready to smite him.

(4.) In bearing afflictions. A slave is never ready to take his master's corrections for kindness, but a child may; for this is the great inducement to a wise and tender father to use any

rough methods with his child ; it is putting a force upon himself to correct him, when he sees it necessary for his good. And yet sometimes an earthly parent's corrections may be the mere fruits of passion, and not of prudent affection : but a child of God may ever be assured, that his heavenly Father intends his benefit in the use of his rod. The apostle's assertion of this, and his argumentation upon it, is highly worthy of our notice, Heb. xii. 6—10. " Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons : for what son is he, whom the father chasteneth not ? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence : shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live ? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now to believe this, that God does nothing unsuitable to the character of a loving Father, when he afflicts us, and that he always wisely and graciously consults our good therein, and to behave accordingly in distressing circumstances, is the proper expression of a filial temper. To suppress every murmuring word and thought, cheerfully to submit to his will and wisdom in all, to put a good construction upon the darkest providences, still to love and trust in a correcting God, to deprecate his displeasure as far as that can be discerned, to believe that he means us well, and to wait with submission his time and way for deliverance : This is to act like a son of God.

(5.) In studious assimilation of mind and manners. A son, by being much with his father, from his reverential esteem of him, and the many endearments which at the same time he receives from him, naturally falls into a conformity of behaviour. And this is one way, wherein the scripture calls us to shew our relation to God, Eph. v. 1. " Be ye followers of God, as dear children," 1 Pet. i. 14, 15. " As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance : but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

(6.) In love to all who appear to be children of the same father. " How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to

dwell together in unity !” Psal. cxxxiii. 1. Especially brethren by the adoption of our heavenly Father. The thought of their being beloved of him, should recommend them to our love ; and if we truly love him, we should love his image in them. “ Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him,” 1 John v. 1.

(7.) In the temper of our spirits in reference to dying. Where God is considered mainly as an object of fear and dread, death must be so too in proportion. Death came in as the wages of sin, and the sentence of an offended God for it ; and in that view must be terrible to apostate creatures. And the relief discovered by the law was so imperfect, that good men then might be expected to have a greater dread of it remaining, than becomes saints under the gospel, when Christ has been actually made a sacrifice to put away sin, and life and immortality are more fully brought to light. It was the very intention of Christ, in “ taking part of flesh and blood by death, (his own death,) to deliver them who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage,” Heb. ii. 14, 15. to change the grim aspect of that last enemy, to reconcile his followers to it, and to induce them rather to wait for it as a friend to the children of God, the introduction to the inheritance of sons. Now a servile fear of it ill becomes the light and liberty of the gospel. If still it be our dread merely from a fondness of life and of present things, how unworthy is that of the filial affection to God, to which his grace should constrain us ? If the relief discovered by Christ is ineffectual to reconcile us to death, because of the weakness of our faith in that relief, we have then but a small share indeed, if any, of the spirit of adoption ; for that is founded in our believing the love that God hath to us, as the gospel makes it known, and can rise no higher than our faith. But if our terror arises from a doubt of our own interest in the gospel-relief, the best way to remove that doubt is to cultivate a love to God in our hearts, by the frequent contemplation of his general love to sinners in Christ. If we love God, it is certain in itself that we are beloved of him, that we are the sons of God, and therefore that death and judgment will be most friendly things to us. And as love to God will breathe out in desires after the fullest enjoyment of him, so those very desires will gradually abate servile fears, and rise up to filial hope ; and that hope,

“will not make ashamed, because the love of God to us, is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.”

For the application of this subject,

1. Examine yourselves, how far you are partakers of a filial spirit and temper. There is somewhat of it in all the children of God; I say not, to the full of all the particulars mentioned. I have been describing, how an ingenuous love to God should express itself; but dare not say, that every one in the relation thus acts up to the relation. There is too much of a servile spirit in all of them, of darkness and weakness, and indisposition for the frame and behaviour worthy of so happy a state; and in some of the children of God more than in others; but may it not be said, that such things as these are found in those of the lowest form?

They have at least such a persuasion of the general mercy of God in Christ to sinners, as gives them some hope. If they have many doubts of God's special love; yet they are enabled to put in a claim to him as the common Father, not only by creation, but by redemption. If they cannot appropriate a peculiar share to themselves, yet they put in for a general hope upon the declarations of divine grace to sinners. And though at times this hope runs low with them, yet it is never totally extinguished; the Spirit of God keeps it so far alive, that they do not utterly sink. And though they cannot live such comfortable lives as some other Christians, yet they live upon the feeble hope they have, and would not be without that upon any terms.

And they have so high an esteem for an assured relation to God, that they account them the happiest people in the world who have it; and earnestly desire it themselves.

They cannot keep away from God, but cry to him in all their wants and burdens, as a child would do to his father, even though they may fear a denial. If they are in “the depths, yet out of them they cry unto God,” Psal. cxxx. 1.

In their applications to God, they most earnestly desire the things that are suited to the new nature: which may be summed up in grace and glory.

And though they question their state, yet they are very tender of offending God themselves, and cannot bear to have him dishonoured by others. In their darkest hours they jus-

tify God ; and will lay no blame upon him, but upon themselves.

And they continue their dependance upon God in a way of duty, though with a trembling heart.

These things bespeak a filial disposition, though distemper or darkness may cramp it. And would to God, such fruits as these were more conspicuous among those who enjoy the gospel : Yet,

2. Every Christian should endeavour after the greatest heights, and the noblest fruits of the Spirit of adoption ; to act more thoroughly upon the principles of ingenuity, and liberal affection to his God and Father.

This is most suitable to the liberal and gracious dispensation we are under, as hath been shewn at large. “ We are not under the law, but under grace,” Rom. vi. 14. “ As sin once reigned unto death, so now grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord,” chap. v. 21. And when grace reigns as the motive, love should reign as the principle.

It must be exceedingly pleasing to our heavenly Father. Is there any one who hath the bowels of a parent, and is not sensible how much greater the pleasure is, to have his children love him than merely fear him ? And to have them respect and obey him upon affection, and as drawn by kindness, rather than be orderly only by the force of correction ? So different must the complacency be, which our heavenly Father takes in the obedience of love, and that which is only the result of fear.

It may prevent the exercise of much severity, which otherwise it may be necessary for God to use. He does not willingly afflict, any more than a tender parent would do ; he had rather draw with the cords of love and the bands of a man, than be forced to take his rod in his hands. It is only if need be, that for a season his servants are in heaviness, 1 Pet. i. 6. because they are not of so ingenuous a temper, as to be able to bear with safety an uniform course of smiling providences.

It would make the whole course of obedience abundantly more comfortable and pleasant to ourselves. The work of the Christian life in the servile spirit, will be all tedious and tiresome ; it will go on heavily, because against the grain. But

wisdom's ways will be ways of pleasantness, when we are pushed on by the generous principle of gratitude to walk in them, when we love him who set us on work, and love the work itself as co-natural to our souls.

It would adorn religion, and invite other people to embrace it. A Christian should be very solicitous for the reputation of religion, that "his good may not be evil spoken of," Rom. xiv. 16. "But his light may so shine before men, that others seeing his good works, may glorify his Father which is in heaven," Matth. v. 16. Now though one man cannot certainly judge of the principle of another's acting; yet where there are the natural fruits of an ingenuous principle, such as delight in approaching to God, cheerfulness, assiduity, and vigour in holy obedience, patience, submission, and thankfulness in an afflicted state, the amiable resemblance of God shining out in life, and a cheerful prospect of going to God in death; where, I say, the doctrine of God our Saviour is thus adorned, it commands attention, insinuates into men's affections, takes off their prejudices against religion, and shews them engaging pleasures in exchange for the pleasures of sin.

And to add no more, the expressions of such a spirit, which we find even in some Old Testament saints, to a surprising degree in their more disadvantageous circumstances, should provoke our zeal. I will only take notice of one, holy David: How much of the gracious spirit breathes in his Psalms? How frequent and confident was he in his applications to God? "Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray; and he shall hear my voice," Psal. lv. 17. "Seven times a day do I praise thee," Psalm cxix. 164. "He loved the habitation of God's house, and the place where his honour dwelt," Psal. xxvi. 8. He often pleads relation to him, as his God and portion. "He would run the way of his commandments, when he should enlarge his heart," Psal. cxix. 32. "He counted all his precepts concerning all things to be right, and hated every false way; and that in keeping God's commands, there is great reward." When he fell into sin, the offence against God sat heaviest on his mind, the offence given to his Spirit, and the loss of the joys of his salvation: Psal. li. When he was afflicted, he was dumb, and opened not his mouth, under the hand of God; and counted, that in very faithfulness he had afflicted him. How often does he pant after conformity to

God? "His delight was in the excellent of the earth." And viewing both worlds, God was to him all in all. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever," Psal. lxxiii. 25, 26. How should such a spirit then, shame and inspire us? To see a poor man content, may justly shame the discontents of the great and the rich. To see the patience and piety of some in sickness and pain, should be a powerful restraint upon the peevish and fretful spirit of those who are at ease. And certainly the evangelical strains of some in that state of the church, which was comparatively a state of bondage, should strongly excite us, who are brought into the liberty of the sons of God, to equal or outdo them.

To this end then,

1. Accustom yourselves to the frequent contemplation of divine goodness. In creation, and in common providence; but especially as manifested in the face of Christ. This has often been successful, by the blessing of God, to carry good men above their distrustful fears to a free and evangelical temper.

2. Watch against every thing which tends to draw off your heart from God. Though it be ever so innocent in itself, yet when you discover it to be his rival for your affections, peculiarly guard against it, that it may not be suffered to have the ascendant. And on the other hand, diligently fall in with every thing, which you find leading you to the love of God; such divine institutions, such converse, such particular discoveries of divine truth, as you experience to be most apt to make your hearts burn within you.

3. Daily pray for the light and aids of the Spirit of God, "to shed abroad his love in your hearts, to solve your doubts, and satisfy you of your relation; that he would direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ," 2 Thess. iii. 5.

4. Set yourselves to act up to your hope as far as it goes, till you can proceed no farther. Be much in thankfulness for general grace, while you have not an assurance of special interest. Animate yourselves by that to go on in duty, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ: and your way will hardly fail to brighten, as you go on.

SERMON XIX.

CHRISTIAN FORTITUDE.

2 PET. I. 5.

And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue.

CHRISTIANITY encourages us to lay aside a slavish *fear of the great God*; and much more obliges us to get above a *cowardly fear of men*. Nor is any thing more necessary to our acquitting ourselves well in our course of obedience to our heavenly Father, than courage and undaunted resolution; which I apprehend the apostle here to recommend.

He supposes those to whom he wrote to *have obtained like precious faith with him and the other apostles*, ver. 1. that is, to believe the gospel as well as they. After this character given them in the inscription, we have the usual apostolical salutation; a prayer, that *grace and peace might be multiplied to them*. On this occasion he enlarges on the happy state they were brought into by the gospel, the great and good things given them, and promised to them in Christ for this purpose, that they might be wrought up to a divine temper and life. Hereupon he immediately proceeds to exhort them to give all diligence in building a proper superstructure upon their belief of the gospel. That which he recommends, consists of seven important articles. The first mentioned, and which he immediately connects with faith is virtue. *Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue.*

Some would understand *virtue* in a general sense, for an universal regularity of mind and manners, or a disposition to all virtuous actions. So Peter's exhortation would fall in with

that of another apostle, Tit. iii. 8. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works." But this general sense seems not so natural here, because all the following particulars reckoned here except *knowledge*, are comprehended in *virtue* taken in this large sense; *temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity*. The answer which some give to this reason, seems not satisfactory; that the apostle first recommends virtue in general, and then some principal parts and branches of it; for by the manner of expression it is imported, that every one of them signifies a distinct excellence, something additional to what had gone before. Add one to the other.

Therefore I take the word *virtue* in a more limited sense here to mean the particular disposition of Christian fortitude. So the word *αρετή*, is often taken in Greek writers, and *virtue* by the Latins. This sense seems to agree best with the context. What could more naturally be pressed upon us after faith, or a belief of the gospel, than courage in the profession of it, and in a practice correspondent to it? And what could more aptly follow upon this, than that we should add to our virtue or courage, knowledge? or a growing acquaintance with the doctrines and duties contained in the rule of our faith, that our courage and resolution may not be ill placed?

The truth then, which I am now to insist upon, is this,
That Christian courage and fortitude is a temper of mind, very necessary to be found in all true believers.

Here it will be my endeavour to shew 1st, The nature of this Christian grace. And, 2dly, What may be intended in the exhortation to add it to our faith.

I. I am to explain the nature of this grace of Christian courage or fortitude.

Courage in general is a temper, which disposes a man to do brave and commendable actions, without being daunted at the appearance of dangers and difficulties in the way. The heathen moralists reckoned bravery in war to be the highest expression of courage, and that a soldier had the greatest opportunity to shew courage; because life, the dearest thing in

this world, is risked in war. Thus the Christian life being a warfare, gives the principal occasion and opportunity to shew Christian courage. It is nothing else but to behave as "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," 2 Tim. ii. 3. To adhere to Christ, and to continue in the discharge of Christian duty, in the view of the greatest discouragements and hazards.

To explain it more particularly, it may be proper to shew, 1. For what Christian courage is to be exercised. 2. Against what it is to be exerted. And, 3. In what acts and instances it should be expressed.

1. *For what* it is to be exercised.

For the cause makes it a Christian grace. It is courage in Christ's cause; that is, in maintaining the profession of the Christian faith; and adhering to the practice of our duty, as far as we are convinced of the mind of God; so as not to deny a known truth, or admit the least sin, upon any consideration whatsoever. This is warring a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, to which Timothy is exhorted, 1 Tim. i. 18, 19. These are the two things which Christian fortitude is concerned to hold fast, and not to suffer either to be wrested away.

But it must necessarily be presupposed, that we are careful to inform ourselves well about the mind and will of God, relating both to faith and practice; that our courage may not be blind and rash, without a good foundation to support it. Otherwise, for ought we know, we may be contending earnestly for error, instead of the faith once delivered to the saints; or for the mere precepts of men, or our own humours, instead of the commands of God. This will not be esteemed by God Christian courage, but mad rashness, if we have not made a careful inquiry into the doctrines and duties of our religion. Though we should chance to be in the right, yet if we have not arrived at a conviction of this upon conscientious and impartial examination according to our capacities and opportunities, the most resolute adherence will not be a Christian virtue; because in the course we have taken, we might have chanced as well to be in the wrong.

And indeed, without such diligent inquiries, we are hardly like to be courageous in an hour of trial. Whatever resolutions we may seem to have, while difficulties are at a distance; yet the actual approach of sufferings and strong temptations

will search our foundations ; and we shall scarce withstand resolutely in an evil day, and having done all, stand, unless we have good evidence, that we are contending for divine truth, or striving against sin.

It is therefore of the utmost concern to us, as ever we should have our courage acceptable or abiding, that we would have solid grounds for the persuasions we admit in religion, or the word of God indeed on our side. Then our resolution will be truly Christian, and it is like to be proof against the greatest difficulties.

2. *Against what* Christian courage is to be exercised.

It supposes oppositions, trials and dangers in our way ; else there would be no occasion for it. It is a temper, for which there will be no room in heaven ; and the need of it now, ariseth from our present condition as in a state of conflict. Some indeed meet with greater trials of their courage than others do ; but all have some, and none can certainly promise themselves an exemption even from the greatest. Now all that hath a tendency to awaken a Christian's fear of danger in his course of faith and obedience, gives opportunity to exercise his courage : whether it be apt to excite fear of present sufferings for his fidelity, or of his final success. And so we may observe,

(1.) The power, the subtilty and activity of the powers of darkness call for courage in a Christian. Upon this the apostle founds an exhortation to be strong and courageous, Eph. vi. 10, 12. " For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, weak or visible enemies only ; but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Number, policy, strength, unwearied application in enemies, are each of them trials of the courage of a soldier ; and especially when they are all united. A little soul is affrighted and disheartened at them. If they have had success in former assaults, the discouragement is still greater. But all these things whet the courage of the brave.

These things all meet in the case of a Christian. He is entered upon a warfare with evil spirits ; who are invisible, and therefore the more apt to gain advantage at unawares ; who are many in number, and therefore able to find him full employment : of the most refined skill and subtilty, furnished

with great capacities of nature, and grown old in experience ; and therefore very likely to beguile ; of the most implacable and desperate malice, who vow our ruin, if they can accomplish it : restless and incessant in their pernicious endeavours, “ going about continually, seeking whom they may devour,” 1 Pet. v. 8. And every one of us is conscious, that they have had too frequent success against us already, as they have actually slain their thousands. Such enemies will find work for our courage, to *resist them*, notwithstanding all these threatening circumstances of danger, ver. 9.

(2.) The oppositions from within ourselves require courage. Our own irregular inclinations and affections and passions are difficult to be overcome : in some temptations they are particularly violent ; they have sometimes been successful against our best resolutions ; and after a long warfare, most feel them to retain a considerable power, and gain not such a conquest as they desire. All these things are very apt to dishearten. And if we add, that all our struggles with these domestic enemies, and all the ground we gain from them, is offering a sort of violence to ourselves, like “ the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye ; the trial occasioned thereby to our fortitude and courage, will appear very considerable.

(3.) The several discouragements or dangers we may meet with from other men, in the way of our duty, and even for our duty, make courage necessary. Solomon tells us, “ that the fear of man bringeth a snare,” Prov. xxix. 25. Courage is to overcome this snare.

All Christians have warning even to prepare for martyrdom ; to be ready “ to resist unto blood, striving against sin ; to take up the cross,” though they should be called to bear it in the literal sense. This they must be determined to do, rather than to deny any thing which they believe to be a truth, or comply with any known sin. God sometimes leaves even the lives of his servants at the mercy of their most cruel enemies ; and then they may have no choice left, but either to forsake Christ or their lives. And notwithstanding our long ease and enjoyment of the liberty of our consciences ; notwithstanding the gracious indulgence and protection of the present government ; yet, in the uncertainty of human affairs, none of us can be sure, that we shall escape even the fiery

trial: we could expect no better, should God ever suffer the bigotry of Rome to possess the throne of these kingdoms; which may he of his infinite mercy always prevent: for we know, that when that sort of people kill us for our supposed heresy, they think that they do God good service. Now here is Christian courage, if we should be called to lose our lives for the testimony of Jesus, "not to be moved with these things, nor to count our lives dear unto ourselves, so that we may finish our course with joy," Acts xx. 24.

This is the utmost that man can do, to kill the body: but beside that, there are many lower sufferings for righteousness' sake, which require fortitude to bear them: the loss of substance, or liberty, or friends, or reputation. We may lie open to *the trial of cruel mockings* and reproaches, when enemies are restrained from doing more; and these are some trials of resolution to an ingenuous mind.

Or even to descend lower; it is a point of courage, especially to some tempers, to be singular or to act contrary to the common stream of practice; to be obliged by our sentiments to go against the advice and importunity of friends; to differ in points of conduct from many wise and good men, whom we highly esteem and value. And yet a good man may sometimes find himself necessitated to run counter to his dearest associates, and even to *withstand them to the face*, Gal. ii. 11. while he studies to approve himself to God.

It yet remains, for explaining Christian courage, that it be shewn.

3. *Wherein*, or in what acts and instances it should express itself.

Insensibleness of difficulties or dangers is not a proper expression of it. It is not expected of a Christian, that his apprehension of these things should be less quick than other people's, or that he should have no natural reluctance to them. Without that, they would be no trial of his courage.

Nor are we to expose ourselves *unnecessarily* to dangers. We should exercise courage in conjunction with Christian prudence, though it ought not to be under the restraints of carnal policy. It is Christian prudence, not to run upon danger, farther than plain duty obliges us. I cannot say, that it is always men's duty to profess every particular opinion they entertain to all the world, in some cases that rule holds,

“Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God,” Rom. xiv. 22. The preservation of the peace of the church, and their own safety may justify them in it. But it is always our duty not to deny or profess the contrary to that which we believe, though at the greatest peril. It would rather be imprudence than duty, to act in time of persecution, as some primitive Christians did, who ran uncalled to the heathen tribunals, and cried, *I am a Christian*, on purpose that they might obtain the honor and reward of martyrdom. It is sufficient, if we are ready to hold fast our profession, when the providence of God calls us out to the conflict; if we are willing to bear any temporal evil for our faithfulness, rather than be false to Christ and a good conscience, when we must choose the one or the other. It is delivered as an ordinary rule by Christ himself to his disciples, when he foretels the persecutions that would await them, Matt. x. 23. “When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.” Though circumstances may sometimes vary the case, and make even this inconsistent with duty. Nehemiah was so situated:—When the whole work of repairing the state of the Jews, after the captivity, depended under God upon his presence with the people; though he was apprized of attempts against him by the common enemy, yet in such circumstances, says he, “should such a man as I flee?” Neh. vi. 11. And the like may occur in the case of others; which good men must judge of for themselves, as they fall out, and by which those who are thoroughly devoted to God will govern themselves. The ordinary rule is as hath been mentioned.

But Christian courage is to exert itself in such ways as these.

(1.) In deliberate and vigorous resolutions for God and our duty, upon counting the cost. This is all that can be done, when difficulties and dangers are not actually present; seriously to consider them, and upon balancing matters, to determine for a firm adherence to our master, whatever it may cost us. It is true, we may deceive ourselves in this courage at a distance, and after resolutions that seemed bold and brave, betray shameful cowardice in the conflict. The disciples were a sad instance of this: their resolution for Christ seemed firm, and certainly they thought it so themselves. Peter said to him, “Though all men should be offended because of thee,

yet will I never be offended," Mat. xxvi. 33. In ver. 35. he seemed to consider the very worst that could befall him, and from that particular view to add new vigour to his resolution. "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples." And yet we know, Peter soon shamefully denied him, and all the rest "forsook him and fled." Such an instance may justly be a loud admonition, against confidence in ourselves, for performing good resolutions in our own strength; and against trusting to them, when we have made them, without continued watchfulness and recollection: one or both of which seem to have been the faults of the disciples, and the reason of their ill success. But their miscarriage after laudible resolves, should by no means divert us from forming such purposes. Christ himself recommends them to all his followers. When he had stated the terms of being his disciples, he plainly intimates the folly and danger of setting out in profession, without weighing those terms, and a full determination to go through, Luke xiv. 26—30. The same thing Barnabas inculcated upon the church of Antioch; he "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord," Acts xi. 23. Such a noble ardour in Paul was a bright part of his character, when he could say, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," Acts xxi. 13.

(2.) In the suppression of distracting fear of evils at a distance. The coward often fears where no fear is: and as well as the slothful man, creates to himself many imaginary dangers; "There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets," Prov. xxii. 13. And represents real ones with a much more formidable aspect than they have in themselves. His spirits sink at the prospect. Fortitude has a very contrary effect. The brave soldier of Christ does not anxiously take thought about the morrow, but leaves future events to God's ordering. "He shall not be afraid of any evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid," Psal. cxii. 7, 8.

(3.) In a vigorous application to our Christian work, notwithstanding the stated and constant difficulties and oppositions attending it. Though Satan would hinder, and the world ensnare, and a corrupt heart resist, a courageous Chris-

tian goes on as one resolved to conquer or die ; striving to enter in at the straight gate, Luke xiii. 24. Maintaining an unwearied conflict with his spiritual enemies, wherever they oppose him in his great design. If he is sometimes foiled yet he returns to his warfare, and strenuously endeavours to regain the ground he has lost. And if still he hath not the success he wishes for, yet he resolves to persevere and never to quit the field, till his warfare is accomplished. Such a man answers the character given by our Saviour of the heirs of heaven, Matt. xi. 12. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

(4.) In a readiness to undertake hard and difficult services, when God calls to them. Such as may be eminently for the honour of God or the advantage of our generation, though we may foresee few to help us, and many to oppose us ; though we must reckon upon numerous and formidable adversaries, and reproaches possibly from good and bad men too ; though the business we are employed in may be unacceptable to the most. Holy fortitude is necessary to dispose men to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty ; when popular mistakes are to be opposed ; when iniquity comes in like a flood, and God seems to call out, "Who will rise up for me against the evil doers ? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity ?" Psal. xciv. 16. Or when duty obliges us to go upon an ungrateful errand ; as when God was about to pronounce the sorest judgments upon the Jews, and said in the hearing of the prophet Isaiah, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? Then said I, here am I, send me," Isa. vi. 8. And especially, when visible dangers await us, not to decline a service of which we are capable, is an act of illustrious courage for God : as Moses bravely pursued the design of delivering Israel out of Egypt, till he had accomplished it, "not fearing the wrath of the king," Heb. xi. 27.

(5.) In an uniform steadiness of conduct under all the trials we actually meet with. It is no great expression of courage in common life, to talk big when dangers are remote ; those are most apt to do so, who behave worst in time of trial ; but cool courage and steadiness, as men are called out to action, is the most valuable thing. So it is in a Christian. If he quits not his post, forsakes not his God, makes not shipwreck of faith or of a good conscience, when he is called to suffer for

his fidelity; this is indeed the Christian hero. Though he should have had more fears beforehand how he might behave, than some more confident men; though he should meet suffering with a trembling heart; yet if he stand his ground in the hour of temptation, he has the truest courage. As it hath been observed of some of the bravest soldiers, they have come with a trembling hand into the battle, but when once engaged have done wonders. This should be the great care of every one of us in an hour of trial, that we betray no known truth, and admit no known sin, whatever temporal good we lose, and whatever evil we suffer thereby: and to continue thus stedfast from one trial to another; that fortitude may be our habitual temper, and not merely occasional. And if we can maintain serenity and cheerfulness under trials, if we can rejoice in tribulation; so much the more will Christian courage have its perfect work.

II. I am farther to shew, what may be intended in the exhortation to *add virtue, or courage, to our faith.*

This may intimate the imperfection of our faith, without this superstructure upon it. It is necessary to be added to our faith, in order to our acceptance with God. We must “confess with the mouth, as well as believe in our hearts the Lord Jesus, if we would be saved,” Rom. x. 9. Faith is dead, if it produce not a correspondent profession and course of action. Without this, we may ourselves justly question the sincerity of it, and cannot recommend it effectually to others; for without fortitude we cannot perform and execute the noble dictates of so divine a principle.

But that which I principally apprehend to be designed is, to intimate the just reason which our faith gives for Christian courage. When we are called to make this addition, we are only required to build the most proper and natural structure upon our most holy faith. The fortitude required by the gospel, is distinguished from all other fortitude, not only as it is upon account of the truths and duties of Christianity, but as it is founded upon Christian principles. Christian faith is most fit to inspire with Christian fortitude. For instance,

1. Faith discovers divine providence as engaged for us, and with us in all our difficulties. God frequently animated his servants under the Old Testament in hard services, by an

assurance of his presence. "Fear not, for I am with thee," Gen. xxvi. 24. Isa. xli. 10. The three Jewish youths considered him as able to deliver them, when Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to be cast into the fiery furnace, Dan. iii. 17. and therefore, like the Jewish nurses in Egypt, they were not afraid of the king's commandment. Faith will support us in the greatest dangers by this reasoning, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee: so that we may boldly say (in the way of our duty,) the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me," Heb. xiii. 5, 6. Nor yet what devils can do; "for greater is he that is in us, and with us, than he that is in the world," 1 John iv. 4.

2. Faith proposes the divine Spirit, as directly provided to help our infirmities. Particularly for this very purpose, to inspire us with needful courage. So the apostle prays for the Ephesians, "that God would grant them to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner-man," Eph. iii. 16. that is, animated with proper courage in their Christian course. Agreeable to that ancient promise, Psal. xxvii. 14. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart," that is, Maintain your trust in God, and so set yourselves vigorously to go on in the way of your duty, and you shall find his confirming grace still more to corroborate and animate you.

3. Faith represents our main enemies as already vanquished, and as having their chief power broken. The captain of our salvation hath personally overcome them, and as the head of his church too. "Having spoiled principalities and powers, (which he did by the efficacy of his death,) he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (or rather,) in himself, by his resurrection and ascension, leading captivity captive," Col. ii. 15. This is a strong encouragement, not only after his example, but under his banner, to fight the good fight against them. And to the same encouragement, he directs us himself with reference to the world and the evils of it; "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," John xvi. 33. Hence the intention of God in sending his Son, is represented to be, "that we should be saved from our enemies," Luke i. 71. and then, ver. 74, 75. "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without

fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life."

4. Faith gives us particular assurance, that our trials shall not exceed our strength ; either the strength we have, or that which shall be imparted, 1 Cor. x. 13. " God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

5. Faith sets in view greater evils to be feared from our cowardice, than can be feared from our adherence to God. Christ elegantly sets these the one over against the other, Luke xii. 4, 5. " I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do." They cannot go so far without divine permission, but it is certain that is doing their worst. " But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him, (who can do that and more too ;) who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." And this we are fairly warned will be their lot, who cowardly turn their backs, after they have seemed to engage in the Christian warfare. If we should " draw back, it must be unto perdition ;" God's soul will have " no pleasure in us," Heb. x. 38, 39. And the fearful, who chose always to be in the rear in danger, stand in the front of those who " shall have their part in the second death," Rev. xxi. 8. One would think this necessity, and the impossibility of escaping without it, should make even a coward to fight. On the other hand,

6. Faith assures us of the certain and glorious success of our courage. That our endeavours against our powerful enemies shall issue in a full conquest. " The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," Rom. xvi. 20. And though now a saint after all his struggles, may have frequent occasion to mourn over the body of death, he may be assured that God " will deliver him from it through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vii. 24, 25. " And death itself, the last enemy shall be destroyed," 1 Cor. xv. 26. And unspeakable rewards shall be the prize of the conquerors. We find promises of glorious recompences, in a variety of moving descriptions, made to the seven churches of Asia, in the second and third chapters of the Revelation, but all of them assured only to him that overcometh. We strive for mastery, not as uncertain what we are to obtain by it, but for an incorruptible

crown, 1 Cor. ix. 25, 26. If we are "stedfast and unmovable, we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord," chap. xv. 58. And the promised rewards are plainly declared to bear a proportion to all the difficulties and dangers we surmount.

7. Faith represents to us the noblest examples of such holy fortitude upon the same principle: all the excellent of the earth, particularly that noble collection of worthies, whose brave exploits are recorded in Heb. xi. The glorious apostle Paul himself; and above all the Captain of our salvation, who was an illustrious pattern of invincible coarage in his work: He feared the face of no man in the course of his ministry; but boldly reprov'd sin and sinners. His enemies could not help owning it, Matt. xxii. 16. "Thou carest not for any man, for thou regardest not the person of men." He pursued his Father's business, and the instruction of mankind, notwithstanding the unwearied designs of ill men against him; which led some upon his preaching openly at Jerusalem, at the feast of tabernacles, to say with admiration, "Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing to him," John vii. 25, 26. When some of the Pharisees would have persuaded him to quit the place, where he knew his present duty lay, for fear of Herod, Luke xiii. 31, 32. "Get thee out, and depart hence; for Herod will kill thee:" Jesus said unto them, "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." He neither quitted his post of service for fear of him; nor declined to send him a sharp reproof, according to his special prophetic commission, for fear of provoking him farther. But especially he shewed the truest fortitude, when he was called to bear his last testimony to the truth, and "witnessed a good confession before Pontious Pilate," sealing it with his blood. In this the apostle calls us "to look to Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him, that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," Heb. xii. 2, 3. We are called to consider this pattern of courage, and of the glorious success of it too, to animate us to new vigour in our race.

Upon the whole,

1. Consider this grace of fortitude, as a matter of the utmost importance in the Christian life. The variety of oppositions and difficulties in our way make it necessary. We shall never make any considerable progress in the divine life without it, nor ever do much for God or our generation.

It is indeed more especially necessary in some stations; as in magistrates. Great things depend upon their vigour, when they like Asa, "take courage and put away the abominations in a land," 2 Chron. xv. 8. And in ministers, who have peculiar occasion "with all boldness to speak the word," Acts iv. 29. to "speak the gospel boldly, as they ought to speak," Eph. vi. 20. But it is necessary in every station, to resist the devil, whom we have all in common for an enemy, 1 Pet. v. 9. And to overcome the world, to which every man is obliged, and which no man can successfully do, without a vigour of resolution.

It is eminently necessary in some duties. As for instance, in reproving and endeavouring to reform sinners. But almost every duty will at one time or other require it.

It is comparatively more necessary in some periods of time and circumstances of life, than in others. As in times of persecution, or of the uncommon prevalence of sin and profaneness. But the best times on earth will furnish us with some occasions for it.

It was a proper disposition for a saint in every dispensation of the church. It was often inculcated under the Old Testament; "fear not, be strong and of good courage." But it is eminently suitable to a saint in the evangelical state, wherein we have much stronger motives to it. For, (as the apostle says,) 2 Tim. i. 7. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." He has given us no occasion for a cowardly temper, but the greatest reason for a courageous spirit.

2. Cultivate therefore your faith, in order to the forming of your minds to holy fortitude. Frequently contemplate the establishing motives of the gospel, which are so full and apposite; and by prayer and frequent reviews of the grounds of your faith, endeavour to confirm your hope in the gospel.

3. Use all farther additional means to fortify your minds. Be prepared for the worst, by counting frequently the cost. Make clear the goodness of your cause, for which you may be called to exert your courage. Make sure of the goodness of your state, and carefully exercise a good conscience ; without this, the best cause in profession will be very faintly maintained in an evil day ; because the gospel so fully assures us, that an assertion of the clearest and most important truth contained in it, will not be a sufficient passport for heaven, without real goodness and a general sincerity of heart.

SERMON XX.

PREFERENCE OF THE SOUL TO THE BODY, AND DILIGENCE FOR ITS WELFARE.



JOHN VI. 27. [First Clause.]

*Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that
meat which endureth unto everlasting life.*

ST PAUL, summing up the duty which we are taught by the grace of God in the gospel, expresses that to ourselves, Tit. ii. 12. by living soberly, or with a sound mind, as the word σοφρονως signifies. We consist of body and mind, but by this we are especially directed to see that our mind be in a sound state. The powers of the mind are vastly superior to those of the body, and they were designed by our great Creator, to sit at helm over the whole man. Now, to live “with a sound mind,” is to conduct ourselves as those who have an intelligent spirit to preside in body, to direct and govern the whole.

The apostacy hath inverted this order, set the inferior powers in the throne, and enslaved the mind to the body; so that the appetites and passions we have, by occasion of the body, have the most commanding influence, the interests of the meaner part are apt to be most regarded; and reason and the higher powers, instead of giving law, receive law from appetite, and are pressed into its service to minister to it.

Christianity is designed to bring us “to ourselves,” or to our right mind, to reinstate the reasonable spirit in its just empire over the whole man. And in this view we may easily

discern the several branches of the temper becoming us with reference to ourselves.

We owe it to ourselves, in the *first* place to prefer the interests of our immortal souls, before those of our perishing bodies ; which is only to form a right judgment, upon comparing the different value of soul and body.

Hereupon we should exercise *care* and *diligence* to secure our best interests, answerable to their superior value and excellence, in opposition to *negligence* and *slloth*.

And as we should judge fairly between our own higher and lower interests, so we should make a just estimate of ourselves, compared with other beings, not thinking of ourselves above what we ought to think ; and that will lead us to *humility*.

We should regulate our bodily appetites and passions, conformable to the dictates of reason, and the higher interests of our souls. This will be done by the graces of *purity*, and *temperance*, and *meekness*. And, *lastly*,

We ought to moderate our desires after any present good, and our resentment of present evils to the body, according to the necessity of our lot, and the reasons which religion gives to qualify both. And this is done by what we call *contentment* and *patience*.

For the two first of these duties to ourselves, preferring the interests of the soul to those of the body, and suitable pains and diligence to secure these our principal interests, our Saviour, in the text, calls us to act in that manner.

The occasion of the words was this : Christ had miraculously fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. The people, struck with admiration, concluded that Jesus was "that prophet that should come into the world," that is, the promised Messiah, verse 14. But having their minds full of the notion, which generally prevailed among the Jews at that time, that the Messiah was to set up a temporal kingdom, they immediately attempted to take him by force, and make him king. But Christ withdrew himself from them, ver. 15. His disciples went by ship to the opposite shore, and Christ, miraculously walking on the sea, followed his disciples, unknown to the people. The people, however, eagerly pursue him where they thought it most likely to meet with him, and finding him, say, "Rabbi, when comest thou hither?" ver.

25. Christ, who knew their insincerity, and the base reason which induced them to follow him, plainly tells them of it, ver. 26. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." 'You do not follow me in pursuit of the true end for which I work my miracles, that you may be made willing to learn of me the way that leads to everlasting life, but merely in hope of receiving some temporal benefit from me, as you have lately done, when you found your bodies fully refreshed by the loaves and fishes.'

Thereupon he gives them the exhortation in the text: *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.* 'Be not so much concerned, nor take so much pains as you do, to obtain those things which may support a frail and dying body, or for any outward and secular advantage, which will be serviceable to you but a little time; but rather labour for the food of souls, which will make you happy for ever, and which I, the Son of man am ready to give you. You have followed me for the sake of the loaves; you should much rather follow me to receive the instructions which I am able and ready to grant, whereby you will be made wise unto salvation.'

Three general heads will comprehend all that is necessary to be said upon this subject.

I. All care and pains for the interest of our bodies is not forbidden. But,

II. The interest of our souls, and all which subserves that, ought greatly to be preferred before the other.

III. Much labour and diligence are necessary in order to the securing of our everlasting interest.

I. All care and pains for the welfare of our bodies, and for promoting our present interests, is not forbidden.

It may possibly seem to be so by the absolute way of speaking: *Labour not for the meat which perisheth.* But the sense of this is familiar to such as observe the manner of the Hebrew style; which often appears to forbid one thing, and to command another absolutely, when it is plain that no more is intended, than that one should be done more than the other. Neither all "looking at the things which are seen," nor all

“affection to things on earth,” nor “laying up treasure on earth,” are unlawful, though, in the way of speaking, they may seem to be absolutely excluded, 2 Cor. iv. 18. Col. iii. 2. Matt. vi. 19. But we must consider them as set over against what is mentioned on the other hand along with them, and understand the whole taken together in a comparative sense. We should look, not so much at the things which are seen, as at the things which are not seen; and not set our affections on things on earth, so much as on things above, nor be so solicitous for earthly treasure, as to lay up treasure in heaven. And so we must understand the text.

For we ought to labour for the meat which perisheth.

Our bodies, while we sojourn in them, claim a part of our care: “No man,” acting worthy of a man, “hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it.” The law of nature, and the word of God, oblige us to honest industry, in our lawful callings and stations, for the support of ourselves and our families. God has so ordered it in the course of his providence, for the generality of mankind, that “in the sweat of their face they must eat bread, till they return to the ground,” Gen. iii. 19. And if any, on pretence of attending to the care of their souls, should neglect their secular business, either expecting God’s providential care of them, or that other people should relieve them, in truth they tempt God, and injure their neighbour. The apostle gives them the character of “disorderly walkers, who work not at all;” and “commands, and exhorts them, by the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread,” 2 Thess. iii. 11, 12.

To be diligent in our outward affairs in the proper time of attendance upon them, is as truly serving God, and obeying his command, as attending his immediate worship in the proper season for that. It is as much the command of God, “Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work,” that ordinarily the greatest part of common days should be taken up in our proper callings, as that we should lay aside secular business for one day in seven. This will no way interfere with a daily acknowledgment of God, morning and evening, in secret, and family worship; for which a little prudent forecast will redeem sufficient time from business. Nor need it prevent some attendance on occasional means of public instruction.

tion on week-days; which may easily be managed, if you have really a mind to it, so that your outward affairs shall not suffer by it.

To have a lawful employment, and to be diligent in it, will preserve from many hurtful temptations. This is peculiarly desirable to employ the activity of youth, who are led into a thousand snares by want of business, or want of application to it. And for that reason, such as have the direction of young people, should take care that they be engaged betimes in some way of employing themselves suitable to their genius and circumstances. And in such a way it will be the wisdom and interest of young people to walk with God.

Nor is it unworthy of a Christian to make his temporal interest, and even the advancement of his worldly circumstances above what they are at his setting out in the world, a subordinate end of his labour and diligence. If it had been unlawful to propose such an end, industry would not have been encouraged by such declarations as these; that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich," Prov. x. 4. and "shall bear rule," chap. xii. 24. that "the thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness," chap. xxi. 5. that such a one "shall stand before kings, and not before mean men," chap. xxii. 29. Religion does not absolutely forbid us to aim at those ends by our diligence, which it gives us some encouragement to expect as the consequence of it. Certainly a man may lawfully, and commendably, labour to obtain any worldly good, which he may come fairly by, without breaking any known law of God, or injuring his neighbour, or neglecting his soul.

But our Saviour designs to teach us, that,

II. The interest of our souls, and all which promotes that, deserves to be far preferred before any interests of the body. Christ here sets both before us in a comparative view; and the expressions he uses not only serve to distinguish these different concerns, but sufficiently intimate the reason of preferring the one to the other, when he describes the one as *the meat which perisheth*, and the other as *that which endureth unto everlasting life*. The gospel often gives us this comparative view of both, 2 Cor. iv. 18. "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen, are eternal."

So Christ expresses himself to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 13, 14. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again : but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst : but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

1. All that is for the sustenance and welfare of the body, has the character of *the meat that perisheth*. Which is apt enough to express the following things, which justly depreciate all worldly good, and yet are proved to be true, by daily experience.

Every present enjoyment may be lost. Though it be ever so comfortable, ever so suitable, we hold it by no certain tenure. Whatever advantage riches may give us, they may "take themselves wings, and fly away:" and shall we then "set our eyes upon that which is not?" Prov. xxiii. 5. All earthly treasures are perishable things: some of them *moth and rust* may corrupt; for others, the *thief* may break through and steal them from us, Matt. vi. 19. Devouring flames may consume a large and liberal substance, and reduce a man in a few hours from very plentiful circumstances, to extreme necessity. Or, if people should imagine themselves secure in an inheritance, a small observation of human life may shew, that this cannot absolutely be depended upon; for fraud, or violence, may turn a man out of that which appeared the firmest possession. Health is as uncertain as riches. When it seems most confirmed, it is not proof against the assaults of sickness or pain. All the prudence of precaution, and all the skill of the physician, cannot ascertain to us this the greatest of outward comforts. Every member of the body, every bone, and joint, and sinew, lies open to many unknown disorders; and we cannot always prevent those disorders from coming upon us as an armed man. If we were exalted to the highest honors, an exchange of them for the lowest abasement, and the most general contempt, is no uncommon step in life. The rich man is frequently reduced to poverty; the healthy man laid upon a bed of languishing; and the man who stood in the first rank of dignity, is soon debased in his character and influence. So perishing, so changeable, is all worldly good!

The use and comfort of worldly enjoyments may be lost,

while the things themselves continue. In that respect they are perishing. Some of them are no more than a transient pleasure, such as perishes with the using: it is well if they are followed with no lasting sting, such as make a dear reckoning for a momentary delight: that is certainly the case in all unlawful sensualities. And those external delights, which are most innocent, in a little time, upon a man's being accustomed to them, leave him empty, unless he can make some new experiment for happiness: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing," Eccl. i. 8. New circumstances, and new wants, which are not provided for by what we have already, will supersede the comfort and use of present enjoyments. Pain and sickness will take off the relish of riches, or honors, or pleasures. And especially a wounded spirit, whether arising from bodily melancholy, or from the strong temptations of Satan, or from the arrows of God stuck fast in the soul, will embitter all enjoyments at once.

The body itself, to which alone such comforts are suited, is perishing. It is ever tending towards the dust, and will soon be stripped of all sensation, and suitableness to the things that are in the world. What are they all to a dead carcase, that will entirely lose the relish of things once most agreeable? This is the case of us all; we are going down to the silent grave, and can carry none of those things along with us, to be of any service in the state whither we are going. All their pleasures and use, if it should happen to last so long, must have its period with the stroke of death.

On the other hand,

2. That which serves the interest of our souls is of the most durable use. It is *meat that endureth to everlasting life*. Christ here compares bodily food with his own instructions, which were sufficient to make men wise unto salvation. These are often in scripture represented by the emblem of food, Prov. ix. 5. "Wisdom crieth in the streets, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled:" which is explained, ver. 6. by "going in the way of understanding." And Isa. lv. 2. "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness:" which is expressed in plainer words, ver. 3. "Hear, and your souls shall live."

This food of souls is said to endure to everlasting life.

Not that the means of grace will last always : if we could enjoy them in the future world, the folly would not be so great in neglecting them at present : but their continuance is of as short a date as that of the meat that perisheth. This transitory life, and all such opportunities, must end together. All that is intended is, that the benefit and happy fruits of them will be eternal, if they are carefully and conscientiously improved now.

This is the argument, which our Lord intimates, to induce us, while we are probationers, to prefer the interests of our souls, and the means of their welfare, before those concerns which are terminated within the present life and world. And to shew the force of it, I would lay together the following considerations.

(1.) We have immortal souls, as well as perishing bodies. A part within us, which has no tendency to corruption and dissolution, as the earthly house of this tabernacle hath ; but is designed, and framed, by our great Creator to subsist for ever. When the body returns to the dust, the spirit returns to God who gave it, and is adjudged by him to endless happiness, or misery. The wiser heathens, by natural light made some discovery of this ; but we have more abundant evidence of it by revelation, that we are spirits dwelling in houses of clay, of which God is immediately the Father, as men are the fathers of our flesh. These will not cease to be, or to act, to feel pleasure or pain, to bear the wrath, or enjoy the favour of God, when their present dwellings shall become uninhabitable. Immediately upon death, they either are in torments, or go to paradise ; either become the companions of devils, or the associates of holy angels ; and so remain for ever. The fashion of the world passeth away ; one generation goes off the stage, and another comes on ; there is a continual succession of persons and things below, the visible heavens, and this earth, shall in time be dissolved : but God hath taken care to assure us by reason and scripture, that we have souls designed for eternity.

(2.) Our state hereafter will be determined by our behaviour here. Heaven or hell, happiness or misery, will be our final portion, just as death finds us ; whether in Christ, or out of him ; dead in sin, or become alive to God. For we are to “ receive hereafter the things done in the body, whether good

or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10. God will "render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath," Rom. ii. 6—8. Ever since the apostacy, by the grace of God, life as well as death is set before us, and we are allowed our choice. We may either, "after our hardness, and impenitent hearts, treasure up unto ourselves wrath against the day of wrath;" or we may "lay up treasure in heaven; lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation," or security, "for the time to come, that we may lay hold of eternal life." This is all our sowing-time; and "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," Gal. vi. 7, 8.

(3.) We are often determined in the affairs of this life, by hope and fear of things to come, where we have far less certainty. All our pursuits, and I may say, most of our actions, are for the sake of something future, and not yet in sight; either to prevent some evil feared, or to obtain some good desired, which are both futurities. In the beginning of life, people apply themselves to become masters of some of the learned professions, or of some trade or business, in hope of a livelihood, or of serviceableness when they arrive at maturity: but they are not sure they shall ever live to be masters of business themselves. Those who are entered upon the world, pursue their several businesses in expectation that they will answer their end; but they are not certain of success in the most prudent steps they can take. In the affairs of our souls, we act upon a future prospect; but divine promise ascertains us of success, in the way of the gospel. That the benefit is future, is no reason therefore to abate our zeal in prosecuting it; that is the case in our aims for this world: and we have the advantage of a better hope in our aims for another.

(4.) It is a plain rule of wisdom, that we should decline a present pleasure for one equal to it of longer continuance; or that we should submit to a present inconvenience, to prevent one more lasting, or to obtain a more lasting good. We justly esteem it wisdom to act in this manner, though there should

be no difference in the things themselves, but only in the continuance. Would a man be wise in refusing to go through a short course of physic, in an ill condition of body, upon a fair prospect of a regular state of health after it? or in neglecting to give a small sum of money in hand, upon security of enjoying a good inheritance in a little time?

Now, the most lasting things below bear no tolerable proportion to the future state. There is no room for measuring them with eternity. A minute compared with our whole lives, or even with the whole duration of the world, is no disproportion in comparison of that between time and eternity. We lose all our thoughts, and stretch beyond the power of numbers in that one word, *Eternity!* For go as far on as you can, add millions of years to millions, and yet you are never the nearer to an end; an unfathomable depth is still behind. Now, the state of all men at death is fixed for ever. Can we think of this, and find any pretence to prefer present things to future? Shall we prefer a minute's satisfaction to lose an eternity of joys, or to sink into an eternity of woe? Shall we refuse the light afflictions, which Providence may call us to bear in the way of our duty, "which are but for a moment," when they "work out for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory?"

(5.) Whatever is temporal, for that very reason is capable of giving full satisfaction. It is a great abatement of the pleasure of any enjoyment, to think that it may be lost. In truth, the more pleasant it is, so much the more afflicting will be the thought of parting. Heaven itself would not satisfy the possessors, if they had the prospect of an end. This arises from the natural principle of self-love, which necessitates our wishing for the continuance of that which is agreeable. When we are all, therefore, upon an inquiry after happiness, we may discern at first, that earth says, It is not in me, for every thing here is perishing, and must soon be at a period.

(6.) The eternal continuance of happiness, is one of the most satisfying characters of it; and the eternity of misery the most bitter ingredient in it. As it is impossible to be perfectly happy with the prospect of an end before one; so this one consideration would magnify inferior delights, to think that we should never be deprived of them: and light afflictions, an aching of a tooth, or a finger, with eternity written upon them,

would be an insupportable burden. What shall we think, then, of perfect happiness, and complete misery, both of the highest kind, and both eternal? If we were not acquainted with the excellent nature of the heavenly joys, yet as long as we are told of this qualification of them, that they never end, we might be sure that happiness is to be found there, or no where. But when we are fully assured how great the happiness is, and that it is of everlasting duration, it must be the most unreasonable thing of all others, to prefer any present good before it.

With what force and evidence, then, should that question come upon all our consciences, “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Matt. xvi. 26.

A third general head yet remains to be considered.

III. Labour and diligence are indispensably necessary, in order to the securing of our best interests. Faint desires, and transient resolutions, will not be sufficient in this case, but we must labour for the meat that endureth to everlasting life: “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath not.”

Here I shall shew, wherein our labour is to be exercised, and then the necessity of it.

1. Wherein labour for our souls is to be exercised.

(1.) In the diligent use of all appointed means of life. Some pains are needful even to keep up a stated attendance on them; to fall in with every proper opportunity for reading and hearing, for meditation and prayer, and communicating at the Lord’s table. Some, by reason of the straitness of their worldly circumstances, are obliged to a closer attention to their secular business for a livelihood, than others are; and, therefore, they may be necessitated to redeem some time from their sleep, or their recreations, for the more immediate service of God, and care of their souls. Others may live at a greater distance from public worship, and so be obliged to some bodily fatigue to attend upon it: in their hearts should be “the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well.” Psal. lxxxiv. 5, 6. This is a description of such who, living remote from Jerusalem, yet out of love to the temple-worship, and in obedience to God, who enjoined all the males

to come up to it at certain times, passed cheerfully through the dry and desert valley of Baca, as if it had been plentifully furnished with wells for their refreshment by the way. Happy they who so love the habitation of God's house, or his public ordinances, as to be content to pass through some difficulties, rather than omit an attendance on them.

But much more labour and pains are needful with our own hearts in religious duties, to fix our attention, excite proper affections, and exercise that humility and reverence, that seriousness and fervency, without which the outward performance will be of little service to our souls. A careless temper of mind in our use of appointed means, is most unsuitable to God, and renders them useless to our best interests. But good men are sensible that it is no easy matter to secure their thoughts from wandering, to raise pious and devout affections, or to keep them up, to exercise faith, or love, or self-abasement, or any other grace suitable to the work in which they are engaged. They find, by experience, no small occasion for care and conflict, for pains and application, both before and in holy duties, to perform them to advantage. And certainly, if we consider them as the means of our salvation, we shall not think those pains unnecessary, without which they cannot be spiritual sacrifices, either acceptable to God, or profitable to ourselves.

(2.) In opposing the enemies and difficulties which are in our way. As we must enter upon religion with a prospect of difficulties, and a resolution to adhere to God in defiance of all; so we cannot maintain our ground, and acquit ourselves like Christians, without labour and diligence; to resist the devil in all his known assaults, to overcome the world in its ensnaring influence, and to mortify the irregular inclinations of our own hearts. Beside that, we may be called to sufferings for righteousness' sake, which will occasion no small conflict between nature and grace; notwithstanding all, to "run with patience the race that is set before us."

(3.) In making continued advances towards the perfect day: "The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day," Prov. iv. 8. He who hath his heart really fixed upon heaven, never thinks himself sufficiently meet for it, but still endeavours a progress. Now, this calls for constant application and diligence, 2 Pet. i. 5. "Giving all diligence,

add to your faith virtue," &c. We must still continue to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God." As a man of letters, who has a true relish for learning, never thinks he has learning enough; so a Christian, in his labours for everlasting life, is never satisfied with present attainments, but would abound more and more. You have a noble instance of this, and of incessant labour thereupon, in Paul. Though he had attained much, yet he forgot what was behind, and reached forth to apprehend more; still pressing forward, and bounding his desires and ambition by nothing short of the resurrection of the dead, Phil. iii. 10, &c. We should copy after that pattern.

2. The necessity of labour and pains, as it plainly appears from the cases wherein it is to be exercised, so might be made evident in many other ways. I shall only mention two.

(1.) It might be concluded from the necessity of labour to the securing of our present interests. What is there valuable in this world, ordinarily to be obtained without pains? And can it be thought, that heaven, the greatest blessing of all, should become our portion at unawares? Must we labour for the meat that perishes, and can we flatter ourselves that the meat which endureth to everlasting life, can be had without labour? It is, indeed, an argument that present things have the ascendant in our practical judgment, if we can allow ourselves in such a thought.

(2.) We have the plainest declarations of God in the present case: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in and shall not be able," Luke xiii. 24. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. ii. 12. The promise is made only to him that overcometh; which cannot be done without pains and labour, while there is a devil to assault, corrupt hearts to oppose our better inclinations, and many difficulties to be encountered. The conduct of those who are heirs of the heavenly country, is described in scripture by the most indefatigable pains that are laid out about any thing in the world; by the incessant labour of the husbandman, the continual progress of a traveller, the painful exercises of a soldier, the diligent application of a merchant,

the toil of a race. Thus good men in all ages have found their way to glory; though the farther progress they made, and the clearer views they had of the prize before them, so much the more easy and pleasant they accounted their work to be.

And now be persuaded to bring all this home to your consciences by a personal application.

1. Seriously examine whether the care of your souls, or of your bodies, has had the preference with you, to this day. I mean not, whether you have never had convictions that your souls deserve the preference; nor whether you are not ready to acknowledge this in discourse; but which in fact have you practically set the main value upon? What things are you most afraid of? Those which are detrimental to your bodies, or to your souls? that is, in other words, which do you most fear, sin or suffering? On the other hand, which gives you most pleasure, that your bodies prosper and are in health, that your estates increase, that your families flourish, that you have success in your business? or, that you can have reason to hope, that your souls prosper, that the divine life improves in them, that you gain some advance in the mortification of irregular appetites and passions, that holy ordinances are more pleasant and profitable to you? Especially, how do you behave upon a competition between the interests of both? Which interest are you determined to maintain and abide by, when you find you must quit the one for the sake of the other? Put such questions as these to yourselves, and allow conscience to make a faithful report.

2. If the interests of your souls have hitherto been shamefully neglected, allow me to expostulate with you in the apposite words of the prophet, Isa. lv. 2. "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

Why do you mainly pursue that which you know cannot satisfy, when you may obtain an infinitely greater good? If *the meat which perisheth* was the best you had in view, there might be some pretence to say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," and we have no views beyond that. But when we may inherit substance, shall we act with indifference for that, and employ all our pains for that which hath vanity written upon it by the word of God, by the testimony of the wisest men, and by our own frequent experience?

Why should you spend more for present good than it is worth? Should you throw away your immortal souls for it, when nothing can be given in exchange for your souls?

Why should you make so disadvantageous a bargain, after frequent warnings given you of it by a compassionate Saviour, and those who speak in his name, after many disappointments in your own most raised expectations from the things of time?

Why should you employ your excellent talents so ill, when they are plainly given you for a better use? The spirit of a beast would have been sufficient for the employment and happiness of a beast: but when your Maker has given you a capacity of looking forward to immortality, of judging between the value of things present and future, of choosing and prosecuting your best interests, when you have such noble powers, you must account not only to yourselves, but to your Maker also, for your usage of your souls, of yourselves: and certainly you can give no good account, either to God or yourselves, for neglecting the one thing needful. And, once more,

Why should you neglect your souls for the sake of your bodies, when in the ordinary state of things you may comfortably mind both; when a regular care of souls will admit of all reasonable concern your outward welfare too, and will give you a better security than you can have any other way, for all that is needful and good for you in this life? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you," Matt. vi. 33. And by securing the future happiness of your souls, you provide for the everlasting glory and felicity of your bodies too in the morning of the resurrection. Therefore,

3. Be persuaded to make everlasting life your governing aim through the present life, and not *only* a transient concern. When Christ is come into the world to seek and save lost souls; when your time below is principally given you to mind their interest, when the many dangers attending them require your earnest application to prevent their ruin, be in earnest here, wherever else you allow yourselves to trifle. I may happily add for your encouragement in this case, what you cannot be assured of in the most diligent and prudent labours

for the meat that perisheth, that you shall not fail of success: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58.

SERMON XXI.

CHRISTIAN HUMILITY.



COL. III. 12. [middle of the verse.]

—*Humbleness of mind.*

The whole verse runs thus:—

Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.

THE first instance of being wise for ourselves, is to put the principal value upon that part of ourselves which is most noble and durable, *our souls*, and to use our main diligence for securing their welfare. It is another branch of wisdom, to make a right estimate of ourselves, compared with other beings, either above us or of the same order with ourselves. Christian humility is the very temper of which such a thought will lead us. And that is to be our present subject.

St. Paul, in the 9th and 10th verses of this chapter, expresses his charitable hope of the Colossians, that they had “put off the old man with his deeds, and had put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.” And hereupon, in the text, and some following verses, he enumerates several particular excellencies, which are parts of the new man, and, therefore, he exhorts those Colossians to put them on.

If any should say, ‘Since the apostle had already supposed that they had put them on, why does he yet exhort them to do so? especially why does he *therefore* exhort them to it?’

The answer is plain. His charitable hope was founded upon their avowed profession of Christianity, which was, in other words, a profession to have put on the new man : he, therefore, justly exhorts them to shew that this their possession was sincere and genuine ; and his hope, concerning them, well founded, by all the actual and proper expressions of a renewed disposition. Or, supposing them to have been undoubtedly renewed already, yet there would be room for improvement and advance in every part of the Christian temper ; and, therefore, they should still put on the new man more and more, daily grow in the strength, and activity, and just expressions of every holy disposition. Among these, *humbleness of mind*, our present subject, is reckoned up for one.

