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Wm. Hadden

J. F. Torrance



3-1-1-6.
PRIMITIÆ & ULTIMA:

OR,
THE EARLY LABOURS
AND
LAST REMAINS
THAT WILL MEET THE PUBLIC EYE,

IN SEVERAL PRACTICAL DISCOURSES,
EMINENTLY CALCULATED FOR ALARMING SINNERS AND
HYPOCRITES IN ZION,
AND
AFFORDING INSTRUCTION, CORRECTION, AND CONSOLA-
TION, TO GENUINE BELIEVERS,

OF THE LATE REV. AND LEARNED
MR THOMAS BOSTON,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT ETTRICK,—AUTHOR OF
THE FOURFOLD STATE, &c. &c.

Now first Published from his MANUSCRIPTS.

HEB. xi. 4.—*By it, he being dead, yet speaketh.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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IN
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S E R M O N S.

THE EVIL AND DANGER OF HALTING
BETWIXT TWO OPINIONS.*

S E R M O N XXV.

1 KINGS, xvi. 21.—*Elijah said, How long halt
ye betwixt two opinions?*

IN the ordinance of the Lord's supper, there is to be seen Jacob's ladder, with its foot set on the earth, and the top thereof reaching unto heaven, Gen. xxviii. 12. We trust ye have been essaying to mount it, though perhaps ye are yet not far from the ground. O that ye may have freely entered upon the first step! I must, however, warn you, whoever ye be, that are looking upwards towards the place to which the top

VOL. II. A reaches,

* This discourse was delivered immediately after the celebration of the Lord's Supper, in Maxton, August 3, 1718.

reaches, namely, heaven, that there is such a voice to you from heaven in our text, as came to David from the castle of Zion, when he set himself to win it, 2 Sam. v. 6. "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither." *1/2*, Unless the blind mind and heart that is still wavering in the choice betwixt the Lord and idols be taken away, and thou canst be determined absolutely and finally for the Lord, ye cannot come in hither. Of this we have discoursed already *.—There is a *second* voice. Except the lame feet whereby one is still going from side to side in practice, betwixt the Lord and idols, be taken away, you cannot come in hither. To this we are now to attend, in considering,

DOCT. II. That an unequal and an unsteady walk, here-away there-away, betwixt the Lord and idols, is an unaccountable and abominable way of walking through the world.

In discoursing from this, it is proposed to shew,

I. What is to be accounted such a walking.

II. The evil of this way of walking.

III. The causes of this unsteady walking; when we shall also point out some remedies against it.

IV. Make some improvement.—I am,

I. To shew what is to be accounted such a walking.

i. Random-walking is such a walking: Lev. xxvi. 21. "And if ye walk contrary to me, and will not hearken unto me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins." The original word, *contrary*, may be rendered, as by accident, at random, at all adventures.

* See Vol. I. p. 389.

tures. There is a generation that are at best but random-customers to religion, who take no more of it than they readily meet with. Their religion fits so light on them, that in their way through the world they take it as it comes to them. As the fashion of the time turns, they face as the stream runs about. They conform themselves to the taste and humour of whatever company they fall in with; they become a prey to every temptation, and are picked up like straying beasts by the first finder. Beware of this; that day ye get to heaven in this way, God and Baal shall be reconciled. Set up your mark in religion, and press unto it. Lay down a principle for God, and hold by it, however times, companies, or temptations may seduce you: Phil. iii. 15. "I press towards the mark for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus." Acts, xi. 23. "And exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord;" that is, abide by his side with full purpose, laid down and determined beforehand.—I observe,

2. Wavering-walking is such a walking: Heb. x. 23. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering." When men are still unsettled in their way, hither and thither, are wavering in their purposes and practice, one day for God, another for the devil, and their lusts like men in an ague, with their hot and cold fits by turns, at one time destroying what at another time they were building up, they are never fixed. Hence they will be one day at the table of the Lord, another at the table of drunkards. Like water-fowls, sometimes they will be soaring aloft towards heaven in the exercises of religion, and quickly again swimming in their lusts, and over head and ears in the cares, profits, pleasures, and

vanities of the world. Sometimes they will appear so serious in religion, that one would think they would never go back again to their sinful courses; anon, they give themselves the swing in their sinful courses, as they would never look back again to religion. Take heed to this; waverers will never get up the hill to Zion: Jam. i. 6. 7. 8. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Go straight forward in the Lord's way, as one that is resolute for God and his way: Prov. iv. 25. 26. 27. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thy eye-lids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left, remove thy foot from evil."—I observe,

3. Unequal walking is such a walking: Prov. xxvi. 7. "The legs of the lame are not equal." The parts of the conversation of many answer no better than a long leg and a short one do. In the church they are saints, at home they are devils; in their profession they are fair, in their practice they are foul and false; in their words the world is nothing, but in their affection it is their all. Their practice is made up of contradictions. They agree not with themselves, how can they with God? They pretend piety towards God, yet make no conscience of duty, mercy, and justice towards man: Matth. xxiii. 23. "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith: These ought ye to have done, and not left the others undone." A wide conscience

science in substantials, and narrow in circumstantials of religion, is a conscience of a profane make. Beware of this; see the emblem of these folk, Prov. xxvi. 23. "Burning lips, and a wicked heart, are like a potsherd covered with silver dross." The potsherd will be broken in pieces at length. Labour to have your whole conversation of a piece, if ever you would see heaven: James, iii. 10. "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so."—I observe,

4. Partial and divided walking is such a walking: Hos. x. 2. "Their heart is divided." They keep not with one master, but in some things serve the Lord, in other things their own lusts. They would make void the commands of God; some they will comply with, others they will not regard. They will strain at a gnat in some things, and in others swallow a camel. At a communion, or under a conviction, they say, as in Deut. v. 27. "Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it." But when it comes to a labouring in their work, they will resolve to do, but they cannot: Prov. xx. 4. "The sluggard will not plow, by reason of the cold." They have their particular idols of jealousy, which they can by no means part with. Beware of this; be universal in your respect to God's commandments, otherwise you will be clothed with shame at length: Psal. cxix. 6. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have a respect unto all thy commandments." The straight soul says, as in ver. 128. "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way."—I shall now go on to shew,

II. THE evil of this way of walking. I shall sum up this in these four things.

1. It is a walking highly dishonourable and offensive to God: Rev. iii 15. 16. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." How could an affectionate husband take it, to have his wife gadding after other lovers? And, O how dishonourable is it to God, that those who have given themselves away to him should be found hanging about the doors of the world, and their lusts! Friends' wounds pierce deepest; and therefore many do more dishonour God, and disgrace religion, by their uneven walk, their halting betwixt two opinions, than if they should go over entirely to the devil's side in the world: Ezek. xx. 39. "As for you, O house of Israel! thus saith the Lord God, Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts and with your idols."

2. It is a walking which is most grievous and offensive to the serious and godly. With what concern does Elijah complain of it here! They are a heavy burden in the ship of the church of God; and the lighter they are in their fleeting and flowing, the heavier their case lies on serious souls: Psal. lv. 12. 13. 14. "For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company." And no wonder, considering that the name of God is blasphemed by reason of such walkers;

walkers ; and they are the worst enemies religion has : Phil. iii. 18. “ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and who mind earthly things.” When two armies are in the field, as is the case betwixt Christ and the devil, absolute deserters are dangerous ; but such as remain in the camp, yet keep up a correspondence with the enemy, are still more so.

3. It is a walking which is hardening to the wicked : Prov. xxviii. 4. “ They that forsake the law, praise the wicked.” They betray the cause of religion to them, and open their mouths to blasphemy and reproach the way of God : Rom. ii. 23. 24. “ Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God ? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you, as it is written.” Do you think that your coming to a communion-table, your waiting on ordinances, public, private, or secret, will ever commend the way of the Lord to onlookers, while you make not conscience of tender walking in the whole of your conversation, even in your natural and civil actions ? Nay, truly, the sinful liberty you take to yourselves, even as others, will make your religion loathsome to them. I have found some have been restrained from the table of the Lord by observing the unsuitable walk of others after a communion ; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.

Lastly, It is a walking which is ruining to one’s own soul. The generation that wandered in the wilderness died there ; and waverers betwixt the Lord and their idols fall into the mire at length : Hos. vi. 4. 5. “ What shall I do unto thee, O Judah ? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and

as the early dew, it goeth away. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth; and my judgements are as the light that goeth forth." It is to those that are faithful unto the death only that the crown of life is promised, Rev. ii. 10. Instability in the good ways of the Lord vexeth the Holy Spirit; whereupon he departs, then the soul withers, and is cast over the hedge at length. Many walk in a round betwixt their lusts and their duties while they live; and when they go out of the world, they are just where they were when they came into it. As they were born in sin, so they die in it, and so tumble down into the pit.—I shall now point out,

III. THE causes of this unsteady walking, going from side to side betwixt the Lord and idols; together with the remedies.

1. The want of a right set of the heart at first, is one cause: Psal. lxxviii. 37. "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." While these in the text had two opinions, and were not determined to one of them, they could not but halt betwixt the two. The heart that is never once freely separate from sin, so as to see it to be an evil, and the greatest evil, and to hate it for itself, that is, for its contrariety to God's holy nature and law, will make at best but a halting professor. If the duties of religion be desirable to them for one reason, the enjoyment of their lusts is so for another; and thus the heart being divided, the life is so too.

In this case the remedy is, to come once freely away to the Lord Christ, from all your lusts and idols: 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and

and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." They who once thus part freely, will never halt again betwixt the two. Though they may have a weak side by reason of indwelling corruption, yet they have a sound side too, that is combating with that weakness: Gal. v. 17. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." And they are in consequence longing for the victory: Rom. vii. 24. "O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Unite with Jesus Christ, and you will walk in him; for where he is once freely chosen for a pilot to the ship, the sinner's course through the sea of this world will be completely managed; that soul will never be shipwrecked.

And now, if ye be in earnest not to halt any more, I give you an advice:—As soon as ye get home after this work is over, retire by yourselves, and consider where your weak side lies, what is that lust or lusts that is most likely to draw you over to its side again; and having seen it, consider how your soul stands affected to it, and labour by all means to make sure a final parting with it in your heart; that is, honestly and resolutely before the Lord to give up with it again for ever. And as for the void space which the renouncing that sweet morsel will make in your heart, fill it up with Christ himself, by taking him expressly in the room of that idol: Matth. xiii. 45. 46. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

To this some may object, Is there any faint in the world that is free of halting? *Ans.* There is

a great difference betwixt the Christian's halting through weakness, and the halting through wickedness spoken of in the text, which is really more than halting, properly so called. The one is a halting like him that is lame of one leg, the other like him that is lame of both.—The Christian; whatever weakness he is attended with in his walk, is absolutely determined for God and holiness, in opposition to all his idols: the hypocrite wants this resolution of heart. The former longs, sighs, groans, and strives to get the victory over corruption; is never for truce and reconciliation betwixt the Lord and lusts, but for the extirpation of these lusts. But the latter is at bottom for both together, a reconciliation betwixt them, and cannot think to hold with the Lord without his lusts.—The Christian sinneth not with that full swing of heart the hypocrite doth. The former hath a sound side, a renewed part, which lusteth against the flesh, and so far resists the sway to the weak side; whereas the latter has nothing sound, and so sinneth with full consent of the will, however the conscience may reclaim and reprove.

2. Another cause is, unmortified lusts and light meeting together in the soul. An enlightened conscience puts it forward to God; unmortified, lively, reigning lusts, draw it back again. Thus one is tossed from side to side, as in the case of Pilate and Balaam: Job, xxiv. 13. "They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof." Lusts rise against light, and thrust a man out of the paths thereof. It is with them as with David, in the battle against Absalom. Upon the one hand, it was hard to lose a kingdom; on the other hand, to lose a Son: "Therefore deal gently," says he, "with Absalom." Even so here, they are

are loth to lose their souls, yet loth also to lose their idols. Hence they must do something for each of them.—In this case there is this

REMEDY:—Mortify your lusts, that you may trample on them, and follow the light : Col. iii. 5. “Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth,” &c. Prune off these suckers, that ye may have a thriving soul. Deny their cravings, that ye may weaken and starve them. And that ye may be enabled to do this, let your conscience and your heart both together take up their rest in Christ by faith. Know, O sinner ! there is enough in Christ for the boundless desires of thy heart, as well as for the cravings of thy conscience : Cant. v. 16. “His mouth is most sweet ; yea, he is altogether lovely.” Col. ii. 9. 10. “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”——Here some may reason,

(1.) How can that be ? for, alas ! there are many desires in my wretched heart, that are of such a carnal sort, that there can be nothing in Christ for them. *Ans.* Our Lord satisfies the desires of poor sinners, by enlarging such of them as are holy, fulfilling these, and extinguishing others of them that are unholy : Psal. lxxxi. 10. “I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt : Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” Though thou canst not have in Christ the unworthy thing thy false heart desireth, thou shalt have in him what is a thousand times more desirable ; and then the desire of that thing will die away. None complains of the want of candles while the sun shines into the room, for that more than supplies the want of them all ; and none will cry, “Who will shew us any good ?”
when

when the Lord “lifts up upon them the light of his countenance.” A child may be fond of his rattle, and will not part with it; but put a more pleasing thing in his hand, and he will immediately let it go: Matth. xiii. 44. “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.”—Another may inquire,

(2.) What way shall I take to get Christ to fill my heart? The answer, in a word, is, BELIEVE.—What shall we believe?

[1.] Believe that there is a complete fulness in Christ, sufficient to satisfy the boundless desires of your hearts: Col. ii. 19. “Holding the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” He is infinite in perfections; and whatever is desirable in all the creation, is eminently in him as the fountain of all.

[2.] Believe that he, with all his fulness, is offered to you, in the way of exchange with all your lusts and idols. Sincerely consent to the exchange. There is a full Christ *before* you; and the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, are *with* you. Give up with these as expressly and solemnly as ye can, and take Christ in their room; believing there shall be no missing of them, and looking for the heart-satisfaction in him ye used to seek in them. And believe it is a bargain unalterable for eternity: Matth. xiii. 45. 46. Psal. lxxiii. 25. “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.—God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

[3.]

[3.] When your lusts come back, offering to entertain you as formerly, believe ye have in Christ what is a thousand times better: Psal. lxxxiv. x. "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Say in your souls, as the olive, Jud. ix. 9. Shall I come down from bread, and lie down to eat husks? Shall I leave the milk and honey, and fill my mouth with gravel-stones? If the lust of Vanity say, There is gaiety and finery, the eyes of beholders are fixed on thee. Let the soul say, But I have in Christ a never-fading beauty, glorious robes of unspotted righteousness, Christ's love and his Father's, &c. that is solid and substantial, not to be exchanged for the airy nothings of the world's vanity. If the lust of Covetousness say, There is a good prize to be had by a very little stretch, let the soul say, But I have riches in Christ, and that without any sting, durable riches and righteousness.

[3.] Another course of this walking is, men's touching but very lightly on religion in its turn, but digging deep in their lusts in their turn: Psal. lxxviii. 18. "And they tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lusts." Ver. 36. "Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues." They are as it were in jest in the former, but in deep earnest in the latter; they swim like feathers in the waters of the sanctuary, but sink as lead in the mighty waters of their corrupt affections.

In this case, I propose this remedy:—Labour to be experimental Christians: Psal. xxxiv. 8. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." A taste of the transcendent goodness of God, the hidden excellency of religion, would hold you fast to the right side: John, iv. 10. "Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and

who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." O then press eagerly into the inner court of religion; there are beauties there that will arrest your heart. Labour that you may have your hearts in every duty; break through the shell, till ye come to the kernel. Once make religion your business, it will soon fill your hands, as well as your hearts.—I shall only mention,

4. Another cause of this walking. 'They would fain be at heaven, but have no heart for the rugged way to it: Mark, x. 21. "Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions." The sluggard loves the gold, but will not dig for it.

In this case the remedy is, to put on a resolution, a peremptory resolution for God, to cleave to him at any rate, and to pass through the wilderness to the heavenly Canaan, cost what it will: Numb. xiv. 24. "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." 'There ye may be, there ye must be, else you are ruined. And there are two things, as to which I would caution you.

(1.) Have you not got that victory over your idols you were expecting? Do not give over, but resolutely continue the struggle, looking to the Lord for strength to accomplish that in which you have engaged: Rom. xvi. 20. "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Have you come to Christ's door, though you apprehend
you

you have got nothing yet? Be peremptorily resolved you will not go back to the door of your lusts, but hang on at his, though you should die at it, and you shall find, as in Cant. iii. 4. "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth."

(2.) Have you got your feet on the necks of your idols? Pray, do not think the war is over, or that the Egyptian pursuers, who have been sometimes heavy on you, that you will see them no more; No, no; the broken forces of corruption will rally again, and the newly-baffled idols will lift up their heads; therefore be on your watch, and prepare to renew the battle.

IV. I AM now to make some improvement, which for the present shall only be in an use of exhortation.

Beware of wavering, and study to be stable Christians.--To enforce this, consider,

1. That stability is the ground of fruitfulness: Psal. i. 3. "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." A tree, after being lifted, and planted sometimes here, sometimes there, cannot be fruitful: 'The rolling-stone gathers no fog.' Unstable as water, can never prevail. Doubts, fears, and dryness in the soul's case, is a necessary consequence of unsettledness.--Consider,

2. That stability is the beginning of comfortable experiences in religion. We cannot think to thrive in a trade, till we settle to it. A fool is always beginning, leaves off, begins again, and so on; he never brings any thing to perfection.--Consider,

3. That stability is a fence against temptations. The wavering professor is a hopeful prey to temptation. The town that begins to parley, is next door to surrendering. The Jews saw Pilate begin to waver, and then they plied him to condemn Christ, till they carried him off his feet.—Consider,

Lastly, That stability is the foundation of serviceableness for God. The vessels of the temple were of gold, silver, brass, &c. but none of glass, no crystal ones; these were too brittle for temple-service. So wavering professors will never be honoured of God to be serviceable for him, but they will do much harm to the way of the Lord.

CREATION'S

CREATION'S GROANS CONSIDERED AND
IMPROVED.*

S E R M O N XXVI.

ROM. viii. 22. *For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now.*

IF we look abroad into the world, we cannot miss to perceive it in a feverish condition; the whole head sick, the whole heart faint; good men and God's good creatures also groaning under a weight of misery. If we look above us into heaven, we cannot but see that it is an holy God who has cast them into, and keeps them in this miserable condition. But withal we may conclude, that it shall not be always so; this fever of the creation will have a cool. A gracious God will not suffer it always to be ill with good men and his good creatures. Therefore the apostle, ver. 18. of the chapter before us, taking a view of the suffering lot of the saints, of which himself had a large share, by faith looks through the cloud of

B 3

miseries

* Delivered January 17 6.

miserics into which the fairs are now wrapt up, and beholds a glory that is to be revealed in them, a lightsome day that shall succeed this dark night, when all the clouds shall be scattered, never more to gather. He confirms the revelation of that glory from two considerations. 1. The creatures, ver. 19. with earnest expectation wait for it. 2. The fairs, ver. 23. anxiously look and long for it. And neither of these can be in vain, for they are of God's implanting; and justice stands not against the satisfying of these appetites raised by the sanctifying Spirit in the fairs, and by the creating hand in the creatures.

As to the first of these, the apostle, 1. Asserts that longing of the creatures for the revelation of that glory in the fairs, ver. 19. 2. He shews the misery they are under, from which they are so anxious to be delivered, *Vanity*, ver. 20.; *Corruption*, ver. 21. 3. That their deliverance is connected with, and must be suspended till the revelation of that glory in the fairs, ver. 21. 4. He shews how uneasy they are in the mean time, ver. 22.—Thus much for the connection.

In the words of the text, we have,

1. The party whose uneasiness is here taken notice of: "The whole creation," or every creature in heaven and on earth, is uneasy. Yet this phrase is not so universal, but that it admits of some exceptions, as Mark, xvi. 15. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" yet not to the angels, glorified fairs, devils, &c. The limitation is every creature made for the use of man, in heaven or on earth, which, because of their relation to him, were made subject to vanity on occasion of his sin. This shews a good reason for that phrase, Mark, xvi. 15. "Preach the gospel to every creature;"

ture ;” that is, the gospel, which is gospel or good tidings to every creature ; for not only man, but the creatures that were sunk in misery with him, shall have the advantage of it. As they smarted by the first Adam’s sinning, they shall be restored by virtue of the second Adam’s suffering. Acts, iii. 21. “ Whom the heavens must receive, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” So here are to be excepted,

(1.) The angels. For as they were not made for man, so they are already perfectly happy, as the courtiers of the great King, who stand before the throne continually, as is signified by that phrase, Matth. xviii. 10. “ That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.”

(2.) The devils. For though they be most uneasy, and carry their hell about with them, 2 Pet. ii. 4. “ For God spared not the angels that sinned; but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment ;” yet as they were not made for man, so man did not make them miserable, but they made man so. Besides, the creature here was subjected in *hope*, ver. 20.; but the case of devils is absolutely hopeless ; for them there is no Saviour, and to them there is no promise.

(3.) Men themselves. For as, 1 Cor. xv. 27. “ But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest, that He is excepted who did put all things under him;” so when it is said, “ The whole creation groaneth,” &c. it is manifest he is excepted, who was the cause of the groaning of them all. The reprobate, some of them are in hell already, others are posting on, both groaning, but in vastly different degrees. Yet they are not meant here,

here, for their groans shall never have an end. But all the effects of the curse that are to be found in the universe this day, shall with them be swept out of the world into the lake at the great day, there to be settled on them as their proper base : Rev. xx. 14. " And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

(4.) The elect. Some of them are in heaven, and groan no more. The unconverted elect groan under outward miseries ; but they are not meant here, for, being immersed in wickedness with the rest of the world, they are far from the earnest expectation which the creatures here have, ver. 19. Believers groan most sensibly, but they must also be excepted here, as being opposed to this creation or creature. Ver. 23. " And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Now, these being excepted, it remains, that by the whole creation we understand all the rest of the creatures made at first for the use of man. They are all uneasy. The visible heavens were made the roof of his house, the earth the floor ; the sun, moon, and stars, were made to be his lights, the air to breathe in, the wind to refresh him ; the various produce of the earth to afford him necessities, conveniences, and delights. He was lord of sea and land. Fishes, fowls, and beasts of the earth, were all at his command. While he stood, they were all of them most easy in his service. But now that matters are reversed with him, their situation is also reversed ; none of them failed to share in his misery. For though vanity, corruption, and misery, first sprang up in man, they did not halt there, but spread over the
face

face of the whole earth, diffused themselves over the brinish waters of the sea, and ascended through the air to the very glorious lights in heaven.—
In the words of the text we have,

2. The agony that the whole creation or creatures are in,—a great agony. It is expressed two ways, both metaphorical.

(1.) They *groan*. This is a metaphor, taken from a man, with a heavy burden on his back, which so straitens him, that he cannot freely draw his breath; and when he gets it, it is a groan. So there is a heavy weight lying on the whole creation, that makes it groan; or, in other words, creatures got their death-wounds that day Adam got his, and so they are groaning still with the groans of a deadly-wounded man. His sin stung them to the heart, and so they groan. The weight they are lying under is the weight of the curse, which binds vanity and corruption on them by virtue of the sin of man: Gen. iii. 17. “Curfed is the ground for thy sake.” A weight under which, though stupid impenitent man groans not to God, yet his very beasts, and the very earth on which he walks, do.

(2.) They *travail in pain*. A metaphor taken from a woman bringing forth a child. The pains of child-birth are exquisite pains, and put the patient both to groans and strong cries. And into this condition is the whole creation brought by man’s sin. They are in pangs, and they cry out of their pangs. But though birth-pains are fore-pains, yet they are hopeful. There is thus some hope that the creature will be delivered. They are travelling in pain with the hinds, to cast out their sorrows, Job, xxxix. 3. They have conceived vanity and misery, and they have gone long with it, and they are travelling in pain to be delivered of the unhappy birth. They groan,
and

and also they travail. One that has too heavy a burden on his back, groans continually while it is on. But blessed be the holy and wise God, that has made the pains of travail intermitting; now and then a shower. So the creatures have their ordinary pains that are never off them. But sometimes, as at this day, they have extraordinary, and as it were travailing-pains, which will off again, though they will return: Joel, i. 18. "How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate."—In our text we have,

3. The mournful concert they make: They groan together and travail together. Not together with us, verse 23. but together among themselves. Before sin entered into the world, they all looked blyth, and as it were sung together: But now they have changed their tune, and groan together. The beasts and the fowls groan from the earth, and the very heavens echo back to them the same strain. So many creatures as there are, so many groaners, each of them with their mournful note.—We have,

4. How long they have sung to the melancholy tune: *Until now*. They began at Adam's fall, and they have groaned ever since, and travailed on till the apostles days, but they had not done with it then. Nay, they have groaned and travailed till now in our days, long five thousand seven hundred years, and yet their burden is not off their backs, nor have they yet got their sorrows cast out. And how long it may be to their delivery, we know not. But one thing we know, it will never be till the world end by the general conflagration, when the new heavens and the new earth may rise, like the phoenix, out of their own ashes.—We have,

Lastly,

Lastly, The auditory that listens to the mournful concert: *We*, “we know,” &c. ‘We believers, we serious Christians, hear and certainly know the mournful ditty.’ Can the shepherd who is sent to notice the sheep, not observe when they make their moan for lack of their food, especially when the whole flock is crying together? Were all the men of a city groaning of their wounds, and all the women travailing in pains together, that person must be deaf that would not hear the sound, and he must have an heart of adamant that would not be affected. But the whole creation, above us and about us, are groaning and travailing together, and that for our sakes; yet a sinful generation has no ears to hear, no heart to be affected with it, and with sin which is the cause. But serious Christians, awake to it, cannot miss to hear, and their ears affect their hearts. You will observe, that they hear it distinctly, not confusedly, as we apprehend sometimes we hear a thing, which we are not sure whether it be a real voice, or only an illusion of the fancy. We know, says the apostle, we are sure, it is no fancy. Some creatures have a voice that every body can hear. But there is no creature so mute, but a serious Christian, whose senses are exercised, can discern its voice. David could hear the silent heavens, day and night, and also know their meaning, Psal. xix. 1. 2.; and verse 3. “Their is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.” O that we could hear their voice this day! and that their groans and cries might pierce our hearts for sin.

This subject is highly important.—There is contained in it the three following DOCTRINES, which in their order we propose to consider.

DOCT.

Doct. I. That the whole creation, made for the use of man, groans under the sin of man.

Doct. II. That the creatures' pains, under the sin of man, are travailing-pains, fore indeed, but hopeful, they will in due season be delivered from them.

Doct. III. That the whole creation makes a mournful concert in the ears of serious Christians, by their groans under man's sin.

WE begin with

Doct. I. That the whole creation made for the use of man, groaneth under the sin of man.

What is to be offered on this doctrine shall be comprehended under the three following heads of discourse.

- I. IN what respects the creation, or creatures are said to groan ; for many of them, as the earth, &c. are properly incapable of groaning.
- II. What distresses the creatures so much, that they groan ? What has man's sin done to them, to make them groan under it ?
- III. How, and by what right, can the harmless creatures be made to groan for our sakes ? They have not sinned. True, these poor sheep what have they done ?
- IV. I shall add a practical improvement of the subject.

I. I AM, then, to shew in what respects the creation, or the creatures are said to groan, for many of them, as the earth, &c. are properly incapable of groaning.—Here I observe,

1. That the sensible part of the creation really groans, each after its kind : Joel, i. 18. "How do the beasts groan? the herds of cattle are perplexed, because

because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate." The beasts, the birds, all that can groan, do groan. And these may be admitted as the mouth of the rest; they groan out their own misery, and the misery of their mate-fellows, that are in the same condemnation with them, while they stand about, as it were, looking on, like a company of foreigners, one of whom only being capable of speaking our language, speaks for the rest.

2. The whole creation appears in a mournful mood and groaning posture. The sun, the eye of the world, has often a veil drawn over it for many days; and he with the rest of the lights of heaven are covered with blackness, like mourners. The earth, trees and plants upon it, lay aside their ornaments, and every head among them is bald; because man, whom they were appointed to serve, is slain by the great murderer, the devil; therefore all his servants are gone into mourning.

3. The whole creation, if they could, would groan, for they have good reason, as we will see afterwards. As our Lord says, Luke x. 40. "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." The pressure they are under would make them groan, if they had sense or reason to understand it. It is God's goodness to man that his sense of hearing is not more quick than it is, otherwise he could never have rest, there being always some noise in the world. And it is well for man that the creatures cannot represent their misery as it deserves, otherwise they would deafen him with their complaints, and make him continually uneasy with their groans.

4. The Spirit of God is grieved, and groaneth (so to speak) in the creatures. God is every where present, quickening, influencing, preserving, and

governing all the creatures, according to their several natures : Acts, xvii. 25. " Seeing he giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things : " Heb. i. 3. " Upholding all things by the word of his power. " The sun cannot shine without him ; nor the earth produce its fruits, nor its fruits be serviceable to man, without him. Whatever is profitable or pleasant in the creatures, is but some drops of the divine goodness distilled into them, for his glory and man's good. Hence it is evident, that the abuse done to the creatures riseth to God himself. As if a mother having suitably sweetened the meat to a child, he should, after all, throw it away, his doing so is a wrong to her as well as the abused creature. Therefore, the abusing of God's works is forbidden in the third commandment, under the notion of taking God's name in vain. For the creature's goodness is in effect God's goodness : " For there is none good but one, that is, God, " Matth. xix. 17. And therefore (with reverence be it spoken) God groans from the creatures against sinners : Amos, ii. 13. " Behold, (says God), I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves. " And as the Lord from heaven cried to Saul, Acts, ix. 4. " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? " so, if men had ears to hear, the drunkard, for instance, might hear God, from the creature, saying, ' Man, why abusest thou me ? ' &c.

Lastly, Serious Christians groan in behalf of the creatures. Man was made to be the mouth of the creatures, to speak out what they could not ; for which cause God gave him a tongue and speech, therefore called his *glory*. When sin entered, man's mouth was closed in that respect. When grace comes into the soul, the Lord says, *Ephphatha*, that is, " be opened, " Mark, vii. 34.

So

So man becomes the mouth of the creation again, Psal. xix. 1. Thus believers, seeing the reason the creatures have to groan, groan out their case for them, acknowledging, before God and the world, the misery and hard case they are brought into by man's sin.

II. WE come now to inquire, what distresses the creatures so much, that they groan? What has man's sin done to them, to make them groan under it?

Why, truly, they got a large share of the curse to bear for man's sake: Gen. iii. 17. "Curfed," said God to Adam, "is the ground for thy sake." The curse coming upon man is also felt upon the earth. Wherefore, but because of its relation to man? It bears him, and feeds him. And if so, that curse would spread to the visible heavens that cover him, and afford him light, and that nourish the earth which nourishes him. If this be not enough, remember they are all to go to the fire together at length; and surely that makes it. So thus man's sin, as brimstone, is scattered on his habitation: 2 Peter, iii. 10. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." Verse 11. "Seeing, then, all these things shall be dissolved; what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?"

This curse has subjected the creature to vanity. It has squeezed much of the fat out of it that was put into it at the creation; and from a full ear has brought it to an empty husk. And it is thereby also in bondage to corruption. It is made a

stage of sin, a scene of misery, and liable to destruction as such. But to come to particulars.

1. The whole creation, by man's sin, has fallen far short of its beneficial and nutritive quality, in comparison of what it originally was at its creation. Man has not that benefit of the creatures for which they were appointed at first. While he stood, such sap and nourishment was in them, that could have afforded him all things for necessity, convenience, and delight, without toil. But sin gave them such a shock, that much of that sap is shaken out of them, and so man must now wring hard to get but a very little nourishment from them. This makes so much barrenness in the earth, which so meanly rewards all the toil of the husbandman. It brings forth thorns and thistles plentifully, under the influence of that curse, while it makes a very sober increase otherwise. And what is the procuring cause of all this but sin? Psal. cvii. 34. "He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." We see how it is bound up, that the beasts of the field cannot get their food. And if the influences of the heavens were not restrained, it would not be so; the earth would not be iron, if the heavens were not brass. Under this vanity the whole creation groaneth.

2. The whole creation, by man's sin, has come far short of its ultimate end, the honour and glory of God. God's revenue of glory from the creature is mightily diminished by the sin of man. The whole creation was made to be a book, wherein men might read the name of God; a stringed instrument, by which men were to praise him; a looking-glass, in which to behold his glory. But, alas! sin has drawn a veil over our eyes. Men may say they are unlearned,
and

and cannot read more than what may make them inexcusable: "For the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse," Rom. i. 20. The book is as it were sealed. They have lost the art of praising; hence the instrument is hung by, being to little purpose in the possession of such persons. They care not for beholding his glory, therefore the looking-glass is overlooked, and very little use is made of it. Under this vanity they groan also.

3. The nature of the whole creation is in some sort altered. When God looked on his creatures, he saw that they were very good, Gen. i. 31. And that is a sad alteration that makes them groan. Sin has cast the whole creation into a feverish disorder. There is an evil which accompanies them now, that they long to be rid of. Man complains and groans under the evil of the creatures, and they complain and groan under him. The transgression of man is heavy on the earth, and the case of the earth bound up from his service is heavy upon him. Where is the creature that has no evil about it now? The sun sometimes scorches man, and burns up the fruits of the ground; at other times his absence makes the earth as iron, that he cannot stand before the cold. The air often sickens and kills him. The distempered winds often sink him in the sea. out of the earth, where he is to get his meat, sometimes he meets with poisonous herbs. What is the cause of all this? Impute it not to the creatures as they came from the creating hand of God, but to the fall of man, whom nothing could have hurt, had he stood in his integrity.

4. The creature has fallen into the hands of God's enemies, and is forced to serve them. When man stood, all the creatures were at his beck, and were ready to come to him at his call. But when he left God, all the creatures would have left him, the sun would have shined no more on him, the air would have refused his breathing in it, the earth would not have fed nor carried him more, if God had not subjected them anew to him : Rom. viii. 20. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." We see how far some of them have gone in renouncing their service to him, Job, xxxix. 7. 8. And ver. 9. "Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib?" And they would all have left their service, as a faithful servant will leave his master, when he goes out in rebellion against his sovereign, but that they were forced to go along ; and therefore they groan.

5. They are used by sinners to ends for which God never made them. They suffer violence, they are abused, and therefore they groan. God made them for his honour, men abuse them to his dishonour. Never did a beast speak but once, Balaam's ass, Numb. xxii. 28. 30. and that was a complaint on man for abusing it to an end for which God never made it. The dumb ass rebuked the madness of the prophet, that would have it to carry him in a way God forbade him to go, and where the angel stood to oppose him. And, could the creatures speak to us, we would hear many complaints that way. God gave the creatures to be servants to man, but man has sold them for slaves to his lusts ; and who would not groan to be so maltreated ? There are two things which make hard service :

(1.) Labour in vain, continual toil, and yet no profit by it. The creatures have no intermission in their service: Ecclef. i. 5. 8. "All things are full of labour." But O where is the profit of it all? The sun riseth, and runs his race every day, and never resteth. But what is the issue? If it were to let men see to read God's word, to behold and admire his works, to perform acts of piety, to accomplish substantial good, all the toil would never be grudged by the creatures. But, alas! here is the case, for the most part men see to sin more by it, the worldling, the drunkard, &c. to pursue their lusts by it. The night waits on in its turn, and the thief, the adulterer, and the like, get their lusts fulfilled with it. The air waits about us continually, and the swearer gets sworn by it, the liar lied by it, and the like. The earth and sea wait on us with their produce; and people get their sensuality, their vanity, pride, and the like, nourished by it. What wonder they groan, to be brought to this pass? Sun, moon, air, earth, and sea, are groaning for this as they can. If our very meat and drink could groan, they would groan in the dish, cup, throat, and belly of the drunkard, glutton, sensualist, yea, of every one with whom they are not employed to nourish the body for the Lord and his service, but for the world, &c.—There is,

(2.) Hard labour, and much loss by it. We have both these: Hab. ii. 13. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" The creatures not only toil for vanity, but as it were in the fire, where they smart for their pains. The covetous oppressor's money kept from the labourer, groans in the corner of your chest, and cries, "Behold, the hire

hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them that have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth," James, v. 4. 'Why do you lock me up here, where a heavy curse lies upon me? why wilt thou not let me away to the labourer?' The oppressor builds his house by blood and oppression, and the very stones and timber cry out, "Why have you laid me here, where the curse of God will not let me rest?" Hab. ii. 11. If a master should force his servant into the king's throne, and force the crown on his head, and the sceptre into his hand, how would he groan to think that he is abused, and that his life must go for it too. Ah! is it any wonder that the beasts, the pastures of the wilderness, groan this day, who have so often been set in God's throne, the heart; have had room with him, yea, more room than him, nay, many times the only room there? O! would they not cry, if they could speak, 'Why get we the first thoughts in the morning, and the last at night? Why set you that love, joy, delight, and trust in us, that you ought to place in God? O let us out of this dangerous place, let us out of your hearts, that is a dangerous place to us,' Ezek. xxiv. 25. 26.—I only add, as a

6. And last reason of their groaning, that the creatures partake with man in his miseries.—Though they do not sin with him, yet they suffer with him. They that have life, live groaning with him. They are liable to sickness, pains, and sores, as well as he; for not a few of the troops of diseases billeted on man, were quartered also on them. Sinful man's neighbourhood infected them; they die groaning with him. In the deluge they perished with him, except a few preserved in the ark,

as

as living in the same element with him. The beasts in Sodom were destroyed with fire and brimstone, with the men. In the plagues of Egypt, the cattle smarted together with the owners, also their fields, vines, sycamores, &c. The inanimate creatures suffer with him also. He sins, and the very earth is laid in bonds for him ; but groan as it will in that case, he cannot loose them : Job, xxxviii. 31. " Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion ?" Their iron-bands he cannot break : Deut. xxviii. 23. " And the heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron." The very waters are straitly bound up on his account : Job, xxxvii. 10. " By the breath of God frost is given ; and the breadth of the waters is straitened." Nay, they are muffled up with a weight above them, like a stone under ground ; for as swift as they rise to go, and as nimble as they run, they are caught and held fast, like a wild beast, in God's trap. This is the true sense of Job, in the Hebrew, chap. xxxviii. 30. " The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen." Nay, the very heavens are in bonds too, Deut. xxviii. 23. And they cry out in their bands, Hof. ii. 21. " I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth."

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED*.

S E R M O N XXVII.

ROM. viii. 22. *For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now.*

HAVING considered in what respects the creation, or creatures, are said to groan, and what distresses the creatures so much that they groan, we now proceed to inquire,

III. How, and by what right, can the harmless creatures be made to groan for our sakes? They have not sinned. True, these poor sheep, what have they done?—Here I observe,

1. That there is sovereignty in this groaning. The creatures are all his own, and it is lawful for him

* This Sermon was delivered on a Fast-day, appointed by the Presbytery of which the Author was a member, on occasion of a severe threatening storm which then prevailed.—In this discourse, and through the whole of this subject, the Author has evidently a reference to the unnatural rebellion which was then raging, and appears deeply affected with the state of the church and nation at that period.

him to do with his own what he will, Matth. xx. 15. Solomon tells us, Ecclef. viii. 4. "Where the word of a king is, there is power, (Heb. dominion), and who may say unto him, What doest thou?" God is the great store-master, to whom all the flocks and herds in the world belong: "The cattle upon a thousand hills are his," Pſal. l. 10. He has given you the use of them, but has reserved the absolute property to himself. You have them in kine, and that is ill paid; therefore no wonder he take them out of your hand, and dispose of them in another way, whereby he may get the use of them, that is, glory to himself.—I observe,

2. That the creatures are liable to this groaning, because of their relation to sinful man, who has a subordinate, limited, providential interest in them; and that by the same justice that the whole which a malefactor has, smarts with him; as it was in the case of Achan, and all that he had, Josh. vii. 24. The sun is a light to him, therefore it is overclouded; it nourishes his ground, therefore its influences are restrained. The ground feeds his flocks and herds, therefore it is inhibited. They furnish him with necessaries, conveniences, and profits, therefore they suffer. They stand in a nearer relation to him than other creatures; they were made the same day, and of the same earth, and live in the same element with him, and therefore they smart first, because they are nearest to him. They are nearer, and therefore it is harder with them than with fishes and fowls, which were of the water, and live, the one in the water, the other in the air.—I observe,

3. That the creatures groan because of their usefulness to him, by the same right that, in war,
one

one takes from his enemy whatever may be of use to that enemy in the war. None scruple to take every thing from an enemy, that so he may be disabled, and yield. Now, God is angry, and carrying on a war with us, which we began ; and to oblige us to yield, he falls on the creatures that are useful to us. Pharaoh will not let Israel go, and the cattle, and the very trees and water of Egypt, smart. They kill, swear, lie, steal, commit adultery : Hos. iv. 3. " Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven ; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away." Men are very indifferent about the interest of God, and if they get their own interest seen to, are little concerned as to any thing else ; and therefore God blasts their prospects ; as you may see, by consulting Haggai, i. 4.—11.—I observe,

4. That the creatures groan, by the same right one takes a sword from a man wherewith he is running at him. The creatures are idols of jealousy often to provoke God, and therefore he strikes them down. Often, and most justly, does God punish sinners in that wherein they have sinned, so as they may read their sin in their punishment, as in Eli's case, and in Isaac's, Gen. xxv. 28. and xxvi. 35. The farm, and the care about it, often keeps people from the marriage-supper of the King's Son, Matth. xxii. 5. The Gadarenes, for their liking of swine better than a Saviour, had their wretched idols drowned in the sea.—I observe,

5. That the creatures groan by the same right one takes back his loan, when he gets no thanks for it, but, on the contrary, it is improved against himself : Hos. ii. 8. 9. " For she did not know that

I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness." Alas! though we are always in God's common, for every thing we have, we are not thankful, we do not remember our holding, but sacrifice to our own net. And God's favours with respect to the creatures, though they make people more wealthy, they make them not more holy.

Lastly, I observe, That the creatures groan by the same right a prince levies a fine on a man, when he might take his life. It is a mercy God deals not with ourselves, as with the creatures for our sake: Sam. iii. 22. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." True, men feel the stroke; and good reason, for God makes the creatures groan for that very end, that we may feel it. But we feel only at the second hand, though it is we only that are guilty. The bands lying on the earth might have lain on us, and we pinched as sore for our food as the beasts of the field for theirs; that as our flocks are forced to go to another part of the country, leaving our own hills desolate, so our houses might have been desolate, families scattered, and sent through the country begging bread. They have had more than any of us, who yet have been brought to such trying circumstances.—It only remains,

IV. THAT we make some improvement of this doctrine.

I. In an use of information. Let us notice this scripture fulfilled in our days, in this day, and

that in a remarkable manner. There is a mournful concert which the creatures have been making in our ears now for many weeks together, for which we are this day called to fast and humble ourselves.—Hear the groans of the creatures :

(1.) The earth is groaning under us, Deut. xxviii. 23. “ And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron.” God has laid a weight on it, and bound it so strait, that it can get no breathing, there is no perspiration ; it can get up nothing. It is run together as lead does after it is melted ; Job, xxxviii. 38. “ When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together.” Hebrew, “ God has pitched it up, or pitched it all over with frost, as one would do a vessel to keep in the liquor, when they have in view to prevent others drawing from it.”

(2.) The waters groan, for there is a weight on them : Job, xxxviii. 30. “ The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.” Men’s sins have taken hold of them, and turned them into dry land : Psal. cvii. 33. “ He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground.” Verse 34. “ A fruitful field into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.” We have bridges of God’s making, but these are no more signs of God’s favour, than the turning of sea into dry land was to Pharaoh, for it proved his destruction.

(3.) The wild beasts of the field groan for lack of food. They that take the range of the mountains for pasture, are forced into the valleys, and this strait brings them near the dwellings of men, which otherwise they would shun, Hos. iv. 3.

(4.) The fowls of the air groan, and are hard put to it, to make shift for their lives, and they mourn
after

after their kind, for the hand of God is heavy upon them : Hof. iv. 3. " Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish ; with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven ; yea, the fishes of the sea shall be taken away."

(5.) The flocks groan, for God has locked up their pasture : Joel, i. 18. " How do the beasts groan ? the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture ; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate." They are—fruitful creatures, but God threatens to pluck up the tree with its fruit ;—harmless, yet they sadly suffer for the sins of men, their owners ;—useful creatures, and because of their singular usefulness, a singular weight of the stroke lies on them. They cannot help themselves, and men cannot help them ; so they groan and cry unto the Lord : Joel, i. 20. " The beasts of the field cry also unto thee : for the rivers of water are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness."

(6.) The heavens groan, Deut. xxviii. 23. (quoted already), for God has laid them under arrest. They have been long crying that their influences are bound up, but God has not yet heard them : Hof. ii. 21. " And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth." The machine of the world, in some sort, has long stood ; because God has holden still the heavens, the main spring ; but the heavens cannot help the earth, nor the earth the grass, nor the grass the beasts of the field, till God see meet.

2. We may learn, that when the whole creation groans for man's sake, it is no wonder God make man himself to groan heavily. It has been a groaning time through Scotland now for a long

time, and these groans are not over yet. God grant they be not but beginning!

(1.) The nation is groaning under the weight of two armies, which, whether friends or foes, must needs be heavy to a poor land, that has enough ado to maintain itself. Besides, that as the world is now distempered by the corruptions of men, it is morally impossible but that violence, rapines, and other disorders, will fall out in such a case, which some heavily feel, however easy others may live, and that whether the armies be for or against us. It is groaning under a most causeless rebellion, raised by men of a perverse, malignant, Antichristian spirit, who, to get a limb of Antichrist on the throne, and to ruin religion, have made all this disagreeable work. Hence the nation groans under a drawn sword, deeply bathed in blood, and thirsting for more. The blood of many has been shed in the field like water, many precious souls sent to eternity in a moment, in the hurry of war, and the carcases of men laid like dung in the open field; parents left childless, children fatherless, and their mothers widows, while the lives of many others are made to them more bitter than death. Into what a wretched case have many of the nobility and gentry of Scotland brought themselves! which, though it be the just judgment of God upon them, for which we are to praise him, yet it makes the nation groan, as the cutting off a gangrened member is painful to the whole body. Thus David lamented over Saul, 2 Sam. i. 17. The northern parts of the nation have been long groaning, who have had many months of that oppression, of which the southern parts have had but a few days, and yet made so great an outcry. Some groaning there, because their houses are made unpleasant to them; some, because they and their

their families are scattered ; some groaning because they are harassed ; others, because they are solitary, &c.

(2.) The church is groaning for the weight of the Lord's anger gone out against her. Our mother is in mourning, and the gates of Zion lament. She groans under the weight of these mischievous decrees laid on in the latter end of the last reign, not yet removed, by which she is greatly oppressed, — under our own unchristian divisions, by which she is rent into many pieces ;—under the just withdrawing of her Lord, by which she is become heartless. Many congregations of the land are groaning under the want of gospel-ordinances, the weight of silent Sabbaths. Her serious ministers and members are groaning, while they behold, on every hand, matter of lamentation and woe. Nay, she is groaning this day, to see the great red dragon standing before her to swallow her up. A limb of Antichrist set up for a king, to be a captain, to lead back the nation to Egypt, and to give the kingdom, if he had it at his will, to the Romish beast that supports the whore. Her members are in no good case to give a draught of their blood to the scarlet-coloured whore, and therefore in hazard to drink the cup of the wine of her fornication, if she had once access to put it to them.

Thus the church and nation are groaning together. No sort of persons, from the throne to the dung-hill, are exempted. Our only rightful and lawful Sovereign, our Protestant King, whom God, by an admirable step of favourable providence, brought seasonably to the throne, groans for the unnatural rebellion raised against him. The nobles and gentry, who used to escape other strokes, smart under the confusions in the land by that means. Ministers have a load of many weights to

groan under this day ; and to all the rest, not a few of them are threatened with suffering for a cause which their souls abhor as much as any in the nation. People of all sorts groan ; the husbandman, because the earth, being as iron, will not allow his labouring ; and the store-masters, because of the particular distress of the beasts of the field.

3. This lets us see what is the cause of all this groaning. Is there not a cause ? Yes ; men's sins are the cause of all the distress on the creatures, and on themselves. We have procured all our miseries with our own hands. All ranks in the land have gone out of course, and therefore the very creation is put out of its course : Isa. xxiv. 20. " The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage, and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again."—The Lord is contending with us,

(1.) Because that the sins of our fathers have not been sufficiently mourned over by the generation. National perjury and bloodshed are crying sins that are making the land to mourn this day. Without controversy, God is fulfilling that scripture in our eyes this day, Lev. xxvi. 25. " And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant ; and when you are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you, and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy." God is making inquisition for the blood of the slain witnesses of Jesus and it will be a wonder if, before the quarrel be ended, God make not the lives of hundreds of others go for one of theirs. I have sometimes thought, ' O ! why has God made choice of poor Scotland, to be the field of blood ? Are there not sins against God in the neighbouring land, as well

as amongst us ?' But I have been silenced by this consideration, Scotland was the place where the witnesses were slain, in a special manner, in the late times : " True and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord !"—The Lord is contending with us,

(2.) Because of the atheism and contempt of God in the land. Matters were come to that pass under the light of the gospel, that all religion was laughed at by many ; so that there was a necessity that God, by some new argument, should prove the truth of his being, which he has already done, to the cost of many that were deeply engaged in these atheistical ways. May God bear it home on their consciences, that at least they may get their precious souls for a prey !—The Lord is contending,

(3.) Because of the horrid profanity of the generation : Hof. iv. 1.—3. " Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel ; for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God, in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven ; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away." How many are there up and down the land, that glory in their shame, and take a pleasure to affront the God that made them by their profane courses. Can these things escape a mark of God's displeasure ? It has broken in like a flood, and gone through the land ; so that they are indeed but rare persons who have not entertained one branch or another of it ; either they are swearers, or liars,

or

or such like ; and there is no reforming of them. The word cannot do it.—The Lord is contending,

(4.) Because of our abuse of mercies, and God's good creatures. We have had long peace, and God has wrought wonders for our deliverance. But we were surfeited with peace ere the war came. The good creatures of God prospering and thriving, were but fuel to our lusts, and so snares to lead us away from God, that it is no wonder they get a stroke, like idols of jealousy, where-with God has been provoked.—The Lord is contending,

(5.) Because of that woful security and unconcernedness for the public cause of God and of religion which prevails. God is a jealous God, and when he is going out against a land, he calls all the inhabitants thereof to fear and to tremble ; and he cannot endure indifference when his cause is at stake. This provokes him to blast people's private concerns : Haggai, ii. 14.—17. “ Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation, before me, saith the Lord ; and so is every work of their hands, and that which they offer there is unclean. And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord. Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten : when one came to the press-fat, for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting, and with mildew and hail, in all the labours of your hands, yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord.” This woful selfishness has prevailed in an amazing manner among us. Little were we concerned with the distresses which many others of the nation were under ; very indifferent were we as to what way public matters

matters should go, as if we had been set here to be idle spectators of the reelings of the nation. But we see God has many arrows in his quiver, and will even have us to groan with the rest. And if people go lightly under the burden of the public, he will give them a burden of their own to bear. God knows, your distress by this storm has lain near my heart, as I bear a part in all your afflictions; but seeing, with grief of heart, your prevailing temper to be such, that I could not call you together to wrestle for the public cause, I could not have confidence before the Lord to do it upon an inferior cause, though in itself a very weighty one.—The Lord is contending with us,

(6.) Because of the contempt of the gospel, and unfruitfulness under the means of grace. This makes a land to groan, and the creatures in it to bear a share.

4. Let the groans of the creatures stir us up to repenting groans before the Lord. Shall we be groaning under trouble, and the creatures groaning for our sakes, and yet not groan for sin, which is the cause of all? For the Lord's sake, sirs, be pliable to the word, and do not think yourselves above warnings, but receive convictions from the word, and be humbled under the hand of God, and take a look of your ways, and repent, and reform yourselves and your families. Wrath is gone out from the Lord against the land and us. Let us try to quench it ere it go farther, lest it break out like fire, that none can quench it. Let us be concerned for the public cause, and take a lift of Zion's burden this day. Be not indifferent in the cause of a Protestant king, and a Popish pretender. Ye have had fair warning to prepare to meet the Lord, and God followed the closing of our sermons on that subject hard at the heels with the stroke.

And

And if this do us no good, take heed it come not next from the stall to the hall, and men and women be as sore straitened as the poor dumb creatures are this day.

5. Let us come here, and learn various other lessons. We know the book of the creation is an instructive book; every day we may have a lesson from them, from the highest, Psal. viii. 3. 4. to the lowest, Prov. vi. 6. 7. 8. namely, from the heavens to the ant. But in such a day as this we may learn more from them than ordinary; now they speak much and loud to us. God makes them groan thus for our instruction, as he cursed the fig-tree, for a lesson of faith to his disciples; and slew the cattle of Egypt, to make the owners see what they might expect. The creatures groan out these lessons to us:

(1.) That God is angry with us. He is angry with the land, has a controversy with our mother, and he is angry with the creatures, for they smart under it. We may say, as in Hab. iii. 8. "Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea? that thou didst ride upon thine horses, and thy chariots of salvation." Sure if it is so, it is for our sakes, and therefore he is angry much more with us. Look now through the whole creation, above, under, and about us, and we will see the characters of the Lord's anger. It is true, these things have natural causes, but God guides these. And this lesson we may take for a certain evidence of our sin; see sermon on Joel, i. 18.—Another lesson is,

(2.) That it is not easy to get the flame of wrath quenched when once it is kindled. We may say this day, as in Psal. lxxv. 5. "By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation."

salvation." Men's sins may bring that on the creatures, which they will not soon get removed. Learn here to beware of kindling the fire by provoking God ! It is easier to keep the sword of vengeance in the sheath, than to get it sheathed again when once drawn. It is dangerous to depend on the praying for mercy on a death-bed, delaying all till then, for then wrath may be gone out, not to be quenched.

(3.) It is dangerous to be concerned with those with whom God hath a controversy ; thus, all that belonged to Achan perished with him : Josh vii. 24. 25. " And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan, the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had ; and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us ? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones." Had these oxen and asses been another's than Achan's, they had not perished in the manner they did. Thus the poor creatures lament their relation to sinful men ; and many smart fore upon the occasion of the controversy God has with them with whom they are nearly connected. A companion of fools shall be destroyed. Even those God has a kindness for may smart full sorely for the sake of others ; see 1 Kings, xiv. 10.—13.—Another lesson is,

(4.) That sin is a heavy burden, which none are able to bear up under. O sirs ! what think ye of sin, that makes the very earth to groan under it this day ? Isa. xxiv. 20. " The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage, and the transgression thereof shall be

be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again." Ye walk for the present full lightly under it, but the weight of it, ere long, will be felt by the most stupid sinner; a dreadful weight! that makes the whole creation groan. Are not the bands of guilt strong and strait, that thus gird up the heaven and earth, and bind down the creatures, that they cannot get up their head? It is an offence to an infinite God, no wonder it doth lay an infinite weight on the offender.—We are instructed,

(5.) That God is a jealous and just God, who will not suffer sin to go unpunished. Deceive not yourselves with misapprehensions of God, like the wicked, who, as in Psal. l. 21. think him altogether such an one as themselves; for as sweet as sin may be in the mouth, it will be bitter in the belly: Job. xx. 12.—14. "Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth:—Yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him." Therefore, Exod. xxiii. 21. "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions." He is true to his word, and it cannot fail. He will reverse the order of nature, turn the heavens to brass, and the earth to iron, rather than one word of his fall to the ground.—We may also learn,

(6.) That the creatures are ever weak pillars to lean to. You have need of something else to bear your weight, the weight of your comfort, much more of your happiness, for they are not able. There is a vanity that they are under, by reason of which they cannot reach that end: Eccles. i. 2. "All is vanity." They that have not something else to lean to, may soon have nothing to
look

look to at all. O what a pitiful idol is the clay god of the world!—We may farther learn,

(7.) That God is a sovereign King, against whom there is no rising up. How can sinners think to escape with their sins, when the whole creation smart for their sakes? Can we think that the innocent creatures should suffer, and we go free? Can there be an out-braving him, who makes the earth and heavens groan under his hand? or a fleeing from him, from whom the whole creation cannot make their escape?—We are instructed farther,

(8.) That the service of the creatures to sinful man, is an imposition on them: Rom. viii. 20. “For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly.” Man falling from God, lost the right he had to them. But yet they are kept in his service, which they grudge, and therefore they groan.—Hence it comes to pass, that these servants sometimes becoming masters, hurt him, and dispatch him. The least creature, having a commission for such a service, proves too hard for him, such as a stone in fruit, or a hair in milk.—I only add,

(9.) That the creatures are wearied of the world lying in wickedness, and would fain have it brought to an end: Rom. viii. 19. “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” There is a happy day for the restitution of all things; they are longing for that day, when this world, that sink of sin, that stage of vanity, and scene of misery, shall be taken down; and the wicked shall have poured out upon them, the deserved curse, with all its effects, centering in themselves, without burdening others with it in any measure.—I come now,

2. To an use of exhortation. The groans of the creatures are exciting, stirring up groans. So

many of them as are about us this day, so many preachers have we to provoke us to the duty we profess to be engaged in.—They cry to us,

(1.) Humble yourselves under the hand of God. He has laid them low, and shall not we lie low before him, since for our sake they are cast down. The noisy waters are now silent as a stone under his hand, the lofty mountains have laid aside their ornaments, and every thing mourns after its kind. Come down, then, from your pride and obstinacy; yield yourselves to the God that made you, lie low in the dust, and join issue with the rest of the creation.—They cry,

(2.) Repent, repent; for he is a God that will not be mocked, and though he long forbear, he will be avenged on impenitent sinners at last. He has been long pleading with us to let our sins go, and he is saying now, as to Pharaoh, *Exod. ix.* 2. 3. “For if you refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still; behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep; there shall be a very grievous murrain.” Harden not your hearts to keep fast the bane of strife betwixt God and you, lest it fare with you as it did with Pharaoh, on whose person God’s hand fell heavy at last.—They cry,

(3.) Pray, pray. When the heathen mariners were at their prayers in a storm at sea, it was a shame for Jonah to be sleeping, *Jon. i.* 4. The creatures, as they can, are crying to the Lord; shall we be more brutish than they, and be silent at such a time? We have been praying in the congregation; it would be a promising thing, and no more but duty, if families and particular persons were fasting and praying: *Zech. xii.* 12. “And the

the land shall mourn, every family apart." There is much work in families otherwise, to take care of them. O! then, will you not do that which is so needful for yourselves and them?—I exhort you,

(4.) To reform, for the sake of these you would not involve in ruin with yourselves. For, Eccles. ix. 18. "Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroyeth much good." We see how the poor creatures are ruined in this way. But it is not them only: Achan troubled the camp of Israel. God has threatened to pursue his quarrel to the third and fourth generations. If one in the family be seized with the plague, it is enough to carry away the whole.—Be exhorted,

(5.) To endeavour to reform others, for your own sakes. The fire in your neighbour's house may come to burn down yours, if you do not help to quench it. It is thought that Achan's sons perished with him, because they concealed and laboured not to put away their father's sin.

(6.) Seek to find your comfort and happiness only in the enjoyment of God and Christ. Then in the time of famine you may rejoice in the God of salvation, like the prophet Habakkuk, chap. iii. 17. It is a sad matter we should again be so ready to trust the deceiving world, and to lean again to that broken reed that hath so often failed us, and pierced through our hand. Seek it in God, where it can never fail, in the everlasting covenant, that will be a portion of which ye may always be sure.

(7.) Fear God, and stand in awe of him. As the sight of the drawn sword makes him in some measure afraid that wields it, so the sight of God's judgements should fill us with the dread of his majesty: Psal. cxix. 120. "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgement." When the sea was raging, and Jonah awaked, he

was impressed with fear and reverence of him that made it, *Jonah*, i. 9. God would have the hearts of people awed with his works; and it is contempt of God not to be so.

(8.) Labour to get a renewed right to the creatures. Our first charter was lost by Adam at his fall; and as the estates of rebels fall of course to the crown, so our right to the creatures was forfeited, and they fell back into the hands of him that gave them. We must get a new right through Jesus Christ, by faith in him, if ever we would have true comfort in the creatures. I own a wicked man has a sort of right to the creatures: *Psal.* cxv. 16. "The earth hath the Lord given to the sons of men." By the same law that God has said, Thou shalt not kill, he has made them over to us. This is a providential right, but it is not a covenant-right. It is but like the right the forfeited condemned man has to his meat till the hour of his execution.

Lastly, Ye that are godly, I would beseech you to long for that blessed day for which the creatures are groaning. You have good reason, as well as they. Long for the day this stage shall be taken down, whereon so much sin and misery are acted, when all that Adam put wrong shall be completely righted by Jesus Christ.

CREATION'S TRAVAIL, AND DELIVERY.

S E R M O N XXVII.

ROM. viii. 22. *For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now.*

HAVING, in the preceding discourses, considered the groans of the creatures under the sin of men, I now proceed to the illustration of

DOCT. II. That the creatures' pains under the sin of man are travailing-pains, sore indeed, but hopeful, they will not last always, they will be delivered from them.

THAT this is the sense of this metaphor, appears by comparing ver. 23. "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

The creatures have now had a sharp shower for several weeks; blessed be the Lord it has in part intermitted, and that he has heard prayers in their be-

half. Many such showers they have had since Adam's fall; and though they have an intermission of the exquisite pains, they are not well yet; the clouds will return after the rain. But the day will come when they will be quite well, and fairly delivered, and never groan more. What is clear from the scriptures in this nice point, I shall briefly lay before you, and a more curious inquiry is not fit for the pulpit.—With this view, I shall inquire,

I. When this delivery of the creatures is to come to pass.

II. What delivery shall they then get?

III. Confirm the doctrine of the creatures' delivery.—And then,

IV. Lead you to the practical improvement of the subject.—We are, then,

I. To inquire when this delivery of the creatures is to come to pass.

God, that has appointed a set time for every thing, has also appointed the precise time for the delivery of the groaning creation; and this is plainly revealed to be at the end of the world. For then is that time, Rom. viii. 19. 21.; so Rev. xx.

11. “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled; and there was found no place for them.” The apostle Peter is very express, that then they shall have their bearing shower, as it were, the sharpest ever they had, but it is the last. 2 Pet. iii. 10. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.”

Ver. 13. “Nevertheless, we, according to his promise,

promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." They have been in their pangs ever since Adam fell, and will not be delivered till then. When that period shall be, I know not; but it is plain the world is come to its old age. The heaven and earth, that beautiful garment, is grown old, as the psalmist foretold long ago, Psal. cii. 6.; therefore it cannot be very long ere it will be changed. She that hath had many children is waxed feeble; I mean, our mother earth. It is evident she is not so fruitful as she was; neither do her fruits yield such nourishment as sometimes they did, they are both fewer and weaker; hence still less and weaker bodies. And why so with the earth, but because the heavens are in the same condition, and afford not such influences as formerly, in the vigour of their youth? It is observed by astronomers, that the sun shineth more dimly, and appeareth more seldom than before, being much nearer to the earth than in ancient times. So much the nearer, so much the less influence, as appears by comparing summer and winter, the mid-day and evening; so that the mighty giant, having so long run his race, begins also to wax feeble. It is long since our Lord said he would come quickly, Rev. xxii. 20. And most of the prophecies of the holy scripture are already fulfilled. All the seals are opened. Six of the trumpets are already blown. In the time of the seventh, the mystery of God is to be finished, and the world to end, Rev. x. 7. And there is no doubt but it is long since it began to sound. Under this trumpet are contained seven vials; and if these were poured out, then time is no more. There seems to be two of these vials past, and that we are now under the third, expecting the fourth, So that there will be but four of them to come.

And

And it is very agreeable to the dispensations of providence, that the nearer the end, the motion will be the quicker ; as in the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah, before their respective captivities, 2 Kings, xv. 16. & 23. and downwards. Thus, without dipping further, it is evident we are far advanced in the last times, and that the world is in its old, if not decrepit age ; and at the end is the delivery*.—We now proceed,

II. To inquire what delivery the creation shall then get. The creature conceived vanity and misery from the time of Adam's sin, then they shall be delivered of that burden, with which they have been so long big, Rom. viii. 20. 21. Now, according to what I before said on the first general head, we may soberly explain here.

1. They shall fully answer their end, I mean not the very end for which they were created at first, for some of these are inconsistent with the state of glorified saints : 1 Cor. vi. 13. " Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them." But whatever is their end, they shall fully answer that, God shall have his glory by them ; and if he design any benefit to man by them, they shall not be plagued by vanity therein, Rom. viii. 20. 2 Pet. iii. 13.

2. They shall be freed from all that evil that cleaves to their nature now by reason of man's sin. For now they have undergone a sad alteration, but then they shall undergo another. They shall be changed : Psal. cii. 26. " They shall perish, but thou shalt endure ; yea, all of them shall wax old like

* The author has, in this part of his manuscript, several notes in short hand, which the transcriber could not decypher, from the want of which this part of the subject is not so complete.

like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." And that it shall be to the better, is evident from Rev. xxi. 1. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea."

3. They shall no more be abused by sinners; they shall never more serve the lust of any man whatsoever, Rom. viii. 21. They shall then be recovered, the groaning creature rescued, never to suffer a relapse any more. However the lusts of the wicked may then be, they must prey upon their own bowels, but they shall get no more of the creation to feed them.

4. They shall serve God's enemies no longer. Their long captivity shall then be at an end: Rom. viii. 21. The sun shall no more bestow one beam of its light on an ungodly wretch, nor shall the face of the earth bear him any longer. One drop of water to cool the tongue, shall no more be at his service. Then they shall bid an eternal farewell to the masters they served so long against their will.

5. All their misery, which was brought on them by man's sin, shall then be at an end. They have shared long with man in his plagues, but then they will get the burden off their back, Rom. viii. 21. The eating of the forbidden fruit cast them into a fever, they have groaned under it ever since; but then they shall get a cool, and never relapse more. Now, as to the way this shall be brought to pass, the scriptures are clear in two things:

(1.) That the world shall all go up in flames at the last day, which we call the general conflagration: 2 Pet. iii. 7. "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment,

ment, and perdition of ungodly men." The apostle is very particular on this, in the 10th verse: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." The visible heavens by these means shall pass away with a great noise. What a fearful noise would there be in a burning palace! what a noise, then, must there be arising from a dissolving world! the elements of air, water, and earth, shall be melted down like metal by that fire; the habitable earth shall be burnt up, with the works therein; men's works, cottages, palaces, castles, towns, and cities; God's works, all the creatures therein, birds, beasts, plants, trees, silver, gold, coin, &c.

(2.) That upon the back of this conflagration, there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, as in 2 Pet. iii. 13. This John sees, Rev. xxi. 1. To this purpose the psalmist speaks, telling us that the heavens and the earth shall be changed, which is quite another thing than to be annihilated. So the apostle Peter calls it only a dissolution, 2 Pet. iii. 11. And to this agrees what he says of melting by fire, which, we know, does not annihilate, but only purges the metal from dross.

So far the scripture clearly goes. But what particular creatures shall be renewed in the new earth, their actions, properties, and uses, I will not inquire into these things. It is certain that some creatures came in after sin. Anah found mules in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father, Gen. xxxvi. 24. The day will discover these things. But when one considers the world was made to be a looking-glass, wherein to behold
 God's

God's glorious perfections ; and that ever since it was made, it has been before sinful man, blinded with sin, except the short time Adam stood, it may occasion some thoughts as to what the state of matters shall be in a new heaven, and in a new earth.

—We come now,

III. To confirm the doctrine of the creatures' delivery.—As to this,

1. Consider, that the great day is the day of the restitution of all things : Acts, iii. 21. " Whom the heaven must retain, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began." When God made the world, there was nothing but harmony and orderliness in it. But as ever a rude heedless person, by a rash touch of his hand, defaced a fine picture, or disjointed and unframed a curious piece of work ; so did Adam's sin the world. But there is a restoration coming.—Consider,

2. That our Lord Jesus is the heir of all things, Heb. i. 2. God gave Adam a charter, to hold of him the great estate of the world. But, rebelling against his God, his estate was forfeited, and that charter-right void, because it depended on his good behaviour. The second Adam coming in his room, the forfeited estate is made over to him, Psal. viii. 5. 6. 7. compared with Heb. ii. 6. 7. 8. " But now we see not yet all things put under him." Ver. 9. " But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." But still in some sense he has not yet the actual possession of all, there are many of them still in the hands of his enemies, Heb. ii. 8. As
Jesus

Jesus Christ has a right to all the elect, though some of them are yet under the power of sin and Satan, and all of them, except a few singular persons, under the power of death, but Christ at that day will fully recover them all; so the creatures yet in the hand of his enemies, he will then restore, seeing they are all his by his Father's gift; hence we are taught that he will come again out of heaven for that restoration: Acts, iii. 21.—Consider,

3. That all the effects of the curse are to be gathered together, and confined for ever with the wicked in the lake: Rev. xx. 14. 15. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." Now, they lie scattered up and down through the whole creation, but they shall all meet together there; and therefore it evidently follows, that as to the creatures, their share of them, which makes them groan now, shall then be taken off them, and they for ever made free. As the mud and filthiness that lies in every part of the street being swept together, and cast into the common sink, it is all there then, and in no place else.—It remains,

IV. THAT we make some improvement.

1. In an use for information.

(1.) This teaches us that every wicked man shall at length get all his own burden to bear himself alone. Many one takes a light lift of the burden of sin, because there are so many to bear a share of it. Men provoke God, and God smites the earth that bears them with a curse, makes their poor beasts groan, &c. But these strokes are far from their hearts; they notwithstanding keep their sins.

If they groan at one time, they will recover again. But remember, O impenitent sinner! the day is coming when the creature shall escape, and leave thee in the lurch for all. The whole weight that is on them and thee together now, shall lie on thyself alone, and press thee down through eternity, while not one of the creatures shall touch it with the least of their fingers.—Learn,

(2.) That people had need to take heed how they use the creatures while they have them. For as much as they are under our feet now, their ears are not nailed to our door-posts to be our slaves for ever. The day of their freedom is approaching. Let us not abuse them to the service of our lusts, lest they witness against us at last. Let us not dishonour their Lord by them, lest they rejoice over us for ever in our misery, when their foot is out of the snare, and ours in it. Let us not put them in God's room, lest they send all the effects of the curse from off themselves on us, and so put us in the same place with devils.—We may hence see,

(3.) That this world, and what is therein, passeth away: 1 John, ii. 17. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." It is a stage of vanity that will be taken down, and the table of a dying life will come to an end. What marvel is it that man dies, seeing he lives by deaths, the death of the creatures; but this bondage of the creatures will not continue, they will be delivered, and God will support the life of man another way in eternity.

(4.) We may learn what glorious things will be the new heaven and the new earth! When the old cracked pewter vessel is melted down and refined, and cast into a new mould, how unlike will it be to what it was! The heavens and earth are now very glorious, yet sin has marred them. He

that made them is not pleased with them, and therefore will have them cast over again. If they be so glorious, even while so far unmade by sin, how great must their glory be when they are again new made!—We learn,

(5.) However large a share the wicked may have here, they will have neither part nor lot in them. For “in the new heavens and new earth dwelleth righteousness,” 2 Pet. iii. 13. For the wicked to be there, would be inconsistent with the creatures. But as for the saints, they have a charter, making over the earth to be theirs; which, seeing it is not fully put into their possession now, it must be in the other world: Matth. v. 5. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” But how and in what sense they shall possess it, I am not here to inquire.

2. From this subject we have afforded an use of terror to the wicked. How dreadful shall their case be at the end of the world! Come, O impenitent sinner! behold here, as in a glass, the misery that is abiding thee. Thou canst make a shift now for thy ease, but what wilt thou do then? It is terrible news to thee, that the creature shall be delivered.—For,

(1.) The misery that lies this day on any creature whatever for thy sake, shall be taken off it, and laid on thee thyself; and when all is laid on thee, thy burden will be insupportable. There is a curse on thee already, as a transgressor of the law, Gal. iii. 10. But a heavy end of the curse lies on the creatures for thy sake: Gen. iii. 17. “Curst is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.” There is no way to extinguish the curse but by faith in Christ’s blood, which thou flightest. Therefore, seeing there must be a removal of it from the creatures,

it

it must needs be turned over on thee, and with thee turned out of the world: Matth. xxv. 41. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Compare Rev. xiv. 10. "Thou shalt also drink of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation, and thou shalt be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." And wilt thou not then cry out with Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear?" Gen. iv. 13.

(2.) As thou wilt be deserted of God, so thou wilt be deserted of the creatures in thy misery. No help from heaven, none from earth: Isa. viii. 21. 22. "And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: And it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their King, and their God, and look upwards. And they shall look unto the earth, and behold, trouble and darkness, dinness and anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness." When thine enemy falls upon thee, all thy friends will run away from thee. There are two ways by which the ungodly get ease in the world, which will both fail them here.

[1.] Though they have no comfort or satisfaction in God, they can take it in the creature. Though they see no beauty in Christ, they see a great deal in the world. Though the marriage-supper of the King's Son be to them a light matter, yet the farm and the merchandise are not so; Matth. xxii. 4.—7. Though they have no heart for the bargain of the everlasting covenant, Prov. xvii. 16. yet they are easy when they can win a few pence or pounds. Though the promises of things unseen are to them hungry things, empty

shadows, yet what they can see with their eyes, and get a hold of with their hands, are substantial: Hof. xiii. 6. "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me." Though the man cannot lie on his right side, he can lie full well on his left; though not on his back, looking up to heaven, yet on his face, looking down to the earth. But, ah! sirs, this trade of yours will not last; you will not shift long this way; the creature will be delivered, and what wilt thou do then? Thou wilt not have a whole side to turn thee to then; thou shalt have as little comfort in the creature then as in God, and that is none at all. He that has but one pillar to lean to, had need to have it a durable one. But thou hast but one, and it cannot last.