My business shall be,

I. To explain the nature of this holy temper. And,

II. To shew the special obligations which lie upon us, as Christians, to cultivate it.

I. I would explain the nature of this temper, or shew wherein true humility of mind consists.

The word *ταπεινοφροσύνη* which is here, and in several other places of the New Testament, used to express this Christian virtue, signifies, in general, *a low apprehension*, or esteem : and from the scope of the places, though the word does not directly express so much, it must mean a low apprehension, or esteem, of ourselves. I think the apostle's exhortation, in Rom. xii. 3. is a natural paraphrase upon that in the text : "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." It stands directly opposed to pride and arrogance. Generally the word is used in scripture in a good sense, but twice in one chapter of this epistle in a bad one, Col. ii. 18, 23. for a base and unworthy subjection of mind ; which shews, that there is occasion to guard against mistakes in this matter, as well as to illustrate the excellent temper designed to be expressed by it.

It is farther to be observed, that the word leads us to consider it principally as a disposition of mind suitable to the scheme I am upon. There may be a seeming humiliation of outward expression and behaviour, which covers a very proud heart.

But Christians are called to put on *humbleness of mind*, and not *only* a humble demeanour; though humility in the heart will certainly produce the proper fruits in the behaviour.

The actings of this temper will be best discerned in a relative view, as we entertain a humble opinion of ourselves, compared either with God, or with our fellow-creatures. And the description of it, as well as the distinguishing of it from what is unworthy and unbecoming, may, I think, naturally fall under the following particulars.

1. A humble apprehension of our own knowledge: "Knowledge," St Paul observes, "puffeth up," is very apt to do so, 1 Cor. viii. 1. There is nothing which men are more ready to be proud of, and to think better of themselves, in, beyond desert. Many would sooner bear a reflection upon their moral character, than upon their understandings. One would think the serpent was early sensible that this was man's weak side, when he made use of that artifice to seduce our first parents, to assure them, that if they would but follow his counsel, "they should be as gods, knowing good and evil," Gen. iii. 5. And we may remember what an unhallowed flame this kindled in their inclination. And though they soon had sad evidence of the falsehood and folly of the suggestion; yet, notwithstanding so clear a confutation, there is no part of original sin which they seem to have conveyed more universally, and more strongly, to their posterity, than a proud surmise, that they have gained what the devil then promised. No branch of pride hath more need of a cure, though, indeed, none hath less to support it, than conceit of our own knowledge: "Vain man would be wise," and would be esteemed wise, "though he be born like the wild ass's colt," Job xi. 12. Now, the beginning of humility, and, indeed, of true wisdom, lies in moderating our conceit of our own sufficiency this way. And so it will include,

(1.) A sense of the natural imperfection of our faculties. There is indeed a dignity in our natures, in comparison of the lower creation, as God hath made us intelligent beings; but we should ever remember, that the faculties he has given us are but finite and limited at the best, and that many things are above them, which they cannot grasp, "things too wonderful for us, which we know not," Job xlii. 3. We find it so,

even in natural things; the wisest and greatest men will readily own themselves to be puzzled in several of these: and much more may it be expected to be so in things supernatural, especially in what belongs to the great God, his nature, and purposes, and the mysteries of his providence: "Canst thou, by searching, find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Job xi. 7.

Now, a just sense of this imperfection of our own capacities, will dispose us absolutely to credit God's testimony, as far as he has been pleased to give it, and we can discern his mind, whatever difficulties may attend that revelation, as to the manner of things discovered by it, beyond our capacity to solve. God's word alone will be a sufficient reason of faith to a humble mind. And, on the other hand, it would teach us not to pretend "to be wise above what is written" in matters of pure revelation, not to venture to form schemes of our own to account how such things are, where none are delivered in God's word; at least not to be positive and dogmatical in them: but in the deep things of God, to satisfy ourselves to understand so much of them as God hath revealed by his Spirit in his word; because such "things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," any farther than he has been pleased to make them known, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

(2.) An apprehension of our own infallibility, and liahleness to mistake, even where we may think we judge right. When we consider the power of prejudice, our readiness to make rash and hasty judgments, the plausible colours which may be put upon error, the indisposition of our minds in our fallen state for the admission of divine truths; when we consider these things, we have reason, in most judgments we form, to carry this cautionary thought along with us, that it is possible we may be mistaken. Who is there among us, who is not conscious to himself, that he hath actually been mistaken in many former judgments he hath made of things, even in some wherein he was very positive? And certainly this is a good reason why we should carry the thought of our fallibility about with us in our future time. Those, indeed, who have made the deepest searches, and the most impartial inquiries in every age, have discovered most mistakes in themselves; and, therefore, have justly entertained the most lively sense of the possibility of their being still mistaken in many things.

Now humility in this view, would teach us,

Not, indeed, upon that account to surrender ourselves to the absolute conduct and government of other men, who are fallible as well as we. To this the church of Rome would lead us, but on pretence of infallibility, to rest ourselves upon; though they neither are agreed among themselves where to place it, nor give us any proof from scripture of their own conduct, that such a glorious gift is lodged with them. If any others would lead us to such an implicit faith in their dictates, while they disdain infallibility, their claim is still more absurd. If our judgments be not so good, or our capacities not so enlarged, as our neighbours; yet we are obliged to make the best of them, and to judge for ourselves. Christ blames the body of the Jewish people for "not judging of themselves what was right," Luke xii. 57. We must answer for ourselves to God in the great day: and, therefore, it can neither be a laudable, nor a safe humility, to take our religion from the dictates of any fallible man, or number of men.

But a just apprehension of our liableness to mistake, should induce us, in all our searches after divine truth, to be very desirous of divine illumination and guidance; that God, by his Spirit of truth, would "shew us his ways, teach us his paths, and lead us in his truth," Psal. xxv. 4, 5. It should keep us ever open to farther light, willing to learn; we should never behave as if we had made our last understanding, but be willing on any proper occasion to review our sentiments, and to allow a cool and unprejudiced consideration of what may be said against them. And though we should not see reason to change our own thoughts upon such inquiries, but be more confirmed in them; yet we should be tender in our censures of others, whom we apprehend to be mistaken, as long as they give credible evidence in other respects, that they are conscientious.

(3.) A moderate apprehension of our own attainments in knowledge, when we compare them with the attainments of other men. Every good man indeed judgeth himself to be in the right in every particular sentiment which he maintains; for if he were convinced that it was an error, he would give it up: and it must necessarily follow from hence, that he cannot but think those of a contrary judgment to be mistaken as long as he judges himself in the right. Is he

therefore, to be puffed up above others ; No, by no means. But it is a becoming humility in most cases, even where we think ourselves in the right ; yet to believe it possible, however, that those who differ from us may be in the right ; and, therefore, to be willing to hear what they have to offer for their judgment. If we judge our knowledge superior to others with whom we compare ourselves ; yet we should still remember, that in this life “we” all “know but in part,” 1 Cor. xiii. 9. If some know less, others know more, than we : if we are better acquainted with some particulars, they may exceed us in other parts of knowledge : we may have made less improvement in proportion to our greater advantages, than they have made of fewer opportunities : and especially that, after all, we owe it more to the providence, or the grace, of God, than to ourselves, that we are distinguished from the most stupid and ignorant in the world. Humility, therefore, will keep us from despising any, and incline us to learn all we can, even from the meanest : for it will possess us with this truth, 1 Cor. viii. 2. “If any man think that he knoweth any thing,” and as the context shews the apostle to mean, because of that knowledge despiseth others, “he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.”

(4.) A persuasion of the small value of the most exalted knowledge, without a suitable practical influence. Knowledge, even of divine things, is of little valuable use, but in subservience to practice : “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them,” John xiii. 7. It will not render us more acceptable to God, but more inexcusable, and liable to “be beaten with many stripes,” if we rest in the most extensive knowledge, Luke xiii. 47, 48. A man comparatively of low attainments in knowledge, if his heart is right with God, is truly acceptable ; while a resolved sinner, though he understood all mysteries, will be eternally disowned by him : and no wonder, since exalted knowledge may leave a man of no better a temper than a devil.

2. Humble thoughts of our own goodness, is another branch of humbleness of mind. Not that we are required to be insensible of any thing that is truly good and valuable in us. But Christian humility includes,

A sense of the undeservingness of our own goodness at the hands of God, even if it were perfect. Whatever the pride of

nature may suggest, this is the lesson which Christ teaches his disciples, Luke xvii. 10. "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do," and no more. It could not properly deserve divine favour: how much less capable are we of merit by any thing we do in our lapsed state?

An apprehension of the great disparity there is between the goodness of God, and the goodness of any creature. From which our Saviour teaches us, to conclude, that "none is good save one, that is God," Luke xviii. 19. None is originally, absolutely, necessarily, and unchangeably good, but God only. Created goodness is derived from God; compared with his, it is incomplete, and capable of addition: and in its own nature it is changeable; as we find the goodness of angels, and of innocent man, was in fact.

An affecting conviction of our own sinfulness, and of the guilt contracted by it. Evangelical humility implies a sense of our lost and miserable state by the apostacy; so that we cannot lay claim of ourselves to the divine mercy, and yet can have no hope without mercy: that we are not only less than the least of his mercies, but have forfeited them all, and deserve ill, deserve wrath at his hands; and could not hope to stand, if he should mark iniquity: that, from a lively sense of this, we are heartily willing to be beholden to the gospel-way of relief, by the atonement and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and rely upon that alone for our pardon and acceptance with God, as conscious we have nothing in ourselves to rely upon. This is one principal part of gospel-humility, that we see ourselves "sick," and, therefore, to "need the physician;" and "sinners," who "need repentance," Luke v. 31, 32. That we humbly call to remembrance our particular offences, and penitently confess them before God, suing for his pardoning mercy in Christ, with the temper of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," Luke xviii. 13. And that, from a sense of our desert of worse, we cheerfully submit to his present corrections. We must proudly forget our own case, when we repine at his mild discipline.

A sense of the imperfection of our goodness at the best, in this world, is another branch of humility, to which the

gospel leads us. If we are recovered from the dominion of sin, yet, without insufferable pride, we shall see reason to confess, that we sin daily, and come short of the glory of God; that we “cannot understand” all “our errors,” and need to be “cleansed from our secret faults,” Psal. xix. 12. that no grace or holy disposition is complete in us, but ever needs improvement, and is subject to interruption in its exercise, and to great decays.

An acknowledgment, that we are principally indebted to God for whatever is good in us, is also to be comprehended; that we principally owe to him the beginning of any good work in us; and must expect from him the perfecting of it, Phil. i. 6. If we are better than others, we owe it to the grace of God, who hath “made us to differ,” 1 Cor. iv. 7. Either we were as bad as any, till we were “washed, and justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,” 1 Cor. vi. 11. or we might have been as bad, was it not for the restraints of his providence, or grace. In a word, the humble soul, whatever goodness he is conscious of, has this for the abiding and thankful sense of his soul, “By the grace of God, I am what I am,” 1 Cor. xv. 10.

And, lastly, a modest apprehension of our own goodness, compared with that of other men, must enter into the Christian temper. I say not, that Christian humility will oblige us to condemn ourselves as worse than all others; though, as we know ourselves best, it is ordinarily true, that we know more amiss in ourselves, as to the number, if not the kinds of sin, than we can do in any other particular person: but it will dispose us to esteem as well, at least, of other people’s goodness as of our own, as far as there are credible evidences of it: in which sense the apostle exhorts, Phil. ii. 3. “In lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves.” We should not admit uncharitable jealousies, and evil surmises, of them, where we have no just foundation, but think the best of them we can; and observe their excellencies, as well as their defects; the excellencies, in which they may shine above us, though we should exceed them in some others. Humility will incline us to make all charitable allowances for their failings and defects, when we are conscious of so many of our own; to censure them with gentleness, Rom. ii. 1. to

“restore them in the spirit of meekness,” Gal. vi. 1. and not vauntingly to say to any, “Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou,” Isa. lxxv. 5. A lowly mind will consider even the worst of men as such with whom we partake in the same nature, the same sinful nature; who are bought with the same price as we; who have an offer of the same spiritual and eternal blessings; and are at least capable, by the same grace which hath made us to differ from them, of the same everlasting happiness.

3. A humble sense of our dependence and wants.

And here, *first*, and principally, we are concerned to have a humble sense of our dependence on God, and our need of him; that, in the sphere of nature, we cannot subsist of ourselves, but “live, and move, and have our beings in him,” Acts xvii. 28. that “our times are in his hands,” the time of our continuance in life, the circumstances of our lot and condition, and all the particular events that can any way concern us. If “he takes away our breath, we die, and return to our dust,” and cannot recall it for a moment longer. Our understandings and reasonable powers continually depend on him. A slight touch of the brain may soon raze out all the traces of wisdom and knowledge, and change a wise man into a fool, or a mad man, unless God protect our powers in their regular course. If he will speak peace, who can speak trouble? and if he will exercise us with rebukes, we are never out of his reach, but he can easily “make a way to his anger.” We hold no comforts by any tenure but at pleasure. He has an unlimited, uncontrollable power over us, and an indisputable right to do with us as seems good in his sight. If our souls are under the power of these apprehensions, humility will teach us to live in daily dependance on him for every thing we need; to expect our supplies from his favor and blessing, more than from the kindness of our friends, or from the wisest measures we can take ourselves; to maintain a constant thankfulness for the bounties of Providence; not to be much lifted up for the sake of any of those loseable comforts; and to suppress every fruitless and impatient murmur at any of the events that befall us.

And, in the sphere of grace, we should have an equal sense of our constant need of his influences: that we need his mercy to pardon our sins, and help our infirmities every

day : that we can perform no religious exercise well, nor discharge the duty of any relation commendably, nor acquit ourselves honorably in any trial, nor make any advances in the divine life, nor be blessings in our generation, without the light and grace of his good Spirit : that we need his quickening influences to think a good thought, and to bring it to maturity ; his supplies of light and strength to overcome any temptation, to succeed in any conflict, or even to maintain the ground we have already gained. To live in the constant lively sense of this : and, therefore, not to trust in our own hearts, or our best endeavours, but in his grace and blessing, is one eminent part of “ walking humbly with our God.”

But then, *secondly*, a humble sense of our subordinate dependence upon our fellow-creatures, and the need we have of them, is not to be omitted in the description of humility. We should consider, that by the law of our creation, our condition is so ordered, that we cannot comfortably subsist independent of our fellow-creatures. Even those in the most advanced and easy circumstances of life, need the assistance of their inferiors ; yea, the plenty they enjoy could not enable them to be more at ease than the meanest, if they had not the benefit of their labour : “ The king himself is served by the field,” Eccl. v. 9. and is indebted to the industry and pains of those who cultivate it ; and the various conveniencies and accommodations of life, which some enjoy above others, could not be attained with all their wealth, if the diligence and skill of those much below them were wanting. Every link in the chain of society contributes to the good of the whole. In the body-politic, as well as in the natural body, and in the body of Christ, “ the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee ; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. But God hath tempered the body together, that there should be no schism in the body,” 1 Cor. xii. 21, 24. This should make all sensible of their dependent state, and of their interest in the society to which they belong. And beside this dependence of the highest on the lowest at all times, it should be remembered farther, that in the changeableness of human affairs, those who are now in the most prosperous estate, know not how soon they may need the kind offices, the good will, of those in the lowest condition of life. Instances of such an alteration continually occur ; and, therefore, should

abase the pride of those who may now be most exalted. This naturally leads to a *fourth* branch of humility.

4. A modest apprehension of our own rank and station.

And compared with the blessed God, we cannot think too low of ourselves. So "the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing," Isa. xl. 15. All the relations in which we stand to him, bespeak the profoundest submission due from us; as we are his creatures, his subjects preserved by him every moment, disposed of at his pleasure, and such as must appear at his bar. The very relation of children, which bespeaks the greatest friendship on his part and freedom on ours, yet obliges to humility before him. All lead us highly to magnify him, and to abase ourselves: so the very angels above behave. His condescension should be adored in every favor he shews, because he "humbleth himself to behold the things in heaven, or upon earth." And, therefore, the language of our hearts, upon the view of all his benefits, should be like David's, Psal. viii. 4. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" "Lord what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man that thou makest account of him?" Psal. cxliv. 3. Or with Job, chap. vii. 17. "What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him?" Humility will teach us neither to dispute the precepts, nor the providence of one who needs not our consent to give him a right to rule us, but has a natural authority over us, and is necessarily and infinitely exalted above us.

Revelation also teaches us to consider ourselves as beneath many other invisible beings, by the state of our creation: "As made lower than the angels," Psal. viii. 5. a rank of creatures behind them in the original capacity of our natures, while even the highest of them is infinitely beneath the blessed God.

And for our fellow-creatures of the human race, we should consider them all as of the same nature with us, and, therefore, near a-kin: "God having made, of one blood, all nations of men that dwell on the face of the earth," Acts xvii. 26. That any distinctions made by outward circumstances, are in the account of God, and in themselves, really but little

things : that if the distinctions made between us and others, in the figure made in the world, were ever so important, the providence of God has been much more concerned than we in making that difference ; and that all differences between men, besides those of true godliness, will entirely cease with the stroke of death.

In such a state of our case, humility will dispose to the cheerful performance of the duties of humanity to all men, esteeming them all as our brethren, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. We shall not put any mighty value upon ourselves, merely because we may enjoy a larger share than others of the riches, or honors, of the world ; but reckon the human nature, which they partake of along with us, to set us all more upon a level, than the differences of outward rank can exalt one in value above another ; and esteem goodness to enoble and recommend, more than mere greatness. But since the providence of God, our common ruler, is principally concerned in the differences made in men's outward rank, a humble mind will not think much of observing the duties to others, whether above, or below him, which the word of God hath annexed even to those providential differences between their and his own lot. If they are above him, he will cheerfully "render them their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor," Rev. xiii. 7. And, on the other hand, if he stand in a superior rank, will readily "condescend to men of low estate," chap. xii. 16. Be willing to do to them any good offices in his power, and to treat them with modesty and courteousness, without any thing of supercilious contempt.

These things may set in a competent light the nature of the Christian virtue of humility. It will be your wisdom to turn in upon yourselves, by way of reflection, and to inquire how the temper of your own spirits stands in this matter. We shall see in the next discourse the importance of the inquiry.

SERMON XXII.

CHRISTIAN HUMILITY.



COL. III. 12. [middle of the verse.]

Put on—humbleness of mind.

II. **I** AM to shew the special obligations, which lie upon us as Christians, to cultivate a humble temper.

1. Humility is a grace of the first rank and eminence, in Christianity. So that, while it seems to carry in the notion of it a lessening of ourselves, it exalts a man in the Christian character above any thing else. This appears several ways.

(1.) It is mentioned in scripture with peculiar marks of distinction and honour. Under the Old Testament, when God would sum up the things which are eminently good in his account, this is marked for one, Mic. vi. 8. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good : and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Pride is stigmatised as his peculiar abhorrence, but humility honoured with the fullest testimonies of his approbation. "Pride and arrogancy—do I hate," says Wisdom, Prov. viii. 13. "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly ; but the proud he knoweth afar off," Psal. cxxxviii. 6. When the Son of God condescended in our nature to instruct mankind, he sets humility in the front of his beatitudes, and at the head of his excellent sermon, Matt. v. 4. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," as if it were the first lesson in which he would have his disciples instructed. The importance of it, and the rank it holds in our religion, is still more emphatically described by him in another place,

Matt. xviii. 4. "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven," or in the gospel-church, the Christian dispensation ; as if he had said, He that excels in humility, is the greatest and the best Christian. It is a laudable ambition to aspire at this foremost rank of honour among the disciples of Christ.

(2.) The most distinguishing promises are made to it, such as mark it out for a temper eminently in the way of divine favour. The prayers of the humble are entitled to a peculiar regard : "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble," Psal. ix. 12. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble, thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." Psal. x. 17. They are encouraged to expect the gracious presence of God abiding with them : "Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isa. lvii. 15. So does the divine Majesty condescend, as if he would signify to us, that, in a sort, with the humble, he will shew himself humble. Such are assured of farther measures of grace. While God "resisteth the proud, he giveth grace to the humble," James iv. 6. 1 Pet. v. 5. The proud shall miss of the aim they have so much at heart, self-exaltation ; but the humble are in the way to the truest glory, while they seem to fly from it : "Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased ; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted," Matt. xxiii. 12. He shall be high in God's estimation ; God is like to put the greatest honour on such a one, by the use he makes of him ; and even men are commonly more disposed to respect him.

(3.) It is, in its own nature, a necessary introduction to the other graces and duties of Christianity. This is not a religion calculated for the proud, but the lowly.

Humility is necessary to faith. Without this we shall not be in a disposition to receive every doctrine of divine revelation, as an undoubted truth upon the sole testimony of God, and to silence our objections by that only authority. Pride and self-sufficiency was the principal reason why Christ crucified was of old "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness."

It is equally necessary to obedience. A proud unbroken heart sets up for itself, and at least practically says, "Who is Lord over me?" It must, therefore, be first humbled, before the language of it will be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6.

Without this frame we shall not value a Saviour, so far as to receive him, and make use of him, as he is offered in the gospel. We shall not be fond of being beholden to another for our pardon and acceptance with God, till we have an abasing sense of our own guilty and miserable condition: "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick," Luke v. 31. As long as "men think that they are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," they will pay but little regard to Christ's "counsel, to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they may be rich; and white raiment, that they may be clothed," Rev. iii. 17, 18. This was the foundation of the difference of behaviour between the Pharisee and the publican. The "Pharisee trusted in himself that he was righteous, and despised others," and so came to God with an arrogant self-sufficiency: but the publican had a lively sense of his own sinfulness and unworthiness, and therefore came in the most humble manner, and with the most humble request, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," Luke xviii. 9—13.

Without a humble spirit, we shall not prize the grace of the Holy Spirit, nor live in a constant dependence on his aids; unless we are sensible of the deceitfulness and badness of our own hearts, and of our own insufficiency for that which is good.

Without humility we cannot persevere in our adherence to Christ, but shall be ready to take offence when we are called out to trials and exercises. The proud mind, that is full of itself, is not easily content to bear reproaches, to be meanly thought of by others, to be exposed to the trial of cruel mockings, to sacrifice reputation, and honour, and ease, and every valuable outward comfort, to the pleasing of God, and the securing of a good conscience. But humility will go a great way to make all these things sit light; that will form our souls to a placid resignation to the will of God, as wiser and fitter to determine our lot than ourselves. We shall not brook

so ill the reflection of other people, when we have a just sense of much amiss in us. We shall not think much of any ill usage we meet with by the way, or think we have any reason to complain, when we are conscious that we deserve much worse, that we are less than the least of the mercies we enjoy; and especially that the heavenly reward, as it is unspeakably great, so is altogether undeserved. And humble apprehensions of ourselves, compared with other people, will go a great way toward silencing complaints, when we consider what others have undergone, who were much more wise, and holy, and useful, than we.

Without this grace, we shall be indisposed to receive that assistance from other men in the way to heaven, which we might obtain. Those who are wise in their own conceit, despise the admonitions of their pious parents and friends, are impatient of reproof, are above ministerial instructions; and, for want of a modest apprehension of their own defects, suppose themselves too good proficient in knowledge to learn, or in goodness to improve.

And, *lastly*, without this lowly disposition, we cannot possibly perform that compass of duty to our fellow-creatures, which makes so great a part of true Christianity. A haughty mind will ill comport with "becoming all things to all men, that we may gain some;" with "pleasing our neighbour for his good to edification;" with bearing all things, with the forgiveness of injuries, with condescension to the weaknesses and humours of other men, and to the meanest offices, when we can have hope of doing them good thereby.

So evident is it that humility is a grace of the first rank in Christianity.

2. It is a grace which adorns every other virtue, and recommends religion to every beholder. If all the characters mentioned in that rule of conduct, which the apostle lays down in Phil. iv. 8. can be said to meet in any one grace, it is in humility. "Whatsoever things are true," have a just foundation in the reason of things; "whatsoever things are honest," or honourable, "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Our light cannot more effectually shine before men, than by not affecting to have it shine; that is, by humility. Hence

St. Peter calls us to “be clothed with humility,” 1 Pet. v. 5. And St. Paul, in the text, to *put it on*, as an ornament. It casts a lustre even upon attainments comparatively low, while pride eclipses the beauty of great and distinguishing excellencies. It conciliates esteem from all, even from the proud themselves, who value that in others which they care not to practise in their own case. And, therefore, as we are concerned to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour,” and to take care that “our good be not evil spoken of,” it concerns us to live in the exercise of humility; without which all the train of Christian graces beside would suffer in their amiableness, and their use for the glory of God.

3. Humility is eminently recommended to us by the example of the Author and Finisher of our faith. There is hardly any one part of the amiable character of Christ, of which the gospel-history gives us more instances, than of his humbleness of mind; nor any in which he is more frequently and expressly proposed to us for a pattern. For instance:

(1.) His assuming the human nature was the highest instance of humiliation that ever was, or could be given; that “the word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God,” should consent to be made flesh. Though he was no lower a person than “God blessed for evermore,” yet he vouchsafed to descend from the habitation of his holiness and glory, to lay aside, in appearance, his divine character, and all that visible glory, which had been used to attend him in his manifestations under the Old Testament; and was content to take upon him the nature, the state, and the sinless infirmities, of mankind, to be “made of a woman, made under the law.” This was an instance of humility, of which none but himself was capable; which, indeed, is so far above our direct imitation in the letter of it, that the manner of it exceeds our comprehension. And yet it is a very proper argument to inculcate upon us humility in our measure, and with that view is proposed to us by the apostle, in Phil. ii. He had, among other things, exhorted to “lowliness of mind,” ver. 3.; and adds, ver. 5. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” How was such a temper shewn by Christ? It follows, “Who being in the form of God (being truly God, or having been used to appear under the Old Testament with a godlike glory, which he would not have been suffered to do,

had he not been true God,) thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation (emptied himself, or, as the same word is rendered, 1 Cor. ix. 15. *made void* his glorying, as to the outward manifestation of his glory,) and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. Though he was rich (with the riches of the Godhead,) yet for our sakes (out of his abundant grace to us,) he became poor," 2 Cor. viii. 9. But how should the same mind be in us, which was thus expressed by the eternal Son of God? We should never, then, think much of any instance of self-abasement suitable to our measure, to which we can be called for serving a valuable end; and be always sensible that it can never come up to this amazing condescension of the Son of God.

(2.) When he appeared in the world in the human nature, he affected not worldly glory and honour. He contented not himself merely to lay aside the glory of heaven, and his glorious appearance by the *Shechinah*, and to enter upon the condition of mortal man, which at best is but unspeakably low and mean, in comparison of the divine glory; but he appeared in the world with many additional circumstances of meanness. He descended from a family which was then very obscure, which had lost the ancient dignity and grandeur of his father David. Mary, his mother, was a woman in a low condition, capable of giving the Lord of glory but very poor entertainment at his coming into the world; and, therefore, at his birth, "she wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was then no room for them in the inn," Luke ii. 7. There were no servile attendants, no sumptuous preparations made for his nativity; but, as in his after life, so now, he had scarce "a place where to lay his head." The shepherds could never have divined, without the instruction of an angel, that here, and in this manner, was "born a Saviour, which was Christ the Lord," ver. 8—11. And the wise men of the east must be under a divine conduct, to find the King of the Jews in such a despicable place. While he was growing up, he lived with his reputed father, a carpenter, and thence was styled "the carpenter's son," Matt. xiii. 55. When he entered upon his public ministry, the generality of those whom he chose for his disciples and followers, were poor fishermen, or men of a like condition. He made no outward

figure, and mainly sojourned in places of small note. He had no wealth or secular honor, not so much as a settled habitation or certain provision. He contemned wordly honors, when they were offered him; as when the people would have taken him by force, and made him a king. He cheerfully underwent poverty, and contempt, and ill usage of various kinds, before he submitted to the last act of his humiliation, to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Now, surely, all this was to recommend humility to us, to teach his disciples not to seek high things for themselves, nor to value themselves much upon a large share of wordly enjoyments. If he had thought that outward shew and grandeur would have served those ends better, for which he came into the world, he could easily have secured to himself all the riches of the earth; and have appeared with a pomp far superior to the mistaken apprehensions of the Jews concerning their Messiah. But he rather chose to teach his disciples humility, and self-denial, and mortification, by his own voluntary entrance upon the stage of life, and passing over it to the end in a low condition.

(3.) As man, he was a pattern of great humility towards God. He "sought not his own glory but the glory of him that sent him," John viii. 50. chap. vii. 18. This was his professed aim through his course on earth, and conspicuous in the course of his words and actions. Hence, as man, he disclaimed any pretences to such knowledge as was above the capacity of his human nature, or his attainments at that time, Mark xiii. 32. And when one, who took him for no more than a man, seemed to ascribe goodness to him in too exalted a sense for a creature, he expostulates with him about it, and asserts the perfections of Godhead to be so peculiar, that even those, wherein creatures may bear the divine image, do yet belong to God in such a manner, as they can belong to none else: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God," Matt. xix. 17. He ascribed the glory of his works to his Father. He was entirely obedient to his commands, for what he should say and do, in the minutest circumstances and for the hardest services. He cheerfully submitted to his will in the severest sufferings, and paid him all religious homage in acts of worship. The remarkable instances of this have been produced in another discourse, when he was represented as an example of godliness.

4.) He was a pattern of the greatest humility to mankind.

He was ready to condescend to the meanest, in order to their good. Most of the miracles he performed, were wrought upon those who were of a low condition. When a man of figure besought him to heal his servant, he was as ready to do that kind office for him, as if it had been the master himself, Matt. viii. 6, &c. He stood still in the way to regard the cry of a poor beggar, as much as if he had been a man of the greatest consideration, when the multitude would fain have silenced him, Mark x. 46, &c.; and esteemed it as his meat and drink to maintain a conversation with the poor woman of Samaria, in order to her soul's advantage, though his "disciples marvelled that he talked with her," John iv. 27. He overlooked not even little children; but called his followers to learn good instructions from them, and to be very tender of them, Matt. xviii. 1—10. In the next chapter, we find him taking them up in his arms, and blessing them; and when his disciples rebuked those who brought them to Christ, he would have them suffered to come to him, chap. xix. 13, 14.

He was willing to stoop to the meanest offices for the meanest persons. He freely touched a poor man who was overspread with a leprosy, in order to his cure; though it was naturally ungrateful, and legally unclean, Mark i. 41.; and particularly recommends the great condescension to his disciples, by using an emblematic action for that purpose, of washing their feet, John xiii. 5, &c. Thus he made it evident in his whole conduct, that "he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," Matt. xx. 28. And yet, which was another instance of humility,

He was not above receiving and acknowledging the respect shewn him by the meanest. He accepted the charitable contributions of some good women who "ministered unto him of their substance," Luke viii. 3. He takes notice of the honest and well-meant hosannahs paid him by children, Matt. xxi. 15. And the more hearty mark of respect shewn him by the woman who poured ointment on his head, as he sat at meat, he has put an everlasting mark of honor upon, Matt. xxvi. 13.

Now, how forcible an engagement should this be to all who profess a relation to him, to imitate him in a virtue, which

made so great a part of the character of their Master? to “learn of him, who was lowly in heart,” Matt. ix. 29.

(4.) Humility is a grace which will go along with us to heaven. The only inhabitants of that world, who were ever lifted up with pride, have been long ago cast down from thence to hell. The “seraphims cover their feet” in presence of the divine Majesty, magnify him with incessant adorations, and abase themselves continually before him, Isa. vi. 2, 3. The representations given us of the glorious company above in the New Testament, bespeak the same lowliness of mind before God. “The four-and-twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne,” Rev. iv. 10. And to the same purpose, chap. v. 14. And, as a farther description of the humility of their adoration, they are said to “fall before the throne on their faces,” chap. vii. 11. and chap. xi. 16. God in that world is all in all; and every blessed spirit there, up to the most exalted celestial mind, maintains the sense of infinite distance, in the midst of the most familiar and satisfying approaches; and receive the bounties of the great Creator, crying, Grace, grace. We have a specimen of the humble temper attending saints to the judgment-day, in the representation of it given by our Saviour, Matt. xxv.; when the Judge will take notice of their acts of charity, and put the most kind and gracious construction upon them that can be, as done to himself in his members; they are represented as having so low an opinion of their goodness, that they can hardly think themselves to deserve the commendation. “Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee?” &c. While the sinner is described as carrying his fond conceit to the bar, and hardly convinced of the neglects charged upon him by his Judge: “When saw we thee an hungred,” &c. “and did not minister unto thee?” We may say, indeed, in commendation of humility, beyond many other graces, that it is greater and more excellent than they; for the same reason that love is preferred by the apostle to “faith and hope;” because “it never faileth,” 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 13.

Inference 1. Those who are destitute of this grace, whatever profession they have made of Christianity, have in truth the rudiments of it yet to learn. If they have been

soaring upward to heaven itself in the sublimest speculations ; if they have built up their hopes to the greatest height upon other grounds, without laying this at the foundation ; they must be content to come down again to learn this lesson, which enters into the elements of Christ's religion. A proud Christian is a contradictory character ; as much as it would be to say, a wicked saint. The whole gospel, in its precepts, its great example, its glorious prospects, tends to humble the pride of man : and, therefore, whoever will come after Christ, must, in this respect, deny himself.

2. We should look principally to the temper of our spirits, to judge of our humility. We may have the character of humble people with men from a modest outside, a negligence of garb, a condescending carriage, lowly speeches ; while the God that searches the heart, may see pride reigning there under these fair disguises ; and that all such plausible appearances are only intended to gratify and support a haughty and overbearing disposition. Humbleness of mind makes the Christian temper ; and the poor in spirit are the heirs of the promise.

3. No single branch of goodness deserves more of our attention, in order to judge of the improving or declining state of our souls, than this of humility. If we grow in knowledge, and are puffed up along with it, we lose more in goodness than we gain in profitable furniture. If we improve in other excellencies, but outstrip that improvement in the conceit we have of ourselves, we only make those things nothing in the sight of God, which would otherwise be valuable. This is a "dead fly, that will spoil the whole box of ointment." Whether we advance in right knowledge of God or ourselves, it cannot fail to make us sensible of our defects, and humble in the sense of them. A man that improves in learning, sees more defects in his attainments when he hath made a good progress, than he did at setting out : he discerns a larger field of knowledge before him, after all his advances, than he had any notion of, when he first turned his thoughts that way. So it is with a lively Christian ; he sees so much before him, that

he “forgets the things that are behind, and reaches forth unto those that are before, still pressing towards the mark,” Phil. iii. 13, 14. This was Paul’s character, when he was most fixedly set in heaven’s way ; and it will be the character of any Christian, when he is ripening fastest for the heavenly harvest.

SERMON XXIII.

PURITY.



PSAL. LI. 10. [the former part.]

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

ONE principal concern we have about ourselves, after the determination of the preference due to our souls above our bodies, is to regulate the appetites and passions we have by occasion of the body, conformable to the interests of the soul, and the precepts of God concerning them. *A clean heart*, which is here prayed for, is one of the first things of that kind, which should come into our consideration.

This is sometimes taken in so extensive a sense, as to signify holiness in general, in opposition to all sin; which is often, in the scripture style, represented as the defilement of the soul. In other places it is to be understood in a more confined sense, for the temper directly opposed to criminal sensualities, or the ascendant of irregular appetites; to that which eminently bears the name of “filthiness of the flesh,” 2 Cor. vii. 1. and especially of the seventh commandment. Thus we are to understand the *clean heart* in the text.

The psalmist had fallen into the horrible sin of adultery, and being awakened to repentance upon the message brought him by Nathan the prophet, he composed this psalm; wherein, besides very suitable abasing confessions of his sins, he earnestly solicits for pardoning mercy, to remove his guilt; for sanctifying grace, to take away the stain itself, with which such heinous offences had polluted his soul; and for a recovery

of the comfortable sense of both in his own conscience. The passage now proposed to consideration, is among the expressions wherein he prays for sanctification. He had not been an utter stranger to this blessing till now; but eminent falls introduce such a general and surprising disorder into the soul, that a man has in a sort his work in religion to begin anew. Therefore Peter's recovery, after his scandalous denial of his Master, is spoken of as if it were a second conversion: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," Luke xxii. 32. So the heinous sin of David had poisoned his soul afresh with impure thoughts and irregular inclinations in such a manner, that he saw occasion to apply again for God's creating power; to recover him to a clean heart, as if he had never had one.

In considering this part of a good spirit, I would, *first*, shew what is included in purity or cleanness of heart, as it stands opposed to fleshly lusts and sensual practices. *Secondly*, point at some of the obligations we are under, to seek after and cultivate such a temper of soul.

I. I would inquire into the meaning of *a clean heart*, or the proper ingredients and expressions of such a temper of soul.

And you cannot but discern, that something more is intended by it than a bare abstinence from the outward and gross acts of criminal sensuality. Would to God that none of these shewed their face in a Christian land! That there was no reason to lament many open instances of impurity and lewdness which hardly shun the light! If the visible reformation of manners were advanced, much dishonor and provocation to the blessed God, and grief to the hearts of good men, would be prevented, and the contagion of vice would not spread as it does. But though the works of the flesh are undeniable evidences of an impure heart, yet other restraints may prevent outward enormities, where the heart is not truly purified. Men may be "like whited sepulchres, which appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness," Matt. xxiii. 27.

That which the psalmist had in his desire, and which every Christian should have in his, is, that the matter may be carried much farther into the temper of the soul; that there may

be not only clean hands but a pure heart also, which are both united in the character of a citizen of Zion, Psal. xxiv. 4. And such a purified heart will import such things as these.

1. A fixed habitual abhorrence of all forbidden indulgences of the flesh. Since human nature is corrupted, and bodily appetite has lost the bridle of reason and religion, the affections are become impetuous towards sensual gratifications; the hearts of sinners, or their love and liking, are on that side. Or, if the remains of natural conscience are so strong, and the bias of fear and of shame, in reference to other people, so far prevail as to restrain from open pollutions; yet they content themselves with this, though all the while a rooted aversion to all fleshly lusts, upon the principles of religion and duty, is wanting. Here is the turning discriminating point in God's account, between a clean and an impure heart. A man, whose heart is purified, looks upon sensualities as hateful to God, as "warring against his soul;" and, therefore, has a fixed detestation of them, as enemies to God and to his own best interests. His "fear of God," and his "love to him," leads him thus to hate evil, Prov. viii. 13. Psal. xvii. 10. This fixed bent of heart against impurity, is that which principally constitutes a clean heart; and from this all the other fruits and expressions of such a temper will proceed.

2. All past impurities, either of heart or life, will be reflected on with shame and sorrow, where there is a clean heart. It is true, that which hath been done cannot be recalled, so as that it should cease to be fact; but when any sin is recalled to remembrance with unfeigned repentance, the heart is, in a gospel-sense, purified from the stain of that sin.

There are too many "who glory in their shame," Phil. iii. 19. They not only give a loose to their vicious inclinations, but think of them with pleasure afterwards; pride themselves in them, and speak of them with a relish. They are "not ashamed, when they have committed abominations; neither can they blush." Jer. vi. 15. You may too often meet with such old offenders, as when they are unable, by reason of the decays of age any longer to practise the excesses of their youthful days; yet, instead of penitential tears, and deep humiliation for their former crimes, call them to remembrance

with an impudent pleasure, boast of them as mighty achievements, and seem sorry for nothing so much as that they can practise them no longer : a spectacle that strikes every serious mind with horror ! God alludes to them in his charge against Israel, Ezek. xxiii. 19. “ She multiplies her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt.” God is there censuring the people of Israel for their spiritual whoredom or idolatry ; that they provoked God afresh, by looking back with delight upon the idolatries practised by their ancestors in the early days of their state : but this expressed by an allusion to persons acting over again their youthful sins with pleasure upon the stage of their imagination, and so renewing their offence in God’s account. Others think of their former offences with a cold indifference ; or, if there be any remorse, it is rather for the prejudice which they may have done to their health, or estate, or reputation, than from a sense of their sin against God. The sin of such people remains, both in the book of God to their condemnation, and in the dominion of it in their own souls.

But it is the mark of a clean heart to remember any past impurities with godly sorrow, and a deep contrition of soul. He “ acknowledgeth his transgression, and his sin is ever before him,” Psal. li. 3. Every review opens the springs of penitential grief ; and while he feels some kindly softenings, yet, like the psalmist in the text, he is solicitous for further cleansing, for a heart still more “ purged from his old sins.” Thus the frame of Ephraim is described, Jer. xxxi. 19. “ I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” The hopes of pardoning mercy will not extinguish, but excite genuine repentance, according to God’s design in the discovery of it, Ezek. xvi. 63. “ That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee.” Every new benefit conferred by a reconciled God, will heighten the displeasure of a clean heart at past offences, Ezek. xx. 42, 43. “ I will bring you into the land of Israel,” out of your captivity in Babylon, and there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled ; and you shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils which ye have committed.”

This is a happy indication of the temper prayed for in the text.

3. A clean heart imports, that the heart is actually freed, in a good measure from impure thoughts and irregular desires; or, at least, that they are not entertained with pleasure and delight.

The refining and regulating of the fancy and imagination, is a considerable branch of the purification of the heart; that vicious thoughts come not so often and so easily upon the stage at every turn, as they are apt to do in a mind devoted to sensuality. St Peter speaks of some, 2 Pet. ii. 14. who "have eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin." And the old world was so abominably corrupt, particularly in sensualities, as the context shews, that we read of them, that "every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. Many have reason and every sober thought drowned, either in actual fleshly indulgences, or in a succession of vile imaginations, in the intervals between gross acts of sin. Every slight occasion serves to revive impure images; and if they set themselves to think, it is to "make provision for the flesh, that they may fulfil the lusts thereof." Their heart answers the description of Babylon, in Rev. xviii. 2.; it is "the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hateful bird." A clean heart is a heart discharged from such habitual pollutions; wherein better thoughts, such as are holy and heavenly, have place, and are entertained with true delight, as chosen and welcome guests.

I say not, that no impure or irregular thoughts do occasionally come into the minds of such who have attained to an evangelical purity. Such evil imaginations may be injected and darted by Satan, into the mind of the most virtuous and good person in the world; or such events may occur in the course of things, as can hardly fail to make a sudden impression upon the fancy. But if immediate care be taken to guard against the ill tendency of such impressions, as soon as they are discerned; if irregular inclinations, which arise from foreign influence, are disallowed, and opposed as soon as born; God will not be strict to mark iniquity: nor ought persons severely to condemn themselves for these, because they are so far from discovering the dominion of impurity,

that they are hardly voluntary. It is not unusual for melancholy people to torment themselves exceedingly with such thoughts ; in like manner as they are afflicted with some blasphemous thoughts, which they find at times started in their minds. Whereas, in both cases, the very horror and detestation with which such thoughts are entertained, might, if they could consider things justly, take off their black apprehensions of themselves because of them. For whether they are from the devil, or the product of bodily distemper, or from whatever source they arise, as long as they are rejected with abhorrence, they are more their affliction than their sin ; or, if they are sinful, will be imputed to the devil rather than to them. It is no more than a temptation, to have them come into their minds : if they resist the temptation, summon up their own endeavours, and call in divine help to master it ; if the language of the heart be, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence to me ;" then, instead of incurring guilt in the sight of God by such vanquished temptations, they will be ranked by him among those who overcome.

But though the bare presence of such thoughts occasionally in the mind, will not argue an impure heart, as long as we are rather passive than active in them ; yet, if once we give our consent, as far as we take any pleasure and delight in them, or even if we can bear them with indifference, we immediately become transgressors. Then "the thought of foolishness is sin," Prov. xxiv. 9. though it should proceed no farther than the heart. When men set themselves to ruminate upon any impure ideas that are offered to the fancy, till their affections are engaged, and unhallowed flames are kindled in their breasts ; then they are defiled by them in God's account, whether they ever break out into act, or not. When out of the heart itself, disposed to them, and siding with them, "proceed evil thoughts," suppose of "murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies ;" such evil thoughts, when they have gained the heart, and so proceed from itself, "defile the man," Matt. xv. 19, 20.

On the contrary, he who is of a clean heart "hates vain thoughts," Psal. cxix. 113. It is his desire, as much as possible, to guard against their entrance ; but if they enter, he will not suffer them quietly to "lodge within him," Jer.

iv. 14. He cannot be at rest till they are dispossessed and gone.

4. A clean heart discovers itself by a cautious fear of the least degrees of impurity; while obstinate sinners make no account even of open enormities, and others think all well if they do but abstain from them: a heart formed to real purity goes much deeper. He is careful to "abstain from the appearance of evil," 1 Thess. v. 22. He dares not allow himself to go to the utmost bounds of things lawful, because he reckons himself to be then upon a precipice. If he feel any of the poison working within, it gives him a sensible concern, though no human eye can discern it.

5. A clean heart necessarily implies a careful and habitual guard, against every thing which tends to pollute the mind. The pretence of a good heart in any kind is vain, unless it be "kept with all diligence," Prov. iv. 23.

Where there is, therefore, a bent of heart to purity, it will engage a man to maintain a guard over his senses, which provide furniture for the imagination, and are the conveyances of external temptation. The case of David, to which this psalm refers, is a melancholy instance upon record, how dangerous it is to allow the senses an unrestrained liberty; no man, indeed, can fail to be sensible of this. Upon this account Solomon leaves the caution in relation to an ill woman, Prov. vi. 25. "Lust not after her beauty in thy heart, neither let her take thee with her eye-lids." And our Lord and Master forbids men to "look upon a woman to lust after her," Matt. v. 28.; agreeable to the resolution which holy Job had made long before for the preservation of his own purity, Job xxx. 1. For the same reason, lascivious pictures and representations of any kind should be avoided, by all who would preserve their virtue inviolate, and the reading of all impure and licentious books. Nor can I see how it consists with a just concern to keep the mind unspotted, to resort to plays and masquerades, which I believe have been too successful corrupters of the present age. Most of the present plays, in their structure and scope, and thought, are wickedly adapted to vitiate the fancy, and recommend a dissolution of manners; and by the beauty of action, the arts used to strike the passions, and the loose morals of the generality of those who represent them, and of the company that attend upon them, they have such a tendency to instil vice,

that it is hardly possible for persons to be often present at them, without weakening the guards of virtue; and great numbers of young people, who were before untainted, have been introduced this way into the school of vice, and soon have made a dismal proficiency.

The practice of masquerades, which were of late revived among us, but which, thanks be to God, have been restrained by public authority, was still more dangerous than the other. In these, unnatural disguises, and an apprehension of the concealment of character, on the one hand, expose to such attacks upon virtue, as would scarce otherwise be attempted; and, on the other hand, abate those restraints of modesty and decorum, which Providence often makes use of to preserve people from notorious impurities, who have not the best principle of the fear and love of God for their security. Would to God that all who have taken Christ for their Master, would maintain such a sense of the infirmity of human nature, as to keep at the remotest distance from the known incentives to sensuality; and that they would take care, also, that young people under their charge may be fortified, by all the prudential methods they can use, against frequenting those nurseries of vice.

All loose and vicious company will be avoided as much as may be, by those who have a clean heart; such company as, by their practice and converse, evidently shew the impurity of their own hearts. This we are cautioned against, 1 Cor. v. 11.; and the reason is evident, "Evil communication corrupts good manners." This danger seems to be intimated in the manner of expression used in Jude, 23. "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." Be not wanting in your best endeavours for the recovery even of the profligate and accustomed sinners, as you have opportunity for it; but then let your attempts to reform them be attended with fear, lest you should receive any infection from them; and, therefore, the apostle adds, "hating even the garment spotted with the flesh." Set about their reformation with a lively apprehension of the danger of such society, that it is hard even to touch pitch and not be defiled; and, therefore, be sure that you keep up a fixed abhorrence of their sin, while you apply yourselves to reclaim them.

Intemperance will be carefully avoided by those, who have an earnest concern to maintain their purity; not only because

of the sinfulness of it in itself, but because it lays a man open to many other sins, and particularly to impurities. Therefore the apostle joins a caution against both of these together : Rom. xiii. 13. "Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, nor in chambering and wantonness." Not only as each of these, separately considered, is opposite to a Christian conversation, but also as rioting and drunkenness is so often the introduction to chambering and wantonness.

And, to advance a step farther, a heart formed to the sincere love of purity, will not think much to restrain himself in some things, which may be lawful in themselves, and safe to many others, if he find, by experience, that they ordinarily prove occasions of sin to him. Though he will not censure others, where the law of God does not censure them, yet he will make it an ordinary rule to himself to forbear, as far as he can, that which seldom fails to be a temptation to him.

II. I proceed to represent the obligations that lie upon us to seek after such a purity of heart.

1. A ruling inclination to sensuality is directly contrary to the purity and holiness of the divine nature : "God is a Spirit :" he has made us, indeed, to consist of flesh and spirit ; but if we give an unbridled loose to fleshly appetite, instead of keeping the body under the dominion of the higher faculties, we shall abandon all that wherein we are capable of bearing the image of God, and "become like the beasts that perish." And this cannot be done by us without the guilt of debasing our natures, when God has made us capable of nobler pursuits and better relishes. It is observable, that in three several places where sin is spoken of as against God, reference is had to the sin of uncleanness. So it was in Joseph's case, when he overcame the temptation with the thought, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. David's confession in this psalm had the same special evil in view, verse 4. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." And the prodigal son is represented to have wasted his substance with riotous living, Luke xv. 13. ; and in another verse, to have "devoured his living with harlots," ver. 30. And, without doubt, he had

that as much as any other sin in his eye, when he resolved to return to his father with this penitent acknowledgment, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," ver. 18, 19. Thus the scripture leads us to consider this sin as eminently against God. How much are we obliged, therefore, to cultivate purity! and especially purity of heart, since properly we can bear the image of God only in our spirits.

2. Sensuality has a special tendency to extinguish the light of reason, and to unfit for any thing spiritual and sacred: "Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart," Hos. iv. 11. Such criminal indulgences are both the effects of great blindness, and the means of increasing it, Eph. iv. 18, 19. No sort of sin commonly hardens the heart to a greater degree; of which David was a melancholy instance: he seems not to have been recovered to a penitent sense of his fall, till he received a message from God by Nathan the prophet, and that was not till after the birth of the child. Nothing makes the mind more averse to sacred exercises, or indisposes it more for the serious and spiritual performance of them. Hence the deluded youth, who gives himself up to sensualities, is described, when he comes to mourn at last, as reviewing this among other pernicious effects of his evil practices, Prov. v. 14. "I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly." His vices had so leavened his mind, that his thoughts were full of them, even when he appeared in worshipping assemblies.

3. Sensuality is most contrary to the design and engagements of Christianity. Our blessed Lord and Master inculcated the strictest purity upon all his disciples; not only an abstinence from the gross outward acts of uncleanness, but from polluting thoughts and desires. To this purpose he vindicates the spiritual intention of the seventh commandment, in Matt. v. 27—30.; and in his practice, kept at the remotest distance from every thing that had an impure aspect. His intention in giving himself for us is declared to be, "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people," Tit. ii. 14. We are to consider "our old man as crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin," Rom. vi. 6. "Sin should not, therefore, reign in our mortal body, that we should obey it

in the lusts thereof," ver. 19. that is, a sinful inclination of mind to the indulgence of bodily lusts, should not be suffered to prevail in us. So, when the apostle puts the Thessalonians in mind what commandments he and his fellow-servants in the gospel had "given them by the Lord Jesus," that is, by his authority, and under the direction of his Spirit, he presses this as a matter of special obligation on Christians, 1 Thess. iv. 2—3. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God." When Christ was ascended into heaven, he puts a most particular mark of his abhorrence upon the deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitans, and, at the same time, of his approbation on those Christians who abhorred them, Rev. ii. 6—15. Those Nicolaitans were a set of vile and filthy heretics at the beginning of Christianity, who taught doctrines of the utmost licentiousness, while they disgraced the Christian name by wearing it; and their practices were as lewd as their principles. The holy Jesus, by a message from heaven, takes care to stigmatise these filthy dreamers, and to animate his disciples to a rooted hatred of every impure principle and practice.

The apostle, in several places, urges this purity upon Christians from another argument, their participation of the Holy Spirit of God: "They are the temple of God, by the Spirit of God dwelling in them;" and therefore they might be assured, that if any man "defile the temple of God, him will God destroy," 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. And, elsewhere, that "they are the members of Christ, and the temples of the Holy Ghost: shall I then (says he) take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid," chap. vi. 15—19. Whatever others do, a Christian, who professes to be united to Christ by his Holy Spirit, should abhor the thought of foolishness.

4. The blessed hope with which Christianity inspires us, lays us under a forcible engagement to present purity.

Those of the contrary temper are absolutely excluded, by the express declarations of the gospel, from the kingdom of God. "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

&c. shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," Heb. xiii. 4. And such are reckoned up among those who "shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone," Rev. xxi. 8. and who are without the heavenly Jerusalem, chap. xxii. 14, 15. On the contrary, the promise of the future blessedness is most plainly made to the pure in heart: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Matt. v. 8. And this very representation of the heavenly felicity, that it principally consists in the sight and fruition of a holy God, shews that his constitution, limiting that happiness to the pure in heart, is founded in the nature and reason of things. We cannot relish it, or be made happy by it, any more than be allowed to share in it, without a heart refined from the dregs of sensuality. Saints themselves have but an imperfect relish for it here, since they are not divested of all remains of sensual inclinations; but because they will be made perfectly righteous in the future state, and raised to their full resemblance of God in spirituality; therefore, the enjoyment of him then will give them full satisfaction. So the psalmist joins these circumstances together in his prospect of the other life: "As for me, I will (or shall) behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness," Psal. xvii. 15. In the same manner St John speaks of our future condition: "We know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. But observe how thereupon he infers the necessity of present aspirings and endeavours after a resemblance of divine purity, in all the expectants of heaven, ver. 3. "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure," that is, every man who makes heaven his hope and real desire in this justest view of it, as a state of likeness to God, and of the nearest enjoyment of him, cannot fail to have a prevailing and a growing relish for purity now.

Let us all, then, by way of application, seriously inquire, what the temper of our own souls is in reference to the subject we are upon. The vast moment and importance of it appears from what has been last offered. And, upon the inquiry, we shall either see reason to judge that an impure spirit prevails in us, or to hope that our hearts are in a good measure made clean: and even

then, we shall hardly fail to discern great defects in our purification, in a higher or lower degree.

If you see reason but to fear that an impure spirit hath the dominion, seriously consider what a holy God must judge of you ; he can look upon you no otherwise than as altogether alienated from him, and “from the life of God,” of a temper most opposite to his nature and will. And can you think, that “for these things he will not bring you into judgment?” That he will not call his reasonable creature to a severe account, for so base a prostitution of his noble powers? Especially a reasonable creature under the gospel, which contains the strongest engagements, and proposes the most effectual assistances, for recovering impure souls. Can you entertain the least hope of standing in the judgment, when you are to be judged by this gospel? And yet, how far soever your impurities have proceeded, if you are awakened to a serious conviction of your sin and danger, despair not either of a cure or of a pardon, if you take the course prescribed in the gospel. It is left upon record, for encouragement to the chief of sinners, when they are awakened, that the apostle, after he had reckoned up some of the grossest sensualities, and declared that they would certainly exclude from the kingdom of God, yet plainly signifies, that he only means this without repentance ; and immediately gives instances of the effectual recovery even of such offenders : “Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,” 1 Cor. vi. 11. Here is a sufficient provision for all the washing that even you need ; for your sanctification by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and for your justification and pardon through the blood of Christ. Here were souls sunk into the lowest impurity, but effectually relieved in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. And these will be as effectual for your relief. But what course must be taken, in order to your being washed by these means? Apply to God by earnest prayer. The text directs you ; go to God and say, *Create in me a clean heart, O God.* Go with the humble serious cry of the publican, “God be merciful unto me a sinner,” Luke xviii. 13. Go with the prodigal son, acknowledge your guilt and unworthiness, and say, “Make me as one of thy hired servants,” Luke xv. 18, 19. And, in dependence on

the grace which God has so many ways encouraged you to ask, set yourselves to break off your sins by repentance: "Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light; awake from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. v. 14.

If you can justly hope that purification is begun in heart and life, adore divine grace which has made you to differ, and has plucked you as brands out of the burning. If, by God's blessing upon a pious education, you have grown to a sincere abhorrence of impurity, without any remarkable sallies of youth by the way, you have particular reason to be thankful for this, as it has prevented many miseries to soul and body in this life, which give no small uneasiness to some other converts. If you are recovered from a sensual course, yet the happy change of your circumstances should greatly affect you, while you see so many around you proceed in the way to destruction to their lives end. Aspire after greater and higher measures of purity, still endeavouring farther to "cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit." And remember that the hopes you have of your present state should not make you secure, but "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." The case in the text, of a man so eminently good before, is a standing admonition against security.

If you have fallen into any sensualities since you came to the knowledge of the truth, David's example in this psalm will give you proper directions of conduct. There must be particular and solemn repentance, answerable to the aggravating circumstances which attend such a sin in you. You should not be easy, till at least you recover the ground you have lost, both in your holiness and your comfort. And if you have "caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," you have all the reason in the world to submit, as David did, to any penal rebukes of God for it, in any way which he takes to vindicate his own honour, and to do all you can for the same purpose, by a repentance as public as your offences.

And as the best have reason to own the imperfection of their purity in the present state, though they are kept from the greater transgressions, so they have reason to walk humbly with God, daily to review and make up their accounts with him, to be always upon their guard against greater of-

fences, and while they dwell in the body, to pursue the work of mortifying the deeds of it.

To close all, the young have peculiar reason to reckon this subject to concern them. The evils I am cautioning against, are called by way of eminency *youthful lusts*. That age of life is more than any other addicted to impurities, and therefore the guard should be answerable. On the other hand, it may truly be said to be a crime, more aggravated in those advanced in years, if they should retain the same vicious turn of mind; and it is possible that they may have a most impure heart, even when they have outlived the serviceableness of their bodies to the dictates of a carnal mind. Young and old are concerned in this subject, and should often make this prayer.

SERMON XXIV.

TEMPERANCE.



LUKE XXI. 34.

Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

IN these words, it may be proper to observe,
1. The person who spoke them ; Christ himself, our Lord and Master, the author and finisher of our faith ; which at first view claims a peculiar regard to them from all who wear his name. They contain one of his solemn commands, which he esteemed of great importance to be inculcated ; and, therefore, I hope that no Christian will think himself unconcerned in them, or that they are an unfit subject of gospel-preaching.

2. The persons to whom they are peculiarly directed. Christ spoke them to his own disciples. Many of his discourses were delivered to them and the multitude promiscuously. But what we have in this chapter, was the subject of a conference between him and his professed disciples alone. St Luke, indeed, only observes of the rise of this discourse, ver. 5. that *some*, without any mark of distinction, “ spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones,” &c. ; and that upon Christ’s foretelling the utter desolation of it, “ they (the same persons, whoever they were,) asked him when these things should be ?” &c. ver. 7. But Matthew, in his parallel account, informs us, Matt. xxiv. 1. that they were

his disciples; and ver. 3. that "his disciples came unto him privately," and put their questions to him. St Mark is yet more particular in their names, that "Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, asked him (those things) privately," Mark xiii. 2. I observe this to shew, that as such an admonition concerns all, so it is not unsuitable to Christ's professed disciples. If Christ saw fit to leave such a caution with his apostles, then, if we will take his judgment, the best of men should think themselves concerned, even in warnings against sensuality. Thus the apostle to the Colossians, after he had expressed his charitable hope that they "were risen with Christ," Col. iii. 1. yet directs an exhortation to the same persons, not merely to guard against sins of infirmity, but to "mortify their members which are upon earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and covetousness," ver. 5.

3. The exhortation contained in the words to a care and concern about ourselves: *Take heed to yourselves*. Such an exhortation is laid down in the New Testament upon several occasions. It imports, in general, the peculiar care we are obliged to take of ourselves, more than of any beside. It intimates, also, the matter introduced with so solemn a caution to be of great importance; and, at the same time, our proneness to behave ill in such a matter, without care and diligence. And all this we are to understand by it here.

4. The general matter, with reference to which we are directed to exercise our care for ourselves: *Lest your hearts be overcharged*. Our Saviour teaches us to be mainly careful of our principal part, our souls; and, particularly, that they be not rendered unfit for their proper and most excellent acts, by too great an ascendant of the body and its concerns over them. The word which we render *overcharged*, βαρυδῶσον, signifies to be *pressed down*; as a man is held down by more weight upon him than he can wield, or as a ship, by being overloaded, is made unfit to sail. So it ought to be our concern, that our souls, which are capable of tending upwards, and were designed to do so, might not be held grovelling below by too much of earthy weight upon them; that they should not be hindered from acting worthy of their spiritual and excellent nature, by too much indulgence of the

body. One of our principal cares, while we dwell in body, should be, that our minds may be preserved free for their own worthy employments.

5. The instances mentioned, whereby our minds are eminently in danger of being overcharged. And they are of two sorts.

One is, the inordinate gratifications of the appetite by intemperance: *Lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*; that is, by the immoderate use either of meats or drinks; making more free with either, than is consistent with the proper place of the body; namely, to be under the direction and command of the soul.

The other is, immoderate cares about the concerns of *this life*. The mind may be as much indisposed and unfitted for regular acting, and for attending to our principal interest, by too great a variety of worldly cares, or by too intense anxiety about them, as even by surfeiting and drunkenness. The sober actings of reason about our principal interests, may be as much disturbed by the one as by the other.

6. The extent in which this caution is prescribed: *Lest at any time your hearts be so overcharged*.

It is worst of all to have this for the case of our souls in customary and habitual practice; but that is not all which we are to provide against. We should be on our guard against every particular discomposure, either by worldly appetites or cares; for every such instance makes a man a transgressor, and is not a little detrimental to his soul.

This addition also may intimate, that they who think themselves best fortified against such disorders, or to have little temptation to them, yet may, at some time or other, be surprised, if they take no heed to themselves. Who could be imagined to have less occasion for a caution against intemperance, than these disciples of Christ, who, by their constant attendance on their Master, were accustomed to a very regular way of living? Or whom should one think less in danger of immoderate cares, than plain fishermen, who had little to care for, except to keep their nets in order? Yet Christ saw it proper to admonish them, lest at some time they might be led by temptation to those evils of which they might have no apprehension at present that they were in any danger. And the same caution we should also take to ourselves.

7. The particular motive by which Christ awakened his disciples to this care and caution: *Take heed, lest your hearts be overcharged,—and so that day come upon you unawares.*

He had, in the context, acquainted his disciples with the sore destruction which was coming upon the Jewish temple and nation; one of the severest judgments ever inflicted by God in this world. And, in the text, he calls his disciples to be very vigilant, that they might not miscarry in such a dreadful calamity, by indulging themselves in excess and luxury, or drowning their thoughts in worldly cares. Either of these would lead them to forget that awful season, though they were forewarned of it, and hinder their preparation for it; and, indeed, be a very unsuitable frame to be found in when such judgments should come.

But though Christ's warning to his disciples of that day was with a particular view to that national judgment upon the Jews; yet, as that was a type of the last judgment approaching to us all, we are equally obliged to attend to the same caution in prospect of death, and the future judgment, lest those days come upon us at unawares. Mark tells us, that when Christ had, upon this occasion, called his disciples to watchfulness in particular, he then actually extended it to all, Mark xiii. 37. "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." And what particular part of watchfulness contained in the text, must be understood in the same latitude.

I intend upon this text to discourse only of the head of Intemperance. Immoderate cares will come under consideration in the next branch of my general subject, Christian contentment. I am now to prosecute this truth,

That Christians are strongly obliged to maintain a strict guard against intemperance. Where I shall,

- I. Shew what is to be accounted Intemperance. And,
- II. The obligations that lie upon Christians to keep a strict guard against it.

I. What is to be accounted intemperance.

And here I doubt not but you will easily apprehend, that I am not inquiring only after the grossest acts of this vice, such as justly expose a man to the common censure of all that

see him, or to be pointed at in the streets for a glutton, or a drunkard; but also after all that which a man, judging of himself impartially by the rules of reason and scripture, and as in the sight of God, will have ground to account a criminal excess in this matter, though other people should have no foundation to pass a censure upon him.

Now, I know not a more comprehensive rule of judgment in this case, than that which is intimated in the text. All such use of bodily provisions, whereby *the heart is overcharged*, or the mind is indisposed for its regular acts, or rendered any way less fit for acting as a rational and a religious agent, this is in proportion a faulty excess. And by this rule, beside the gross acts of intemperance, conscience may tell us, that every one of the following instances infringe upon the grace of intemperance.

1. All such use of meats and drinks as indisposes the body to be at the service of the soul. The body was designed by our Creator to be the minister of the soul, and in a readiness to execute the orders of the higher powers: and the provisions given for our sustenance are intended, by the blessing of God with them, to maintain the body in such a state. Whatever, therefore, we find prejudicial to our health, or that ordinarily has the effect to make our bodies heavy, sluggish, and inactive, whether it be some particular kinds of food, or liquor, or such a proportion and quantity of any, certainly ought to be abstained from, because we find them to disorder the just temperature of the body, and so to lessen its fitness to serve our minds. Indeed, we can hardly judge of this, one for another; for that is eminently fit to nourish, and refresh, some constitutions, which is most prejudicial to others; and some require such a quantity of sustenance to preserve their bodies, in a regular and vigorous state, as would quite disorder and unfit others for their duty. But most people may, if they please, judge of this for themselves: and temperance obliges every man, upon the best observation he can make of himself, ordinarily to abstain from those supports of life, for quality and for quantity, which he finds a disservice, instead of an advantage, to the good state of his body. If our bodies are rendered unserviceable, either in whole or in part, by the providence of God, without our own fault, we cannot help that; it is our affliction, and not our sin. But if we should know-

ingly disable ourselves, we not only sin against our own bodies, but our own souls too. And, indeed, we are so many ways liable to disorders which we cannot help, that we have no need to increase them by our own follies.

2. Such ways of living as are above what our worldly circumstances will admit, may justly be esteemed intemperance. High living, above people's condition and estate, either in the daintiness of their provisions, or the plenty of them, is intemperance in them, though it may not deserve to be so accounted in those of better circumstances. It is going beyond the mean which they should fix to themselves, and is too often the occasion of great injuries done to their neighbours: and, which brings it under the rule of the text, it unnecessarily overcharges their hearts with care how to extricate themselves out of difficulties which were entirely owing to their own prodigality.

3. Such an application to indulge the appetite, as robs men of much of their time, not only frequently makes men to suffer in their secular affairs, but wrongs their souls too. Though reason should not be disturbed, nor health impaired; though the head should be "strong to drink wine," and the estate able to bear it: yet this alone is a breach upon temperance, to "tarry long at the wine," Prov. xxiii. 30. For it makes a business of that which ought to be no more than a refreshment, and a preparation for business. Especially, if by this means men keep such unseasonable hours at home, that either family-worship, or their secret devotions, are shut out; or they or their families already become so drowsy and indisposed, that they can at best only do the work of the Lord negligently. When this is the case, the spiritual interest of themselves, and of theirs, is greatly obstructed.

4. All such gratifications of appetite as disturb and lessen, though they do not entirely take away, the exercise of reason. The only commendable use of outward refreshments, is either to support the body in its daily necessities, or to recruit and refresh the animal spirits when dull and heavy; that so the mind, which is nearly allied to the body in which it dwells, and apt to share in all its indispositions, may become fitter for the service of God and man. All compliance with appetite thus far, are not only lawful but praise-worthy. But every step we go knowingly beyond this is faulty. I wish this

charge may not extend too far among those who pretend to sobriety. If you cannot allow yourselves entirely to dethrone reason, and to transform the man into a beast, as the open drunkard does ; if other people cannot charge you with transgressing the bounds of temperance, or discover any alteration in you for the worse ; yet are you never conscious to yourselves, that you suffer reason to be muddled, and your thoughts to be more confused, instead of being more free ? That though you have not lost the use of your better powers, yet you cannot use them so well as at other times ? That you are neither equally fit for useful conversation, nor for the service of God, nor for application to your proper business ? If this should be your case, though the guilt of it comes not up to the more notorious and scandalous instances of intemperance ; yet, surely, conscience can hardly fail to admonish you in serious hours, that it is amiss. And if such a practice as this should be frequent and habitual with you, I cannot but apprehend it more heinous in the sight of God, than a single act of the grossest intemperance, into which a man is surprised quite contrary to his usual character.

5. All such use of provisions for the body, as is known usually to excite criminal and impure inclinations ; either such kinds of provision, as people have experienced to have such an effect upon themselves, or such a measure and quantity. Certainly, where this is found to be the case, it is not consistent with temperance, to take the same freedom in the use of those provisions, as of others, or as other people may do in the use of the same things without danger, because they find no such effect from them. This every man, who tenders his own soul, and the maintenance of his purity, stands obliged to by the general precept, “Not to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof,” Rom. xiii. 14.

6. Such studied and customary gratifications of appetite, as tend to settle the spirit in a sensual frame, or a strong turn and addictedness towards bodily satisfactions, should not be esteemed harmless things by a Christian : “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” and find a Christian work for conflict all his days ; and while he feeds his body, it should be his endeavour, as little as may be, to feed that. This makes frequent and high feasting, though it should not be attended with any of the bad consequences already mentioned, yet to be inex-

pedient and dangerous for most people. Though all feasting is not unlawful, as I shall have occasion to shew presently, yet I doubt there are very few, who make a frequent practice of it, who, like the rich man in the parable, “fare sumptuously” almost “every day,” Luke xvi. 19. ; but must own, if conscience may speak freely, that they put their minds out of frame, give too strong a bent to sensible good, and abate the edge of their desire and delight, with reference to spiritual and eternal blessings. Now, whatever hath that effect, is so far an enemy, and should not be indulged by a man that values the prosperity of his soul.

II. I proceed to shew the obligations which lie upon Christians, to maintain a strict guard against intemperance.

1. The gospel recommends temperance as a matter of great importance in Christianity. We have many precepts about it. As our Lord and Master here strongly enjoins it, so the apostle : “Be not filled with wine,” Eph. v. 18. It is inculcated upon us from the clear light of the gospel which we enjoy, Rom. xiii. 13. “Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness,” 1 Thess. v. 5—8. “Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day : we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others ; but let us watch, and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night ; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober.” When the apostle mentions it as a common observation, even concerning the heathen world, that those among them who were drunken, were drunken in the night, it reflects the greatest shame upon the present degenerate manners of too many in Christian lands, who are not ashamed to be disordered at noon-day, as well as in the noon-day light of the gospel. The excessive indulgence of appetite in the primitive times, is spoken of as the character of people before their conversion, but which they were under the clearest engagements to change upon their entertaining the gospel, 1 Pet. iv. 3. “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.” These sensualities were chiefly practised by them, as attendants of the profane and impure festivals of their false gods ; and, therefore, when they turned to

God from idols, they should drop all these sinful indulgences also : “ For the grace of God, which hath now appeared to all men, teaches us,” in the first place, “ to live soberly,” Tit. ii. 11, 12. “ Drunkenness and revellings are the works of the flesh,” Gal. v. 21. ; which, therefore, “ they that are Christ’s have crucified,” ver. 24. Therefore the drunkard is to be excluded from Christian communion, 1 Cor. v. 11. “ I have written to you, if any one that is called a brother, be—a drunkard—with such a one, no not to eat.” It is observable, that the sacred historian intimates temperance to be an eminent part of the doctrine of the gospel, when he tells us, Acts xxiv. 24. that “ Felix heard Paul concerning the faith in Christ.” And what was that ? We have an account of no more of his discourse upon this subject, but that he “ reasoned” with him “ of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” ver. 25. ; the apostle choosing out of those parts of the Christian doctrine for his discourse with Felix, which were most suitable to his sins and circumstances.

2. We have lively representations in the word of God, of the danger and mischief of intemperance.

We are put in mind of those bad effects for this world, which so often follow it. The ruin of health and estate ; the quarrels and contentions it so often excites, to the prejudice of others, and often to men’s own destruction ; that “ the drunkard and the glutton shall come to proverty,” Prov. xxiii. 21. “ Who hath wo ? who hath sorrow ? who hath contentions ? who hath babbling ? who hath wounds without cause ? who hath redness of eyes ? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine,” ver. 29, 30.

It is big with innumerable other sins ; the parent especially of impurities : “ Be not filled with wine, wherein is excess,” or unbridled dissolution of manners. It is mentioned as one fruit of tarrying long at the wine, Prov. xxiii. 33. “ Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.” It often prompts to do others the most extravagant injuries ; and though in human courts of judicature, it is often admitted for a plea in abatement of such crimes, that a man was disordered with liquor when he did them ; yet I very much doubt how far they will be allowed at God’s tribunal for an extenuation, as long as men were forewarned of such consequences, as possible and probable to ensue upon intem-

perance, and were cautioned against it from that consideration.

It is eminently of a hardening nature, and tends to make conscience insensible and stupified: "Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart," Hos. iv. 11. It makes men forget the law of God, Prov. xxxi. 5. They are not only unteachable while in an act of intemperance but commonly frequent acts sear the conscience, and render them unapt for impression, even at other times.

And as the fruit of all, without solemn repentance, it will certainly exclude from the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 10. This quickened holy Paul to the utmost guard and caution over his bodily appetites, 1 Cor. ix. 27. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

3. The bounty and goodness of God, in granting us the comforts of life, and leave to use them as far as is for our real good and safety, is an argument to gratitude not to abuse his favour.

He "gives us all things richly to enjoy," 1 Tim. vi. 17. And shall we employ the fruits of his rich beneficence to his dishonour, and to our own hurt? How justly, then, may he resume his own forfeited gifts? "Take away his corn in the time thereof, and his wine in the season thereof?" as he threatened to do to Israel, Hos. ii. 9.

He allows us not only the necessaries of life, but all reasonable conveniences, which we can fairly come by: a vast variety of creatures for our food, and wine in its season, to "make glad the heart," Psal. civ. 15. He does not confine us to the mere supply of the necessities of nature, but allows a freer use of his creatures in proper time and measure. All feasting is not forbidden. There were sacred feasts of divine appointment under the law, wherein the people were to rejoice before the Lord every year, and to partake of the bounties of providence with a sober freedom. And there were feasts among good men in those times upon civil occasions; as Lot's, when he entertained the angels at unawares; and Abraham's, at the weaning of Isaac. We find the Lord himself countenancing a marriage-feast with his presence, and by working a miracle to supply their want of wine, in John ii.

Feasting, therefore, is not unlawful in itself, when it is managed in the fear of God, with sobriety, and in due time and place. All that God forbids us, is to unman ourselves, and to do our souls a prejudice.

Besides this, under the gospel, our charter is enlarged from what it was under the law ; all the ceremonial distinction of meats being abolished, and our liberty, by that means, extended to a greater variety. Therefore, an intemperate abuse of our liberty to licentiousness, must be more criminal under the gospel, when we are taught, that “ God hath created,” all sorts of “ meats to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth ; for every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving ; being sanctified by the word of God and prayer,” 1 Tim. iv. 3—5. ; that is, being warranted to use it by the word of God, if we do not forget to acknowledge God in it by prayer and praise. Now, how ungrateful shall we be, if we cannot satisfy ourselves with the regular use of so large a supply ? Like our first parents, who could not be content without the forbidden fruit, though they were allowed the use of every other tree in the garden.

4. The gospel directs us to a better use of our superfluities, which will redound very much to our own advantage ; that is, to relieve the necessitous with what we can spare ourselves : and this enforced with a declaration of the high honour which our Master will put upon such services, Matt. xxv. 35. “ I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink,” &c. For, as in ver. 40. “ Insomuch as ye have done it unto one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” And shall we ruin our souls by an intemperate use of those things, with which we might lay up a good security for the time to come ?

5. The example of Christ, in this matter, lays a strong engagement upon Christians. He was not, indeed as he takes notice himself, Matt. xi. 18, 19. like John the Baptist, who “ came neither eating nor drinking ;” that is, not as other men do, but using a very spare and peculiar diet. But Christ “ came eating and drinking ;” that is, using such a diet as other sober people were wont to do, and conversing freely with all sorts for their good. His malicious enemies, indeed, called him for this “ a man gluttonous and a wine-biber, a friend of publicans and

sinners ;” but most injuriously. As he was designed for a common example, he was the fitter for it by living in the common manner, as far as innocence would allow ; and so he did, but never exceeded the bounds of strict regulation. He was sometimes at feasts, and thereby teaches us, that not only to support, but moderately to delight the body, by eating and drinking, is not at all times unseemly for a Christian ; but then he maintained strict sobriety, and spent not such seasons in mere vanity and levity, but pursued his general end of doing good, especially to the souls of men ; as we have a remarkable instance in the profitable instructions which he took occasion to deliver, when he was present at an entertainment upon the invitation of a Pharisee, Luke xiv. He did not make feasts his ordinary choice, but commonly lived upon plain provisions ; and ever, by his example, recommended to his disciples, what he prescribes in the text by his doctrine, never to have his heart overcharged or hindered in his work, by the refreshments of the body.

6. Intemperance will put us into the worst posture for Christ’s coming to death and judgment. Who would not be afraid and ashamed to meet him in such an act of sin ? And when we have such great events before us, and the time of them is ever uncertain, this thought should always be an effectual restraint from irregular indulgences. “The old world,” Christ tells us, “were eating and drinking (that is, luxuriously,) till the flood came,” and swept them away, Matt. xxiii. 38. O the dreadful surprise ! And so he intimates it will be with many at his own coming, who shall say in their hearts, “The Lord delayeth his coming,” and so embolden themselves to “eat and drink with the drunken,” ver. 48, 49. But surely we should tremble at the thought of being found in the number, considering what follows, ver. 50, ⁵¹. “The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Intemperance is, in itself, one of the worst preparations to bid him welcome ; and, at the same time, it hinders men in every other branch of preparation ; it induces them to put the evil day far from them, till it come at unawares.

Be persuaded, then, as Christ exhorts, to *take heed to*

yourselves in this matter, lest, at any time, you should exceed proper bounds in the indulgence of appetite. Many in this city are in peculiar danger, by the frequent occasions of feasting in the city companies, as well as in their own and their friends' houses, and especially in this season of leisure and more customary freedoms.* I believe you would find it your wisdom at all times to attend to the following directions.

Maintain a fixed detestation of intemperance, even the lowest degrees of it, as a thing unworthy of the dignity of your natures, vastly prejudicial to the interests of soul and body, highly displeasing to God, and peculiarly aggravated by the Christian light and privileges you enjoy.

Avoid, as much as you can, the society of the intemperate, at least make them not your chosen companions: "Be not amongst wine-bibers, amongst riotous eaters of flesh," Prov. xxiii. 20. Bad company in this, as in all other cases, is most pernicious; it leads people, by degrees, in compliance to evils, of which once they never thought. Scarce any are led at first by themselves to intemperance, but by some evil companions.

Allow not yourselves to proceed to the utmost bounds of things lawful. There is but a step between that and being transgressors, in this as well as other matters; and the transition is easy, and very likely to be made at one time or other, if we often venture to a precipice.

When you fall into the way of that which you know to be ensnaring, be peculiarly on your guard. That is the meaning of the direction: "Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite," Prov. xxiii. 2. A man would not be eager of the richest dainties with a knife at his throat: so when we are aware of peculiar temptation, we should represent it to ourselves, to awaken fear of transgressing, lest our "table should become our snare." And in verse 31. "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour to the cup, when it moveth itself aright." If you know appetite is apt to be too hard for you, you need not call in imagination to its assistance.

Take heed of giving way to the beginnings of intemperance. It insensibly steals on to higher degrees, and grows upon those who give it entrance. Sad instances, I believe may be recol-

* This was preached Dec. 30, 1722.

lected, within the knowledge of most, of persons once in appearance of the strictest sobriety and regularity, who, from small beginnings, which were not restrained at first, have sunk into the most perfect sottishness and sensuality, and been entirely lost to God, the world, and themselves. Intemperance eats like a canker, and too often increases with age; which should make young people especially very cautious of the least degrees of it.

And especially, see that you keep up in your souls the life and power of religion, that your time and thoughts be well employed, that you may not be under the temptation of having recourse to sensual indulgences to pass away your time: "Be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation," 1 Thess. v. 8.; making use of your faith, and love, and hope, to fortify you against every allurements to intemperance. And "be filled with the Spirit;" for "if ye walk in the Spirit," attending to and following his gracious influences, "ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh," Gal. v. 16.

SERMON XXV.

CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT

PHIL. IV. 11. [last clause.]

—*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

IT is a considerable branch of the duty which we owe to God and to ourselves, to have our affection to present enjoyments so moderated, that whether we have them or want them, whether we have a larger or a less share in them, we may yet enjoy God and ourselves. This is the contentment which the apostle could say in the text that he had attained. And a great thing it was, even for an excellent saint to be able to say so.

He let the Philippians know, in ver. 10. with what pleasure he received their kind contributions for the relief of his necessities. But then he was careful to acquaint them, that he meant not by this to intimate that he had been discontented before at the straitness of his circumstances, ver. 11. “Not that I speak in respect of want;” I can undergo even that, and yet be tolerably easy: *For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* ‘My mind can be competently suited to my condition, if my condition happen not, in all respects, to be suited to my mind.’

This is a very eminent part of the Christian temper, wherein we should all aspire to be able to say the same thing with the blessed apostle. And in the prosecution of the subject, I would,

- I. Explain this disposition of mind. And,
- II. Shew how it may be learned.

I. THIS disposition of mind is to be explained : *To be content in whatsoever state we are.*

I have already hinted, that the apostle only means this with reference to any sort of outward condition for this world. That is the proper province for contentment. It would ill become a man to say, ‘In whatever state *my soul* is, whether it be under the reign of sin or of grace, whether it be in a state of acceptance with God, or under his wrath, yet I am content.’ This is really the temper of too many thoughtless sinners ; but it is very far from being commendable. All God’s calls and warnings are designed to awaken them out of this security, that they may never rest contented, till they are in a safe state for eternity. Nor would it be much more proper for a good man to say, ‘I am content with the degrees of conformity to God, and of victory over my irregular inclinations, which are already obtained.’ It is certain St. Paul was of quite another frame, as he declares in this same epistle, chap. iii. 13, 14. “Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark.” He means no more in the text but this, that he was prepared to exercise contentment, whether he was in a high or a low condition in this world.

But what is this *contentment* in every state ?

The word here used, ἀνταρκτης εἶναι, and ἀσπαρξία, which is used in another place for contentment, strictly imports a *self-sufficiency* ; which can by no means be understood, when applied to any creature in separation from God, in whom all our springs are ; but it imports a tranquillity of mind, which does not absolutely depend upon the things of the world, but that whatever our outward condition is our minds can have a foundation for rest and composure.

It would run too high for Christian contentment, to take a full satisfaction in any earthly state, to take up our rest in it, though it should be the best and most advantageous to our outward man, so as to have no lively desires after a better state, but to be ready to say, ‘It is good to be here, I would live here always, if I might have my option.’ The frame here recommended is, not to be contented with any state upon earth

as our portion. St Paul, in the third chapter of this epistle, describes men of that character, who so mind and affect earthly things, as “enemies of the cross of Christ;” and, in opposition to them, gives it as the character of himself and other Christians, “Our conversation is in heaven,” ver. 19, 20,

On the other hand, it is not inconsistent with the grace of contentment, to have a sense of any thing ungrateful or uneasy in our present lot. To be without that would be stupidity, and not contentment. Nor will every desire or regular endeavour to better our outward circumstances, be an argument of discontent. Such desires are the foundation of diligence and industry in men’s callings, which serve so many good purposes in the world : and God himself encourages men, by temporal promises, to diligence, to make the improvement of their worldly condition a subordinate end to their labours.

But true Christian contentment with our state and lot, comprehends in it such things as these :

1. That our desires of worldly good are low and moderate ; that we are not eager after much, nor “seek great things for ourselves ;” but that our desires be reduced within the bounds of necessity and reasonable convenience, or at least are not hot and impetuous after more. To this the apostle exhorts, 1 Tim. vi. 8. “Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content ;” that is, let us be able to acquiesce and be easy, though we should be allowed no more. We find Jacob forming his desires with such moderation at his setting out in the world, and when he was to enter upon a journey of some length and distance from his father’s house : he asked not riches and grandeur, but that “God would give him bread to eat, and raiment to put on,” Gen. xxviii. 20. And it will be the wisdom and the happiness of other young people, to set out in the world without mounting their desires very high ; at least with a resolution to be easy, though they should be able to compass no more than a subsistence. A man that cannot be easy with that, knows not in truth what would make him easy ; for covetousness is insatiable. We see people arriving at one enjoyment after another, which once seemed the top of their ambition ; and yet so far from contentment, that their desires grow faster than their substance ; and they are as eager to improve a good estate when they are become masters of it, as if they were still drudging for food and rai-

ment. Christ warns us against this sort of covetousness, which consists in insatiable desire: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," Luke xii. 15. In the parable which immediately succeeds this caution, the rich fool, whom Christ describes and blames, is charged with no injustice or evil practices, but only with insatiable desires of abundance, and too intense a concern to lay up goods for many years. The apostle exhorts the Hebrews, chap. xiii. 15. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have?" *τοῖς παρῶν, present things.* Till we arrive at such a temper, that we can be content and easy with what we have at present, covetousness is predominant; and the same principle will keep us uneasy in any future circumstances, when they may become present.

2. That in all our views of bettering our worldly condition, we indulge not immoderate cares. A prudent care of our affairs becomes us as reasonable creatures, and as Christians. But a contented mind will not allow us to over-do herein. And we may over-do, either by engaging in a greater variety of cares than we can manage with composure of mind, and inconsistent with our other duties, or by suffering any particular cares to run out into anxiety.

Some, from their eager desire of gain, drown themselves in such a variety and hurry of business, as is beyond their capacity and head to manage. Such a conduct generally defeats its own end, and issues in disappointment and loss for this world; but especially it is prejudicial to men's souls, either not leaving them reasonable time to attend to their better interests, or following them into their reading, and hearing, and praying, so that they cannot perform them without great distraction of thought, or presently wearing off any good impression made upon their spirits. Our Saviour cautions his disciples against this, as well as intemperance, Luke xxi. 34. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." And if it concern us to take heed lest this should be the case "at any time," what must be the mischief and danger of a perpetual hurry of worldly business, when men launch out beyond their depth, and possibly cannot retreat and disengage themselves when they will?

Others, though they may not enter upon an undue multiplicity of business, yet are intemperately solicitous about that in which they do engage, that is, about the issue and success of their projects and endeavours. They are not satisfied with having acted the proper and prudent part incumbent on them, and then to leave the event to God; but torment and rack their minds about that which is not in their own power. This is that sort of "taking thought for to-morrow," against which our Saviour cautions, Matt. vi. 34.; and that sinful carefulness, from which the apostle dehorts us, Phil. iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Anxiety is an evident mark of discontent, and will be a certain hinderance to contentment in any condition, as long as it is indulged.

3. That whatever our present condition be, we cheerfully submit to the providence of God in it. In opposition to all murmuring complaints of him, though our lot should be strait and uneasy. Christian contentment essentially includes in it a respect to divine providence in all our circumstances, and an humble acquiescence in the disposals of it. If we "fret against the Lord," because things are not according to our mind, we fly in the face of the great Governor of the world, and instead of helping ourselves, shall vastly increase our difficulty, by making him our enemy. But when we have uprightly done our part, whatever the event be, it becomes us to say with Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." If any comfort, which may appear desirable in itself, is denied us, there should be a placid submission, upon the foot of what Jacob told Rachel, when she was discontented for want of children, Gen. xxx. 2. "God hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb." It was a truth which became a better mouth than that of Balak, when he said to Balaam, Numb. xxiv. 11. "The Lord hath kept thee back from honour;" and it should be a quieting thought to good men, whenever they are disappointed in such expectations. If you have not that success, by an industrious application to business, as others around you have, it should be a thought present with you, "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich, he bringeth low, and lifteth up," 1 Sam. ii. 7. Contentment, as a grace, includes in it this regard to God.

4. That we are so easy with our own lot, as not to envy others who may be in more prosperous circumstances. Envy is an infallible mark of discontent. Duty to God, and charity to our neighbour, would induce us to take pleasure in the welfare of others, whether we immediately share in it or not. A contented mind, upon the principles of religion, would naturally fall into such reflections as these, if we see other men possessed of a larger affluence of comforts than we; ‘The love or hatred of God, are not known by such things as these.’ If our more prosperous neighbours should be bad men, their riches may be to their hurt, and the prosperity of fools may destroy them. If they be good men, God, who knows what is best for every one, may know it safer for them to be entrusted with such comforts, than it would be for us; that they may be great mercies to them, and yet would prove too strong temptations for us. Or, if that should not be the case, yet “shall not God do what he will with his own?” Or shall my eye be evil against my neighbour, because God is good to him? Matt. xx. 15. As charity, so contentment envieth not.

5. That we are so far satisfied with our present condition, whatever it be, that we will not use any unlawful means to better it. It is a certain sign that our minds are not brought down to the pleasure of God in our lot, if we can allow ourselves to go out of God’s way in any instance to change it. He that is possessed of the grace of contentment, will not allow himself, whatever inconveniences may accrue to his body, to venture upon the displeasure of God, and the violation of his conscience, to remove them. He cannot find in his heart to mend his circumstances by any acts of injustice, or fraud, or violence, or by making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. The apostle opposes to contentment such a disposition that men “*will* be rich,” 1 Tim. vi. 8—10. They *will* be so at all adventures, whatever it costs them, though they should sacrifice principle, and religion, and honor, to the obtaining of their end. We are told particularly the mischievous effects of such a resolute determination in this case: “They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money (such a love of money, or covetousness,) is the root of all evil; which, while some have coveted after, they have erred

from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." When the Roman soldiers came to John the Baptist, among others that were struck with the novelty of his preaching and baptism, and asked him, "And what shall we do?" John wisely addressed them, suitable to their temptations, with these advices, Luke iii. 14. "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." The soldiers were pinched with their narrow allowance, and too apt to injure other people to make up that defect, either by using violence or false accusations, that they might reap the plunder of other men's goods. John, therefore, particularly cautions them against these ill ways of providing for themselves, and exhorts them to contentment with the allowance of their station, as an effectual preservation against all such irregular courses.

6. That we make the best of our condition, whatever it may be. We are too prone to cast our eye only upon the dark side of our condition. But a contented man will impartially survey all the circumstances of his lot, and that will soon enable him to discern many things fit to alleviate and balance his uneasiness. He will reflect in such a way as this:—'If I have not so large a share as some others, yet have I not enough to carry me through the world? If I have not a large provision made for time to come, yet hath not God hitherto given me my daily bread, and what occasion have I to distrust him for the future? If I have not enough to gratify every random inclination, yet have I not sufficient to supply real wants? If I am denied some things which I desire, yet is not this the case of the great and of the most abounding? If others prosper in the world more than I, yet are not some more distressed? If I live more directly upon providence, yet have not goodness and mercy followed me all my past days? And why should I doubt, but that in the way of duty they will follow me "all the days of my life?" If I have not every thing I wish for, yet have I not unspeakably more than I deserve?' A disposition to contentment readily cherishes itself with such considerations.—But it will be proper farther to shew,

II. How such a frame is to be learned.

The apostle declares, that he had learned this. In our

present depraved state, it is not a temper to which we are naturally disposed : whether we look into our own hearts, or observe the world about us, we may easily perceive this. Whoever is possessed of it, is a learner before he attains it. And without doubt the apostle means, that he learned it in the school of Christ ; by laying to heart the principles inculcated by Christianity, which were sufficient to animate such a temper, by improving every other advantage fit to form him to it, and by the gracious teaching of the divine Spirit making all successful. Thus he learned it gradually, and became from time to time a better proficient. So may, so ought we to arrive at such a temper.

1. Christianity sets in view the most solid principles of contentment, and the strongest motives to it. Such as,

The perfections of the blessed God, whose providence disposes our lot. He is just and righteous in all his proceedings. As a perfect being, and “the judge of all the earth,” he cannot but do right. If we firmly believe this, though we should not be able to account for some particular administrations, yet we shall readily impute that to our own ignorance and narrow views, rather than call in question so indisputable a principle : whatever occurs, we shall “ ascribe righteousness to our Maker,” Job xxxvi. 3. His almighty power is another reason to silence every murmur ; for what advantage can it be to repine at our lot, when we are entirely in his hand, who “doth whatever pleaseth him in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,” Dan. iv. 35. Nor is this absolute power in the hands of a malevolent and unkind being, but one of infinite goodness, who loves his creatures, and consults their good ; and has unerring wisdom to judge in every case, and for every person, what is best for them. We “know not what is good for” ourselves in “this life ;” we have often found already, that if we had had our own desires, it must have been in anger, and to our real prejudice. What reason, therefore, have we to be content, and even to rejoice, that “our times are in God’s hands ?” Christ, in his sermon upon the mount, strikes at the root of distrustful and discontented cares, by representing the bounty and the wisdom of providence : the bounty of it, as extending to the meanest creatures, to “the fowls of the air,” Matt. vi. 26. ; and the wisdom

of it, in that "our heavenly Father knows what we need," ver. 32.

The relations in which we stand to God, still enforce the argument to contentment. As we are his creatures, we are rightfully at his dispose. "Wo to him that strives with his Maker : let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth : shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?" Isa. xlv. 9. We forget our condition and original, if we acquiesce not in the determination of the Author of our beings. This consideration, that all is derived from God, composed Job into a calm, Job. i. 21. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord." If we consider ourselves, farther, as such who have offended him, and forfeited every benefit, even life itself, can there be any just reason for discontent, because we enjoy not all the comforts we can think of? It is grace, that we have any left. But especially, if we can justly hope, that we are his children in the most distinguishing sense, this may well reconcile us to any circumstances of our lot here. If we are brought into his family by Christ, so that he is our Father, our friend, and our God, we have a satisfying portion, how little soever we may enjoy of worldly good, and may justly say with Jacob, Gen. xxxiii. 11. "I have enough ;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, "I have all things : " for if God and Christ be ours, "all things are ours," as far as God sees that they will conduce to our real interest, 1 Cor. iii. 21. "Distress, or famine, or nakedness, height, or depth, shall not separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The fulness and extent of the divine promises, is a constant reason for contentment. These are breasts of consolation, from which we may draw refreshment in every state of life ; they are, either particularly suited to our circumstances, or more generally comprehend them. That one promise of "God's being with us," might carry a Christian cheerfully through life. Upon this principle the apostle recommends contentment, Heb. xiii. 5. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have ; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." In the most solitary or mean condition, we cannot be alone or destitute, if "the Father is with us."

The various mercies which actually attend us in every

state, if they be observed and seriously meditated upon, will strongly oblige to contentment. We are never in so low and uneasy circumstances in this world, that there are no mixtures of mercy and favour. If we have not abundance, yet have we not necessaries? "Lack we any thing?" If we lose some dear relation, yet are not others left? If we have met with some disappointments yet are we stripped of our all? Have we no instances of a lower and straiter condition than our own? Certainly we must be very ungrateful to God, to overlook the advantageous parts of our lot, because of some circumstances which we would not choose.

The shortness of our time below, and the approaches of death, loudly speak the reasonableness of contentment with our present condition. A traveller will be contented on the road with the accommodations he meets with, though they should not be the best, upon the prospect that he is going home, where he shall have better; especially if he expects to be soon at home: so a Christian should be easy with his lot in his short pilgrimage through this world; which he knows is shorter, compared with eternity, than the longest journey he can undertake, compared with the rest of his life on earth; and especially if we consider that we can carry nothing home with us, which will be of service beyond the grave, more than the poorest can; a consideration by which the apostle enforces contentment with a small allowance by the way, 1 Tim. vi. 7, 8. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And," or, "therefore, having food or raiment, let us be therewith content."

If we look to the eternal world before us, the argument will gather farther strength. If we view the finished misery of sinners that have shot the gulph, who have not so much as a drop of water to cool their tongue, "Wherefore should a living man complain!" a man still among the living, and in the possession of some comforts, who yet is conscious that he deserves to have his lot with the other? On the other hand, if we can entertain hope of heaven as a state we are designed for, where every want shall be supplied, and where perfect unmixed happiness is ready for us; how unbecoming such expectants is it, to fret at our circumstances in the very short intervening passage.

Finally, the folly and mischief of discontent is fit to be re-

presented to our minds, to fortify them against it. Fretting and uneasiness is not the way to amend our circumstances ; which is an argument suggested by our Saviour, Matt. vi. 27. “ Which of you, by taking thought,” or anxious carefulness, “ can add one cubit to his stature ?” The word we translate stature, signifies, indifferently, either stature or age ; and, accordingly, we may understand Christ to intimate, that we cannot, by our carefulness, add either to the growth of our bodies, or to the length of our lives ; and, therefore, we should, without anxious solicitude, rely upon God’s providence, in the way of ordinary industry, for what he sees convenient for us. Discontent is not a likely way to obtain the favour of providence for bettering our condition, nor will it fit us to take the more proper steps on our part toward the accomplishments of our desires. It rather provokes God to walk the more contrary to us, and discomposes our own minds, so as to render them less apt for any prudent endeavours. It increases every uneasiness, instead of lessening it. It adds the weight of guilt to any burthen. It obstructs our enjoyment of the mercies we have, and our thankfulness for them ; and is often the parent of many great sins, which, otherwise, would be very remote from men’s thoughts. And it is a great disparagement to our holy profession in the view of the world.

2. Christianity furnishes us with the brightest patterns of contentment, to enforce the precepts of it, and prevent our despair of attaining it.

Such a declaration as that in the text, is one of the most persuasive recommendations of the practice. The apostle had learned this, and yet he was now in low and strait circumstances : he had now learned to be content in any state, and he could say this, after he had passed through a great variety of difficulties, had been “ in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness,” 2 Cor. xi. 27. We are to consider this apostle of the Gentiles as set forth herein, as well as in his obtaining mercy at first, “ for a pattern to them which should after believe.”

But especially the Lord Jesus is the great pattern of all his followers in this excellent grace. The Lord of glory stooped to the lowest abasement : “ Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor ;” not only was found in fashion

as a man, but appeared in the world, from his cradle to his grave, in a state of meanness ; in his younger years he passed for a carpenter's son ; and when he came abroad into his public ministry, "had not a place" of his own "where to lay his head." Yet through the whole of his course, not one expression of discontent was heard : but his behaviour was perfectly suitable to one, that considered himself as come into the world to perform the work assigned him, and that was ready to leave it as soon as that was finished. We should all look upon ourselves in such a view, and look to the example of Jesus, to excite us to be like-minded.

3. Christianity directs us to the most effectual teacher, to make these considerations and helps successful for our actual learning the lesson of contentment ; to impress the motives of the gospel upon our hearts and consciences ; and, while we are beholding the amiableness of Christ's pattern, "to change us into the same image." And this is the good Spirit of God. Who teaches like him? Under his influences, Paul became such a proficient. And he is equally ready to perform his kind offices for us, if we desire his aids, and are heartily willing to learn of him.

Inference 1. The present state should be considered by us as a state of learning. There are many important lessons, which we are all concerned to learn in Christ's school ; this of contentment among the rest : and there will be constant room, while we are in the body, for learning every one of them better. The apostle, indeed, in the text, says, that he had already learned to be content. But when he had declared in this very epistle, that "he had not already attained," that is, perfectly, we cannot understand him, that he was become such a proficient in contentment, as to have no room left for farther improvement ; but only that he had attained this skill in a competent measure. They are truly commendable who have made a proficiency above others, or above what they were themselves formerly, in any Christian excellence ; but they should be still aspiring to the highest form.

2. More depends upon our own spirits, than upon our outward condition, in order to contentment. Paul could say, he had learned to be content, "in whatsoever state he was." This was not because he could choose his own condition, but

because his spirit was so regulated by the grace of God, that he could be reconciled to any condition. Most people judge otherwise ; they imagine they could be content and at rest, if they could obtain such a comfort which their hearts are now set upon, if they could arrive at an estate of such a size as would supply their present wishes. Vain thought ! If they are gratified in their present desire, a worldly mind unmortified will outgrow their acquisitions ; new wants and new contrivances will start up, and they will be as far from satisfaction as at their setting out. A low condition, considered in itself, may seem to give the strongest temptations to discontent ; but if we consult experience, we shall find the rich and the powerful as frequently strangers to an easy mind, as those in a mean state of life. The reason is, their irregular inclinations, and insatiable desires, are enlarged with their substance ; and, therefore, all they have passes for nothing, because their own distempered appetites will not let them rest.

We have a lively instance of this in Haman. If his desires could have had any bounds, one would think he had all in possession that heart could wish for. See how he reckons it up himself to his friends, Esth. v. 11, 12. "He told them of the glory of his riches." He had amassed together vast treasures, and was enabled by that means to live in great splendor. "And the multitude of his children." Many heap up riches, but have neither child nor brother to inherit them ; but Haman had a multitude of his own descendants, no less than ten sons, whatever other children he had ; so that he might have hopes that his house should continue for ever, and his dwelling-place to all generations. "And all the things wherein the king had promoted him." The several high offices, and stations of trust and honor, which he had conferred upon him. "And how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king." He was prime-minister, took place of the greatest princes, who were natives of the country, and of the highest officers of the court, who all paid him the next honors to the sovereign himself. "Yea," says he, "Esther the queen let no man come in with the king unto the banquet which she had prepared, but myself ; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king." He thought himself to stand as high in the queen's favor as in the king's : and from the distinguishing marks of regard he had from

both, and from the new invitation sent him for the next day, he had reason to apprehend that he was established in his high dignity. But in all this agreeable situation of his affairs, is the man contented? No; he immediately adds, ver. 13. "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." Mordecai had denied him the respect and reverence which he expected, and this spoiled the enjoyment of all his delights. His haughty mind could not brook one man at court, who would not cringe to him; so that he could not relish the obeisance paid him by all the rest: his riches, his children, his power, his dignities, all availed him just nothing.

This strange, but very striking instance, is a full evidence, that the largest collection and the greatest variety of worldly good, will not produce contentment; that a small uneasiness, the not having a single appetite or passion gratified, will take away the relish of what is agreeable in life, if such an appetite or passion is allowed to be headstrong; and, therefore, that no condition can make us happy, unless a foundation be laid for it in the due regulation of our own spirits.

3. Let us, therefore, labour to have our minds so formed, that they can be content and tolerably easy in any state of life. Let us endeavour to carry such a temper along with us, that we can comport with any condition, and make the best of it; or else, in truth, there is no condition which will not furnish occasions for discontent. The apostle goes on thus to explain his attainment, ver. 12. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Now, what is this universal for contentment through all the changes of life? It must consist of these ingredients: a low opinion of this world, and mortified affections to the things of it; a lively faith in the promised realities of the life to come; comfortable hopes of our own title to the heavenly inheritance; and a hearty resignation to the disposal of our heavenly Father for our circumstances by the way. By means of these we shall enjoy a happy calm through every state, and without these we may be upset in any.

SERMON XXVI.

CHRISTIAN PATIENCE.

HEB. X. 36.

For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

PATIENCE is very near akin to the grace of contentment, which I have been last upon: and yet there is a difference between them. Contentment properly respects our worldly condition, only as it is supposed capable of raising higher, and as our possession of the good things of life is not complete. Patience respects the evils of life, which we are actually feeling; or some future good, which we have ground to expect, but that is as yet delayed. And the apostle, in the text, compared with the context, represents Christians as needing patience in both these respects.

He reminds those converted Hebrews to whom he wrote, how they had already been called to suffer for Christ, and how well they had acquitted themselves in the trial, ver. 32, 33, 34. "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured (the word signifies, ye endured with patience,) a great fight of afflictions. Partly while ye were made a gazing-stock by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." But their warfare was not yet accomplished; and,

therefore, he exhorts them to maintain the same temper, animated by the same hope, ver. 35. "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." 'Quit not the patience, the courage, and freedom, you have used in maintaining your profession; for the rewards you expect, will make full amends for all the trials which may be yet behind, as well as for those already undergone.' And, therefore, stop not short of the prize: *For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.* There is a promise to be received by Christians, which is sufficient to compensate the utmost sufferings and services they can pass through here. But this shall not be received, till after they have done the will of God; till they have gone through their course of obedience to his preceptive will, and of submission to his providential will, for as long time as he sees meet to continue them by the way. And therefore every Christian has need of patience, in order to this.

I shall discourse of the subject in the following method.

I. Inquire into the nature of Christian patience.

II. Shew the need and occasion which a Christian has for it, from this consideration, that he is not to receive the promise till after he hath done the will of God. And,

III. Represent the way to which Christianity directs us for supplying this need, or for furnishing us with the patience required.

I. The nature of Christian patience is to be considered.

I have already suggested, that the province wherein patience is to be exercised, is, either in bearing present inconveniencies and evils, or in waiting for some future good; and especially in the Christian's case, waiting for the future blessedness of heaven.

Two words are more especially used in the New Testament to express this temper. One is *μακροθυμία*, a length of mind. This our translators sometimes render *patience*, as in Heb. vi. 12. James v. 10.; and sometimes *long-suffering*, as Rom. ii. 4. 2 Cor. vi. 6. Rom. ix. 22, &c. It is directly opposed to hastiness of spirit. The other word, most frequently used for patience, is that in the text, *ὑπομονή*, *abiding*

constant under afflictions; or, sustaining the evils which befall us, with perseverance in our duty, in expectation of the deliverance and recompence promised in due time.

Patience is not an insensibleness of present evils, or an indifference for future good: "No affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous." Christ himself was sensible of his sufferings, and expressed his sense of them. Nor should we be coldly affected to the blessings for which God has encouraged us to hope: that would be a reflection upon their excellence, or upon our own taste; and would make us negligent in endeavours to obtain them.

But Christian patience is a disposition that keeps us calm and composed in our frame, and steady in the practice of our duty, under the sense of our afflictions, or in the delay of our hopes.

The principal expressions of it may be reduced to these instances.

1. Patience secures the possession of our souls in every circumstance that tends to discompose our minds. Christ exhorts his disciples, when he had foretold the sufferings and dangers to which they would be exposed, Luke xxi. 19. "In patience possess ye your souls." "Whatever you meet with, keep up the possession of yourselves, let reason and grace maintain the ascendant, and shew yourselves men." This exhortation supposes, what, in fact, we find too often true, that smart trials, or the deferring of men's hopes, are apt to make "their heart sick," to master and enslave the mind; so that people are hardly their own men, but their violent affections and tumultuous passions run away with them. Patience is to guard the soul against this; to preserve it sedate and sober, that unreasonable passions and resentments may not boil up either against God or man; that inward peace, upon the solid grounds of religion, may not be lost in the scuffle of passion, or clouded by events which have no connection with it; that we may not be so infatuated as to lose the enjoyment of the blessings we have, because of some evils we feel; and that we may still be able clearly to discern our present duty in any turns of providence. This is to possess our souls in any trial of patience; to continue in an even frame, and ward off all impressions which would ruffle our minds, or put us out of the temper becoming us as men and Christians.

2. Patience will prevent hasty and rash conclusions, either from present troubles, or from the suspension of desired good. We are prone to make a hasty judgment of things from present appearances; against which patience will fortify. We are too ready to charge God foolishly; to call in question the truth of his promises, if he do not accomplish them in our way and time; or to suspect his mercy and goodness, because of the trials which are made our lot: like the desponding psalmist, Psal. lxxvii. 7—9. “Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?” In opposition to this, patience disposes to rest in God’s certain declarations of his favour to the upright; and to suppress any such hasty surmises to the dishonour of God; as the same psalmist did in ver. 10. “This is my infirmity.” Or, we may be apt in dark hours to entertain some hard thoughts of religion, when it exposes to suffering, and the recompences of it are considered as out of sight and future: but patience will fix us in this reckoning, “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us;” and that the recompences in prospect are worth waiting and suffering for too. If we are ready to despond of success, when we think of the strength or subtlety of our enemies, the variety of our work, and our own weakness, patience will suppress every misgiving thought, and embolden us to conclude, that “he who hath delivered, and doth deliver, will yet deliver;” that he will “keep us from falling, and fulfil in us the whole good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power,” if we endeavour sincerely to finish well.

3. Patience will fortify against any unlawful methods for accomplishing our deliverance or desires. It is natural to all under burthens, to cast about how they may help themselves, or to consult proper means to obtain what they wish for. Now, it is the work of patience to restrain from any sinful expedient which may seem to promise relief: “He that believeth, shall not make haste,” Isa. xxviii. 16. The patient man resolves rather to bear any trouble, than go out of God’s way to ease himself: he will reckon it the same thing to have no way at all, as to have no lawful way of deliver-

ance from his affliction. When the Philistines were coming against Saul with a formidable army, and his own people were much discouraged and afraid, he would not wait for deliverance in God's time and way, but he went himself, and "offered a burnt-offering," 1 Sam. xiii. 9. This was his impatience; and though he promised himself much from it, yet it cost him dear. If he had patiently staid a little longer, God would have "established his kingdom upon Israel for ever." But for this hasty step, God deprived both him and his family, ver. 13, 14. Patience will not suffer a man to apply to any doubtful course, much less to venture upon any known sin, to precipitate, his release or satisfaction.

4. Patience disposes a man to go on in the way of his duty, whatever discouragement may arise from the pressure of his troubles, or the deferring of his hopes. This is the most essential part of patience, to persevere in our proper work and our Christian course, whatever weights and burthens attend us, whatever it may cost us, and though the success and benefit of our endeavours do not immediately ensue. The impatient in such a case are apt to be "faint and weary in their minds," to become remiss in their work, and tired out of their waiting-frame by sharp and continued trials, if not wholly to give up in despondency. But "the righteous shall hold on his way," Job xvii. 9. This is what the apostle exhorts us to, Heb. xii. 1. to "run with patience the race that is set before us," whatever difficulties it is attended with, and for as long time as our Master, who has appointed it, sees meet to continue us in it.

These things may be sufficient to represent the general nature of patience. We shall have occasion to be more particular in the consideration of the second general head proposed, namely,

II. To shew the need and occasion which a Christian has for the exercise of patience. The apostle affirms of those to whom he wrote, that *they had need of patience*: and whatever might be singular in their case, there is enough in the common case of all Christians, or, for ought they know, may be so, to make the same declaration to hold true of them all.

A Christian has need of patience, as well as of the other

graces of the spirit, in his way to heaven. This is one branch of the character of every heir of glory, as much as faith, or love, or any other part of the new nature. It is a part of the image of God in his saints. He is styled "the God of patience," Rom. xv. 5. He is long-suffering, and exercises much forbearance. Though his perfect blessedness admits not properly of his suffering any prejudice, yet he receives many affronts from sinful creatures, and notwithstanding them suspends the execution of his anger, and therein shews, as it were, a power over himself, as Moses elegantly expresseth it in his prayer, Numb. xiv. 17, 18. "Let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy," &c. As if he had said, Yet give another instance how thou canst restrain thy just anger, by sparing again this provoking people. Now, there must be some resemblance of our heavenly Father in all his children, in this as well as other representations of him: they must *properly* exercise a power over themselves to restrain their passions, and keep possession of their souls, under the various providences of God. Hence *patience* is reckoned up as a branch of the godlike nature in us, 2 Pet. i. 6.; and *long-suffering* is one of the fruits of the spirit, Gal. v. 22. and what all the elect of God are pressed to put on, Col. iii. 12.

Christians have need of patience, in common with the rest of their fellow-creatures. All have some exercises of patience in this life, and Christians share in the common lot. They are no more exempted than others from the vanity and uncertainty of the present state. Pains and diseases, loss of friends, ingratitude, disappointments in their affairs, and all the various troubles to which man is born, fall to the lot of good and bad promiscuously. In these things "there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked," Eccles. ix. 2. And they must, as well as others, frequently continue expectants for a long time of many outward comforts and benefits they desire; and, therefore, they have need of patience as well as others; and God would have them to be examples to the rest of the world, in the exercise of patience under the same circumstances with them.

Besides this, Christians, as such, have more need of patience than others; and the greater advances they make in the Christian life, still so much the more occasion they have for it:

they often meet with peculiar exercises upon the score of their goodness, sufferings of one kind or other for the sake of Christ and a good conscience. Such is the temper of the world, that it seldom fails to hold true in some degree, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12. The church is seldom long without open persecution; and when it enjoys, what may comparatively be called *rest*, yet the number of those who are really religious is so disproportionate to the bad, that they generally meet with some ungrateful distinction from those among whom they live: they can hardly escape reproach, if they are treated no worse. Now, all such things are trials of patience. And "their disposition toward the promised blessedness, makes the deferring of that a trial peculiar to them." Earthly minds are strangers to any exercise of patience in this case: if they might, they would live here always. But a Christian has fixed his portion in God, and he expects not his full happiness in him till he arrives at heaven, and therefore he prefers that world to this. And the higher advances he has made in knowledge, and faith, and meetness, and assurance, so much the more will the deferring of his blessedness be a trial of his patience.

Those Christians who have exercised much patience already, yet still have need of it to the end of their lives. It is the scope of the text, as I observed at the beginning, to admonish those who were partakers of this grace, and had given instances of it, that still they had need of it: they had yet need of more patience, and room to acquit themselves better in farther trials.

But that which I would a little more particularly insist upon is, the consideration which the apostle intimates, upon account of which they had need of patience: *That after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.* This gives us a lively representation how necessary this grace is, in several views we may take of it.

1. A Christian has need of patience, to persist in doing the will of God, even in his ordinary course. The certain and known duty of a Christian in his way to heaven, independent of those particular circumstances which are made the lot of some, calls for a good measure of patience to do it well; for there is some difficulty and exercise in a Christian course in the best state of things that this world will admit. Hence a

“patient continuance in well-doing,” is a character requisite to every Christian, Rom. ii. 7.

Many of the constant duties of the Christian life, are unavoidably a weariness to the flesh. Prayer, and reading, and hearing, cannot be performed without pains; and patience is needful for that reason.

Indwelling sin is frequently making opposition, so that “when we would do good, evil is present with us,” Rom. vii. 21. This often occasions an uneasy struggle.

We must act contrary to the practice of the generality in many instances of duty. When the world is at the best, this is the case. If we would approve ourselves to God and a good conscience, we must, in some things, be content to swim against the stream, to be singular and “not conformed to the world,” Rom. xii. 2. but rather, by a contrary practice, with Noah, “to condemn the world,” Heb. xi. 7. This calls for patience.

In many cases, we must proceed in the performance of duty, when we cannot discern the success of past endeavours. We must still go on striving after the mortification of sin, though it may appear to us as strong as ever; and persist in the use of means for the good of others under our care and influence, though they have hitherto been unsuccessful. This is a very considerable trial of Christian patience; the chariot-wheels are very apt to drive heavily in such circumstances.

And in the advances of age, when natural strength and spirits abate, many branches of duty are necessarily more tedious and wearisome, as almost every action of life is, and yet they must not be given over.

2. A Christian hath need of patience to persist in *bearing* the will of God, and in doing his duty under it, when his course is peculiarly embittered. For instance,

To bear the shock of *sudden* and *unexpected* trials, which are apt to upset a man at once, and to produce hasty thoughts and unadvised words, both of God and man: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eye,” Psal. xxxi. 22. “I said in my haste, All men are liars,” Psal. cxvi. 11. To suppress a tumult, and keep the mind in frame upon such an occasion, is a very great attainment. The patience of Job was remarkable upon this account.

To bear a succession of exercises, one after another, is still more. To have God's waves and billows to pass over us, and yet keep our heads above water, neither thinking him unkind, or unjust, or unfaithful, nor losing the use of reason and grace, is a noble firmness of mind. How illustrious was the composure of Job, when so many messengers of ill tidings came thick one upon another! While he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, yet he "fell down and worshipped, saying, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly," Job i. 20—22.

To bear the long continuance of exercises. Many, who have behaved well upon the first attack, yet have been tired out by the length and tediousness of afflictions; they have lost the possession of themselves at last, after they had suppressed passion, and discontent, and hard thoughts, for a considerable time, and have fallen into some indirect course for relief, to which they could not find in their hearts to listen at first. Though tribulation is sometimes so sanctified, that it worketh patience, Rom. v. 3. yet this is far from being its constant effect. But how glorious the example, when a man perseveres in patience through a long course of pain, or poverty, or reproach! There was this circumstance to magnify the patience of Job; though at the same time he is an instance how strong a temptation the length of exercises is, since even patient Job, who began so gloriously, was occasionally transported into some sallies of impatience in the course of his trial.

To bear the hand of God, when he touches us in a most tender point; not only in small trials, but in great and heavy afflictions; if life, suppose, be threatened. The malice of Satan would not be satisfied, when he saw Job's steadiness under his many calamities, without urging God to put him to this last trial; well knowing, that "skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life," Job ii. 4. How hard to have the trial of our faith found unto praise in such a case! or still to exercise patience when God deprives us not only of things more remote from our hearts, but when he calls for our Isaacs, when he takes away our idols! Here

men are apt to say, I could have borne any thing but this.

To bear God's rod, when we cannot account for his reasons and ends in it. When "clouds and darkness are round about him," yet to believe that "judgment is the habitation of his throne;" this is a hard but a glorious display of patience. Job could say this, Job xxiii. 8—11. "Behold, I go forward but he is not there; and backward but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps; his way have I kept and not declined."

To bear sharp afflictions, when natural spirits are decayed. The spirit of a man, when lively and well supported by the animal spirits, will go a great way to sustain his infirmity; but when the spirit is wounded, not only by guilt, but by weakness of body, sinking distresses, or the infirmities of age, how much harder are the amiable expressions of patience!

To bear affliction patiently, when an unlawful way of deliverance seems directly to offer itself, and to promise relief. It is hard, in such circumstances, to choose suffering rather than sinning; to be content to bear our burthen still, rather than be eased of it upon such terms: as, in a time of persecution for conscience' sake, if we should have life or liberty offered us, on condition we will violate the dictates of our consciences; this is an eminent trial of Christian patience.