[2.] If they cannot find it in one creature, they take it in another. If Haman cannot have the comfort of Mordecai's bowing, he can take it in revenge. If there be not sap enough in one creature, he can go to another, and so make shift. But this trade will not last either. For the whole creation shall be delivered; and if all must go, there will be nothing left thee to ease thee in thy misery. Was not Job in a heavy case, when he was full of sores, his whole body over, and all his friends deserted him? Job, xix. 13.—19. But what was all this to what shall be thy case for ever? If you call to the sun that serves you now, it will not bestow one single gleam of light upon you;—to the waters, they will not afford thee one drop to cool thy tongue;—to all that ever thou possessed upon the earth, it will not do thee the least service. For then their term is out, and they will leave thee for ever.—How heavy will all this be!

1st, To be thus left by all thy gods that had
most

most of thy heart when thy days of strength were. O faithless world ! is this thy kindness to thy friends ? Is this the reward of the precious heart and affections, time and soul, spent on thee ? Must they that loved it best, have least comfort of it one day ? They whose hearts idolized it, be the only persons abandoned by it in misery ? Yes, it must be so, and that justly. For it was no more pleasant to the creature to be set in God's room, than it was to a slave to be forced into the king's throne by his master.

2dly, To be concluded under such misery, when the creature, thy servant and slave, which thou didst use and abuse according to thy will and lust, shall be set free. When the suffering of the creature by thy hands shall cease, then thy suffering shall begin. As the heavens abused by Antichrist are called, on the fall of his kingdom, to rejoice, Rev. xviii. 20. ; so the abused creatures will turn their groans into songs of triumph upon thy ruin. And to be insulted in misery by any, is sad ; but saddest of all to be insulted by those that sometime were our slaves.—This subject may be improved,

3. In an use of comfort to the serious and godly, who notice the groans of the creatures under sin, and join their own groanings with theirs. This cloud, that has so black and lowring a side to others, has a fair, white, lightsome side to you.—The creatures shall be delivered.

(1.) The mournful spectacle of the creatures which you see to-day, if that day were come, ye shall see no more for ever. You not long ago saw the heaven as brass, and the earth as iron, and you heard an extraordinary groaning among the creatures. But their groans are not gone, though become lower ; as yet the sun must serve to

let wicked men see to dishonour God ; the earth and sea must afford God's good creatures to be fuel to men's lusts. Many a good creature must lose its life, to preserve the lives of them who live but to dishonour God ; and every creature, meat, drink, and the like, is abused, and groans under the abuse. Well, the day is coming, when they will groan no more ; nor shall you need to groan for them. The travailing creation will cast out its sorrows.

(2.) If that day were come, ye shall also be delivered. You shall groan no more under your own burdens. This is the time of your travail, then ye shall be well : John, xvi. 20. " Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice : and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Ver. 22. " And now ye therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice ; and your joy no man taketh from you." May we not argue here as our Lord doth ? If God so clothe the grass, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, will he not much more clothe us ? And as the apostle, " Doth God take care for oxen, to deliver them, and will he not take care for us ?" If God deliver the old groaning creature, will he not deliver the new creature, that is also groaning ? Yea, surely you shall be delivered,—delivered from sin, the body of sin, you now groan under ; the cords of guilt shall be broken in pieces ; the iron-bands of sin's tyrannical power shall be burst asunder ; the old tenant, that has sit long against your will, shall be cast out, never to set his foot in again : 1 John, iii. 2. " Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him,
for

for we shall see him as he is." Your candle shall not burn dim any more, nor your fire be weakly. In the garden, now so much overgrown, there shall not be one weed, nay, nor the least seed of one left : " The Egyptians, whom ye see to-day, ye shall see no more for ever." Ye shall be delivered from all the consequences of sin. Though you are at present recovering of the deadly disease, yet the effects of it hang about you ; miseries on your soul, body, character, and the like ; but then all of these shall take wing, never to return. No more complaints of a weak and crazy body ; no more reproaches, crosses, and losses ; no more temptations, for when the carcase is removed, why should the eagles gather together ? The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed, 1 Cor. xv. 53. Ye shall have a perfect delivery.

There are four words Christ spoke of, or to Lazarus, at raising him from the dead. These he speaks for the elect.

The *first* word is, " Where have ye laid him ?" John, xi. 34. The old murderer took away the elect's life among the rest, and every elect soul he has naturally buried in trespasses and sins. But our Lord, coming to seek what was lost, sends the gospel to the elect ; and though the party himself cannot discern the gospel-language, yet others do discern it, and hear Christ in the gospel saying of the elect soul, " Where have ye laid him ?"

The *second* word is, " Take ye away the stone," ver. 39. This is spoken for the work of conviction. Though the dead soul cannot hear it, it is heard : ' My Spirit,' says he, ' let him alone no more ; conscience, awaken and rouse him up ; law, take him by the throat ; off with his ignorance of God, of sin, and of himself ; break his security,
throw

throw by his self-conceit and fig-leave coverings :
 "Take ye away the stone."

The *third* word is, "Lazarus, come forth!" ver. 43. This is spoken for the work of conversion. It carries life along with it, the soul hears this voice, and lives. Then the Spirit of Christ enters into the soul, and he that was dead in sin lives to God, and is coming forth in the progress of sanctification. But, O how slowly does he come forth! For though the reigning power of death be broken, yet the grave-cloaths are still about him, which entangle him. Though he can move both hands and feet, which he could not do before, yet there are bands on them both. This is all that is heard in time. But good news to the groaning Christian: At the last day, ye shall hear the last word, which is the

Fourth, "Loose him, and let him go," ver. 44. Then not only sin, but all the consequences of it, shall be taken off. No more sin, pain, death, sorrow, or any such thing. Then comes the glorious liberty of the sons of God, which Christ has purchased, which God has promised, which the whole creation is earnestly expecting, and which the spiritual Christian is groaning and waiting for, Rom. viii. 21. 23.—I come now to a

4. And last use, of exhortation as to these things.

(1.) Let us believe, and give God the glory due to his name. Man is changeable, and he that depends upon his promise may soon find that he trusts to a broken reed. But not so with God's promises: Psal. lvi. 10. "In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word." Abraham had a promise of a very unlikely thing; he believed the promise, and it was accomplished, Rom. iv. 17.—21. Is it unlikely that the creature shall be delivered? Yet God has said it; believe

lieve, and give him the glory of his power, that will perform this great thing. Should all the angels and men in the universe conspire to free the groaning creation, they could not effect it. It is long since they were nonplussed in the case of refreshing the weary earth with a shower of rain: Jer. xiv. 20. "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers?" Nay, men conspire to hold down, to abuse the creatures, and keep the hold they have got of them. And the earth is made a field of blood for the mastery over them. But God will end the quarrel, and deliver the creature out of wicked hands. The second Adam is as able to restore, as the first was to break in pieces. Give him the glory of his goodness, that will not allow it always to go ill with the good. God's good creatures suffer for man's sake; but a good God will not suffer it always to be so. How much more will he provide, that piety shall not always be ashamed, and wickedness triumph! The day will come, when none will be high but they that are holy. Give him the glory of being mindful of his promise, and stedfast to his word. It is more than five thousand years since he subjected the creature to vanity in hope; and so, to this day, they not only groan, but they travail, in the hope of delivery; and their hope shall not make them ashamed. O that it could make us ashamed of our hope wearing out so soon under afflictions! to whom a few years, months, days, nay, even hours, are sufficient many times to make us hopeless.

(2.) Let us believe this delivery, and walk answerable to the faith of it: 2 Pet. iii. 11. "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!"

[1.]

[1.] Let us use the creatures as servants, not as slaves ; allowing them a regard suitable to their natures and use. God has given the creatures into our hands, and they must endure much misery for our profit ; and even that may be humbling to us, as being the consequence of sin. But that ever God allowed man to make a sport of the proper effects of sin, to torment and put to pain, any creature, merely for his pleasure, is what I do not believe. And therefore grave divines do condemn cock-fighting, and such like, as unlawful recreations ; and I think not without good ground. Sure I am Solomon says, “ A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast ; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel,” Prov. xii. 10. And to whom can the needless torment of the poor creatures create pleasure, but to the cruel or unthinking ?

[2.] Let us labour to use the creatures soberly, and in the fear of God, and not abuse them to the service of our lusts. God allows us them for our necessity, convenience, and delight, in sobriety, but not to be fuel to our lusts. Let us use them so as we would wish to have done in the day when we will see them delivered ; that is, use them to the honour of God.

[3.] Let us never build our nest in that tree at the root of which the axe is lying. The creature is passing, lay not the weight of your portion upon it. Ye cannot abide with this world ; and if ye could, it will not abide with you. He is a fool, though he act the part of a king on a stage, who looks not for a portion that will be more abiding. For where is he when the stage is taken down ?

[4.] Look for your portion in another world, where is an enduring substance : Matth. vi. 19.

“ Lay

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal :” Verse 20. “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” This world is no continuing city ; look out for one that is to come. That is life, which begins after death is subdued, and when men shall die no more. To be easy here is no great matter, but to be so then is what should be our chief concern.

[5.] Be holy in all manner of conversation, 2 Pet. iii. 11. This is the time of God’s forbearance, wherein many confusions are suffered in the world : The holy and unholy are mixed : The effects of sin lie on God’s good creatures, as well as sinners : But this will draw to an end, and there will be a fair separation. It concerns you now to see on what side you shall be set, to distinguish yourselves by holiness now, from those you would be distinguished from by happiness hereafter.

(3.) And last place. Believe thy delivery, and help it forwards with your prayers. Cry for the great deliverance, the restitution of all things. It is one of six petitions our Lord has put into our mouths, “Thy kingdom come ;” and the last in the book of God is, “Even so come, Lord Jesus,” Rev. xxii. 20.—I would have you to consider,

[1.] That the churches are all groaning together this day ; some of them under temporal plagues, being raised by Antichrist ; all of them under spiritual plagues, a fearful decay of power and purity among them, whereby the disease is become general. The concern for the Protestant interest is very little at the hearts of some Protestant states. But a due concern for the Protestant religion,

religion, the promoting truth and holiness, by a thorough reformation, appears to be very little at the hearts of any of them: Isa. lxiii. 5. "And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me."

[2.] That the wheels of providence seem to be running speedily forward to great changes in the world. God is shaking the nations, and things appear as in Luke, xxi. 10. 11. "Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines and pestilences; and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven." And who knows what shall be the issue? But we may be sure that the mystery of God is carrying on by them, and a way making towards it being finished.

Let us then, by our prayers, help on the deliverance of the creation, from sin and its consequences, by crying mightily to the Lord, that these glorious things which are spoken of the city of God in the latter days may be fulfilled, and so the end may come.—I now proceed to

DOCT. III. THAT the whole creation makes a mournful concert in the ears of serious Christians, by their groans under man's sin.—Or, That how deaf soever others be to the groans of the creature under man's sin, serious Christians will not be so, they will be affected with them.—In speaking to this, I shall be very short.

I SHALL only, in a few words,

- I. Mention the reasons why they so affect serious Christians.
- II. Make some improvement.

I. I AM to mention the reasons why they so affect serious Christians.—Among others, there are the following.

1. They are the undoubted marks of man's fall and apostacy from God, which cannot fail to affect a serious heart. Sin has marred the beauty of the creation; and though blackness is no deformity among blackamores, yet it is so amongst the whites. Some glory in their shame, but they will not do so to whom sin has been truly shameful. Now, these groans are the memorials of the fall.

2. They are the constant evidences of God's indignation against, and hatred of sin, which are never wanting in the world. And it is a child-like disposition to be affected with the tokens of their father's anger; though they who have no care to please God, can easily pass the signs of God's displeasure, others cannot.

3. They bring their own sins to remembrance; and a tender conscience disposes persons to think, 'This is for my sake, for my provocations, that they suffer.' And so the saints groan with the groaning creatures, and long for the common deliverance.

4. God is dishonoured by the sinner's abuse of the creatures. This makes both the creature and true Christians to groan, to see God's good creatures abused, to the dishonour of their Creator.

II. I AM now to make some improvement; and all I propose here, is an Exhortation—not to be deaf to the groans of the creation under man's sin, but to be suitably affected with them. God has not only made them groan with their ordinary, but with an extraordinary groan; and if you do not from hence see what an ill thing sin is, what a just God the

Lord is, and how severely he punishes, and so set forwards to reformation of life, you may assure yourselves you will see these things more to your cost, when you yourselves shall be made to groan under the heavy hand of the Lord.

Alas ! for the security and impenitency of Scotland ; nothing of all we have yet met with, will rouse us out of it. Take heed that God do not create a new thing amongst us, which whoso shall hear of, their ears shall tingle, and thus groans of another sort from houses and fields shall be heard.

O that we were shewing ourselves serious Christians, by our being deeply affected by the groans of the creation under sin ! If we were so, we would be,

(1.) Groaning under a sense of our own sin, and the sins of the land ; mourning for the dishonour done to God by ourselves and others, by which we have grieved the Spirit of God, and burdened the very earth that bears us.

(2.) We would be weaned from, and in a holy manner wearying of the world, which is a compound of sin, misery, and vanity.

Lastly, We would be longing for the glorious day of the great change abiding the world, when our Lord's kingdom shall be fully come,—the mystery of God finished,—sin and misery swept out of the world,—and the saints and the creatures perfectly delivered. Amen.

FAITHFULNESS TOWARDS GOD EXEMPLIFIED
AND REWARDED*.

S E R M O N XXIX.

NUMB. xiv. 24. *But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it.*

THE Lord being provoked with the murmuring of the people, in consequence of the ill report of the land brought by the spies, though he did not destroy the people all at once; yet, justly displeased, he threatened to cut off the whole generation of murmurers, so that not one of them should come to Canaan. His anger at the rebels, however, did not make him forget his faithful servant Caleb, who had acted a totally different part from the rest of the spies, together with Joshua, who is not named here, because now he was not numbered with the people, being for the present the

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attendant

* Delivered after the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, July 1712.

attendant of Moses, and afterwards his successor, as captain to lead the children of Israel into Canaan. This intimates to us, that God's own people may get special intimations of his love in a time when God is angry with the generation. However great the darkness may be, some select ones will always have a Goshen, a land of light to dwell in. Joys may be their portion, while God is distributing sorrows to others.

There were twelve spies, all of them noblemen or gentlemen, heads of the children of Israel, Num. xiii. 3. There were two, and but two of them, faithful to God and their country. Ten of them brought up an ill report of the land, dishonoured God, and ruined both their countrymen and themselves. They that are false to God, will never be true friends to their country. Hence we see, though not many noble are called, yet some are. Greatness and goodness met in Caleb.—Goodness, that he would not desert the cause of God, notwithstanding of all the ill company with which he was associated. They have little religion, that will not endure the shock of ill company, be they never so great.—In the text there is,

1. Caleb's character.—More generally, God owned him as his servant. This honour God put upon him. It is an honour to the greatest to be God's servants; though the greater part will rather be the devil's slaves, and count that their honour. But blackness is beauty among black men.—More particularly, Caleb was a man of a truly gallant and generous spirit. His name signifies all heart, and his disposition corresponded with his name. He had another spirit than that of the world, another than his own, another than the rest of the spies. He possessed a spirit from heaven, calculated for the work to which he was appointed; and

and that Spirit inspired him with courage, with undaunted resolution, while the rest were misled by a base, mean, sneaking spirit. He was truly courageous in his actions; his other spirit made him behave himself otherwise than the rest. He followed the Lord fully; he walked with the Lord, kept close by his duty, in opposition to all difficulties and discouragements. He was not afraid of the Anakims, nor did his undaunted heart shrink at the sight of their high walls. He knew that towns, walls, armies, and giants, must fall before the Lord, when his promise was engaged for it. His companions deserted and contradicted him in his good report. The people threatened him with stoning, but he was all heart, would not yield, but followed the Lord fully. (Hebrew, fulfilled after the Lord). Whatever way the Lord led, he followed.—In the text there is,

2. The gracious recompence which God promised to his steadiness and faithfulness; that is, the possession of that good land, while the carcases of the rest fell. Piety is the best policy. They who are careful of God's honour, he will see to their interest. Caleb was to fight for the land, but God says, I will bring him into it. The praise of the success of our endeavours is due to the Lord only; this promise secured his through-bearing over all difficulties.—From this subject, we may draw the following doctrines, which we shall attend to in their order, viz.

DOCT. I. That the honest servants of Jesus Christ must distinguish themselves from others, by following the Lord fully.

DOCT. II. That they who would follow the Lord fully must have another spirit, another than the

spirit of the world, another than their own spirit naturally is.

DOCT. III. That those who, by following the Lord fully in the time of great declining, distinguish themselves from others, God will distinguish them, by special marks of favour in a time of great calamity. - The scripture affords many instances in proof of this, as Noah, Lot, Jeremiah, &c.——We begin with

DOCT. I. That the honest servants of Jesus Christ must distinguish themselves from others, by following the Lord fully.——For illustrating this doctrine, it is intended,

- I. To shew what it is to follow the Lord fully.
- II. To give the reasons of the point. And then,
- III. To improve the subject.——We are then,

I. To shew what it is to follow the Lord fully.

1. It is to follow the Lord *only* as our great guide and leader : Heb. xii. 2. “ Let us run the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” They that follow not the Lord only, do not follow him fully, Hof. x. 2. “ Their heart is divided.” Their heart was going, one part after the Lord, another after their idols. He must have the whole man. Now, this implies two things.

(1.) The soul’s ceasing to follow all others who do not lead in subordination, but in contradiction to him. We have eaten our gospel-paschover, and must now set forwards on our journey. We stand as in a place where two ways meet, and at the entrance to these ways there are false guides, who cry, Follow us ; the Lord says, as in Song, iv. 8. “ Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse.”—

We

We must not follow false guides. — We must not follow our own spirits: Prov. xxviii. 26. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Most men's spirits are quite blind: "Ye were sometimes darkness," Eph. v. 8. The best of them are but in their spiritual child-hood, not to be trusted to themselves, but standing in need of a governor. They are naturally biassed guides, having a bent the wrong way. There are many snares which our spirits perceive not, till they are caught in them as a bird; they often grasp delusions instead of light; and men's thoughts in religion, not regulated by the word, prove as false lights on the sea, that occasion the ship's dashing on a rock. Let us look above us, rather than within us, for our way.—Again, we must not follow our own lusts: Rom. viii. 1. "Who walk not after the flesh." Lusts are followed by many unto their own perdition; when they lead, the devil drives, because they lead the highway from God. Wind and tide from hell go with the stream of corrupt lusts, while the soul follows as an ox to the slaughter. Much of the spiritual warfare here lies in striving against this stream.—Neither must we follow the world; the world would have the leading of all, and it gets the leading of its own.—We must not follow the men of the world: 1 Cor. vii. 23. "Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men." No man must be followed farther than he follows Christ. The dictates and commandments of men, be they ever so great, are no rule for conscience and practice: "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." It was the sin of Ephraim, Hos. v. 11. that "he willingly walked after the commandment." They have little faith, or truth either, that will pin
their

their faith to the sleeve of any.—Farther, Follow not the course and way of the world : Rom. xii. 2. “ Be not conformed to the world.” To be neighbour-like is not the plain way to heaven, but a plausible way to hell, for the most part of people’s neighbours are going the broad way. There will none seek to heaven, but a peculiar people, a singular sort of persons, true separatists from the multitude, who must resolve to be men wondered at. They that will follow the multitude must perish with the multitude, and it will be cold comfort to us, that we go to hell with a company.—Finally, Follow not the smiles of the world. If we will follow the Lord fully, we must lift our process, and leave off to make our court to a bewitching world, which treats its followers like the false irregular lights that are sometimes seen in the night, which pleases the eye of the traveller, but leads him off his way into some quagmire, obliging him to retire with shame and sorrow. How often does the world repay our love with frowns, and kills when it flatters.—This implies,

(2.) The soul’s following the Lord in opposition to all these. The souls of men are ruined by an exchange of the living God for idols: Jer. ii. 13. “ For my people have committed two evils : they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” And their salvation is begun by an exchange of idols for the true God. The devil, the world, and the flesh, make many offers ; God makes one, “ I will be thy God,” which, in a day of power, downweighs all the offers of the world and of hell. Hence, when the man is brought to follow the Lord fully, then farewell all others, and the Lord is welcome for all. There the eye of the soul is fixed. You may take this in three things.

[1.] The

[1.] The Lord points out to his people the place of eternal rest, a city where they may abide. This they follow after as their grand prospect in the world: Heb. xi. 14.—16. “For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.” There they must be, there they are resolved to be, cost what it will: Matth. xi. 12. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” Their great question is, “What shall we do to be saved?” While others are following what is about them, they follow what is above them for their happiness; they will not have their portion in this world, nor can such small things satisfy them. They are inspired with holy ambition to have a place among them that stand before the throne of God and the Lamb. Their other spirit so ennobles them, as that they cannot rest in these little views, which the serpents’ feed have before their eyes. It is a holy flame which natively ascends, and carries the soul upward: Phil. iii. 20. “For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

[2.] The Lord points out the way leading to eternal rest; and they following the Lord fully, their heart follows him, making choice of it. He points out Christ the personal way, John, xiv. 6. Then the soul that was knocking at, and working to win in at Adam’s bolted door, the covenant of works, gives it over, and comes in by the door of the sheep, renouncing the way of the law, that old, dead,

dead, killing way, and chusing to enter by the new and living way, Heb. x. 20. The Lord points to the real way of holiness, Isa. xxxv. 8. That way they chuse: Psal. cxix. 30. "I have chosen the way of truth." This is their choice, that they may not be either among the faithless workers, or the idle, indolent believers, neither of whom follow the Lord fully. True, it is a difficult way; both the way of believing, and the way of holiness, lie up-hill, but they halt no more. Their feet follow him, walking in it. He sets them to the strait gate, and they enter on the narrow way, and they walk in it. Better a narrow way to heaven, than a broad way to hell. Their choice is followed with action, their purposes issue in sincere endeavours, and their resolutions are crowned with practice: Psal. cxix. 106. "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgements." Like Naphtali, they give goodly words, and, like Joseph, are as a fruitful bough.

[3.] The Lord goes before them, and they follow his steps. He is glorious in holiness, and their design is to be like him, holy, as he is holy. They labour to imitate him in his imitable perfections. They are "followers of God, as dear children." There is a likeness betwixt a man and his God, and therefore the heathens, when they could not be like God in holiness, they made their gods like themselves in filthiness; and God, to shew men how they should walk, sent his own Son in manhood, both to die for sinners, and also to leave them an example, that men might see with their eyes how God walked, and so learn how he would have them to walk. Thus we must write after his copy, 1 John, ii. 6. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

And

And no less pattern do they propose to themselves who follow the Lord fully.

2. To follow the Lord fully, is to follow him *universally*: Psal. cxix. 6. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Whosoever says he will come after me, they must follow me *in all things, in all times, in all places, with all their souls*. No exceptions can be admitted in following the Lord; but as the resignation at first was absolute, if honest, so must the following be. This is to follow him fully, to fulfil all the will of God.—More particularly,

They that would follow the Lord fully, must follow the Spirit of the Lord, and not follow their own spirit. It is an ordinary character of a Christian in Paul's epistles, that he walks after the Spirit. It is the work of the Spirit to bring in light, to discover sin and duty; we must entertain it, and comply with it, we must answer the call: Psal. xxvii. 8. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." To incline and fit the soul for following, we must beware of quenching the Spirit, but rather, when the wind blows, spread out our sails, that they may be filled by it. We must be spiritual in our hearts, lips, and lives.

They must follow the word of the Lord, Psal. cxix. 30. The Lord's written word is the Christian's directory for heaven, the compass by which he is guided on the sea of this world, and by which he is to steer his course. It is the map of the country to which, and through which, he is travelling. Thence must he take his way-marks. What the Bible says, should seldom be out of the Christian's heart. Those who study the Bible, have the advantage above all others, they get their directors away to heaven with them. "It is written," will be enough

enough to them that follow the Lord fully. They will make the word of the Lord overcome their prejudices. Isa. xi. 6. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: And the calf, and the young lion, and the fattling together: And a little child shall lead them."

They must follow the providential will of the Lord: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." If we have said, I am the Lord's, then we must have said, Our will is the Lord's. It remains that our will should follow the Lord's, as the shadow doth the body. If it be God's will that we should be poor, sick, crossed, &c. that should also be our will; if not, we do not follow the Lord fully. It is a sad matter we should give up ourselves to be servants, and yet still aim at being masters, to cut and carve for ourselves. There will be a crook in every lot of ours under the sun. Eccles. i. 15. "That which is crooked cannot be made straight." That which is crooked, in respect of our will, is straight enough with God's, which is the true rule, so that if we follow the Lord fully, our will should be bended to the crook, and not the crook straighted to our will.

Again, we must follow the cause and interest of the Lord in the world. There is always war in the heaven of the church, between Michael and the dragon, though it does not always come to blood. The armies are always in the field, though they are not always actually engaged in a serious battle. Ye must be on the Lord's side, whether it be the highest, or the lowest in the world. There is no lying neutral here; if we be not for God and his cause, then we are against him. This is a day wherein the enemy has displayed his banners; and we also have a banner to be
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displayed

displayed because of truth: "Who is on the Lord's side? Who?" It is time God's people were taking courage to them, and cleaving to the Lord, his way and work in this covenanted land, in spite of all opposition.

In the next place, we must follow the ordinances and institutions of the Lord, that doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, which has the Lord's stamp on it, the preaching of his word, and the sacraments, &c. It is lamentable to think how that spirit is gone, which some time ago was among people, for following the ordinances of the Lord. We are even glutted and surfeited with them. Opportunities of communion with God are undervalued. People will deprive themselves of them, from reasons which, if they were to lose a sixpence by, they would quickly come over. It was the commendation of the Levites, and godly people through the ten tribes in Jeroboam's time, that "they followed the ordinances of the Lord." All these came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers.

We must also follow the worship of the Lord. —The secret worship of the Lord by ourselves alone: Matth. vi. 6. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Secret prayer is a duty which they who are exercised unto godliness cannot live without, a duty in which communion with God is as readily to be had as in any other; and though there may be prayers in your family, yet, if you know your duty, you will also pray in your closet.

—Family-prayer: "Pour out," says the prophet, "thy fury upon the heathen, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." What do prayerless

families but expose themselves to the wrath of God? Every house should be a church. We receive family-mercies, and are chargeable with many family-sins; why not then family-worship? And do they follow the Lord fully that halve their family-worship? They will worship God at night, but not in the morning. Complain not of want of time, others in your circumstances get time when they have a heart to it.—Next, internal worship, without which all your external worship will be to no purpose. There is no following of the Lord fully, if that be wanting: Phil. xiii. 3. “We are the circumcision, that worship God in the spirit;” that is, in the exercise of grace with external worship; fear, reverence, faith, hope, love, and other holy affections, which are the life and soul of worship.

Finally, they must follow the Lord so as that one thing be not wanting: Mark x. 21. “One thing thou lackest.” There is one thing usually that is the great thing which stands betwixt every one and heaven: It is as it were the *Shibboleth* they cannot frame to pronounce. They can comply with any duty, part with every sin, bear any cross, but such a duty, such a sin, such a cross. And therein they say, as Naaman, 2 Kings, v. 18. “In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant. When I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.” But this is not to follow the Lord fully. People must either come over that also, or they cannot prove their sincerity. The only course to take here is that, in Matth. v. 29. 30. “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right-hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee.” Herein lies the great evidence

evidence of sincerity; and the victory over predominant lusts is like that over the Anakims, which will cost many a severe struggle.

3. To follow the Lord fully, is to follow him uprightly. A hypocrite does but walk in a vain show. His feet only, not his heart, do follow the Lord. God, who is the maker and the searcher of the heart, will never reckon himself followed fully in a carcase of duties; but notices the manner, motive, principle, and end of actions, which, if they be not right, all is wrong.—Then, to follow the Lord fully, is to follow him honestly in respect of our principle, not with a carnal selfish principle, which can only set us a-going, but with a spiritual, lial principle; not as a mercenary soldier follows his captain, but as a child follows his father: John, vi. 26. “Ye follow me,” said Jesus, “not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.” There is a selfish religion, where self is the chief wheel that sets all a-going.—We must follow him singly, in respect of our end; following the Lord with a design and desire to please him, and not for carnal selfish ends. What is not done for the Lord, as the chief end, he will never reward. Want of singleness in the end, maims the action; as when a wife adorns herself to please an adulterer, her aim would make her action abominable.—We must follow the Lord evangelically, in respect of the manner; following the Lord, leaning on his, and not on our own strength. This is the life of faith in obedience, by which the soul goes out of itself to the Lord for all strength, saying, as in Psal. lxxi. 16. “I will go in the strength of the Lord.”

4. To follow the Lord fully, is to follow him constantly: John, viii. 31. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue

in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." It is a small matter to begin well, but it is the continuing to follow the Lord which is true following of him. It is a following the Lord *habitually* and *evenly*, so that our souls are fixed on this as their ordinary bend. It is not to take up our religion by fits and starts. We must delight ourselves in the Lord, and call always upon our God. This must be our daily business, not our by-hand work. It was the fault of Rehoboam, 2 Chron. xii. 14. "He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." And it is the fault of many, that they are unstable as water in matters of religion; many people's religion is like a tree-leg, which they can lay by and put to as their convenience requires. We must follow the Lord, so as to end our journey without defection and apostacy: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." We must not follow the Lord as ordinary servants, who have their term-day, at which they give up with their masters. But our course of obedience must have its perfect work; we must go through with the work of Christ to the end. Apostates are not fit for heaven: "No man," said Jesus, "having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven," Luke ix. 62. But fearful is their doom, if they apostatise: "If any man," says God, "draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38.

Finally, it is to follow the Lord resolutely, as Ruth did Naomi, in opposition to all discouragements and impediments in the way. There is the river of the evil example of the world, but they must strive against the stream; there are corrupt strong lusts of the heart, but they must cut off right hands, and pluck out right eyes; and there is the cross that will be laid on their backs, which they must

must go through with, and not turn their backs on the Lord in a stormy day, but trample on all which they have in the world to follow the Lord. They must not be as those who go to sea for pleasure, but like hardy mariners, who ride out the storm.—We now proceed,

II. To give the reasons of the point.

Among others, we shall mention the following.

1. Because the change made in regeneration is a real change, though not perfect. Believers are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." The new creature, from the time of its birth, is perfect in its parts, though not in degrees. There is something a-wanting in every part of the new man, but no part is altogether a-wanting. Each gracious person has all the graces of the Spirit, though some of them are more eminent than the rest, and are as top-branches. This cannot but produce a following the Lord in a gospel-sense.

2. In closing with Christ there is an universal resignation. They give themselves up wholly to the Lord. No exception can be made, but the most difficult duty is undertaken, the dearest lust is given up with. It remains that people's sincerity in closing with Christ be evidenced by their walk, in an unlimited respect to all his commandments, in following the Lord whithersoever he goes.

3. The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, Eph. v. 9. When there is not something of all goodness, there the Spirit dwelleth not. Where the garden is only watered by man's hands, there some plants thrive, others go back for lack of moisture; but where the shower comes from heaven, it brings all forward together. So where there is an artificial religion taken up by

nien, there may be some partial or external appearance of good fruits; but where the Spirit is at work in the soul, real goodness, and righteousness, and truth, will at once be brought forth in the life and practice.

4. True mortification is universal. Where death comes, it takes the life out of the whole body, the soul departs from every part. So, Gal. v. 24. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Sin keeps its dominion by one lust, as well as by many; therefore where any lust remains unsubdued, there is no genuine mortification there. But where genuine mortification to sin is, the soul will follow the Lord fully.

5. Hypocrites may follow the Lord, but none can fully follow him, but those that are sincere. Judas may be in Christ's company, but the bag was always dearer to him than his master. Demas, because he loved the present world, apostatised; so that, unless we follow the Lord fully, we go not beyond the line of hypocrites.—I now go on,

III. To make some improvement.—And this,

1. In an use of warning.

This may serve to warn one and all of us, to take heed to our ways, and examine well our walk, whether we follow the Lord fully or not. Much depends upon it. None follow the Lord fully in a strict sense, while out of heaven, but all honest Christians follow him in a gospel-sense. Therefore we may well suspect your states, if you do not follow the Lord fully. This may strike a damp upon the spirits,

(1.) Of the more gross sort of professors, whose religion appears plainly to be but half religion; who, even in the externals of religion, take some parts,

parts, and leave others which they know to be duty; like these, Zeph. i. 5. "who worship the host of heaven upon the house-tops, and that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham;" that will sometimes be praying, and sometimes cursing, taking parts of religion only here and there.—It may strike a damp on the spirits,

(2.) Of the more cleanly sort of professors, who go a great length, only lack one thing. There is one thing that is the great make-bate betwixt God and them; and they go through all the rest of religion, but there they are mired, there they stick. That is the great gulf fixed between heaven and them, through which they can by no means pass. But pass it we must, or we follow not the Lord fully. Some do not see it, then it is the more dangerous; but seen it must be, and also overcome, or men may bid farewell to heaven: Rev. iii. 21. "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne."—Here some may state an

OBJECTION, If following the Lord fully take in all these things, who does it? In ANSWER, These follow the Lord fully, in a gospel-sense, who,

(1.) Observe the Lord daily, and bear up after him in every step, yet, like the weak child following its mother, their eye follows him, their desire goes out after him, they would be at him, and with him, wherever he goes.—This implies two things.—(1.) Their observing all the prints of his feet, they love all his footsteps, they love all the duties of religion for his sake, and desire to perform all his commandments: Psal. cxix. 5. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" Their heart is in some measure reconciled to every known duty, and at variance with every known sin.

sin. The spirit is willing, though the flesh be weak. Some sins lie nearer their hearts than others; some are as right eyes, others only but as left toes; but, O! a right eye plucked out is good in their sight, the contrary grace is beautiful and glorious, and the desire of their souls: Rom. vii. 12.

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”—(2.) Their observing himself as the centre of all their desires. All goodness, holiness, and perfection, center in him. That which is scattered here and there in his word, ordinances, and people, they take a view of, as concentrated in himself, and so see in him at one view the whole of what they should be; they are pleased with it, and sincerely desire to be like him.—These follow the Lord fully,

(2.) Who aim after the Lord fully; though they cannot follow him precisely in every point, they aim at, they endeavour it, as the child following its mother, weeping, and making what way it can after her. This implies two things.—(1.) They aim at the performance of all duties, and warring against every sin. They do not give goodly words, and so fold their hands together, wishing they were better; but they even put their hands to roll up the stone, which yet perhaps may come down and down, over and over again, upon them. They aim at being holy in all manner of conversation, 1 Pet. i. 15. Grace infuses a principle in the heart, that turns the man towards every thing to which God calls.—(2.) They aim at the all of every duty, to get it right as to the manner, as well as to the matter: Phil. iii. 3. “They worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”—I come now,

2. To an use of exhortation.

I exhort you to distinguish yourselves from others, by your following the Lord fully. Sirs! have

have ye a desire for heaven or not? If ye have no desire, you may sit still at ease, time will carry you down the stream to an eternity of woe! If ye have a desire for heaven, then up, follow the Lord, follow him fully. Set your affections that way. You follow duties; that is not enough, follow the Lord in these fully, or you will never see heaven. I hope you are not for bidding farewell to, and taking your last sight of heaven. If then you be in earnest to get to heaven, set yourselves to follow the Lord fully. Before I press this upon you by motives, I exhort you to take a solemn, grave, and serious consideration of what is lacking in your conversation, that you may fill it up by following the Lord. We must see our defects before we can fill them up. To assist you in this, consider what is wanting,

(1.) In your mortification of sin, what right eye remains to be plucked out, lest there may be some one leak or other that may sink the ship: Psal. lxi. 18. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Self-love prevails much, and hence lusts, beloved lusts, find harbour, and escape the axe.—Consider,

(2.) What is wanting as to your compliance with known duties, whether ye make conscience of all ye know or not. Do you find that you pray, but do not meditate nor examine yourselves? then fill up that want. Do you pray, but neglect to watch? then fill up this want also; and so on.—Consider,

(3.) What is wanting in the duties ye perform. For many times these are but the half of duties, the outward part only, wanting that faith, love, zeal, and liveliness, that should be in all our duties.—Consider,

(4.) What is wanting in your bearing the cross.
Every

Every one has his daily cross. Consider how ye bear it, with what meekness and patience ye walk under it.