3. A Christian hath need of patience, to persist in waiting to the end to receive the promise. Especially,

If he have lively views of a happy state before him, and comfortable hopes of his own title to it. Here the height of his Christianity increases the trial of his patience. The more relishing the heavenly state is to him, so much the more ardent will be his desires.

If his course be greatly imbittered in the mean while by bodily infirmities, by troubles in the world, by the removal of many of his pious friends and acquaintances to heaven before him; this heightens the exercise of patience to an assured Christian, from the delay of his hopes.

If his service and usefulness are to appearance much over.

When Paul was in a strait between two, which to choose, being with Christ, or staying a little longer below, he was content, upon the prospect of future serviceableness to the church of Christ, to remain longer in the body, Phil. i. 23, 24. But when an aged servant of Christ, who knows whether he is going, but finds that his active work is done, and thinks himself laid by as a vessel of little more use; when such a one is yet continued waiting in pain and weakness, without being capable of relishing the enjoyments, or performing the business of life, this is a singular exercise of patience. And especially,

If he have long thought himself going, just at harbour, but finds himself driven back again to sea, every such instance is a fresh trial to him.

A Christian, then, has great need of patience. I proceed,

III. To shew the way to which Christianity directs us for supplying this need, or for furnishing us with the patience required. And it suggests to us such directions as these :

1. Whatever is a trial of our patience, we should consider it as the will of God concerning us. This is the justest foundation of patience, and the best preparation for it. It will overawe our souls, to do, and bear, and wait, without fretting or passionate sallies. For what room can there be to repine, when all is adjusted by one whose "counsel shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure," and who is a better judge than ourselves what is fit for us? Shall not this induce us to say with a placid submission, "Lord, not as I will, but as thou wilt? Let him do what seemeth him good." If our work in some parts of it be ungrateful to flesh and blood, self-denying, and singular, yet should we not think, "Who art thou, O man! who repliest against God?" Should we be lawless, or receive law from him? In the whole compass of duty we are doing the will of God, and that is enough. Are we labouring without visible success? Yet we should, at God's command, let down the net again: he may have purposes to serve by our work, though our direct end in it should never be accomplished; or he may accomplish our desire by future endeavours, though those already past have been ineffectual. Are we called to sufferings? We ought to remember, that

they came not by chance, but "according to the will of God," and therefore we may therein "commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator," 1 Pet. iv. 19. We are "waiting till our change come;" but let us think, that it is "all the days of our appointed time," Job xiv. 14. Before we fall asleep, we must be content to "serve our generation according to the will of God," Acts xiii. 36.; to accomplish the measure of service and suffering, which it is his pleasure to assign us, before we are dismissed. And though we should, in a great measure, be past active service, yet if it be his will that we should still remain examples of waiting, is not that a sufficient reason to wait patiently, till he hath "fulfilled all the good pleasure of his goodness in us, and by us?"

2. We should strengthen our faith in the discoveries of the gospel, and live in the daily exercise of it. The principles of faith contain the fittest motives to dispose the mind to a fixed patience, and an absolute resignation to the divine will in all circumstances; and, under the powerful influence of a lively faith in them, patience will be an easy and a practicable thing. Therefore, those who actually "inherit the promises," are represented as arriving at them "through faith and patience;" through faith as the principle, and patience as the fruit, Heb. vi. 12.

By this means we shall be satisfied that the exercises of our patience, are not inconsistent with the goodness and favour of God. In circumstances that bear hard upon us, we may be ready to conclude, that if these are his will concerning us, they are certain marks that we are not in a state of acceptance: whereas faith will teach us, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;" that, "if we endure chastening, God dealeth with us as with sons," Heb. xii. 6, 7.

Faith will assure us of divine care to moderate our exercises in proportion to our strength, to support us under them, and deliver us out of them in due time. Christ assured his first disciples of the special presence of God with them, and care of them, when he foretold the difficulties they were to pass through, Luke xxi.; that "he would give them a mouth and wisdom, which their adversaries should not be able to resist," ver. 15.; and that "not a hair of their head should perish,"

ver. 18. ; and thereupon exhorts them “patience to possess their souls,” ver. 19. If any should say, that this was an encouragement peculiar to them, the gospel has left one sufficient to support every true believer, 1 Cor. x. 13. “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Faith will refresh us with the prospect of a blessed issue of all ; that “blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him,” Jam. v. 12.

3. We should carefully cultivate the principle of love to God. That is the character of those who are declared blessed in the place just mentioned, and entitled to the crown of life after their trials. If, then, we love God in the darkest hours, we may take the comfort of that promise, and suppress all impatience in view of the approaching reward. And besides this, a strong affection to God will naturally put a good construction upon all his pleasure. We shall not think much of any service to which he calls us, when it is not only “the work of faith,” but “the labour of love,” 1 Thess. i. 3. Then no sufferings for him will be accounted hard, but we shall rather “rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” No waiting will be thought unreasonable, while we are satisfied he loves us ; and our love to him induces us to interpret all delays as consistent with that.

4. Let us often represent to our minds the present advantages of patience. It is its own reward, as impatience is its own punishment. What more advantageous view can be given of patience, than that of our Saviour, that by it we shall “possess our souls?” We shall keep reason and grace in the throne, and be capable of enjoying ourselves in all events ; whereas impatience lays aside the man, and either sets up the brute or the devil in us, leads us to act a foolish or an outrageous part. Patience lightens our burthen ; impatience doubles it, piercing the heart through with many sorrows. Patience is the likely way to disarm an enemy, it pleases and honours God, and keeps us in a posture to receive a deliverance from our troubles, or the accomplishment of our hopes, with a double relish.

5. We should often contemplate the great examples of patience: "Be followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises," Heb. vi. 12. "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us—run with patience the race that is set before us," chap. xii. 1. The observation of the great patterns of patience will convince us, that it is a practicable thing, and that the best of men have often had the most trying exercises; and it will be of use both to direct and excite to the practice.

Let us especially look unto Jesus for this purpose. Think what trials of patience he met with; the most difficult work to be performed, wherein he often met with the contradictions of sinners; the severest sufferings to be undergone; and a time to wait till his work was finished; for it is often observed in his history, that his time was not yet come. Let us observe, also, how he behaved in all these circumstances of trial; with the utmost regard to the will of God. This he came into the world to do; though that was the most amazing instance of humiliation, Heb. x. 7. When his last sufferings were at hand, while he expressed the desire of human nature, "Father, save me from this hour," he breathed also the calmest submission to his will, "Father, glorify thy name," John xii. 27, 28.; and in another evangelist, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," Matt. xxvi. 39. His patience was as illustrious to his injurious enemies, praying to his Father on the cross to forgive them, Luke xxiii. 34.; and, "when he was reviled by them, he reviled not again." And though he could have no relish for this world, any farther than to do good in it, yet he was content to stay God's time for finishing his work, though he was straitened with desire till it was accomplished, Luke xii. 50. Here was a perfect pattern for us to follow in the way to perfection.

But the examples of others of the excellent of the earth in this grace, are not without their use. As the apostle refers us, Heb. xii. 1. to the most eminent saints in general of the Old Testament, for an example of patience, as well as of faith; so we are directed in particular to "take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience," Jam. v. 10. Many of them, under the darker light of the Old Testament, as they met with ill treatment, and that for their fidelity to God, so were illustrious

patterns of patience. The apostles were the like under the New Testament; they were “our brethren and companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,” Rev. i. 9. You may see their case in that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 9.; they were “set forth, as it were appointed to death, made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men;” and ver. 11. they “hungered and thirsted, and were naked and buffeted, and had no certain dwelling-place.” Such examples shew us, that God’s highest favourites had very ill usage from the world, and great affliction in it; and their eminent behaviour is a noble pattern for imitation.

And it will be our wisdom particularly to turn our eye to those patterns, which are most directly suited to our circumstances from time to time. Job will furnish us with an example of patience in almost all the peculiarities that can attend afflictions of a common kind; and the noble army of martyrs and confessors will be of like use, if we are called to suffer persecution.

6. We should be earnest in prayer to God for this grace, Jam. i. 4, 5. “Let patience have her perfect work. If any of you lack wisdom (this wisdom of patience,) let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given unto him,” Patience is justly called here wisdom, by way of eminence, because it is one of the hardest, and yet one of the most excellent lessons of Christianity. Now, the apostle puts the very case in the text, “If any man lack wisdom;” and directs him to ask that very thing of God. He adds encouragements to such a prayer, “He giveth to all men liberally,” to all who uprightly ask it: and if he gives liberally, we shall have a plentiful stock to spend upon: “And upbraideth not,” either with coming often to ask it, as the occasions for exercising it are frequent, or even with past impatience, if men come with penitent hearts to beg a better frame. And as if this were not enough, he adds, “And it shall be given him;” to animate the assured hope of all sincere supplicants.

For a close,

1. Let those who are destitute of the principle be sensible of their need, and solicitous that they may obtain it. We should

consider patience as a frame, for which every day's occurrences give us some occasion, and when there is such occasion, patience is a very necessary duty, as necessary as it is to please God, to honour religion, to keep a good conscience, to run our Christian race well. We can no more inherit the promise without *patience* in a prevailing degree, than without an unfeigned *faith*.

2. Let us be solicitous to have this necessary principle daily strengthened, to exercise it upon every proper occasion, and that it may "have its perfect work." The full work of patience is the highest perfection of a Christian on earth.

Be solicitous to exert its most excellent acts. Not only that we may be preserved by it from sinking and murmuring, and notorious misbehaviour; but that there may be the most complacential acquiescence in the will of God, that we may be in a frame for praise in the darkest day: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Study to have the actings of patience easy and ready to you, as there is occasion; to be able to say with Paul, Acts xxi. 13. "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Be careful that the exercises of it be lasting; that it be a fixed habit, and not only by starts; like Moses, who made the exercise of patience so constant a practice, that we find but one instance to the contrary through his whole story.

And let there be a general exercise of this holy frame upon every occasion, in all the proper instances of it, however it may be tried; in great as well as in less trials, and in small exercises as well as in great; for sometimes impatience breaks out in men upon trivial occasions, after they have been signal for patience in great and shocking calamities, and in unusual trials, as well as in those to which we have been accustomed. Let our Master find us in such a frame at his coming, whenever it shall be.

SERMON XXVII.

LOVING OUR NEIGHBOUR AS OURSELVES.

MARK XXII. 39.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

THESSE words are part of an answer given by our Lord to a question, which was proposed to him by one of the Pharisees, with a captious intention, namely, "Which is the greatest commandment in the law?" ver. 35, 36. Christ, in return, cites two passages of the Old Testament, which contain the sum of both tables of the moral law, or of our duty to God and man; plainly intimating thereby, the man's inquiry to be a matter of vain curiosity; and that these great branches of our duty rather require our observation, than that we should set them in competition. "The love of God," and the proper expressions of that, are indeed "the first and great commandment," ver. 37, 38. It is first in order of nature, and in the pre-eminence of the object to which it relates; and it is the foundation of our duty to our neighbour.

But lest the Pharisee should run away with this just commendation of the first table, and either represent Christ as making light of the second, or excuse himself by Christ's authority in neglecting the second, while he paid a seeming regard to the first; our blessed Lord not only adds the second, but an emphatical recommendation of it also: *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy-*

self. Like the first, not only as the observance of that, as well as of the former, may be summed up in love ; but as it is prescribed by the same authority, and made by the great Lawgiver, as indispensably necessary as the other.

I, therefore, choose this precept, as our Lord does, to be a summary of the temper due from us to other people ; and so to stand at the head of the particular graces and virtues which have them for their direct object.

In the consideration of it, it will be proper to inquire,

I. Whom we are to understand by *our neighbour*.

II. What is intended by the *love* of our neighbour.

III. What is implied in the measure prescribed for this love ; to love him *as ourselves*. And,

IV. As this gracious command stands in the Christian institution, I would consider the special obligations from Christianity to such a temper.

I. It is a needful inquiry, whom we are to understand by *our neighbour*.

In the passage from which our Lord seems to quote the precept, this phrase appears to mean only a man of the Jewish religion, Lev. xix. 18. "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people ; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The "children of thy people" in the former sentence, and "thy neighbour" in the latter, seem terms of the same import and extent, denoting those of the Jewish nation and religion. It is, indeed, commanded in the same chapter, ver. 34. "The stranger that dwelleth with you, shall be as one born among you ; and thou shalt love him as thyself." But the Jews understood this only of such, who, though they were not born of the seed of Abraham, yet became proselytes of righteousness ; that is, voluntarily submitted to their law, and so became full members of their church and community.

Many proofs might be given of the narrowness of the Jewish charity. It plainly appears in the prejudice which remained in Peter's mind, even after Christ's ascension, against any converse with a devout Gentile, as Cornelius was, till God by immediate revelation, cured him of his bigotry. He spoke the common sense of his nation, when he

tells Cornelius and his friends, Acts x. 28. "Ye know that it is an unlawful thing, for a man that is a Jew, to keep company, or come unto one of another nation : but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." And we find how hardly digested this step of Peter's was at first, even by the converted Jews ; they "contended with him, because he went in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them," chap. xi. 2, 3. They went so far as to deny the common offices of humanity, or at least not to think themselves obliged to show them to any but a brother Jew ; for which a heathen poet justly lashes them, that they would not shew the way, or discover a spring to quench one's thirst, to any but those of their religion ; though he misrepresents the matter, when he makes this a precept of the law of Moses, for there is no such precept in it.

*Judaicum ediscant, et servant, et metuunt jus,
Tradidit arcano quodcumque volumine Moses ;
Non monstrare vias, eadem nisi sacra colenti ;
Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos.*

JUVENAL, Sat. 14.

The case was this : God had singled them out from other nations to be his peculiar people, and distinguished them by a more immediate government of his own. Now they understood their laws, even the moral itself, to be only the political laws of their community, and only to be observed toward their brethren of that favoured nation.

But Christ hath extended the community, to which our love is due, to all mankind with whom we have to do.

He plainly puts this extensive sense upon the term, "our neighbour," in Luke x. There, as well as in the text, he sums up our duty in "loving God, and loving our neighbour as ourselves," ver. 27. The person who was in conference with him, asks him thereupon, "And who is my neighbour?" ver. 29. Christ in return put a case, whether it was real, or supposed, is of no consequence, That a man falling into the hands of thieves on the road, was left by them in great distress. A Jewish priest, and afterwards a Levite, passed by, but neglected to give him any relief. These might be supposed to excuse themselves by saying, that they were not sure this

miserable man was a Jew, and therefore passed him by. At length another passenger, who was a Samaritan, came up to the place, and upon the mere sight of a man in distress, without staying to ask who or what he was, very tenderly compassionated and relieved him. Now, upon this case Christ appeals to the lawyer that had asked him, "Who is my neighbour?" with another question in return, ver. 36, "Which now of those three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?" Which performed the most neighbourly part to him? The lawyer could not help acknowledging, "He that shewed mercy on him." Then said Jesus unto him, "Go and do thou likewise," ver. 37.; though it should be a Samaritan that falls in thy way, though he should be a stranger, though he should be an enemy. The Jews and Samaritans had the greatest abhorrence one of another. Both shewed it in their treatment of Christ. The Samaritans at one time "would not receive him" into one of their cities, "because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem," Luke ix. 53. On the other hand, when some of the Jews were in a rage at Christ, they knew not a more opprobrious name to throw out against him, than to call him a Samaritan, with an addition as black as hell, John viii. 48. "Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?"

Now, the scene of the case which Christ put being in Judea, between Jerusalem and Jericho, it might well appear most probable to the Samaritan, that the distressed person was a Jew, and therefore not one whom he could consider as a brother in religion, but rather as an enemy; yet, being a fellow-creature in misery, he thought that alone sufficient to entitle him to offices of humanity. And herein Christ proposes him for our imitation.

We see then the comprehensive latitude in which Christ would have us to understand *our neighbour*. Not only, according to the usual sense of the word, our neighbours in stated vicinity of abode; or those we call relations: or such to whom we are peculiarly attached by previous acquaintance, or intimacy and friendship; or those from whom we have received, or may have a prospect of receiving benefits: not only good men, or those who are of "the household of faith;" though these and the like distinguished circumstances of some from others, may oblige us to a peculiar affection, and to more

particular and frequent ways of expressing it; yet all men are to be esteemed our neighbours, within the design of the command, who partake of the human nature, and because they do so.

II. I am to inquire, what is intended by *loving our neighbour*.

It is plain, that is designed for a summary of the duties of the second table or of those we owe to the rest of mankind; as loving God is of those we owe to him. So the apostle explains it, Rom. xiii. 8, 9. "He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And again, Gal. v. 14. "All the law," that is, relating to our neighbour, "is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

It is such a value for him, upon account of the excellencies of the rational nature which he hath in common with ourselves, as disposes us not to deny him any of his just rights, or do him any harm, and, on the other hand, to have a hearty goodwill to him, and to be ready to express it in all the proper offices of kindness and beneficence, as we have a just call and opportunity for it.

If it be asked, Why all our duty to our neighbour, as well as to God, is summed up in love? there are two principal reasons to be assigned for it.

1. Because a due temper of mind to our neighbour, as well as to God himself, is necessary to our acceptance. It is no purpose that we may attend to the principle, as well as to the external act, in this as in all other parts of our duty. Inward love to our neighbour, is the first thing which the spiritual law of God requires from us; and so ill-will and enmity, are the first transgressions of it. Though they proceed no farther than the heart, though our neighbour should receive no actual prejudice from them; yet they would make us transgressors in God's account, if we should "be angry with another without a cause," Matt. v. 22. If we should entertain a secret grudge, or malice, or envy, or unjust contempt in the heart, though it should never break out, though ex-

ternal appearances should be ever so fair ; yet these things will make us criminal in the sight of God.

2. Because all the particu- lar branches of our duty to our neighbour, will most naturally and easily flow from love to him. If a real inward love to men could be separated from the proper outward effects, then that would by no means be sufficient. The pretence of love may be separated from the fruits of it ; and that without doubt will fail of acceptance. And, therefore, we have that caution, 1 John iii. 18. “ My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue (only,) but in deed and in truth.”

But, therefore, all is comprehended in love, because genuine love will lay the most pleasing and powerful constraint upon us, to perform the several particular duties which are required from us. A man that loves his neighbour, will be pushed on by that affection to do the same things to him, which God requires of him as an act of obedience ; so that nothing, as one elegantly says, will remain to turn his temper into obedience, but to direct his attention, and to perform the effects of love in obedience to God, which he is strongly excited to by his own loving disposition.

Justice, and beneficence, or charity, comprehend all our duties to our neighbour ; and sincere love will effectually prompt to both. If we truly love our fellow-creatures, that will easily obviate any temptation to do them injury, in any concern we have with them, and will not suffer us to be wanting in any known point of duty to them. St Paul gives this as a reason for comprehending all under love, that it necessarily includes in it a disposition to righteousness, Rom. xiii. 10. “ Love worketh no ill to his neighbour ; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” And St John tells us, that it will make us inoffensive, 1 John ii. 10. “ He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him,” that is, this will secure him against giving just ground of offence.

And it will equally dispose to the performance of all good offices. It will be a “ law of kindness :” not only make us “ harmless and blameless,” but studious to do good, and to treat all as persons we love. Charity or love hath all those excellent properties assigned to it, which we find in 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7. because it has the most extensive influence to produce

them all : “ Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up ; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

III. We are to consider, what is implied in the measure prescribed for the love of our neighbour, that we should love him *as ourselves*.

1. This plainly supposes the lawfulness of some self-love.

The love of ourselves is not, indeed, in so many words made the matter of a precept, as the love of God and of our neighbour are ; because we have it by instinct of nature, and necessarily, so that we can divest ourselves of it, without putting off humanity at the same time. We need not, therefore, an exhortation to self-love in general, because it is not indeed a matter of choice, we cannot help it. All that is proper to be the subject of a command, is the regulation of this natural principle ; a direction of us to our truest interest, that we may not pursue a false scent in our general tendency toward happiness. And this is the business of God’s commands, in keeping of which there is great reward, our duty being made our interest. All God’s promises, and threatenings, and warnings, are an appeal to this natural principle ; they suppose it to be lawful to seek our own welfare, and commendable to take the truest measures for promoting it.

We not only may, but ought to love and seek the welfare of our bodies, as far as that consists with our superior interests. “ No man,” says the apostle, “ ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it,” Eph. v. 29. ; no man in his right wits. And for our truest self, our souls, our Saviour represents the folly of neglecting the care of them, Luke ix. 25. “ What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself?”

When, therefore, it is made a term of being Christ’s disciple, that a man “ must deny himself,” Luke ix. 23. it only signifies, that he must be content to deny his own sinful inclinations, and irregular passions, and sometimes his present ease and humour, and secular interests, but all for the sake of his greater interests, to advantage himself in a higher degree. And when it is described as one of the bad characters of the last

times, that "men should be lovers of their own selves," 2 Tim. ii. 2. it only means that unreasonable love of ourselves, which we call selfishness, or such a self-love as excludes the love of God and of our neighbour. But there is a love of ourselves, which is not only allowed, but it is the necessary foundation of all religion, and is here made the measure of our love to our neighbour.

2. When we are taught to love our neighbour *as ourselves*, it may intimate the reason upon which we should be well-affected to our neighbour. We should not consider others (as we are apt to do mankind at large, unless they are more nearly attached to us than by a participation of the same general nature,) as such in whom we have no concern, or who are altogether remote from us, but as in a moral sense ourselves: as we say of a friend or a family-relation, he is to us as ourselves; or as it is said of Jonathan with respect to David, he "loved him as his own soul," 1 Sam. xviii. 1. In truth, every man should, in a sense, be so esteemed by us all. We stand in nearer relations, and under more special obligations, to some than to others; but we are so nearly related and allied to all, that it claims our love. This will be more enlarged upon presently.

3. It may be considered as a direction to the proper ways of expressing our love to our neighbour. If it should be asked, How we are to express our love to our neighbour? there cannot be a more instructive answer in so few words than this: *Love him as yourselves*. How does your love to yourself work? You know the motions of your own heart, how the pulse of self-love beats, and what you are ready to do upon that impulse for your own welfare. Now, if you had no other instructor or monitor to teach your duty to your neighbour, you might have sufficient direction by attending to the acts and fruits of your love to yourselves. We know by feeling what it is to love ourselves, and what that carries us to do: the precept before us prescribes this very thing for the rule of our temper and conduct to our neighbour; it leaves us, as it were to prescribe to ourselves, and to take the measure from ourselves: as if it had been said, "Judge ye of your own selves," and by yourselves, "what is right" in this matter.

Are we not tenacious of our own rights, and very sensible

of any injury or injustice done us by others? If we love them as we love ourselves, it will lead us to justice and righteousness; to be tender of their rights, as we are of our own; and to be careful that we do them no harm, any more than ourselves.

We are quick at discerning any thing valuable in ourselves, and apt enough to support our own character. If our love to others be like that which we bear to ourselves, it will teach us to observe any thing that is valuable in them, and to pay them the regard and respect due to them, according to what is amiable and commendable in them. And such an impartial view of the excellencies of others, as well as of our own, would be a strong argument to humility.

We heartily desire our own welfare in every instance, according to the best apprehensions we can form of it; nor do we content ourselves with mere good wishes, but take pains to obtain the several good things upon which our hearts are set. And if we are in earnest religious, this is our temper and conduct for ourselves, with reference to spiritual and eternal blessings, as well as for other comforts desirable in their places. The same disposition extended to our neighbours, would form us to universal benevolence, and to be active and industrious in doing good to the souls and bodies of men.

We apply to other people, who we think may be helpful to us in our difficulties, and in promoting our interests. Love to them will make us ready to help them according to our capacity. This would lead to a merciful disposition.

We are not prone to be soon angry with ourselves, or to put the worst construction upon our own actions, or to publish our own faults: but we are apt to complain of other people's indecent passions to us, of their censoriousness, and of their divulging reports unnecessarily to our disadvantage. We should take the hint from that, to exercise meekness and charity to our neighbours, and to "speak evil of no man" without just reason.

We take pleasure in our own welfare in any instance, and are tenderly affected with our own burthens and sorrows. Love to our neighbour will dispose us to bear a sensible part in his joys and afflictions; "to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep."

And we might carry on the same comparison through all the graces and virtues incumbent on us towards other people.

4. This bespeaks the high degree of love due from us to our neighbour. We are to love him as ourselves.

I cannot, indeed, apprehend that a strict equality is meant. Our charity, or love, is certainly to begin at home. That is, indeed, imported in its being made the measure of our love to others. And every man is to consider himself as charged, in the first place, with himself. We are neither to take the same pains for the souls, nor for the bodies of others, as for our own.

We are not to extend an equal love to all others alike, but in proportion to what is lovely and amiable in them. Hence good men justly claim a more distinguishing share in our affection than others. "The excellent of the earth, in whom is all my delight," Psal. xvi. 3.

Nor have all at large an equal right to the expressions of our love. Those under our immediate care and charge, in our families or otherwise, require our more special endeavours for the good of their souls; and our own families are first to be provided for in their temporal interest. Men are not to be beneficent to others, to the real detriment of their own families. And I believe many are unjustly censured of covetousness, because they do not as much for others as they expect, when really the circumstances of themselves and their families, which are unknown to the world, will not admit of it. Every man must judge for himself, as in the sight of God, what is fit for him to do; and other people should be very slow in censuring, where they have not sure grounds to go upon.

But yet certainly, though this precept prescribes not an entire equality, yet it bespeaks a high degree of affection due to our neighbour.

That we should love him with equal sincerity as we do ourselves: be as entirely free from all enmity and malice, and ill-will to him, as to ourselves; and no more allow ourselves to injure him.

We should as readily observe and own any thing truly commendable in another, as in ourselves; and as willingly make allowances for his imperfections as our own. In the matter

of estimation, we should endeavour to be impartial; not flattering ourselves, or underrating the excellencies of others, Rom. xiii. 10. "Be kindly-affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."

There ought to be an alacrity and delight in doing any good offices we are capable of to others, as well as when we are serving ourselves, which is "loving them fervently," 1 Pet. 1. 22.

Yea, there are cases wherein we are to prefer their interest to a loss of our own, or their spiritual and eternal welfare to our present advantage or safety. St John tells us, 1 John iii. 16. that in some cases "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Either be content to hazard them in martyrdom, when our flight and quitting the field of battle may be foreseen likely to expose some we are nearly concerned with to fall from their stedfastness. St. Paul could say, with reference to his beloved Philippians, chap. ii. 17. "If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." Or we may be called to venture our lives for the defence of the innocent, when they are injuriously assaulted; or to assist our neighbours in an imminent danger: or especially to hazard our own lives to secure and save much more valuable lives than our own. So Priscilla and Aquila had for Paul's "life laid down their own necks," that is, exposed themselves to screen Paul in some extreme danger he had been in, for which they had the "thanks of all the churches of the Gentiles," Rom. xvi. 4.

IV. I proceed to shew the special obligations which Christianity lays upon us to the love of our neighbour. To this end we may observe, that,

1. Christianity hath eminently provided to carry our love to this large extent, to consider every man as our neighbour. While it has laid a foundation for a more distinguishing affection to our brethren in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, it leads us to consider all men as near to us, and gives us many uniting views of them. For instance,

It represents the natural relation and alliance which there is between all men as such. The gospel calls us back to contemplate the common original of our natures, that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face

of the earth," Acts xvii. 26. So that we are to consider ourselves and others as all descended from one common father; not only from Adam, the father of our flesh; but, as he was the son of God, we are all in common the offspring of our Father in heaven, ver. 29. When we look upon the meanest, or even the worst of men, we should make the reflection which Job did in reference to his servants, and for the sake of which he durst not despise them, Job xxxi. 13—15. "Did not he that made me in the womb, make them? and did not one fashion us in the womb?" And this common Father is yet more eminently so, as he is the Father of spirits, as he has breathed into them and us living, reasonable, and immortal souls; which gives a dignity and rank to men in the order of beings above the visible creation: "There is a spirit in man," in every man; "and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding," Job. xxxii. 8. Now, this similitude of nature, especially of reasonable powers, is a just ground of universal love.

The gospel also acquaints us with the common state of apostacy and misery in which all mankind is involved: "All the world is become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19. This, indeed, sullies the amiableness of the whole race; but, at the same time, represents us one to another, as in like circumstances of distress and danger, and therefore should induce to common compassion and sympathy, and mortify that pride, upon other accounts, which might tempt us to set ourselves unduly above others.

On the other hand, the good-will of God to men in general, is proclaimed in the gospel, and the kind aspect of redemption, not upon the Jewish inclosure only, but upon all without distinction. "Christ is the propitiation for our sins," says St. John, "and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii. 2. By that he has broken down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, the Jewish covenant of peculiarity, and its appendages. Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; for in Christ Jesus "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female;" there is no difference between them in their capacity of acceptance with God upon the terms of the gospel; "for they are all one in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 28. Therefore, Peter declares, that "God

had shewed him, that he should not call any man common or unclean," Acts x. 28. Not common, because he was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel; nor unclean, merely because he submitted not to the law of Moses. Now, this common proposal of a way of salvation to all men, should cement affection and inclination to one another.

Especially when we consider, also, that we are taught hereby to look upon all men as such who may possibly, at least, share with us in the heavenly happiness. Suppose them ever so bad at present, yet by the grace of God this may be their case. Which certainly should invigorate our endeavours that it may be so, and dispose us to every other friendly office by the way.

Upon such principles as these, Christianity most expressly commands universal love, and the proper expressions of it. That we should "abound in love one toward another, and toward all men," 1 Thess. iii. 12. "Be patient toward all men," chap. v. 14. And "shew meekness to all men," Tit. iii. 2. That we should "do good to all men," Gal. vi. 10. And "make supplications, and prayers, and intercessions, and giving of thanks, for all men," 1 Tim. ii. 1.

2. The gospel lays the greatest stress upon this duty. Christ emphatically calls it "his new commandment, by which all men should know his disciples." John xiii. 34, 35. It is represented as the very design of the gospel dispensation, 1 Tim. i. 5. "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." St. Peter puts a very special mark of distinction upon it, among his practical exhortations, and that in prospect of the end of all things as at hand: "Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves," 1 Peter iv. 7, 8. The want of it is declared to be a sure evidence of a state of death, 1 John iii. 14, 15. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer; and ye know, that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." What an honour is put upon this command in the text, when our Lord declares it to be like the first," of loving God! He condescends, as it were, to place it upon a level with the other, at least to make it as indispensably necessary: and no wonder, when true love to God will cer-

tainly produce this, 1 John iv. 20. "If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Our Saviour plainly intimates, that God will not accept our solemn sacrifices to himself, while we are under the power of an uncharitable spirit, by directing us to go and seek reconciliation with our brother, before we offer our gift, Matt. v. 23, 24.

3. A general love is recommended to us by the greatest and noblest examples. Not to insist now upon those of the best men,

God himself is our pattern herein. How extensive is his goodness to all creatures, especially to all his intelligent creatures! How illustrious and sensible the fruits of it! How free and disinterested are all the expressions of his grace! All he does for mankind, is contrary to their deserts. Yet he "does not willingly afflict the children of men; but his mercies are new every morning, and fresh every moment." He is daily protecting and providing for the wants of our bodies; and most condescending and constant in his compassion for our souls. He "found out a ransom for us; spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all," unmasked; and is ever ready to give good things, even his good Spirit himself, "to them that ask him."—Should not this inspire us with such a godly temper in our measure? He is directly proposed to us as an example herein. In his common bounty to good and bad, Matt. v. 44, 45. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven," may shew by your resembling him herein, that you are his genuine offspring; "for he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust." In like manner his grace in giving his Son is set before us in the way of an example, 1 John iv. 10, 11. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." And St Paul calls us to "be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us:" herein "being followers of God as dear children," Eph. iv. 32. chap. v. 1.

The blessed Jesus, or the Son in our nature, is often in like manner recommended as our example herein. The gospel-history is one continued account of his benignity and grace to mankind. This brought him down from his throne of glory into our nature and world. His life was one continued course of action for the good of men's souls and bodies. He "went about doing good," Acts x. 38.; was full of compassion to people in their various afflictions; and thought nothing too mean, nothing too much, to do for the benefit of those who applied to him, and often sought out occasions of doing good offices. And his death was entirely designed to be an expression of his unparalleled love to a sinful world, in conjunction with his love to his Father. And both in life and death, he shewed amazing tenderness to his worst enemies. And as this his conduct is in itself most fit to be a moving example to us, so the gospel often calls us to attend to it as such. The beneficent mind he shewed in condescending to assume our nature, to be so surprisingly humbled in it, and to become obedient unto death, is elegantly described by the apostle in Phil. ii. on purpose to excite us to have "the same mind in us as was in Christ." And to dispose Christians to charity in distress, the apostle puts them in mind of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. viii. 9. And so in Eph. v. 2. we are exhorted to "walk in love, as Christ loved us, and hath given himself for us."

4. The blessed world we have in view should raise our souls to this lovely temper. That is a world of perfect love. While the use of faith and hope will be superceded there, "charity never faileth," but arrives at its consummation there; and, therefore, is the greatest of the three, 1 Cor. xiii. 8—13.

I shall put a period to this discourse with three exhortations upon what has been said.

1. Carefully regulate your love to yourselves. To press you to wish well to yourselves in general, would be superfluous; for it is impossible you should do otherwise. But to press you to the due regulation of this principle, is one main design of the gospel. Let not your self-love exert itself under the government of ill-placed affections, or tumultuous passions, or unreasonable humour; but let reason and consid-

eration direct you in the choice of your true happiness, and then let your pursuit or refusal of other things be subordinated to that. This is a necessary point of conduct for your own interest and advantage ; and it is as necessary to conduct you in your duty to your neighbour also.

2. Be on your guard against selfishness, or such an addictedness to yourselves, as shall confine your regards within the narrow circle of self. Such a self-love is the main principle of all the evils and disorders in the world ; it makes men undutiful to God, and useless, if not pernicious, to those about them.

It would go a great way to the cure of this, if men would entertain a humble sense of their own post in the universe : how small it is in that comparative view, and yet that it is as a link in the chain, which, if out of order, or separated from the rest, may occasion many disorders. We should think of the dependence we have upon others, and our frequent need of them ; and how ill an aspect selfishness has in them, even in our own account. But especially, we should often consider ourselves as, in common with others, the subjects of the Majesty in the heavens, who assigns every man his post in life, and will call him to an account for his behaviour in it.

3. If we have learned a rectified love and affection to ourselves, let us carry the same temper into our behaviour to others. Then we shall “serve our generation,” and, at the same time do it “according to the will of God,” without prejudice to ourselves in any of our truest interests, and, indeed, with the greatest pleasure to ourselves.

Ever remember the importance and weight of this duty. I should be sorry any Christian should call it dry morality, when it is so essential a branch of Christianity, inculcated by our Lord and Master, and all his apostles, explained or hinted at in most pages of the gospel, made necessary to our final acceptance, and frequently urged upon us on the foot of the greatest and most distinguishing doctrines of the gospel.

SERMON XXVIII.

DOING UNTO OTHERS, AS WE WOULD BE
DONE UNTO.



MATT. VII. 12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

OUR blessed Master hath given us two short summaries of our duty to our neighbour. One is that already insisted upon, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” and the other is contained in the passage now read. Both of them are near akin, and yet in some respects different. An appeal is made in both to every man’s own self; and the principle of self-love is supposed to be lawful, natural, and necessary, when men are pointed to it as the measure of their temper and conduct to other people. But there is this difference: in the former, we are directly referred to our *self-love* itself, as the measure of our love to others, on the score of the relation wherein, on many accounts, we are to consider them as standing to us: in this summary, the expectations we have from others, in reference to ourselves, are offered as the measure of our acting toward them. The former is most properly a rule of *charity*, but this of *righteousness* and *equity*.

In the prosecution of this maxim, I would,

- I. Offer some things for explaining and stating it.
- II. Shew the strong obligations we are under to it. And,

III. The great usefulness and advantage of attending to it in our conduct.

I. It may be proper to offer some things for the due explaining and stating of this maxim. For, however excellent and proper it may be, yet, if it is not rightly understood, we may be misled under the countenance of it. The following particulars may be worthy of our consideration.

1. The measure proposed, is not what other people *actually do* to us, but what *we would that they should do* to us. I should not need to mention this, but that in fact it is so common a measure of practice, and what people are apt to allow and justify themselves in, if they go no farther than retaliation. ‘Such a man refused to do me a kind office, when it was in his power; and why should I serve him when it is in mine? He treated me with rigour and severity, when he had an opportunity for it; and why should not I make him a return in the same kind?’ But this is the language of a heated, and not of a Christian spirit, of passion, and not of reason or grace. For I cannot be justified by that which another does, in doing what I condemn in him; that which was faulty in him must be faulty in me too. The law of nature, indeed, will allow of self-defence, but not of private revenge, any farther than is necessary to a man’s own security. Christianity especially teaches us a better measure of acting, than other men’s behaviour to us. From this very rule in the text, St Luke represents Christ as leading his disciples to do good offices to those who have never yet obliged them, and even to those who have actually disobliged them, Luke vi. 31—35. “As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners do also the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies.” Gratitude for benefits received is an excellent temper, and what is very much wanting in the world; but it is not the height to which Christianity calls us, and to which the maxim in the text should carry us: we should shew kindness, as we have opportunity, to those who have not

conferred any benefit upon us already, and even to such who have done us ill offices. We have a plain rule against governing our conduct to others by their ill usage of us, Rom. xii. 19—21. “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay it, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

2. What we actually would that others should do to us, is not, in all cases, a rule of our duty to them, but the lawfulness of the action is to be presupposed. It will not follow that I *ought* to do or to forbear a thing to my neighbour, or that I *may* do so, merely because I am content, or even desirous, that he should do or forbear the like to me. That inclination and desire of mind, must first be known to agree with the law of God. A notorious drunkard may be willing to be intoxicated and made a beast by another; but it is not, therefore, one jot the more lawful for him to do the like to another in his turn. A man resolutely set upon an evil course, cares not to be disturbed in it by the reproofs or counsels of his superiors or friends; but that does not lessen his obligation to be a monitor to other sinners, especially to those under his care and charge. It is his sin, and owing to his insensibleness of his own true interest, that he would not that others would do so to him; and it is his additional sin, that he neglects, on his part, what the law of God has made his duty to others. A man's desire, that others should either do an unlawful thing, or neglect their duty to himself, will not justify or excuse the like evil actions or omissions in him. To suppose that it would, must be to subject the holy and righteous law of God to men's irregular inclinations and lusts, and so to render it of no effect. Our desires, therefore, from others, must first be known to be fit and reasonable, and not disagreeable to the will of God, before they are made the measure of our conduct to them.

3. When we and others are in different circumstances, we are not obliged by this measure of action, to do exactly *the same things* to them, as we desire or expect from them, but the same things in our circumstances, as we should expect from them, if they were in our condition, and we in theirs.

God, in the course of nature and providence, places men in different relations one to another, in various stations and conditions, and has affixed duties peculiar to each of these. Now, the intention of this maxim cannot be to confound all relations, and the duties belonging to them; as, if, for instance, all that a father may expect from a child, or a master from a servant, or a prince from his subjects, was therefore to be done by such superiors to their inferiors. But the plain meaning is, that a father, a master, a prince, should consider what he should reasonably desire and expect from one in a correspondent relation, if he were a child, a servant, or a subject, and then act accordingly. Thus, after the apostle had laid down the duty of servants, he directs, Eph. vi. 9. "And ye masters, do the same things to them;" not just the same actions as they, by their relation, are obliged to do to you, but see that you perform the duty of your place, as you expect of them the duty of theirs, and with such a manner of behaviour in your peculiar station, as you would account equitable from a master, if you were servants yourselves: one instance of which he immediately mentions, "forbearing threatening" all rough, morose, or churlish words or actions, when there is no necessity for them.

4. We are not obliged to do all that to others, which we might probably be glad they would do to us, if we were in their case, but all that we could expect from them as matter of right and duty. It is hardly to be doubted, but any poor man would be glad that a rich person would not only supply his extreme necessity, but give him a good part of his estate, so as to make his circumstances easy and plentiful; and it is very likely, that if we were poor, we might be of his mind. A rich man, who is master of his own estate, may lawfully gratify such a desire, but then he may lawfully forbear it also. Now, that such a generous action of a rich man would be very welcome to any poor man, and to ourselves in particular, if we were poor, cannot be said to lay an obligation upon any to do so much. Those in prosperous circumstances are bound by this rule to do to another, not all that they might in his circumstances be glad of, but all that they had good reason to expect upon the foundation of justice, or charity, or friendship, or relation.

The sense of our Lord's maxims amounts to this: 'In all

your dealings with other men, suppose yourselves in the same particular state and circumstances wherein they are, and think what treatment, what kindness, what allowances, you would reckon yourselves to have a just claim to expect at their hands, if they were in your case, and you in theirs ; and then be the same to them in your thoughts, and words, and actions, as you would have them to be to you ; and never allow yourselves to do that to others, which you would account injurious, or matter of just complaint, in your own case.

II. I proceed to shew the strong obligations we are under to be of this temper.

1. It is founded in the reason of things, and is one of the plainest dictates and laws of nature ; such a precept as approves itself to the mind of a reasonable creature, as soon as he hears and understands it, so as not to need any laboured proof. Every man is ready to own the equity of it in theory, even such whose vicious and depraved inclinations carry them off from the practice ; those who will not make it the rule of their own actions, yet expect others to make it the rule of theirs, and are ready to complain when it is not observed to themselves. It is, indeed, the basis of all justice and equity between man and man, every instance of which may be reduced to this measure, and proved by it.

The obligation to it results from the sameness of nature, which our great Creator has given to all mankind, as all descending from one original, consisting of like souls and bodies ; and, therefore, whatever rights one has by virtue of this nature, must be common to all, and equal in all. In respect of nature, we are all upon a level, and every man stands equally obliged to another. I am equally obliged to be just, and kind, and grateful to another, as he is obliged to be so to me, because God has made us all alike in the essential state and perfections of our nature. For accidental differences between men, they cannot cancel or lessen these common rights which are founded in nature. And besides that, it is very possible, in the changeableness of human affairs, and frequently seen in experience, that such accidental differences may cease, or the conditions of men be perfectly inverted. He who is now a servant may become a master, and the master be reduced to the state of a servant : the rich may be abased, and the poor exalt-

ed. I may come to be in the station, or relation, or condition, of another man, with whom I compare myself, and actually need that office from him, which he now expects from me. This makes it ever reasonable, and prudent too, to put myself in his circumstances, since they may be my own, and to behave to him accordingly.

This maxim is so agreeable to natural light, that some heathen writers inculcate the same thing in sense. Especially the Greek orator Isocrates applies it to several cases. He lays it down as the first maxim of virtue necessary to be attended to by youth, next to the veneration of God: "Be such to your parents, as you would have your children to be to you."* And he advises princes to "carry it towards neighbouring communities that are weaker than their own, as they would have those which are stronger to behave to them."† So he represents a wise and good king directing his subjects to "approve themselves such to others under them, as they expected him to be to themselves;"‡ and "not to do to others, what they cared not to bear from others."§ We are told, that "the first founders of the empire of the Incas in Peru (which the tradition of that people represents as an empire of vast antiquity,) taught this as one of their first rules, and indeed upon a very clear and cogent reason, that men should neither say nor do any thing to others, that they were not willing others should say or do to them, because it was against all reason to make one law for ourselves, and another for other people."|| Would to God that all Christians would govern themselves by so clear and undeniable a principle.

2. *This is the law and the prophets.* So our Saviour declares in the text; that is, all the duties to our neighbour prescribed by Moses, or by the succeeding prophets under the Old Testament, are comprehended in this, and may be reduced to it; they are but so many branches and explications of this general rule. For the assistance of men's weakness and unthoughtfulness, God saw meet, when he was pleased to vouchsafe a revelation, to be express in enjoining the several

* Orat. ad Demonic. Ed. II. Steph. p. 4. † Id. ad Nicoel. Orat. 2. p. 19.

‡ Id. ad Nicoel. Orat. 3. p. 37.

§ Ib. p. 37.

|| Sir William Temple's Miscel. Part. 2. Ess. Sect. 3.

particulars of social duty ; he knew that in the present depraved state, when our sinful prejudices and selfish biases are so many and so strong, all would be little enough to awaken men to the consideration of their duty. But it is much to the honour of this maxim, that it is the short contents of all the directions, left in the name of God by the law and the prophets, how one man should behave to another.

3. It is still more strongly enforced upon us by Christianity.

Our Lord and Master himself has left us this summary, and that at the close of his most instructive sermon, wherein he had so clearly and distinctly explained our duty in the most important particulars of it.

The context enforces it by an additional motive, which is implied in the word that introduces the precept, *Therefore*. In the verses before, Christ encourages us to apply to God in our various wants, with an assurance of his gracious answer to our requests ; and, to animate our hope, argues from the readiness of earthly parents to gratify the desires of their children, to the greater readiness of our common Father in heaven to fulfil the proper desires of us his children on earth ; whereupon he adds, *Therefore all things, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them ;* making it an inference of God's benignity to us. And the deduction may be made, "in point of ingenuity and gratitude." Doth the great God, who is infinitely above us, and can never be capable of needing any thing from us, readily give to mankind whatever they can reasonably expect from a kind and loving Father ? And is there not much more reason that we should deal so with one another ? If we are obliged to be followers of God as dear children, we should readily afford others, after that bright and disinterested pattern, all needful aid, which they may desire of us as a matter of equity, or humanity, or charity. Or this duty to our neighbour may be proposed "as a necessary term of God's hearing our requests." Such is the benignity of his nature, that he is very ready to hear us ; but he has fixed a constitution, which gives no foundation to hope that he will graciously answer our prayers, if we are unjust or uncharitable to our neighbours. Therefore, that we may have the benefit of such an encouraging declaration, let us diligently attend to all the duties of civil

righteousness ; for God will deal with us, as we deal with others. Declarations to this purpose are very express in scripture, Isa. i. 15—18. “When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you ; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear ; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord ; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” Chap. lviii. 9, 10. “Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer ; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am : if thou take away from the midst of thee, the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity ; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul.”

It may be added, that the gospel has more clearly put all men upon a level, than seemed to be done by the Jewish covenant of peculiarity, as was shewn in a former discourse ; and, therefore strengthens our obligation to make this a rule of our conduct to all men.

III. I am to shew the vast usefulness and advantage of this measure of behaviour.

1. It is equally fit for the direction of all. It is, indeed, so simple and obvious a measure of acting, that the plainest and most illiterate people, who are not capable of long and intricate reasonings, in order to the discovery of their duty, may receive light from it, as well as those of the most enlarged capacities and attainments. Here is a short and easy way to come at the knowledge of their duty ; namely, to turn inward, and catechise themselves in such a familiar manner as this : ‘Should not I esteem it a hardship, to be treated myself as I am about to treat this person ? Why then should I put that upon him, which I should account injurious from him ? What should I think myself to have reason to expect from another, in the same circumstances or relation wherein I now stand, if I had occasion for his good offices ? Should not I reckon the same expectations reasonable from me, and act accordingly ?’ This inward monitor may immediately and easily bring any man to the point of duty.

2. It will be of singular use in sudden emergencies. Many cases occur in life, wherein we have not time for long deliberation, but must speedily, and upon the spot, determine either to do or to forbear a thing. In such a case, the wisest, as well as the weakest, have sometimes need of a short rule, to which they may have recourse for present direction. This is one advantage of having the mind well stored with the express precepts of revelation, that we may immediately call them to mind in an hour of temptation, or upon a sudden incident, to point us to our duty, and engage us to the practice of it, upon the authority of God. Now, this one general rule will hardly fail to furnish us with sufficient light for our immediate conduct in any part of social duty. That may emphatically be said of this command, which Moses applies more generally: "It is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. But it is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it," Deut. xxx. 11—14.

3. It will contribute to impartiality in our judging concerning our duty to others. When we judge amiss in any case, to the prejudice of our neighbour's just claims from us, it is owing to an inordinate self-love, which gives us too strong a bias to that side of the question, that is most in our own favour. But if we will change persons, and suppose those concerned on the other side of the question to be our very selves, then a real hardship to them will appear in its native colours. In one sense, we shall put ourselves out of the reckoning; that is, as far as self-interest gave an irregular bias; by pulling ourselves into the reckoning in another sense, that is, by considering what judgment we should pass, if the case were our own. So that is the surest way to form an impartial judgment.

4. This will minister light both in what we ought to do, and in what we ought to forbear, toward other men. It is a rule that holds both negatively and positively, though the text, indeed, only expresses it in the positive form. To do to others, what we have reason to insist that they should not do to us, is unjust and injurious, and not to do what we might reasonably desire at their hands, is at least unequal and uncharitable.

5. This will contribute to make our duty easy and pleasant; when it is set in so advantageous a light, and recommended

by so near and moving an argument. This maxim, if we attend to it, will not only be full of light, but heat also. It will sweetly draw us to our duty by the most ingenuous motive, and make those very considerations from ourselves to push us on to a due behaviour to others, which, without such a change of persons, are the common impediments of it.

6. It will be of service to discover and enforce our duty to others in the whole compass of it. It will be an universal directory. Every obligation to other men, which either can be made out by other reasonings to be a dictate of nature, or which is inculcated by express revelation, may be deduced from this maxim. Our own minds, as far as we are justly apprised of our own interest, will give suffrage to the justice and goodness of it in our own case, and, therefore, ought to do the like in the case of others. For instance,

In common and general conversation, this maxim will be a proper monitor for decency and regularity of behaviour. Reason and scripture prescribe to us modesty and humility in our converse, without assuming and overbearing airs; courteousness, civility, and respect to all, according to their stations and characters; a care not to give offence by word or action; meekness and the government of our tempers, in opposition to indecent heats and outrageous passions. And this rule directs and strongly engages to just the same things. A reflection upon what we expect or censure in other people's conversation with us, will direct us to all that in our own conduct which is the beauty and pleasure of society, and warn us against those things which are the blemish and the bane of it.

In negotiation and commerce, the same rule will prescribe the most exact justice and righteousness in all our dealings. We shall not take advantage of our own power, and another's poverty and helpless condition, or his necessary dependance upon us, to oppress him, or bear hard upon him in any instance; the rich will not "grind the faces of the poor," when this is made the rule of acting. What should I think of being so used, if I were in their condition? The strictest honesty and truth in trade would flow from the same principle. The apostle's precept, that "no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter," 1 Thess. iv. 6. would be the easiest thing in the world to practise; no man would find any tempta-

tion to the contrary, if all would but agree to observe this rule ; for who is not ready to complain and clamour when he finds himself over-reached and cheated by another ? Would any man allow himself to have diverse weights and measures (in the Hebrew it is “ a weight and a weight, a measure and a measure,” that is, one to buy by, and another to sell by,) if he did but allow himself to consider, that it is not only “ an abomination to the Lord,” but even to himself, when men use him in that manner ? Prov. xx. 10. Would you allow yourselves to make a false representation of the goodness and value of that which you expose to sale ? or, on the other hand, to depreciate the value of a commodity, below what you esteem it to be intrinsically worth, when you are a buyer, if you made it a law to yourselves to do to others as you would be done unto ? Would you take advantage of other people’s unskilfulness, or of their necessity, to put ill things upon them for good, or at an exorbitant price, if this were your measure of acting ? This principle would carry you honestly and honourably to the execution of every contract and engagement, to the utmost of your power ; to the payment of your debts, to the performance of every trust you have undertaken, with exact fidelity ; for would not you in justice expect the same yourselves ? Abundance of practices, in the course of business, for which people think they can offer a plausible excuse, would not bear a trial by this standard, and would not sit easy upon their consciences, if they did but accustom themselves to appeal to it, however they may make a shift to justify themselves before men.

In cases where others need our compassion and kindness, this will be equally serviceable. How ready will a man be to do good offices to others, according to their necessity and his own ability, who consults his own heart ; and what bowels of compassion he would think himself entitled to, if he were the needy person, if he would allow himself to think it very possible that this may come to be his own case, and especially if he must recollect, that this has already been his case in fact, and what his expectations then were ? God touches the Israelites in this feeling strain, Exod. xxiii. 9. “ Thou shalt not oppress a stranger : for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” To know the heart of another in distress or want, or destitute of friends, either by

considering the circumstances of such a condition, though we have not shared in it ourselves, or especially from our own former feeling, would produce a tenderness and enlarged heart to others in misery; and it would induce us to an obliging and compassionate manner, as well as to give them our assistance itself; to do it cheerfully, without tedious intreaty, without a haughtiness of behaviour, with all the marks of good-will and complacency; for if we were in distress, we should think the value of a benefit greatly lessened by a disagreeable manner of conferring it.

In censures and reflections upon others, this rule will be of singular use. If we examine our own hearts, do we not think that we have reason on our side, when we blame others for meddling with our character to our disadvantage, while they have no concern with us? or for putting the worst construction upon doubtful actions? or for spreading accusations of us, before they are well assured of the truth of them? or for proclaiming even our real faults, when they are not able to plead any justifiable reason for it from charity to others, or from the demands of justice? or for their not making reasonable allowances for lesser faults? If they should, for instance, represent that as "a beam in our eye," which they let pass "as a mote in their own!" In such cases as these, should not we think ourselves aggrieved? Let us turn the tables, and beware of giving reason to others for any such complaints concerning us.

In case of provocations, this precept would be a good clue to our thoughts and actions. We should complain of the hastiness of our neighbour, if he were quick in resenting a word or action of ours, which we are conscious was not ill intended: of his severity and uncharitableness, if he should presently take advantage of a rash or unguarded expression or action, to expose us to disgrace, or expense, or punishment: and of his inexorableness and cruelty, if, when he had us at mercy, he should not be ready to forgive, upon proper acknowledgement and reasonable satisfaction. If men were of this mind on all sides in the world, there would be few quarrels, or they would be short-lived, and not run into the pernicious and extravagant consequences which too often ensue upon them.

In the several relations of life, this would secure the peace and order both of families and communities, and of all ranks of people. Was but this precept ever present to the mind,

the greatest would be restrained from insolence, oppression, and tyranny ; and, on the other hand, it would be as effectual to silence many murmurings and complaints of those in inferior stations, because superiors do not every thing to their mind, though they cannot charge them with injustice ; or because of some lesser faults, though for the main they fill up their stations well. If we were in their stations, should we be content to be arraigned at every one's humour, and censured without a crime alleged ? Should not we expect allowances for multiplicity of cares and various expectations from us. Let this teach us a decent behaviour to our governors. A son growing up to maturity, will not think it hard to continue his dutiful respect and submission to his parents, if he thinks what he should reasonably expect from children of his own : nor would parents willingly provoke their children to wrath, by causeless or immoderate severities, if they recollected that they once knew the heart of a child.

And, to mention no more, this rule would be of admirable use in religious differences. Had it been attended to, it would effectually have prevented the entrance of persecution into the world. No man, then, would bear hard upon another, when he has it in his power, because of his different sentiments or practices in matters of religion, as long as he is peaceable and inoffensive ; for who would be willing to be so served himself ? Every man, who has a conscience, must be sensible how uncomfortable a thing it is to offend it ; and will reckon it in his own case an injury in the most tender point, if he is hindered from acting corresponding to it. Suppose but others to have as much conscience as you, and to be as tender of offending it ; and you would never find in your heart to tempt them by severities to do so. The same principle would make Christians, in their debates about religion, very cautious of passing severe censures one upon another, of managing their contests with wrath and bitterness, or of marking others with the opprobrious names of Schismatics or Heretics : for who does not complain of such usage in his own case ?

I conclude with some reflections.

1. How happy would it be for the world, if the Christian institution was generally and heartily entertained ? If even this maxim was fairly inscribed on every heart, and all sorts of people were resolved to conduct themselves by it, it would pro

duce a sort of heaven upon earth, and would revive a golden age. Bloody wars, and vexatious litigations, would soon cease; private injuries, and domestic contests, would be laid asleep; society would be pleasant, and commerce safe; religion would flourish, prejudices abate, and truth prevail by its own evidence. It is a remarkable passage, which Lampridius tells us concerning one of the best of the Roman emperors, Alexander Severus, in his account of his life, that "if any of his army in a march stepped out of the road to plunder any man's possession; according to the rank of the offender, either he was punished in the emperor's presence; or, if his quality set him above corporeal punishment, the emperor would sharply expostulate with him, and say, Would you be willing to have this done unto your estate, which you have done to another?" And, says the historian, "It was a common saying with him, which he had heard from some Jews or Christians, which he carefully retained, and which he ordered to be proclaimed by the common crier, when he corrected any man, 'Do not that to another which you would not have to be done to you.' He had such a love for this maxim, that he ordered it to be inscribed upon his palace, and upon the public works." And shall not we, who call ourselves Christians, pay an equal respect to it.

2. Of what importance to the whole of religion and goodness, is self-acquaintance and reflection? Our obligations to God himself presuppose a knowledge of the natures he has given us, as the foundation in which they are laid. And so we see do all our duties to our fellow-creatures. If we were more conversant at home, that would be our best preparation for all the duties we owe to other beings without us, either to our Creator or our fellow-creatures.

3. This gives the strongest reason to acknowledge, that God's commandments are not grievous. They are founded in the reason of things, and our very nature and most familiar sentiments point to them. None of them are any farther unacceptable and ungrateful, than as we are gone off from the dictates of our natures: and, as far as we come to ourselves again, we shall relish God's commands.

4. How inexcusable, then, must it be in reasonable creatures, especially who profess Christianity, if they govern not themselves by this rule! It must be acknowledged, with

grief and shame, that the practice of the generality of nominal Christians is the reverse of this. Who would think, when he looks abroad into the world, and judges of things merely by the extravagances which may be seen every day, that the maxim in the text is a plain dictate of reason, to the justice of which every man is forced to assent? That our Lord and Master has prescribed it in the plainest terms? That it is a rule applicable to the various cases of life? How comes it, that a precept so clear, so familiar, so comprehensive, yet has so little influence? Certainly it is to be ascribed to one of these two things; either that men have this principle in their heads, but not in their hearts; they are not altogether unacquainted with the notion, but their appetites and passions have the overbearing sway: or they forget this maxim, so as not to have actual recourse to it in the various cases of life. Whatever be the reason, we must certainly be speechless in the great day, if such a truth as this be either a doubtful or an useless speculation with us.

Let us, therefore, earnestly pray to God, that he will "write this law in our hearts," and that he will "keep it for ever in the imaginations of the thoughts of our hearts." And let us not suffer it to lie dormant, but endeavour to have it ever present and ready for use; that it may actually be "a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths." How pleasant will our reflections be, when conscience can bear us this testimony! When other men violate this rule in their behaviour to us, it will be a refreshing support to be conscious that we have not deserved it by an unrighteous conduct to them, nor returned their injurious usage. We may look up with the greater freedom and confidence to God, the common patron of the injured; and in this, and all other applications to him, have the firmer hope of a gracious answer, when this is the temper of our minds. Yea, it will be a happy presage of our arrival at last in the blessed world, where all the holy inhabitants are fully of this temper, and act eternally with uninterrupted harmony and concert one towards another.

SERMON XXIX.

CHRISTIAN MEEKNESS.

COL. III. 12. [middle of the verse.]

Put on—Meekness.

THIS part of the Christian temper might have been considered as a branch of our duty to ourselves ; the regulation of our passions, as well as of our appetites, being a necessary part of self-government, which we owe to ourselves. But I have chosen rather to treat of it among the instances of a right temper to our neighbours, because the main expressions of it immediately relate to them.

And in the consideration of this grace, I shall proceed in the same method as I have done upon several others.

- I. To explain the nature of it ; and then,
- II. To shew our obligations, as Christians, to put it on.

I. I would explain the nature of Christian meekness.

The scripture leads us, indeed, to consider it partly in relation to God ; but principally and most frequently in relation to men.

1. It may be considered in relation to God. There is a meekness which becomes us toward him ; and there are two remarkable instances of it.

(1.) A full and ready submission of soul to the authority of his word, so as not to suffer any prepossessions of sentiment, or former inclinations, to rise up against the significations of

his will, as soon as that is made known to us. This I understand by the character of the meek, in Psal. xxv. 9. "The meek will be guide in judgment, the meek will be teach his way." And in that prophecy of Christ, Isa. lxi. 1. "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek." And by the temper with which St James directs us to receive the word of God, James i. 21. "Receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls." In all which places, meekness signifies not only a sedate composure of mind, free from ruffle and hurry; but also a teachable, tractable temper, arising from a diffidence of ourselves, and a sense of our need of divine light and conduct; that we have the proper disposition of learners, willing to hear and receive God's instructions; and that, therefore, we are willing to give up any prejudices which swayed us before, upon a discovery of his mind to the contrary.

This sort of meekness is a necessary qualification for the obedience of faith, and for the success and efficacy of God's word upon us. We should be of Samuel's temper, 1 Sam. iii. 9. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Where there is plain revelation, we must meekly submit, and yield up any different apprehension to the declarations of him who is truth itself; and in precepts of duty, cheerfully and readily acquiesce in the significations of his pleasure, without any more ado. He is not meek towards God, who is not content to believe what he plainly reveals, unless he be shewn how it is; that is, in other words, unless God will please to make him as wise as himself; or, who is not willing to sacrifice all his present inclinations, and change any present practice, upon God's sole authority; like those in Acts x. 33. "Now we are all here present before God, to hear what is commanded of God."

(2.) A cheerful and absolute resignation to his providence, is another branch of meekness towards God; in opposition to fretfulness and murmuring. Though God allow the complaints of nature under our burthens and exercises, yet he expects we should check and suppress all complaints of him, every impeachment of his justice, wisdom, and goodness, in his dispensations. It is a meek spirit, to "be dumb, and not open our mouths" against any thing which God does, Psal. xxxix. 9. When we have humbly prayed for any temporal good, if

he see meet to deny it, as soon as his pleasure is known by the event, we should behave like David upon the death of his son, 2 Sam. xii. 22, 23. "He said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again?" It is meekness, not to charge God foolishly, but to charge ourselves with our own sins, when he chastens us for them; and, therefore, to "accept the punishment of our iniquities," Lev. xxvi. 41.

These are expressions of meekness towards God: and every man, who observes his own heart, will be sensible that he hath no small occasion at some times to rule his own spirit, in order to keep it under the rule of God. But,

2. The scripture leads us principally and most frequently to consider meekness in relation to other men. And so it is plainly to be understood here; for it stands in connection with several graces and duties which refer to men. The meek are such as exercise themselves in a careful restraint and regulation of their passions, reducing them within the bounds of reason and religion; and so are, in their general character, of a sweet and easy, a courteous and obliging behaviour. It consists, and expresses itself, in the following things:

1. In a calmness of temper, and behaviour thereupon, "under provocations." This is its most direct and eminent province.

The meek will not take offence hastily, and without just reason; but be very careful that they "be not angry without a cause," Matt. v. 22. We should not rashly suppose, that a provocation is meant. A thing may at first carry that aspect, and yet there may be no design either of affront or prejudice; and then certainly what was not ill intended, should not be ill taken. We should not give way to suspicions and surmises, which cannot be supported with good evidence; nor put the worst construction upon words or actions, but the best that they will admit. Resentment should not be allowed to rise, at least should be checked, till we have carefully considered whether there be ground for it. How much of mad passion would be prevented, if this rule were observed! This is included in the exhortation to "be slow to wrath," James i. 19.; and in those properties of charity, that it "is not

easily provoked, thinketh no evil, hopeth all things," 1 Cor. xiii. 5—7.

Meekness will not allow resentment to rise higher than the merit of the offence given. A trivial injury, a reproachful word, a small indiscretion, a casual loss not worth speaking of, raises in many the most outrageous passions : whereas a meek frame of spirit would esteem such things either not worthy of any notice, or to deserve but a very slight one.

But supposing a real and great provocation, a meek man will keep a strict guard upon his own spirits and words ; that his mind be not inflamed by ill usage, nor other people's sins draw him into "speak inadvisedly with his lips ;" for which, in a particular instance, Moses is blamed, Psal. cvi. 33. He was refused an entrance into Canaan upon that very account, though, in his general character, he is pronounced to have been the meekest man upon earth, Numb. xii. 3. Meekness will make us careful not to "render railing for railing ;" but rather if possible, to break the force of other people's unreasonable anger by gentle returns : "Soft answers turn away wrath," Prov. xv. 1. We should gladly try to win with kindness a man that hath injured us, to "overcome evil with good," Rom. xii. 21. How much more pleasant would it be thus to gain our brother, than, by unhalloved transports of passion, to break in upon our own peace, and make ourselves transgressors ?

Meekness will make us slow in using rough methods to right ourselves, even from considerable injuries, which we ought not to sit down easy under : it will dispose to try the mildest ways first, to bring people, if possible, by them to reason ; to try argument before punishment, and conference before law, and private admonition before we make a public example. And if, at last, our own security, or the common good, shall oblige to seek public justice against any, which certainly sometimes may be the case ; this should be done without hatred to their persons, and merely with a view to reach those lawful and commendable ends. Or if we are necessitated, in a case of property, to appeal to the decision of the law, care is to be taken that this difference upon a point of interest between us and our neighbour, be managed with all the temper that may be, instead of being widened by bitter reflections and passionate exclamations. So meekness will direct.

It will always keep us in a readiness to be reconciled, when an offence is acknowledged, and reasonable satisfaction offered. The gospel teaches us to be rarely and hardly provoked; but to be quickly and easily pacified: "Anger resteth in the bosom of fools," Eccl. vii. 9. And, therefore, with that difficult precept of "being angry and not sinning," it is connected, that we should be particularly watchful against the continuance of passion: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," Eph. iv. 26. Implacableness is eminently the reverse of the Christian temper. When Peter asked Christ, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?" Christ makes him this return, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times;" not only so far, "but until seventy times seven," that is, be it ever so often that he hath offended thee; yet if thou canst have hope that he is to come to a better mind, thou shouldst be ready to pass it by. Or if he should persist in his ill mind, meekness should guard us against all malice and ill will, and make us ready to help even the worst enemy in the common offices of life, if he need it; and heartily to pray for him, especially for his repentance.

2. Meekness should express itself in a care to avoid giving offence to others, and a modesty of behaviour for that purpose towards all. St. Paul directs Titus to recommend meekness in this sense to Christians, Titus iii. 2. "Put them in mind—to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men." As this grace will conduct us to a proper behaviour under ill treatment from others; so it will teach us to moderate our affections and passions in such a manner, as not willingly to give offence to others, and to behave in a courteous and affable manner, towards all men. As "charity, so meekness is kind, and doth not behave itself unseemly," 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5. It will make a man observant of the tempers of others, and willingly to deny his own humour in little things, rather than give them uneasiness; and cautions that neither his words nor actions may carry any thing in them unnecessarily provoking. A meek man will not be overbearing in company, and full of himself, to the neglect of others; but will studiously express civility to all, agreeable to their stations. Most men know how to do all this, when they apprehend it necessary to serve a present secular end: but the

grace of meekness would teach us to make it the habitual exercise of our lives, out of a sense of duty to God, and from love to our neighbour.

3. Meekness is shewn in a modest comporting of ourselves to our station and circumstances.

It will dispose those who are in any station of inferiority, contentedly to submit to the duties of that station. It will incline children to "obey their parents in all things, because this is well pleasing to the Lord," Col. iii. 20. ; and servants to "be obedient to them that are their masters, in singleness of their heart, as unto Christ; with good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not to men," Eph. vi. 5--7. Or, as it is expressed in another place, Titus ii. 9. "to please them well in all things, not answering again." It will have a like influence upon subjects, to induce them to "be subject to the higher powers, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake," Rom. xiii. 5. And we find "the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit," particularly recommended to wives, 1 Peter iii. 4. The meek will cheerfully pay "honour to whom honour is due, and fear to whom fear;" it will be no uneasy thing to them; but the froward fret at any yoke.

On the other hand, the same excellent temper will form persons in superior relations, or under smiling providences, to a lowly and condescending behaviour. Parents should exercise this frame in their management of their children, not behaving towards them in transports of passion: "Ye fathers," says the apostle, "provoke not your children to wrath," Eph. vi. 4. Husbands are commanded to "love their wives, and not to be bitter against them," Col. iii. 19. ; and masters are directed to treat their servants with lenity, "forbearing threatening, knowing that their Master also is in heaven," Eph. vi. 9. These are all precepts of meekness to those in superior relations; and the same should appear in superiority of rank or circumstances. The meek man is not assuming in grandeur, or riches, or power; but his meekness shines more brightly for being set in a more conspicuous light. The meekness of a man in obscurity is not so easily distinguished, from the necessity of his condition; but when it appears in a higher orb, or upon remarkable advancement, it hath more clearly the aspect of virtue. When people treat their inferiors with due regard, are easy of access, ready to do them any

offices of humanity as they have opportunity, not apt to take exceptions at little things, or to use the advantages of their power to revenge every small provocation offered them; hereby they display their meekness, as well as their humility. When, upon advantages gained, upon securities from their enemies' power which they had not before, they do not insult, or behave unseemly, but with temper and moderation, and shew a greater disposition than ever to charity and reconciliation; this shews a power over their own spirits, or eminent meekness.

4. Meekness is particularly to be expressed by a temperate and calm behaviour in matters of religion. To break out into anger and passion here, appears as if we thought that "the wrath of man worketh the righteousness of God;" which St. James assures us that it cannot do, chap. i. 20. Men who pretend to knowledge in religion beyond their neighbours, will confute their own pretensions, if they have not learned this lesson of it, James iii. 13. "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you?" Many of the Jews, to whom he wrote, made great pretences to this in matters of religion; the apostle, therefore, says to them, "Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." Let him exemplify the works to which wisdom directs with meekness, or let him shew, by his charity and meekness to his brethren, that his wisdom is superior; and, thereupon, he goes on to shew, that all bitter zeal is "earthly, sensual, and devilish," and hath no alliance with the wisdom which comes from above. We have no other method prescribed or allowed by the gospel even to those who most obstinately oppose it, but "meekness to instruct those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2 Tim. ii. 25. And instead of any effects of rage and passion to bring men to our sentiments, we are taught to "be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us," the grounds of our persuasion, "with meekness and fear," 1 Pet. iii. 15. The same spirit and temper is to be carried into Christian societies themselves, and offenders against the law of Christ are to be treated, and their recovery endeavoured, "in the spirit of meekness," Gal. vi. 1. So that, though possibly there hath not been a greater violation of this holy temper through every age, in any one instance,

than in matters of religion ; yet, indeed, there is no case where-
in the exercises of it is more indispensably required.

II. I am to shew our obligations, as Christians, to the exer-
cise of this grace. And certainly much more of real Chris-
tianity lies in it, than most people are willing to think. The
following considerations may shew the importance of meek-
ness.

1. It is a frequent precept of the gospel. This plainly ap-
pears from many passages already mentioned, in giving an ac-
count of its nature, and might be made more evident from
others. It is pressed upon us, as an eminent branch of that
walk which becomes our Christian calling, Eph. iv. 1, 2. "I,
the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of
the vocation wherewith ye are called." If you would know
how that is to be done, the practice of humility and meekness
lead the van in the apostle's direction : "With all lowliness
and meekness." If this command be habitually neglected, it
will prove us insincere, and as truly as any other instance of
stated disobedience.

2. It is represented as essential to a true Christian, as much
as any other particular grace or virtue : "If any man have not
the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his ;" and if we have the
Spirit, we have his fruits in us : now, this is one of his neces-
sary fruits. And it is remarkable, that when the apostle
reckons up several of them, he not only mentions meekness
itself by name as one, but indeed, the greatest part of his in-
stances are either branches of meekness, or very nearly allied
to it, such as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness,
goodness," or beneficence, Gal. v. 22, 23. And among
"the works of the flesh," to which these are opposed, we find
"hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, envy-
ings," ver. 20, 21. Again, "if any man be in Christ, he is
a new creature." But the apostle represents meekness as a
necessary branch of the new man, and recommends it as such
in the text. So that really a man may as truly be a genuine
Christian without faith in Christ, as without prevailing meek-
ness.

The necessity of it will farther appear from that solemn de-
claration of our Saviour himself, in Matt. v. 22. "I say unto
you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause,

shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, *Racah*, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, *Thou fool*, shall be in danger of hell-fire." Our Saviour is here vindicating the spiritual nature of the sixth command, which forbids murder, from the corrupt glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees. They taught men to think that the gross acts of sin, only made men liable to punishment; and so, particularly, that "whosoever should kill should be in danger of the judgment," ver. 21.; or that actual murderers only would be punished as breakers of this command. But Christ lets his hearers know, that though such only might fall under punishment from men, yet there are evils which fall far short of downright murder, by which men will be liable to punishment from God, and that in proportion to the degree of their offence.

I apprehend that in every instance he mentions, he intends the punishments of another life: but to express the proportion of punishment answerable to the heinousness of the offence, he seems to allude to the several degrees of punishment, to which the Jews thought offenders liable; common offenders, to punishments by the ordinary judges, which they had in all their cities, called here "the judgment;" bolder criminals, to greater severities inflicted by their higher counsel or sanhedrim, called here "the counsel;" and the most hardened and profligate of all, to the miseries of another life, called here "hell fire." Now, all the offences he mentions, and against which he denounces severe threatenings, are only so many steps of unbridled passion. "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause," whoever indulges rash and causeless anger, will, without repentance, fall under the anger of God, and "whosoever shall say to him, *Racah*," which signifies a vain, empty, worthless fellow, he who suffers his passion to carry him on to mock and deride others, shall be still more severely punished. "But whosoever shall say, *Thou fool*," which word signifies in scripture, not only a defect of understanding as we commonly mean by it, but a profane, wicked, or vile man; so that the meaning is, he who shall allow his passion to transport him so far as to revile and slander others, to represent them as not only fit to be despised, but even to be abhorred, he shall meet with still sorer punishment. You see, then, that Christianity is so far from allowing the indulgence

of passion, that Christ here expressly declares, that it excludes from the kingdom of heaven, and exposes to the wrath of God.

3. Meekness hath particular characters of honour put upon it in the gospel. It is a principal ornament, 1 Pet. iii. 4. which makes a person's face to shine, and his profession to be amiable. And in the same place it is declared to be "in the sight of God of great price," a temper with which he is highly pleased. And no wonder, since "he that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city," Prov. x. 32. He is the most glorious conqueror, who has obtained a victory over himself. A peculiar blessedness is pronounced upon such. Christ is pleased to single out this virtue for one of his beatitudes, at the beginning of his preaching the gospel, Matt. v. 5. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

As he proceeded afterwards to declare the necessity of it to our inheriting heaven, ver. 22. as hath been already observed; so he was pleased to begin with a recommendation of it, from its subservience to our present comfort, by repeating an ancient promise made to it, Psal. xxxvii. 11. that "the meek shall inherit the earth." It has a natural tendency, in the ordinary state of the world, to promote men's temporal interest, and ease, and reputation. While unbridled passions tend to make all about us our enemies, they must be of a very brutal nature, indeed, who will be outrageous against a man that studies to walk harmless and blameless, and to give offence to none. The meek, at least, will be free from those vexations and troubles of life, which hasty, froward people, bring upon themselves, as the fruits of their own provocations. They have the security of God's providence and promises for so much of the good things of the earth, as shall be for their real welfare; and if they meet with unjust and ungrateful returns, they may confidently rely upon God as their protector and avenger, who is ready to "rise to judgment to save the meek of the earth," Psal. lxxvi. 9. And whether they have a larger or a less share of outward good, yet they are prepared, by the mastery of their passions, to enjoy more comfort in what they possess, than those who interrupt their enjoyment by the tumult of their own minds.

4. We have Christ's example here to recommend and enforce the exercise of meekness. This was a bright part of

his character. He calls us himself to "learn of him, because he was meek and lowly," Matt. xi. 29. Not only to receive the rather his instructions in general upon this account, as these are recommending qualifications of a teacher, but particularly to learn these excellencies from him, as our pattern in them. Hence St Paul beseeches Christians "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," as known and conspicuous branches of his character, 2 Cor. x. 1. And so they certainly were.

He had, indeed, the natural affection of anger in him, and could express it upon proper occasions. He looked round about on his captious enemies with anger, Mark iii. 5. He had the affection itself, as a proper affection of human nature; without that he could not have been a proper pattern to us of the due regulation of it; and the regulation, not the extirpation, of it, is required of us, that we "be angry, and sin not." In this he was a perfect pattern to us. But,

He was never angry without a cause. We do not find him *often* angry, but only upon some extraordinary occasions. Nor was he ever transported into indecent passion. The hardest words he spoke, were owing to his knowledge of hearts and to his prophetic character, not to the transports of passion.

He usually chose to turn away wrath, or prevent it, by soft and gentle answers, by mild expostulation and calm reasonings, rather than by severe expressions. We find instances of this upon the most injurious charges. When he was charged by some of the Scribes with no less blaspheming, upon his pronouncing pardon to a man sick of the palsy, Matt. ix. 2, 3. he coolly justifies himself by appealing to his miraculous power of healing, as a proof of his authority to pronounce absolution to the man. And when, in the same chapter, ver. 11. he was reproached by the Pharisees for undue familiarity with publicans and sinners, he chose the way of mild reasoning with them, acquainting them with the peculiar need such people had of his good offices, and the design of his coming to save miserable sinners, ver. 12, 13. When the same sort of people censured his disciples, Matt. xii. for plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath-day, when they were hungry, he only gives them irrefragable proofs of the lawfulness of such a practice in their circumstances, from allowed examples, from the

design of the Sabbath, and from his own authority as the Lord of it. And when his enemies, upon one of his eminent miracles, went so far as to ascribe them to a confederacy with the devil, instead of "rendering railing for railing," he only confutes their vile cavil with the greatest strength and force of reasoning, and annexes to it a necessary warning against their persisting in their obstinacy, Matt. xii. 24, &c. When some of his hearers were so enraged as to attempt to stone him; yet he reasons with them with the utmost calmness and composure: "Many good works have I shewed from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?" John x. 31, 32. Could any thing be at once more gentle and convictive? He treated even Judas himself, notwithstanding all the aggravating circumstances of his crime, with unusual softness of speech; as one evangelist represents it, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Matt. xxvi. 50.; or, according to another, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Luke xxii. 48.; which is no more than an appeal to his own conscience. These instances shew us, that meekness, and returns gentle in the manner of them, but strong in the matter, and to the purpose, are ordinarily the best ways of dealing with ill-minded adversaries.

At other times we find Christ perfectly silent, when he could have no hope of doing good by speaking. So he behaved when the two false witnesses appeared against him, Mat. xxvi. 62, 63. His adversaries were resolved and fixed in their determinations against him; and he could have no prospect of bringing them to a better mind by debating the matter with them, and then he chose to say nothing. Though "oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth, he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," Isa. liii. 7.

And upon the greatest provocations he was most remote from a revengeful temper. As he would not countenance his disciples, but reprov'd them for pretending to call for fire from heaven against the Samaritans, upon their ill usage of him and his followers; so he maintained a good will to his outrageous enemies: "Father," says he, on the cross, "forgive them, for they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34. "Forgive them," that is what I wish for them; "they know not what they do," that is the best apology I can make for them.

Herein he teaches us meekness and gentleness under the worst usage.

By way of reflection, then,

1. Be persuaded "to seek meekness," Zeph. ii. 3. Propose it to yourselves as a matter of necessity, that meekness should ordinarily have dominion over passion; and carry the conquest as far as you can.

To this end, it will be of great moment that a careful guard be kept upon our hearts, and that the beginnings of anger there be observed. It will be much easier to extinguish it in the first sparks, than when it has flamed out. Fixing it as a law to ourselves, that we will make a short pause upon the first rise of a resentment, would stifle most passions in the birth.

All prudent precaution should be taken, in reference to the ordinary sources and occasions of passion. And I may venture to say, that lowering our inordinate esteem of two things, of *ourselves*, and of *this world* and its affairs, would go a great way in removing the fuel of passion. For external occasions, as far as we can foresee them likely to provoke, we should carefully avoid coming in the way of them, farther than necessary duty obliges; if we cannot avoid the occasion, we have reason to double our guard when we are aware of this danger.

To think often of our own frailty and liableness to offend, how many indiscretions and weaknesses, at least, others have to bear with in us, would be an habitual preservative against hastiness with them. It would cherish in us "the spirit of meekness," to "consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted," Gal. vi. 1.

The indecencies and ill effects of passion should be often called to remembrance. Every man is sensible, when he sees another in a transport, that he is in a fit of madness. Now, we should see our own face in that glass. What mischiefs has passion produced in the world! I may rather say, what has it not produced? How much sin does it occasion in others as well as in the transported man himself? What shame and sorrow have our own past sallies cost us in our cooler hours. These things should be laid up as guards against new temptations.

But, along with all, let us often seek meekness of God by prayer. Let us pray for the Spirit, one of whose fruits it is.

2. See that your meekness be, indeed, a Christian grace. Some, by a turn of natural temper, find it easier to restrain passion than others; and certainly they have reason to be thankful to God for that advantage in their constitution; and the extravagancies of passion would be the more criminal in them upon that account. But as far as it is mere good nature, and not performed out of a sense of duty to God, it is not a Christian grace. To make it so, it must be animated by Christian principles, and exercised by the direction of the Christian rule.

Those who, by their natural tempers, have a stronger proneness than others to be warm and eager, or to be peevish and morose, should yet remember, that this will not release them from obligation to the grace and duty of meekness. If it be more difficult for them to govern their passions, and behave as becomes the gospel; yet this is absolutely necessary by the Christian institution; and there is no help for it, but they must take the more pains with their own hearts, watch more their own spirits, and be the more earnest in prayer to God. They are not incurable by the heavenly Physician; and they will have one advantage, upon a conquest, above those of milder natural tempers, that it will be more evident that their meekness is really from religion.

3. Let us not lay much stress upon an excuse commonly made for other faults, that they were done in a passion. When such evil consequences might be foreseen, at least as possible, they should rather have fortified us against the admission of passion, than passion be made use of afterwards as a plea for them. A true Christian will rather consider those evil effects of his passion as aggravations of the sinfulness of it, and therefore be more watchful for the future, and diligent to grow in meekness: which will be a growing preparation for the heavenly world, where neither pride nor passion have any place, but all is calm and serene, peaceful and happy.

SERMON XXX.

PEACEABLENESS.



ROM. XII. 18.

*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably
with all men.*

THE several expressions and exercises of a peaceable disposition, belong to other graces and virtues, or naturally flow from them; yet, as they are all directed to this special end, the promoting of peace, we may consider them as making, in a sort, a particular excellence, or branch, of the Christian temper. I have chosen this passage of the apostle to represent and recommend a peaceable spirit, because it is especially expressive and emphatical.

And there will be occasion,

I. To shew the general import of the exhortation.

II. What is implied in the qualifications added: *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you.*

III. The extent prescribed for our aim and endeavour in this matter: *With all men.* Under which the particular duties incumbent upon us for this purpose, will naturally fall to be considered. And,

IV. The importance of a peaceable spirit in Christianity.

I. The general import of the exhortation to *live peaceably*, may be reduced to two particulars.

1. That we should have a hearty love and value for peace, as far as it may be obtained. Considered as a Christian

grace, it must begin in the temper. Heathen morality taught no more to be necessary than the performance of commendable actions; or, when their moralists directed to look deeper, to an inward disposition and principle, it was principally as that might forward and facilitate the outward practice. But in Christianity, the principle and temper have the main stress laid upon them, in order to acceptance with God; that "whatever we do, we do it to the Lord, and not to men." So the *peaceableness* of the spirit is of main account with God. To bear a hostile mind to our neighbour, is highly offensive to God, though it should not break out into act. And in order to his acceptance, this inward disposition to peace must arise from religious principles. It must not be the mere result of a more quiet and easy natural temper, but flow from a regard to God's authority, enjoining it as a necessary duty by the voice of nature and scripture, and from a sincere love to men thereupon.

2. That we studiously direct our conduct so as may be most likely to reach this end: or "follow peace with all men," Heb. xii. 14. That we gladly embrace all becoming methods for cultivating amity, and as carefully avoid every thing which tends to break the peace. It is a vain thing to pretend we are lovers of peace, if it plainly appear in our conduct that we are litigious and provoking, pettish and exceptionous, ever stiff and unyielding in our demands, or, in other respects, take the ways which make or keep open, or inflame differences.

II. I proceed to shew, what is implied in the qualifications added: *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you.*

1. It is evidently intimated, that it is not always possible, or in our power, to reach the desirable end of peace. Those who conscientiously and in earnest "seek peace and pursue it," according to the exhortation, Psal. xxxvi. 14. yet sometimes find, that it flies from them as fast as they pursue it.

Sometimes this falls out in common life, through the perverse humours and unreasonable obstinacy of those with whom we have to do. There are people in this world so captious, as to take exception and offence without any foundation, who catch at the most innocent occasions to work up their

minds to resentment; and so inveterate, that they will not give up a prejudice once entertained, upon the best reasons offered, or the most condescending steps taken to satisfy them. They are not to be gained by kindness, but it rather makes them more insolent: the more they discern that you seek peace, they will be at the greater distance from it: every concession emboldens their animosity; and there is no peace to be had, but by ceasing to have any thing to do with them, or by just punishment. The generality, it is to be hoped, are not so abandoned; but whoever converses any time in the world, will hardly fail to meet with some such ill-turned minds. The psalmist had occasion to complain of such in his time, and it was a very uncomfortable circumstance of his life, Psal. cxx. 5, 6, 7. "Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war."

Sometimes it is not morally possible, or in our power, to be at peace with men; because they will not be at peace with us, unless we will violate a good conscience. We only can do, what we may do lawfully: *Id possumus, quod jure possumus*. Men may be displeased for that wherein we act most conscientiously toward God. This we cannot help, for we must not sacrifice conscience in any instance to peace, though all the world should be angry with us. Peace, though so desirable a blessing, is not to be purchased at any rate, but only pursued, as far as consists with superior obligations, as far as we are left at liberty to seek it, without violating our duty. For instance,

Neither truth nor holiness are to be sacrificed to peace, that would be to sacrifice our peace with God, and with our own consciences, for the sake of peace with men; which for certain would be much too dear a bargain. We are required to "love the truth and peace," Zech. viii. 19. Truth first, and peace only in consistence with the other. We are to "buy the truth, and not to sell it" upon any terms, Prov. xxiii. 23. A regard to peace may justify us in keeping some of our sentiments to ourselves, which are of less importance; but never in denying the least truth. And so we are to "follow peace with all men," but in conjunction with holiness, Heb. xii. 14. For "the wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then

peaceable," James iii. 17. Truth and holiness, then, are undoubtedly preferable to peace; and if we cannot procure the favour of others, without "making shipwreck of faith, or of a good conscience," we must be content without it. It should be esteemed by us impossible, what *lies not in us*, to profess any thing contrary to what we think the doctrine of Christ, or to practise any thing contrary to what we judge the law of Christ, even in the least instance, to gratify the whole world.

Nor should we decline any service we are capable of, to the interest of Christ, or of our country, for fear of some people's offence. Christian courage and fortitude should extinguish such fears. To "contend earnestly for" that which we apprehend to be "the faith once delivered to the saints," when it is opposed, will never be construed by God, or equitable men, for the mark of an unpeaceable spirit; as long as we do it only by fair reason and argument, without injurious representations of the sense of those we oppose, or uncharitable reflections upon them; in a word, if we intermix not passion, or injustice, with our zeal. Nor is it a defect of any thing becoming us in order to peace, if we will not sacrifice the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, by complying with impositions in religion, which have no more than human authority.

We may displease some, and occasion their being our enemies, by making head against their vices and immoralities, and by bringing them to deserved punishment for the mischief they do to the community: they may call those the troublers of our Israel, and disturbers of the peace, who will not suffer them to proceed with impunity in open profaneness and sensuality, but contribute their utmost to the execution of the laws for reformation of manners. But they may as well impute unpeaceableness to those who endeavour to detect the thief, or the cheat, or any other public nuisance. Attempts against open licentiousness in morals, are as truly conducive to the public tranquillity and welfare, as any other prosecution of crimes against the society. Here peace with particular persons should be out of the question with a Christian, who acts under superior obligations to God, and his country.

Where peace, then, cannot be maintained in full harmony, with truth and duty, it should be esteemed by a man devoted to God an impossibility. But,

2. This addition greatly enforces the precept, when it may consist with higher obligations. We must not venture every thing for peace, nothing which is more valuable than itself; but we should esteem it worth a great deal of pains and self-denial. If we can compass it by any means that are fit for us to use, we should endeavour it; and though past endeavours should have failed of success, yet still attempt to reach so valuable an end, as long as any hope of success remains.

3. It is implied farther, that we shall have reason to be content and easy, though we should miss of our aim, if we have performed our part. Do but what lieth in you, and no more can reasonably be expected: then the breach of peace may be your affliction, but it will not be your sin. You may entertain comfortable reflections in your own breast, and hope for divine acceptance and reward. You may cast your cares upon God, for protection against the designs and ill offices of the unpeaceable, or for supports under the trial of their ill-will; or hope that possibly in time they may be recovered to a better mind; that “when your ways please the Lord, he will make your enemies to be at peace with you,” Prov. xvi. 7.

III. The extent prescribed for our aim in this matter, is to be considered: *Live peaceably with all men.* There is a civil peace and concord to be cultivated with all men at large; and there is a more peculiar peace and harmony, which we should endeavour to maintain with our fellow Christians as such. These are of distinct consideration.

1. We should endeavour to live peaceably with all men at large, as far as we have any concern with them. Setting aside the consideration of their religion or their virtuous character, we are obliged by the dictates of nature, and of Christianity too, to study peace with them as our fellow-creatures. And to this end,

(1.) We should be careful to behave inoffensively to all; to “give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God,” 1 Cor. x. 32. that, if possible, we may prevent any difference from arising.

No man should be treated with insolence and rudeness, with injurious, or reflecting words, with outrageous and indecent passions; which every man knows to be directly provoking. A peaceable man is not ordinarily a wrathful man, because such a one “stirreth up strife,” Prov. xv. 18. nor,

“a froward man,” for the same reason, for he “soweth strife,” chap. xvi. 28. nor “a scorner,” for he gives rise to contention, strife, and reproach, chap. xxii. 10. He will not behave with haughtiness, but with humility and meekness. If we are for peace, we shall be so far from allowing ourselves to do our neighbour a real injury, that we shall endeavour to conciliate and secure his affection by any offices of humanity and friendship within our power.

A lover of peace will observe the tempers of others; and when he knows them to be peculiarly tender, and apt to take exception, instead of reckoning it a pleasure to put them out of humour, he will rather restrain himself from such innocent freedoms with them, as he might use to others without the least offence.

We should not intermeddle unnecessarily in the affairs of others, or act the busy body, which is mentioned in scripture as a very ill character, and is known to be a frequent incendiary. We should not pry into the secret concerns of other people, that do not concern us, the affairs of families, or the behaviour of relations one to another; much less should we divulge what we hear to the disadvantage of our neighbour, any farther than the honor of God, or the interest of some other persons, make it necessary. There are a set of miscreants, who often bring themselves into briars, and break the peace of neighbourhoods, and families, and friends, by making it their business to pick up ill stories of others, to spread them again in conversation; either merely that they may furnish themselves with matter of talk; or for a worse reason, that they may gratify their own vile inclination to detraction and backbiting. Some are thus employed out of idleness: “We hear,” says the apostle, “that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies,” 2 Thess. iii. 11. and, 1 Tim. v. 13. “They learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not.” These are pestilent make-bates in civil and religious societies: “A tale-bearer revealeth secrets; and, therefore, where he is not, the strife ceaseth,” Prov. xxvi. 20. But those who “study to be quiet, will mind their own business,” 1 Thess. iv. 11. And if people would agree to do this more, and mind the affairs of others less, it would go a great way to maintain the peace of the world.

Another thing necessary to prevent offence, and secure peace, is, that we are careful to give all, in their several stations, the regard and respect due to them : as justice requires this, so it is the way to peace ; that we may pay a quiet submission to lawful authority, and give not in to noisy complaints and murmurings against those in power, upon every step in the administration which seems doubtful to us. And surely a little modesty would teach us to be very tender in judging of things much above us. If we make conscience of “ rendering to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour,” as is our unquestionable duty, Rom. xiii. 7. so we cannot but apprehend how much it would contribute to peace.

(2.) We are equally concerned, in order to peace, not to be quick in taking offence. Possibly as many quarrels in the world owe their rise to a temper unduly exceptionis in some, as to a provoking humour in others ; that is, they proceed from offence taken without ground, or real design. They are founded upon misunderstandings, and wrong interpretations of words or actions : and that is esteemed a great and heinous provocation, which a small share of humility and charity would have passed over in silence, or soon forgot. A man of a peaceable spirit will put the best construction upon things doubtful ; and suspend sharp resentment, till facts are ascertained : he will not admit prejudices upon uncertain hearsays ; but examine the truth of them before they make impression. If some reckon it a point of honour to be quick at resenting a provocation, I am sure it is the reverse of Christianity ; and can neither be for the service of the world at present, nor contribute to a comfortable account at last. That which was observed upon meekness, is equally true of a sincere love to peace, that it will restrain from deep resentment of small injuries, though they should be real ; and from such passionate expressions of displeasure thereupon, as serve to no other purpose, but to inflame a difference. Many people might soon have received proper satisfaction for an injury done them, if they had not themselves overrated it, and carried their resentment beyond all regular bounds, till they made a small breach wide, and most difficult to be healed.

3. We should be desirous to regain peace, as soon as pos-

sible, whenever a difference actually arises. The implacable are reckoned among the greatest sinners, Rom. i. 31.

If we have given offence by any hasty or imprudent action, a love to peace will push us on to set matters right; to explain our conduct, if it hath been mistaken; or cheerfully to acknowledge our fault, if we have done amiss. So Christ teaches us, Matt. v. 23, 24. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

On the other hand, if we have received a small injury, we should be easily satisfied with our neighbour's acknowledgment. Christ, knowing the proneness of men to be too obstinate in their resentments, prefaces a command to the contrary with a solemn caution, Luke xvii. 3, 4. "Take heed to yourselves;" watch your own spirits, that you may the more easily comply with what I am about to say: and that is, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him."

Or, though a person who has offended us should not, according to his duty, make the first overture for reconciliation; yet, if there be any hope of succeeding by our taking the first steps, surely we should not stand upon forms to obtain so great a blessing as peace.

Yea, we should be willing to sacrifice little things, and to recede from our strict rights in some cases, rather than perpetuate a quarrel. This I take to be one part of our Saviour's meaning in Matthew v. 39—41. "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Not that our Saviour requires us patiently to put up with every injury done us. In some cases, that would be a prejudice to the community, an encouragement to injurious men, and a wrong to our families. But, I apprehend that, two things were especially in our Lord's intention. One is, that in the beginning of Christianity, when there were none but heathen and Jewish judges, he would have his disciples, for the credit of Christianity, not

to appear litigious by appealing to their courts upon slight occasions. And the other is, that for smaller injuries, either in their reputation, such as smiting on the cheek, which was mark of contempt ; or in their property, as the taking away of a coat ; or in their liberty, as compelling them to go a mile out of their way ; they should rather pass them over for the sake of peace, if they could have reasonable hopes that such soft treatment would make a good impression on them. Certainly those who are resolved to give up nothing of their strict rights for the sake of peace, are not hearty lovers of it, Abraham's example in respect of Lot was truly commendable, when no great damage could ensue upon his yielding to him. When their herdsmen differed, Abraham, instead of saying, 'I have as much right, as you to this country, or I have a superior right, as I am the elder, and your uncle,' chooses to say, Gen. xiii. 8, 9. "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee ; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee ? If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right ; or if thou wilt depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Prudence, indeed, must direct how far this may safely be done in particular cases ; but a strong love to peace will certainly dispose to submit to some inconveniences to obtain it.

2. We should endeavour to cultivate a more peculiar peace and harmony with all our fellow Christians as such. Over and above that which we are directed to maintain, as far as in us lies, with all men in common, the gospel prescribes something special in this matter, with reference to the visible subjects of Christ's kingdom, and members of his body, Mark ix. 50. "Have peace one with another." Rom. xiv. 19. "Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." 1 Cor. xiv. 33. "God is the author, not of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints," Eph. iv. 3. "Keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." 1 Thess. v. 13. "Be at peace among yourselves." 2 Cor. xiii. 11. "Be of one mind, live in peace."

Such passages as these are plainly designed, not only to enjoin Christians to live peaceably together, in the same sense as they are obliged to do so with all men, in the common offices of life ; though for certain that is included, and with

peculiar bonds to do so, as we are fellow Christians; but also to have a peaceable spirit toward one another, especially in matters of religion.

It must be owned, indeed, with grief and shame, that in fact there have never been greater, more outrageous, more lasting and inveterate dissensions in the world, than among those called Christians, and upon the score of their religious differences. Much blood hath been spilled in these quarrels. And where contests have not been carried to that length, yet nothing is more apparent, than that the most inflexible animosities and distances, from age to age, have been among those who have in common worn the Christian name. With respect to this event of things, though not the tendency of his doctrine, Christ foretold, that "he was not come to send peace upon earth, but a sword," Matt. x. 34. that is, the various lusts and irregular inclinations of men would so abuse his doctrine, that it would too often be made the occasion of violent contentions. But as to the proper design and natural tendency of his coming, the angels proclaimed at his appearance in flesh, that it was to send "peace upon earth," Luke ii. 14. And so the precepts delivered by himself, and his apostles plainly declare.

And the way of peace among Christians seems to be as plainly declared in the gospel, if we are but in a disposition to attend to it, as the way to peace between man and man in common.

Not by pretending to bring all Christians to a perfect uniformity of sentiments or practices, in matters of religion. That was not in the apostolical days themselves; nor can be hoped for, till we come to heaven.

Nor by arbitrary forms of agreement devised by men, and prescribed by some to others. There was more of the unity of the Spirit preserved in the bond of peace during the primitive times, before ever such methods were invented, than since the Christian world has abounded with them. And if they had been thought necessary, certainly he who was faithful in all God's house would, either in person, or by his apostles, have recommended them to the use of the church.

But we are directed to look upon all as our fellow Christians, "who call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours," 1 Cor. i. 2. who profess "one body, one Spirit, one hope of their calling, one Lord, one faith, one

baptism, one God and Father of all," Eph. iv. 4—6. Nor can it be thought that every difference of sentiment about every one of these particulars, nullifies men's Christianity. One would think, that now, when the canon of scripture is completed, we should be ready to own all them for our fellow Christians, who own the same sacred books as we do, for the only and the perfect rule of Christian faith and practice. Though they and we should differ in understanding many particulars contained in that rule; yet, if we judge them "weak in the faith," we are directed to "receive them, but not to doubtful disputations," Rom. xv. 1.

What peace would it soon produce in the Christian world, if hereupon such plain gospel-rules as these were observed among the several contending parties of Christians! "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, to forbear one another in love," Eph. iv. 2. "Not to judge our brother, or set at nought our brother," Rom. xiv. 10. "but to judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way," ver. 13. How happily would the face of the Christian church be altered, if all the members of it, on all hands, would make it a law to themselves, charitably to think others as sincere in their searches after truth, as we profess to be in ours, though they cannot see with our eyes. To avoid censuring others for differing from us, as we should complain of their censuring us where we think we are in the right; to remember, that they have a right to judge for themselves, as well as we; and that we are no more infallible than they: and, hereupon, to treat one another with brotherly love, notwithstanding our different persuasions.

These things, accompanied with a care to manage disputes in religion, when they fall out with temper and moderation, to give a reason of our hope and persuasion with meekness and fear; and with the readiness to allow others to give a reason of their persuasions, without taking offence at it, as we expect the like ourselves: these things, I say, would go farthest to heal the breaches of the church; and, I doubt, they will hardly be healed in this world by any other way.

IV. We are yet to consider the importance of a peaceable spirit in Christianity.

It has been already shewn to be frequently and strongly in-

culcated by way of precept; and, therefore, should be diligently attended to by all that call Christ Lord: for “for why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” And it is many other ways recommended in the gospel: as,

1. By shewing us the great evil of an unpeaceable spirit. It is the fruit of carnality, or of an undue ascendant which some fleshly motive or other hath over us, 1 Cor. iii. 3. “Ye are yet carnal; for, whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?” And, therefore, “variance, emulations, wrath, strife,” are reckoned up among “the works of the flesh,” Gal. v. 20. And as a turbulent quarrelsome spirit hath a bad source, so it produces very ill effects, James iii. 16. “Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” When a quarrel is begun, however innocent at first on one side, yet it scarce ever happens, in the progress of contention, but there come to be faults on both sides: evil surmises, undue animosities, mutual reflections, indecent sallies of passion, it may be usefulness on all hands obstructed, and scandals multiplied, and the name of God and their holy vocation blasphemed, when quarrels rise to a height among those who pretend to religion. Who can reckon up the many sins, and the many occasions of dishonour to God, which have their rise sometimes from a single and a small quarrel? And how few, when they reflect upon their own frames and actions, can remember a contest they have been engaged in, wherein they could altogether acquit themselves from blame through the whole procedure? Besides the sins of others, which they may have seen upon such occasions, have they not found their own spirits disturbed, their frames disordered in religious exercises, and that too often they have spoken unadvisedly with their lips? So justly does Solomon give that excellent representation, Prov. xvii. 14. “The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water.” If you take away the dams that keep in an impetuous torrent, you cannot foresee all the mischiefs it may produce: so it is when a quarrel is begun. “Therefore,” if possible, as it follows, “leave off contention, before it be meddled with.”

2. By representing a peaceable disposition in a very advantageous light. It is one of “the fruits of the blessed Spirit,” where he is pleased to take up his gracious residence, Gal. v. 22. It is mentioned as one principal thing wherein the

spiritual kingdom of God, or true religion in the hearts of men, consists, Rom. xiv. 17. Christ saw fit to make it the subject of one of his beatitudes, Matt. v. 9. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." They who would make it their business to promote the peace and welfare of mankind, and to settle those about them in general quiet and love, as far as it is in their power; such men, resembling God in those attributes of his in which he so much glories, his goodness and love, shall be owned and received by him as eminently his children. The calm and composed soul, that is breathing love and peace, is in the best preparation to receive divine influences and favours; and, accordingly, they are peculiarly promised in such a frame, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. "Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

3. By the lively expressions of such a temper in the example of Christ. He was, on the one hand, a pattern for observing the proper limitations to be attended to in all pursuits after peace; he ever preferred truth and duty to it, an obedience to his Father to the pleasing of men; and so must we. But, on the other hand, as far as it was consistent with his higher engagements, he ever shewed a strong disposition to peace. Instead of offering injury to any, he made it his business to do good to all. He acted correspondent to the ancient prophecy of him, that he "should not strive nor cry, neither should any man hear his voice in the streets," Matt. xii. 19. He pursued his work without noise and contention, without tumult and disturbance. And he discountenanced the beginnings of a strife among his followers, Luke xii. 24, 25. Rather than "he would offend" the civil government, he paid tribute, though it were not due from him, as he declares, Matt. xvii. 27. And rather than he would offend the Jewish priests, when he had miraculously cured a leper, he ordered him to go to the priest, and carry him the gift prescribed by the law for the priests, when they were concerned in the cure of a leprosy, Matt. viii. 4. Our Master came both preaching peace, and exemplifying our proper behaviour in order to it.

4. By the account it gives us of the heavenly world, as a state of perfect love and harmony, where there are no jarring notes and affections. When a good man dies, he "enters into peace," Isa. lvii. 2. Here possibly he had frequent occasion

to lament the unsuccessfulness of his endeavours to obtain peace, and to mourn over the many bleeding wounds of the church of Christ. But this is one circumstance which makes heaven a delightful prospect, that he shall meet with an equal disposition to peace in all the other inhabitants; that the unity of the Christian church will be then completed; and that all his own distempers, which make him not so peaceable now as he should be, shall be fully cured. Now, surely this prospect should excite our zeal to grow in such a temper now, as an eminent meetness for that world, and a similitude of temper to what prevails in it.

By way of reflection, then,

1. This may be sufficient to vindicate Christianity from the reproaches which have been cast upon it, for the divisions and animosities that have abounded among Christians. The precepts, the pattern, the principles of Christianity, all lead another way, they directly lead to peaceableness. If it be asked, then, "Whence come wars and fightings?" this question must be answered now, as it was by the apostle James in the primitive times, Jam. iv. 1. "Come they not hence, of your lusts that war in your members?" Pride, and ambition, and passion, too often prevail and reign among many that wear the Christian name: and there are too strong remains of these and other disorderly affections in the best.

2. This may be a proper subject of trial and self-examination. If we make no conscience of this duty of peaceableness, we have not yet entered into the spirit of true Christianity. And it will be one way to discern at least, whether vital religion is advancing or declining in us, by examining whether we are of a more peaceable or a more turbulent temper than we were formerly.

3. Let us all, as we are exhorted in the text, cultivate and exercise a peaceable and healing disposition. This is the likeliest way to dispose others to be at peace with us. The reason of the thing, the promise of God, and the ordinary course of experience, shew this: and every man desires that others may be at peace with him, even such as contribute least toward it themselves. This will, at least, be an effectual means to secure peace in our own breast, under other people's undeserved unkindness and ill usage, if they have nothing against us except in the matters of our God. It will greatly

credit our profession, and capacitate for the more extensive usefulness ; and it will be one thing to soften a death-bed.

Therefore, pray for the spirit of grace, to make it a settled habitual principle with you. Often meditate on the blessings which ensue from peace to soul and body. Cultivate the grace of humility, the want of which lies at the bottom of most contentions. Watch against every thing which you find by experience to have a tendency to sour your spirits. And whatever difficulty you may find in ruling your own spirits for this purpose, or in bearing with the peevishness of others, remember, that this, and all the other parts of your warfare, will soon be over ; and the prize you have in view, to be recognised hereafter as the children of God, will abundantly over-balance all your difficulties.

SERMON XXXI.

A MERCIFUL TEMPER.



COL. III. 12. [first clause.]

Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies.

I HAVE chosen more than once already, and in the course of my design, to make this verse my subject, for some branches of the Christian temper mentioned in it, because it recommends the several particulars which it enumerates in the most advantageous light, as “parts of the new man,” wherein vital Christianity consists, or as Christian graces which those who profess Christianity are especially obliged to cultivate. As such, we are called to put on *bowels of mercies*, or a disposition to shew mercy to the proper objects of it. And here, as on several other heads, I shall,

I. Explain the disposition required. And,

II. Shew the peculiar engagements that lie upon Christians to it.

I. The nature of the disposition required, expressed by *bowels of mercies*.

It may be thus described in general:—It is a disposition of mind, whereby we are inclined tenderly to sympathise with others in their evils or dangers, and are ready to help and relieve them as far as it is in our power.

The peculiar occasion for this grace is given by the *misery* of other people, either present distresses they are labouring un-

der, or some evils to which we may discern them to be exposed. As there would have been no room for divine mercy, if misery had not made its entrance among creatures, either in actual feeling or in title; so without this there could be no place for the mercy of one man to another.

And, as in other graces, so in this, we are principally to consider the temper of the mind. We are called to put on *bowels of mercy*; a tender sympathising spirit, apt to have a quick sense of other people's calamities and dangers, and to be nearly touched with them, and from that inward charitable frame to do them all proper good offices. Actions which carry the greatest appearance of compassion and mercy, if in truth they proceed not from such a temper of soul, will not meet with divine acceptance. And the apostle intimates, that there may be such actions without a right principle, when he tells us, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." This is one of the strongest evidences whereby one man can proceed in his judgment of another, that he is of a merciful disposition, when he is content to give all he hath to relieve another man's necessity; and yet the apostle intimates, that such a diffusion of visible charity may proceed from an ill spring; as suppose from ostentation, from a hope to compound with God by this means for other sins, from something beside a genuine sympathy with our neighbour. If this should be the case, the most pompous acts of beneficence would profit us nothing at the bar of Christ.

On the other hand, men may be esteemed by God really to possess the *bowels of mercy* which Christianity requires, though they are not in a capacity to give any bright proofs of it to men by sensible instances. A poor man may have the grace of a merciful disposition as truly as the richest, if he really sympathises with his neighbour, and would do more if he had it in his power. For "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not," 2 Cor. viii. 12. The temper of the mind, then, is first to be regarded.

But if there be such a disposition, it will not fail to express itself in merciful actions, in proportion to capacity and opportunity. The man who can allow himself to act a barbarous and cruel part, or who ordinarily declines to act as bowels of mercy

would lead him to do, certainly is not possessed of them. The Christian scheme is so spiritual, as not to admit the acts of mercy for virtue, without the disposition; but it is so just and consistent as not to leave room for a pretence to the disposition, when the life and actions proclaim the contrary.

Now, a compassionate and merciful temper to our neighbour, may be considered as leading to be affected and to act differently, according to several particular views we may take of the case of others; that is, in reference to their souls, and their spiritual miseries and dangers, or in reference to their outward afflictions and sufferings, wherein we have no immediate concern of our own; or, lastly, in relation to any particular injuries they have done to ourselves, by means of which they may lie at our mercy. By this way of considering mercy, the nature of it will, as I apprehend, be most plainly and practically explained.

1. It is to be exercised in reference to the souls of men, and their spiritual miseries and dangers. Here a Christian has abundant reason for bowels of mercy and compassion to his fellow-creatures, much more than he can have from any outward calamities that may befall them.

The sins of men, and the danger of their everlasting ruin by them, will awaken a lively concern and grief in the merciful mind of a Christian. He has the truest and justest compassion for his neighbour, who cannot, without a tender sorrow, see him provoking the great God to jealousy, throwing away his immortal soul, living under the power of a mortal distemper, and laying up in store for a dreadful account. Whoever believes a reality in religion, must be much more affected with such a melancholy sight, than with seeing the bodily wants or consuming diseases of men, or with hearing their dismal groans and mournful complaints upon any worldly account, because he knows that the danger of their souls is infinitely greater. Such was the temper of the holy psalmist, Psal. cxix. 158. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved because they kept not thy law." He was grieved for the dishonour to God; that was piety: and for the risk they run of their own ruin; that was charity and compassion to them.

But if this inward concern be sincere and genuine, it will shew itself in all proper endeavours, according to our ability

and opportunity, to save them from sin and ruin. If we truly pity the ignorance of others, we shall be ready to instruct them, if we are able to do it, and they are willing to receive it, or take pleasure in supporting others in such a work, who are more capable of helping them. If we are deeply affected with their danger, we shall gladly embrace any opportunity to give them faithful warning, and to “pull them out of the fire,” if we can, Jude 23. Where our own influence cannot reach, we shall rejoice if, by any means within our power, we can engage others in so beneficial a design, who may be more capable and likely to succeed. This compassion for the souls of men, would give life to any project for supporting and propagating the gospel, either by our immediate influence, or by our purses, or by any other way we can come at, it would make us immediate actors, or fond of bearing any part in any reforming design set on foot: and if we can have no farther influence, we should help all such designs by frequent and fervent prayer for the propagation of the gospel to the darkest and most distant corners of the earth, that it may “have free course and be glorified;” for our worst enemies, that they be recovered to repentance; and even for such, of whose recovery we may have very low hopes at present. O that there were more such merciful men to the souls of their fellow-creatures! that more were inspired with this persuasion, that “if a man err, and one convert him, he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins,” James v. 19, 20.

2. It is to be exercised in relation to the outward afflictions and sufferings of others, even where we may have no immediate concern. Any of the calamities and evils of life, to which men are liable, give opportunity for bowels of mercy; their pains and diseases of body, their troubles and perplexities of mind, their necessitous circumstances of life either in their ordinary course, or as reduced to them by disasters and disappointments, their unjust sufferings from other men, either for their consciences, or by common oppression and injustice, and even the sufferings and miseries which men bring upon themselves by their own fault and folly. A merciful man will not think himself altogether unconcerned in any of these; though some of them, and in some cases, and with some particular views, may justly touch him more tenderly than others.

Here, as in the former case of the souls of others, mercifulness begins in the frame and temper of the mind. There should be an affecting sense of the distresses of others, a sympathy with them, and a charitable good-will to them. He who is wrapped up in himself, and regards not what calamities befall other people, as long as his own circumstances remain easy, is not humane, much less acts like a Christian. Christianity teaches us to "look not only at our own things, but every man also on the things of others," Phil. ii. 4. It is true, we are called to a more special sympathy with some than with others. The bonds of nature are not cancelled by Christianity, but strengthened; and, therefore, without doubt, we are not only allowed, but obliged, to a more particular sympathy with our relations, our acquaintance, and our friends. "To him that is afflicted, pity should be shewed from his friend," from him especially, Job vi. 14. And ordinarily we are called to interest ourselves in the sufferings of our fellow Christians with more tenderness, than in the sufferings of the world at large; that "if one member (of the Christian body,) suffer, all the members suffer with it," 1 Cor. xii. 26.; and Heb. xiii. 3. "Remember them that are in bonds, (that is, for righteousness' sake,) as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity (upon that account,) as being yourselves also in the body," that is, as belonging to the same body of Christ to which they belong. But there is a general compassion and sympathy due to all men, as they come within our notice and reach, even to the worst of men. To rejoice in the miseries of any as such, is most unchristian, and to have no manner of concern for them, is certainly, at least, a great defect in Christianity; for we are taught "weep with them that weep," without excluding any, Rom. xii. 15.

And where there is really such a disposition of mind, it will express itself in the proper instances and fruits of mercy. The *bowels of mercy* we are to put on, must not be "shut up," as they are, if we satisfy ourselves with a mere tenderness of mind, when we have it in our power to contribute to their relief and help. The merciful will not think it too much to undergo some pain and labour, in order to soften the cares, or divert the pains, or remove the distempers, or solve the doubts and perplexities of their neighbours. They will cheerfully encounter with some difficulties for righting

the injured and oppressed, if they can have a reasonable prospect of success ; and, especially, in proportion to their circumstances, they will be ready to “draw out their soul to the hungry,” as the expression is, Isa. lviii. 10. that is, to draw out their inward compassion by “dealing their bread to the hungry,” ver. 7. and by “satisfying the afflicted soul,” as far as they can, ver. 10. The apostle James represents the absurdity of pretending to sympathy and compassion without this, James ii. 15, 16. “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit ?” And St John exhorts us to shew the sincerity of our love by the feeling expressions of it, 1 John iii. 17, 18. “Whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? My little children, let us not love in word, or in tongue (only,) but in deed and in truth.”

Where people are not in a capacity for relieving the necessities of others themselves, they may exercise their compassion as acceptably to God, by applying to those who are more capable, if they have an interest in them ; whereby, indeed, they may serve *three* good purposes at once, pursue their own charitable temper, excite others to their duty, and help the distressed. Or if they should not know where to make application with prospect of success, yet all have one way left to express their disposition to mercy, which will be pleasing to God, and may be profitable to men ; and that is, by prayer to the Father of mercies, on behalf of the distressed.

3. This temper should be exercised with respect to particular injuries done by others to ourselves, upon account of which we may have them at our mercy : as suppose, by injurious reflections upon our reputations, or by occasioning some damage to our substance, or in other ways of using us ill. This is a peculiar province for mercy to display itself.

Governors are not, indeed, obliged to shew mercy to such offenders, as endeavour to overturn the state, or disturb the public peace, by forbearing to punish them according to their deserts. It is the duty of their office to be “terrors to

evil-doers," as well as "a praise to them that do well." It is one of the greatest blessings of the present world, that there is such a power lodged somewhere in every society, to restrain those, by the terror of punishment, from evil actions, who will not forbear them upon principle. And if there were not actual executions of punishment upon bold offenders, laws would soon lose all their force, and be mere scare-crows; societies must be dissolved, and there could be no living in the world. Mercy to great offenders would, in some case, entail guilt upon a land, as in the case of murder, where the law of God and nature require blood for blood. And, in many other cases, it would be the greatest cruelty to the community, by continuing it in danger from "roaring lions and raging bears," who neither fear God nor regard man," and by encouraging others to offend upon hope of impunity. It must, therefore, always be left to the wisdom and judgment of those in power, to determine how far, at any time, there may be a relaxation of the severity of laws, in particular instances, without danger or prejudice to the community.

My view is, to consider private and personal injuries. And here,

I am far from saying that Christianity, in all cases, obliges us to put them up, without any endeavour to right themselves, either in our reputation or our property. Our usefulness depends upon our reputation; and, therefore, when that is remarkably attacked, and we cannot vindicate ourselves without the prosecution and punishment of those who unrighteously strike at it, it is past doubt that we may and ought to do ourselves justice that way; mercy to others, in such circumstances, would be injustice to ourselves. And in case of injury done us in our property, religion does not forbid us to take advantage of the laws of our country against lawless men. We should give an ill example of mischievous consequence to the public, if, out of a foolish lenity, we should give up our own rights, when they are not merely our own, but stand connected with the rights of the society; which is the case when the crime is of a very pernicious tendency, and the person who commits it appears to be accustomed to it, and in no likely disposition to leave it.

But a merciful temper, when injuries are offered, should shew itself in such instances as these.

We should maintain a good-will to those who injure us, as far as is consistent with the public safety and our own. We should be sorry for their sin, and heartily wish their repentance and everlasting welfare.

If there is any probable hope of their being reclaimed, we should try mild methods first to bring them to reason, and allow time for observing how they operate, before we come to extremities. "Charity suffereth long," 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

If we have received prejudice by their means, but it was undesigned on their part, if in charity we have reason to pass that judgment, not only mercy, but justice requires us not to take any advantage we may have against them. If the providence of God has unexpectedly reduced them, without their own visible fault, so as to disable them to answer our demands from them, to treat them with severity in such a case, would be to fly in the face of Providence.