(5.) Consider what is wanting in your graces, if you have any; and unto what you have you should be still adding: 2 Pet. i. 5. "Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly love and charity."—Consider,

(6.) What is wanting in your relative conversation. A man is really what he is relatively. Consider how thou answerest the duties of a husband, wife, parent, child, master, or servant.—Having carefully observed all these wants and defects, be conscientious in filling them up; follow the Lord *only, universally, uprightly, constantly, and resolutely*. Follow him fully.—To constrain you to this, I would mention the following MOTIVES.

1. All is full which is set before you in the way of following the Lord. God deals not by halves.

(1.) We have a full law for our rule to walk by: Psal. cxix. 96. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." It is extended to all the parts of our walk; it reaches heart, lip, and life; requires not only duty to be done, but done aright. And unless we have respect to all God's commandments, our obedience is not acceptable.

(2.) We have a full word for our light in our walk, by which we may take up what is sin, and what is duty, see how to steer our course in times of the greatest darkness: Psal. cxix. 105. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." It is the star that is given to guide us through this world, and we should be much conversant with it.

(3.) We have a full covenant for provision in
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our way. It is "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Whatever be our case, there is suitable provision in the covenant for it. There are in it precious promises to the saints in all conditions of life. Whatever storms and tempests may blow in the world, the saints may find something in the covenant to shelter them.

(4.) We have a full Christ to lean to. He is mighty to save. In him there is both righteousness and strength.

(5.) There is a full weight of glory for reward; such as will fill soul and body even those of the most enlarged capacities. Shall we not then follow him fully?

2. The Lord Christ, our leader, did not do the work of our salvation by halves, but fully. He obeyed the law fully, none of its commandments wanted their full due of him. He suffered and paid the debt fully, its threats and curses fell on him in full measure. And what would have become of us, if Christ had halved the work of our salvation? Who would have done the rest? Who would have satisfied for any of our sins, or made up for any deficiencies in our services?

3. Our not following the Lord fully, makes the following him in any instance so difficult; and to follow him fully would be the high way to make religion easy. When the Christian has one foot fixed to the earth, it is no wonder than that he with difficulty mount upward. One lust unmortified is enough to mar all our duties, and make our progress in religion very irregular, and therefore difficult; whereas it would be a great ease if all came away together, Luke, ix. 59.

4. If we do not follow him fully, we will lose the reward of following him at all, in respect of
eternal

eternal salvation, 2 John, viii. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward; otherwise we will lose all the pains we have been at in religion. That in which we follow him not, will draw a black stroke through all in which we have followed him.

Lastly, Another motive is, if we follow him not fully, we will share with them that have not followed him at all, in a fullness of wrath: Psal. cxxv. 5. "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." God will fill them with the wine of his wrath. He will "cut them in sunder, and appoint them their portion with unbelievers," Luke, xii. 46. as those who divided themselves betwixt the Lord and their own lusts.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

S E R M O N X X X .

NUMB. xiv. 24. *But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereunto he went, and his seed shall possess it.*

I Now proceed to the consideration of
DOCT. II. THAT they who would follow the Lord fully, must have another spirit; another than the spirit of the world, another than their own spirit naturally is.

IN attending to which, I shall,

- I. Shortly point out, that it is another spirit.
- II. Shew what that spirit is, which they who follow the Lord fully have, and must possess.—Illustrating, at the same time, the nature and necessity of such a spirit.
- III. Make some practical improvement.

I. I AM shortly to point out, that it is another spirit which such possess.

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This other spirit, which is so necessary to following the Lord fully, is understood, either of the Holy Spirit of God, who dwells in all the saints, Rom. viii. 9. or rather of a spirit sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and raised above its natural spirit by the power of grace. Thus it seems here to be understood, though both amount to the same thing. Such a spirit may well be called another spirit. For,

1. It is another spirit than that which the world is possessed of, which is a mean and base spirit, influencing them to grovel on this earth. The world has what it calls a fine spirit. But even that does but grasp at shadows, while the most excellent things are out of its view. But this is a spirit truly noble.

2. It is another spirit than the most refined hypocrites have. By the common operations of the Spirit, the spirit of hypocrites may be raised to act more nobly than before, but these change not the nature of a man's spirit, but only help it to act in a natural way to a better purpose; whereas, this spirit raises it to gracious actings.

3. It is another spirit than what the saints had before they were sanctified. Another, not in substance, but in qualities. How does this other spirit make a man differ from himself? How doth it advance him to a higher sphere? It made a preaching Paul of a persecuting Saul. It endows a man with quite new principles, motions, ends, and aims, and elevates him to new measures for attaining the same.

II. I go on to shew what that other spirit is which these who follow the Lord fully have and must possess.—Illustrating, at the same time, its nature and necessity.—This spirit is,

I. A

1. A noble elevated spirit, aiming at high things, and is not satisfied with these with which the common herd of mankind are satisfied. Thus Caleb aimed at Canaan, Numb. xiii. 30. while the rest were for Egypt again, chap. xiv. 4. Such another spirit have the saints, Phil. iii. 14. "They press forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Were a beggar's child adopted by a prince, he would change his spirit with his lot, and aim at things suitable to his new quality. Thus the children of God rise in their aims and designs, will not be content with the creatures, but with God himself; not with earth, but heaven, not the favour of men, but of God, not with gold, but grace; for they have another spirit, which can be content with nothing less. They have high projects, not bounded within the limits of this narrow world, but aiming at a greater conquest. Now, such a spirit they must have that would follow the Lord fully.—For, if less can satisfy, they will be content to take their portion on this side Jordan; they will exchange heaven for earth, and keep their grand prospect within the bounds of this world: Phil. iii. 19. "Their God is their belly, and they mind earthly things;" and so will never follow the Lord fully, nay, they will leave him where they cannot get their carnal interest along with them, as Demas did.—Again, if they have not such a spirit, they will continue creeping on the earth, to get their food, as the beasts among their feet, and never follow the Lord in the way to true happiness. They will fall down before these three that are in the world: "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," 1 John, ii. 16. They will wrap themselves up in the world's profits, or drench themselves in its pleasures, and, like beggars,

take care of their cottages, having no eye to a palace. Finally, if they have not such a spirit, they will never use means and endeavours suitable to such high aims. Noble spirits will proportion their endeavours to their high designs, while the mean spirit will go heartlessly about them. Gold is not got, like stones, beside every brook; nor is grace and glory got, but in the way of hearty exertions: Prov. ii. 3.—5. “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest for 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. It is a spirit of faith, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. iv. 13. “We having the same spirit of faith.” Such a spirit had Caleb, another than that of the rest, who could not enter because of unbelief. Such another spirit have the saints, while the rest of the world remain under the power of unbelief, and if they had it not, could never follow the Lord fully; for unbelief will soon trip up a man’s heels in following the Lord: Heb. iii. 12. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” Now, Caleb’s other spirit of faith thus discovered itself.

(1.) It took part with the promise, and hung by it, while the unbelieving spirits of the rest sided with sense in opposition to it. Thus, while the unbelieving world, whatever they pretend, do never solidly venture their happiness on the promise, but seek it rather among those things which are the objects of sense. The saints have another spirit, which rejects these, and by faith rolls the weight of its eternal happiness on the promise; which spirit of faith realises to them the things
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which are not seen, Heb. xi. 1. affords a view of them, as matters of the greatest realities, and of the word of promise as sufficient security. Without this, none will ever follow the Lord fully;—For, if that which is held out in the promise be not realised unto men, it will never make sensible things, the reality of which men certainly know, to yield and give place to it; for men will not quit certainty for hope. Were men as much persuaded of the reality of the things contained in the promise, as they are of gold, and other metals in the earth, think ye, they would slight the promise and take up with the objects of their senses as their happiness? No. The truth is, all the glorious promises are to the world but fair words about fancies.—Again, if men cannot trust the promise as sufficient security, they will never venture their all upon it, but our all must be ventured upon it, if we follow the Lord fully: 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. “‘This is all my salvation, and all my desire.” We must glorify him by faith, hanging by his bare word. All for another world must be laid upon it, and often it comes to this, that all for this world must also be laid upon it.

(2.) This spirit of faith took up the land of promise, as a land well worth all the pains, toil, and hardships, which the conquering it would incur: Numb. xiv. 7. “It is an exceeding good land.” Thus, while unbelievers cannot see heaven worth the pains and toil that must be at the work, like the false spies, chap. xiii. 32: “they bring up an evil report of it.” But the saints have another spirit of faith, which makes them see the glory of that land to be such as to deserve their utmost efforts and endeavours. “Let us therefore labour,” say they, Heb. iv. 11. “to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” Now,

without such a spirit, men can never follow the Lord fully; because to work for nothing makes us extremely averse to engage. If the recompense of reward be not seen as sufficient to counterbalance all the pains, persons will never strive to enter into God's rest, nor take heaven by force, Heb. xi. 26. Whence do we see, that men will strain every nerve for a little of the world, which they think worth the pains, who will not bow a knee to God for heaven? They will work eagerly, who pray very heavily and carelessly, because they think the one worth their pains, the other not.—Again, men are naturally very averse to spiritual endeavours, and if they see not something that will provoke the sluggard to run, they will not follow the Lord fully. There must be a glory seen by an eye of faith, to overcome this aversion. Thus Christ proposed the treasure to the man, Mark, x. 21. but he saw it not, therefore he went away.—Farther, no man can reach heaven with ease, the way to it lies up-hill. It will cost striving, wrestling, using violence, and the like. There are right eyes to be plucked out, that is hard; there are giant-like lusts to be mortified, who will adventure upon that? there is a combat, a fight to be maintained, in which the person must be a conqueror. Will ever men, then, follow the Lord fully, without such a spirit as by faith discerns heaven as worth all that pains? Most men see it not; they think less may serve, for they want that other spirit, which accounts nothing too much here; and so, with Judas, they say, Why all this waste?

(3.) This faith penetrates through all the difficulties which the unfaithful spies could not see through. Caleb's other spirit took the glass of the word of promise, and saw thereby how their numerous armies might be beat, their high walls
thrown

thrown down, the Anakims laid as low as ever they were high: Numb. xiv. 9. "Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us; their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not." Such another spirit have all the saints in a greater or less measure. The carnal professor, like the sluggard, cries, "There is a lion in the way, I shall be slain in the streets." There is no meddling with such a duty, no mortifying such a lust; thus he gives over the attempt. But the saints have another spirit, which by faith discovers how impossibilities may be surmounted, how hills may be made to skip like lambs; and therefore falls a blowing his ram's horns, in hopes that the walls of Jericho shall fall down; and, like another David, with his sling, he sets upon Goliath, and attacks even the children of Anak. I do not say but this faith sometimes may be very weak, it may be very low; but it is such as makes them venture on duty and difficulty, though trembling. Now, without such a spirit none will follow the Lord fully.—For, the want of it cuts the sinews of resolute endeavours after universal holiness. It is the hope of victory that makes the soldier to fight; and when he loses, he turns his back: 1 Thess. v. 8. "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation." Faith must go before and see through difficulties, ere a person can come up and break through them.—Again, the want of it makes men, like Issachar, to couch under the burden, or as one who is upon an unruly horse, and finding there is no mastering of him, he lays the reins on his neck. This is the reason why people, after some struggle against sin, turn worse than ever. They find difficulties in the way of
duty,

duty, they have no hope to surmount these, and therefore give it over. But how can any reach the promised land, without the promise in their eye? How shall they go through in the spiritual battle, while they throw away the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the word of promise, and leave themselves destitute of the shield of faith? Without this they cannot go out in the name of the Lord against their enemies, and so must turn their back as foiled.

(4.) Caleb's spirit of faith looked to the Lord, as sufficient to bear him over all difficulties. He saw the Anakims as well as the rest, and had as little confidence in himself as they had; but he had confidence in the Lord, and so would go against them in the strength of the Lord. Such a spirit have all the saints: Psal. lxxi. 16. "I will go in the strength of the Lord." Isa. xlv. 24. "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." This carries them to the Lord as the fountain of strength; while as to the rest of the world, their spirit is as a pipe laid short of the fountain, by which no water can be conveyed. Without such a spirit, none can follow the Lord fully.—For, there are difficulties in the way to heaven, which none can overcome, but by divine strength: 2 Cor. xii. 9. "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Unmortified corruptions will be as heavy as a giant upon a child, till God himself take part with the soul, and give the victory. They may lie under them and groan, but who shall roll away the stone, if the angel come not from heaven for that purpose? Wo to him that is alone when he falleth! without the Lord, the least work of religion is above us. "Without me," saith he, John xv. 5. "ye can do nothing." The slenderest
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temptation

temptation will be found a wind from hell sufficient to blow over the man that is not supported; the least duty, a task which they cannot perform acceptably. Where the Spirit of the Lord does not draw, we will never follow. Thus that spirit of dependence upon the Lord is necessary.

3. This spirit is a spirit of holy courage and resolution, Numb. xiv. 9. Such a spirit, in some measure, have all the saints: Prov. xxviii. 1. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous is bold as a lion." Their spirit is peremptory and resolute for following the Lord whithersoever he goeth, not to be diverted by any means from their great interest. And though the godly may be naturally fearful and unsteady, yet this spirit in the things of God will prevail, seeing that their all lies at the stake; without such a spirit, none can follow the Lord fully, for the following, among other reasons.—Because,

(1.) The work of religion is a great work, for which we had need of courage and resolution. The outward work of religion is great work, the inward work is still greater: Prov. xvi. 32. "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." The labour of the hand is hard, the labour of the head is harder, but the labour of the heart hardest of all; and religion is work of that sort. To work out our own salvation, to serve our generation, to get heart, lip, and life cleansed, is work sufficient to fear cowards who have not another spirit.—Again, consider,

(2.) That our own strength is small. O how weak is man at best for the work! What a vast disproportion is there betwixt our strength and the least duty, if done aright! 2 Cor. iii. 5. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as
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of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God." When we view our work, how far it is above us, we may say, " Who is sufficient for these things ?" 2 Cor. ii. 16. Here is need of another spirit to influence men, in attempting to roll away the stone, that is so far above their strength. But holy courage, through faith in Christ, will do it : Phil. iv. 13. " I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."—Consider,

(3.) That our opposition is great. If ye have a desire for the heavenly Canaan, ye must fight your way thither over much opposition, and so have need of another spirit. He that overcometh shall be crowned. If you have a desire to follow the Lord fully, you must follow him over much opposition,

1. From the devil : Eph. vi. 12. " For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickednesses in high places." No sooner was man set up in the world, than the devil attacked and overcame him ; and as soon as a soul begins to set heaven-ward again, the devil then will be on his top. O it is much to stand, when hell is in arms against us, when the black bands of temptations make an attack ! Satan is a powerful and subtle enemy. He will be sure to attack you on your weak side, and suit his temptations to your circumstances. Thus he did with our Saviour ; for when he had fasted forty days, the devil said to him, " If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread," Matth. iv. 3. He has his temptations for the poor and for the rich. He tempts the poor to steal, and the rich to deny God. Hence said Agur, " Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me ; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain," Prov.

xxx. 8. 9. He has temptations for youth and for age, for the joyful and for the mournful Christian. Sometimes he appears as a fox transforming himself into a lamb. Sometimes he roars as a lion. There is thus need of a spirit of courage to oppose him.

2. We have great opposition from the world.

(1.) From the things of the world. They collect their bands to encounter those who would follow the Lord, to turn them back.—There is the white band of the world's smiles, stained already with the blood of thousands. Many have been wounded, and many slain by these: Prov. i. 32. "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Many a soul has died by the embraces of a smiling world, for it does with men as the panther with other beasts, who draws them after him with the sweet smell of his breath, hiding his head, while he afterwards devours them. Its profits and pleasures are syren songs, which end in bitter lamentations. They are silken cords, which afterwards grow as iron fetters, which may cost a flood of tears to get them off. Here is a trial for true courage of spirit. O it is a great spirit that rises above the world when it courts us! while our own spirit naturally loves it, even when it gives us gall to drink.—There is next the black band of the world's frowns. The world often puts on the lion's skin, and brings a train of crosses against the followers of the Lord: Acts, xiv. 22. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." The world often turns stepmother to the godly, who may have enough ado to get their bread, while plenty flows to its own darlings. We see how the world's sun went down at noon with Job. There is need of another spirit to carry

a man above these, to give him another joy when that of the world fails, and to make him sing as the nightingale when the very storm is at his back. Thus did Habakkuk when the world failed: Chap. iii. 18. "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation."—Again, there is the mixed band of the world's cares. These are the world's thorn-hedge, which the Christian must break through, or else they will choke the seed of the word in his heart, Matth. xiii. 22. This is the thorny crown it sets upon our heads so soon as we set out into the world. How hard is it to keep our ground here! The care of a family, the care of the body, is that which has rendered many careless of eternity. Yea, and care we must: Our meat will not be found among our feet, as that of the beasts, nor will it drop into our mouths without care. But O what need of another spirit to use these things as if we used them not! But,

(2.) We have great opposition from the men of the world. The devil has his agents in the world, factors for hell, that will give much ado to those who would follow the Lord fully. And people may lay their account to be attacked with their tongues. They are not for heaven who cannot digest the mockings of a graceless generation; nor are they meet for it that will pass over their duty, only for the virulent reproaches they may meet with in their way. These sting severely, but there must be a resoluteness against them, to please God. Let a generation of imbittered spirits say what they will; let Christians strive to have the testimony of God and their own conscience, which will be a secret support, condemn them who will.—They will attack them with their feet. The example of an unholy life: Matth. xviii. 7. "Woe unto

unto the world, because of offences! for it must be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." The world lieth in wickedness; it is hard to bear out, against the stream of example set before us. To be righteous as Noah in his generation, to keep clean garments in Sardis, is not easy: Matth. xxiv. 12. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Example ruins many, who like sheep, when one gets into the water, the rest readily follow.—They will attack them with their hands. The hands of persecutors are sometimes bound up; the Lord seems now to be loosing them; and some are already finding the smart of that. And it is like it will not be so easy to follow the Lord as it has been for some time past. But they who will follow the Lord fully, must have another spirit, which may urge them on to lose all, rather than lose their soul by leaving off to follow the Lord.

Finally, The Christian has great opposition from his own lusts. He will not only find a war without, but also a war within him: Gal. v. 17. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Our greatest enemies are within our own bosoms.—First, there is the general of this army, indwelling sin, the corrupt nature, the old man, flesh, called sin by way of eminence: Rom. vi. 12. "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof." The plague of the heart: 1 Kings, viii. 38. This is the cursed ground, bringing forth briars and thorns. There must be another spirit to draw this to the cross: Gal. v. 24. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."—Next, there is a swarm of

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hellish foldiers under him, particular lusts, as pride, covetousness, envy, malice, and the like, that dog the man wherever he goes, and will give him enough ado to resist: Rom. vii. 21. "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." If you ask their name, it may be Legion, for they are many: Titus, iii. 3. "Serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." All sins are radically even in the best. Look through the world, and see what appears there; these swine, who are running on others, shew that corruption which is within the whole. Who are their allies? These are the devil, John, viii. 44.; the world, Tit. ii. 12. All the snares and temptations in the world are allied to some one or other lusts within us, that suits them as tinder the fire.—There is, their quarters, the heart. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders," &c.; and the nearer to us, the more dangerous. The heart is as a common inn,—so often thronged with these, that the master is kept out.—There is, their qualities. They are deceitful: Eph. iv. 22. "The old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Hurtful: 1 Tim. vi. 9. "But 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."

III. I now proceed to make some improvement of the subject.—And this,

1. In an use of information.—From this we see,

(1.) The great spring of defection and apostacy from the good ways of the Lord. How is it that so many make such a bad account of religion? They have not another spirit. Many, at their first taking up
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of religion, have great vigour and briskness of spirit; but it is only like a blaze of straw: Their oil fails, and their lamps go out. Such appearances denote only awakening, and not changing grace, which they have got; therefore it lasts not. There is no spring of grace in the soul, only some showers from the clouds, watering the old ground of their natural spirits, which is soon dried up. They who thus drink, shall soon thirst again, John, iv. 13.; it decays by little and little, as the light after sun-set, till it be quite dark. Again, because they have not another spirit, that frame of their souls is not fed by nourishment from Christ, as the sincere soul is, who receives out of the fulness of Christ. Hence, for want of nourishment, it dies, and they wither as branches cut off from the trunk, John, xv. 6. A branch newly cut off from its stock, and ingrafted into another, may keep a short time green; but if it do not take with the stock, it will wither. Now, they cannot take with the stock, because they have not another spirit: John, i. 12. 13. "He came to his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Farther, it is the newness of the thing, not the newness of their nature, that makes that stir among their affections. Hence, when they have a little accustomed themselves to religion, and the duties of it, the newness is gone, and so their delight is gone, their affections settle, for they have not another spirit, to which religion would be its element: John, v. 35. "He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." Hence old truths turn stale

with many, and nothing relishes with them but some new thing. They are sprightly for a while, but at length their metal is gone, their hearts are deadened, their affections withered, and their consciences seared. Hence, a spirit of reigning sloth, which was only covered, not subdued, rises again, as weeds, in the spring, which, though nipped with winter-frosts, yet were not plucked up by the roots: Ps. lxxviii. 37. "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." They are awakened as with noise a little while, but, because they have not another spirit, they fall asleep again.—Finally, hence a spirit of profanity succeeds in many: 2 Pet. ii. 22. "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Their lusts, which were forcibly restrained before, break out again with greater violence than ever. The devil returns with seven spirits worse than the first; and not being able to follow the Lord fully, they turn back with the greater violence.

(2.) This instructs us as to the great spring of a divided religion, where there is still one thing or more lacking, Mark, x. 21. They have not another spirit; the old spirit may follow the Lord in many steps, but it will never carry a man through with it. There are difficulties in the way to heaven, which it is impossible to pass without another spirit. These are such as,

It is a difficult step to advance into the heart and life of duties, spiritual worship, and the like. Bodily exercise is the farthest the old spirit can carry a man. A bird may as soon fly without wings, or a beast reason, as one that has not another spirit can worship God in spirit.

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Another difficult step is, to be denied to duties : Matth. v. 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The old spirit is a selfish spirit, that does all from and for self. It knows not to strip itself of its own robes spun out of its own bowels, and to go naked to Christ for a covering. A man shall as soon rent out his own bowels, pluck out his own heart, and cast it from him, as one without another spirit will lay the stress of his salvation on Christ alone, counting as if he had done nothing, when he has done all he can.

A third difficult step is, to give up with bosom-idols. Jesus laid the treasure in heaven, on the other side, to that man, Mark, x. 21. and directed him to step over his idols, and he should have it; but he was sad, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions. Fire, sword, and gibbet, will not affright some people from following the Lord, who will yet start back, when Christ offers them the knife of mortification, to cut off the offending right hand : 1 Cor. xiii. 3. "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Thou hast a hand, it is a right hand, it must be cut off, it must be done with thy own consent, nay, thou must put thy own hand to the knife, and thou must labour to carry it through. This is language that will never go down with a man that hath not another spirit. —Hence, men have a heart-aversion to encounter heart-difficulties in religion. Few see heaven. Why? Heaven's gate is strait, ease is sweet. They are like the rich man in hell, see heaven afar off, but there is a great gulph fixed between them and it. Their base spirit from within, when the man is looking over the gulf, cries, Man, spare thyself,

and then the heart starts back. They love the gold but they do not dig for it. And they have not another spirit, a new spirit, as Caleb had, to put them forward.—Hence any attempts they make that way are faint, and therefore fruitless : Luke, xiii. 24. “ Strive to enter in at the strait gate : For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Like a cowardly man, offering to cut off his own hand, which threatens the ruin of his whole body, he takes up the knife, lays it to the skin, but always the heart misgives, and he pulls it back. Whereas a man of another spirit, will do it resolutely, because he is resolved not to die. Hence such tampering with idols, in the way of mortification. Then finding the fruitlessness of these faint attempts, they even give over, losing all courage. They see it will not do that way, and they despair of getting any more power over them : Jerem. ii. 25. “ With-hold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst, but thou saidst, There is no hope ; no ; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.” Lusts are like an unmanageable horse, which therefore gets the reins on his own neck. They have tried to roll the stone away, but it comes down on them again ; and therefore they even let it lie, and leave it.—Finally, their endeavours then are turned to the soothing of conscience for peace. For this cause the man pretends he can do nothing, but Christ must do all. What is left is but an infirmity, from which the best cannot be freed on this side of the grave ; he will look for pardon, and so makes the blood of Christ a defence for his bosom-lust. For as great an enmity as the natural man has to Christ, the devil will preach Christ to serve a turn ; and thus the grace of God is turned into lasciviousness.

(3.) This subject points out to us, that the righteous

teous is more excellent than his neighbour. He has another spirit. O what a glorious difference does this other spirit make between one man and another ! I will instance this in a few things.

How is it that one man contemns the world, with all that is in it, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, while another man adores the world, and drives after it as his chief good and happiness ? He drives a trade with another world, looking beyond others. What is it but that he has another spirit, a finer spirit, a spirit of a greater elevation and compass than others, which cannot take up with the little views of time.

How is it that a serious holy Christian, appearing in his own colours, strikes a damp upon the profane, and even on the formal hypocrite ? Is it not that another spirit shines out of him, which compels them to fear him, though they hate him, to give him a secret testimony, though openly they reproach him ? Is it not because greater is that spirit which is in the saints, than that which is in the world ?

How is it that when many are carried away with the strong tide of an evil time, keeping but one principle, which is to save themselves on any terms, others do resolutely row against the stream, keeping one principle, which is, to please God, to follow the Lord, from which they will not be diverted, whatever they meet with in the way ? No worldly advantage, the preventing of no worldly loss, do they think worth their going out of their way, to attain it. O ! is it not another spirit ?

How is it that one man enjoys such serenity and tranquillity of mind, amongst the swelling waves of outward trouble, which carry others quite off their feet ? That one stands as an unmovable rock, before the temptations which carry
others

others hither and thither, as the chaff before the whirlwind? Is it any thing but another spirit, fixed on the Lord, his word, his promise, which are better things than what the world has, and the tempter offers.

(4.) Hence we may see, the ground and rise of the spiritual combat which is in the saints. They have another spirit. They have a spirit in them, naturally as the rest of the world, which ordinarily takes the first word; but then they have another spirit, that contradicts and corrects it: Gal. v. 17. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." The natural man has one spirit, which is corrupt, and not another; therefore he is wholly corrupt, in heart, lip, and life. The saints in glory have one spirit, which is holy, and not another; therefore they are perfectly holy. But the saints on earth have one spirit that is corrupt; but they have another spirit also; and therefore their heart becomes a field of battle.—Hence we see how it comes to pass that the saints are at war with these lusts, with which the natural man cannot but be at peace. He has another spirit, which is contrary to them, while the natural man's lusts and his spirit are of the same nature, and he has not another spirit contrary to them. If a man have a father, a brother, or son, in the opposite army, how can he find in his heart to lift up a sword against him? The natural man's spirit, in the faint mortification which he makes, says to him, as David said to his three generals, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." The man that has a wooden leg can take it off, and cast it from him, but how can one do so with his limbs? A man that has meat on his stomach, which loathes and disorders it, can vomit it up, but
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how can a man do this with a dainty morsel which he loves.—Hence we see also how there comes to be such difficulty in dealing with these lusts; there is a resistance made by one spirit, which is opposed to another. Lusts have a friend within the bosom of the saints, which takes part with them, and gives that other spirit so much work. You will see in them, as it were, the company of two armies,—twins struggling within them.

(5.) Hence we may see the ground of that enmity that is betwixt the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. There is a holy amity among the saints as people of one spirit, which is a most close knitting thing. They cleave to one Christ; they pursue one object; they point towards one place; because they have all one spirit. And what jars are among them, flow from their own spirits not being sufficiently subdued by that other spirit. But betwixt the godly and the wicked, how can there be but great enmity, seeing the godly have another spirit than they? Those of different spirits and tempers are ill-yoked. This makes that enmity.—It is,

[1.] A spiritual enmity, it breeds a natural antipathy betwixt them, for they have not only other actions, but another spirit. Hence the man whom the world caressed, and embraced, while of the same spirit with itself, when once he becomes truly serious, and gets another spirit, he is quickly turned out of the world's favour, he loathes them, and they loathe him.

[2.] It is a most diffusive enmity; the spirit of the world is carried out after these things which favour of the flesh, that other spirit is carried out after the things which favour of the spirit. The spirit of the world has things which it loves, and hates these which the other spirit loves. Hence such an enmity against holiness of life, against di-
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vine ordinances, preaching the word, and other duties of religion ; but trace all these to their fountain, they will be found to meet in that of their other spirit.

[3.] It is a most violent enmity ; for the two spirits strike like two flints against one another, to raise the fire. No enmity like that which obtains on account of religion ; it breaks over all bounds of humanity, while no other reason can be given for it but religion. It sets the daughter against the mother, the son against the father, &c.

[4.] It is a most rooted and fixed enmity. This quarrel began sooner than any in the world ; Cain and Abel were thus enemies. Many other quarrels have begun since this one, which have been long since rooted out. But no length of time can root out this ; the wicked children continue the quarrel, though they have seen the fathers fall in it.

(6.) This subject directs us to the great object towards which such as would follow the Lord fully are to look, it is to their spirits. If our spirit be right, we will be carried through ; if not, we will fall off. The great work of religion lies inward. Take heed, therefore, to your spirits ; see that these be of the right kind, that your hearts be right with God, and sound in his statutes.— I shall have done with,

2. An use of exhortation. Labour then to get another spirit, earnestly seek it, aim at, and pursue after it. To obtain your compliance with this exhortation, I would lay before you the following MOTIVES.

(1.) The prevailing spirit among us is a spirit which is our plague, and therefore we have great need to labour for another spirit : Luke, xix. 55. “ Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” This is among the rest of our plagues. Men are little
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at home, weigh not their spirits in the balance of the sanctuary; but their spirit of self-love makes all of high importance, and to appear well, which is their own. There is a sixfold spirit that is our plague this day.—There is,

[1.] A carnal worldly spirit: Phil. iii. 19. "They mind earthly things." Our spirits are sunk in the thick clay of a present world, and have got into an earthly constitution, as if, with our bodies, they were only sprung of earth. From communion and converse with God, our spirits are greatly estranged, but the world gets our first, middle, and last thoughts; so that there seems need of some terrible alarm to make us lift up our heads off that pillow.—There is,

[2.] A private narrow spirit: Phil. ii. 21. "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." O what a rare thing is a public spirit among us this day, a kindly concern for the kingdom and interest of Christ in the world, men naturally caring for these things as their Father's concerns. Sirs, our wide mouths will not absolve us from the crime of a narrow spirit in God's matters, more than Jehu's bravado, "Come see my zeal:" Prov. xxvi. 23. "Burning lips and a wicked heart, are like a potsherd covered with silver dross." The Protestant religion is in hazard abroad and at home; is there any thing of the care of the churches lying upon you? This church is in hazard of falling into the enemy's hands; are your hearts, like good old Eli's, "trembling for the ark?" 1 Sam. iv. 13. Nay, do not many look upon our present privileges with such a despising eye, that it is all one to them whether they sink or swim. Have the attempts of our enemies ever made you go alone to wrestle with God against them? You profess you would have ministers

sters to keep honest ; but are we obliged to your wrestlings with God for us on that account ? Have we any larger share in your prayers than we were wont to have ? Will the loss of our honesty be to you the loss of many prayers for us in a difficult time ? Psal. cxxxii. 9. " Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout aloud for joy." It is a time of much sinning ; are you sighing and crying for all the abominations that are in the midst of the land ? Ezek. ix. 4. Are you putting to your hand, as you have access, to stop the stream of abounding sin ?—There is,

[3.] A stout, sturdy, fearless spirit. I fear, if God look to none but to those who are poor, of a contrite spirit, and who tremble at his word, Is. lxvi. 2. there will be few amongst us that will get a look of him. How little are we affected with the word, the dispensations of the day, and the signs of the times ! Is not the word like a ball thrown against a wall ? The custom of hearing it has lessened the value of it. Who is hearkening for the time to come ? Does that question lie near your heart, How shall I be carried through in the evil day ? Are you putting matters in order between God and you, and preparing an ark for your safety ?—There is,

[4.] A proud fiery spirit, while the humble, meek, and lowly spirit does rarely appear. People are so puffed up with conceit of themselves, there is no dealing with them. If they make themselves vile, they will rather be more vile than submit to admonition or reproof. And if they be in the least ruffled, they are ready to cast all ordinances behind their backs. If the whole be not exactly according to their mind, they will contemptuously reject all. Witness the contempt poured by some upon the last fast. Humiliation of heart, and self-

self-denial would cure us of this irreligious heart, which is the bane and ruin of religion among us, and would kindle in us a more kindly warmth of heart towards God and the things that bear his stamp.—There is,

[5.] A formal spirit: 2 Tim. iii. 5. “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” The bodily exercise of religion is much amongst many of us, but for exercise unto godliness among us, it appears to be very rare, 1 Tim. iv. 7. 8. And many proclaim themselves utter strangers to it. In the eyes of any discerning Christian, they have so little sense of the vitals of practical godliness, that these things are an absolute mystery to them. It would fare the better with many of us, that we would begin again and lay the foundation of our religion, and follow it out in the great mysteries of the Christian life, mortification of heart-corruptions, the life of faith, and communion with God.—There is,

[6.] A profane spirit, where the works of the flesh are manifest. There is a lying spirit, which so possesseth many, that they make no conscience of speaking truth, but lend their tongues for lies. There is a bitter spirit of cursing and swearing, railing and reproaching, amongst us, so that sober persons may say, as in Psal. lvii. 4. “My soul is among lions; and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.” See also Psal. lxiv. 3.—7. A base, sneaking, dishonest spirit, lodges in the breast of many, whose covetous, unrighteous ways, in undermining, deceiving, and wronging their neighbours, will bring a vengeance from heaven on their heads.

(2.) The case of our day requires another spirit than we have. God seems to be speaking to the

carnal worldly generation this day, as in Haggai, i. 4. Jer. xlv. 4. 5. To the formal and profane, as in Matth. iii. 10. To the private-spirited, as in Amos, vi. 1. And to all, as in Amos, iv. 12. But O how unfuitable are our spirits to the case of the day ! How unmeet are our spirits to act for God ! They are too mean to do any thing great and honourable for God and his glory. And doubtless, if we get not another spirit, we will never be honoured of God to perform any thing that is great for him. Our work as Christians is at all times difficult, but we are likely to have a special difficulty in our time. Is the mean and base spirit wherewith we are plagued, meet to set us to oppose the stream and tide of sin, that is going through the generation ? Is our careless carnal spirit meet to wrestle with God, to keep him still in our land ? — Again, How unmeet are our spirits for suffering ? The soft and carnal spirit which prevails, suits very ill with a time in which the Lord seems to be about to pluck up and destroy. That spirit of formality and profanity answers very ill with a time in which people's religion may be put to the utmost trial : Isa. xxxiii. 14. " The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites." Verily, if we get not another spirit, a time of trial will make a dreadful discovery among the professed followers of the Lord.

(3.) Does not our own particular case, with respect to eternity, require another spirit ? Eternity is no dream, the wrath to come is no scare-crow ; these are the greatest of realities, and certainly require our utmost efforts. Does the prevailing temper of our spirits look like the eternal weight of glory that is abiding those who strive, run, wrestle, and fight the good fight of faith ? Alas ! our spirits are as unlike the attaining it, as the
fluggard,

fluggard, who will not plow his field, is like to attain a good crop. They who look for a treasure, dig for it; and they who wish for the prize, run for it; but it is a loitering, not a labouring spirit, with which most of us are possessed, who have small probability of seeing heaven, unless it will drop down into our mouths.—Again, Does our spirit look like flying from the wrath to come, that infinite load of wrath which is abiding a perishing generation? We seem to be creeping from it, rather than fleeing; and therefore it is ready to overtake us. O how would our spirits stir within us, if we were duly affected with eternity, and the danger that our souls are in of the wrath to come!—But farther, How unlike is our spirit to the subduing of strong corruptions within our own breasts! How soft are our spirits against these our deadliest enemies! We must have another spirit, or our spirits will soon be devoured by them.—Lastly, There is no following of the Lord fully, and so no heaven, without another spirit; and therefore, as ever we would be found Christians indeed, and safe through eternity, let us labour for that other spirit: “Create in us, O Lord, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us.”—I shall now very briefly attend to

DOCT. III. That those who, by following the Lord fully in the time of general declining, distinguish themselves, God will distinguish them from others, by special marks of favour in the time of general calamity.—The scriptures afford many instances in proof of this, as Noah, Lot, Jeremiah, and many others.