If they have been designedly injurious to us, but give credible marks of repentance, we are obliged heartily to forgive them, whatever their offences have been.

If they have wronged us, but we know are now utterly incapable to make us reparation, mercy will certainly prompt to be content with what can be had, and never allow us to say, If I cannot have my debt, I will have the man's bones. Nor will it suffer us to proceed to extreme rigour in such circumstances, wherein the innocent must be deeply involved with the guilty, and the utter ruin of a family must ensue upon carrying matters to the greatest height. Mercy in such a case, should temper justice, and it will do so where a merciful temper prevails.

II. I proceed to shew the peculiar engagements that lie upon Christians, to be of a merciful disposition.

1. It is most frequently inculcated upon us as a necessary duty. By frequent precepts, "Be ye merciful," Luke vi. 36.; "Be kind one to another, forgiving one another," Eph. iv. 32.; "Be of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful," 1 Pet. iii. 8. It is represented as an eminent branch of the goodness which God requires of men: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy?" Mic. vi. 8. An unmerciful spirit is declared

to be inconsistent with the love of God in the soul : “ Whoso shutteth the bowels of compassion,—how dwelleth the love of God in him ?” 1 John iii. 17. A tender sympathy is emphatically described as the fulfilling of Christ’s law : “ Bear ye one another’s burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ,” Gal. vi. 2.

2. It is made an express term of our acceptance with God : “ With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful,” Psal. xviii. 25. ; “ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Matt. v. 7. ; “ If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you : but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses,” Matt. vi. 14, 15. The same thing is represented in a very affecting parable, Matt. xviii. 23, &c. ; wherein the king of heaven is described as calling his servants to an account, and out of compassion forgiving one of them a debt of ten thousand talents ; while this same servant used the extremest rigour to a fellow-servant, that owed him but an hundred pence ; whereupon his Lord is represented, after the manner of men, as calling his forgiveness, and insisting afresh upon his debt to him with the utmost severity ; to teach us what our Lord delivers at the close as the moral of the parable, ver. 35. “ So shall, likewise, my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” The process of the great day is directly described as turning eminently upon this point, both in the goodness and severity of God, Matt. xxv. 34. to the end. We are told on the one hand, Jam. ii. 13. that “ he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy ;” and, on the other, that “ God is not unrighteous, to forget any work or labour of love, shewed toward his name, in ministering to the saints,” Heb. vi. 10. Would to God that all who name the name of Christ, would seriously lay to heart things so strongly and frequently said !

Nor is it any wonder that this should be made an indispensable term of the divine favor, and of our eternal happiness, since,

3. We are most fully taught our own need of divine mercy. We have constant occasion for mercy to pardon, and grace to help, Heb. iv. 16. None of us can come to God as innocent creatures, but as penitents, who must be beholden to infinite

mercy for the pardon of innumerable offences, and for the acceptance of our best services, and cannot hope for any benefit at his hands upon the foot of desert, but as the fruit of sovereign grace and favor. And can we come to God with a humble apprehension of our own guilt and unworthiness, and yet allow an unrelenting temper to our neighbour; How can we have the confidence of such a frame to offer to God that petition of the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors?" The very request, coming from a hard-hearted and implacable man, is no better than to bespeak a denial. Can we be sensible, according to the elegant representation of the parable lately mentioned, that our debt to God is as "ten thousand talents," and yet hesitate upon forgiving our neighbour the trifle of "an hundred-pence?" That is a vast disproportion, but falls much beneath the reality of the case. Can we have the face to be petitioners for his compassion and indulgence every moment, and yet be obdurate to the cries of our fellow-creatures, or think it beneath us to have any regard for them in their wants and distresses?

4. God's actual mercy to us is, therefore, set in our view in the gospel, as a pattern for this holy disposition. He is "the Father of mercies, rich in mercy; his tender mercies are over all his works." He is "full of compassion." The course of providence and redemption are the brightest demonstrations of it. He continually supplies our returning wants, often before we call upon him, and especially he satisfies our desires, and answers our humble entreaties. He remembered us in the low estate of our apostacy, when no other eye pitied us, and no other hand could save us; and, out of the riches of his grace, gave his only-begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. All his mercy to us is disinterested; he never can have any need of us, as we may have of the meanest of our fellow-creatures; there was nothing but misery and necessity on our part to move his tender regard. He was highly provoked by us, so that resentment, instead of relief, might in all reason have been expected; yet then mercy rejoiced over judgment. Can I then beseech you to put on *bowels of mercy*, by any stronger argument than "by the mercies of God?" The Scripture dwells upon this consideration: "Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful," Luke vi. 36.;

“Love your enemies, &c. that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,” Matt. v. 44, 45.; “Be tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you,” Eph. iv. 32.

5. The Son of God gave us a most illustrious pattern of mercy. This was the great inducement to veil his original glory, and to assume our nature, not our merit, but our misery. He came “to seek and to save them that were lost,” to “save us from our sins,” and “from the wrath to come,” due for them.

When he was actually made flesh, there never was such a pattern of mercy in our nature. Almost all his words and works breathed this.

How singular was his compassion to the souls of men! When he “saw them as sheep without a shepherd,” without proper and good instructors in the way to heaven, “he was moved with compassion on them,” Matt. ix. 36. And that compassion induced him to be their unwearied instructor himself, to go about through their cities and villages preaching the doctrine of the kingdom, accommodating himself to their capacities and circumstances, taking every advantage to enlighten their minds, and remove their prejudices, and guide their feet in the way of peace. When any of his hearers perversely opposed the design of his instructions and miracles, he was “grieved for the hardness of their hearts,” Mark iii. 5. And when he plainly foresaw, that the body of the Jewish nation were about to fill up the measure of their iniquities, by rejecting and crucifying him, the Lord of glory, he shed tears of sorrow for them, because they would “not know the things of their peace,” till they were “hid from their eyes,” Luke xix. 41, 42.

His sympathy with men in their bodily wants and sorrows, was also very conspicuous. We often read of his being “moved with compassion,” upon several distressing occasions, and so being led to relieve them. From those bowels of tender mercy, he was induced to heal a sick multitude, Matt. xiv. 13, 14. and to cure the blind men that cried after him, while the multitude rebuked them, chap. xx. 34.; and to restore to life the only son of the woman of Nain, Luke vii. 12—15. He

bore an affectionate part with the mourners at Lazarus' grave, he wept and "groaned in spirit," John xi. 35—38. Every miracle that he wrought, was a relief to men in one or another distress, excepting two; one of which, in permitting the devils to enter the herd of swine, Matt. viii. was, after an act of great mercy, in delivering two men who had been sorely tormented by those devils; which was also an instance of mercy to the people of the country, who had been in continual danger before from those possessed men, ver. 28.; and the other, of cursing a barren fig-tree, so that it immediately withered away, Matt. xxi. 19. was intended, with no considerable loss or prejudice to any, to warn his disciples, by an instructive emblem of the danger of unfruitfulness.

He was ready to perform kind offices to all sorts of people in distress, whether good or bad. Though he seemed more shy of relieving a Gentile during his personal ministry, and before the wall of partition was broken down, lest he should offend the Jews, to whom he was peculiarly sent; yet we find as illustrious a fruit of his gracious compassion to the woman of Canaan, as any in the gospel-history, Matt. xv. 28. Even his enemies felt the benefit of his miraculous power; so he healed the ear of Malchus, the high-priest's servant, when he was among those who came to apprehend him.

He did not always stay for desire and application, but would even surprise a miserable object with the offer of his help. Thus he acted with reference to the man who waited at the pool of Bethesda, and "had an infirmity thirty-eight years; when Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, wilt thou be made whole?" The impotent man not knowing him, only tells him his helpless case, but without expectation of a miraculous cure; but Christ pronounced the healing word, and made the poor man to feel its healing virtue, ere he was aware, John v. 5—9. Such was his disposition to mercy.

And his benignity is not lessened now when he is passed into the heavens. For still "we have not an high-priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," Heb. iv. 15. As they are not out of the reach of his knowledge, so they still move his compassionate regard; and we may suppose him saying to us from heaven those gracious words under them, which he did to St. Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 9. "My grace is

sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And upon the foot of the blessed discoveries of the gospel, we "look for his mercy unto eternal life," Jude 21.

Upon the whole, then,

1. If the gospel lay us under so various and so strong engagements to a merciful disposition, where shall the cruel and the savage appear ? If a compassionate temper, ready to express itself in the kind and beneficent fruits of it, is made necessary to a well-grounded hope of God's favour, what must become of those who are perfectly insensible of the calamities of others, unmoved at their cries, and inexorable to their intreaties ? of the spiteful and malicious ? of the injurious oppressor, that "sees the anguish of his brother's soul, when he beseeches, but will not hear ?" What must be the end of the bloody persecutor ?

2. Let us, then, *as the elect of God, holy and beloved*, as his peculiar people and beloved children, studiously *put on bowels of mercy*. Shall others, who make no such pretence, be induced by goodness of nature, or by some ignobler motives, to shew mercy to the miserable in many amiable instances ? And shall we, who profess Christianity, or to be called into the kingdom and fellowship of God's dear Son, come behind them ? We who acknowledge ourselves to need so much mercy from God, who have already received such rich fruits of it, and have all our future expectations from the same source ; we who are not encouraged to hope for divine mercy, without exercising it to our fellow-creatures ; we who are called the followers of the merciful Jesus. Certainly many of the heathen world will rise up in judgment against those pretended Christians, who shut up the bowels of their compassion from their neighbour, and will condemn them.

SERMON XXXII.

VERACITY, OR TRUTH BETWEEN MAN AND MAN.



EPII. IV. 25.

*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth
with his neighbour; for we are members one of an-
other.*

THE apostle, in some verses before the text, had represented the gross corruptions that prevailed in the Gentile world; and then his charitable hope of the Ephesians, to whom he wrote, that they had learned Christ so as to make them new men, quite another sort of people in the temper of their spirits, and the course of their conversation, and what they had once been themselves, and from what the body of the heathens still were.

Having expressed such a charitable persuasion concerning them, he proceeds to exhort them to behave accordingly; cautioning them against many sins, which abounded among those who had not yet received the knowledge of the truth; and exciting to several particular duties to which the new nature would prompt them. He begins with the exhortation in the text, to a strict regard for truth, or veracity.

This was a duty especially fit to be inculcated upon converts from Paganism; not only as lying, among other evil practices, was common and customary every where among them, but as some of their most celebrated masters of wisdom taught looser principles upon this head, than upon many other subjects of morality. They esteemed lying, in many cases, to be lawful

and justifiable ; for which Dr. Whitby, upon the place, produces several passages out of their writings. It was, therefore, peculiarly suitable, that when the apostle puts the Ephesians in mind of the better instructions they had learned from “the truth as it is in Jesus,” or from the Christian revelation, which eminently bears the character of a doctrine of truth, he should begin with pressing them to a stricter regard to truth, than they had either practised or been taught before their conversion. And so he does in the words read : *Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another.*

Upon this head it will be proper,

I. To explain the precept here recommended to Christians, or the social duty which is prescribed by these words.

II. To consider the reason which the apostle gives for it.

And then to close with a practical application.

I. I would explain and state the social duty which is here recommended to Christians.

The apostle, for greater emphasis, had described the general change made in the spirits and lives of Christians by the gospel, both negatively and positively ; by “putting off the old man, and putting on the new,” ver. 22—24. In like manner he does, for the same reason, in reference to this particular virtue. On the one hand, he calls the Ephesians to *put away lying* ; and, on the other, to *speak every man truth with his neighbour*.

Truth, in scripture and in common use, hath several acceptations. Sometimes it signifies “the real nature of things in themselves :” and that is the same, whether we think at all of it or not, however we judge about it ; for our judgment cannot alter the nature of things. Sometimes it signifies the conformity of our apprehensions to the nature of things ; that we conceive aright of them, and just as they really are : error and mistake stand opposed to truth in this sense. Every man, as far as he is concerned to think at all about things, should endeavour to judge as truly of them as he can, or agreeable to what they are in themselves. And when he speaks to

his neighbour, he should communicate truth to him, in opposition to error, as far as he is able. But a man may vent error and mistake without the guilt of lying.

Therefore, we must come to a third sense of truth, the "agreement of our words to our own sense and apprehension." And lying, properly speaking, stands opposed to truth only in this signification. A man may speak the truth to his neighbour in this moral sense, and in the sense of the text, even when he is involuntarily mistaken; and, on the other hand, he may be guilty of the sin of lying, when he speaks to his neighbour that which is a real truth in itself, as long as he does not think it so. A man may be guilty of other sins, which will be ruinous to him in the day of account, when he judges amiss or contrary to the truth of things, under sufficient means of better information. God may condemn him for his sloth and negligence, or for his corrupt prejudices in such a case. But he is not directly and properly charged with the sin of lying, except when he speaks contrary to his own present sense and judgment.

Speaking, or writing, which is but another way of speaking, are intended to be means of communicating our minds one to another. Lying is giving a false representation of our minds; speaking what we think to be false, to deceive others.

Both of these are to be taken in for explaining this vice; that the matter of what we say is false, or different from what we believe to be true; and that it be spoken with intention to deceive him to whom we speak.

There may be *either* separately, without incurring the guilt of lying. It is not a lie, for instance, to repeat a known falsehood in the way of narrative, but declares that he believes it to be false. Nor is it repugnant to veracity to use figurative expressions, which yet are not strictly true in the literal sense; as long as by common use, or the manner of speaking, the design of them is easy enough to be understood: as in the use of an hyperbole; or, when we exceed what is strictly true, either in magnifying or diminishing a thing, but every one at the same time may understand that it is intended for no more than a figure. So the evangelist says, John xxi. 25. "There are many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world it-

self could not contain the books that should be written ;” which none can understand to import any more than that the books which must be written upon such a subject would be endless. So the use of an ironical way of speaking, is not inconsistent with veracity ; that is, when the strict literal sense of the words seems to signify one thing, but the circumstances of the case more plainly shew that the quite contrary is meant : as in Elijah’s contest with the false prophets of Baal, when they had offered their sacrifice, and called upon their false god from morning till noon, to send fire down to consume the sacrifice, Elijah did not think it unlawful or unbecoming to deride them and their god, that he might awaken them out of their stupidity, and shew their folly to all the people, by an irony, 1 Kings xviii. 27. “ Cry aloud,” says he, “ for he is a god ; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.” Here was no violation of truth, in saying in the matter, and on the occasion that he said so, that Baal was a god. Every one that heard him, must understand him to mean the contrary in the strongest manner. In all figurative ways of speaking, it is necessary to their consistence with truth, that it be apparent they are intended for figures : and then, if they are apt to express our minds to the hearer, they are words of truth ; but break in upon truth, if they are intended to mislead him.

Nor is an intention to deceive others always criminal, if no falsehood be spoken for that purpose. It is not unlawful to deceive an enemy in war by a stratagem, though it would be so to assert a falsehood to him. I may foresee that my silence, or forbearing to say all that I know of a matter, will lead my neighbour into a mistake, and yet may lawfully inform him of the truth ; yea, in some cases, it may be my duty not to do it : as, where a greater good requires that he should be kept ignorant of it ; or, sometimes, for the sake of his own good ; suppose, for instance, it is known that a sick person will refuse a medicine very likely to be of service to him, if he were acquainted with what it was ; certainly a physician, or a parent, or friend, may very lawfully endeavour to deceive him by any method consistent with truth : or, if a matter be intrusted with me as a secret, and another would fain discover it, who has no right to know it, if either by silence, or by a

partial but true account, I can divert his inquiry, it will be no violation of truth. Jeremiah's conduct may be an instance, Jer. xxxviii. He had been thrown into a filthy dungeon by king Zedekiah, at the instigation of the princes of Judah; but, upon the intercession of Ebed-melech, was admitted to a private audience of the king, wherein the main subject of his discourse was, to acquaint the king with the mind of God for his direction in his present circumstances. The king, at parting, charges him to conceal this from the princes, and, if they should come to examine him about the matter, that he should say unto them, ver. 25, 26. "I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there." And we are told, ver. 27. that "when the princes came to him, he told them according to all those words that the king had commanded him: so they left off speaking with him, for the matter was not perceived." No doubt this was part of the conversation, and the king had commanded him to conceal the rest on pain of death; he was under no obligation to acquaint the princes with the rest; and he knew he should run the hazard of his life from them, if he informed them of the message which he had delivered from God to the king, because it was most disagreeable to their mind; and, therefore, he deceived them, by letting them know only part of the truth. In this he was no way worthy of blame.

But to affirm any falsehood, in order to deceive others, is never justifiable. It is not lawful to lie for God, or for the greatest advantage that can be proposed by it to our neighbours, or to ourselves. A mischievous lie, that is designed to the prejudice of any, is more heinous and aggravated upon other accounts, than an officious or a jocular lie: but lying, in any kind, is a violation of truth, which the best end proposed by it cannot justify; and that for this one reason, because we must "not do evil, that good may come," Rom. iii. 8. That lying is always evil, will appear when I come to the second head.

But I would be first a little more particular in explaining this exhortation, by shewing how it is to be observed eminently in three cases: in common conversation, in bearing testimony, and in making and performing offices.

1. Truth is to be observed in common conversation. Peo-

ple have more special need, in some respects, to be admonished of their obligations inviolably to maintain truth here: for many are more ready to allow themselves to transgress in what they account trivial instances, than upon solemn occasions; and yet by such beginnings, way is made for the disregard of truth, in the most considerable matters, in process of time. As men often proceed gradually from customary breach of their word, to break their oaths too at length; so when once a strict regard to truth, upon common occasions, is lost, it seldom remains long unshaken in cases of greater importance. The scriptures, and, as we shall see presently, the reason of things also, oblige us to maintain truth inviolably and universally, without indulging ourselves in any sort of known falsehood. The prohibition of lying, both in Old and New Testament, is absolute: "Ye shall not lie one to another," Luke xix. 11. "Lie not one to another," Col. iii. 9. And so is the injunction of truth: "Speak every man truth to his neighbour," Zech. viii. 16. "Whatsoever things are true,—think on these things," Phil. iv. 8. Such declarations of the mind of God, leave us no licence to make free with truth on the slightest occasions.

How common soever, therefore, the practice may be, we should not think ourselves at liberty to make professions of kindness, where none at all is meant. Civility is one thing, and fit to be professed and practised to all; but profession of distinguishing respect and esteem is another thing; and when there is nothing inward to answer it, it is inconsistent with the candour and simplicity which should be found in a Christian. To give men commendations, which, at the same time, we think them not to deserve, or to flatter them upon excellencies we do not esteem them possessed of, if they should pass with us for words of course now, yet I doubt will not pass so easily in the judgment.

There are a set of people, who think to recommend themselves to those with whom they converse, by a surprising story of their own invention, or by pretending, with a boasting air, to things which they never did, or by magnifying matters beyond the bounds of probability; and think any thing of this kind no more than a harmless amusement, as long as they avoid making free with their neighbour's character. Such facetious lies may not be in a direct breach upon

charity ; but they are a breach upon truth, and awaken men's regards for it : and, certainly, if such inventions happen to produce some mirth and entertainment for the present in company, yet they can give neither a man nor his friend pleasure in the reflection, when it is known that all this hath no foundation of truth.

2. Truth should be maintained in bearing testimony. Many, who make no account of violating truth in a theme of common conversation, where they apprehend none to be injured ; yet cannot allow themselves to bear false witness, where they think their neighbour directly concerned, in his life, or property, or reputation, or other valuable interests. “ A false witness that speaketh lies, and so soweth discord among brethren,” may as yet be an opprobrious name to some who have not the universal regard to truth which they should have, because of the obvious mischief which accrues to society from a false witness. But I doubt some will incur this guilt in God's account, who reckon themselves clear of it.

A conscientious regard to truth will engage us to be very careful, that we spread nothing to the lessening or reproach of our neighbour, of which we have not good assurance ; that we publish not a defamation upon hearsay, nor take up, without sufficient grounds, “ a report against our neighbour.” This is the settled character of a citizen of Zion, Psal. xv. 3. Reports which we divulge carry the authority of our names to support them, as far as that will go, farther than we bear our testimony against them. And if we hastily put an uncertain story we have heard out of our power, by making it public, we may prove the false witnesses of a scandal to many, who take it up upon our authority, without having either inclination or opportunity to examine the grounds we went upon.

If we are called to give public testimony between man and man, a sincere respect to truth will engage to a careful recollection, before we give our testimony what we can say upon the matter. It will dispose to lay aside affection on one hand, and prejudice on the other, and impartially to relate the true state of things, as far as we can bear witness to them ; nakedly to represent facts, as they have come within our notice.

Here we should think ourselves obliged, not only to speak

nothing but the truth, but to speak the whole truth, without concealment or disguise. Though we are not bound, in every case, to speak the whole truth, yet certainly, when a matter depends either in whole, or in part, upon our evidence, and we come in as witnesses, we are bound not only to avoid all direct falsehood, but also not to omit any thing we can discover, which may give light into the true merits of the cause. This ought to be sacred to an honest man, when he is only heard upon his word, as well as when he is sworn to "speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." If a matter should be wrong taken by a partial representation, and so a wrong judgment passed in a cause; though we should have said nothing untrue as far as we went, yet we shall be justly accounted accessory to that wrong judgment, by concealing what we had farther to offer: and thus partial evidence will have all the same evil effects that evidence directly false can have.

3. Truth must be exercised in our promises and engagements; and veracity requires two things in relation to them.

(1.) That we really intend to perform them, when they are made. In matters where we were at full liberty before, promises lay us under obligation, and give our neighbour a right; and, therefore, we should never allow ourselves to make them, unless there be an intention to make them good. A citizen of Zion is careful of that, *Psal. xv. 2.* "He speaketh the truth in his heart." He speaks according to the true meaning and design of his heart. To engage to do a thing, when at the time of the engagement we foresee that we cannot accomplish it, or have it not in our intention, is really to injure and impose upon our neighbour, and to wrong our own souls. We should not, therefore, be rash in making promises, but weigh beforehand, the lawfulness, the practicableness, the expedience of what we undertake: for the same thing which Solomon says of vows to God, will hold true of promises to men, *Ecc. v. 5.* "Better it is that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow, and not pay."

(2.) That we are careful of performance, after they are made. This is as essential to veracity as the former.

Not but that there are some cases which may supersede our obligation. If we are unexpectedly disabled afterwards, by the

providence of God, God and conscience, and all reasonable men, will discharge us from the guilt of falsehood in not making our word good. We could only be supposed to promise, if we were able. Or if we should be convinced, that the matter of our promise is unlawful, we must repent of our rashness in making it, and not add sin to sin by executing it. Herod ought with repentance to have broken even his oath, rather than have done so cruel and injurious a thing in pursuit of it, as beheading John the Baptist, if really that were included in his oath: indeed, he might more justly have given that wicked woman, who solicited it, the half of his kingdom, according to the letter of his promise, than the Baptist's head. And if unforeseen, superior engagements require our attendance, at the time when a promise was to be performed, they must take place of it: as, suppose you have undertaken to do a particular service to a person at such a time, but afterwards you understand that a wife, or a child, or some in whom you have a near concern, are in danger of life without your immediate assistance; the promise is evidently superseded by higher engagements. No promise can be made in bar of all future contingencies, nor can release a man from that which the providence of God makes much more immediately his duty.

But veracity obliges to performance, when we lawfully may do it, when we are in a capacity, and not called off from it by much more evident duty. A lover of truth will not satisfy himself to have given his word, to be rid of present importunity, or to please his neighbour for the time, without any concern about the matter afterwards. Though the performance in the event should prove a considerable damage to himself, and a disadvantageous bargain, yet he will not be a covenant-breaker: "He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not," Psal. xv. 4. If he is not able at present to make good his engagements, yet he will bear them in mind, and make conscience of performing them in case of restoration to capacity, though he should be under no obligation to human laws to do so.

II. I proceed to consider the reasons which the apostle gives for the inviolable maintenance of truth: *Because we are members one of another.* Which may be understood

either as applicable to mankind in common, or to Christians in particular.

1. This argument is applicable to mankind in general. We are members one of another, as we partake of the same human nature, and in that respect are upon a level. We are members of society in common : entitled to the same rights, claims, and expectations, one from another, as men ; and are mutually helpful and subservient, as the members of the body are to each other : and the principal link that holds us together, is mutual confidence, founded upon the hope of common fidelity.

Now, lying makes void and useless the great instrument of society, the faculty of speech or writing. The power of speech was given us by our Creator, and the art of writing since found out, on purpose that we might be able so to convey our sense to others, that they may discern it, where we pretend to express it, just as if they were so far privy to what passed in our minds. By these means, joined with the power of reason, man is a creature fitted for much more agreeable society than the inferior creatures are. But as far as the inward sense of our minds, when we profess to give it, is not faithfully conveyed ; so far these means of union and correspondence between man and man, must necessarily become the means of disuniting and estranging them one from another.

Truth hereupon becomes a branch of righteousness, what every man hath a right to claim and expect from every man ; as it is the proper and natural use of that instrument of society, which our common Maker has furnished us with for mutual good and service. And, therefore, “a righteous man hateth lying,” Prov. xiii. 5.

In fact, it is what every man would expect and desire from another. The most common liar, the falsest witness, the most perfidious covenant-breaker, would have others speak the truth to him, and is ready to complain when they do not ; and, therefore, by that obvious rule of equity, of doing as we would be done unto, every man has a right to expect and claim the same thing from us.

And unless truth be inviolably observed in every thing, the bonds of human society cannot fail to be weakened. If a man allow himself to throw off a regard to truth in one instance, when this is known, it is impossible that another

should be assured where he will stop ; and, consequently, mutual confidence must be destroyed. It is a man's profession that he esteems truth sacred in itself, and, consequently, in all cases, that is the security for his credibility upon his word in any case. As long as we cannot charge him with any violation of it, we are obliged to credit him. But when he is convicted of falsehood ; and especially if he declares that he thinks himself not bound to the observation of truth in some cases ; as, that "faith is not to be kept with heretics ;" or, that he should not scruple a lie for its own sake, unless upon account of some farther mischief attending it ; then, I say, a man will justly be esteemed to disclaim the sacredness of truth in itself ; and so his neighbour cannot believe him upon his bare word. It cannot be wondered at, that a known liar hardly meets with credit, even when he speaks truth : and so the least impeachment of a man's veracity justly weakens his credit, and others confidence in him.

Every man must be sensible what universal mischief this brings upon the world, and how it destroys the comfort and benefit of society. See a melancholy description of it in the corrupt state of Israel, Jer. ix. 4, 5. "Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother ; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth ; they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity."

The sight of abounding falsehood in the world, brought in the use of oaths ; in hope, that by a direct appeal to God, and a solemn imprecation of his vengeance in case of perjury, men who are not restrained within the bounds of truth in common cases, might be awed into veracity upon important occasions, by an immediate appeal to the great God. This practice, in the present degenerate state of human nature, is plainly countenanced by God in scripture, and by the general consent of all civilized nations, "an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife," Heb. vi. 16. ; as the last appeal which men can make, and, therefore, the highest test of their veracity. And if men can allow themselves to falsify, not only their word, but their oath, there is nothing by which they can be held, nor any security they can give to society, and, there-

fore, must forfeit all the benefits of it, as such who are not capable members of it.

But we should consider ourselves as always under the eye of God, as well in what we say as in what we swear. If this were the general temper, there would be no occasion for the solemnity of oaths: and if men lose sight of this in common life, so as contentedly and customarily to prostitute truth, even where there is no direct appeal to God, their oath itself will hardly be sufficient to produce a full confidence in their veracity.

2. This argument may be particularly applicable to Christians: *We are members one of another*, in a more distinguishing sense, as we belong to the body of Christ. And this lays additional engagements upon all the visible members of that body, to *put away lying, and to speak the truth one to the other*.

In conformity to the common Father, to whom we belong, who is eminently styled "a God of truth," Deut. xxxii. 4. "His words are true," 2 Sam. vii. 28. Psal. cxix. 160. They are not only agreeable to the true nature of things, but are suited to convey the divine mind plainly and without disguise to us. His promises are sure and certain, such as may firmly be relied upon. Falsehood is as impossible to him as any other imperfection: "God is not a man that he should lie," Numb. xxiii. 19. His promise and his oath are "two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie." And if this be a perfection so essential to the blessed God, in which he so much glories, and which we have so much reason to venerate in him; if we are born of him, we shall study imitation. Therefore, his children are described as "children that will not lie," Isa. lxiii. 8. Liars, we are told, belong to another father, John viii. 44. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."—There is no truth in him. "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." This character is fixed upon him, as he pronounced the first lie that we find upon record in the Bible, when he told our first parents, "Ye shall not surely die," Gen. iii. 4.

In conformity to our head the Lord Jesus, there should be a strict observation of truth among Christians. He came into the world to bear witness to it, John xviii. 37. And he

was and is "the faithful and true witness," revealing the mind of God with the greatest exactness, and having "no guile found in his mouth," in any part of his conversation.

In conformity to the Spirit that animates us, who is eminently described by this attribute, "the Spirit of truth," John xiv. 17. xv. 26.; whose revelations are contained in "the scriptures of truth," Dan. x. 21.; where "that which is written is upright, even words of truth." And, therefore, those who are taught by him should shew it by the strictest regard to that which is made his noted character in scripture. This is, therefore, particularly described to be his fruit, Eph. v. 9. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." Which leads on to observe, that Christians are under strong engagements to veracity,

Because of the stress laid upon it in the rule by which all the members of Christ's body are to be governed. The observation of truth is prescribed there in the strongest and most unlimited terms, as has been shewn. It is recommended by the clearest expressions of God's approbation, Prov. xii. 22. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truly are his delight;" and eternal death is expressly denounced as the portion of liars. They bring up the rear in the catalogue of those who "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," Rev. xxi. 8. Whosoever "maketh a lie, shall in no wise enter" into the heavenly Jerusalem, ver. 27.; and the same is said of "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie," chap. xxii. 15.

Inference 1. This is one remarkable evidence how much Christianity is calculated for the benefit of mankind and the good of society at present, as well as for our everlasting welfare; in that it so strictly enjoins and enforces the exactest regard to truth. No man can be insensible that this would contribute greatly to the happiness and comfort of life, if every man conversed with another without deceit and guile, so that there was no occasion for just jealousies and suspicions. The Christian religion written in the heart, will form a man to this.

2. We see from thence upon how good reason the Christian religion strictly forbids common swearing. So our Sa-

viour himself does, Matt. v. 34—37. “I say unto you, Swear not at all. But let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.” The same precept for substance is repeated by the apostle James, chap. v. 12.

Not that we are to understand either Christ or the apostle as intending to represent an oath to be unlawful in all cases. However absolute the expressions may seem, “Swear not at all,” we cannot suppose them to forbid us to bear solemn testimony, or to give solemn assurances of fidelity upon oath, when called to either by lawful authority, since these were, with God’s countenance and by his appointment, used in the church of God from the first ages of the world; and the apostle, after the precept of our Saviour, countenances the use of “an oath for confirmation,” and to “end strife,” Heb. vi. 16. Nor are all appeals to God, performed with seriousness and upon important occasions, even without the call of the magistrate, to be supposed unlawful to a Christian. We have many instances of such appeals and oaths made by the apostle Paul, in his inspired writings, 2 Cor. i. 23. xi. 31. Gal. i. 20. Rom. i. 9.; who certainly knew, and would not transgress, the mind of Christ in this matter.

The meaning, then, of these passages, is to forbid all swearing in ordinary discourse and conversation; that we should satisfy ourselves with a bare affirmation or denial of a thing, and not be ready, at every turn, to appeal to God for the truth of what we say, unless we are lawfully called to it; nor use any of those methods of asseveration, which may be esteemed petty oaths, as *by heaven*, or the like; several of which both our Saviour and the apostle particularly mention, pointing to the practice of many of the Jews, who thought it lawful to swear by other things, as long as they used not the name of God. Instead of this, we are directed to go no farther in common converse, than bare asserting or disowning any thing.

And the reason is obvious, Christianity most strictly enjoins veracity upon all Christ’s followers, that they should have such an exact regard to truth in all they say, that they may deserve to be believed upon their word. He who does not so behave as to deserve credit upon this foundation in common affairs, can hardly be more regarded upon the light and negligent use

of an oath, which is the best that can be said of common swearing ; and, at the same time, he depreciates the solemnity of an oath in extraordinary cases, by taking the name of God in vain, so as to give ground to fear that he trifles with it then as well as in common converse.

3. All that name the name of Christ, are concerned to see that they comply with the exhortation in the text : “ If any man seemeth to be religious, and bridled not his tongue,” particularly from lying, surely “ that man’s religion is vain.” And, therefore, we should use the most effectual means to secure our veracity.

We should maintain a constant sense of the great evil of falsehood, and of the excellence of truth ; as the one is contrary to the God of truth, and the other to his image ; the one destructive of society, and the other the greatest strength and security to it.

We should be upon our guard against every thing that may be a temptation to falsehood. Guilt needs a lie to excuse it. Covetousness may prompt to falsehood for gratifying it, but a woe is entailed upon all such gains, Prov. xxi. 6. “ The getting of treasure by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.” Malice and ill-will sometimes lead to false charges to support them ; when the reputation of an adversary cannot be sunk by true accusations. And rash speaking often betrays into falsehood at unawares. All these, therefore, should carefully be guarded against by every lover of truth.

We ought to take heed of any appearance of evil in this case ; to keep at a remote distance from any thing that borders upon falsehood. This is the surest way to avoid any vice.

And, as in the practice of every other duty, and the avoidance of every other sin, so here we should join prayer to God with our own care and endeavours, in such language as that of the psalmist, Psal. cxix. 29. “ Remove far from me the way of lying, and grant me thy law graciously.”

4. Christians should do all they can to promote truth among others, both for the honor of God, and the spiritual and eternal good of their neighbours, and the general interest of society.

Such as have the care of youth should, with the utmost and most early care, impress upon their minds their indispen-

sable obligations to maintain truth inviolate ; they should let them know, by their conduct, that a lie is to be reckoned a greater fault than most of those which they may intend to excuse by it, at least that any crime is more easily to be passed over by itself, than as aggravated by a covering of falsehood.

Falsehood should, upon all occasions, be discountenanced. A Christian should resolve, with the psalmist, that "he that telleth lies should not dwell in his sight," Psal. ci. 7. ; he should frown upon the backbiter, and "not give heed to false lips ; he should countenance plain-dealing in all, and both express a just abhorrence of flattery, and a real liking of frankness and openness, though it should be shewn in truths that bear hard upon himself.

SERMON XXXIII.

CHARITABLE JUDGING, IN OPPOSITION TO CENSORIOUSNESS.

MATT. VII. 1.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

AMONG the many important rules delivered by our Saviour in his comprehensive sermon on the mount, there are not many more needful in every age of the world than this. It was peculiarly suitable to the Jews, who were eminently censorious of all who were not of their nation and religion. And the same spirit of bigotry closely adhered to those of them who embraced Christianity, after Christ had set up his church and kingdom, in relation to the Gentile converts; so that there was occasion frequently to repeat to them such an admonition as that in the text, which we find done in several of the apostolical epistles. And, God knows, the same evil temper abounds in every age of the Christian church; so that the like caution is never unseasonable.

In the prosecution of the subject, I would,

- I. Explain what is here forbidden. And,
- II. The motive by which the prohibition is enforced.

I. It is needful to explain this prohibition of our Lord and Master, in what sense we are to understand him, when he says, *Judge not.*

The words, in themselves, are very general, but the sense of

them may easily be understood, if we look into the context and compare them with other scriptures.

Nothing is plainer, than that Christ intends not absolutely to forbid any to use their own judgments. *Judging* is a natural faculty, which God hath given us all as rational-creatures, and which he expects us to use in the best manner we can, according to every natural and acquired advantage for it, each of us for himself, to conduct us in the affairs of this world, and in our way to a better. We act no farther as reasonable creatures, either in civil concerns, or in those of religion, than as we act upon our own judgments.

But it is *judging of other people*, which is the subject of the text, passing a judgment concerning their words, or actions, or intentions. The third, fourth, and fifth verses, of this chapter, plainly shew, that it is "our brother," that is, any other man who is concerned in the judging spoken of.

And though the word itself doth not limit the sense either to judging *well* or *ill* of him, yet the use of it in the New Testament confines the meaning to *judging ill*, or censuring him.

And yet even *all such* judging of our neighbour is not designed to be forbidden.

The censure of the magistrate upon criminals that disturb the public peace, and his punishing of them when found guilty, is so far from being discountenanced, that it is absolutely necessary to the good of civil society. Magistrates are instituted by God to be "a terror to evil doers;" and they are justly worthy of blame, when they "bear the sword in vain," by not executing judgment upon notorious offenders, which, by the precept of God in scripture, and by the claim of the society in which they are, is their proper province.

Ministers and Christian societies are not debarred from censuring those, in the way of censure which Christ has appointed them, who are of their own body, or who offer themselves to be members of it, by denying them Christian communion with them, if they notoriously break the laws of Christ. This sort of judging is made a duty by the gospel-rule, "not to keep company," in Christian society, "with any man that is called a brother, if he be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner," 1 Cor. v.

11. This is called "judging them that are within," ver. 12.; judging them, according to the rule of Christ, to be unfit for Christian communion.

It is not unlawful for private persons to entertain a fear, that evils may possibly be committed by those in whom they have a concern, by means of the temptations which are known to attend their circumstances; that is, such a fear as may awaken prayer and endeavours for their good: "It may be," says Job of his sons, when they had been feasting together, "they have sinned;" and, therefore, "he offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all," Job i. 5. And the apostles express their fears of the Christians, to whom they wrote, and gave them the most awful cautions accordingly, when, at the same time, they expressed a charitable hope of better things: "I fear," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, 2 Epist. xi. 3. "least by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." So he warns the Hebrews of the dreadful danger of apostacy, and of the sad effects to be expected from unfruitfulness under the advantages of the gospel; and yet tells them, that "he was persuaded better things of them, and things that accompany salvation, though he thus spoke," Heb. vi. 4--9. Fear and concern for others, that arises from a sense of their danger, is the fruit of true charity, consistent with a good opinion, and very different from actual censures without a good foundation.

We shall not be chargeable with censoriousness, for judging any thing erroneous in the professed sentiments of others, or amiss in their practice, which really appears so to us. If we believe ourselves in the right, we cannot but judge those who differ from us in the wrong: there is no uncharitableness in this; nor in endeavouring, by fair reasoning, to convince them of what we judge their mistake, or, by fair reproof and advice, to use our best endeavours that sin may not lie upon them.

And, to go a step farther, we are not forbid to judge those to be ill men, who give flagrant proofs of it by a course of evil actions, and whose sins go beforehand to judgment.

But the judging which we should avoid, may, I think, be reduced to the four following heads:—pragmatical, rash, partial, and uncharitable judging.

1. Pragmatical judging is carefully to be avoided. We should not officially pass our condemning sentence upon any persons or things without just warrant or authority.

Thus to censure things out of our province, where we have no concern or call to pass any judgment at all, is a busy intermeddling. Many things may be proper for the cognizance and animadversion of the magistrate, with which private members of the community have nothing to do. Christ, by his own example, has taught us to consider, whether a thing be within our province, before we meddle with it. When a person said to him, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me," Jesus answered, "Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you?" Luke xii. 13, 14. 'It is none of my province, whose kingdom is not of this world, to determine disputes about civil rights between you and your brother; but it belongs to the magistrate; and, therefore, I will have nothing to do with it.' Thus the apostle, 1 Cor. v. 12. "What have I to do," says he, "to judge them that are without?" It was his province so far to judge them who were within the pale of the Christian church, as to declare the mind of Christ for denying them Christian communion, who are notoriously scandalous; and, accordingly, he directs the Corinthian church to take care that this should be done. But for those who were without, and pretended not to Christian communion, the Christian church had nothing to do with them.

Another instance of pragmatical censure is, when men take upon them to judge of things above their reach; either from the defectiveness of their own capacity and furniture compared with others, or from the obscurity and unsearchableness of the matter upon which they pretend to pass a judgment. Men discover only their own ignorance and ill-nature, when they go beyond their depth in censure; as if, suppose people of weak capacities, and who have had a very contracted education and acquaintance, should, at every turn, be arraigning the conduct of their rulers, while in truth they are by no means capable judges: if they knew the springs of action, or the many difficulties under which an administration may labour, it may be they might discern either wisdom or unavoidable necessity in the steps they blame. The same may be said of many other reflections and censures upon men and things,

wherein very often the most clamorous fault-finders “speak evil of things which they understand not,” and they betray their folly to wiser and more competent judges. There are other things in which no man can pass a certain judgment concerning another; such are, the secrets of the heart, the thoughts and intentions. And yet how ready are people to judge of these in the most censorious manner, as if they had a window into their neighbour’s heart, though we must all acknowledge that the heart of man is unsearchable!

A farther instance, especially worthy of our notice upon this head, is, when men take upon them to censure others without the authority of their rule. He would be an ill judge, who judges not according to the law, but condemns men for things merely because he does not like them, though the law leaves them indifferent; or passes a heavier censure upon them than the law does. It would be equally unjust in us, and going out of our way, if we censure any as guilty of a crime, because they happen not to think and act as we do, while we have no warrant from the word of God to pronounce it a crime. We must not make sins and duties, which God has never made so; we ought not to do so to ourselves, by indulging unreasonable scruples; much less should we pretend to do it for other people. We must no more add to our rule, than diminish from it. A thing may appear doubtful to us, and then it will be proper that we should forbear it; but we must not pretend to condemn others, for any such liberties which we cannot prove that God has made unlawful, much less for not conforming to us in things which we confess that God hath left indifferent. The apostles had frequent occasion, in the beginning of Christianity, to caution the converted Jews against censuring the Gentile converts, without warrant from the Christian rule. The Jewish converts would have had the Gentiles to observe the ceremonial law along with the Christian institution. The apostles shewed, that Christ had superseded this law, as indeed, the Gentiles were never obliged to observe it. Therefore, says St. Paul, Rom. xiv. 3. “Let not him which eateth not” the meats forbidden by the law of Moses, “judge him that eateth” them, as profane on that account, or not accepted of God; “for God hath received him.” And ver. 15. “Let us not, therefore, Judge one another any more.” To the same purpose, Col. ii. 16, 17. “Let no man judge

you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days ; which were a shadow of good things to come." This prohibition is founded upon the declaration in ver. 14. that Christ had "blotted out the handwriting of these ordinances, and taken them away, nailing them to his cross ;" therefore, let no man judge another for not observing them. The apostle James very emphatically represents the great evil of such censures, James iv. 11, 12. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother," that is, as we must plainly understand him, for such things as the law of Christ allows (he seems to have the same case in view, as Paul had in the places mentioned ; he that condemns his brother for such things, "speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law," he censures the law as imperfect for not having forbidden such things. "But if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge." Thou actest not as one under law to Christ, but who settest up for a censor of his law. Now "there is one lawgiver," that is Christ, "who is able to save and to destroy," and so to confirm his laws with proper sanctions : "Who art thou, then, that judgest another ?" This passage plainly represents the pragmaticalness and arrogance of censuring men for any thing, where we have not the law of Christ going before us ; for Christ, and not we, or any other man or men in the world, is the sole Lawgiver in matters of religion : but to censure men for any thing which he hath not thought fit to condemn, or beyond the censure he hath passed upon it, is to usurp his place of a Lawgiver, and to arraign his law as imperfect and insufficient.

2. Blind and rash judging is also to be guarded against. We should be very careful, that we condemn not men in the dark or precipitately, before we have clear and reasonable evidence of facts and their circumstances. We must not presume to raise suspicions into accusations, or to judge hardly of men merely upon hearsay and common fame, or to "take up a report against our neighbour." A judgment ought not to be formed to men's disadvantage, without knowing what they have to say in their own defence : "He that answereth," or determineth "a matter before he heareth it," all that is necessary to give light into it, "it is folly and shame unto him," Prov. xviii. 13. The law of Moses required that a

man should be heard in his own vindication, John vii. 51. "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" So Festus mentions it in commendation of the Roman law, Acts xxv. 16. "It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him." And it is the law of Christ, "not to receive an accusation against an elder;" the reason of the thing will suggest the same as to others, that an accusation should not be regarded against any under two or three witnesses, 1 Tim. v. 19. Certainly justice requires, that such precautions should be taken before private reflections as well as public censures. Wherever we take upon us to be judges and censors, we should reckon ourselves obliged to obtain good assurance of the truth of facts; or else be wholly silent, and let the matter alone, as none of our business. What a vast number of censures would be stifled in the birth, if such measures were conscientiously observed!

Another thing deserves consideration upon this head. We shall be guilty of rash judging, if we condemn men without being apprised of the particular circumstances that led them to the actions in question. The same thing may be lawful, and even commendable, in some circumstances, which in others would be worthy of blame; or at least may deserve a milder censure, if it cannot be wholly vindicated: and we shall judge very rashly, if we make not allowances for the special differences of people's case, in judging of their actions. The Pharisees censured Christ's disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, Matt. xii. as if it were a criminal violation of that sacred rest; not considering their hunger, and that such a slight refreshment fitted them for the service of the day, instead of breaking in upon it; and that God will have mercy rather than sacrifice, as our Saviour argues. The circumstances of men, in innumerable instances, quite alter the moral nature of actions, and in others make a vast difference in degrees of guilt. And he is an unjust and hasty judge, who censures at random, without taking these things into consideration.

3. Partial judging is also forbidden; when either the judgment we form, proceeds from pique or dislike of the person, ra-

ther than abhorrence of evil ; or when it is not equally extended to all who are equally concerned.

If we should censure others for a thing with which we are equally chargeable ourselves, though it be really faulty, yet the censure would come very ill from us. It is intolerable to reproach another with drunkenness, or cheating, or idleness or covetousness, if, at the same time, you are guilty of the same crimes, Rom. ii. 1. "Thou art inexcuseable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest ; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemneth thyself ; for thou that judgest doest the same thing." Can you forbear blushing, while you reprove or reproach them upon such an account? And this, indeed, greatly aggravates any scandals given by magistrates or ministers, by parents or heads of families, or by any whose province or profession it peculiarly is to bear testimony against the sins of others. Upon this account, the apostle expostulates with the Jews, who valued themselves upon knowing much more than the Gentiles, and were ready to pass severe censures on them, Rom. ii. 21, &c. "Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou which preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?"

If we censure smaller faults in others with more rigour than we do greater of our own, though they should not be just of the same kind, it is very unjust and unequal. If we are quick at observing, according to our Saviour's allusion, a mote in our brother's eye, but are insensible of a beam in our own ; to such Christ addresses in this context, ver. 5. "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." It is odious both to God and man, to animadvert rigorously upon the blemishes of others, when our own character is sullied with blacker stains.

If we censure that strongly in an adversary, which passes for little or nothing in a friend ; if that shall be represented as a heinous crime in a man we do not like, who follows not with us, or is not of our party, which can be easily overlooked in a favourite, or a man attached to us ; this is judging with respect of persons ; which is a very bad character of a judge.

4. Uncharitable judging is also to be guarded against ; all

such censures as are not agreeable to the rules that candour and charity would prescribe.

If we give way to suspicions and jealousies of people at random, without any proper foundations to support them; these are the evil surmisings spoken of in 1 Tim. vi. 4.; whereas "charity thinketh no evil," till obliged by evidence, 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

When we put the worst construction upon actions, while they will admit of better. The people of Israel were too hasty in this matter, with reference to their brethren of the two tribes and a half, who, when they were settled on one side of Jordan, built an altar there for a good and lawful end. The other tribes immediately upon the news of it conclude, but too uncharitably, that they had built this altar to turn away from following the Lord; whereas they soon found that no such thing was intended. The story is in Joshua xxii. There was some zeal for the true religion in these resenting tribes, but they put too rigorous and invidious a construction upon an innocent action of their brethren; and it was like to have had ill effects; for they resolved, at first, "to go up to war against them," ver. 12. But their heat subsided, and they had so much prudence, before they executed their resolution, as to send a deputation to know the truth of the case who soon found that they had put much too hard an interpretation upon the conduct of their brethren,

If we take upon us to judge of men's thoughts and intentions, while we can find nothing to reproach in their actions. As such censures are pragmatistical, so they are highly uncharitable. We should hope their ends and principles are good, when their actions are regular. To insinuate the contrary, is indeed a direct imitation of the devil, who is the most flaming instance upon record of such vile uncharitableness, in the case of Job. God had blessed Job with a course of great prosperity: Satan, therefore, would insinuate his religion to be entirely mercenary: Job i. 9. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" It was, indeed, a possible supposition, for all that men could know, that Job might not be sincere; but it was a vile suggestion to insinuate that this was fact, when all external appearances were otherwise. So bad a precedent should effectually set every honest man against the imitation of it.

When we venture to judge of men's state and condition in reference to divine acceptance, upon grounds which are not decisive by the express rules of the gospel; either on account of mistaken opinions in religion, or some faults in practice. We know not how far these may consist with sincerity in other people; nor what allowances the great Judge of all may see fit to make in particular circumstances, which are obvious to his notice, though they escape ours; nor is it any part of our business to enter into this matter.

If we censure men in the lump, as if there were nothing valuable in them, overlooking many commendable excellencies, because of some real or supposed faults in them; this is not charitable. How often is it seen, that a man once highly caressed and commended, shall presently be run down and disgraced by the same persons, if he happen to differ from them in some favoured notion, or even in a point of conduct! All his merits and amiable qualities are forgotten, and all must be done to blacken him. This is vile uncharitableness.

When we impute to others opinions and consequences that they disown. It is very lawful and charitable to endeavour to shew men whom we think mistaken, that such and such consequences follow from their avowed opinions; this is one proper mean to convince them of their error. But it is uncharitable and injurious to charge them with actually holding those very consequences, when they utterly disown them, and profess that they see not their connection with their principles.

To interpret calamities that befall people, as special judgments of God for something we dislike in them, without very clear and full evidence to support such a persuasion, can by no means escape the imputation of uncharitableness. Alas! these constructions are much more frequently the language of passion, and prejudice, and private resentment, than of reason or true religion. The judgments of God are a great deep, and it is very seldom that we can safely pronounce, that God intended to bear testimony against this or that sin of others, in the afflictions that come upon them in the course of his providence. But angry men serve their purposes by such bold reflections, inflaming others against people whom they dislike, by this uncharitable supposition, that they are declared to be

hated of God, and that he interests himself in their quarrels. Christ cautions his hearers against forming such dangerous conclusions from the calamities of others, directing them not to think men upon that account greater sinners than their neighbours, Luke xii. 1—4.

If we are unready to admit fair tokens of repentance even for real faults, this is uncharitable. It is a temper too frequent, if people have done ill things, presently to judge them incurable; if they are seduced into that which we think a dangerous error, to give them over. Whereas, at the worst, “charity hopeth all things,” 1 Cor. xiii. 7. that “if any are otherwise minded,” from what we esteem important truth, if they give us ground in charity to believe their integrity, “God shall reveal even this unto them,” Phil. iii. 15. And if men own their faults or mistakes, while uncharitable jealousy may surmise many objections in the way of crediting them, charity will not enter into secret things that belong to God; but gladly “restore a man that is overtaken with a fault in the spirit of meekness.”

To publish the real faults of others without a just occasion, is carrying our judgment beyond the bounds of charity. If we can hope to reclaim them by private admonition, we should not choose to proceed farther to their disadvantage. To bring them upon the public stage, and expose them to the censure of others, where the welfare of our neighbour or public justice do not require it, serves no good end. That which we render, “charity beareth all things,” 1 Cor. xiii. 7. πάντα ἔσγει, would be more properly rendered, “concealeth all things:” which falls in with St. Peter’s observation, that “charity covereth a multitude of sins,” 1 Pet. iv. 8.

And to add one instance more; when innocent people are involved in a censure with the guilty, this is a notorious breach of charity. A whole party shall suffer reproach for the crime of a single man, who happened to bear the same name of religious distinction with them: or a whole profession shall be insulted for the knavery or unjustifiable practices of some particular men belonging to it. This method of judging would leave no bounds to censoriousness. Every man’s faults should be laid at his own door, and be no farther imputed to any other, than as their avowed principles directly

justify them, or they can be proved to be actual confederates in the practice.

II. I proceed to consider the motive by which this prohibition is enforced: *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Which is strengthened by an express declaration in ver. 2. “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” This may be applied to retaliation, either from men or from God.

1. We should not be censorious of others, as ever we would not be served by men in the same kind. They may be faulty, indeed, in making such returns; but it can hardly be expected, that when other men see that we make free with their characters, they will not make free with ours: they will even think themselves obliged, in their own defence, to scan our actions more narrowly than they would otherwise do; and very probably, in their turn, be as rash and uncharitable upon us, as we have been upon them. Divine Providence wisely and justly so permits it that men, who fish for scandal, are very often met with in their own way; and it seems to give a general satisfaction, when they are effectually exposed.

2. We should avoid censoriousness, as ever we would escape the judgment of God.—For,

(1.) Without repentance, we may expect that he will severely animadvert upon this sin in particular; which, upon many accounts, may be esteemed a very great and heinous sin. It is a direct invasion of God’s province: either anticipating the work of the great day; on which account the apostle exhorts the Corinthians, 1 Epistle iv. 5. “Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” Pretend not to judge of things out of the cognizance of men now, and that are designed to be so till the great day, as the secrets of the heart; otherwise, you will usurp God’s place. Or, it is judging men for things wherein they are not at all accountable to us, but to God only; judging his servants in things which concern none but their Master and themselves: as in matters which he hath left indifferent, or which neither the good of society, nor the ap-

pointment of God, require to be called before any human tribunal: "Who art thou that judgest another's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth," Rom. xiv. 4. "Why dost thou judge, or set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," ver. 10. And "every one of us shall give account of himself to God," ver. 12. In such matters as the apostle is there speaking of, every man is to give account of himself to God; but men have no right to call one another to account. Therefore, to judge another in those things, is to thrust ourselves into God's province.

And will not God, think you, chastise such arrogance? It is, also, very injurious to our neighbour. Evil surmises of him, weaken our own affection; and if we spread them abroad, may lessen his reputation with others, and draw many pernicious consequences after them; for which we shall justly be accountable, as long as they spring from a sinful action of ours, and such effects might be foreseen likely to ensue. And we may add to all the rest, that it is a practice wherein we cannot but be self-condemned, if we reflect how we should resent the like treatment in our own case. Every man inveighs at unjust censures, when he feels the lash of them: and may not the Judge of all be reasonably expected, if we should so "smite our fellow-servants," to say, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

(2.) We may expect that God will proceed with rigour in judging our offences against him, if we are rigid censors of our neighbours. We have no reason to complain, if God shall treat us according to the measures we observe to others. He will never, indeed, exceed the measures of justice, however we act: he will not retaliate in his proceedings; but if we allow uncharitableness, we are to expect no mercy, James ii. 13. "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy." And what then must become of us? If God be strict to mark all our real iniquities, can we stand? Can we answer him for one of a thousand of our actions? The uncharitable are excluded from any hope of the benefit of gospel-grace. God grant, then, that we may have mercy on ourselves, by being more merciful in our censures of others.

I might now, in the close of this subject, pursue such reflections as these:

That this is one remarkable instance of "godliness having

the promise of this life and that which is to come ;” that there is, in particular, an ordinary connection between charitable judging on our part, and mild and gentle censures from others in the world ; and that those who throw about censures at random, commonly meet with very cutting returns ; and especially that great regard will be had in the future judgment of God to men’s present conduct in this matter.

That the neglect of this precept is a melancholy instance how little true Christianity is practised among those who profess it, when this notorious vice of uncharitable judging prevails so much every where.

But I choose rather to shut up this discourse with some proper directions for guarding us against a censorious spirit.

Let it be a settled resolution with us, to maintain a good opinion of every man in particular, till we are obliged by evidence to quit it. This is a duty we owe to God and man ; and our suspicions, especially our reflections, should never outrun or exceed the discovery men make of themselves.

Often recollect the evils included in censoriousness, and that are used to attend it ; that it arrogates divine prerogatives, is a constant act of injustice to our neighbour, and a plain violation of the golden rule, of doing to others as we would be done unto. And, besides the retaliations to be feared from the resentment of men, and the righteous judgment of God for it, there is one thing fit to be often thought of by an ingenuous mind : that in the serious review of our spirits and actions conscience will never reproach us for having admitted too favourable an opinion of any man, but we shall always have reason to blame ourselves, when we find that we thought too hardly of him.

We should carefully avoid and mortify the usual incentives to this temper. Idleness, and want of good employment, often leads people to this vile practice ; many set up for judges of others, because they have nothing else to do. Selfishness and pride are common principles of censoriousness ; men think too highly of themselves, and are strongly tenacious of their own interests ; and imagining other people to stand in the way of their reputation or advantage, they know not how to lessen them but by detraction, and uncharitable censures. Vio-

lent attachment to a party, is very often the parent of this crime. The charity of some, like that of the Jews of old, is confined to those of their own way; and so they give themselves an unconscionable liberty to expose and blacken other people. This party-zeal has, in every age, been the foundation of the greatest excesses. Whereas, if we would but enlarge the community of love, as our Master has taught us to do, to all mankind, and our brotherly love to all that hold the Head, this would extinguish the desire of censure.

We should especially think frequently of the number and greatness of our own faults, and our need of allowances both from God and men. If we are not strangers at home, it is certain we are privy to many more irregularities and defects of our own, than we can be of any other man. If we are not conscious of the same enormous sins as some publicly commit; yet we must be sensible of very many particulars which will not bear a strict scrutiny, but need gracious indulgence from the blessed God daily: let us judge ourselves for these, and we shall be very tender in judging others. We cannot but discern many parts of our own conduct, which are capable of an ill construction by other men, though we should be conscious of our own honest intention in them. How should we complain, if our neighbours should take them by the worst handle? Let not us then do so by them, but judge favourably and charitably, "lest we also be tempted."

Finally, think often, how gentle and long-suffering God has been to us already; and that if he enter into judgment with us, we can have no hope for eternity; but that *if we judge ourselves* impartially, and our neighbours charitably, *we shall not be judged.*

SERMON XXXIV.

SINCERITY.



1 COR. v. 8. [last clause.]

But with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

THE apostle had, in the seventh verse, represented Christ as “our passover sacrificed for us;” that is, in his becoming a sacrifice for us, he resembled the paschal lambs which were slain by the Israelites in Egypt. When God was about to accomplish the deliverance of his people out of the house of bondage, and Pharaoh was unwilling to let them go, God inflicted many judgments upon Egypt, and after others appointed a destroying angel to pass through the land, and to slay all the first born of every house, from the royal palace down to the meanest family. But he was pleased, in order to make a gracious distinction in the case of the Israelites from that of the Egyptians, to appoint them to slay a lamb for every house, and to sprinkle the blood of it upon the side-posts and upon the upper door-post of their houses, promising that, upon sight of the blood, the destroying angel should pass over and spare their families. Thus, while divine vengeance was hanging over the heads of sinners, God sent his own Son to shed his blood as a sacrifice, in virtue of which those on whom it is sprinkled, who are entitled to the benefit of it according to the gospel-constitution, shall be graciously spared and passed over by God.