FOR illustrating this doctrine, we shall,

I. Shew how those must distinguish themselves

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from others in the time of general declining, who would have the Lord to distinguish them from others in the time of general calamity.—We shall point out,

II. 'The marks of favour by which, in times of great calamity, God uses to distinguish such.

III. We shall subjoin some reasons of the point, to confirm it.—And,

IV. Make some improvement.

WE are then,

I. 'To shew how those must distinguish themselves from others in the time of general declining, who would have the Lord to distinguish them from others in time of general calamity.—Here we observe,

1. That they must be best, when others are worst : Gen. vi. 9. "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation ; and Noah walked with God." Their candle must shine brightest, when that of others is dying out. It is the property of holy zeal for God and his way, to become more vehement by opposition ; so that the declining of others is as oil to their flame. It was better with Lot when he dwelt among the Sodomites, than when with his own children in the cave : 2 Pet. ii. 7.—10. "And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)." The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement, to be punished." "It is time for thee, Lord, to work ; for they have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." If religion be dying out among others,

others, this will the more kindle an holy fire of zeal, and increase it in their own breasts.—We observe,

2. That they must cleave to God, especially in that article in which others are leaving him, as in Caleb's case; that is to say, they must be careful that they be not led away with the sins of the time, that they do not enter into the general conspiracy of the generation against the Lord and his way, whether it be against truth or holiness. Thus the promise was to those who kept the life and power of godliness in Sardis, where there was a great general declining, a deadness and formality, and the bare carcase of religion: Rev. iii. 4. "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."—We observe,

3. That they must witness against every declining, according to their stations, and as they have access, for the exoneration of their own consciences, and the honour of God. Thus did Noah, that preacher of righteousness, to that unrighteous world. These must give a real testimony by their contrary practice, and, as they may have access, labour to withdraw others from sinful courses. Thus did Caleb.—We observe,

4. That they must be mourners over the sins of others, lamenting them before the Lord; sighing and crying for all the abominations which are done in the midst of the land, Ezek. ix. 4. They must mourn for those who cannot mourn for themselves. When the glory of God is impaired by the sins of an apostatizing generation, their love to the persons of the sinners, and hatred of their sins, must draw tears of godly sorrow from their eyes.

LET us now,

II. Point out the marks of favour by which, in times of general calamity, God useth to distinguish such.—There is,

1. Liberal furniture for duty, in a large communication of the Spirit, when the Spirit is withdrawn from others : Matth. x. 19. “ But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.” The Lord calls not his people to serve him for nought ; he even rewards the will to his work, with strength for it. If they be resolute to bear his burden, God will strengthen the back for it. Hence it comes to pass, that God’s people never make better speed, than when rowing against the stream of opposition.—There is,

2. Intimations of his special love to their souls. Thus had Caleb in the text. The saints of God have often golden days in the dregs of time upon this account. When the deluge of public calamity carries incorrigible sinners before it, with their burden of guilt upon their back, the saints are then made to rest in the evil day, by virtue of that peace which they have with God and their own conscience, Hab. iii. 16.—There is,

3. Special provision in a time of calamity : Psal. xxxvii. 19. “ They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.” God riseth often to see well to the provision of those whose work it is to cleave to their duty, and rely on the Lord for their provision : Psal. xxxvii. 3. “ Trust in the Lord, and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.” So that their faces are fatter and fairer than those who eat of the defiled meat.—There is,

4. Special protection in an evil day. God sets

a mark on their foreheads : Ezek. ix. 4. “ And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” They are always protected from the evil of trouble ; but God sometimes, besides this, affords them special protection from trouble, by some surprising providence removing them out of the way of it ; sometimes by making them find favour in the eyes of their enemies : Jer. xv. 11. “ The Lord said, Verily, it shall be well with thy remnant ; verily, I will cause the enemy to intreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction.” And sometimes by hiding them in the grave before the calamity come on : Isa. lvii. 1. 2. “ The righteous man perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart ; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace ; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.”

Lastly, He gives them the crown of glory : Rev. ii. 10. “ Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer ; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried ; and ye shall have tribulation ten days : Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” He brings them into Canaan above, and crowns them, while others, who forsook God, are for ever forsaken of him ; and they who sinned with the multitude, suffer with them for ever : Luke, xxii. 28. 29. 30. “ Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me ; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the
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the twelve tribes of Israel.”—We now proceed very shortly,

III. To subjoin the reasons of the point, to confirm it.—Here we offer the following, viz.

1. It is hard work to follow fully in a declining time, to strive against the stream which is so ready to carry people away : Matth. xxiv. 12. “ And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” Hard to keep warm in cold Sardis, Rev. iii. 4. To keep up the flame of religion, when a deluge of sin comes on, is very hard work. But hard work has always the greatest reward from the Lord.

2. It is a piece of special honour to God ; and those who honour him he will honour. It is not so much to follow Christ when he hath a great backing, as to cleave to him when many are dropping off from him on every hand.

3. The Lord orders it so for the encouragement of his people, to follow him fully. He gives them the view of the recompence of reward, to encourage and animate them in pressing forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

IV. WE are now to make some brief improvement of the whole ; and this,

1. In an use of information.—We see,

(1.) That none shall be losers at God’s hand. They that cleave to him, when others leave him, God will cleave to them when he forsakes others. Our errand will come in his way, and he will shew himself mindful of any respect and love shewn him by them that walk uprightly.—We see,

(2.) That he who walketh uprightly walks surely, come what will come. Whoso wanders from
God’s

God's way, and follows the multitude to do evil, their feet will slide. But the best preparation and security for a time of general calamity, is to walk with God in a declining time.—We shall only add,

2. An use of exhortation.

We exhort you, then, to follow the Lord fully now. Our time is a declining time. There is a declining from the purity of gospel-doctrine and gospel-ordinances. There is a horrid declining in practice; the vail is falling off many faces, and the mask of religion. There is a general declining from holiness, and the power of godliness, on the spirits of professors in our day. It is a day of approaching calamity. Would you be safe? Return now, and set your face against the stream; and the more you see others going off from God, cleave the more to him. If you do so, you will be distinguished by special marks of favour in a day of public calamity; but if you also go away, your sin will afterwards find you out.

Remember, now you have heard your duty; it is the duty of communicants, and also of others. Remember that it is not enough to set fair off. It is only he that follows fully who will be brought safely to the promised land. It is only he that endureth to the end who will be saved. Be not, therefore, “weary in this well-doing, for in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not.”

THE CHRISTIAN DESCRIBED, THE HYPOCRITE DETECTED *.

S E R M O N XXXI.

ROM. ii. 28. 29. *For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

THESE words are a reason why no man ought to value himself on the externals of religion, for they will go but short way. However they please men, they will never please God. The scope of them is, to shew who are the people of God. The Jews of old were the people of God; the Christians are so now, being come in their room. The apostle here distinguishes the people of God into nominal and real ones, calling them Jews, because he was speaking to Jews; the case is the same as to Christians.—In these words, he shews two things.

1. Who

* Delivered in March and April, 1719.

1. Who are not true Jews, real Christians, or saints indeed, ver. 28.; for these are they whom he means by Jews, saying, "He is not a Jew." Not those who are Jews outwardly, Christians and saints by profession, that is, who are only so, and no more; for God requires externals of religion as well as internals, though the former, separate from the latter, avail nothing. But those who have no more religion than what is outward, viz. what men see or may see, they have nothing of the reality of it.

The Jews valued themselves on circumcision, as Christians on baptism; but true circumcision is not what is outward in the flesh, nor baptism what is by water; that is, only so. These external rites signify an inward grace, without which they signify nothing before God. Circumcision was in a hidden part of the body, yet it was on the body, and what might be seen; so religion might be in saints; yet being only what may be seen, will not constitute a person truly religious.--He shews,

2. Who are true Jews, real Christians, or saints indeed? There are two characters of these, which distinguished them from the other. They are,

(1.) Those who are so inwardly, or in the hidden part, which is open to God alone, as well as in the outward part, which appears to the world. These who have the hidden part of religion, which being hid from the world's view, they cannot certainly judge of. Those who have the true circumcision, the spiritual baptism, that is, the circumcision of the heart, Deut. x. 16. by which corrupt lusts are cut off, and the body of sin put off, Col. ii. 11. This is the spiritual, not fleshly circumcision only. It touches on, reforms, and renews our spirit, our soul, the hidden, but most valuable part of a man. The carnal is but the cutting off a
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bit of the flesh of the body, which might be done while the spirit remained overgrown with unmortified lusts, and the soul quite defiled. The spirit is here opposed to the letter, which last cannot be well understood of the body, but of circumcision, and therefore the spirit also; q. d. and circumcision of the heart, which is circumcision in the spirit or grace of it, (not in the letter, or external rite of circumcision), is the true circumcision. So they have the spirituality of it, which is as the soul thereof, as well as the letter, which is as the body thereof. The spirit of circumcision is the invisible grace signified by it, and joined with it, when it is effectual; the letter of it is the sensible sign or external rite.

(2.) They are such as have God's approbation, commendation, and praise, whether they have men's or not. There is an allusion here to the word Judah, from whom that people, now called Jews, had their name; it signifies praised, Gen. xlviii. 8. These are the true Judahs, whom not only their brethren, but their Father, even God, praises. Outward religion may gain praise of men, who cannot discern what is within; but the true Jew, the real Christian, is one approved even by the heart-searching God, according to the reality, and not the appearance.—From this subject I take this

DOCTRINE, That he is not a true Christian, who only in the outward part, and in the letter of religion, approves himself to men; but he who, by the inner part of religion, and the spirituality thereof, also approves himself to the heart-searching God.

In illustrating this important truth, I shall,
I. Speak to this point generally.

II.

II. Consider it more particularly.—I shall,

I. SPEAK to this point more generally.—Here I propose,

I. To shew that there is such a difference in the visible church, that there are some who are only Christians outwardly, and that there are others who are also Christians inwardly.

II. To inquire what are the causes of this difference?

III. To point out what is the outside and letter of religion, which only makes an outside Christian, and what the inside and spirit of religion is which makes a genuine Christian.

IV. To confirm the doctrine.—I am,

I. To shew that there is such a difference in the visible church, that there are some who are only Christians outwardly, and that there are others who are also Christians inwardly.

This difference appears many ways. It appears,

1. In the very different characters given those who profess the same faith and true religion. The preachers of the gospel are fishers of men, but they are not all good that come by profession into the net, Matth. xiii. 47. 48. The tares and the wheat grow together in the field of the church, the goats and the sheep go together all the day, till the great Shepherd separate them. And as to virgin-professors, some are wise, and have oil in their vessels, with their lamps; others are foolish, Matth. xxv. who mock God with fair promises, beset even the godly, who looked well upon them, and, worst of all, beset themselves in the latter end, when the Bridegroom cometh.—This appears,

2. In the very different effects religion has on

the lives of those who are called Christians. There are some whose religion, has a powerful efficacy on their hearts and lives to make them holy, others who have nothing but an idle form, having no more sanctifying power with it, than a painted fire has to burn : 2 Tim. iii. 5. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." The knowledge of some is confined to their heads, it never gets down to their hearts : Tit. i. 16. "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." Others, by reason of their light, dare not venture on an ill thing, more than on a precipice. Religion makes some persons godly, sober, and righteous, binds powerfully on them their duty to God, to themselves, and to their neighbour. The pretended religion of others, leaves them loose as to all those things. It never checks them when neglecting secret prayers, or prayers in the family, or when disposed to swear, drink, lie, defraud, &c.—This appears,

3. In the very different acceptance with God, which persons' prayers get. There are some whose duties are very pleasing to God, they have a sweet savour in his nostrils ; their words are registered before him, their tears are bottled, their sighs and groans are regarded, their will is accepted for the deed. But there are others whom God abhors, and also their duties. The word is preached to them, but it never reforms them ; yet they hold on with their attendance on ordinances, and it may be also with their prayers. What says the Lord of all such ? "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." "For all these things hath my hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord ; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

word. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's flesh; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations." "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed. beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats," Prov. xxviii. 9. Isa. lxvi. 2. 3. and i. 11.—This appears,

4. From the very different sense and feeling which those have of the advantage of religion, the ordinances and duties thereof. Some are acquainted with the gain of religion, and, from their own experience, can give a solid reason why they follow it: 1 Tim. vi. 6. "But godliness with contentment is great gain." They have tasted of communion with God in duties, and of access to him, of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit in ordinances: Mic. ii. 7. "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" But unto others all these things are in very deed but as empty husks: Prov. xiv. 10. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." They abide in the outer court of religion all their days; they see not its intrinsic glory, nor taste of its kernel or marrow. They keep up a form of duties from custom, and an unenlightened conscience; but they feel nothing in them kindly to draw their hearts towards God.—This appears,

5. In the very different effects of the religion which those profess. Grace is of a growing na-

ture ; and it will grow, though not visibly at all times : Prov. iv. 18. " But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And the longer that saints have a standing in religion, they will be the more firmly rooted ; though perhaps their affections be not always so vigorous, yet solid tendernefs will display itself with them : Psal. xcii. 13. 14. " Those that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall grow up and flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing." And if they fall, they will not lie still, but recover again : Psal. xxxvii. 24. " Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down ; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." But what are the effects which the religion of many has ? Some grow up to their false pitch, and there they stand without motion : Prov. xxvi. 14. " As the door turneth on his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed." They think they are right, and they seek no farther. Some, instead of growing better, grow worse and worse ; the longer they live, they are the more unholy, more untender in the substantials of moral duties ; and some throw aside the mask altogether, and, in sight of the world, desert to the devil's camp, by falling into some profane course, apostatising upon some temptation or other, and so, as they were before loathsome before God, they become also loathsome before his people : Rev. iii. 16. " So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee of my mouth."—This appears,

Lastly, In the very different passage which those have out of time into eternity. True, all must die, that is the point in which we all meet ; but as true is it, that it is the point where outside and inside

inside Christians part for ever : Psal. xxxvii. 37. 38. " Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together ; the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Though they have lived in the same church together, under the same ordinances, gone to prayers together, to one communion-table, when they come to that step where their ways part, they separate, never to meet more. The one goes to the society of God, angels, and saints ; and their unseen religion terminates in a glorious open reward, their grace in glory, their inward beauty in shining as stars in the firmament. The other gets his portion with reprobates, and those who had as little of the shew, as of the reality of religion : Psal. cxxv. 5. " As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."—I shall point out,

II. WHAT are the causes of this difference : which obtains betwixt Christians and others.—Among others, there is,

1. The very different way that persons come by their religion ; if we examine outside and inside Christians, how they came by the religion they severally have, it will be found, that the religion which they have is answerable to the way they came by it.—Thus,

(1.) There is a difference in the weight which their entering on their religion had on their spirits. Some come very lightly by their religion ; hence it sits lightly upon them, and often goes as lightly from them. They venture upon building a tower, without deliberately counting the cost. To others it is not so easy, but they are brought to the utmost seriousness in the matter, Luke, xiv. 28. 29. ;

hence they go to the bottom of the matter, while others satisfy themselves with superficial work.

(2.) There is a difference in the depth of their conviction and humiliation : Luke, vi. 48. 49. " He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock, and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that, without a foundation, built an house on the earth, against which the stream beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." The plough of conviction lightly going over the fallow-ground of the heart, is sufficient to make an outside Christian : Matth. xiii. 5. 20. " Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it." If he have as much of it as to let him see the evil and danger of a life quite profane, without so much as the form of godliness, it is sufficient to make him put on the form. But it must be carried deeper, to make an inside Christian, even to the root of the most inward beloved lust, to the sin of one's nature, and to the discovery of Christ for sanctification, as well as justification.

(3.) There is a vast difference in their light and illumination in the knowledge of Christ : John, iv. 10. " Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." This is plainly intimated in the wise and foolish builders and virgins ; so that an
outside

outside Christian has never been right in the head. All their insight into the excellency of Christ and religion, has left them fools, while others have been made really wise, their judgement rectified, their taste purified, so as to be capable to discern things concerning their souls in their native colours. Hence that glory in Christ has been seen by the one, which has darkened all created glory, made them content to part with all for him, while the other has always some lust or other more dear to them than Christ and religion.--There is,

(4.) A difference in the issue of their exercises about their soul's case. In the one they have issued in the change of their nature, the taking away of the heart of stone, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. the making of them new creatures, putting off the old man, and putting on the new. But in the other, whatever stir has been made in the affections, whatever griefs or joys they have had, the stony heart has remained untaken away, Matth. xiii. 5.; so, though they have become other men than they were before, yet not new men.--Another cause of difference is,

2. The different ways in which professors follow religion. This, if attended to, cannot fail to make a mighty difference.

(1.) Some make religion their business, their main business, in the world: Gen. v. 24. "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." Religion is their all. They see nothing they have to do in the world, but it is either their salvation-work, or their generation-work, so that they must observe God in all things. And this makes an inside Christian: Psal. cxix. 6. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have a respect unto all thy commandments." Others make religion but a bye-work; their main business is of another kind, how to please themselves, how to advance

advance their temporal interest; and this makes an outside Christian. In regard to the one, all things else about him bow to his religion, he cuts and carves them as may best suit God's honour, and his soul's welfare; whereas, as to the other, he makes his religion bow to his other designs, takes so much of it, and no more, as may leave him in quiet possession of some lust or other.

(2.) They follow religion from different principles, motives, and ends.

[1.] Some follow it from natural principles and motives; that which moves them to it is a natural conscience, in some sort enlightened by the word and providence, which will give them no rest in the utter neglect of religion. Fear of punishment, or hope of reward, are powerful enough to make an outward Christian. But an inside Christian has a gracious principle of love to God and holiness implanted in him, the law is written in his heart, he has a new nature, which inclines him unto universal holiness, and thereby he is kindly drawn to follow religion, upon a view of its inward beauty; and thus he fills up this character.

[2.] Some aim at approving themselves to men in their religion. They seek a name by it, they desire thus to advance their credit and reputation among the sober part of the world, Matth. vi. 2.; and seeming to be religious will satisfy, because men can judge no farther than the outward appearance. But others study to approve themselves to God: 2 Cor. v. 9. "Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." Now, since God cannot be deceived with outward appearances, this engages them to be careful of the hidden man of the heart, and to value no approbation of any, if the Master approve them not.—From what has been observed, we may learn,

That

That there is something in religion above nature's reach. O study to attain it! The mystery of godliness is a great mystery. It is no easy thing to be a Christian. The difference betwixt the godly and others lies not in externals, but in internals, things removed out of the view of the world, and open to God only. O labour to study internal religion, and to approve yourselves to God who searcheth the hearts!—Try yourselves. Consider to which of the two sorts you belong, whether you be real Christians or not. Never value yourselves on the outward part or letter of religion, for you may have that and be stript of all by apostacy to which you lie open, and will be turned out with the workers of iniquity at last, though you still keep on the mask. We must all appear before the tribunal of Christ. Study that religion which will be approved by him there.—I now proceed to consider,

III. WHAT is the outside and letter of religion, which only makes an outside Christian? and what is the inside and spirit of it, which makes a Christian?—Here I observe,

1. That the outside of religion is that part of it which lies open to the view of the world, by which men form their estimate, not God: 1 Sam. xvi. 7. “But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” It comprehends all church-privileges, duties, whether of doing or suffering, and attainments lying open to the view of men. Men may come a great length in this, and yet be nought in God's esteem.—I observe,

2. That

2. That the letter of religion is that part of it which is agreeable to the letter of the law, whether in externals or internals. And it comprehends not only the outside, which is open to man's view, but also internal dispositions, exercises, and attainments, as to the matter of them; for example, Judas's sorrow for sin, the stony ground's joy at receiving the seed of the word, and the hypocrite's delight in approaching to God, Isa. lviii. which have the matter, but not the form and manner, and so is like a body without the soul.—I observe,

3. That the inside of religion is that part of it, which is open to the all-seeing eye of God, Matth. vi. 4. "That thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly." What persons go about, out of mere conscience towards God, as knowing that the world either is not, or cannot be witness to it, and though it was a witness, it does not know right or wrong; but such setting themselves in the presence of God, are carried to their duty as if the eyes of all the world were upon them, Acts, xxiv. 16. But this is not all.—I observe,

Lastly, That the spirit or spirituality of religion is the internal grace, joined to the external performance; it is the right manner, joined to the right matter of religion: John, iv. 24. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth." 1 Tim. i. 5. "Now, the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," as when heart-humiliation is joined with bending of the knees to God in prayer, and the duty is gone about from right principles, and directed to a right end.—It remains that,

IV. I CONFIRM the doctrine,

That

That not the former, but the latter sort of religion, marks a true Christian, is evident, if we consider,

1. That there is nothing in the outside or letter of religion, but what one may reach in an unregenerate state, in which no man can ever please God, Rom. iii. 8. The hypocrite's mask may take in the whole outward man, and the devil's goats may resemble Christ's sheep, in all but the hidden man of the heart. All these are but acts of moral discipline, not requiring a new nature from whence to spring, but may arise from the old corrupt nature, assisted by external revelation, and the common influences of the Spirit.—It will be farther evident, if we consider,

2. That the outside and letter of religion may be without any true love to God in the heart, which yet is the substance of practical holiness, and the comprehensive duty of the whole law: Ezek. xxxiii. 31. "And they come unto me, as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Love to God makes all duties run in a right channel; but how can this be found, when the natural enmity is not overcome by regenerating grace? Self-love may supply its place, so far as the outside and letter of religion go, and that upon this principle, Job, iii. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."—This will also be evident, if we consider,

3. That the outside and letter of religion may consist with the reign of sin in the heart: 2 Tim. iii. 5. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it." Such in themselves are weak,
and

and can never turn sin off the throne in the soul. Hence it is that every hypocrite is a slave to some lust or other; whatever be his attainments, this always remains true of him, Mark, x. 21. This kind of religion is ever like the legs of the lame, unequal.—This will be evident, if we consider,

4. That men are in religion only what they are before God, not what they are before men. When God directs Abraham to a holy walk, he says, “Walk before me,” Gen. xvii. 1. If God did not observe the hearts, the insides of men, the principles of their actions, an outside religion would be sufficient. But what does it avail before the all-seeing God, to cleanse the outside of the platter, while the inside is full of ravening, while that is wanting which God chiefly requires and delights in? Psal. li. 6. how is it possible that the man should be approved of God?—This will be evident, if we consider,

Lastly, That the great difference of accepted and unaccepted performances, dispositions, &c. does not lie in the letter but in something else. Cain and Abel both offered, the one acceptably, the other not, Gen. iv. 3. 4. 5. where lay the difference? The apostle shews it, Heb. xi. 4. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” Peter and Judas both mourned, and we need not hesitate to say, that the mourning of the latter in itself was fully as hearty as that of the former, but they differed in their kind, the one was godly sorrow, the other was the sorrow of the world. The trial of men’s works is not only by *what* they have wrought, but *how* they have wrought: John, iii. 21. “But he

he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

V. I NOW come to make some brief improvement.—We infer,

1. What are those Christians, who do not so much as approve themselves to men, by the outside, and letter of religion. 'Those surely have nothing of God, and shall never see heaven, if they change not their course of life : Matth. v. 20. " Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." How many are there among us this day, whose way of life is a scandal to Christianity, who are in the church, as boils, botches, and sores, are in the body, serving for nothing but to grieve the spirits of others who have any concern in them ! What sort of Christians are prayerless persons, liars, Sabbath-breakers who loiter away whole Sabbaths, unclean persons, &c. ? 1 Pet iv. 18. " And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinners appear ?" The day will come, when such will see that it had been their happiness to have lived and died among Pagans.—We infer,

2. That those also are a sad sort of Christians, who, if they can approve themselves to men, make it none of their business to approve themselves to God : Rev. iii. 1. " I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." How many are there, with whom their credit goes farther than their conscience ! And therefore, if they can carry their wickedness, so as none but God may see it, they value not his eye on them : Numb. xxxii. 23. " But if you will not do so, behold you have sinned against the Lord ; and be sure

your sin will find you out." This practical atheism will be bitterness in the end, when the day comes, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the gospel, Rom. xi. 16. Ah! how many cast a fair cloak of profession over reigning lusts; but behold their end: Psal. cxxv. 5. "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel."

II. I SHALL consider this point more particularly, and shew, in some particulars, how far one may go, and yet be an outside Christian, and in what respects the inside Christian goes beyond him, and these jointly, in the following propositions.

I. THAT he is not a true Christian, who only bears the visible badges of Christianity, but he who, with the visible badges, also partakes of the invisible grace.

II. That he is not a true Christian, whose outward man is only cleansed from the gross pollutions of the world, but he whose inward man is also cleansed.

III. That he is not a true Christian, who only performs the duties of external obedience, but he who, with them, joins the duties of internal obedience.

IV. That he is not a true Christian, who has inside religion only in the letter, but he who has it also in its spirituality.—These I shall illustrate in their order.—I observe,

I. THAT he is not a true Christian, who only bears the visible badges of Christianity, but he who, with the visible badges, also partakes of the invisible grace.—Mark, xvi. 16. "He that believeth,
and

and is baptised, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The visible badges of Christianity are the sacraments, baptism, and the Lord's Supper ; by partaking of these, we are distinguished from Pagans ; but there is an invisible grace, without which these avail nothing to salvation.—For,

1. One may be baptised in the name of Christ, and yet be no true Christian, but even at the last only an outside one ; as in our text, " For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh." We find some have been bred Jews or Pagans, and, by their own free choice, have turned Christians, and received the seal of the covenant, and after all been naught : Acts, viii. 13. 21. " Then Simon himself believed also ; and when he was baptised, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs that were done. But Peter said to him, Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God !" How much more may persons amongst us be such, who were baptised in their infancy with water, which was not their choice, but a benefit they had by their parent's care, and from Christianity's being the religion of our country ! And how little it avails many, and what good they make of it, may be learnt from this, that the impressions of their baptismal engagements are so slight on them, that they never mind them, many baptised persons pass year after year, without preparing themselves for the Lord's table. But he is a true Christian, who has the invisible grace signified by baptism. See the difference betwixt outside and inside Christians in this, Matth. iii. 11. " I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance ; but he that cometh after me is greater

than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." 1 Pet. iii. 21. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The outside Christian may be baptised with water, but the inside is baptised with the Holy Ghost, working like fire, burning up the lusts of the flesh. He is born of water, and the Spirit, working like water, to the washing away of the natural filthiness of the spirit with which he was born, on whose conscience Christ's blood is sprinkled, on whose soul Christ's spirit has savingly operated to his spiritual cleansing. In this the inside goes beyond the outside Christian.

2. In like manner, persons may be admitted to the Lord's table, and yet not be true Christians. Though this be only the privilege of saints, yet a person may be a communicant, who is nothing more than an outside Christian. While others are debarred, they may be admitted to an external partaking of the children's bread, and yet be but dogs in the sight of the heart-searching God: Luke, xii. 26. "Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and have drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." Matth. xxii. 13. "And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? and he was speechless. Then said the King to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." A competency of knowledge, with an appearance of seriousness, of an holy life, will entitle persons to this privilege before the church, who can judge only
by

by the outward appearance ; but he is a true Christian, who is admitted to communion with God in that ordinance : Cant. v. 1. “ I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” In this matter, the inside Christian goes beyond the outside one. The outside Christian gets the token from men, the inside Christian has also the Lord’s token. The one only eats the bread of the Lord, the other, with it, eats that bread which is the Lord : John, vi. 57. “ He that eateth me, he shall live by me ;” he feeds by faith on a crucified Christ, unites with him, as partaking of his Spirit, of all the benefits of his purchase, to his spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace. The one is held in the outer court, the other is admitted into the inner, and is there feasted in greater or lesser measures. The lusts of the former are strengthened by the abuse of that ordinance, those of the latter are weakened by the holy use of it.—I observe,

II. THAT he is not a true Christian, whose outward man only is cleansed from the gross pollutions of the world, but he whose inward man is also cleansed. Saving grace penetrates to the inside, and stays not in the outside only : Psal. xxiv. 34. “ Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ? and who shall stand in his holy place ? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” A person may be clean from gross pollutions of the outward man, and yet be but an outside Christian ; no swearer, liar, Sabbath-breaker, fornicator, &c. and yet no Christian, Luke, xxviii.

11. Negative holiness and outside religion, though

the want of it will damn the profane, 1 Cor. vi. 9. 10. yet the having it will not keep the outside Christian from ruin. A blameless life in the world, though good in itself, yet comes not the length of true Christianity. There are several things beside saving grace, that may in some measure cleanse the conversation from gross pollutions. —Among others, there is,

1. Good education, and good company, as in the case of Joash under the tutorage of Jehoiada. This may chain men's lusts, though it cannot change their nature; their heart is of an apish nature, apt to follow example. Though readily the worst example is the most taking, yet good example has a mighty influence, especially when persons are brought up with it from their childhood. —There is,

2. A good natural temper and disposition. Many a person is more indebted to his natural temper, than to the tenderness of his conscience, for his cleanness from gross pollutions. It is evident, that several persons who have no real religion, nay, nor even the form of it, may be sober; as it would be a pain and a torment to them to go to the extravagant courses in which others indulge themselves. But no man is born a true Christian, as he is with his natural temper; religion in reality is a supernatural temper: 2 Pet. i. 4. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." —There is,

3. Their being kept out of the way of temptation. It is a mercy to be so kept; but while people's corruptions are not tried with a suitable bait, they cannot so well know what influence the commandment has or has not upon them. The
cleanness

cleanness of the outward conversation of many is owing more to those circumstances in which they were placed in the world, than to any gracious disposition ; as may appear from the case of some who kept right as long as they were not tried, but so soon as the trial of their corruptions comes, they give way.—There is,

4. The workings of a natural conscience under the common influences and convictions of the Spirit, and a rousing ministry : Mark, vi. 20. “ For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy, and observed him ; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.” The preaching of the word sometimes serves to embalm dead souls, who are never by it quickened. It also sets the natural conscience a-working to purify the outward man, while the inner is never renewed. It brings on many so far, as that they are not far from the kingdom of God, who yet never have power to go forward to it.

5. Self-love may do it, in so far as a regard to their soul or body, credit or reputation, may move men to all this. Fear of punishment, and hope of reward, are powerful incentives, where God’s authority is but little valued ; nay, some reigning lust, as covetousness, pride, or ambition : Matth. vi. 2. “ Therefore, when thou dost thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.” But what avails all this to salvation, while the hidden man of the heart is sunk in pollutions before the all-seeing God, while the man is as a painted sepulchre, fair without, but within full of rottenness : Ezek. viii. 12. “ Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of
Israel

Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth." It is a weak evidence to lean to outward religion. But the true Christian has this cleanness of the outward conversation, and besides goes farther than the outward Christian in that point, in two particulars.

(1.) The inside Christian joins internal purity to external: Psal. xxiv. 4. "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." Mat. v. 8. "Blessed are the poor in heart, for they shall see God." He does not sit down contented with outside purity, as the other does, but his chief concern is the heart, the fountain of all impurity of life. And though the world cannot charge him with any gross pollutions, he finds he has work enough to do with the blind mind, the rebellious will, and the carnal corrupt affections. He accordingly strives to get them mortified: Gal. v. 24. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." Though the world sees not, yet, since God sees the disorder of his heart, that is enough to humble him, and give him new errands to Christ for his blood and Spirit.

(2.) Even his external purity is from religious motives, springs, and principles. Thus Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" In this he serves God, while in it the outward Christian does but serve himself. It is God's authority that sways him to it; though his natural inclinations be to break out, yet the fear of God in his heart does restrain him. And if he be surprised into temptations, the offence and dishonour to God weighs
more

more with him than all the shame and loss in the world which he incurs.

From all which we may learn, that certainly they are not true Christians, who are profane in their walk, whose conversation is not so much as cleansed from gross pollutions, such as cursers and swearers, drunkards, mockers at religion, obscene speakers, unclean persons, &c. Gal. v. 19. 20. 21. These bear the devil's mark on their foreheads, Isa. iii. 19.; and have not so much as the rude draughts of the form of godliness.—Hence,

Let no man value himself on the cleansing of the outward man from those pollutions, for a person may go all that length, and much farther, and yet be a cast-away. Religion is much deeper than this is, and is more inward. What the world observes least, God looks most to. Therefore study the inwards of religion, truth and purity in the inward parts.

THE

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

S E R M O N XXXII.

ROM. ii. 28. 29. *For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, considered the two first propositions which I laid down for illustrating the second doctrinal point, I go on to the

III. THAT he is not the true Christian who only performs the duties of external obedience, but he who also with them joins the duties of internal obedience. It is not the outward duties of obedience, but those which are inward, which constitute a true Christian. A hypocrite may go the whole round of outward duties, and thus have a form of godliness, so as, to the view of the world, he appears nothing short of the true Christian.— Thus, for instance,

1. A man may perform the external duties of righteousness and morality towards his neighbour, and yet be no more than an outward Christian. He may be just in his dealings with men : Luke, xviii. 11. " The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." He may be liberal and abundant in mercy towards the needy, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. and yet after all no true Christian. True Christianity makes a good neighbour, makes him abhor every unjust and dishonest thing, it renders him true to his word, and upright in his dealings in the world ; but when a man has this and no more, he has but one half, and hardly the half, of what is necessary to make a true Christian.—Besides this,

2. A man may perform the outward duties of piety towards God, yet after all be but an outside Christian. For pointing out the hypocrite's attainments in this respect, I would have you consider,

(1.) That persons may attend public ordinances, and not only so, but they may be very punctual in their attendance ; they may be far from loitering away Sabbaths at home, or from satisfying themselves with a partial attendance, as in Isa. lviii. 2. " Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of our God." They may behave themselves gravely and attentively, and neither be sleepers nor gazers, far less laughers at ordinances, and yet after all nought in God's esteem : Ezek. xxxiii. 31. " And they come unto me as the people, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them ; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart

heart goeth after their covetousness." They may be at much pains in following ordinances from place to place : John, vi. 24. 26. "When the people, therefore, saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.—Jesus answered and said unto them, 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." They may talk well of what they hear, and after all be but outside Christians : 1 Cor. xiii. 1. "Though I speak with the tongues of men or of angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."—Consider,

(2.) That they may be praying persons, and so carry religion into their families, and into their closets : Jer. xii. 2. "Thou hast planted, yea, they have taken root ; they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit ; thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." Even secret prayers, where no eye but the Lord's doth see, is a piece of bodily exercise, not beyond the walk of a hypocrite, which an awakened conscience may put a person upon at first, and other selfish principles may keep them at it. They may be persons of many prayers, not like those who pray some, but who indeed pray much : Heb. xii. 17. "For ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."—Consider,

(3.) That they may not only do much, but they also may be sufferers for religion, suffering not only to the spoiling of their goods, but even unto death, and yet be naught in God's esteem : 1 Cor. xiii. 3. "And though I give my body to be
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be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Hypocrisy is such a salamandar, as can live in the fire of persecution, of which there have been many instances; namely, of such whom the violent wind of persecution has not been able to drive off the Lord's way, but the warm sun of prosperity has done their business, to their undoing.

3. They may join both the outward of the first and second tables, and yet be but outside Christians. There are some who are very upright in their dealings with men, yet have not so much as a form in regard to the duties of piety. Others, who do not neglect duties of piety towards God, but they make no conscience of their duty to their neighbour, but where they apprehend their worldly interest will drive to it, right or wrong. Persons may even join both together, and yet be naught in God's esteem. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tythes of all I possess," Luke, viii. 12. "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless," Phil. iii. 6.—All this may be, and yet not beyond the boundaries of Pharasaical righteousness: Matth. v. 20. "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." The reason of this is manifest, namely, that all these things being but bodily exercises, are within the compass of nature, and do not require any supernatural grace to the bare performance of them; if the conscience be in any measure awakened, persons may thus be influenced to perform them; and custom may so habituate them,

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that the performance may be consistent enough with the reign of sin in the heart. But he only is a true Christian who joins internal to external obedience; spiritual exercise to bodily exercise in religion. The inside exceeds the outside Christian in various particulars.—As,

(1.) The inside Christian performs the duties of evangelical obedience, in subjecting his whole heart and soul to the Lord, as well as the outward man. This is the spiritual service which declares a man to be a true Christian: “God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth,” John, iv. 23. “For we are the circumcision, that worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” Phil. iii. 3. The bulk of the hypocrite’s religion lies in externals, but that of the true Christian’s lies in internals, in faith, love, resignation, and other parts of unseen religion. Their chief labour is with the heart, to notice the risings of corruptions, their bewailing the defects which the world cannot perceive, and mourning over the sin of their nature, the spring of all evil: Gal. v. 24. “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts.”

(2.) The inside Christian is unreserved and universal in his obedience, which the outside Christian never is. They have still some lusts with which they can never part, they reign in them.—Enmity against the power of godliness: 1 John, iii. 12. “Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.”—Self-seeking: John, v. 44. “How can ye believe, who seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?”—Bitterness of spirit, which cannot

not digest the gospel-command, of doing good for evil: Tit. iii. 3. "For we also ourselves were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."—Reigning love to the pleasures of this world, and covetousness: Ezek. xxxiii. 31. "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." But the gracious soul's obedience is universal; all such in so far sincerely aim at every known duty, approve the holy law in every point; desiring their spirits to be conformed to it, not it to be brought down to them; lamenting from the heart their shortcoming in all points.