St Paul, having thus represented Christ as our paschal

Lamb, goes on to press the duty of Christians, in language alluding to the Jewish passover.

The Jews kept a festival throughout all their generations, in thankful remembrance of this great and gracious deliverance. So, says he, "Let us (Christians) keep the feast."

And it was a circumstance very particularly enjoined in the celebration of the passover, that they should eat it with *unleavened bread*. The Hebrew word *Matsoth*, which is so rendered, strictly imports as much as *pure and sincere* bread, that is, unmixed with leaven. In allusion to this, the apostle exhorts Christians to keep the feast with a qualification that answers to that figure. As the Israelites were to remove leaven out of their houses before the passover, so we should lay aside "the old leaven," the "leaven of malice and wickedness," all sorts of known sin, either in corrupt affection, or sinful practice, and keep the feast *with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*. Christ himself warns his disciples against hypocrisy, under the same allusion of leaven, Luke xii. 1. "He began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

We may understand the apostle, by the phrase of "keeping the feast," to have the Lord's supper particularly in his eye, which is to Christians just such a commemorative sign of the sacrifice of Christ, as all the Jewish passovers in after ages were of that in Egypt. And so the text would be a direction to us for the frame which is especially necessary in observing that particular festival.

But I apprehend, with the general stream of interpreters, that the apostle had not his eye so much to that ordinance in particular, as to a Christian course in general, correspondent to the Jewish passover; as if he had said, 'Let your whole lives be like their passover, an exercise of praise, and service, and obedience to God, as it becomes those who are redeemed by Christ from so great evils, and by so great a price; but then see that all be done *with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*.

After all this has been said of the Christian temper in the general characters of it, and in the principle branches of which it consists, I would, in the last place, consider some qualifications which should run through every branch of the Christian temper; and this passage is a proper foundation for discours-

ing on that with which I choose to begin, *sincerity*, for it is here recommended as a property requisite in the whole of our Christian obedience.

In the prosecution of it, I would shew,

I. The nature of gospel sincerity. And,

II. Our engagements to see that this be a qualification of all the exercises of the Christian temper and life.

I. Let us inquire into the nature of gospel-sincerity.

Two words are used in the text, I apprehend to signify the same thing. The former, translated *sincerity*, is as much as to say, 'a thing which may be best judged of in the clear sunshine.*' A counterfeit will not bear the light, but that which is true will; such is sincerity. Or, it may be an allusion to "the judgment passed upon grain when it is winnowed; whereby that which is valuable is separated from the rest. Sincerity † will bear sifting, and will appear the better for it. The other word ‡ signifies *reality*, in opposition to that which is feigned, or a mere appearance. And when sincerity and truth are recommended by the emblem of unleavened bread, or pure and unmixed bread, they denote simplicity, which we find joined with "godly sincerity," 2 Cor. i. 12. The word translated *simplicity*, § signifies, *being without folds*, a metaphor that intimates an open and undisguised behaviour. It was the character of Jacob, that he was "a plain man," Gen. xxv. 27. The Greek version imports || *a man not formed, or shaped*, that is, to serve a turn. Sincerity is the same thing which the scripture so often expresses by uprightness, and is opposed to guile and hypocrisy, which we are called to lay aside, 1 Pet. ii. 1. The description of the blessed man is given from his sincerity, Psal. xxxii. 2. "In whose spirit there is no guile;" and so is Nathanael's, John i. 47. "An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."

Now, religious sincerity will comprehend in it the following particulars.

* 'Ειλικρινία qu τῆ εἴλη κρινόμενος. *Constantin. Lex.*

† Πρα το κρινεσθαι εν τῷ εἴλειν ου ειλεῖσθαι. *Nota Hesychium.* edit. 1658.

‡ ἀλνθεια.

§ Ατλῦτης.

|| Ατλως.

1. A single intention and aim to please God, and approve ourselves to him through our whole course. That it is our principal study to be well accepted with him, before all other considerations, and above all other motives of acting; and that we resolve to conduct ourselves chiefly, and in bar of any thing else, by the hope of his favour, and the fear of his displeasure; this is meant by having "the eye single," Luke xi. 34. To which "a double-minded man" stands opposed, James i. 8. who has some desire to please God, but is in suspense between that and other motives of acting; the balance now turns one way, and then another. It is truly said concerning such a man, that he "is unstable in all his ways." But the basis of sincerity is this, that "whatever we do, we do it unto the Lord, and not to men," Col. iii. 23. As far as we suffer ourselves to be swayed by other considerations more than by a regard to God, and especially when we are carried away by other inducements to run the risk of losing his favour, and falling under his displeasure, so far a breach is made upon gospel-sincerity, whether it be the pleasing of other men, or the advancement of our own worldly interest, that is set up in competition with him, and allowed a preference before him.

We are indeed allowed not only to aim at our own spiritual and eternal advantage, which is inseparably connected with the pleasing of God, but also at our temporal interest, whenever it will not interfere with our duty, and at the pleasing of men, when we can have a prospect of reaching that end with a safe conscience. But if either of these be made our main aim, or be pursued at the known hazard of offending God, if we seek to please ourselves, or other men, at this expense, "we are not the servants of Christ," Gal. i. 10. Sincerity is wanting, as far as a concern to please him hath not the pre-eminence.

Not that we can actually be supposed to form this intention in every particular action we do. In many cases it is sufficient that this design be habitual. In actions where there is no suspension of evil, a man may act with full sincerity, though there be not a direct and express regard had to God therein. But wherever there is deliberation, when there hath been a doubt and struggle, whether we ought, or ought not,

to do a thing, there an actual intention to please God, and to perform our duty, is necessary to sincerity.

2. An impartial inquiry into our duty is an essential part of sincerity. That having fixed it for our aim above all things to please God, we diligently apply ourselves to the use of all proper and appointed means, according to our capacities, to discover his mind and will, "how we ought to walk and to please God," 1 Thess. iv. 1. Sincerity consists not with a rashness of acting, or a negligence in inquiry, but necessarily implies a hearty desire to "know what is the good and acceptable will of the Lord." A sincere man is willing to discover his Master's will, though it should happen to contradict the sentiments of which he is firmly persuaded at present, or the practices of which hitherto he hath been most tenacious; and is ready to change his mind, or his course, upon conviction.

He not only cannot satisfy himself to shut his eyes against light when it is offered him, but diligently applies himself to the means of information. He will consult the dictates of his own mind, and carefully search the word of God, and gladly embrace any opportunity by which he may be assisted to understand the meaning of it better. He is desirous to be free from prejudice and prepossessions that might give him a wrong bias, and hinder him from the admission of light and proper evidence, from whatever quarter, and by whatever means it is offered him. And, therefore, as conscious of his own liableness to mistake, and how easy it is to have latent prejudices of which a man may not be particularly sensible at the time, he often applies to God by earnest prayer, that he would be his guide and teacher, and would relieve him by his grace against every sinful bias and wrong impression, or influence, he may be under. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" is the frequent language of his heart: "What I know not, teach thou me." He sets himself to prove all things, as he hath opportunity, to consider and make the most impartial judgment that he can upon the means of information. And, as sensible of his continuing imperfection, he still "follows on to know the Lord," and would ever remain open to light. This of upright inquiry is a great branch of sincerity.

It is observable, that Nathanael had that illustrious character given him by Christ, of being "an Israelite indeed, in whom

was no guile," upon his discovering himself to be an impartial inquirer. He had as yet no actual knowledge of Christ. Upon Philip's telling him, John i. 45. "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth;" Nathanael, like a man careful not to be deceived in a matter of the greatest importance, as this was, whether Jesus was the promised Messiah, honestly proposes an objection, which in his mind, upon what Philip had said, "Can any good thing, (says he,) come out of Nazareth?" ver. 46. Either the meanness of the place, or the bad character of the inhabitants, might lead him to suspect it. Or he might be prepossessed with the same mistaken sentiment which some teachers of the law expressed, in John vii. 52. that "no prophet could come out of Galilee." Or, perhaps, he understood Philip to mean, that Jesus was born in Nazareth; and then knowing, with the rest of the Jews, from Micah's prophecy, that Christ was to be born at Bethlehem, till he was set right in this fact, he could not yet get over the objection. Philip, without standing to answer him, it may be without being able to do it, because he was yet but a young disciple, presses Nathanael to come and see; to go along with him and converse with Christ, that he might make a trial himself, whether there was not reason to think the same of Christ, that Philip did. Nathanael, like a truly upright and conscientious man, as he would not take so great a matter upon trust without evidence, so, on the other hand, he would not neglect an opportunity of better information, when he was so fairly led to it, but goes along with Philip to Jesus. And no sooner was he come within hearing, but, before any conversation had passed, Christ receives him with this encomium, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." Wherein our Lord eminently fixes this character upon an impartial inquirer after truth. As if he had said, 'Thou hast acted like an honest and sincere man, both in the objections thou hast started against me, and in coming to make a farther trial. Thou didst, without favour or affection, say of me what thou thoughtest agreeable to scripture, and yet, upon Philip's invitation, art come to inquire whether thou canst discover any thing more certain. Thou hast neither shewn a rash credulity, in taking me for the Messiah without proper evidence, nor an unpersuadable obstinacy in refusing to use the means in thy

power for better information. This is worthy of a sincere man.'

3. An entire and universal application to the practice of duty, as far as it is known, without stated and allowed reserves and exceptions. Sincerity comprehends integrity in it, or making conscience of the whole compass of known duty.

If our governing end be to please God, we shall as carefully pursue that end, where we have only that motive, as where there are other considerations likely to influence, beside the pleasing of God. And really there is no trial of our sincere and impartial regard to God, more clear and decisive than this, to observe how we stand affected to those parts of religion to which God and our own consciences alone are privy. For instance,

We shall be as careful about the exercise of every grace and virtue, in the inward frame and temper of the heart, as in the visible action that should flow from it. A hypocrite is satisfied to "make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, though within he be full of extortion and excess, Matt. xxiii. 25. But sincerity will concern itself about the inward disposition, in mortifying "the thought of foolishness," as well as the fruit of it in the life, and in cultivating a right temper of soul to God and man, as well as a blameless outward behaviour to both. A sincere man will bewail the sins which go no farther than thought, if he be conscious that his heart gave in to them, though the conception should, by some means or other, prove abortive; and both in his devotions to God, and his transactions with men, he will be solicitous not only to escape the censure of men, but that the actions they are ready to commend, flow from an inward principle, and that dispositions be not wanting in the heart, correspondent to all the "light shewn before men."

For the same reason, sincerity will engage to equal care in private conduct, as when we are upon the public stage. It will not allow a man to be a libertine in secret, as long as he appears in open view a man of probity and virtue; nor to be an Atheist at home, while he wears the mask of a saint abroad; nor to be in readiness to practise a base trick, when he can hope for concealment, while he appears accurately just in cases where he knows he is strictly observed. An upright man

makes conscience of owning God in his family and his closet, as well as of public worship, and will be as careful to maintain life and seriousness in the one as in the other. It is probable that Christ points at something of this nature in Nathanael's case, when he tells him, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee," John i. 48. Possibly he was there in retirement, engaged in holy meditation and devotion; and Christ lets him know, that when he was there alone, out of the reach of any human eye, he saw and observed him. It is plain, that some private transaction of importance passed there, because Nathanael declares himself immediately to be convinced of Christ's extraordinary character from his being able to give him a hint of this; and it is equally plain, that it was some good thing that he had done in private, because Christ, instead of reproving him for it, produces this as an additional evidence, that he had not spoke at random in pronouncing him "an Israelite indeed." The reason why a sincere man is the same in private as in public, is in truth because he never thinks himself alone, but always in the presence of God, as well as of his own conscience; and that consideration has principal weight with him.

And sincerity disposes to pay an indiscriminate regard to God's authority, or an equal respect to it in all cases, where we can discover it; that it be allowed to command and sway the whole man, so that we are willing to receive any thing for truth upon his testimony, and any thing for law upon the signification of his will, and to consecrate all that we have, and are to his service without reserve. It is a false and dissembled respect to God, if we consent not to be at his direction universally and without exception, if we count not, "all his precepts concerning all things to be right, and hate not every false way," Psal. cxix. 128. I say not, that any man performs actually perfect, unsinning obedience, but that it is inconsistent with gospel-sincerity to have a fixed and known exception against any particular branch of duty, or in stated favour of any irregular habit, or inclination, which we are convinced to be such.

4. A correspondence and harmony between inward sentiments and the words and actions, is necessary to constitute sincerity.

This must be maintained in the affairs of religion, if we

would approve ourselves to be sincere. It will forbid us to profess, or act, any thing in matters of belief or worship, different from the inward persuasion of our minds. The charge which the apostle Paul lays upon Peter, is observable to this purpose, Gal. ii. 11—14. “When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with the dissimulation. But I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel.” The case was this: Peter was persuaded that it was a truth of the gospel, that there was no difference to be made between those who embraced Christianity, whether they received circumcision or not. He was one of the first of the Jewish converts whom God took care, in the most solemn manner, to convince of this truth in the case of Cornelius, Acts x. He had acted for a time agreeable to this sentiment, conversing freely with the converted Gentiles, without any regard to the ceremonial distinction of meats; but when some converted Jews, who were tenacious of the law of Moses, came down where he was, lest he should offend those bigots, he withdrew from the Gentile converts, as if they were unfit for the free society of Christians of the circumcision; and this had such an influence as to carry other Jewish converts, even Barnabas himself, to the same dividing practice. This St Paul calls “dissimulation, not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel;” and declares, that “Peter was to be blamed” for it. And, without doubt, it was an encroaching upon Christian sincerity, seeming to profess, contrary to his inward persuasion, that ceremonial distinctions were yet in force, when he knew that they were abolished. The gospel, we see, will not countenance an action that, in fair construction, is repugnant to our principles, much less will it allow us to make a contrary profession.

And the same honest agreement between our words and hearts, should run through our behaviour to men. As far as we are conducted by sincerity, we shall not pretend to friendship where really we have none, nor make promises of kindness where none is intended, nor act an unfriendly part behind

men's backs, after professions of regard and respect to their faces. Especially, we shall not make pretence of friendship, on purpose to have the greater advantage for imposing on men, or use crafty insinuations to draw things from them in the freedom of discourse, on design of divulging those very things afterwards to their disadvantage. Sincerity requires fair and open dealings in all our concerns with them. But this last hath been the subject of a particular discourse already.*

II. I am to shew of what importance it is that this qualification should attend us in all the exercises of the Christian temper and duty.

1. It is expressly required by divine precept in the several branches of our duty. The new man in general, which Christianity teaches us to put on, is, "after God created in true holiness," Eph. iv. 24. The first and great commandment of godliness is thus prescribed, Matt. xxii. 37. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;" Josh. xxiv. 14. "Fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth." And the gospel eminently inculcates the same thing: "The hour cometh, and now is," says Christ of the evangelical dispensation which was then beginning to dawn, "when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in truth," John iv. 23, 24. And this is the first thing pressed upon Christians in their approaches to God, Heb. x. 22. "Let us draw near with a true heart." The "love to Christ," upon which we can hope for divine "grace with us," must be "in sincerity," Eph. vi. 24. And the same qualification is insisted on, in our love to our neighbour, 1 John iii. 18. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Thus, he that giveth in acts of charity, is required to do it with simplicity, with integrity, and unfeigned affection, Rom. xii. 8, 9. "Let love be without dissimulation." The same temper should be carried into every relation, and attend the performance of all our relative duties,

as it is particularly mentioned in the case of servants, Eph. vi. 5. "Servants, be obedient,——in singleness of heart, as unto Christ."

2. It is indispensably necessary to our acceptance with God. How can that be expected to meet with a favourable regard from God, which was not in intention done to him? Nor can any persuasion, or practice, how agreeable soever it may be in itself to the rule, be a faith that "gives glory to God," or "the obedience of faith," which is not the fruit of honest and impartial inquiry into the mind of God: indeed it is not the homage of a reasonable creature, or of a Christian, but a rash and bold adventure, that shews little of a conscious concern whether we be right or wrong, and might have happened the one way as well as the other. Partial obedience cannot be founded upon an upright regard to God's authority, James ii. 10. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point," that is, live in the stated disregard of one known command, "is guilty of all," that is, of contemning the authority upon which all is built. The apostle adds the reason, ver. 11. "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit not adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." The same holds good in any other precept. And to expect the acceptance of any outward regards, while the heart is wanting, is an argument of high contempt to God, as if either he had not knowledge to discover, or holiness to detest, vile hypocrisy. Whereas that is so much abhorred by God, that the "portion of hypocrites" expresses the severest punishment, Matt. xxiv. 51. Such only have their sins pardoned now, "in whose spirit there is no guile." Psal. xxxii. 2. And they only will have them all "blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;" and, therefore the apostle prays for the Philip-pians, "that they might be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ," Phil. i. 10. Gospel-sincerity will appear to be of the greatest consequence in the judgment-day.

3. This qualification alone can minister solid satisfaction to ourselves upon reflection. If men could always discern hypocrisy, they would detest it: but this may be out of the cognisance of creatures. One man may possibly reach his ends with another by disguise; but how low and empty a satisfac-

tion will that produce, if he cannot be satisfied from himself? So the truly good man alone is, Prov. xiv. 14. Consciousness of his own sincerity will be a perpetual feast to him. "Our rejoicing is this," says St Paul, "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world," 2 Cor. i. 12. If our consciences can bear us this testimony, it will be a spring of joy within ourselves, that depends not upon other people's estimation; we "shall have rejoicing in ourselves alone, and not in another," Gal. vi. 4. It will be a peace that no man can take away, and which will give comfort and confidence toward God: "We shall assure our hearts before him; for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God," 1 John iii. 19—21. We may then entertain a just assurance of his favour and acceptance, and have the greatest freedom and hope in all our applications to him, as it follows, ver. 22. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Happy they are now in every condition, who can appeal to God and conscience for their integrity, while the hypocrite must ever be either afraid or ashamed of himself.

4. Sincerity will be the easiest method of conduct. What art and pains are needful to wear a disguise tolerably! It is uneasy to a man while he wears it; and odds, but that upon some opportunity he throws it off, and shews himself in his proper colours. When the heart is one way, and the behaviour another, under some present unnatural influence, the restraint must be unpleasant and maintained with difficulty; and, therefore, the best way to secure, in all weathers, the appearance of piety, and purity, and charity, and of every virtue, is to make sure of a hearty disposition to be what we would seem to be.

5. Herein we shall copy after the most illustrious and excellent examples. By this the saints, enrolled in the records of scripture, where the Spirit of God hath embalmed their names, "obtained a good report." This was the glory of Noah and Job, that they were upright men, and of the excellent of the earth, in their several generations, who have

finished their course well, and whose "end was peace," Psal. xxxvii. 37.

But, above all, the Lord Jesus shone in this character. He was most sincere in pursuing the pleasing of God as his governing aim, so that he could say, "I do always those things that please him," John viii. 29. He executed every thing which was given him in charge, without exception, or reserve, fulfilling all righteousness, performing every thing which was the duty of the human nature as such; submitting to all the ceremonial observances, which were of divine appointment, and remained in force during the Jewish economy, and completely discharging all that was incumbent on him, by virtue of the peculiar law of the Mediator. So impartial and universal was his obedience, that he could solemnly appeal to his Father at the close, John xvii. 4. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And as "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," 1 Pet. ii. 22. this is observed concerning him, where the apostle particularly represents him as going before us, "shewing us an example," ver. 21.

Insincerity, on the other hand, is most directly the image of the devil, that false and lying spirit, who, from his craft and deceitfulness, is called "the old serpent," and represented as assuming all shapes and disguises to carry on his designs, sometimes "transforming himself into an angel of light," full of cunning and subtlety, of wiles and stratagems. This view, which the scripture gives of the spirits of darkness, should strongly possess our souls with the deformity and vileness of an insincere temper and behaviour.

The subject we have been upon may very fitly be applied various ways.

1. As a subject of sorrow for the evident violations of sincerity among those who wear the name of Christians. Indeed we cannot without arrogance, pretend to fix the charge of hypocrisy upon any man, as long as he maintains a fair and regular appearance; every man, especially every Christian, should be very careful that he assume not the province of God, the Searcher of hearts, by arraiguing, or suspecting other men's sincerity, when they seem religious in the judgment of charity. But without entering into the secret things which belong to God, too many flagrant instances of insincer-

ity may be observed and lamented every day. How often is a pretence of religion evidently made to serve the design of defrauding men! What tricking arts are practised under the mask of friendship! Such things as these, which often come to open light, may justly be the grief of serious Christians, who know the value of sincerity in itself, and how contrary every breach of it is to the obligations of Christianity.

2. As a measure of judging ourselves, whether we are in a state of acceptance with God. Here we may, and ought to, enter into the closest scrutiny of sincerity. We are privy to what passes within ourselves, though we cannot reach the secrets of others hearts. Conscience is the candle of the Lord within us, to enable us to discern the real state of our own case. Let us, therefore, bring ourselves within the light and judgment of our own consciences, upon this most important inquiry, Whether we are sincere or not? Whether the pleasing of God is our ordinary and prevailing design and aim? Whether we are impartial in our searches what the mind and will of God is? Whether universal obedience to all the known will of God is our stated aim, and resolution, and endeavour? Whether there be an agreement between our hearts and our words and actions? Another man cannot decide these questions for us, upon which our acceptance with God depends; but God knows how the matter stands, and we may discern it; and it is of the utmost importance that we pass a right judgment ourselves.

3. As a ground of humiliation to the best, for the defects in their sincerity, as well as in every particular branch of goodness. Sincerity, as prescribed by the rule, is to be considered as perfect, as well as the particular graces and virtues of which it is a qualification; that is, every failure in any of the articles wherein sincerity consists, is as contrary to sincerity, and as truly a breach of our duty, as every degree of doubting is contrary to faith, or any violation of truth to veracity. And though the grace of the gospel admits of prevailing sincerity as the term of life, as well as of the prevalence of other graces and virtues; yet a Christian has reason to humble himself before God, for the defects of his sincerity, as well as of every other fruit of the Spirit. Though we can entertain hope that we have been prevailingly sincere, yet who shall dare to say upon recollection, that he hath been perfectly

sincere? that his intention and design to please God has been so entire that he hath never deviated from it? that he has inquired into the mind of God with as much diligence and impartiality as he might, and ought to, have done? that his obedience has been unreserved and universal as it might have been? that he hath never been guilty of the least dissimulation, or false disguise? Now, though we may have good reason to hope for divine acceptance, according to the grace of the gospel, upon the consciousness of sincerity in a prevailing degree; yet we should confess and bewail every known defect in it in our temper or conduct, either to God or man.

4. As an engagement to cultivate and advance in this excellent qualification.

How greatly would this blessed end be promoted, if we would think, at every turn of the eye of the great God upon us, that we are wholly naked and open to him with whom we have to do! If we would frequently place ourselves by faith and serious meditation at the judgment-seat of Christ, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed! If we consider how high sincerity stands in divine estimation, how valuable it is to all men, as far as they can discern it, and what satisfaction it will produce in our breasts!

Let us then studiously mind and practise it as the principal thing in all the seeming good we do, either in the acts of piety to God, or of justice and charity to men.

Particularly, whenever we keep the gospel-feast of the holy supper, let not this qualification be wanting. It is the great thing requisite in every communicant, "the wedding-garment," without which we cannot be welcome guests. And it should attend every part of our work at that solemnity. We should be sincere in the reasons and ends of observing it, that it be done in pure obedience to our Master's will, and in hope of that spiritual benefit for which it was appointed; in the exercise of those dispositions which should attend the remembrance of a dying Saviour, such as thankfulness for the love of God in the work of our redemption, sorrow for sin, which should be excited by this evidence of its evil nature, and faith in the promises of God, which are ratified in Christ's blood; in our desire of the blessings offered us in virtue of his blood; in our resolutions of new obedience, and in our charity and affection to our fellow Christians.

We have there the highest instance of undissembled love set in view, faithful promises sealed on God's part. We are immediately transacting with him who can judge of sincerity ; and without it, instead of receiving advantage by that holy institution, shall eat and drink judgment to ourselves.

SERMON XXXV.

CONSTANCY AND PERSEVERANCE.

1 COR. xv. 58. [former part.]

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

NEXT to sincerity, and indeed as very closely connected with it, fixedness or steadiness may properly be considered as a general qualification, which ought to run through every branch of the Christian temper.

The apostle, in this chapter, explains and proves at large the doctrine of the resurrection: a most comfortable and encouraging doctrine to every sincere Christian under the present difficulties which attend his pilgrimage, and in the prospect of death approaching, whether in the usual course of nature, or to be undergone for the testimony of Jesus. Upon this refreshing revelation, the apostle grafts the exhortation in the text. From the promised rewards, he excites Christians to attend to their present work. Seeing they have reason to look for a glorious and happy resurrection from the Lord Jesus, they should mind *the work of the Lord* now: by which we are to understand, the whole work and duty which our Master prescribes us by the way.

There are two qualifications of our Christian obedience, which are here recommended: the one is steadiness, and the other abounding in this work. For the last, that we should do our utmost, and make the highest advances we can therein, there will be occasion to consider it under another qualification yet to be discoursed of, namely, Christian zeal.

That which is to be our present subject, is *stedfastness, and unmoveableness in the work of the Lord*. Two words, near akin in their signification, are used to express one and the same thing with greater emphasis: the former * is an allusion to a man seated, set down in a settled posture, in opposition to a man that is moving about and unfixed: the other word † directly expresses what was imported by that metaphor, unmoveable. This same apostle, writing to the Colossians, chap. i. 23. expresses steadiness in the faith by both words, with the addition of a third ‡. “If ye continue in the faith, grounded,” or fixed upon a solid foundation, and settled or stedfast, “and not moved away from the hope of the gospel.”

I am to prosecute this truth,

“That stedfastness in the graces and duties required of us, is a necessary qualification of the Christian temper.”

Where I shall,

I. Explain this qualification. And,

II. Shew the necessity of it.

I. For explaining the qualification, it may be observed, that it includes two things in it. 1. That the exercise of grace and duty be habitual and constant, in opposition to that which is merely occasional, or by fits and starts. 2. That it be persisted in to the end of life, in opposition to apostacy.

1. The Christian temper and course must be habitual and constant, in opposition to that which is merely occasional, or by fits and starts. It is not enough that now and then we attend to religion; but the ordinary bent of our spirits must run this way, and customary practice correspond with it. We should live soberly, righteously, and godly; that is, it should be the stated and even course of our lives, what we are fixedly designing and pursuing.

* Ἐδραῖοι ab ἐδρα, sella, quod ab ἐζομαι, sedeo.

† Ἀμετακίνητοι.

‡ Εἴ γε ἐπιμένετε ἐν πίσμιν τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἑδραῖοι, καὶ μὴ μετακινούμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἰλητέδος τῆς ἐναγγελίας.

Indeed, such a constancy in our Christian obedience, as is absolutely perfect, and denotes an entire freedom from sin, is not what the gospel insists upon. Experience, and scripture too, shews this to be impossible and impracticable in the present life: "There is no man that sinneth not," 1 Kings viii. 46. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not," Eccl. vii. 20. "How should a man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand," Job ix. 2, 3. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?" Prov. xx. 9. No man can; and, therefore, the psalmist makes that acknowledgment and prayer, Psal. xix. 12. "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." The New Testament plainly affirms the same thing of Christians, James iii. 2. "In many things we all offend." 1 John i. 8. "If we say, we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." St. Paul pretended "not to have already attained, or to be already perfect," Phil. iii. 12. And, therefore, the disciples of Christ are directed in the Lord's prayer daily to acknowledge and ask the pardon of their trespasses, as well as to beg God to give them their daily bread.

Such passages as these plainly shew, that a perfect evenness and uniformity of obedience, without any mixture of sin, is not to be supposed in any man living. If any are so vain as to make the pretence, they have more reason to say with Job, chap. ix. 20. "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse:" "My very saying so against notorious evidence of fact, will be a proof that either I am a very faulty stranger at home, or a proud and arrogant boaster." If a man could not be an acceptable Christian without such a perfect uniformity of conduct, there would be no such Christian to be found in our world.

But yet such an evenness and constancy in our devotedness to God and goodness is attainable, as in the gracious acceptance of the gospel is so styled; and is a very different and distinguishable thing from the character of many, who play fast and loose with God; from that character, for instance, which is given of the Israelites in Psal. lxxviii. 8. as "a generation that set not their hearts aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast

with God." And in ver. 37. whose "heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." A right spirit is the reverse of this, stedfast with God and his covenant. That is,

1. Our design and purpose should be for a constant adherence to God and our duty at all times. Those resolutions for God are insincere, which are made with a designed exception against some known precepts, or in favour of some known sin; and those are equally insincere, though they should be ever so extensive as to the branches of duty, which are made only for some particular times and seasons, and not for all. As suppose, I will mind my soul, and the service of God upon the Lord's day, but I will be my own master, and at full liberty on other days: or, now in a serious hour, when temptation is at a distance, I will set myself to repent of my sins, and to walk softly; but if, when temptation returns, when my companions renew their importunity, I should begin a new score, I hope I shall repent again, and God will forgive me. Such purposes, formed with a view and a sort of design of turning again to folly, are an abomination to God, and shew that the first steps are not taken in real religion. There may be purposes of constancy, and yet a fatal miscarriage; but if even these be wanting, that much religion is vain. He cannot be styled truly upright in the lowest sense, even in intention, who is not come so far as to purpose not to transgress; who makes it not his fixed design to be faithful to God, and to maintain a good conscience, at one time as well as at another, for the future as well as at present; and especially to be upon his guard in a known hour of temptation, and when he may be most apprehensive of danger.

2. Religion must be made our stated and ordinary business, to denominate us with any propriety constant in it. We must set about it as our work and main concern, and not only mind it on the by. This is imported in that expression of the apostle, Acts xxiv. 16. "Herein do I exercise myself, to keep a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." 'I reckon this my chief business, and accordingly make it my daily care and employment to endeavour to know and do my duty to God and men. I have no concern upon my hands that I esteem equal to this.' Though the thoughts are not employed at all times with equal intenseness and application

to the direct consideration of our duty, as it is impossible they should be ; yet these thoughts are commonly uppermost in the mind of a man truly religious ; they often recur to it ; he minds them, as we say, ever and anon ; actual attention to his main concern is not long intermitted.

3. Deliberate and presumptuous sins must be carefully avoided ; or a breach will be made upon our constancy and stedfastness in the work of the Lord, in the mild and favourable sense of the gospel. Sins of ignorance and common infirmity, break not in upon Christian constancy ; though they are sins, yet they are not properly breaches of covenant. If we set out in our Christian course with a just consideration of the state of human nature, we did not absolutely resolve against these ; though we resolved not to countenance them, and to endeavour more and more to outgrow them under divine culture and grace : and as long as we retain that temper with reference to our ordinary infirmities, they should not be thought breaches of covenant. The psalmist, before his great fall, though he was aware of many imperfections, could say, *Psal. xviii. 21, 22.* “I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.” But known and presumptuous sins are of quite another nature, such as are directly voluntary and chosen, against the dictates of a man’s own judgment and conscience. These are direct insults upon God’s authority. Every particular act of this kind is contrary to covenant-engagements, and so far a renouncing of God for our Lord and Sovereign. If a good man fall into such offences, it is impossible for him to be assured, that he is born of God, as long as he continues under the power of them. And in the number of such presumptuous sins, we must reckon—

All great and notorious sins in their nature ; such as either any man may discern to be amiss by the light of nature, or that a man completely acquainted with the holy scriptures may plainly perceive to be forbidden there. If a man fall into any of these crimes, though upon a sudden temptation, and without discernable thought and reflection ; yet they cannot be called sins of mere surprise and infirmity, because they are so contrary to the light and habitual frame of a good

man, that they could not be done without some reluctance.

And any sin, though of the least kind, when it is committed upon actual deliberation, and against the actual judgment of the mind, is a wilful sin, which breaks in upon evangelical steadfastness. If there be time and space, between the temptation and the ill action, to consider the evil nature of it; if our heart rebuke us at the time, admonishing us that God forbids what we are about to do, and yet we presume to do it; if there be debate and arguing, and yet temptation carry the day; this is a breach of covenant, though in ever so minute an instance. It makes us "the servants of sin; for to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, his servants we are to whom we so obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness," Rom. vi. 16. And if a servant of God so yield himself to any wilful sin, it would be a sin unto death, if he were not renewed again to repentance.

And much more heinous still will it be, if the instance of offence, into which a man falls, be at once greatly criminal in itself, and such as conscience is habitually furnished against, and also which is actually remonstrated against at the time. This is a prodigious breach upon the temper and character of a saint. As in the case of David's dreadful fall into the complicated sins of adultery and murder, or that of Peter, when he denied his Master thrice, with oaths and curses, and that after a solemn warning which he had received but a few hours before of his danger. Such sins make a dreadful waste upon conscience, and such an interruption in a holy course, as would be ruinous without particular repentance, and really make their recovery difficult. Hence David found occasion to pray for God's creating power, to purify and renew him, as if he were to begin the divine life anew, Psal. li. 10. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." And Peter's recovery is described as another conversion, Luke xxii. 32. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Though such instances of recovery may prevent utter despair in others upon their falls: yet the falls themselves are so marked in scripture, as much more strongly to admonish us against the like.

4. Upon any known falls, there should be a speedy and

proportionable repentance. Next to a constant evenness in our walk, without turning again presumptuously to folly, a quick return to God and to ourselves, by unfeigned and answerable repentance, is the best that can be done; that the interruption may be as small as possible. Indeed David's case is a sad instance of the hardening quality of such offences, even in good men, that he seems to have continued many months under the power of his sin: it is a mighty instance of grace that he was recovered after all. But certainly, where there is a latent principle of goodness under such sins, it is not usual to suffer them to lie long upon them. Upon the return of such exercises as a pious man has accustomed himself to, self-examination and prayer, hearing or reading the word of God, surely he will bethink himself, and then not be easy till he break off his sin by repentance, and come to himself. His return will be with eminent bitterness and deep sorrow. He will not be for covering or extenuating his sin with excuses, or for avoiding just shame for it; but will condemn himself more severely than others can do, and give glory to God by making ample confession, as public as his offence was. Like Peter, when roused out of his lethargy, "he went out, and wept bitterly." He will do all that lies in him, to repair the dishonour done to God, or the damage to his neighbour; will walk softly and humbly all his days, lie as a deep penitent at the foot of divine mercy; endeavour to regain the ground he has lost, and to repair the breaches made in the healthful state of his soul; and to double his guard and care for time to come.

The issue of a fall with a good man, should be like that described by the apostle in the case of the Corinthians, 2 Cor. vii. 11. "This self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you," that you might not offend again: "Yea, what clearing of yourselves?" Not by self-justification or excuses, but by endeavours to clear yourselves from guilt, by application to God for his pardoning mercy; and from the sin itself, by putting evil far away. Yea, what indignation at the sin, and at yourselves for having been guilty of it? Yea, what vehement desire, that you might by no means fail of pardon and purification? Yea, what revenge upon your sins, by careful endeavours to mortify the deeds of the body? Those who, after eminent falls,

have nothing of this temper, will have just ground to fear the insincerity of all their former pretensions.

2. The Christian temper and course must be persisted in to the end of life. This is to be steadfast and unmoveable in it. It is not enough that there hath appeared some evenness and constancy hitherto ; but we must be careful that we hold out to the end. Many have begun and continued for a while to behave in a very promising manner, “but their latter end has been worse than their beginning,” and they have proved apostates after all. But we are concerned, as it is said the righteous shall do, to “hold on our way,” Job xvii. 9. and “having begun to build,” that we may be “able to finish.”

That we be not wearied out by the length of our way. We are to “lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees,” Heb. xii. 12. ; not allowing ourselves to be weary of well-doing, either by reason of the frequent repetition of self-denying duties, or through the decays of age and strength, and the increase of bodily infirmities, which are apt to make the exercises of religion tiresome. We should be careful to maintain a willing spirit, even when the flesh is weak. Thus it is promised, Isa. xl. 31. that “they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.”

That we suffer not ourselves to give over our work in despondency, because of the slow progress and small success we discern ; as if it were an impracticable thing to arrive at the perfection we hope for, because we still find opposition from depraved appetites, and afflictions, and passions. We should go on, notwithstanding, in our conflict, as assured of victory if we faint not.

That we are not affrighted from our steadfastness by the approach of sufferings, but resolutely adhere to God and a good conscience, “withstanding in an evil day, that having done all we may stand :” remembering the terms on which Christ invited us to become his disciples, that we must be content to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, any cross which he lays in our way, and to follow him, whithersoever he leads us ; and that whosoever shall save his life, by turning his back

on Christ, shall lose it; "and whosoever will lose his life for his sake, shall find it," Matt. xvi. 24, 25.

That we suffer not ourselves to be drawn aside from the faith or practice of the gospel, by giving heed to them that lie in wait to deceive; but "beware, lest being led away by the error of the wicked, we fall from our own steadfastness," 2 Peter iii. 17. To this purpose, it concerns us to see that our persuasions are well grounded in the word of God, and not taken up upon trust; and then, that no other consideration, beside evidence of a mistake, draw us from that which we apprehend to be the truth as it is in Jesus, or the practice of any known duty.

And, finally that we be not insensibly drawn on to apostacy, by the importunate allurements of present temptations. Many who behaved well for a time, and some that have acquitted themselves with bravery in a time of persecution; yet, by remitting their care and watchfulness, have had the edge of holy affections and resolutions so worn off by degrees, through the deceitfulness of riches, the cares of life, and the customary society of irreligious men, that they have left their first love; the things that remain are ready to die, if they prove not absolute apostates. It claims the lively and daily concern of all who would finish well, to guard against this danger.

II. I am to shew the necessity of this qualification of steadfastness, in the whole Christian temper and work.

1. It is necessary to our acceptance with God, and our final happiness, by divine constitution.

Constancy or evenness in our course of obedience, so as not to turn aside knowledge to crooked paths, is many ways signified to be a necessary term of our acceptance. It is a natural fruit of sincerity or uprightness; and, therefore, as that is insisted upon, so must the fruit of it be. The psalmist desires to be "kept free from presumptuous sins;" because then," says he, "shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression," Psal. xix. 13. Customary sinning is often declared to be inconsistent with a new nature, or being born of God. So the apostle John, 1 John iii. 6. "Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not," as a matter of allowed and ordinary practice; "whosoever sinneth in such a

manner, hath not seen him, neither known him." No, he belongs to another master and father; for, ver. 8. "He that committeth sin, is of the devil." Ver. 9. "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." And so our blessed Lord himself, John viii. 34. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." The meaning of these passages can be no less than this, that a truly good man cannot allow himself ordinarily to commit a known sin, and least of all to continue wallowing in the mire, if he should fall into it. Without an habitual abstinence from known sins, we can have no title to the benefit of Christ's sacrifice. Under the law, no sacrifice was allowed for presumptuous offences; but "he who did ought presumptuously," was understood to "reproach the Lord, and was to be cut off from his people." Num. xv. 30. The reason is given, ver. 31. "Because he had despised the work of the Lord, and had broken his commandments." Under the gospel, indeed, the virtue of Christ's sacrifice reaches to presumptuous sins, as well as others: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," 1 John i. 7.; but from none without repentance, or till men come to "walk in the light, and not in darkness," ver. 6.

Perseverance is equally necessary to our final reward. So the promises run: "He that endureth to the end, shall be saved," Matt. x. 22. "To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life," Rom ii. 7. "Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. ii. 10. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing," Luke xii. 43. On the other hand, apostacy is declared to cut off all just hope, and to fix men under the most dreadful doom, Ezek. xviii. 24. "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations which the wicked man doth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned, in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die," Heb. x. 26, 27. "If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth," that is, by apostacy, and without repentance, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indigna-

tion, which shall devour the adversaries." If we draw back, it is "unto perdition," ver. 39.—2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. "If, after men have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Awful warnings! which should ever keep up a wakeful care to finish our course with joy.

2. Stedfastness is necessary to the credit of our holy profession. Nothing is so great a disparagement to religion, and so freely opens the mouths of its enemies, as any scandalous falls, and especially the open apostacy of those who have made a distinguishing pretence to it. The body of mankind, how injuriously soever, will interpret that to be a defect in religion itself, which is really nothing else but the great imperfection or insincerity of those who have pretended to it: and, therefore, every good man should be solicitous, that his good may not be evil spoken of through his defaults, Rom. xiv. 16. "Woe to the world, because of offences.—But woe to that man by whom the offence cometh," Matt. xviii. 7.

3. It is necessary, in conformity to our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may prevailingly bear his resemblance, though we cannot in this world do it perfectly. The apostle John argues from God's perfect and absolute purity and holiness, that prevailing purity is necessary in all that share in his friendship; that "if we say, we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth," 1 John i. 5, 6. So all that the holy Jesus will own for his must be really conformed to him in the stedfastness of obedience which he performed in our nature, though they cannot come up to his perfect and absolute measure. His course of obedience was exactly uniform, regular, and even without any variation; he always actually exercised a devotedness to God. The same temper must be habitual in us, or there will be no similitude of character. And as he was "obedient unto death," Phil. ii. 8. and finished, as well as began, "the work which God gave him to do," John xvii. 4.; so we must, in our measure, follow him to the end of our course below, being "faithful unto death."

By way of reflection.

1. We have here a rule for trying the goodness of our state, as far as we are advanced in life, by inquiring into the evangelical constancy of the Christian temper and course, since we have given up our names to be the Lord's : whether it has been the daily settled bent of our souls to please God, and avoid every known sin? Too many seem allowedly to divide their time between God and sin : from transgressing they fly to repentance ; and then, as if past accounts were cancelled by that means, they return again with ease from repenting to known transgressions : thus they do in a circle, and think they have done enough. They are always overcome, when a suitable temptation offers, and always sorry when it is over, but as ready as ever to relapse when a new temptation comes. Their "goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it passes away." This is not vital religion, nor these the spots of God's children. Their purpose is never allowedly to offend ; their ordinary course is an even walk with God ; they rarely fall foully and presumptuously ; but if they do, they repent in earnest, and very seldom relapse. Yet,

2. The best have room to censure themselves for the lesser unevennesses of their frames and course. Though they should not be such as are direct breaches of covenant, yet they are sinful and evil ; and the gospel-way to prevent these from making an inroad upon the habitual state of our souls and our peace with God, is by disallowing them, exercising a general repentance for them, endeavouring to gain ground of them, and soliciting for the daily pardon of them through the blood and intercession of Christ.

3. We have all reason to be excited to the greatest concern and care, that we may always be stedfast and unmoveable in the work of the Lord.

We have many warnings of our danger, by scripture and experience, both of intermissions to which we are subject, and of greater falls, and even of apostacy itself, enough to awaken our constant fear and care.

Every breach made in our Christian course, lessens the pleasure of it, unavoidably increases our difficulties, and is in itself a tendency to apostacy : which should, therefore, set us on our guard against the least defection from God.

The steadfastness of God to his covenant with us, and the uniform course of his past goodness to us, are arguments to our gratitude not to be unstedfast with him. He is with us, while we are with him; his covenant is ordered in all things and sure, and his promises yea and amen; he never breaks with us, till we are grossly perfidious. And we have found him hitherto nigh at hand to us, in all that we have called him for. Upon any revolt, therefore, he may justly expostulate with us, "What iniquity have ye found in me, that ye are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity?" Jer. ii. 5.

The best we have to expect, if we turn aside to folly, is his fatherly corrections. There is not a kinder declaration in the book of God, than that in Psal. lxxxix. 30—33. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments:—then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." The design of such corrections is gracious, to reclaim them; but why should we make our Father's rod necessary?

That we may, therefore, be steadfast and unmoveable, I would offer the following directions for a close.

See that you begin well upon the foundation of a sincere and unreserved devotedness to God; that you have the power, as well as the form, of godliness. A flaw in the foundation will make the building totter; and unless it be rectified, may occasion our perishing under the ruins of it, like the house, which our Saviour speaks of, that was "built upon the sand."

Often review the state of your souls; let not long accounts remain without inspection: but often examine what ground you have gained or lost, that disorders may be soon rectified, before they have proceeded far, or before your hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Improve every melancholy instance of the falls of others, to awaken your own caution. When you see other people's miscarriages, the best improvement you can make of them, is that to which the apostle directs upon such an occasion: "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. x. 12.

Be steadfast in the faith, as ever you would be steady in your obedience. This is the principle which feeds and ani-

mates Christian obedience. Every doctrine of divine truth has a practical influence, and its influence will be proportionable to the strength of our persuasion about it. If your faith be shaken, that which depends upon it, and would not be a reasonable service without it, will be shaken too.

Aim at advances, if you would not decline. If once you think you are come to your full pitch, it will soon make you remiss, and lay you open to the snares of life. Therefore St Peter unites the exhortations: "Beware lest you fall from your steadfastness; but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. iii. 17, 18.

Eye the most excellent examples to excite your emulation. Make those your chosen patterns, who walk most closely with God, and even them no farther than they do so.

Trust not your own hearts, but "in him who is able to keep you from falling;" and, therefore, often and earnestly pray to him to keep you "back from presumptuous sins," Psal. xix. 13.; to "make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you," 1 Pet. v. 10.; "to keep you, by his mighty power, through faith unto salvation," chap. i. 5.

And often think of the promised reward as sure, and great, and near. "Knowing the time," Christians, reckon it "high time to awake out of sleep; for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed."

SERMON XXXVI.

A TENDER SPIRIT.

2 CHRON. xxxiv. 27. [first clause.]

Because thine heart was tender.—

THIS is God's own commendation of King Josiah. He entered upon his reign very young, at "eight years old;" and though he were the son of an exceeding wicked father, yet was a prince of eminent religion through the several periods of his government. Personal religion appeared in him betimes: "In the eighth year of his reign, when he was yet young," or when he was but sixteen years old, "he began to seek after the God of David, his father;" that is, he publicly avowed the worship of the true God, which had been notoriously cast off in the days of his own father Amon, ver. 3. "And in the twentieth year" of his reign, the twentieth of his age, "he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high-places and the groves," &c. He began a public reformation of the worship of God from the abuses which had been countenanced in the days of his predecessor, several of which the sacred historian goes on to enumerate. "And in the eighteenth year of his reign," when he was twenty-six years old, he proceeded to repair the house of God, ver. 8, &c. In the course of the repairs, "Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses," ver. 14.

Whether this was that original book of the law which Moses laid up by the ark, or some ancient authentic copy of it, is not so certain. Probably this had been concealed in some

secret place of the temple, to secure it from the impious fury of some of the idolatrous kings of Judah, and now happily came to light when people were set to work to repair it. It is plain by what follows, that both king and people were, in a great measure, strangers to the contents of it till this discovery. Probably the reading of the law had been neglected, both publicly and privately, in the reigns of several wicked kings, who had gone before Josiah: it may be most of the copies had been wilfully destroyed, or, by the general neglect of transcribing more, were grown very rare and scarce. Without doubt, the king had not written a copy of the law with his own hand, according to the command in Deut. xvii. 18. which surely he would have done before this time, in obedience to the law, if he had been particularly acquainted with it, since he is declared to have "done that which is right in the sight of the Lord" from his early days, ver. 2. that is, according to such degrees of light about the mind of God as he had before the law was found, either by hints received from some good people about him, or by means of some imperfect abstracts of the law which might go about, while entire copies were wanting.

The law being found, it was carried to the king, who, like a man earnestly desirous to "know the way of God more perfectly," ordered it to be read to him, and, like a man of a tender conscience, "when he heard the words of the law, rent his clothes," ver. 18, 19. fell under it, struck with the dreadful threatenings contained in it against transgressors; and apprehending from them, that "great wrath from the Lord" was like to be "poured out upon them," sends a deputation of some of his principal ministers to inquire of God, in the case by Huldah the prophetess, ver. 20, 21. to enquire whether there were any hopes that God's anger might be appeased, and what was necessary to this end. Huldah, by direction from God, lets him know that God was peremptorily resolved to execute his vengeance upon the Jews for their great and long revolts from him; but for the king himself, he should have the favour to "be gathered to his grave in peace, that his eyes might not see all the evil that was coming upon them." The reason of this distinction in Josiah's case is given in the text: "*Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before God, when thou heardest his*

words against this place, &c. I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord.”

I have chosen this divine encomium upon an Old Testament saint, to represent to you one eminent ingredient, or qualification, of the Christian temper, which should attend us with reference to every part and branch of it, *a tender heart*.

The same thing is expressed by “an heart of flesh, in opposition to “a stony heart,” in some promises of the Old Testament, which were to receive their principal accomplishment, in evangelical times, in the spiritual seed of Abraham, in Ezek. xi. 19. and chap. xxxvi. 26. “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” I apprehend St Paul had those promises in his eye, when he says to the Corinthian converts, 2 Cor. iii. 3. “Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.” These converts were a sort of epistle from Christ, in commendation of the sincerity and efficacy of the apostle’s ministry among them; this commendatory epistle of Christ was written in the “fleshly tables of the heart,” that is, in their hearts made soft, and ready to attend to and obey the gospel, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, agreeable to the ancient promise, that he would “give an heart of flesh.”

To this stands opposed what we so often read of, “hardness of heart,” an “heart of stone.” We read of some, who “made their hearts as an adamant of stone,” Zech. vii. 12. the extraordinary hardness of which makes it exceeding difficult, to carve, or fashion it, by art into a regular figure. Others are said to “make their faces harder than a rock,” Jer. v. 3. which you cannot easily move or penetrate. The same bad disposition is elsewhere set out by a metaphor taken from flesh, but such a part of flesh as has contracted a brawny stiffness and hardness, by much exercise and hard labour. Under such an allusion, the Gentile world is described as “past feeling,” Eph. iv. 19. and others as “having their consciences seared with an hot iron.” 1 Tim. iv. 2. The *tender heart* in the text stands opposed to all this.

My business upon this head shall be,

I. To give a general account of the import of a *tender heart*.

II. To describe more particularly the ways wherein such a temper should express itself.

III. To shew what foundation is laid for it by Christianity.

I. It may be proper to give a general account of the import of a *tender heart*. Two things seem to be pointed at by it.

1. A quick and ready sense and feeling in spiritual things. A tender heart is one that hath senses exercised and prompt "to discern both good and evil," Heb. v. 12. Spiritual things are apt to make a deep impression, or spiritual pains and pleasures are easily felt, where this is a man's character.

Quickness of apprehension in matters of a religious nature, is one instance. Light in the mind is necessary to guide all our powers and actions: "If our eye be evil, the whole body must be full of darkness; if, therefore, the light that is in thee, (in the understanding, which is as the eye of the mind,) be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Matt. vi. 23. If our minds are blind to the true light, or under the influence of a false light, this must be followed with disorder in all our actions. But how many are insensible of the light which shines around them, and of those things of which one would think they might have the fullest conviction! Their "understandings are darkened through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness, or hardness, of their hearts," Eph. iv. 18. "God speaketh to them once, yea, twice, but they perceive it not," Job xxxiii. 14. They discern not plain duty, though it glares in their eye with full evidence. They know not the plague of their own heart, though it is so obvious to reflection. How happy is it, on the other hand, to be ready to take in the light which is offered! to be quick at discovering our duty and danger, and wants and distempers, our best friends, and our worst enemies, the way in which we ought to go, and the temptations in our way; things of such importance to our spiritual and eternal welfare.

Ready reflections of conscience are also included. When conscience is silent, so as not to animadvert upon sin, and

check men for it, or not to set their duty in view, and excite them to it, or when it favours some known sin, or connives at the omission of some plain duty ; when this power of the soul is not in a disposition to act, or not to act impartially, it bespeaks a hard and insensible mind. Either the “mind and conscience is defiled,” Tit. i. 15. that is, the practical judgment is vitiated, so as to call evil good, and good evil ; or else it is seared as “with an hot iron,” 1 Tim. iv. 2. so as to be altogether unapt for sensation. But a tender heart imports, that conscience is quick and active, ready to answer its character of being “the candle of the Lord within us,” to search us out, and to be a faithful monitor, “accusing, or excusing,” as there is reason given for either.

A disposition to be “easily and suitably affected” with our own spiritual concerns, enters into the notion of a tender heart. A hard heart is unmoved by such things as are fittest to impress it. Of how many is it the character, that the knowledge they have dies as they receive it, and kindles no answerable affections ? “Seeing many things, they observe them not ; opening the ears, yet they hear not,” Isa. xlii. 20. The meaning of the prophet is, those people were as little affected with the works or word of God, as if they had not seen or heard them ; or, if affections are moved for a time, they are but transient, they presently wear off. This is the description of “the stony ground,” Matt. xiii. 20, 21. So many deal with their convictions like the man described by St James, chap. i. 24. “He beholdeth himself as in a glass, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.” Such is the remorse of many sinners under divine punishments, like the people of Israel, in Psal. lxxviii. 34—37. When God “slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God.—Nevertheless, they did not flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues ; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.” A tender heart, on the contrary, is readily affected according to the nature and importance of things represented to it ; and these affections produce lasting fruit. The impressions are strong, and the influence is lively.

2. A pliable disposition to yield to divine influences, and

engage in the practice of our duty, is the other branch of a tender heart. Though we should have ever so great a sense of sin and duty, yet if our hearts are unyielding, and will not return unto the Lord, this is hardness of heart in the sense of scripture. However we may have been awakened by God's Spirit striving with us, by the reflections of conscience, by ordinances or providences; yet if all this leave us as it found us, if we forsake not the sins of which we are admonished, nor engage in the duties of which we are convinced, our hearts are still in God's account as the adamant. Indeed, the greater our light is, if we "hold the truth in unrighteousness," our obstinacy is the more aggravated; as Stephen charges the Jews, Acts vii. 22. "Ye still-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," counteract his designs and motions. "Hardness, and an impenitent heart," are much the same thing, Rom. ii. 5. But a tender heart cheerfully complies with the will of God. It cannot be described more fully in a few words, than in these, that it is "willing and obedient," Isa. i. 19.

II. I proceed to give a more particular description of the principal ways wherein this holy tenderness of spirit should express itself in our course. And a representation of this may be given in reference to several points.

1. In relation to the word of God, or the discoveries he has made of his mind. I begin with this, as it was the particular instance referred to in the case of Josiah.

A man of a religious tenderness of spirit will make it his business to acquaint himself with the mind of God. Others may be content to act blindfold, or to take their religion upon trust, or "receive for doctrines the commandments of men," because they chiefly consult their own ease, or that which may be acceptable to other people. But a good man has in the first place determined to shew himself approved to God, and, therefore, is concerned to be well assured of his mind. He may not be so soft and pliable as others, to the dictates and determinations of men, for their mind is not the thing he is inquiring after, but what his Lord and Master reveals for truth, or prescribes as duty. This he is earnestly solicitous to know, and, therefore, diligently studies his Bible, as the notification which God hath given of his mind: "I meditate in

thy precepts, (says David,) and have respect unto thy ways," Psal. cxix. 15. He endeavours to make the best use of the assistance within his reach, which may any way help him to understand the scriptures, especially of the ministry of the gospel; but then he does not believe the sense of scripture given by a minister, or any number of ministers, to be the sense of Christ, merely because they say it is, but, like the noble Bereans, he "searches the scriptures diligently," to discover whether their sense agree with this rule, Acts xvii. 11. and really receives what he finds to have a foundation there, but no more. It is a noble obstinacy to men's authority, and at the same time bespeaks the greatest obsequiousness to Christ, to admit no more for his mind upon the dictates of men, than we can ourselves discern to be so, upon an impartial comparison of what they say with that in his word upon which they found it. But, on the other hand, a tender spirit is willing to learn from any man, and will be thankful for any assistance to discover the meaning of the scriptures in any particular of truth and duty.

Such a man pays a ready and reverential subjection to the authority of God in his word, as far as he understands it; whether it be in less or greater concerns, in matters of belief, or of practice: "My heart (says David) stands in awe of thy word," Psal. cxix. 161. Such a man cheerfully sacrifices any favourite opinion, or inclination, as soon as he apprehends that the word of God declares against it. It is included in a man's becoming a Christian, that he makes this determination in the general, that every thought shall "be captivated to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 5. Not that he hath no thoughts, no sentiments, no inclinations, which are different from the mind of Christ; every mistake in judgment, every irregular desire, certainly is so. But as he comes gradually to discern the inconstancy between the mind of Christ, and any sentiment or practice of his own, he puts his general determination in practice in that particular case; that wrong thought is captivated to the obedience of Christ. The language of his heart concerning the whole law of God, is the same with the language of Israel upon the delivery of the Mosaical law, Exod. xxiv. 7. "Moses took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be

obedient." And as particulars come to his notice, he yields an obedient ear to them.

He is afraid to do any thing which he doubts to be disagreeable to the word of God. There is indeed a conscience unduly scrupulous, which is a great obstruction to the usefulness and comfort of some infirm Christians; and it is the duty and interest of all to come, as far as may be, to a clear and determinate judgment about the particulars of their conduct, by considering, as any doubt occurs, what foundation there is for it in the word of God, and by considering the wise and judicious upon the case; for it is past doubt, that we should not make more sins and duties to ourselves than God hath made so. But some, by the weakness of their judgment, or the power of melancholy, cannot get clear of their doubts as to some things which others esteem lawful; and in some parts of conduct in lesser matters, possibly the most judicious can discern no more than probability concerning the mind of God on either side. Now, while a scruple remains, though it should in itself be ill grounded, it is a just discovery of a tender spirit to forbear an action which appears doubtful. The apostle clearly decides this case, in the affair of meats forbidden by the law of Moses. The Jewish converts, by means of the remaining prejudices of their education, thought it unlawful to eat these; the Gentile converts were persuaded of their Christian liberty; and they were on the right side of the question. But while this mistaken apprehension remained in the Jewish converts, it would have been sinful in them to do as the Gentiles did, Rom. xiv. 23. "He that doubteth is damned, (self-condemned,) if he eat, because he eateth not of faith." Where sin is suspected on one hand, and there is no room for a suspicion on the other, a tender spirit will avoid the doubtful part.

He is readily impressed, suitable to the several parts of truth proposed to him out of the word of God. Our affections, under the proper direction and conduct of light, are of the greatest service to facilitate holy obedience. And it is a good indication of a tender spirit to have suitable affections readily excited, according to the particular branches of truth and duty set before us. It is the general character of a man sincerely good, that he "trembles at God's word," Isa. lxvi. 2, 5. He receives it with reverential awe and becoming af-

fection. Thus Noah, "being warned of God" of the approaching deluge, was "moved with fear," Heb. xi. 7. This was the expression of Josiah's tender heart in this chapter, ver. 19. "When he heard the words of the law, he rent his clothes." So when the riches of grace are set before us, to have love, and gratitude, and trust in God, excited thereby to a proper exercise, is highly becoming a soul softened and ingenuously melted by the comfortable discoveries of the gospel.