3. The inside Christian's obedience is son-like obedience, the other is servile and slavish. The highest principle with the hypocrite is fear of punishment, and hope of reward, Hos. x. 11.; their highest end is themselves, Hos. x. 1. Jehu professed zeal for the Lord, but in effect it was but zeal for a kingdom. The inside Christian serves God as a son does his father.—Prompted by love to him, next to his command: 1 Tim. i. 5. "Now, the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."—Leaning on him for strength to perform his duty: Col. iii. 17. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."—Aiming at his honour: 1 Cor. x. 31. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

From this learn, that those are inevitably exposed to death, who come not the length of the outward

duties of religion, of mercy towards their neighbours, or of piety towards God. Lay this to heart, ye unrighteous, ye flighters of religion, prayerless persons, &c. Ye come not even the length of some who will fall short, and never see heaven. O ! if those who do all these things be lost, what will become of you ?—Ye that even come that length, lay no stress upon it, it will be but a broken reed to trust to. Duties are by no means sufficient confidences ; nor in themselves, without internals joined to them, can they even be evidences of your safety. Examine not only what ye do, but how ye do it, for this last is that to which God chiefly looks.—I now come to the

IV. AND last proposition, That he is not a true Christian, who has inside religion only in the letter of it, but he who also has it in its spirituality. We have pursued the nominal Christian through his outside religion, but we may not leave him here ; for, as an hypocrite may go farther than mere externals, so the text pursues him for discovery, even in internals in the letter.—For explaining which, I observe,

1. That a man may carry his religion into internals, and yet be but a Christian in the letter. He may do and have that in religion which no eye but God sees or can see, and yet be no true Christian : Jer. xvii. 9. 10. “ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it ? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” A person may form such a fine thread of hypocrisy, as to beguile every eye but the all-seeing eye : Jer. iii. 10. “ And yet for all this, her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart,

heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord." Do not think that all hypocrisy is gross dissimulation, or yet that all a hypocrite's religion lies only in his outside, and in nothing within. — For,

(1.) A natural conscience may check for heart-sins, and sins that no eye sees but God's : Rom. ii. 15. " Which shew the work of the law written on their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean time accusing, or else excusing, one another ;" and consequently must press to inward duties, according to the light. Hence there may be sorrow and grief for what is hid from all the world ; since the conscience perceives that God sees it, and that he will write his indignation on it. This fire has burned in many an un sanctified breast, yet it behoved it to have a vent, though to their own shame and loss.

(2.) An un sanctified desire of salvation, in the way of the covenant of works, may carry a man to internals in religion : Rom. x. 3. " For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, went about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. — The covenant of works is engraved on man's heart naturally, and under the influence of it a man may do his utmost to conform to the letter of the law, in the inward as well as outward duties of it. Observe the case of the young man in Matth. xix. 16.—20. It is no rare thing to see men eager to purchase heaven by their works.

(3.) Light may be strong, and kept strong by the common operations of the Holy Spirit, in an unholy heart. Thus, Balaam durst not entertain a thought of cursing Israel ; though he would fain have gained the wages of unrighteousness, his light would have suffered him. Our Lord Christ

breaks up the outer door of our understanding often while the inner remains shut. This cannot miss to have some bond on the heart, as well as on the outer man.

(4.) Even in the internals of religion, there is a letter and a spirit; there is the body or matter of the thing, and the soul and spirit of it lying in the right manner of doing it. The former is not beyond the power of nature, but the latter is; and therefore a hypocrite may come the length of the letter of internals of religion. He may have desires of good: Prov. xiii. 4. "The soul of the sluggard desireth," &c. though not holy desires; so in other cases.

2. The true Christian has inside religion, not in the letter only, but in the spirituality thereof: Phil. iii. 3. "We—worship God in the spirit, and—have no confidence in the flesh." He does not satisfy himself with the thing itself, but labours to get it, and maintain it as of the right stamp, such as God will approve. Here lies sincerity, that ornament of all religion, or rather the spirit and life of all, John, i. 47. Now, this spirituality consists in two things.

(1.) In the graciousness of the principle, 1 Tim. i. 5. Their inward religion is the fruit of their new nature, influenced by the Lord the Spirit; it is natural, and not violent or forced out by terrors, or from necessity, as screening them from the wrath of God. The new nature makes it their absolute choice, in whatever circumstances they may be; whereas it is the choice of others, only because they cannot otherwise act safely.—It consists,

(2.) In the holiness of their aim; their chief aim is to please the Lord, Col. i. 10. The stress of their salvation is laid on the obedience of Christ, not their own, whether outward or
inward;

inward ; and hence their aim in all their duties, is not to please themselves, but him who has called them to be partakers of his glory. The hypocrite is servile in his aims to please God, as he is mercenary for his own profit, so that himself, and not God, is his chief end ; but the sincere soul acts like a son, by virtue of the spirit of adoption. —From all this we may learn,

That this shews they are not true Christians, whose religion lies all in externals, and have no concern about their hearts, Matth. xxiii. 25. A whited sepulchre is the emblem of a hypocrite, not of a true Christian. Persons also may be at much pains inwardly, who yet never come the length of the spirit of religion. What, then, will become of these, whose case is entirely confined to the outward man ?—Let those who carry religion inwardly also examine well, what are the principles and ends they act from, lest their inside religion be found a spiritless lifeless corpse of religion, the mere product of their own exertions. Such may perceive whether or not they have the spirit of religion, by,

1. Their endeavouring to approve themselves to the Lord, as an all-seeing holy God, not in some things only, but in all things, Col. i. 10. Being content to know the whole word of God as to duty, and what they know not to be discovered to them, in order to their setting about it, Job. xxxiv. 32. Psal. cxxxix. 23. 24. They will know it by,

2. Their endeavouring to purge their inward, as well as their outward religion, of all carnal and selfish motives, principles, and ends, John, iii. 21. Self is an insinuating thing, and much of our spirituality lies in persons endeavouring to be spiritual in what they do. So short length do most come, we must be concerned to be purged from
hypocrisy;

hypocrisy ; it is a good sign with those who are unsatisfied with their performance of duty, and are lamenting that they are not spiritual in it, Rom. vii. 22. 23.—They will know it,

3. By being denied to their outward, and also their inward religion, Phil. iii. Though they endeavour to do all as if they were to gain heaven by doing, yet they renounce all in point of confidence before the Lord, as naked and bare. This is a good sign, Matth. v. 3.

In pursuance of this point touching inside religion, I shall offer the following observations touching the hypocrite's attainments in this respect, and at the same time shew wherein the true Christian goes beyond him.

1. A person may be under heavy exercise of soul after the commission of some sin, especially a gross sin, and yet be but a Christian in the letter. This is manifest in the case of Judas. Though there are some sins, which every unsanctified heart makes no bones of, yet there are some which may stick in the throat even of a person void of the grace of God ; nay, more, in this exercise of soul there may be, (1.) Great restlessness and anxiety of mind, which the person cannot divert, as he was wont to do. (2.) Indignation at himself, for doing as he has done. (3.) A taking shame to himself before men, by a plain and open confession of guilt, Mat. xxvii. 3. 4. Lastly, Strong resolutions to guard against that sin in all time to come. Thus, Exod. ix. 27. in which Pharaoh was morally serious, speaking as he thought in the time.—But here there are four things wanting, which are to be found in the exercises of true Christians after their falls into sin.—There is,

(1.) Kindly humiliation of soul before the Lord. The Christian in spirit sees not only an evil in sin which

which affrights him, but a loathsomeness in it which turns his stomach at it, as being contrary to God's holy nature and will : Job, xlii. 5. 6. " I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He owns himself unworthy of God's grace, and casts himself down at the Lord's feet, stopping his mouth from quarrelling with God, however he dispose of him, Psal. li. 4.

(2.) The dishonour done to God, and the grieving his Spirit, is what does most touch the heart of the true Christian : Psal. li. 4. " Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight ; that thou mightst be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." The consideration of God's glorious majesty, his loving-kindness and gracious benefits towards the person, furnish a quiver of arrows to pierce his heart, and he calls himself beast and fool for thus requiting the Lord.

(3.) No peace will that person have, but that which God himself speaks, and what flows from the application of the Redeemer's blood, Rom. i. 5. Others may be for peace at any rate, build up their peace on their sorrows, repentance, and confession ; but no peace for the true Christian, till he get it under the covert of the blood of Christ, Heb. ix. 14.

(4.) Their exercises under their trials drive them out of themselves to Christ for sanctification : Psal. li. 10. 11. " Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence ; and take not thy holy Spirit from me ;" whereas trials drive others into themselves, as resolved, that if God, for Christ's sake, will but pardon their sin, they will see to their
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own holiness of life ; after which, in some, they issue in faithless blind vows against such and such sins, not sensible of their own weakness, and not fleeing to Christ under a sense of it. But the true Christian will be equally concerned for sanctification of his spirit, as justification of his person by blood, knowing he equally needs both.—In like manner,

2. A person may have a great struggle in himself against sin, and against temptation to it, and yet be but only a Christian in the letter. It is a dangerous mistake to think, that every inward struggle against sin is the combat between the flesh and the spirit. Herod had no small struggle with himself, before he could yield to the beheading of John, Matth. xiv. 9. Pilate also, before he could yield to the condemning of Christ. Nay, a hypocrite may not only have this struggle, but may carry the day against the temptation, in so much that he will not yield to it. This is clear in the case of Balaam, when all Balak's intreaties and rewards could not engage him to curse Israel.—There are five things wherein the true Christian goes beyond the hypocrite in this respect.—As,

(1.) His struggle arises from the new nature, with which he is endowed ; he has an habitual bent to holiness, and an aversion to evil : Gal. v. 17. " For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." The hypocrite's struggle does arise only from a slavish fear, or at best from a civil disposition, which is easily overcome, as being but a part of the old nature, and so reaches but to some things.—Which brings me to observe,

(2.) That a true Christian's struggle is against
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all sin, every thing which is discovered by him to be sin, of whatever sort it be, whether it be of those which are more gross or more subtle, those that are brought to the light by some external action, or those that are in the soul or spirit only : Thus the psalmist : Psal. cxix. 128. " Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." Hence the struggle of the true Christian is against unbelief, the actings and workings of self in the various shapes which it assumes, and against predominant idols. But the struggle of others is confined to the grosser kinds of sin, and is never taken up against all known sin, but only against some one lust or other, which has often at length a respite given to, or rather a league concluded with it. A hypocrite gives evidence that the cause of this war is not a natural antipathy, as in the true Christian, but an accidental quarrel.

(3.) The Christian's struggle tends to the mortification and extirpation of sin, the plucking up of it by the roots, the destroying of the tree with its fruit, Gal. v. 24. It tends to no less than the perfection of sanctification, and the utter abolition of sin as the cause of this war. This the new nature lusteth and longeth after, and cannot be satisfied to lay down the sword while there is a Canaanite in the land ; and since it is not obtained in this life, the war is continued till death make the sword drop, and victory is obtained : Phil. iii. 13. 14. " Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus." The other is not so violent, but
strives

strives only to repress certain lusts which are troublesome or dishonourable.

(4.) The Christian's struggle prevails, to the constituting of the habitual course of his life, a holy course. This is the chief strain in which he runs on, although mixed with many slips, John, iii. 9. 10. ; so that he has that noble testimony with the apostle, "that with 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. But the other still lives a life habitually unholy.

(5.) The Christian's struggle is betwixt a new and gracious quality in the will, and the old corrupt inclinations, its neighbours there, whose reign is broken, though their molestation still continue : Gal. v. 17. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh : And these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." But the struggle of the hypocrite is betwixt his will and his partially enlightened conscience, which takes up the cudgels against the corrupt will, and fights against it with the fire and terror of a holy law ; or, at most, between a slight inclination of the will, and the reigning corrupt inclinations.—There is farther to be considered,

3. That a person may be in great concern about his state, and yet be but a Christian only in the letter. How is it possible that men living under the clear light of the gospel, can but have some touches of this ? Felix was so troubled with it, that he trembled, Acts, xxiv. 25. Simon Magus, Acts, viii. 24. Conversion begins here in the work of conviction ; but oftentimes it stops here, and goes no farther, Hof. xiii. 13. But I will say more than this : A person may have such an exercise

ercise on his spirit about his state, and it may be carried on from one step to another, in so much that, in his own eyes, and the eyes of others, it may be taken for the work of conversion, and yet after all he be a Christian only in the letter, and not in the spirit.—Thus, for instance,

(1.) He may have a law-work on his spirit, and yet may be no true Christian. Had not Pharaoh and Felix deep conviction? and was not Judas stung and pricked at the heart under the sense of his guilt? Legal qualms of conscience may fill a man with terrors, sorrow, and anxiety, on account of sin, who notwithstanding is never brought to Christ. The apostle tells us, Gal. iv. 24. that “the law gendereth to bondage.” The covenant of works bringeth forth children; but they are only bond-children, that is, slaves, not sons, in their obedience to God. There are many pangs of conscience in the world, which, though they may be taken for pangs of the new birth, are nothing other than pangs of the second death. The matter lies here: Either the wound which the hypocrite gets, is over deep, as is the case when it drives the person to utter despair, as it did Judas, so that he neither closed, nor pretended to close, with Christ; or else it is not deep enough, so that the work is marred, being but superficial; and he is like the person who, without a foundation, built his house upon the sand, and the storm, whenever it arose, swept it away, Luke, vi. 48. Betwixt these two extremes, in the middle way, the work is carried on for making a Christian in spirit, and not in the letter only. The case of utter despair is manifest; but to shew that deepness of the soul’s wound, which issues in conversion, which is wanting in that which only issues in a person’s becoming a Christian in the letter, con-

sider the nature of that wound which is given in the work of grace.

[1.] It brings the soul to be content to part with all sin, and to take Christ on any terms : Hos. xiv. 2. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord ; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously ; so will we render the calves of our lips." Acts, ix. 6. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?" said Paul, trembling and astonished. The man is content to expose the right-eye sin, that the Lord may pluck it out, and the right-hand, that it may be cut off. But the hypocrite, with all his soul-exercise, is never brought this length. There is still some one bias of the heart or other he is never content to have corrected. There is always some idol of jealousy to be spared, some particular or other in Christ's terms of salvation to which he cannot submit, Mark, x. 21.

[2.] The wound goes to the root of sin in the soul, namely, the sin of our nature : Jer. iv. 3. 4. "For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow-ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem." He that is only humbled for the sins of a wicked life, and some particular lusts in the heart, which is the utmost of the hypocrite's attainment, in him the serpent's heel may be bruised, but not his head. The sin of our nature is the great reigning sin, and in the work of grace the Lord strikes at that particularly, and makes the soul feel the intolerable weight of it : Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" But as long as heart-corruption is untouched, as the man recovers his peace, his sin will recover its strength.

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[3.] The wound brings the soul to a sense of its absolute need of Christ, and his whole salvation, for justification and also for sanctification. This is the issue of kindly soul-exercise, namely, that thus a person becomes poor in spirit, which the exercise of the hypocrite never brings him to: Matth. v. 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Right soul-exercise carries a man out of himself to Christ for righteousness, roots up his confidence in himself, in his best duties and dispositions, &c. breaks the marriage between him and the law, that he may be married to Christ, without any thing whatever to recommend him: Gal. ii. 19. 20. "For I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." He also depends on Christ for sanctification, being persuaded of his utter inability to do any good: Rom. vii. 18. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." And under the sense of this, the soul lies down at the Lord's feet, as in Jer. xxxi. 18. "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God."

(2.) A person may have a common illumination in the knowledge of Christ, and yet be but a Christian only in the letter: Heb. vi. 4. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, &c. if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance." They may have such knowledge of Christ in his natures, person, and offices, as may enable them

even to teach others, and edify them in the knowledge of Christ, and yet be no true Christians themselves. Such were Judas, Demas, and thousands of others in other ages of the church. Great gifts may be without grace; and there may be much heat, where there is no sanctified warmth. —But there is a saving illumination, communicated to all true converts, of which others never partake: John, iv. 10. “Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” And it has these three characters.

[1.] Saving illumination discovers to the soul such a suitableness in the mystery of Christ to the divine perfections and the sinner’s case, that the soul heartily falls in with, and acquiesces in the glorious device of salvation by Infinite Wisdom: 1 Cor. i. 24. “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” They see that there is nothing wanting in it, which is necessary to promote God’s honour, or to answer their own miserable case, but that it has a perfect suitableness to both; so that their awakened consciences may find complete rest there; and hence they lay themselves wholly for rest upon it, while the consciences of others, being awakened, and their minds being still blinded, they never go to him *only* for rest, but at best mix their own righteousness with his, and dare not trust to his righteousness alone.—Saving illumination,

[2.] Discovers such a transcendent glory and excellence in him, as that the soul is made content and determined to part with all, for him: Phil. iii. 8. “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss,

lois, for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." It is a sad, but common question in the hearts, though, it may be, not in the mouths, of unrenewed sinners, Song, v. 9. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" Certain it is, that the most refined hypocrite has always something that to him is dearer than Christ, and which has more of his heart than he has. But the soul, enlightened with the light of life, beholds that in him which darkens all created excellence, as the rising sun makes the stars hide their heads; so that they will part with all lawful, as well as unlawful enjoyments, to win him, Luke, xiv. 26.

[3.] Saving illumination discovers such a fulness in him, that the heart takes up its everlasting rest in him: Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." The returning prodigal sees bread enough and to spare in his father's house; and the true convert sees a rest to his heart, as well as for his conscience, in Christ; so that he is brought to be content with him alone, as seeing him to be all in all. But this the hypocrite never comes to; the divided heart must have Christ, and also some lust or other, or else no contentment.

(3.) A person may give a consent to the covenant, and in some sort close with the Lord in his covenant, while, after all, he may be only a Christian in the letter; and thus the work of conversion may seem to be completed, as it would really be if they were sincere in so doing. A hy-

pocrite may expressly and solemnly covenant with God, by word or by writ, and thus engage to be the Lord's. This is evident from the practice of the Israelites : *Exod. xiv. 8.* " And all the people answered and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord."—Here we may observe, how full they are in their consent and engagement, " All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do." See also *Exod. xx. 19.* But mark the Lord's own verdict on this covenanting : *Deut. v. 29.* " O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them and their children for ever !" Not only may all this be classed among the externals of religion, but I shall add, for illustration, that persons may be morally serious in their consent to the covenant, that is, thinking and resolving in the time to do as they say. Moral seriousness is opposed to gross dissimulation, which there was no place for here, *Deut. v. 24.* Yet it may be where there is no sincerity, *Psal. lxxviii. 37.* Of the same people it is said, " For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." Hypocrites, in this case, are like those who, out of mere simplicity, and ignorance of the worth of a thing, offer to buy it ; but if they really knew what it could not be sold under, they would never once bid for it.—They may also consent to the covenant out of a real sense of their sin and misery, and a conviction of their need of a Mediator, as in *Exod. xx. 19.* " And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear ; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." There was the mountain on fire, for a tribunal ; the voice of a trumpet, summoning the criminals ; terrible thunders, to pronounce

pronounce the sentence of death against them: This filled them with horror and fear of death, and shewed them the need of a Mediator. But there are three things in which the Christian in spirit goes beyond the Christian in the letter, in this point.

[1.] He engages freely and heartily to the Lord in his whole covenant. The hypocrite is but dragged and forced into it, when the matter is seriously considered. They are not a willing people: Pſal. lxxviii. 34. 36. & 37. "When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God. Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." I doubt not but a hypocrite may be very hearty in his consent to receive the comforts of the covenant: Matth. xiii. 20. 21. "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet he hath not root in himself, but dureth for a while." But if he consider the duties of the covenant, there he sticks, and can come no other way to the whole covenant, but as he is dragged: Rom. viii. 7. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

When the Spirit enters into a person's heart, he takes such hold of it, that the person is overcome by grace into willingness. Thus it is said, Jer. xxxi. 3. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Then the person pours out his heart like water: Pſal. lxii. 8. "Pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." Terror may begin the work, but love crowns it:
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Hof. ii. 14. "Therefore, behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."

[2.] While the person's heart consents to the covenant with the Lord, it is divorced from sin; but the hypocrite consents to the covenant, with a heart glewed to his lusts: Psal. xlv. 10. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." It is an ill-made second marriage, where there is neither death nor divorce from the first husband; and this is the cause of apostasy, men going back to their lusts, because they never freely parted with them. What makes a man and his lusts one, is, the greedy hold the heart takes of them; the heart cleaves to them: Jer. viii. 5. "Why, then, is the people of Jerusalem flidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return." But the bond is loosed by divine grace, and their liking is turned to loathing; though sin cleaves to them, they cleave not to it: Rom. vii. 21. 22. "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." In which case, it is not only put out of the life, but out of the heart.

[3.] In covenanting with God, the person resigns himself absolutely to the Lord, the hypocrite never without reserves. The sincere soul absolutely gives up itself, (1.) To the yoke of his commandments, Psal. cxix. 128. "Therefore, I esteem all thy commandments concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." But there is some one duty or other the hypocrite's heart cannot digest, as in Mark x. 21. (2.) The soul gives up itself to the providential will of God, Luke xiv. 26. He is content to bear his cross, as well

as to wear his crown; but there is always something in the cross to which the hypocrite cannot submit.

(4.) And lastly, A person may be in the exercise of religious duties, may be much enlarged and affected, and yet only a Christian in the letter, Heb. vi. 4. Many get a taste of gospel-benefits, who never digest them, this taste arising only from common operations of the Spirit on an unrenewed heart; and a person may, at a time, get another heart, who never gets a new heart. Thus it was with Saul, 1 Sam. x. 9.—As to this, I would observe,

1. In the general, that a hypocrite may have a mighty enlargement in duties, and be much affected in them. That there may be a great stir and motion among the affections, while the stony heart does yet remain, is plain from the case of the stony-ground hearers, Matth. xiii. 20. and the many instances of joys and sorrows raised in unrenewed hearts by the word. Many lay a great deal of weight on this, that they are not always alike in duties: Sometimes they are bound up, sometimes enlarged; sometimes they drive heavily in them, sometimes they have a great deal of comfort and pleasure in them. But, do not such swallow down this as an evidence of the grace of God without examination?—To understand this, consider, that there is an enlargement in the exercise of a gift, as well as in the exercise of a grace; and the one may be mistaken for the other, 2 Cor. ii. 13.—15. Thus also God both enlarged and straitened king Saul in gifts: And as the gifts of others, well exercised in holy things, may greatly delight a man, as in Ezek. xxxiii. 32. “And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that

that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument ;" so much more may the exercise of one's own gift with ease and readiness, delight the person's self.—Consider also, that the power of a deluded fancy may produce this, as in the stony-ground hearers, Matth. xiii. 20. As a man may have a great deal of pleasure in a dream, or in a misconception, so a deceived heart may make a person feed very sweetly upon ashes, and never suspect that there is a lie in his right hand, II. xlv. 20. Do we not read of a fire of men's own kindling, which, though it may mightily comfort them for a time, yet ends in sorrow and darkness, II. I. 10.—Consider, in a word, that there are common influences of the Spirit which are not sanctifying, which may produce a mighty commotion among the affections, Heb. vi. 4. 5. 6. Even signal providences will have this effect on unrenewed hearts, whether they be in mercy or in judgement: Psal. lxxviii. 34. When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God." These things come like a summer-shower, which wets the surface of the earth, and makes every channel run for a while, but is quickly again dried up.—Now, the difference between the Christian in the spirit in his gracious enlargement in duties, and the Christian in the letter in his delusive enlargements in duty, may be seen in these two particulars.

(1.) Gracious enlargements tend always to the killing and mortifying of self, that grand competitor with Christ: 1 Chron. xxix. 14. "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." The hypocrite's enlargements feed and nourish it, swelling the heart with pride and self-

self-conceit: Is. lviii. 3. "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast, ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours." The more a person is graciously enlarged in duties, the more his sinfulness, weakness, wants, and nothingness appear, notwithstanding of all his meltings, mournings, humiliations, &c. But the hypocrite, the more he is enlarged, appears to himself the more worthy that Christ should do great things for him; and he becomes the less self-denied.

(2.) Gracious enlargements are sanctifying; they promote holiness in heart and life: Zech. xii. 10. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." They are a burning, as well as a shining light, and make persons more tender in all moral duties to God and man. If one has been taken into the temple of God in duties, it will appear about him in the substantials of morality. He will fear sin more, and be more exercised to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men. But delusive enlargements have not this effect. On the contrary, they readily leave people more proud, peevish, and selfish, often making them such sons of Belial, that a person cannot speak to them; and never strike at inward beloved lusts to mortify them.

2. But to be more particular,

(1.) A hypocrite may be much affected with sorrow for sin in his duties. All mourners are not true

true mourners, Zech. vii. 3. One may hear the word, or pour out a prayer with wet cheeks, and yet have a whole heart, a heart far from being broken for sin. Esau was in a flood of tears, seeking the blessing. Many times, where water goes out in their case, wind enters in. It is not always humbling grace that produces tears. Some are of soft dispositions, and easily wrought upon by a melancholy object, without any efficacy of grace, like the daughters of Jerusalem, Luke, xxiii. 27. and downwards. Some, of most rugged dispositions, because their affections are vehement in any case, may be thus touched and affected, and yet there be nothing more than the product of nature. Thus, when David shewed him mercy, even Saul lifted up his voice, and wept, 1 Sam. xxiv. 16. But the difference betwixt the Christian and the hypocrite lies here, (1.) That the chief ground of the true Christian's sorrow for sin is, the offence and dishonour done to a holy gracious God, as an ingenuous child is moved with his father's displeasure and dishonour: 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." But the hypocrite's chief ground is selfish, because of the evils to which he has thereby exposed himself, whether in time or eternity. (2.) The hypocrite's sorrow is soon over; it is but a flash, and away; and he goes back again, if not to the same sins, yet to others no less offensive to God. His sorrow never goes the length to loose the bonds of wickedness: Isa. lviii. 5. 6. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?"

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Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" It is not so with the godly: Lam. iii. 49. 50. "Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission: Till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven." Their sorrow for sin is habitual, because the body of sin still remains, and this sorrow influences them to war against all sin.

(2.) A hypocrite may have a kind of love to God and Christ, and a desire after grace and good things. Hence Paul prays for grace to "them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," Eph. vi. 24. The Christian in the letter may say, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," John, vi. 34. and join the foolish virgins in their desire to partake of the oil of the wise. But the difference betwixt the Christian and the hypocrite here lies:

[1.] That a hypocrite may love God as his benefactor, as one who does him good every day, and from whose hands he looks for good in time coming, either for time or for eternity, Mal. iii. 1. This is to love God for one's self. But the true Christian loves him, not only because of his benefits, but because of his lovely nature, his perfect holiness, truth, hatred of sin, &c. This is to love God for himself: Psal. xxx. 4. "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." And this the unholy heart can never do, Rom. viii. 7. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." Now, they that love God thus, they love his image, wherever it appears, and particularly in the holy law, even where it strikes against that sin which most easily besets them: Rom. vii. 22.

“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”—The difference lies,

[2.] That they may desire grace, for its necessity in order to save them, but not for its intrinsic beauty and likeness to the Lord: Matth. v. 7. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” It is the chief thing the true Christian desires, grace to be holy, as well as grace to be justified and pardoned: Psal. xxvii. 4. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”—The difference lies,

Lastly, That a hypocrite may have much joy and delight in the duties of religion; so had the stony-ground hearers, Matth. xiii. 20.—Is. lviii. 2. “Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.” There may be delusive raptures of joy, as well as unsound floods of sorrow. I shewed very lately the difference betwixt genuine joy and these delusive raptures. True joy riseth orderly, after a preceding renting effect on the heart, &c.; delusive joy more quickly, &c.*—I now come,

III. To make some short improvement.—I have endeavoured to lay before you, the differences betwixt the hypocrite and the sincere Christian; and from the whole, I think you may carry away these lessons.—We may hence see,

1. That it is no easy thing to be a real Christian.

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* See Catechetical Sermons on Rom. v. 2.

A parcel of external performances do not make a Christian, nay, nor even internal things also, without the genuine spirit of duties, performances, and attainments: That the great thing which makes the difference is, not so much what is done, as how it is done, the principles, ends, manner, &c. of doing it.-- We may learn,

2. That a man may go a very great length in religion, and notwithstanding be naught in God's esteem. A person may look so like a true Christian, that he may deceive both saints and sinners, like him who is said to have made an image with such motion, that others thought it had life. Nay, I know not but he may deceive the devil himself: Jer. xvii. 9. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" like him who is said to have painted grapes so lively, that the birds came and picked at them. He may deceive himself like the Laodiceans, and go to death with the delusion, like the foolish virgins.-- We may learn,

3. That however far the hypocrite goes, the true Christian goes beyond him; and therefore we must not, we ought not, to satisfy ourselves as to the point of sincerity, unless there be something in us which is not to be found in hypocrites. And therefore I exhort you to put yourselves to the trial. Try yourselves whether you be in Christ or not, whether you be sincere Christians or not.-- Consider,

(1.) True religion is very rare at all times: Mat. vii. 14. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The miserable decay and untenderness among all sorts of persons, shew it to be especially rare at this time, in which we may say, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth;

for the faithful fail from among the children of men," Psal. xii. 1.—Consider,

(2.) That we are like to see trying times, in which the Lord will set his furnace in Zion. God has appeared often seasonably and wonderfully for our deliverance; but the generation is not bettered, but rather growing worse and worse in all points. This is a forerunner of a fearful stroke. Now, Sirs, a shew of religion may do in a time of ease and peace, but when that trial comes, it will be hard to bear up without the reality.—Consider,

(3.) That death and judgement will try us all. We may put off the trial as we will for a time, there is however no shifting of it altogether. God will not be mocked.—Consider,

Lastly, That it will be a terrible disappointment to be awakened out of dreams of heaven, by falling into hell. It will be no time to seek oil, when the Bridegroom is come, and hath shut the door. We have in view an ordinance that calls to self-examination: 1 Cor. xi. 28. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Therefore bestir yourselves, and consider your state. Study the spirituality of religion, that you may thus approve yourselves to the heart-searching God. Amen.

THE STATUTE-LAW OF DISCIPLESHIP *.

S E R M O N XXXIII.

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.*

HE is a fool who joins himself to any society, before he has weighed with himself how he can comply with the laws and rules of that society. In vain do we propose to be a disciple to any person, if we are not disposed, if we will not submit to his discipline. Man is born like a wild ass's colt, naturally untractable and unteachable; the Son of God has fet up his school amongst us; many who externally belong to it stand at a distance from him, as rude and unpollished by grace as when they first came to it. There is a solemn and awful entry into the school of Christ before us, and it cannot be unsuitable, especially on such a season as this, to stand and

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* Delivered at Selkirk, Saturday, Oct. 11. 1712.

hear, out of the mouth of the great Master, the necessary qualifications of all such as will be reckoned his disciples indeed. This we have in the text.—In which there is observable,

1. A case supposed; and there are two things in it. For this case, though the case of many, is like the legs of the lame, which are not equal.—In it, first, there is a fair profession. The man cometh to Christ, not in the way of believing on him, as this word is often used, the expression here can by no means be thus explained; but in the way of an outward profession, joining himself with his followers, taking on him the name of his party. The occasion of the words clears this. Multitudes went with him, and they were ready to value themselves because they kept good company. The Lord turns to them, and tells them, that it was another thing to be a disciple of his than most of them took it to be. He lays the matter so plainly before them, as would make it easy to conclude, that most who followed him now would leave him afterwards; and that when it came to the trying pinch, he would have but a thin backing; therefore they should in time consider what they were doing.—In the case there is, next, a foul and false heart. The man comes to Christ, and brings not his heart with him, but leaves it at home with his father or mother, &c. or keeps it still hugging and embracing his dear self, his life, so that he cannot embrace Christ, more than a man can take both heaven and earth in his arms at once. Christ must be dearer to his disciples than what is dearest to them in the world. The dearest persons are father, mother, &c. The dearest thing is life. That which makes this case so bad is, that they are dearer to the man than Christ. He hates not his father, mother, &c. He who taught us

My Son.
Give me thy
heart.

in the law, to love our neighbour as ourselves, does not contradict this here, but speaks out what was implied there, that we must neither love our neighbour nor ourselves as our God. It is not an absolute, but a comparative hatred, which is here meant; that is, a less love: Gen. xxix. 31. "And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated;" that is, less loved than Rachel. Similar instances occur, as in Deut. xxi. 15. John, xii. 25. And thus it is explained, Matth. x. 37. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." A man must leave father and mother to cleave to his wife; but he must leave his wife, yea, and his life also, to cleave to Christ. Levi gave a practical commentary on this text, Deut. xxxiii. 9. "Who said unto his father, and to his mother, I have not seen, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." And so did that disciple-like resolution of Jerom: 'If my father should stand before me,' says he, 'my mother hang upon me, my brethren press about me, I would break through my brethren, throw down my father, tread under feet my mother, to cleave to Jesus Christ.' So said a certain Dutch schoolmaster, being asked, if he loved not his wife and children? 'Yes,' says he, 'if all the world were gold, and mine to dispose of, I would give it all to live with them, though but in a prison; yet is my soul and my Lord Christ dearer than all.' But perhaps this is only the attainment of few. Mistake it not, but hear,

2. Christ's verdict upon the case, and venture not to distinguish where the law makes no distinction: "If any man come to me, and hate not, &c. he cannot be my disciple." Be he or she who they

they will, they cannot be Christ's disciples, if Christ be not dearer than what is dearest to them in a world. Nominal disciples they may be indeed, but real they cannot be, they cannot bear afflictions for Christ, because they want such affections to him as are necessary to make them go in the strait and narrow way which leads unto life.—From this subject I would take this

DOCTRINE, That no man can be a true disciple of Christ, to whom Christ is not dearer than what is dearest to him in the world.

For illustrating this subject, I shall,

I. Speak to the nature of this necessary qualification of a true disciple of Christ.

II. Confirm the doctrine of the text.

III. Offer some reasons why Christ is dearer to his true disciples, than what is dearest to them in the world. And,

IV. Conclude with some improvement.

WE are then,

I. To speak to the nature of this necessary qualification of a true disciple of Christ.—There are in it,

I. An esteem of Christ above all : Psal. xlv. 2. "Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips ; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." Christ is the highest and most glorious object in the practical judgement of all his true disciples : Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." They do not only think him the best portion, considering things in the general, in which sense he has even the commendation of those who slight him; but they look upon

upon him as best for them, in whatever circumstances they may be ; this is the character of a true disciple : Matth. xi. vi. " And blessed is he, who-soever shall not be offended in me." As the sparkling stars hide their heads when the sun ariseth, so all things in the world lose their lustre when the glory of God appeareth to them, shining in the face of Jesus ; though to others there is in him no beauty.

2. The heart renounceth its property in all things of the world, in the day of its closing with Jesus Christ. As a rebellious son, turned out of his father's house into an uninhabited land, takes that as his property which he falls upon by the right of first-finding ; but when he has access to return, he quits it, that he may enjoy his father's estate : so Adam and his children being driven out of paradise, and banished from the presence and enjoyment of the Lord himself, they take up with what created comforts they stumble upon in their blind rambling through the wilderness of this world, as their own portion ; but returning and taking Christ, they part with these, their souls returning into their quiet rest. The natural man, being alienated from the life of God, takes a dead hold of created things, as suited to his corrupt state, and therefore his own by choice ; hence so many carnal *my's*, but not a word of *my God* amongst them : Hof. ii. 5. " She said, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." This is very unlike to Psal. xviii. 1. 2. " I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer ; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust ; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." Now, when the soul begins

gins to live, it quits that greedy grip of carnal things, and begins to fall off from the world ; that bond of iniquity which bound the heart and the world together being broken ; so that the disciple of Christ looks on all he has as no more his own.

3. The soul resigns all to the Lord, lays all down at the Lord's feet, to be disposed of as he will : 1 Sam. iii. 18. " Eli said, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." 2 Sam. xv. 26. " David said, Behold, here am I, let the Lord do with me as seemeth good unto him." If the Lord have use for his comforts in the world, he, and all that are his, are for his part at his service. Though they were his before, he now makes a free-will offering of them all to the Lord ; so that, in very deed, all that a true disciple of Christ has, are dedicated things, consecrated to God. He may not, he dare not, revoke the grant ; they must be used, as God who is the proprietor doth direct, whose will must not be disputed in the disposal of his own ; they can be no more for profane, but holy uses. And if, through the prevalence of corruption, he has put his hand to that which is not holy, Christ's discipline will make him bring it back with the tear in his eye. Never a soul closes with Christ aright, that layeth not all its enjoyments, even life itself, at his feet. I John 3.

4. The soul accepts of Christ for, and instead of the things resigned. God does not require us, nor will the heart ever part with these, but for a better : Matth. xiii. 45. 46. " Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." The man takes Christ instead of father, mother, and all things ; for it is impossible that man can be self-sufficient. The heart
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of man is an empty, hungry thing, that must needs have something to feed upon; and let men ply their hearts with the utmost diligence, they will still find it impossible to draw the husks of the world out of their hearts, unless something better is set before them. They must see heaven, before they will be drawn from earth; therefore, the great transaction between Christ and the soul is held out under the notion of buying, in which a man does indeed in one sense, namely, as to his portion, give away his money; but he obtains something instead of it, which is better to him than his money. He gets Christ, the pearl of great price, the one thing needful.

5. The soul is disposed to part with them, when the Lord calls for them; has an habitual readiness to part with them for Christ. It is true, indwelling corruption is ready to hold the grip too fast, even when the Lord calls for a delivery; yet every soul closing with Christ has an honest resolution to part with all for him actually, when he shall please to put them to this trial. The grace of God looseth them at the root, when it first comes into the soul, rooting and grounding them in love to Christ; which root of the righteous shall never be moved.

6. There is in the soul a new power of living, without them, on Jesus Christ; a life which is an absolute mystery to every Christless soul: John, vi. 57. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." If in this spiritual bargain they have quit with their money, on the purchase made, they can live without it, else would they never have quit with it. Though all temporal things fail them, yet can they rejoice in the Lord as their portion, and joy in the God of their salvation,

vation, Hab. iii. 18. If father and mother should leave them, they can satisfy themselves in the Lord's taking them up. If they should lose all relations for him, his relation to them is, in their eyes, more than sufficient to make up the loss. If they should not know where to hide their heads, or how to get food in a hiding-place, he is to them, not only a refuge for protection, but a portion for maintenance, Psal. cxlii. 4. 5. If all their substance should be taken from them, the Almighty shall be the gold and silver of their strength, Job, xxii. 25. Yea, though natural life should go in his cause, himself is their life, a life which cannot be taken from them; for, Col. iii. 4. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory."—We now proceed,

II. To confirm the doctrine of the text, or shew, that no man can be a true disciple of Christ, to whom Christ is not dearer than what is dearest to him in the world.—For this purpose, consider,

1. That the soul cannot truly lay hold on Christ, but it must of necessity part with the world. The embracing of Christ infers naturally the loosing our hold of the world: Matth. vi. 24. "No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." We may as soon grasp heaven and earth at once in our arms, as fix on Christ, and not loose our hold from all things besides him. If you would look up to the heavens, you must look away from the earth. The world is the term from which Christ calls us: Song, iv. 8. "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon." Men may keep his company, with the world under their feet, but not with the world in their heart.—Consider,

2. It

2. It is impossible that the love of God, and the love of the world, (the persons and things of the world), can at the same time be predominant in the heart. One of them must of necessity be uppermost. If the love of God be predominant, then it will command the love of all worldly things to yield; and these things will be disposed of, so as may best please him that has the chief room in our hearts. All the streams of our love to things below, will be swallowed up in the depth of our love to Christ: but this will be swallowed up by none; for this love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned; see Heb. xi. 25. 26. If the love of the world predominate, then it leaves no love to the Lord, because no predominant love of the world is consistent with the true love of God: 1 John, ii. 15. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This proves the man no disciple of Christ, Matth. vi. 24. James, iv. 4. 2 Tim. iii. 4. 5.—Consider,

3. That if Christ be not dearer to us than the world, there is no universal resignation, which is necessary to prove the sincerity of the heart: Acts, ix. 6. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" 2 Cor. viii. 5.—"But first gave their own selves to the Lord."—If this be wanting, there is nothing done; we give not to the Lord what he seeks, namely, that we be *all his*. If we deal thus in this solemn transaction, we do but lie to the Holy Spirit, as Ananias and Sapphira, keeping back part of the price. This is a sure evidence that grace is not effectually at work with us, else

we would have been a willing people ; we would have made no reserves in closing with Christ.— Consider,

4. That if Christ is not loved supremely, there is a root wanting, the fruit of which is necessary to evidence sincerity. (1.) There is no root of universal obedience, the want of which will leave us ashamed, Psal. cxix. 6. There will always be, in this case, one thing lacking, that will marr all other good things about us. There will always be some idol of jealousy that gets Christ's room ; some offending right hand spared, that will bring the whole body to hell at length. (2.) There is no root for Christian suffering, bearing the cross of Christ, which is a cross of Christ's chusing, not of our own. Our part is, to take up the cross that Christ lays down to us ; and without this we cannot be his disciples. And when Christ lays on his cross, it is found, that readily he will have the man tried in that which of all things lies nearest his heart, and bids fairest for Christ's room ; so that, if any thing be dearer than Christ, the cross readily discovers it, and the man's hypocrisy with it.

You, then, that are to sit down at the Lord's table, may see how you are to manage this solemn transaction, so as that it may be ratified in heaven. If you take Christ, let these go their way. Lay down your all at Christ's feet, with all solemn seriousness ; if there be ought kept back, you do but ruin your own souls. The laws of Christ's school are read before you. Examine yourselves this night, whether ye be content with Christ on these terms or not. If you be not, it will be unnecessary, and even criminal, for you to come to his table ; you cannot be his disciples. If you be content,

content, then give up your all to him, and lay down your all at his feet. Because of the deceitfulness of your heart, it will be good to be very distinct and particular in this point, on which eternity depends.—In consequence, I would advise you,

1. To give up with all your lusts. You have held the grip long, let it now go: “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?” Hof. xiv. 8. Let none escape, let there be no reserved morsel, as you would not quit your lot and portion in Christ. Let every man give up with “the iniquity he knoweth,” as the phrase is, 1 Sam. iii. 13. If there be any bosom-lust, which has been a signal competitor for the heart with the Lord, let it be given up with in a particular manner. Sure, if lawful things must be laid at the Lord’s feet, unlawful must much more be laid down.—I would advise you,

2. To lay down at the Lord’s feet your nearest and dearest relations, so as that you may never break with Christ for them; his favour, truths, and ways, must be dearer to you than them. And sure I am, if thou meetest with Christ at his table, thou wilt say, “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh.” “I will love my father, mother, wife, children, brethren, and sisters; but my Lord Jesus more than all.”

3. Lay down at the Lord’s feet your substance in the world, be it great or small, houses and lands, goods, &c. that he may dispose of them as he may see meet. Times have been, and they are like to return, wherein the Lord has sent for these things from professors, even by wicked messengers, as he sent for the ass and colt, Matth. xxi. 3. “Saying, The Lord hath need of them.” And they that had before fairly given them, with themselves, to the Lord, did not stand to deliver him his own: “Go thou, and do likewise.”

4. Lay down at the Lord's feet, your credit and esteem in the world. This is often a great idol, and goes betwixt many a man and Christ. There are few that ever have it, but suffer an eclipse in it some time or other. God even sends for his people's credit, to be a stepping-stone for his glory. But if thou makest sure work in this transaction, thou wilt even be content at his call to creep down, and lie among the pots, till he himself bring thee out again. Thou wilt be content to commence a fool to the world, that thou mayest be wise to God.

5. Lay down at the Lord's feet, your ease and liberty: Acts, xxi. 13. "I am ready," said Paul, "not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." The flesh will cry, 'Man, spare thyself;' but the spirit must offer all to the Lord. Thou wilt not break with Christ, though thou shouldst never get an easy hour, but be hunted as partridges, till in heaven. He to whom his ease and liberty is dearer than Christ, is a slave to the devil, and cannot be Christ's disciple.

6. Lay down at Christ's feet, your desires. Your desires shall be to your spiritual Husband, who shall chuse for you your inheritance, Ps. xlvii. 4. If he shall grant your lawful desires, it is well; if he see meet to refuse them, it must even be well also in your eye; you are to take himself, and give up with your own will, and say, Thy will be done.

Lastly, Lay down at the Lord's feet, your life. Let your bodies be given now to the Lord, not only for service, but also for a sacrifice, if he requires it. The text makes it plain, none go to heaven but martyrs, either in action or in affection. It may be the Lord may have use for your strength, for your health, it may be for your blood.

blood. Resign all to him now. If you hate not your life, you cannot be his disciple. Be not deterred from the sacrament by this, for, by the word of God, the way to heaven is no easier. But when the time comes, that the saints are to be carried to the table above, they will not be supposed to stand and look on, as when they present themselves before the lower table; the fearful and unbelieving shall be excluded from that table, Rev. xxi. 8. It is necessary at all times that people should manage matters thus when they sit down at the Lord's table, but especially at this time, when the cloud of the church's trouble is gathering so fast, and our peace is flying from us. That party has now got the ascendant, whose temper always has been to breathe out threatenings, cruelty, and blood, and furiously to drive their plough over the back of the church, and to make their furrows deep, till the righteous Lord do cut the cords of the ungodly crew. They have brought in their superstitions already, by the favour of a toleration which reflects shame on themselves before the world, as if they were men of no faith, but as to one article. By their means we are threatened with idolatry, and with a French government. But God sits in heaven, and can bring order out of confusion. Let us prepare for whatsoever may come, honestly committing all to the Lord, and he will raise the sincere soul above itself, and give the back to bear its own burden, if we be but willing to stoop, and take it on for his sake. He left all for us, and shall we account any thing too much for him? However, this is the settled law of heaven, *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.* Amen.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED. *

S E R M O N X X X I V .

LUKE, xvi. 26. *If any man come unto 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.*

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, attended to what was proposed as the first and second heads of method, I now proceed,

III. To offer some reasons why Christ is dearer to his true disciples than what is dearest to them in the world.—Among other reasons, the following are mentioned.

1. Because to every true disciple, sin, of all bitter things, is the bitterest. A man will get a clearer view of the stars from the bottom of a deep pit, than from the top of a high mountain; and the lower that a man is laid in humiliation for sin, Christ will be the dearer to him. Many things,

* Delivered at Selkirk, Monday, Oct. 12. 1712.

things, nay, almost any thing, is dearer to most persons than Christ. Why so? Because any bitter thing is more bitter to their depraved taste than sin. As when God intended to endear the promised land to the Israelites, and make them content to leave the flesh-pots of Egypt, *Exod. i. 14.* their lives then were made bitter to them; so God gives his people deep wounds for sin, till their consciences be made to dread it, and their hearts to loathe it; he makes them sick at the heart with it, and puts more and more bitterness in the cup to them, till it be of all things the bitterest, to this very end, that Christ may be the dearest to them, and that whatever they may afterwards meet with in his way, they may embrace it rather than sin. Sin has been bitter to many, but not extremely bitter; therefore they say, as the drunkard, *Prov. xxiii. 35.* "When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." But the experience of sin duly embittered quickly determines the Christian which side to chuse, when they are brought to this alternative, to suffer or sin.—Another reason is,

2. That God is man's chief end; and when he made him, he made him pointing towards himself as his chief end: *Eccles. vii. 29.* "God made man upright." But man sinning, turned off from God, turned his intention, his love, and desire, beside the mark set before him, turned these in to himself, made himself his chief end. So that the whole of every natural man's religion, however refined, resolves itself into that cursed principle, 'Master, spare thyself.' Hence they chuse new gods, father, mother, &c. setting their heart on them more than on God. Hence is their war in the gates against heaven, those things which were to be subordinate to God are set in opposition to him; those

those which were to be below him in their love and esteem, are set above him. If the grace of God rectify not this disorder, it does nothing; for it is impossible, while the soul is perverted as to its chief end, that any thing can be right with that person; as a watch that is once wrong set, though it go never so regularly, it is still wrong, for it never points right. But grace truly, though not perfectly while here, brings back the Christian to God as his chief end. It makes him say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee?" Psal. lxxiii. 25.; and again, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Phil. i. 21. It makes him holy in all manner of conversation; so that whatever way the Christian turns, he points habitually towards God.—Another reason is,

3. That as there unquestionably is, so they have seen, a vanity and emptiness in all things of the world, even the things that are dearest to them: Psal. cxix. 96. "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad." God has hung the sign of vanity at the door of all the creatures, yet do men throng into the house, every one calling and looking for a fill, and promising it to themselves after a thousand disappointments: Isa. lyii. 10. "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope. thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved." They see not the sign by the light of grace, though they may have a rational conviction of it, which will be as far from producing a true weaning of the heart from the world, as painted fire is from burning off a man's bands. But Christians are made to see it with the light of grace, which is the light of life, which makes them go by the creatures door

door to him, in whom "it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19. The Lord squeezes the sap out of all things, besides himself, to his own, so as that when the heart is seeking its rest, they are tasteless to them as the white of an egg: Phil. iii. 7. 8. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ."—Another reason is,

4. Because they find Christ of all objects the most suitable to them, and therefore he cannot but be dearer to them than the dearest thing in the world. The soul which has long gone through the dry places of the world, seeking rest, and finding none, when it comes to Christ, finds rest to the conscience under the covert of his blood, and rest to his heart in that all-fulness dwelling in Christ, which is commensurate to the unbounded desires of the heart, desires which can never be satisfied but by an infinite good; and therefore of necessity, and from choice, settles here, saying, "This is my rest;" and that soul is not to be drawn away from Christ by any means whatever: Rom. viii. 35. 38. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." He is fully suited to their case; and, what is more, he is suited to their mind, they have no fault whatever to him: Song, v. 16. "His mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely; this is my beloved, and

this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." There is nothing in him they would have out of him, and nothing out of him they would have in him; whereas every created enjoyment is lame, and defective to a great degree; the fairest rose has some sharp prickles about it. Now, that soul which has traversed all created enjoyments dissatisfied, and could never find contentment, is completely satisfied in him. How, then, can it otherwise be, than that he is dearer to it than all other persons and things whatever?—Another reason is,

5. Because he is their greatest benefactor; his unparalleled benefits command their hearts to be all his; he has done for them what none other could do. When Lebanon was not sufficient to burn, nor the cattle on a thousand hills for a sacrifice, when rivers of oil were too shallow, and the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls would have been rejected, he redeemed them with his own blood; he left the bosom of his Father, and came and poured out his soul unto death for them, when they deserved to have died for ever. He is doing for them what none can do, he is their Resident at the court of heaven, taking up emergent differences betwixt God and them, preparing a place for them in his Father's house of many mansions. And he will do for them what none but he himself can do; he will at last bring them to his glory, and make them perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of their God and Saviour through all eternity.—Another reason is,

6. Because they are sensible, that whatever they have in the world, they have it through and by him. And so they behold him as the fountain of all their mercies.—Thus,

(1.) They have the enjoyment of their blessings through him. It is by him they enjoy father and mother,

mother, wife and children, &c. ; not only by his common providence, as the wicked enjoy their mercies, but by his blood, whereby the malefactor is not only pardoned, but also is set down with these, and far better things, as the purchase of Christ's blood ; whereas, had not the Mediator intervened betwixt them and the stroke of justice, they had been stripped of all their enjoyments in the world, even life itself, and shut up for ever in the prison of hell *.

(2.) They have the comfort of them through him. Every creature is to us what the Lord makes it to be, and it is no more ; no more it can be. The creature in itself is a mere nothing ; what drops of sweetness are to be found in it, are distilled into it from himself, the fountain of goodness ; none good but one, that is, God. And surely the Lord never puts any sweetness in the creature to arrest our hearts upon it, but rather that, finding the sweetness of the streams, we might thereby be drawn up to the Fountain, where sweet water is always sweetest. Let God call in his own from our enjoyments, our dearest relations shall be utterly uncomfortable ; yea, our very life a burden. If it be by him only, then, that our enjoyments are desirable, surely himself is much more so. And seeing the Christian loves these things for what of God is in them, and with them, and can never be satisfied with them without Christ, sure Christ himself must be dearest of all.—Another reason is,

7. Be-

* The worthy author is doubtless here to be understood as referring to that comfort and benefit which is enjoyed in such relations ; for it is only in the nature and extent of this kind of enjoyment, that a difference arises between the Christian and the sinner, or that the former, with propriety, can contemplate the enjoyment of these relations as the fruit of Christ's blood.—EDR.

7. Because, if it were not so, Christ would have no church in the world. His standard would fall, and there would be none to take it up. There is an old inveterate enmity in the wicked against godliness; the devil's partizans are always the most numerous. If imprisoning, banishing, spoiling of goods, fields and scaffolds reeking with the blood of the saints, would have deterred all persons from following Christ, there had been no church in the world this day. But God will have a church in spite of devils and wicked men. 'The spark shall be kept alive, though in the midst of an ocean, and "his name shall endure for ever," Psal. lxxii. 17. A new seed shall ever be rising to enlist themselves under Christ's banner. God will not remove the rocks for them, but the way to heaven, to the world's end, shall lie through many tribulations; for he will animate his people to quit with all that is dearest to them in a world, rather than quit his way, and make them overcome through the word of his testimony, and not love their lives even unto death.--I come now,

IV. To make some practical improvement.

1. In an use of information.--You may hence see,

(1.) That Christ will admit no rival in the heart. One throne cannot receive two kings, and one heart cannot admit both Christ and any worldly thing set up beside him; it must needs lie at his feet, or all is wrong in that heart: Matth. vi. 24. "No man can serve two masters.--Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Christ and the world have long struggled together, it is hard to tell which of them many of us have been chiefly following; but when Christ and the world parts, it will be known which of them is our master.--Hence see,

(2.) How

(2.) How far those persons are from being Christ's disciples, to whom a loathsome lust is dearer by far than the Lord Christ. Though it tends to ruin their bodies, their souls, and consciences, they notwithstanding will not part with it for Christ. When Christ commands thee to do some great thing for him, how wilt thou do it? Is it a right hand, a right eye? Thou must cut it off, pluck it out; for wast thou parting with all but one thing, this one will eternally separate betwixt Christ and thee, if thou canst not also part with it for him.—Hence see,

(3.) That men are not out of danger, even when walking within the bounds of lawful things. It is a certain observation, that lawful things are a ditch, in which many souls are drowned, Matth. xxiv. 38. 39. A man in the use of lawful things, is like one walking on the brink of a steep precipice; the ground is firm, but his head is ready to become giddy, and he may fall over. It is hard to rejoice in them, and not to overjoy; to have them, and yet to sit loose to them. Be often feeling the pulse of thy affection to them, how it beats, lest it be so violent as to separate Christ and thee.

(4.) This shews what is the root of apostacy and defection from the truths and ways of Christ, in a time of the church's trials and troubles. It is the things of the world being dearer than Christ, his truth and ways, this is the first spring of it: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present world." If Christ be dearer to us than all things else, we will follow him wherever he goes, and never break with him, for the world's frowns.—I shall only add,

2. An use of exhortation.

Let me now exhort all of you, especially those

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who

who have been communicants, to evidence yourselves the true disciples of Christ by your comparative hating of father and mother, &c. for Christ and his cause in the world. Let your hearts be loosed from, and do you sit loose to, all that is dear to you in the world, resolving in the Lord's strength, and shewing yourselves ready to part with all for Christ, if he shall call you to it. In order to influence your complying with the exhortation, I would lay before you the following MOTIVES.

Mot. 1. This is necessary to fit you for trials; that you may be able to stand in the evil day, arm your souls with this disposition.—For this purpose, consider,

(1.) That the path-way to heaven lies by the cross, and all who have a real desire for heaven must lay their account with suffering: John, xvi. 33. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Acts, xiv. 22. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom." 2 Tim. iii. 12. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Therefore he who does not lay his account thus is a foolish builder, Luke, xiv. 25. and downwards. There is always a hot noon-tide in the church's day, Song, i. 7. and it may as certainly be expected as the noon.—Consider,

(2.) That the things which concern us appear to be making haste. You have enjoyed the dispensation of the sacrament after Christ's institution in peace, we have no great ground to promise another such season in a haste. There has been much sad work wrought upon this church in a little time, and it is the temper of our enemies to drive more violently than deliberately. We have had long peace, and the air is usually quiet and clear

clear before an earthquake, and the winds are laid before great rains fall. The gospel has been doing little good for many years; and where people are not bettered, they are made worse by it. I believe there was never a generation more disposed to root out serious godliness from the earth, than that which this time affords. Among the fashionable people of the age, religion is become almost quite out of fashion. Ministers and professors, through long ease, have gathered much mud, they need to be emptied from vessel to vessel. And it seems that judgement, as ordinary, must begin at the house of God, to purge it, and prepare the nations for a more dreadful vengeance; so that it is probable it will be brought to this ere long,—suffer or sin.—Consider,

(3.) That it is not easy to stand in a time of trial. Many will venture to sea in a fair day, that will never abide a storm. Many tall cedars have been blown up from the root by the wind of persecution, and they who have stood fastest, their towering branches have been made to sweep the ground. Be not over confident; though you have endured a storm already, there may be a harder yet before you, Heb. x. 34. compared with chap. xii. 4. There is need, then, to be preparing.—Consider,

(4.) That this will fit you for it. When the things of the world hang loose about us, like Joseph's mantle, and Satan, by the hands of wicked men, seizes them, to draw us to him by them, they will slip off, and we will leave them in their hand, and so escape, as he did. They who are standing ready to encounter, will resist the enemy, while they who are surprised will fall into confusion. It is a sad thing to feel trouble before we see it, to be past hope before we have any fear. Troubles

that find men secure, ordinarily leave them desperate.

Mot. 2. Apostasy and defection from God in a trying time, is dreadful and dangerous: Heb. x. 38. "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." God punishes men of this description oftentimes remarkably. How has a spirit of defection been followed in the fearful judgement of God with a spirit of persecution; for when God departs, the spirit is embittered. As the sharpest vinegar is made of the most generous wine, so apostate professors oftentimes become the bitterest persecutors. Besides, their gifts often wither, and dry up. It has also often been seen, that they have quickly lost their all dishonourably, who have gone out of God's way to save it, while they who have walked honestly, have walked surely. Dreadful above expression will their doom be, if they get not grace to repent: Matth. x. 33. "Who-soever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." But, Heb. x. 32. "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions."

3. The truths and ways of God are more worth than the whole of what we have to lose for them. It is a general rule: Prov. xxiii. 23. "Buy the truth, and sell it not." The profane spirits of some influence their slighting some less truths of religion; and they imagine, after doing so, that they are secure from suffering, while the foundation points remain untouched. If these men valued their bodies as little as they do the truths of God, they would, in like manner, allow you to cut and mangle them as you please, provided ye did not stab them in the heart; but they who value fundamental

damental truths, because of Christ's stamp upon them, will not dare to give up with circumstantial truths which they know, seeing they also bear the same impression of divine authority: So that it is a bold venture for a man, on any pretence, to quit the word of Christ's patience in a time of trial, and to step out of God's way; for he leaves his soul in pawn for it, which is of more worth than all he has in a world; and it is one to a thousand, if ever he has power to come back, and loose it by repentance.

Mot. 4. Death is approaching, and then you must part with all you have in the world. Cleave as fast as you will to these things, you must let go your hold at length. The serious consideration of the shortness of our time, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time of it, would discover to us, that the whole we can make by turning aside from God's way in a time of trial, is not worth our trouble, not worth the going off our road for it; for it may be, what is refused for Christ may quickly be taken from you at death. I am sure we will never part so easily with what we have, as when we sit loose to it. Ripe fruit falls off the tree with a shake, when the unripe must be rent off. When the heart is loosed from what we have in the world, it is easy parting with it, by what it is when the heart holds by it till it be forced from it.—Nothing is ever parted with so honourably, as when it is parted with for Christ. No thanks to you that you part with what you have, when God takes it from you whether you will or not. It is honourable to forsake the world at Christ's call, for Christ's sake, before we be forsaken of the world.

Mot. 5. You will be no losers at Christ's hands. If you quit with them now to Christ, he probably

will let you keep them, and accept of your will for the deed. This was the case with Abraham, when called to offer up Isaac; and with David, when it was in his heart to build a house to the Lord. Thus you will have them with his blessing and favour. If he take them from you, without them you will get a throughbearing: Psal. xxxvii. 3. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." A little served up to you from the promise, and brought to your hand by a particular providence, will have a double sweetness in it. That bread will not be lost which is thrown upon these waters; after many days you shall find it: Matth. xix. 29. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit eternal life." Himself will be to you instead of all, and better than all here; and heaven will fully make up all hereafter.

If any shall say, 'But, O! I fear I shall never be able to carry through,' I would say to such, You know that the foundation of your throughbearing is laid, if your heart be loosed from all things besides Christ, and if he be dearer to you than what is dearest to you in a world: Psal. xlv. 10. 11. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him." When the king thus greatly desires thy beauty, he will see to preserve it: John, x. 28. 29. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is
able

able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

You have taken him for all, and it lies upon his honour to see you carried through. Live by faith, and draw your daily supplies from him:

Hab. ii. 4. "The just shall live by his faith."

Isa. xl. 31. "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."

Amen.

A RICH REWARD TO DILIGENCE IN
RELIGION *.

S E R M O N - XXXV.

Hos. vi. 3.—*Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.*

IT is an observation of Solomon's, Prov. xii. 27. "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." Men are at some pains to get something, but when they have got it, they let it slip through their fingers. Hence our religion, good frames, attainments, resolutions, &c. turn to small account. We are at some pains to acquire something when attending divine ordinances, but then we put it in a bag with holes. Now, the text tells us how to remedy this loss, and to bring our religion to some good account; and that is, when once our hand is in, to follow on eagerly: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."—In these words, consider,

1. What is the sum and substance of all religion. It is "the knowledge of the Lord," that is, the practical

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practical knowledge of him, who can only be truly known in Jesus Christ. That thus the knowledge of the Lord is here to be understood, is evident, not only from the nature of the thing, but from other scriptures: John, xvii. 3. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." See also Hos. vi. 6. Jer. xxii. 16.—Consider,

2. The beginning of religion supposed. This is supposed in the particle *then*, namely, when we have turned to the Lord; and likewise in following on to know the Lord.—Consider,

3. The pursuit of religion, or the knowledge of the Lord proposed. We shall follow on, if we shall not content ourselves with the measure attained, but go on still farther, improving the beginnings. (Heb. *pursue*), which is an eager sort of following, as is the case when we follow a fleeing enemy.—Consider,

4. The benefit of this pursuit: "Then shall we know," we shall thrive in our religion, get a larger measure of it, even of a practical experimental knowledge of the Lord. We shall be still adding a cubit to our spiritual stature. The more we pursue, the more we will gain.—From this subject, I observe the following.

DOCTRINE, That the way to thrive in religion is to follow on, to pursue, to hold our hand to it, when once our hand is in it.

It is evident, this is a day in which there is little thriving in religion. It is long since the generation began to weary of God, and professors to decline; yet sometimes there is a blowing up of the spark, but, alas! it dies always out again. Sometimes

times people look so well when attending upon ordinances, we would almost think it was a pity they should ever go from them; but when they are away, and the communion-frame has wore off, they look so ill, that one would think it was a pity that ever they should come to them again. We would shew you how to prevent this; and, that things may apply the more closely to your consciences, I shall,

I. SHEW who they are whom we may call to follow on.

II. I shall shew what it is to follow on, or how you must hold your hand to religion, that you may thrive in it, now that your hand is in it.

III. I shall confirm the doctrine, and shew you, that it is the true way to thrive; and the belief of it would be a great spur to diligence. Then,

IV. Conclude with the improvement of the subject.

WE are then,

I. To shew who they are whom we may call to follow on.

There are some we cannot call to follow on, because they have not yet stirred a foot in religion. There are some who, for all that they have heard and seen, are quite stupid and unconcerned, lying asleep in their chains; they have no good motions on their spirits, and feel no concern for the want of them. Our text calls us to leave you, but a word or two before we part.

1. What would you think, if you saw the showers of heaven, after a great drought, fall all around your land upon your neighbour's ground, but not one drop on yours? would you not think you were the mark at which God aims his arrows?

Now,

Now, what can you think of yourselves, when God touches the hearts of others about you, but never touches yours? when he goes by you, and comes by you, speaks to those on your right hand and on your left, but not a word to you? Does not that look very like what is in Hos. iv. 17. "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." 'To see a tree in the winter without leaves, is nothing; but in the spring, when all is flourishing about it, such a tree is fit for the axe, and is near to the fire.

2. Do you think the world will always last with you? will you always sleep in a sound skin? Nay, sooner or later you shall get an awakening, in mercy, or in wrath: Isa. xxxii. 9. 10. "Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters, give ear unto my speech. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women; for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come." If you should sleep it out all your days, you shall at last awaken, Luke, xvi. God will one time or another take the filthy garments of your sins, wrap them up in brimstone, and set them on fire about your ears.

But there are several sorts of persons, whose hands we may say are now in their work; and their business is to pursue.—Such as,

1. There may be some whom the King has brought into his chambers, and assured them of his love, and they have got the covenant sealed, not only with the public seal of the sacrament, but the privy seal of the Spirit. Your business is to follow on, and improve the precious season for the church of God, and for yourselves: Exod. xxxiv. 8. 9. "And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord,

Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us." Follow on to know. There is more in that God, that Christ, that covenant manifested to you, than you have yet seen. — There are,

2. Others that have got but some glimmerings of solid hope from the Lord. It may be that they come here in a dark night of desertion, saying, "My hope is perished from the Lord," Lam. iii. 18. But now the day begins to break, and they have some hope, that there may be yet room for a backslider. Follow on, his going forth shall be as the morning, which grows lighter and lighter to the perfect day. — There may be,

3. Some who, it may be, Christ has treated, as Joshua did his captains, when he made them set their feet upon the necks of the captive kings, Josh. x. 24. Some lust that has long kept them under, they have now got subdued, the bonds of wickedness are broken, and the gates of brass pulled down; so that now they are conquerors over their spiritual foes. To such we would say, Bestir yourselves, and pursue. Wounded lusts, when they get time to recover, have made sad work at a second onset; you are not yet there, where the gates shall not be shut at all by day. You are, however, strong for the present; follow on, and you will be yet stronger: Zech. xii. 8. "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among you at that day, shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." There may be,

4. Some who have not come so far forward yet, though they are come the length to be heartily content that they and their lusts were freely parted, though they cannot tell how it will be accomplished. Follow on, pursue, you have them at a fair advantage.

advantage. The throne of sin in the heart is shaken. Lusts sit looser than they did. Press hard upon the tottering fabric, and it may come to fall altogether; so that you may soon be ready to say with Ephraim, "What have I any more to do with idols?" Hof. xiv. 18.—There may be,

5. Some who have not come so far, but yet they have some desires after Christ and religion. They have a hungering after him, and they are more squeamish as to their lusts than they were; though they cannot as yet see, if they forego the world and their lusts, how their loss will be made up. Truly this is not much; but every thing must have a beginning. Follow on; that cloud, like a man's hand, may come to darken the heavens at length. The conversion of Zaccheus had as slender a beginning, Luke, xix. 3. You have seen, you were touched, look on, take a better look of the Plant of Renown, and ye may come to be affected, allured, and captivated.—There may be,

6. Some who have not come even so far, but they have got some convictions of sin; and though they have no will to part with their lusts, yet, they cannot see how to live with them, and as little can they see how to live without them. Their conscience is awakened, but their heart is just where it was. It is a small length this indeed; but follow on. If the conscience has got the first touch, the heart may get the next. If sin is become uneasy to the conscience, it may become a burden to the heart next, and so the sweet morsel may be vomited up.--There may be,

Lastly, Some who have not come so far as to have any particular conviction, or quick touches of conscience, only they have a sort of uneasiness with respect to the case of their souls, a secret dissatisfaction with their state and case, which they

fee is not good. This is even as little as can reasonably be concluded to be any beginning of good ; yet follow on, pursue this, think more attentively upon it. If the dry bones be but beginning to move, they at last may come together, and live.—We now proceed,

III. To shew what it is to follow on, how you must hold your hand to religion, that ye may thrive in it, now that your hand is in it. The word imports a violence and eagerness, such as men have in pursuing an enemy, persecuting the people of God, or in hunting for prey.—Wherefore, when following on,

1. You must make religion your great end. As every man who pursues has something in view, so your great design must be to know the Lord : “Not,” says Paul, “as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” There was a prospect which misgave at first with Adam, because Satan laid the measures for it, Gen. iii. 5. But you must take it up again, as the Lord himself will have you : Matth. v. 48. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” When once grace touches the heart, it produces a certain restlessness there, till the soul be perfectly united with God. You will never make any good of religion, till you make it your grand object in the world. You must not be merely occasional customers to religion, of which see an instance, Judges, xviii. 5. but stated and constant.—When following on,

2. You must be persuaded of the weight and worth of religion ; for no wise man will pursue what he thinks not worth the pains. What is
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the reason that the men of the world do not follow on to know the Lord? Why, truly the most part are of Pharaoh's opinion, that religion is only for those who have no other thing to do. Hence it may be, they have got something to do here for the present; but if they were at home, they have another thing to do than to follow it out: Matth. xxii. 5. "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise." The shadow of the world is substance with them, Hof. xii. 1. 8; and the substance of religion is a shadow; but, O! consider, "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?" A wedge of gold would make a sluggard run, and shall not a weight of glory make us follow on?—When following on,

3. You must hold fast what you have; the pursuer will be very loth to go back a step: Rev. iii. 3. "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." Beware that the spark does not go out, for thus you may quickly have a cold coal to blow at. Make much of any good motion put into your heart. Say not, it is not much you have to hold; for the less it is, it will die out the easier, and there is thus the more need to keep it in. It cannot be so little, but Satan will think it worth his pains to rob you of it. The kingdom of heaven in the soul has a small beginning, like a grain of mustard-seed, and must be cherished.—When following on,

4. You must not stand still, but be moving forward, labouring for more, be it much or little which you have: Phil. iii. 12. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect;

but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

A man who sits down on his attainments, will quickly be empty-handed. The fire will go out, if constant fuel be not furnished to it. Good beginnings will be lost, if they be not cherished. Hast thou but one conviction? follow on to get it more deeply rooted. Be earnest that it spread further into thy heart and life, that thou mayest bring forth fruits meet for repentance.—When following on,

5. You must habitually attend upon religion, and make it your chief business: 1 Thess. v. 15. "See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." Fits and starts of religion cannot be reckoned a following on, or holding our hands to it. You must labour to weave the whole life into one continued web of religion: 1 Pet. i. 15. "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Whatever way you may turn, you should still be pointing towards God. You must not be sober at home, and loose abroad; not a church-faint, and a house-devil; a pretender to piety, and a renouncer of honesty. You must say to all temptations which would take you off your way, as Joab, in his pursuit, 2 Sam. xviii. 14. "I may not tarry thus with thee."—When following on,

6. You must be resolute and vigorous in your endeavours: Eccles. ix. 10. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Mere endeavours will not reach heaven: Matth. xi. 12. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Our iron is blunt, we must therefore apply the more strength. Our work is great, our strength small, our opposition
powerful;

powerful ; but we must do or die. The work of religion will not prosper with only good wishes and folded hands. No ; we must exert our hands, and set down our feet : Prov. ii. 4. 5. “ If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hidden treasures ; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”

—When following on,

7. You must entertain a hope of success. No man will pursue but in hopes to overtake. We will have difficulties to grapple with in this pursuit ; but let us “ who are of the day be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.” When the heart grows hopeless, the hands will hang down, and the knees be feeble : Heb. x. 35. “ Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.” You must learn to hope against hope. You have the promise in the text to encourage you. What though many attempts misgive ? The tree falls not down at the first or second stroke of the axe ; and the water, by continued dropping, wears the stones.—When following on,

Lastly, If you fall, you must get up again, and quicken your pace ; and the sooner the better. The longer you lie, you will find it the harder to get up. If you find the impressions on your spirit begin to decay, take them in time, and go to God with them for a revival : Rev. iii. 2. “ Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die.”

FROM what has been observed, we may learn, that the world shall never be able to ruin religion, as long as there are some remaining who will honestly follow after it. The hostile designs against

religion are plainly exposed at this day, and its enemies have begun to put them in execution. There are contrivances on foot to debauch men's consciences, and mischief is framed into a law. Such a toleration of superstition, errors, and blasphemies, is set on foot, as is a shame to a Christian country, no point of Christianity being protected from the insults of vile men, but the doctrine of the Holy Trinity ; and withal, patronages are restored to make way for introducing the most naughty men into the ministry, while the most conscientious will find more difficult access. The discipline of the church is left to be trodden under foot of profane men. And what is all this, but to ruin religion, and the covenanted work of reformation ? But while our text remains, religion shall never be ruined, if we will follow after it. Let men and devils do their utmost, it shall stand, till its followers abandon and give up with it. And therefore, if it be ruined, the ruin will lie at our own doors, in not cleaving to it ; but woe be to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed !

You may see here how to turn the cannon on the enemies of religion this day. It is very natural for zeal to grow by opposition. Now, the friends of religion in Scotland have been long at a stand, and its enemies have begun to drive the work back. Should we now awake, and follow it more vigorously, then should *we know*. We should discern the flame to spread more and more, we should see the Lord going forth as the morning, his work prospering over the belly of opposition, superstition and profanity gliding away as the darkness of the night at the morning-dawn. We should perceive him as a giant refreshed with wine, rising to defend and carry on his own work.