And such a man frequently compares his heart and life with God's word, as one suspicious that he may have offended, and yet truly desirous not to offend, or to make his peace, and to come back to God and himself, as soon as may be, if he hath offended: "I communed, (says the psalmist,) with my own heart, and made diligent search, Psal. lxxvii. 6. "I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto thy testimonies," Psal. cxix. 59.

2. In relation to sin, a tender spirit eminently appears.

Conviction is more easily admitted where this is the frame of the heart. Solomon tells us, Prov. xvii. 10. that "a reproof enters more into a wise man, than a hundred stripes into a fool." When conscience is awake, it is ready to give attention to a hint, and to make personal application. In two sad instances, which we have upon record, how far even good men may be "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," that is, Peter's denial of his Master, and David's scandalous fall, and continuance in it for so long a time; yet we have in both an instance also of the easy admission of conviction by a man habitually good. A look from the Lord Jesus darted the most pungent conviction into the mind of Peter, so that "he went out and wept bitterly," Luke xxii. 61, 62. And a word from the prophet Nathan, bowed David's heart, and brought him to confess his sin, 2 Sam. xii. 13. And in another case, the numbering of the people, "his heart smote him" without a monitor, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. A tender heart is jealous of more sin in himself than he particularly knows, and, therefore, the language of his heart is often the same with David's, Psal. xix. 12. "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." It would, therefore, be strange if he should be unready to fall under conviction, when

his sin is set in order before him, if then he should endeavour to cover and excuse it.

Upon conviction, shame and sorrow readily flow in a tender mind. The hardened sinner "is not ashamed when he committeth abominations," Jer. vi. 15. possibly he may "glory in his shame," Phil. iii. 19. But softening grace strikes a man with deep remorse upon the remembrance of his offences, it produces "a broken and contrite heart," Psal. li. 17. He "is ashamed and blushes to lift up his face to God, because of his iniquities," Ezra ix. 6. like the publican, who stood afar off, and could hardly presume to "lift up so much as his eyes to heaven," he "smites upon his breast," full of contrition and godly sorrow, Luke xviii. 13. His soul is filled with pungent concern, and overspread with a holy confusion, he is more free to condemn himself than others can be; and that not merely because he may be liable to human punishment, or censure, but much more for his offence against God, and even in cases where men might rather commend than condemn him. The great impression made on his mind falls in with the confession of the prodigal: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." His sorrow is more animated by ingenuity than by fear. Sin is so odious and burdensome to him, that he mourns even for the offences of others, and much more for his own.

He is affected with known sin of every kind; the omissions of duty, as well as direct commissions of sin. The very remains of sin dwelling in him, though he has hopes that no sin has the dominion, are no small uneasiness to him, which often occasion such a complaint as that, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death."

He is very solicitous to be delivered from the guilt and the stain of the sins of which he is convinced. A soft heart cannot be easy under the sense of sin, till he can have hope of a pardon, till "his feet are washed," when they have contracted new defilement. David, come to himself, expresses the greatest importunity: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin; for I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me," Psal. li. 2, 3. A true penitent, upon conviction in any instance of transgression,

will sue for mercy, plead the atonement, and earnestly pray for the sanctifying Spirit : " Create in me a clean heart, O God," after my new impurities ; and renew a right spirit within me," ver. 10. Even suspicion of guilt will carry him to the mercy-seat to supplicate mercy.

And the matter will not rest in relentings, but issue in the most essential part of repentance, ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well : " Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, never to be repented of," 2 Cor. vii. 10.

And as a tender spirit will naturally discover itself in the proper exercises of genuine repentance for sin committed ; so it will produce a cautious and habitual fear of sin through a man's course. He dares not indulge himself in a thing which he apprehends displeasing to God, though it should be ever so common, or pass among men for a trifle : he " abstains from every appearance of evil," 1 Thess. v. 22. as afraid to tread upon doubtful ground. He " watches and prays, that he may not enter upon temptation ;" is afraid of insuaring company, and of such actions as he finds to be generally dangerous to himself, though they may be lawful and safe to others. He is careful that he " make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof," and " keeps his heart with all diligence."

These are the proper expressions of a tender spirit, with reference to sin.

3. In relation to the events of Providence, and the circumstances of his own lot and condition. And in this matter,

When he is under the most favourable providences, he is afraid of abusing divine mercy : " Lest his table should become a snare, or he should be full and deny God : " lest he should grow secure, and forgetful of his dependence on God ; or his spirit become vain and worldly ; or he should put the evil day far from him ; or give into any criminal indulgence of his appetites ; or be lifted up with pride.

He entertains an awful fear at the apprehension of God's judgments. That was David's frame, Psal. cxix. 120. " My flesh trembleth for fear of God, and I am afraid of his judgments." Noah was moved with fear of them, when they were at a distance : and much more will a man of a tender heart be so, when God's hand is visibly stretched out, or

when there are many moral prognostics, that God is "making a way to his anger." The least tokens of God's displeasure affect him, such as others hardly observe; while hardened sinners are unmoved under the greatest: Jer. v. 3. "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return."

He is desirous to understand the voice of God in his providences; that God would "shew him wherefore he contendeth with him," Job x. 2. And he endeavours, that his own temper and behaviour may comport with the providence he is under, whether they are prosperous, or afflictive. He would "know both how to be abased, and how to abound," Phil. iv. 12. The particular prospect of calamities approaching, excites him to prepare suitably to meet his God, Amos iv. 12. And his chief attention from time to time is the duty of his present condition.

4. This temper, where it is genuine, will express itself industriously in relation to the honour of God.

Such a man will do what he can himself to promote it. It is the general scope of his actions to "do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. All that he has and is, is sincerely consecrated to this aim. And, according to his station, he will be active and zealous in any designs that are on foot in his day, conducing to the glory of God, and the service of religion. He guards against every thing in his own conduct, which may occasion the name of God to be blasphemed. He is willing to hazard his own honour, or interest, or life itself, if God may but be glorified; and can be content to have his own reputation laid in the dust, if his Master may be magnified by it. As John the baptist "rejoiced greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice;" though he foresaw that Christ's entrance upon his ministry would eclipse the honour of his own: "He must increase, but I must decrease," John iii. 29, 30.

In any sin he commits, while insensible sinners are chiefly concerned for the dishonour done to themselves when their sin is found out, a man of a tender conscience chiefly laments the dishonour done to God by it. God by Nathan set David's sin before him in this view, 2 Sam. xii. 14. "By this deed

thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme:" and when David comes to make his acknowledgment, he principally reflects on the same thing, Psal. li. 4. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

He greatly rejoices in any thing that tends to the honour of God; if he hear of the advancement of his interest, where he hath no immediate concern in the matter; if good be done any where, though he has no hand in it; and in any service done by others, though he may seem to be lessened by it himself: as Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached, though some did it out of envy to him, Phil. i. 18.

And, on the other hand, he is deeply affected with other men's dishonouring God: "Rivers of tears run down his eyes, because men keep not God's law," Psal. cxix. 136. He mourns for abominations done in the land, which he cannot help, Ezek. ix. 4. As Hezekiah deeply resented the blasphemies of Rabshakeh, Isa. xxxvii. 1—3. And he is ready to bear his testimony against the sins of others, in all proper ways.

This is some drought of a tender spirit in its proper features.

It remains to be shewn,

III. What foundation is eminently laid for such a temper by Christianity.

You see good men in the ancient church were not strangers to it: much less should we be under the gospel; for the rule of our faith and practice is more complete. Things of importance to us are no longer wrapped up in figures; but he, who was in the bosom of the Father, hath revealed him and his will. God hath spoken to us in these last days by his Son, as his fullest and finishing revelation; and, therefore, "if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven," Heb. xii. 25. if we are less moved and impressed by the brighter light which Christ hath brought down from heaven.

The recompences of the life to come are more fully revealed to us. Indeed the church under the Old Testament was

not altogether unacquainted with these ; but temporal promises and threatenings were most inculcated in that dispensation, and the future recompences more darkly and sparingly. On the contrary, the eternal wrath of God against impenitent sinners, and the heavenly happiness reserved for saints, are the motives which the gospel chiefly dwells upon. And surely the greater importance of the motives that are now principally set in our view, should make the deeper impression.

The richer discoveries of grace made in the gospel, is a strong argument to ingenuity for promoting such a temper in us : “The grace of God that hath appeared to all men,” should soften our hearts to the most ingenuous regard to our Master’s will in every thing ; his goodness should lead us to the most kindly repentance. God’s tender concern for our interests, so as not to spare his own Son, but to give him up for us all, should inspire us, in return, with the most tender concern for his glory. He that continues hard and insensible to the gracious persuasions of the gospel, surely has no part left in him tender.

The ceremonial observances, which took up so much of the attention of serious minds while they were in force, are now superseded ; and, therefore, the more tender spirit is justly expected with reference to the more substantial parts of religion that remain.

Especially if we add, that the softening Spirit is more fully promised, and more plentifully communicated to the church now. He must have been often resisted, and his motions greatly quenched, by any who continue hard and obstinate under the gospel.

Some inferences shall conclude this discourse.

1. We may discern the difference between this truly Christian temper, and some things which people are apt to mistake for it.

It must not be confounded with a natural easiness of temper. This is not founded upon a regard to God, nor expresses itself with distinction in a religious conduct ; but upon all occasions, with reason or without. This indeed is a weakness, and not a virtue ; it lays a man open to temptation from all quarters, and makes him liable to every oppression ; to be

carried about with every wind of doctrine, and drawn aside by any solicitation of a tempter.

It is also a different thing from a mere occasional tenderness under the word or providences of God. Ahab humbled himself upon God's threatenings, and went softly for a little time, 1 Kings xxi. 27. Pharaoh himself did the like upon the execution of some of God's judgments in Egypt. But these were very different from the tender heart of Josiah. Their humiliation was not an habitual temper, and the fruits of it were very short-lived: Josiah's was lasting, and brought forth fruit to perfection. Their tenderness only shewed itself either in some good words upon a sudden conviction, or in forbearing some particular sin for the present: Josiah was led by the impression he set about an universal reformation, and to carry it to the greatest extent he could.

2. Let us all seek after and cultivate a religious tenderness of spirit. It is of indispensable necessity to our acceptance with God. What force should that declaration have, to awaken an earnest concern to be possessed of this frame, which God makes in Isaiah lxvi. 2. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." It is a strong encouragement to our desires, and prayers, and endeavours, that such promises stand upon record: "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." If you are convinced of the necessity of this temper, take encouragement from such a declaration, to pray to God for his quickening grace, and to hope that it shall not be denied in your attendance upon his appointed means.

And if your hearts are in any measure softened, labour to preserve their tenderness through your course. Be afraid of the beginnings of hardness of heart. Exhort and admonish yourselves daily, "least you should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13. Observe and fall in with every good motion of the Spirit of God. Endeavour to maintain an habitual tenderness, by the frequent exercises of such a spirit; especially by daily serious reviews of your own frames and actions, and the speedy exercises of godly sorrow and true repentance, for every thing you discern amiss from time to time in your temper or behaviour to God, yourselves, or your neighbour.

3. If you are conscious of such a spirit prevailing in you, take the comfort of it as a good evidence that you are in the Christian state. As we have frequent occasion for repentance, with reference to every branch of the Christian temper, so thanks be to God there is room for repentance: "A blessed and contrite spirit God will not despise," Psal. li. 17. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," Matt. v. 4. "God will have mercy on such and abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 7. "He is faithful and just to forgive them their sins," 1 John i. 9. Though the occasions for penitential sorrow will not entirely cease while you are in the body; yet when the hardened sinner's mourning-time begins, yours will end; at the end of your trial, "God will wipe away all tears from your eyes for ever," and give you the rewards promised to them that overcome.

SERMON XXXVII.

CHRISTIAN ZEAL.

REV. III. 19. [the middle of the verse.]

—*Be zealous.*

ZEAL is not a particular grace or virtue by itself, but rather a qualification, which should attend us in the exercise of every grace, and in the performance of every duty.

Indeed, it is no virtue at all, unless it be well placed and regulated. Zeal, in its general notion, is nothing else but a strong and ardent concern for or against any thing, and a lively and vigorous manner of acting thereupon. It has the denomination of a religious zeal, only as far as the objects about which it is conversant are of a religious nature. And even a religious zeal is no farther good and commendable, than when it is really on the side of truth and goodness, when it is measured by the importance of things, and when it is expressed and exercised by lawful and regular methods.

It is fit to be observed, that we read in scripture of a bad zeal more frequently of the two, than of a good one; and many admonitions are given against some sort of zeal, as I shall have occasion to take notice presently. Which should make us sensible how highly necessary it is, that a strict caution, and a very careful regulation, should attend our zeal.

And yet right zeal is a duty, and a needful ingredient of the Christian temper, and is recommended as such in the text.

Christ, from heaven calls his disciples to it, in an address particularly directed to one of the seven churches of Asia, that of Laodicea.

The description which he, who knew their works and character, gave of them just before, made this call peculiarly apposite and suitable to them. He charges them, in ver. 15. that they "were neither cold nor hot." They had taken upon them the profession of Christianity, owned the truth and laws of Christ, and their obligation from them, and so were not absolutely cold: but, on the other hand, there was no spirit in their religion, no vital influence from it; their principles were not lively and active; they did not behave as people in earnest in what they professed, who resolved to make it the business of their lives to observe the Christian rule, and to be governed by Christian motives, or who were determined upon an adherence to their profession, whatever it should cost them. This is the charge against them.

Christ, therefore, declares his disapprobation of such a lukewarm temper: "I would thou wert cold or hot." As if he had said, 'You would act more consistently with yourselves, and it would be more for my honour, if either you would entirely quit your Christian profession, or else would be more in earnest in the pursuit of it.'

In the next verse, he expresses his displeasure in stronger terms, ver. 16. "So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." 'As lukewarm water turns the stomach, so,' says Christ, 'lukewarm and indifferent professors of my religion make me sick of them, I cannot bear them; but, unless they repent, I will reject and cast them off from me.'

In the 17th and 18th verses, Christ intimates wherein their lukewarmness lay, or at least points to the natural fruit of it: "They thought themselves rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing," while their case was quite otherwise. They reckoned their profession, their privileges, their possession of sound doctrine, or their having escaped common pollutions, to be enough, without the real power of godliness. Christ admonishes them how much they were mistaken in their opinion of themselves; after all, they "were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." And, therefore, he graciously counsels them to look out for a supply of

their wants, and to apply to him for that purpose, who was yet able and willing to relieve them.

And in the verse where the text lies, he lets them know, that even so severe an admonition was the fruit of kindness and goodwill: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." "I have said this, not as pronouncing your condition desperate, but faithfully to warn you of your danger, that this negligence in religion may not be your ruin: *Be zealous, therefore, and repent.*" "Since this is really your condition, and I have warned you, out of pure grace, of the dreadful consequences of such a temper persisted in; therefore, repent that you have trifled so much hitherto, and be zealous for time to come."

Zeal is a qualification necessary in Christ's disciples.

Upon which argument, I would,

I. Explain the disposition to which we are exhorted. And,

II. Shew the obligations which lie upon Christ's disciples to such a temper.

I. It is very necessary that the disposition should be explained, to which we are here exhorted. We are here required to *be zealous*. But, in other places, we are warned against zeal, and the word is often used in an ill sense, and the most wicked and pernicious fruits are represented as proceeding from it. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance, that we should carefully attend to scripture-light, for the due stating of this matter, where we should be zealous, and where not; and what regulations our fervour should be under, for the degrees and measures of it, the principal seat of it, the persons that may be concerned in it, and the proper ways of expressing it. The following particulars may help to discover our duty in this matter.

1. It should be our first care to be well assured that the cause is good for which our zeal is employed; that is, that what we are zealous for is really truth or duty; and that what we are zealous against, is certainly false or evil: "It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing," Gal. iv. 18. But the greater our fervour is in a wrong way, so much the more hurt we are like to do to ourselves and others.

Indeed, heat without light, or rash and blind zeal, is the most extravagant and mischievous thing in the world. And, therefore, careful examination should always go before the actings of zeal; otherwise, we may be found fighting against God, when we think to do him good service; and active instruments in the devil's service through ignorance, while we flatter ourselves that we are animated by a zeal for God. Such was the zeal so often taken notice of in the Jews at the beginning of Christianity. They had a mighty regard for their ceremonial law, and for their ritual traditions: and because the gospel insisted not on the observance of these, but directed them for acceptance with God to faith in Christ, without the works of the law, they set themselves against it with the greatest warmth and eagerness. And this their bigotry and fury is called their zeal. So the original word is, where our translators have rendered it by indignation or envy. So Acts v. 17, 18. "The high-priest and his companions were filled with zeal, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison." And chap. xiii. 45. "When the Jews saw the multitudes that came to hear Paul preach, they were filled with zeal, and spake against those things that were spoken by Paul." And when the same apostle endeavoured to convince the Jews at Thessalonica, that Jesus was the Messiah, Acts xvii. 5. "The Jews which believed not, moved with zeal, took unto them certain lewd fellows, and made an uproar." Here was fiery hot zeal; and the apostle assures us, that it was a zeal of God, or for God, Rom. x. 2. "I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God; but then it was not according to knowledge." They had not examined the evidences of Christianity, and so blindly and madly opposed it. St Paul could the better bear this testimony of his countrymen, because it had lately been his own case. He had been "exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers," Gal. i. 14. And "touching zeal, persecuting the church," Phil. iii. 6. But when he came to himself, this misplaced zeal was so far from giving him any comfort that it was his grief and his shame: he calls himself for it a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, and even the chief of sinners," 1 Tim. i. 13—15.

To be zealous for we know not what, is as bad as to "worship we know not what." And however positive and

confident we may be, after all our warmth, we may be on the wrong side, if our assurance be not the result of a sincere and impartial inquiry. And, indeed, if we should happen to be in the right, yet a blind and random zeal, even for truth itself, cannot be acceptable to God, because it is rather by chance, than upon reasonable evidence, that our zeal is on the right side.

Every man, therefore, is bound, before he gives a loose to his zeal, to use the best helps in his power for discovering the mind of God : and no man should suffer his zeal to outrun his knowledge, or to exceed the evidence he has of the truth or falsehood, of the good or evil of things.

2. Zeal should bear a proportion to the value and importance of things. Indeed, the least truth, of which we are convinced, must not be given up ; nor should we act contrary to known duty in the least instance, upon any worldly consideration. But all truths or duties are not of equal moment or concern, either to ourselves or others, to the honor of God or the interest of religion. While a warm zeal, therefore, is not only allowable, but commendable, in reference to matters of importance ; yet there is room for the exercise of moderation, as a virtue in relation to things of small consequence.

This difference in the value or importance of things should be measured, either by the plain declarations of God in his word concerning the necessity of some points of belief or practice to salvation ; or by their obvious tendency to promote or hinder practical godliness, by their plain influence upon the welfare of mankind, either in this or in the next world.

Now, really it is no good sign of sincerity, much less of a regular zeal, to be very warm and earnest about little matters, while there is a plain coldness about things of the greatest moment. To be all on fire about rituals and ceremonies, either for them or against them, when we are negligent and indifferent about the very vitals of religion ; to lay a mighty stress upon doubtful things, or the mere dictates of men, and yet to make a small account of the undoubted precepts of God, and even the plain dictates both of natural and revealed religion ; to be exceeding eager upon such points as are confessed by all thinking men to be attended with great obscurity and difficulties, upon knotty and perplexing questions, but slightly to pass over the clear and obvious truths and duties of

religion; this is an untoward and a monstrous zeal. Nothing, indeed, which appears to bear the stamp of divine authority, is to be received by us with an absolute indifference: but as God has laid a different stress upon things, so should we, and endeavour to follow his declared judgment of their importance, as near as we can. We shall do well in this case to lay to heart Christ's reproof to the Scribes and Pharisees, in Matt. xxiii. 23, 24. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."

3. Zeal is first to be considered in the temper of the soul, and then in the proper expressions of it in the tenor of the practice. It stands, in the first place, opposed to indifference or lukewarmness in the heart and affections. So it is eminently to be understood in the text, as appears from the context. But if there be inward life and vigour, this ought to be, and will be, expressed by correspondent effects in practice. And so zeal stands opposed to slothfulness, Rom. xii. 11. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." It is the reverse of doing the work of the Lord negligently, of every thing in the outward course that might discover a coldness in affection to God, or in resolution for him, or in hatred of sin, or in our regards to God's honour and interest.

Now, though one man cannot judge of another's zeal, more than of any other inward disposition, by any measure beside visible and becoming fruits; yet the fervour of the soul is principally to be considered with respect to divine acceptance. No seeming warmth of zeal for God in pious discourse, no appearance of vigorous acting for him, will pass with God for any thing better than hypocrisy, if all be not animated with the inward fire of holy zeal. It is not enough "with the mouth to shew much love to God, if the heart goeth after covetousness," or something else more than God, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. To be forward and ready in religious conversation, to lament the sins of the times, and the decay of piety, is a becoming instance of Christian zeal; and charity, without good evidence to the contrary, will induce us to believe concerning

another, that “out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” But if he who knows all things should know it to be otherwise, he will abhor the vile dissimulation. To be diligent in attendance upon the institutions of divine worship; to be active in endeavours to propagate God’s truths and interest, and to prevent the progress of sin and error, are natural fruits of religious zeal. But if we should only design thereby to approve ourselves to men; if the language of our hearts should be like Jehu’s, “Come, see my zeal for the Lord,” 2 Kings x. 16. this is vain ostentation, and not holy zeal.

4. The first and principal province of Christian zeal, is in relation to ourselves: and to other people only in the second place, as we have only a secondary concern in them.

I am afraid, by this observation I meet with a very common mistake among people that speak much in commendation of zeal; I doubt they consider it, as if it chiefly related to the conduct of other people, rather than to their own. But, in truth, though the province of zeal extends farther than ourselves, yet not only its first, but its main business, is at home. Zeal, as well as charity, is to begin here: in keeping up the fervour of our own spirits in religion, and the intenseness of our own personal obedience.

It should principally operate in ardent desires and endeavours after the increase of light and useful knowledge in our own minds; “in following on to know the Lord, increasing in the knowledge of God” and his will; that we may know our duty better, in order to the direction of our practice; and be more fully instructed in the truths of the gospel, that our persuasion of them may be firmer, and their influence more strong and forcible upon our souls.

Christian zeal is the sprightly vigour and strenuous activity of every holy affection and disposition; an earnestness and intenseness in every spiritual act, of faith and love, of hope and trust, of resignation to God, and resolution for him. It is the performance of every act of devotion with life and close application of thought, as those who are in earnest in it, and with the exercise of those pious dispositions which are suitable to it. To praise God with admiring and adoring thoughts of his excellencies, with inward gratitude for his benefits, and with a lively sense of our own unworthiness; to confess our sins with a truly broken and contrite spirit, with pungent,

shame and sorrow for them, and with vigorous resolutions against them : to “pour out our hearts in prayer, to labour fervently in it,” as the expression is, Col. iv. 12. with the fervent or inworking prayer of a righteous man ; this is to be zealous in religion. To desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby ; to come to all the means of grace with an aim to receive advantage by them, with a concern to exercise every proper holy affection in them, and to obtain the acceptance of them : this is true fervour in devotion.

We are also to be “zealous of good works,” Tit. ii. 14. Every thing that is praise-worthy and commendable, all that may contribute to the honour of God, or the good of mankind. To be zealous of them, is to be very forward to engage in them, cheerful in performing them, solicitous to do our utmost in them, that they may be more for quantity, and better for quality, than hitherto ; this is to do “whatever our hand finds to do, with our might,” Eccl. ix. 10. ; to “do it heartily,” Col. iii. 23. ; to “abound in every good work,” 1 Cor. xv. 58. ; to be “rich in good works,” 1 Tim. vi. 18. ; which are so many expressions describing holy zeal.

Zeal is to be shewn in endeavouring to outstrip others in every grace and virtue. This is a noble emulation. We find the word *zeal* once translated *emulations* in a criminal sense, and ranked among “the works of the flesh,” Gal. v. 20. By emulation or zeal there, the apostle seems to mean envying our neighbour, either for his greater share of worldly enjoyments or of useful gifts. Envy is always bad ; and the word *zeal* is often so translated in the New Testament, Rom. xiii. 13. “Let us walk—not in strife and envying,” or zeal. 1 Cor. iii. 3. “Whereas there is among you zeal, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal ?” And we are told, 1 Cor. xii. 4. “Charity envieth not ;” in the Greek, “is not zealous.” We are neither to envy the wealth, nor reputation, nor gifts, nor graces of others. But it is a laudable zeal to aspire to the highest attainments in goodness, and to be excited to the greater ardour by all that we see excellent in them ; that we may become such examples ourselves, that our zeal may provoke very many ; as the apostle tells the Corinthians that their zeal in acts of charity did, 2 Cor. ix. 2.

Thus our zeal should be first employed about ourselves ; here we should be warmest, in concern and endeavour, that

we ourselves may daily become wiser and better, that we may pull out every beam or mote out of our own eyes. And if people were thus in earnest zealous at home, a great deal of irregular zeal to others would be prevented. But then,

5. Christian zeal is not to be confined at home, to our own personal goodness; but has still a wider scope. If it be employed abroad, while our own vineyard is not kept, it is a false pretence, and justly offensive to God and man. But the due exercise of it for our own conduct being presupposed, there is a large field for its exercise still behind.

We find many instances of zeal in relation to other men recommended in scripture. Phinehas is praised, that he was zealous for his God, and shewed it by executing judgment upon an Israelite and a Moabitish woman for notorious debauchery, Numb. xxv. 7, 8—11, 12. So St Paul's "spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry," Acts xvii. 16. We are commanded "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," when it is opposed by men of corrupt minds, Jude 3. Error and sin, wherever we see them, call for the exercise of our zeal against them. Christ gives it as a singular commendation of the church of Ephesus, that they "could not bear them that were evil," Rev. ii. 2.

It may be proper to shew more particularly the due regulations and expressions of our zeal upon account of what we may see amiss in others. And,

1. What would be irregular in the exercise of our zeal?

(1.) While we express Christian zeal, we should take heed of uncharitableness; that we pass not rash or too severe censures upon men's characters, even when we cannot but judge some of their opinions erroneous, or some of their actions faulty. There has been a great deal of this false fire in the Christian world: Christians have often been hereticating and anathematizing one another for matters of doubtful disputation, or mere human decisions, as if all religion lay at stake; when the mistake on either hand may consist with their being good Christians. Or, if a man has been guilty of an irregular action, it is too common to condemn him hastily for a bad man, and overlook all that is commendable in him, upon that account, when this is but a single and occasional act, and contrary to

his habitual character. On the other hand, while we heartily condemn sin and error according to the best of our light, we must not take upon us to cast men out of the Christian pale, where we have not good warrant from the word of God to exclude them.

(2.) In our zeal against what is amiss in others, we should be careful "that we become not transgressors ourselves." So we shall be, if we suffer ourselves to be transported into passion, and join not meekness with our zeal. When the people of Israel sinfully murmured against God and Moses, for want of water in the wilderness, Moses was too far transported with anger, and spake unadvisedly with his lips: "Hear now," says he, "ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Numb. xx. 10. For this, as a mark of displeasure, God denied Moses an entrance into Canaan; ver. 12. And we shall be much more transgressors, if our zeal against men's supposed or real errors, or sins, degenerate into hatred and ill-will to their persons. We are "not to hate them," though "we are not to suffer sin to lie upon them," Lev. xix. 17. This is that bitter zeal spoken of by St James, chap. iii. 14. of which he says, ver. 15. that it "descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."

(3.) We should not in our zeal use any methods to advance even God's truth and interest, or to suppress errors and disorders, "for which our Master gives us no warrant." Zeal for truth will not justify the use of the civil sword to punish men for a mistaken conscience; when this is not the way to enlighten men's minds, or change their judgments; when Christ and his apostles have intimated no other method for propagating the truth, but fair reasoning and argument; when Christ discountenances even such a zeal, as calls for fire from heaven against his worst enemies, Luke ix. 54, 55. Certainly imprisonments and banishments, fire and faggot, are none of his ways to suppress error.

(1.) Regular zeal will not lead men to bear testimony against the sins of men in any way which is not warrantable in their stations. How fit and necessary soever it is that open vice should receive punishment, as the bane of society, yet it would be an irregular zeal in private persons to take the magistrate's work out of his hand, and pretend to do this

themselves. If any should imagine themselves countenanced in such zeal by the case of Phinehas, when he executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi, a little consideration will shew them the vanity of such a plea. Phinehas himself was a ruler or judge as we are told, 1 Chron. ix. 20. And an order had been delivered for such an execution by Moses, the chief magistrate, Numb. xxv. 5. "Moses said to the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his man." The crime was capital by law, the fact was notorious, and Phinehas had a commission from Moses to inflict the legal punishment. Nothing, therefore, can give less countenance to wild and extravagant zeal in private persons, than this instance, wherein a magistrate was performing the duty of his place, and his proceedings were regular and orderly: but that which made his zeal so commendable, was, that he ventured to execute this judgment in the face of the whole congregation of Israel, when the infection was become general, and the number of offenders made it dangerous to do justice.

(5.) Right zeal should not burn with equal fervour in all cases. Public and open offenders are much more intolerable, than those who keep within the bounds of privacy: such as declare their sins as Sodom, and have been long accustomed to do evil, more than young offenders, who are drawn in by others, and are still willing to hearken to better counsel, Jude 22, 23. "Of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." A partial respect of persons, is unworthy of holy zeal; but a prudent distinction of persons, according to the degrees of guilt and obstinacy, is very well consistent with it.

2. I would shew what zeal for God in reference to other people's conduct becomes a Christian.

(1.) We should be affected with proportionable concern at what we judge amiss in others. Zeal will not allow us to say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" as long as we apprehend any thing in him that greatly dishonours God, or endangers his own soul; but will awaken concern and sorrow upon such an occasion. Such was the temper of the psalmist, Psal. cxix. 136. "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law." Ver. 158. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved." And of Lot, who was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked," 2 Peter ii. 8. And of

Paul, when his spirit was stirred at the sight of the Athenian idolatry.

(2.) We should express our dislike and disapprobation, when the evils of others come in our way. Zeal will induce to reprove sin, where we can have no hope to reclaim the sinner, or to stop the progress of sin, or to prevent the infection of others thereby; or if we have reason to apprehend, that silence will be interpreted for connivance and approbation: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but reprove them rather," Eph. v. 11. Indeed, if we should be cast among known and impudent scorers, possibly silence itself may be one of the best ways of reproving them.

(3.) We should cheerfully and vigorously use the best means in our power for the good of others. Zeal for God, and for the welfare of others, will inspire every man in his private capacity to endeavour to prevent the infection of those under his care and charge, or to recover them, if possible, by faithful instruction and admonition. It will engage ministers to fervour in their preaching, and diligence in their stations to convert sinners, to convince gainsayers, to defend the truth, to recover the fallen, and to stir up all to love and to good works. It will spirit magistrates to put the laws of their country in execution against notorious transgressors: "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and the disobedient," 1 Tim. i. 9, 10. It was not enough in Eli, as a parent, to admonish his sons of their notorious crimes: though they were now grown up, yet he was a magistrate, and in that capacity should have punished them, as well as others, for their enormous crimes. God so highly resented his neglect herein, that he calls it despising him, and brought vengeance on him and his house for it. The same principle of zeal should dispose private persons to assist the magistrate in endeavours for reformation of manners, by bringing open offenders within his cognizance; without which his hand cannot reach them, and law must be an useless thing. Both a partner with a thief, and he that heareth cursing and betrayeth it not, wrong their own souls, Prov. xxix. 24.

(4.) We should not choose to make ill men our chosen companions, farther than necessity requires. Zeal against sin, and indeed for the safety of our own souls, will carry us not

to like and choose their society ; not to take pleasure in being where God is openly dishonoured. Instead of that, we should choose, with David, to be “ companions of them that fear God, and of those that keep his precepts,” Psal. cxix. 63. And especially for that reason, to constitute our families, if possible, of such ; as in Psal. ci. 4. “ A froward heart shall depart from me, I will not know a wicked person.” Ver. 6, 7. “ Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me ; he that walketh in a perfect way, shall serve me. He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house ; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.”

II. I proceed, in the second place, to mention some of the obligations which lie upon Christ’s disciples to be regularly zealous.

1. The importance of religion deserves our zeal. It is that wherein the honour of God, the present welfare of the world, and the everlasting interest of ourselves and others, is more concerned than any thing else. And where, then, should zeal and fervour be employed, if not here ?

2. The difficulties that attend religion, make zeal necessary. There are many indispositions within ourselves, and many oppositions from without, that will never be surmounted without a holy fervour. When we are remiss, our enemies are vigilant and active. Indeed, the maintenance of a right zeal is of the utmost consequence for our own security against infection by the many evils around us. It is an easy transition from conversing with sin and sinners with indifference, to learn their ways, and become like unto them. By this means, people of a sober education are gradually drawn off from wisdom’s ways.

3. Sincerity in religion obliges to zeal. If we love God, we shall hate evil, Psal. xcvi. 10. And so great is his excellence, and sin’s evil, that if our affection be right set between both, we cannot remain cold and indifferent for the one, or against the other.

4. The end of religion, divine acceptance, cannot be obtained without zeal. Christ plainly declares this in the context, where he threatens the Laodiceans with utter rejection, because they were neither cold nor hot ; and, therefore, calls

them to repentance, and to resume a warmth and spirit in religion, as ever they would avoid so dreadful a doom.

5. The exercise of regular zeal is the most likely way to do good to others. Not, indeed, when we treat them with supercilious contempt, or with a peevish moroseness; or when pretended zeal breaks in upon the offices of humanity, civility, or charity. But if they see, along with all the marks of love and good-will to their persons, that we are in earnest in religion ourselves; that we dare not run with them to the same excess of riot, nor comply with them in their sins and errors; it is natural to inquire in such a case, why do these people act against the stream of the world? Why will not they allow themselves to behave as we do? Why do they shew uneasiness, when we speak profanely, or act loosely? Why do they choose to expose themselves to censure and dislike? If this be a steady conduct, joined with the expressions of benevolence and civility upon other occasions, God may lead them to see, that we dare not go their lengths, "because of the fear of the Lord;" and it may dispose them to consideration, and to bear with patience what we have to offer for God and religion.

6. Zeal is eminently recommended by the example of the great Head of our religion, the Lord Jesus. As man and Mediator, he was always fervent in his course of obedience: "I must," says he, "work the work of him that sent me, while it is day," John ix. 4. He expressed the most vigorous concern for the honour of God, and for all that belonged to him; whereby the evangelist takes notice, that that ancient passage spoken in his person, in a prophetic psalm, was accomplished: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," John ii. 17. How ardent was his love to souls, and his zeal against sin, upon all occasions! We are obliged to learn this, as well as other graces, of him; to be zealous in the work assigned to us, as he was in his; to be zealous and active for God in our stations; and to have his interest much at heart, as he had ours.

Upon the whole,

1. We should seriously examine how we comply with this exhortation, or whether the character which our Lord had re- proved in the context, be our character. Have we ever to this

day began to be in earnest in religion, or only made it a by-business? Is any zeal we seem to express the mere fruit of a natural warmth of temper, or the fruit of religious principles? Is it "a godly zeal?" 2 Cor. xi. 2.; a zeal for God, founded on the authority of God, and directed by the will of God. Is our warmest zeal for the substantial and most indisputable parts of religion? Is our zeal first, most constantly, and most earnestly, spent upon the advancement of the power and practice of godliness in ourselves? Have we not left our first love? Have we not abated in the life and vigour of holy dispositions, of pious resolutions? In the spirituality of the acts of devotion? In tender fear of sin, and watchfulness against it; in endeavours to do good? These are inquiries of the greatest concern to all that call themselves Christians.

2. We should heartily and speedily repent, according to the evidence against us, which conscience gives in upon inquiry. If we have lived long under the gospel, and never felt its vital quickening heat, but have remained dead to this day, is it not high time to arise from the dead? To bewail our past stupidity, and miserable trifling in the matters of our souls; and before it is too late, to turn the main stream of our concern and care to our everlasting interests, and the means of securing them?

If there were once some holy fervour begun (but it is not with us now as in days past,) let us "remember from whence we are fallen, and repent, and do our first works," Rev. ii. 5. How ungrateful and aggravated is such a declension in those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious; Shall the avowed servants of sin and Satan be more zealous in the way to death, than the professed servants of Christ in their way to heaven? It may be, we were once very zealous and active for sin; let the thought of that quicken our zeal now in a better way. If we remit our fervour, the state of our souls will suffer unspeakable loss, the pleasure and relish of every duty will proportionably abate; our zeal itself is like to take another course, for it will be exercised one way or another; and if we should be saved upon repentance at last, it will be as by fire.

Let us, therefore, frequently converse with the word of God, by which our zeal is to be excited and regulated;

often represent to ourselves the great motives of the gospel, the fervour of redeeming love, the constant observation of God, the danger of apostacy, the shortness of time, the greatness and nearness of the reward, if we faint not ; and, along with all, often pray for the light and quickening influences of the divine Spirit. So religion will have power in us now, the peace of God will rule in our hearts, and we shall be able to go with full sails to glory.

SERMON XXXVIII.

CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE.

MATT. X. 16.

*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves :
be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

OUR blessed Saviour observes, “The children of this world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light,” Luke xvi. 8.; that is, it is too commonly true, that those who have chosen their portion in this life, use more prudence to gain their end, than people who have had the wisdom to determine upon a better happiness, do in pursuit of their nobler end. This is too often the fact, but at the same time is no small reproach upon Christians; they should use as much wisdom in prosecution of their end, as they did in the choice of it, and have need of wisdom in the management of the Christian life, in which they are engaged as much as worldly men have to compass their aims below. The following discourse is to be upon this argument of *Christian prudence*, for which the words of the text may be a proper foundation.

They are part of Christ’s instructions to his apostles, when he sent them out only on a special commission in Judea. But several of the instructions seem much more to point forward to events that should befall them in the execution of a more general commission, which they were to receive after Christ’s ascension. Thus, particularly, the warning he gives

them of difficulties, dangers, and persecutions, that awaited them, and the directions for their conduct in them, are to be understood. These begin in the text; wherein Christ first represents the dangerous state they would be in: *I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.* They would find the generality of the world about them like wolves, ready to devour and make a prey; and they would be as sheep in the midst of these wolves, very unable of themselves to resist their rage, and of so contrary a nature and disposition to them, that for that reason they might expect to be the more violently hated by them.

In such circumstances, Christ gives them a double advice: *Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* It is said, Gen. iii. 1. that “the serpent was wiser than any beast of the field.” Though that is principally meant of the old serpent, yet an allusion seems intended to the sagacity of the animal itself, of which naturalists have observed several instances; and from thence our Saviour seems to use the wisdom of the serpent as a proverbial phrase. On the other hand, the dove is noted for one of the most harmless birds, as the sheep is among the beasts. Christ directs his disciples to unite these two things in their conduct, wisdom or prudence, and innocence.

The lot of good men, in all ages, bears some resemblance to the case of the apostles, as described here; and, therefore, the direction may be considered as of general use. We find another very like it laid down by the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 20. “Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice or evil, be ye children, but in understanding be men.”

Upon this head I would,

I. Briefly explain the double direction given us.

II. Point at some principal instances, wherein we shall find Christian prudence, in conjunction with innocence, very necessary and serviceable. And,

III. Enforce the exhortation, from the description given of our state in this world.

I. I would briefly explain the double direction given us. And I choose to begin with the last, because the wisdom to

which we are directed, cannot well be explained without first considering the other.

1. We are required to be harmless. We find the original word only twice besides in the New Testament ; in Rom. xvi. 19. where it is rendered *simple*, concerning evil ; and in Phil. ii. 15. where it is translated, as here, *harmless*. Several accounts are given of the derivation of the word ; but I apprehend the most probable to be, that it is a metaphor taken from “unruly beasts that push with their horns.”* The design of it is well expressed by our translation, *harmless*. This should be the first care of every Christian, that he be inoffensive in his whole conduct, or, as St. Paul says, may “keep a conscience void of offence, both toward God and toward men ;” and, I may add, towards ourselves also.

It should be our care with respect to God, that we wrong not him of his rights, by neglecting any part of the homage and allegiance we owe him. A sinner is represented by Eliphaz, in a phrase not unsuitable to that in the text, as “running upon God, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers,” Job xv. 26. He is, indeed, altogether above receiving any real prejudice from us ; but sin is acting against him as much as it is in our power to do ; it is a wrong and injustice offered him. Here, therefore, we should study to be inoffensive.

With respect to our neighbour, we should be careful that we give no just ground of offence, by denying him any of his just claims from us, or depriving him of his rights, either in his person, or substance, or reputation : “Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art,” in the strictest sense, Job xxv. 8. Being harmless in common acceptance, principally relates to our neighbour. But besides this,

We have a farther concern in relation to ourselves, that whatever we do, we wrong not our own souls, but are true to their interests, to their present peace and purity, and their everlasting happiness ; and that a due provision may be made for our temporal well-being, as far as may consist with our superior engagements.

This is the harmless, or innocence, which we should

* Ἀκέραιος. Ἀ κέρατος. *cornutus*. *Metaphora sumpta a bestiis cornutis*.
Constantin.

make it our business to maintain, that our duty to all, in the several relations wherein we stand, may be conscientiously and inviolably observed. And now it will be easy to discern what is intended by the other part of the direction.

2. We are required to *be wise as serpents*. And as this stands in connection with the former particular, we may plainly collect two things for explaining it.

(1.) That no rules of policy are to be observed which are inconsistent with innocence and a good conscience. The most prudential methods that can be thought of to compass a bad end, or those which may bear the most promising aspect of success, in order to obtain a good end, if they are known to be unlawful, are alike abomination to God, and should be so to every good man; for in both there is the wisdom of the serpent, without the innocence of the dove. Trick and falsehood, “cunning craftiness,” as the scripture calls it, is a very different thing from Christian prudence. It is “the wisdom of this world,” which is “foolishness with God,” 1 Cor. iii. 19.; “fleshy wisdom,” which stands opposed to “simplicity and godly sincerity,” 2 Cor. i. 12.; or the wisdom which James pronounces to be “earthly, sensual, devilish, chap. iii. 15.; not the laudable wisdom of the serpent, but the wicked craft of the old serpent. Known duty is a line beyond which we must not suffer ourselves to go, upon any pretence of convenience or prudence.

(2.) The wisdom to which we are directed, is that by which we may most effectually be enabled to discern and discharge our duty. It presupposes a conscientious regard to duty, a hearty desire to know and practise it; and the province of Christian prudence is only to second this design, to facilitate and improve the performance; when we have fixed a right end, to find out the most suitable means for attaining it; to judge of the proper times and seasons of things, as “every thing is beautiful in its season,” and that one branch of duty may not interfere with another; to consider the circumstances of providence from time to time, and so to discern our present duty, and “bear fruit in season;” to weigh the circumstances of cases as they occur, which may sometimes make it difficult to discover on which side of a question duty lies, and so to direct and guide our practice.

The scripture speaks of some, Jer. iv. 22. who “were wise to do evil, but to do good they had no knowledge;” they

shewed a great deal of art and cunning in the management of their wicked practices, but were most unfurnished and unexpert for the performance of any thing truly commendable. In opposition to such a character, the apostle expresses his wishes for the Romans, Rom. xvi. 19. "I would have you wise to that which is good, and simple concerning evil." Which is a good exposition of our Saviour's direction in the text. "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way," Prov. xiv. 8. First and principally to learn the way to heaven, which is prescribed to all, and then the way of particular duty, according to our special and distinguishing circumstances; and to understand the best manner of performing our duty, in order to reach the end proposed in it; as it is said, Eccl. viii. 5. "A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment."

This is a general view of the wisdom or prudence recommended.

II. I would now consider some principal instances wherein we shall find Christian prudence, in conjunction with innocence, very necessary and serviceable. And we may take a short view of the three great branches of our duty to this purpose.

1. Prudence, as well as conscientiousness, is necessary in the exercise of godliness, or our direct duty to God himself. An honest upright heart, truly devoted to God, though it be the principal thing, yet will need the aids of prudence to facilitate the practice of piety, to promote the pleasure and lustre of it.

We must not omit any branch of real piety, or of the due homage which God requires from us, to avoid the reproaches of profane people, nor make it our main end in any religious exercises to be seen of men; that would be carnal policy. But it is Christian prudence to avoid any such indecencies in our outward behaviour in sacred exercises, as may unnecessarily give men offence, or a handle for reproach and censure. By this means we are most likely to honour God, and recommend his ways to men.

Wisdom is also profitable to direct to the proper seasons for the exercise of the several holy dispositions of which piety consists; that God may have the acknowledgements from us, which his providences and our condition, from time to time,

require. There is a peculiar seasonableness and propriety in the exercise of some gracious dispositions, and in some branches of worship, at special times, and under particular circumstances ; and it is a part of prudence to observe these, and judge aright of them, and to direct the frame and actions accordingly. We are directed, “in the day of prosperity to be joyful, and in the day of adversity to consider,” Eccl. vii. 14. And God blames Israel for the unsuitableness of their behaviour to their circumstances, Isa. xxii. 12, 13. “In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth ; and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine.” There is a time to weep and a time to mourn, and graces and duties eminently suited to both conditions. We are especially called to awful fear when God’s judgments are abroad ; to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, when it is laid upon us ; to practice submission and patience under his corrections, and trust in him in dark and distressing circumstances. On the other hand, the smiles of his providence, and the light of his countenance, should summon up their lively actings of joy and gratitude, of love and delight. Some seasons especially call for prayer, and others for praise, James v. 13. “Is any man among you afflicted ? let him pray. Is any merry ? let him sing psalms.” Every pious affection and exercise is most amiable in itself, and most acceptable to God, when it is seasonable and suitable to men’s present case. And it is a considerable part of Christian prudence carefully to attend to this.

And it is also of use for regulating the time and manner, and length of our devotions, so as may best answer the end of them, the promotion of real piety in ourselves and others. There is no stated and prescribed rule for these things : nor can any particular direction be given which will suit all. The determination of it must be left to prudence, animated by a lively zeal to secure the great end. Thus, in secret devotions, the general rule for all is, that they manage them so as may be most for the benefit of their own souls. Prudence, under the conduct of a heart truly devoted to God, must direct how it is most likely that this end may be answered, according to a man’s constitution and circumstances in the world. For the time, it must be a rule of prudence ordinarily to be observed,

that for duties which are statedly to return, a stated time in the morning and the evening should be pitched upon as that which we intend commonly to employ this way, farther than extraordinary occasions may make an exception; and this at such a time wherein, upon the knowledge of our own constitutions and business, we may expect to be most lively and least interrupted; for a truly pious mind will not content himself commonly to put God and his soul off with the dregs of his time and spirits. For the manner, prudence, aiming at the great end of piety, must still be our guide. As, suppose, for the posture used, whether prostration, or kneeling, or standing, we should choose that wherein our minds are most free, and least liable to discomposure. By the same measure, we should be conducted either to use the voice, when privacy will admit of it, or to forbear it; and I may also add, either wholly to address God in such thoughts and expressions as our own hearts suggest, or at some times to use the assistance of pious forms or hints prepared by others, when our own minds may not be in the best frame. For the length of them, prudence must direct that too; and I believe most people will find it ordinarily expedient, that their devotions should rather be frequent than long, that at least the length of them should be proportioned to the fervour and seriousness of the spirit. In the social duties of religion, we are concerned to mind the good of others, as well as of our own souls, and therefore Christian prudence must consult that. We should adjust the time of our family-devotions, as may best comport with the general edification of the members of it, if possible, when they can be all present, and when they are least likely to be sluggish and indisposed. The matter of our addresses should be things of the most common concern to all, and suitable to the circumstances of the family as such. Care should be taken in the manner and expressions, that, as far as possible, it may not be justly exceptionable. And here especially, in the daily service of God in our families, tediousness is carefully to be avoided; for want of prudence in which I doubt many children and servants in pious families, have been led to disgust religion more than otherwise they would have done.

2. Prudence is equally necessary to accompany zeal and goodness in performing our duty to ourselves.

In the first and fundamental part of it, the immediate care of our souls. This cannot be well done without Christian prudence. To become well acquainted with the bias of our constitutions and natural tempers, which belongs to prudence, will give us the principal light to discern the "sins that most easily beset us, and the best methods of escaping them, and to discover the graces and virtues wherein we have the best prospect of shining." The more we discern the devices of Satan, we shall be the better prepared to obviate them; for if we are ignorant of them, he is like to "gain an advantage over us," 2 Cor. ii. 11. Prudence must point us to the happy and advantageous seasons, the promising minutes, which may be most successfully improved for strengthening our good habits, and mortifying the several irregular dispositions that attend us. Prudence describes the temptations which are apt to excite our irregular appetites, and directs us to avoid them; whereas, if without it we rashly enter into temptation, how difficult it is to preserve our innocence!

In making the interests of soul and body consistent, as far as possible, prudence is of vast service. We must not neglect the care of our bodies while we sojourn in them, but endeavour, as far as is practicable, to make the welfare of soul and body comport together. And this end might in many cases be obtained by the exercise of Christian prudence, far more than some good men reach it, or than worldly men think practicable. By a prudent observation and improvement of the proper times and seasons for both, there would be room, in the ordinary state of things, for all the diligence in men's worldly business that can be reasonably desired, and yet their better interests not be neglected. If men would but observe God's rule for the strict observation of the Lord's day, they would not find that to interfere with a close application to their secular business on other days, nor to their success in it, and yet they might be able to preserve the strongest affection for things above. Nor would it be difficult, with a little prudent forecast, or the "ordering of their affairs with discretion," so to manage them, that convenient time might be found on every day for the worship of God in private, and in their families, and sometimes occasionally in public worship, without any detriment to their outward interest. Experience shews this daily, in many instances of people who carry on their trades and worldly business

with the greatest success, and yet are very diligent for their souls too, in season and out of season.

Thus, by innocent prudence, we may often avoid temporal inconveniencies for our profession, which we should endeavour to do, as far as may be done without intrrenching upon a good conscience. This is the particular case referred to in the text, the escaping of persecution, as far as may lawfully be avoided. Sometimes it is impossible to be staved off without making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and then all regards to the body must give place to the everlasting interests of our soul. So Christ exhorts in this chapter, ver. 28. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." But sometimes we may avoid suffering in a time of persecution, without violating duty; and we are directed to use any wisdom of the serpent for that purpose consistent with integrity, particularly if we can escape it by flight, ver. 23. "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." To the same purpose, Prov. xxii. 3. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself." This is an ordinary rule, though it may admit of exceptions, as Nehemiah said, "Should such a man as I flee?" Neh. vi. 7. Being the supreme magistrate at Jerusalem, by whose influence and encouragement the Jews were chiefly animated in their work, and foreseeing that if he forsook them, they would quit their work and fly too; in this case he resolved to run all risks. The same may be the case of some in a public character in time of persecution; they may be so circumstanced, that it may not consist with duty to fly. But prudence, upon an impartial weighing of the particular circumstances, must direct in this matter.

Prudence, as least, will contribute one way very much to our safety from many sufferings. As far as we are governed by it, we shall not expose ourselves to sufferings by mere imprudences, which indeed give rise to many instances of unkind usage. Christian prudence will take away the occasions of ill treatment on any other account than as Christians; it will not allow us to suffer as busy bodies, or upon account of needless provocations. And, I doubt, good men too often heighten the ill-will of others against them by such means.

3. Prudence is yet farther necessary to the regular and

successful discharge of "our duty to our neighbours." Innumerable instances might be produced on this head: I shall only single out a few.

Prudence should attend our sincere endeavours to do good to the souls of men. Most men are so indifferent about their best interests, and so ready to misinterpret the most honest methods taken for that purpose, that some policy and prudence must be used to make such charitable endeavours to go down. He who would hope to succeed in instructing of the ignorant, or convincing of gainsayers, or reforming of the vicious, must take some pains to render himself acceptable, as far as that may be done without sinful compliances. The preacher must "seek to find out acceptable words;" only he must be careful that they be "upright, even words of truth," Eccl. xii. 10. He must be content, out of a desire of doing good, to imitate St Paul's example, 1 Cor. ix. 20—22. "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law; to the weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." That is, he was ready to condescend to the capacities, humours, and prepossessions, of all with whom he had a concern, as far as his duty to his Master would allow, in order to be a successful instrument for their good; and so must every faithful minister be content to do, who has the service of Christ and souls at heart. And Christians, in a private station, should study to "please their neighbour for his good to edification," Rom. xv. 2.; to accommodate themselves, by all easiness of behaviour and prudent address to other people, that they may be the more capable of serving them to their everlasting interests. There is one instance of usefulness to others, which is made a general duty upon Christians, "reproving them for their sins;" but possibly there is not more prudence requisite in the discharge of any one part of religion. A reproof may be thrown away where it will do more hurt than good, Prov. ix. 7, 8. "He that reproveth a scorner, gets to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, gets to himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest

he hate thee ; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee." If you see a man desperate in sin, so as to mock at reproof, it is a vain thing to reprove him any longer, you would but provoke him to add sin to sin, and expose yourself to needless trouble, without serving any good end by it. But there may be some hope of success in reproofing "a wise man," one who has yet some commendable modesty remaining, and will patiently give you the hearing. Prudence must make a proper distinction of persons, and it must direct to the fittest opportunities ; as, to reprove in private for more private offences, and to observe people's most serious and tender minutes, to take the advantage of convictions or awakening providences : and, in like manner, to suit a reproof to men's different tempers, capacities, and stations : "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reproof upon an obedient ear," Prov. xxv. 11, 12.

There is need of prudence in the exercise of mercy and charity to the bodies of men. Not only for the management of our outward affairs with discretion, "that we may have to give to him that needeth," Eph. iv. 28. ; but to distinguish the most proper objects of charity, since we cannot reach all cases, and to proportion the measures of our bounty to the extent and importance of occasions ; and, in many cases, to judge of the best methods effectually to reach the good ends we propose.

Prudence is of equal use in the management of common conversation ; to judge when it is fit to speak, and when to keep silence ; to consider the different tempers, expectations, and views, of those with whom we converse, that we may avoid offence ; and for directing us in other incidents of society without number. One instance must not be omitted, when we are speaking of Christian prudence. We are commanded, that "our discourse be good to the use of edifying," Eph. iv. 29. This plainly intimates, not only that we should be always careful, lest any thing pass from us in conversation which may tend to corrupt the minds of others, but also that religious discourse, or that which directly tends to their spiritual good, should frequently be our theme in conversation. But wisdom is needful to direct in this matter. We should "not cast our pearls before swine," Matt. vii. 6. "nor speak

in the ears of a fool, who will despise the wisdom of our words," Prov. xxiii. 9. That will only furnish very loose people with a subject of mockery. There is also a happy dexterity to be used in accomodating serious discourse to different persons and seasons, if we would reach a good purpose by it ; and a propriety to different occasions to be observed. The apostle gives us a direction of general service in this matter, Col. iv. 6. "Let our speech be always with grace," in the most grateful and acceptable manner you can ; "seasoned with salt," the salt of wisdom and prudence, which may make it pleasant and beneficial to the hearers ; that ye may know how to answer every man, that your answers may be well suited to the variety of persons and occasions, which are to be considered in them.

The like observations of the use of prudence, might be carried into all the branches of duty, and the various stations and relations of life. But I shall enter no farther into particulars, rather choosing,

III. To offer something to enforce this exhortation from the description given in the text, of the state of Christians in this world ; that they are as *sheep in the midst of wolves*. The devil, as "a roaring lion, seeks to devour ;" and as an old serpent, to seduce ; and we should act with all the caution and wisdom we can to defeat him. But the danger suggested here, is principally from men.

Indeed, good men are so imperfect in their goodness now, that we are not out of danger from them. Their society and example may have much ensnaring in it, which requires precaution for our own safety. But especially the number of bad men, even in the best of times, calls for much prudence to carry those who are truly good, securely and creditably through their course of obedience. Such admonitions are always seasonable, Eph. v. 15, 16. "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise ; redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Col. iv. 5. "Walk in wisdom toward those that are without, redeeming the time." Phil. ii. 15. "Be harmless and blameless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." Many ill men are observing us, ever ready to triumph in the least advantage

they can gain against us, and to reproach our profession upon that account. If they can find any thing to impeach our moral character, that would make us their reproach and their jest. The psalmist especially deprecates this, Psal. xxxix. 8. "Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish." 'Lord, suffer me not to become their reproach by any real and notorious crimes.' But in defect of them, they will gladly lay hold of imprudences to reproach religion, and those who pretend to it; and, therefore, we should endeavour, as far as possible, to prevent their ill-natured satisfaction that way.

Let us, then, laying aside all the deceitful arts which are inconsistent with godly sincerity, cultivate the wisdom that is from above; all that may help forward the comfortable and successful performance of our duty, and recommend our holy profession. In matters of importance, and which admit of premeditation, let us deliberately consult, not only the matter of our duty, but the most acceptable and amiable manner of performing it: and endeavour to become masters of an habitual furniture of prudence, to direct us upon sudden emergencies: that it may be our character, with the wise man, to have our eyes in our head.

A growing acquaintance with the holy scriptures, will be of singular use to our improvement in prudent conduct by the way, as well as to our becoming wise unto salvation. The precepts, the histories, contained in those heavenly oracles, carefully attended to, will be in this respect, "a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths." The proverbs of Solomon, and the pattern of Christ, should especially be studied to this purpose. The blessed Jesus was not only a pattern of spotless innocence, but a model of consummate prudence; "as in him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He chose the fittest means in all cases to reach his ends; and took advantage of all occurrences to convey a word in season to those with whom he conversed, in the manner, and at the times, wherein his instructions were most apt to make impressions. When he shewed his charity to their bodies in healing their diseases, or in some other instances of compassion, he laid hold of such happy opportunities to be a monitor also for their better interests. There are many instances, in the gospel-history, of his prudent conduct for avoiding dangers,

and the effects of his enemies' malice, till his time was come ; and of his wary answers to captious and ensnaring questions, whereby he either softened the rage of his adversaries, or evaded their wicked intentions. His followers may derive great delight from a diligent observation of his behaviour, attended with the various circumstances.

The lives of wise and good men, of which there are many written for our use, may furnish us with several profitable hints to make us wiser, as well as better. And, especially, experience will enable us to make a successful progress in this needful skill, if we are but careful observers of men and things around us, and principally of ourselves and our own conduct : then days will speak, and growing years will teach wisdom ; if we use ourselves to recollect, where we have taken a wrong step, that it may not be repeated ; and where we have succeeded well, that we may be in a readiness to conduct ourselves in a like manner, if the same occasions occur again. And along with our own care, from a sense of the many imprudences to which we are liable, and of the various unforeseen trials which we can hardly be provided for by any precautions of our own, "let us daily ask wisdom of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not." The constant guidance and conduct of the all-wise and holy God, will be our best security through a dangerous world, and will bring us to glory at the end of life.

"I pray therefore, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ; that ye may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."