Be

Be exhorted, therefore, to hold your hands to religion now when your hand is in it. As ever you would do a good deed to the church of God, and to your own souls, follow religion closely in your practice. It is observed of some of the builders of the wall of Jerusalem, that they repaired each over against his own house, Neh. iii. 23. 28. 30. Make it your endeavour, that your own exercise be right ; this will be so much reformation. If you have got never so little, hold your hands to it, labour to get it strengthened this night.

THE

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED*.

S E R M O N XXXVI.

Hos. vi. 3. *Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord.*

HAVING, in the former discourse, attended to the two first heads of the method we laid down, we now proceed,

III. To confirm the doctrine, or shew you, that the way to follow religion is, to follow on, to pursue, to hold your hands to it, when once your hand is in it.—And the belief of this would be a great spur to diligence. If a person, digging with great labour in the earth, was almost ready to give it over, but another comes to him, and persuades him, that if he will hold on, he would assuredly find a treasure, he would unquestionably renew his resolution, and vigorously follow it out. This I would persuade you of, in regard to religion; however small your beginnings or hopes may now be,

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be, yet persevere : “ Be not weary in well-doing, for in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not.”—To convince you as to this, consider,

1. You have God’s word of promise for it : Matth. xxv. 29. “ For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.” A man hath no more in God’s account, than what he keeps and improves for God’s glory and his own salvation. Now, God does not set down all his children with equal stocks. There are fathers, youths, and babes in Christ. Some get more, some less ; but there is a promise of more given to them all, on their holding their hands to what they have got. It is God’s goodness to most of us, that we are held short by the head, and that any thing we get, we know well how we come by it. This is necessary that our light hearts may not grow vain, and that our careless spirits may be aroused the more. But a little thing, with a promise, will be like the five loaves that multiplied in the distribution.—Consider,

2. That it is the Lord’s ordinary way in his works, to bring great things by degrees out of small beginnings. He could have made the world in a moment, but he took six days to it ; at first there was but the rude mass, which day by day was brought to perfection. See an instance, 1 Kings, xviii. 43. and downwards. See how another great work began, Esther, vi. 1. Both which places consult. So also in the text : “ His going forth is prepared as the morning.” In his works of grace, as in the works of nature, he ordinarily keeps that way of advancing by degrees.—Consider,

3. That the works of grace in the soul ordinarily arise from very small beginnings. The grain of mustard-seed, called the smallest of seeds,
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is used as an emblem of this, Matth. xiii. 31. 32. It is a seed springing so leisurely, that the springing of it cannot sometimes be discerned in the time, Mark, iv. 27. It springeth and groweth up, we know not how. See how low the beginning of good may be, which the Lord will cherish, and bring to perfection : Isa. xlii. 3. " A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench ; he shall bring forth judgement unto truth."—Consider,

4. The bountiful nature of God, who surely will not always flee from those who follow him, but will at length be found of them. If at any time he seem to flee from them, it is that they may follow him the more vigorously ; if he hold meat from them a while, it is that their appetite may be the more sharpened, Luke, xxiv. 28. 29. But resolute following on cannot miss to find him. See an eminent instance of this in the Syrophenician woman, who besought Jesus to cast the devil out of her daughter, and persevered till she obtained her request, Mark, vii. 25.—29. For good being in its nature communicative of itself, goodness itself cannot fail to be so. The spouse had experience of this, Song, iii. 1.—4. —Consider,

5. That no person gets a refusal from heaven, but those who court it by their own indifference : and indeed a faint way of seeking is to beg a denial. God is more ready to give, than we are to seek : Psal. lxxxix. 10. " Open thy mouth wide," says he, " and I will fill it." He loves importunity, and cannot deny an importunate suitor ; and though some such have stood long at his door, there was never a single individual who fell down dead at it ; their long waiting was always made up by the greater incomes of favour which they experienced

experienced, Matth. xv. 21. and downwards. The richest treasure is that which lies deepest.—Consider,

6. That as importunity is usually in all cases the way to come speed, so it has special advantages in this case which promise success. The Lord gives much to importunity: Luke, xi. 9. “And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” The word in the eighth verse rendered *importunity*, is in the Greek *shamelessness*. Pinching need makes people shameless. It is not here as with men, that a shameless seeker must get a shameless refusal; they who will not, cannot take a denial, shall not be troubled with it: And when there is enough and to spare to the needy, this and their condition makes them shameless; both concur to make them importunate.

7. But further consider, that such followers the Lord does not bid them go back; and is not this very encouraging? If a beggar be following a man for an alms, and he knows it, there is always hope while he does not command him away. Now, you will follow long ere the Lord bid you go away; but if there were no hope, you would soon get your answer. Thus the foolish virgins were soon answered with a “Verily I say unto you, I know you not,” Matth. xxv. 12.—Consider also,

8. That the Lord commands you to follow on: Luke, xi. 19. “And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” And is not that encouraging? I know unbelief will be ready to shape an answer to the soul, taking God’s delay for a denial, that the soul may follow no further: Jer. ii. 25. “With-hold thy foot from being unshod,

shod, and thy throat from thirst ; but thou saidst, There is no hope ; no." It is, however, better to hang on about God's door, than go back to fill our belly with the husks which swine devour. He commands you to follow on, and he would not do it, if there was no hope.—Consider farther,

9. That it is the Lord who has given you the foot to follow him : James, i. 17. " Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." If you have any desire after him, or the least good motion, it is from himself ; and though he should have no regard for you, he will regard his own work in you, if you do not put it away from you. God opens not his children's mouth to put an empty spoon in it ; but he who forms the desire will satisfy it.—Consider,

Lastly, That the very nature of the thing confirms it, that the more we apply ourselves to the business of religion, we shall bring it to the better account. It is true, we own that religion in the principle of it is infused into the heart ; but the Christian having both to will and to do wrought in him by God, must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, Phil. ii. 12. 13. Grace, by its exercise, increases. Whatever good motions the Lord has put into the heart, it is like a spring ; the more opening which it gets, and the more it runs, the more water comes into it ; whereas, if it be stopped, the water turns away, and seeks another opening.

IV. WE are now to make some practical improvement,

1. In an use of information.

Is it so that the way to prosper in religion is to follow

follow on to know the Lord? Then we may learn,

(1.) That those who have not yet begun to look and seek after the Lord, they are neither prospering in their souls, nor are they in the way to it. Hearken, O ye stupid souls, whose hearts within you are this day dead as stones, moving still towards the earth, but having no motion in them towards God. Your case is sad, and there is no appearance yet of its growing better; it is dark night with you, and there is no appearance of the morning-light. Your hearts are shut against Christ, and there is no putting in of his hand at the hole of the door; you have not the smallest prospect of happiness.—We may see,

(2.) That it is no wonder though backsliders have lean souls. How many are there this day, who, comparing their own case with what it has been formerly, may cry out, as in Isa. xxiv. 16. “But I said, my leanness, My leanness, woe unto me.” They have lost the delight they sometimes had in God; there is now little or no communication between heaven and them. Whence does this take place? Why, they did not follow on, when they were once set fair off, but went backward. When the wind was fair for Immanuel’s land, they trifled away their time, and were busy here and there about other things; and their fair occasions were lost.—We may see,

(3.) That they are in no prospering case, who are at a stand in religion. There is a generation who think they have got as much grace as will carry them to heaven, and therefore they are not pressing forward. Paul had more than ever they could pretend to, yet says he, Phil. iii. 12. “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may

apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Truly, if you continue thus, it will be an evidence that you have no grace at all; for, Prov. iv. 18. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

(4.) You may see how the smallest spark which you now have, may be brought to a great flame. Do but follow on to know the Lord, and then you shall know, you shall make progress; and though your stock be but small, you may come to make that blessed account of it, which is in Luke, xix. 16. "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." Hold your hands to what you have got here, when you are gone from this place, and you will find it will grow in your hands; it will increase in the using.—But here some may propose an

OBJECTION: "I am a fearful backslider, who have wasted my stock which some time increased with me in that way, and can I think ever to recover it again?" *Ans.* Return, O prodigal! there is yet room for thee in thy Father's house. The promise in the text concerns you as well as others. See also Hos. v. 15. and chapter vi. 1. and downwards, where there is great encouragement to returning backsliders. Are you convinced of your folly? are you touched at the heart with your backsliding? are your souls moving for a return? as in Jer. xxxi. 18. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." Then it may yet be as well with you as ever it was, Joel, ii. 23.---27.

Lastly, We may hence see what is the ruin of many communicants, and others who attend upon ordinances. It is not so much that they get nothing

thing at them, as that they carry nothing away with them; or if they do, they do not hold their hands to it when they are at home. You who think that your work is over when the communion is over, you will make no good account of what you have been doing. Would you not think him a foolish man, who would employ himself on the meadow sharpening his scythe, and then lay it by when he has got it sharpened? Wherefore came you here, but to get a meal for your journey heaven-ward; and if so, then go in the strength of it, go from strength to strength unweariedly, till you appear before God in Zion.---I come,

2. To an use of exhortation.

I would exhort you all to follow on, to hold your hands at religion, however small the beginnings of it may be with you; and to prevail with you, I would lay before you the following MOTIVES.

Mot. 1. The way to prosper in religion is, when we find the least moving, to bestir ourselves, and hold our hands to it, as David, 2 Sam. v. 24. 25. We would all take measures for improving our bodies and estates, why not also for improving our souls? I am sure, there are sad symptoms of a spiritual consumption and decay on the generation in which we live; we have need to use the remedy for ourselves against it. These symptoms are such as the following.---The stomach for our spiritual food is gone; ordinances are not prized; we look generally as if we had got a surfeit of the gospel; farms and merchandise go much nearer people's hearts than opportunities of communion with God, for which they will be loth to lose a day's work; an evidence this that we may have to fast till we find our stomachs again.---Another symptom is, that professors have generally lost

their colour; their former beauty is gone. That heavenliness, spirituality, and tenderness, that favour of godliness which was sometimes about them, is also gone; and formality, worldly-mindedness, deadness, and lifelessness, have come in their room; so that we may well say, 'O our bones are dried!' Any growth there is, is in pride and self-conceit; like rickety children, a large head, but a poor lean body. Indeed, not a few are even turned the colour of the earth, that their profane neighbours may say, Behold, the man is become like one of us. It is a day in which God is drawing the veil from off many faces; and all this is drawing on to a national apostasy from the Lord. The alarm is sounded already to carry back this church into Egypt. Breaches are made to let in a deluge of superstition, error, and profaneness. The ruin of this church, and the covenanted work of reformation, is threatened. It is high time we were bestirring ourselves to hold our hands to the truths and ways of the Lord, handed down to us from our fore-fathers, that we may transmit them also to our posterity, by a faithful adherence to them, over the belly of all opposition, whether from open enemies or professed friends; and for that end, to be following on after the Lord's work in our own souls.

Mat. 2. Follow on, hold your hands to religion, however small a measure of it you have; for you shall know, if you follow on to know.

You shall know that a going foot in religion is always getting: Isa. xlv. 19. "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." They who are hanging on about the Lord's hand, will always find some off-fallings. Though they do not soon get the very thing they would be at, they will always

ways get something in the mean time, well worth all the pains. If you be following on for comfort, this may be denied for a while, but you will be ready to get a deeper conviction to prepare the way for it; if, for deliverance from temptation, you may, like Paul, get grace to wrestle against, and to overcome it.—Again,

You shall know that religion is a reward to itself: Psal. xix. 11. “In keeping of them, (thy commandments), there is great reward.” There is a pleasure in attending the very posts of Wisdom’s door: Psal. lxxxiv. 10. “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” There is a sweet peace in the Lord’s way; the strictest ways of religion are a pleasure: Prov. iii. 17. “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” There is a great pleasure in seeing the bosom-idol on the cross, sin dying, and grace reviving in the soul.

You shall know, that the more you follow on, it shall be the easier; the more you walk in this way, you will be the more expert: Isa. xl. 31. “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 which makes religion so difficult to us, is our not holding at it, our taking it but by fits and starts. Is it not always the easier to you to seek the Lord, the oftener you are at his throne? But omit one occasion, you will find yourselves the less fit for the work.

You shall know, that some difficulties in religion, which are like mountains afar off, shall turn to mole-hills, when you resolutely come up to them. God will make iron gates open of their

own accord to his people who are resolute to be through. Unbelief and carnality make difficulties where there are none. "A lion," says the sluggard, "is in the way." They make real difficulties greater : Exod. xiv. 15. 16. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me ? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it ; and the children of Israel shall go on dry land through the midst of the sea." See David's experience, Psal. xviii. throughout.

You shall know that his goings forth are prepared as the morning. The manifestations of himself are certain. As the morning will certainly follow the darkest night, so the darkest time which a follower of the Lord has, will certainly issue in a morning-light of refreshment at length. These manifestations are also gradual. There is always more and more of God to be known, to be given out, according to the soul's diligent waiting and following on.

Mot. 3. You will be great losers if you do not follow on ; you will lose what you have got. The sacred fire in your hearts will go out, if you do not cherish it, and if this should take place, you will be a step farther from heaven than you were. Nay, if you lose it, who knows if ever you will recover it again ; if ever the wind will blow as fair for you to Immanuel's land, remember that which is in Luke, xiv. 24. "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." And if it should recover it, you will have to begin again, and it is a sad matter for people always to be but beginning ; ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth, because they forget as fast as they learn.

learn. You will lose also all the pains you have been at to get what you have: Prov. xii. 27. "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious." What a sad matter is it to be at pains for something, and then when it is got, just to let it slip through our fingers! We have work enough besides. There is no propriety in always doing and undoing again. In a word, you will lose your souls, if you do not follow on to know the Lord: Luke, ix. 62. "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." Heb. x. 38. "Now, the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." And it will be a bitter ingredient of hell in your heart, that sometime you was not far from the kingdom of God, and yet missed it.—To this may be proposed these OBJECTIONS.

1. I have met with so many disappointments, how can I follow on further? *Ans.* You are not the first who have met with disappointments, Job, xxiii. Song, iii. And yet such have found him at length. Disappointments are useful to the people of God; they sharpen their appetite; they are necessary to give us honourable thoughts of, and to learn us to stoop to divine sovereignty, for our time is always ready, while his time may be not yet come. They make the enjoyment more sweet, when we are favoured with it. And therefore follow on, and wait the Lord's time.

2. My case grows worse and worse. *Ans.* What then? his goings forth shall be as the morning, and the darkest hour is usually before day-break.

I shall, in conclusion, offer the following DIRECTIONS.

1. Look

1. Look to God through Jesus Christ, from whence must come all your strength. Let your resolutions be taken up under a sense of weakness, and a persuasion of the supply to be had from the Lord himself.

2. Be much in prayer and meditation. These are suited to keep the impressions of God fresh upon your souls.

3. Make conscience of self-examination, that ye may the better know how it is with you, whether you be going backward or forward.

4. Beware of looking back, much more turning back, to your old sin, especially the sin which has been the great make-bate betwixt God and your soul. Keep special watch against it.

5. Beware of evil company, and follow only such as are following the Lord.

6. Live above the world while ye live in it. It will not be possible to follow on, if we come not to an holy indifference about the world.

Lastly, Keep the prize in your eye, and remember how short a time it will be before you arrive at your journey's end. This consideration will animate you to follow vigorously, because the time will not last, and the work must be done. It will dispose you to recollect, that ere long you will be at the end of every difficulty, that the days of your sorrow and mourning shall be ended. Amen.

THE ACCEPTABLE MANNER OF DRAWING
NEAR TO GOD *.

S E R M O N XXXIV.

HEB. x. 22.—*Let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

I HAVE been, in our last discourses, urging and directing you to evidences for heaven; and we are shortly to celebrate that ordinance which is a special evidence of the Lord's love to his people, and appointed to evidence it to them. That it may be so in effect to us, let us hearken to the advice in the text; which is an improvement of the doctrine as to the great privileges of Christians. They have freedom of access to God through Christ. They have Christ as an High-Priest set over the house of God; therefore, *let us draw near*, &c.—Here we have,

1. An exhortation and excitement to a duty corresponding to the privileges which are through Jesus Christ: *Let us draw near*, that is, to God.
Though

* Delivered May 1715.

Though he is great, and infinitely glorious, dwells in the highest heavens; yet, seeing he is upon a throne of grace, let us not stand at a distance from him, but draw near to him in the whole of our conversation, and particularly in acts of worship waiting on him. Let *us* do it, the weak together with the strong; let us press in at the door of grace together.—We have,

2. The right way of managing this duty for God's honour and our own comfort. This is laid down in four particulars.

(1.) We should draw near to God with a *true heart*, that is, a sincere heart; with the heart, and not with the lips only; not with a false hypocritical heart, but a heart true to God, true to our own real interest.—We are to draw near,

(2.) *In full assurance of faith*. Let us come believingly, come in faith, leaning upon his Son, trusting in his blood. Let us not come doubtfully, doubting whether we will be welcome or not, whether there be access for us or not; but with full assurance, like a ship that is carried towards the port with full sail before the wind.—We are to draw near,

(3.) *Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*. An evil conscience is a guilty, accusing, and condemning conscience. This vexes, disquiets, and torments the heart. Guilt is the mother and nurse of fears. The sting of guilt in the conscience is like a thorn in a man's foot; when he is called to meet a friend, alas! he cannot go, he dare not set a foot to the ground, or every step goes to his heart. The way to cure this is, by sprinkling with the blood of sprinkling, that is, by faith applying the blood of Christ for remission of sin. This makes the soul meet to draw near to God, and that with full assurance, even as the unclean

clean under the law were cleansed by the sprinkling of blood.—We are to draw near,

(4.) Having *our bodies washed with pure water*; that is, our outward man also purged; that so, having clean hands, and a pure heart, we may ascend to the hill of God, and stand in his holy place, Psal. xxiv. A blameless outward conversation. Sin so curbed and borne down within, that it do not scandalously break out into the life; and this must be done with the pure water of the Spirit of sanctification, not with the muddy water of Christless endeavours, as in painted hypocrites.—From this subject, I would take the following

DOCTRINE, That Christians *may*, and ought to draw near to God.

Let us draw near. This is the voice of the gospel sounding in the ears of the visible church through our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is sounding in our ears more particularly this day, while he gives us the hope of his coming so near us in the sacrament of the supper next Lord's day.

In this discourse, I shall attend shortly to the following things.

I. SHEW what is implied in this, *Let us draw near.*

II. Shew that we *may* draw near.

III. Shew that we *ought* to draw near.

IV. Add the practical improvement of the subject.—We are then,

I. To shew what is implied in this, *Let us draw near.* There are two things in it.

1. Sin has set us at a distance from God: Isa. lix. 2. “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his

his face from you, that he will not hear." Sin indeed could not remove us out of the place where God is, for he is every where; but it has set us out of his favour, out of his friendship, and that is a sad outcast. In Adam, while he stood, we lived in the land of light, the light of God's countenance; but he sinned, and was banished from the presence of the Lord, after he had run away from him with us in his loins; and so we come into the world estranged from God: Psal. lviii. 3. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

2. Sinners stand at a distance from God, till they be called, and that powerfully: John, vi. 44. "No man can come unto me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." They keep their ground where their first father left them. The breach began on our side, we left our father's house, and ran away from it without all just ground, but we never come back again till worthless *we* be sent for and fetched; like the Levite's concubine, Jude, xix. 2. 3.—And here lies the case:

Insensible sinners will not: John, v. 40. "And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." They are away, and they will not come back. They have no eye upon the privileges of them that are near; they can do well enough without it. They love the devil's common, where they can ramble up and down at their own liberty, better than God's inclosure, where they think a man cannot get elbow-room. Hence they are running away farther and farther from him, till, I believe, not a few are so far from him, that they hardly ever hear from him; nor is there one left with them to disturb them in their wandering.

Sensible sinners dare not: Luke, v. 8. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying,

saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." They see his glory and his seat, they admire the happiness of those that stand before him, as the queen of Sheba did the attendants of Solomon, 1 Kings, x. 8. But they dare not draw near, but stand afar off, under a deep sense of unworthiness. Like the Publican, they cannot lift up their eyes to heaven, but smite upon their breasts, saying, God be merciful to us sinners, Luke, xviii. 13. They cannot conceive how such vile malefactors can face the Judge, how such prodigals can set their foot again in their Father's house, how such filthy, loathsome, beggarly creatures, can presume to come forward to the throne. If at any time they break forward, it is like offering violence to themselves. They take their life in their hand, and, like Esther, go in to the king, chap. iv. 16. And then the legs of their confidence tremble, the hands of faith shake, and they are ready to start back: But *let us draw near.*—This brings us,

II. To shew, that we *may* draw near to God. Glad news this to poor sensible sinners! Come in, ye blessed of the Lord; why do you stand back? you may draw near to God.—For,

1. God is on a throne of grace in Jesus Christ: 2 Cor. v. 19. "To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." God has in Christ laid aside his red garments, being to pursue the war no longer against those that come to him through Christ. He wears the white garment of peace, and breathes nothing from hence, but peace, love, and good-will. To look on an absolute God out of Christ, is enough to make a devil

tremble. You are not called to draw near to him as such. Indeed some presumptuous sinners will, like beasts, touch the mountain; but darts of wrath will strike through their consciences, and drive them back at length. But you are to draw near to God, as on his throne of grace, in Christ.

2. There is a way to the throne never trode, nor designed to be trode, by any but sinners such as you, and the like of you. This is no back-entry, but the most glorious way to the throne. Adam had a way to it, but that is blocked up; there is a new and living way consecrated for us, Heb. x. 20. And may we not draw near by it? It lies through the vail of Christ's flesh, and leads into the holiest, the seat of God! It is a way paved with glory to God, peace on earth, and goodwill to men. It will vail all your weaknesses, wants, and blemishes; yea, it vails the fiery law, wraps it up out of sight; it vails the sword of justice. The smiles of a reconciled God shine through it, to revive and refresh the hearts of the guilty.

3. He is a friend of ours who is set over the house of God: Heb. x. 21. "And having an High-Priest over the house of God," that is, Jesus Christ. He was taken out from among us, being "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." Psal. lxxxix. 19. "Thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people." He is for us, in things pertaining to God, to employ his power and interest for us in the court of heaven. He bears the keys of the house, and admits whom he will, gives them what he will, brings as far forward as he will: John, v. 22. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement to the Son." And he is a Priest, a High-Priest, who will take all our services,

vices, wash away all their pollution, and offer them for us with the much incense of his merits tercession.—We now proceed,

III. To shew, that we *ought* to draw near :
Let us draw near.—For,

1. It is the command of God : James, iv. 8. “ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” God commands run-aways to return, and draw near to him. He commands returning sinners to come forward, and come near him. He gives them no thanks for standing afar off. Though he can bear with them long, yet he is not pleased when a sense of sin makes poor sensible sinners stand off from him as affrighted at him. His fatherly bowels yearn toward them : Luke, xv. 20. “ And he arose, and came to his father ; but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

2. If we do not draw near to God, we dishonour his Son, and so dishonour himself, in so far as we frustrate the great design of the mystery of Christ : John, v. 23. “ That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which sent him.” Eph. ii. 13. 14. “ But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle-wall of partition between us.” So far as we stand afar off from God, we dishonour the friendship of God, the blood of the Son of God in its efficacy and virtue, while we dare not trust ourselves in the new and living way, and under the covert of the Redeemer’s blood.—We now proceed,

IV. To a practical improvement of the subject, in an use of exhortation.

Let us, then, draw near to God. Return, sinners, and come back to God, ye who have gone away from him; and having come back, come forward to him in Christ, come forward even to his seat; the nearer you come the better, and always the nearer the more welcome.

1. Come back, sinners, draw near towards God and duty. What have you gained by going from him? Satan, the world, and lusts, made you fair promises to get you away from God. But what have you made of your rambling, wandering life through the mountains of vanity? You have got a restlessness in your hearts, a blindness in your minds, a deadness in your affections to what is good. You have got your lusts strengthened, and a conscience full of guilt and stings, when you seriously reflect. Our Lord is ready to take run-aways home again: Jer. iii. 1.—"Return again to me, saith the Lord." Ver. 22. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto me, for thou art the Lord our God." He is again casting open the doors of his house to receive backsliders; nay, his arms of love and mercy are ready to receive you. Come back, then, smiting on your breast, as grieved for that backsliding heart of yours; smiting on your thigh, as grieved at those wandering feet of yours, which have not continued in the paths of righteousness.

2. Not only draw towards God, but come forward, and draw near to him as a God in Christ. You may get near him ere you come to heaven; in his ordinances in the lower house, there you may have access to him. Particularly, let us draw near him,

In

In prayer : Heb. iv. 16. " Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." This should be a praying time with us, a time of wrestling for the blessing. It may be you have not neglected the form of prayer ; but though God was near you in your mouth, yet perhaps he was far from your reins. But pray now, and draw near in prayer, press forward even unto his seat, with the arms of faith and love. Many have got very near him in that exercise ; they have broke the shell on which many gnaw all their days, while they are never the better, and they have got into the kernel ; like Jacob, they have succeeded : " He had power over the angel, and prevailed ; he wept, and made supplication unto him ; he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us."

Draw near in the holy sacrament of the supper. God is again coming to us in that ordinance ; an ordinance appointed for the most special nearness out of heaven : 1 Cor. x. 16. " The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ?" Here we may sacramentally touch his precious body and blood, and feed upon it. Oh ! let us be sure to meet him there ; he will not break the appointment. Let us draw near, draw by the vail with the hand of faith ; whatever be betwixt him and us, let us closely unite with God in his Son, and come even to his seat, come forward, for we will be welcome. But if we abide in the outward court, contenting ourselves with the bare elements, better we sit not down at this table.—Let us draw near in these ordinances,

1. As rebels accepting the King's peace, indemnity

demnity in the blood of his Son; draw near, and welcome: Isa. xxvii. 5. "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." He holds forth the golden sceptre to thee, though thou deservedst the iron rod. Start not back by unbelief. If it be too much for thee to expect when thou lookest to thyself, it is not too much for him to give; for he is infinite in goodness, and the blood of Christ purchased it for the undeserving; and the price of blood will not be kept back. Then, let us draw yet nearer,

2. As petitioners to the King. While God sits on the throne of his grace, he says to all who have accepted his peace, as Ahasuerus did to Esther, "What is thy petition, and it shall be granted thee?" Let us not, then, slight the season of petitioning. Be sensible of your soul-wants; labour to get desires of supply wrought in your hearts by the Spirit of Christ. And draw near with your petitions as particular as you can make them. Come, and welcome; though there be blots in them, they will be accepted out of the Mediator's hand. Nay more,

3. Draw near as servants of the house, to serve our Lord, to wait upon him, and behold his glory: Psal. cxvi. 16. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds," Rev. xxii. 3. "And his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." Though our ragged garments are very unlike our Master's honour, yet he allows us a livery in which to appear, of which we need not be ashamed, and which will cover all our filthy rags. He gives us white raiment, that we may be clothed, that the shame of our nakedness do not appear, Rev.

iii. 18. Lay this over thy soul, wrap thyself in it, come thus forward, and welcome.—Draw near,

4. As friends; friends of God, to have fellowship with him, who may freely converse with him; to unbosom ourselves to him, and to be let into the secrets of the covenant: John, xv. 15. “Henceforth,” says he, “I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” He treats you as such, setting you down at his table; and the less reserved you are, and the more you improve the privileges through Christ, the more welcome you are. Does he approve the kneelers at the sacrament, when he has ordered them to sit? as little will he approve the Christian’s carrying froward-like, and standing afar off from him at that table which he has covered for his friends. Nay, draw near,

5. As children to a Father in Christ, to receive the portion of children. Is not the soul which hath closed with Christ a son by adoption? “To as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” A child of the house by marriage with the King’s son. Is not the children’s bread given them at the table? Believe, then, and say to God in Christ, “Abba, Father.” If he did not love the compellation from those that are his, his Spirit would not put it into their mouths, Rom. viii. 15.—Draw near,

Lastly, As a spouse to an Husband, for our Maker is our Husband. Let us embrace him in the arms of faith, give the love of the heart to him a full vent: Song, viii. 6. “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which
hath

hath a most vehement flame." Rejoice in him, delight in him, and bleis ourselves in our choice of him. The sacrament of the supper is appointed for that very end, that we may unite more closely with him, have more intimate fellowship with our Lord, and may joy in the blessed Husband, while at the feast of espousals. Think not strange of drawing near at this rate ; for, if ever we come to heaven to be happy, we will be nearer than all this, nearer God than we can now conceive. The blood of God will be close cement betwixt God and his own creatures ; and this is the only way of our nearness.

But how must the business of our drawing near to God be managed ? The apostle here lays down four directions.

(1.) Draw near to God sincerely. Hypocrisy is a disease in the vitals of religion ; it pretends one thing, and intends another. The tongue and external behaviour in gospel-ordinances are no true interpreters of the hypocrite's mind. Beware of this : Matth. xv. 8. " This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips ; but their heart is far from me." If you be to take Christ, let those go away. If you join hands with him in this ordinance, join heart with him also. Seek out your sins impartially, and see if you be willing to part with them without exception : Psal. lxvi. 18. " If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Consider and deliberate on the cost of the covenant, and see if there be nothing at which your heart stands. Consider if you be for Christ and his salvation, for his sanctifying Spirit, as well as his justifying blood. If it be thus, you may warrantably come forward, even to his seat ; but if otherwise, you will never get near to him.

(2.)

(2.) Draw near in the *full assurance of faith*. Faith's special object is the blood of Christ. Come leaning and depending on the merit and efficacy of this blood. Would you be waisted over to the presence of God, come swimming through that river which makes glad the city of our God. Cast all your weight upon it. It bears the weight of the Father's glory, and will bear the weight of your salvation. If your assurance of welcome depends on any thing in yourselves, God will cast the door of access in your face, as presumptuous insensible creatures. Labour to get your souls wrought up to a full assurance of faith, not doubting of your welcome to, and acceptance with him through Christ. Fix on the promise, he is faithful who made it. Though a trembling hand may reach a pardon, and God will not quench a smoking flax, yet it is more to the honour of God, the honour of the precious blood of Christ, and more to the sanctification, as well as comfort of the soul, confidently, without hesitation, to lay hold upon the promise, and apply it, with all that is in it: Matth. xxi. 22. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

(3.) Get your hearts before-hand *sprinkled from an evil conscience*. Are you to come to his table? pray that all controversies be done away between you and him. If you are to appear before the Lord, go, dip, wash, bathe in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. that you may be clean. Take a back-look of your ways, and be not superficial in it, lest some unremoved guilt stare you in the face when you are coming forward, and drive you back. Do not think your repentance, reformation, vows, tears, (though of blood), will purge the conscience: Only Christ's blood will do it; for this only can satisfy the demands

mands of justice and of the law. Now, lay the weight of your remission on this blood, apply it to yourselves by faith, and this will purge your conscience. This sea of Christ's blood stands between us and the throne for that effect, Rev. iv 6..

Lastly, Let your outward conversation be blameless, free from scandalous sins: "Psal. xxiv. 4. "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully," is the person who shall ascend into the hill of God. Wash your hands in innocence, if you would encompass God's altar. Repent, and mourn over the sins of the outward man, and apply to the same blood for pardon. Forsake and give up with those sins, whether against the first or second table; resolve, and endeavour sincerely to perform. Amen.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED *.

S E R M O N XXXV.

HEB. x. 22.—*Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

IT will afford a beam of surprising and heart-reviving light upon this text, to sensible sinners, if we compare it with that in Gen. iii. 22.—24. Behold in these verses the fruits of the first Adam's sinning. Adam sinned, and we in his loins, as well as himself, were driven out from the presence of the Lord. Christ suffered, and we are drawn in again, and farther in than ever Adam was. Hear the sentence from Heaven casting us out: "Behold the man!" see what he has brought himself to, "he is become as one of us, to know good and evil." A holy taunt! "And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever." There is a deficiency in this speech, which is easily supplied

* Delivered immediately before the dispensation of the sacrament.

plied from what follows : " Let us drive him out." But hear the voice from heaven calling in again the wretched outcasts. The apostle here, as one of the outcasts, manages the voice in effect thus, ' Behold God, the second Person ! he is become as one of us, has taken upon him our nature, to know by his own feeling in some sort, the good we lost, the evil in which we are involved ; and now, *let us draw near*, let us come back, come in, come forward, nay, come near ; let us not only put forth, but freely stretch forth our hand, grasp, and take of the tree of life ; eat freely, abundantly, and live for ever.'

O that the reverse may be carried yet farther ! God sent forth the man, bade him go, but he would not : " So God drove him out." Now, God bids us draw near, but we will not come. May the Lord put forth his hand, and draw us in.

But here an inquiry occurs, How near may sinners come to Jesus Christ ?

1. They may come into the house of God, ver. 21. " Having an High-Priest over the house of God." When Adam sinned, he was driven out of the house, as a divorced woman. The first covenant was broken ; but now, that the new covenant is made, the divorced sinner, who is new-married to his Maker in Christ, may come in again to the house. They may come to the lower house in ordinances ; it is their own house ; by that title, they may sit down at the table as in their own house : Isa. lvii. 13. " He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain." They may come to the higher house, even heaven, this is the house in the context. They will come there at death, but the text aims at a coming to it before death ; and therefore, this drawing near is a spiritual motion
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upon

upon the wings of faith, carrying the soul out of the body to heaven as its own house, because it is Christ's house.

2. They come far forward in the house: Ver. 19. "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." The temple stood east and west, the porch, or entry, being in the east. Without the house were the courts of the temple, in one of which stood the altar, before the porch of the house, in the open air. In the temple was a vail, which divided the east end, called "the holy place," (into which ordinary priests might go), from the west end, called "the holiest of all," into which only the High-Priest might enter once a-year. There was the ark, with the mercy-seat and cloud of glory on it; and it was a special type of the highest heavens, the high and holy place, which is the glorious dwelling of God.

Now, I say, sinners may through Christ come far forward in the house, they may have Job's wish to come to God, even to his seat, Job, xxiii. 3. Sinners, we have an altar, a crucified Saviour; if you desire to come into the house of God, come by that altar, and welcome, there is no other way; come into the holy place; nay, come forward into the holiest of all. Stand by no means only gazing on the vail, the vail of Christ's flesh, but come through the vail unto God, God in Christ; come even to his seat. God is in Christ as the cloud of glory on the mercy-seat in the holiest of all; come forward through the vail of Christ's flesh, sufficiently rent and torn in his sufferings, to afford you access through it to God, sitting on his mercy-seat in Christ, that you may be refreshed and comforted, your souls satisfied and sanctified with breathings of his love, with peace, and good-will from thence,

even through the wounds of our Redeemer. If this do not kindle in you a desire to draw near, what can we say to kindle it?

I told you last Sabbath, that you *may* draw near to God in Christ, and that you *ought* to draw near, &c. Is there any here who so love their outcast condition, that they will not come back, nor draw near to God, though they are invited? Then I must leave you, to speak to others. But, before we part, consider,

1. What a miserable state you are in while far from God. As God said to Adam, Gen. iii. 9. we may say to you, "Where art thou?" Like the prodigal, Luke, xv. 13. thou art in a far country, far from God, his covenant, his grace, his Christ, Eph. ii. 12. And while you will not come back, you are far out of your senses. Tell me, sinner, in sober earnest, (if you be capable of a sober thought), Are you not in want? Is there not a principle of restlessness in that soul of thine, which thou canst find no way to quiet, but sometimes by the fulsome breasts of lusts which may surfeit, but at no time can satisfy? The dry breasts of the world, squeeze them as you will, can never give full content, still there is some thorn of uneasiness in your bed, make it where you will. Thou dost hunger after happiness, but shalt never find it till thou come near to God in Christ.--Consider,

2. If thou art able to hold on to the end without coming near to God. Though thou canst live this way, wilt thou be able to die in this state, and continue so for ever? Art thou still able to make thy part good without him, yea, against him, so that thou art resolved never to knock at his door? If not, thou art wretchedly foolish, to slight a kind invitation from him, to whom at length thou must bow. Therefore, Isa. lv. 6. "Seek ye the Lord, while

while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."—Consider,

3. If thou wilt not draw near now, the time will come, when God will drive thee from him with a vengeance, and will give thee thy heart's fill of distance from him for ever : Matth. xxv. 41. "Then shall he say to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now he bids thee draw near, and thou wilt not ; this voice will draw to an end with thee, and thou wilt hear that other voice, Depart from me ; and thou must go, though thou wouldst gladly stay. As, then, you would not be forced to depart for ever, draw near to God now, while he is drawing near to you.—Consider,

Lastly, That the access to God, now in your offer, will make your departure from him to hell the more dreadful : Matth. xi. 24. "It will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgement, than for you." Ye are guilty of a sin of which heathens are not capable, nay, which devils cannot commit it. They departed, but they never got a call to come back again. It was never said to them, *Let us draw near*. There is a way opened at the expence of the blood of Christ, for you to come back to God, and therefore your neglecting to improve it must be inexcuseable.

But now, as for you who desire to draw near to God, ye have a fair occasion at all times for it, there is a ready way from earth to heaven, through Christ, wherever you are. You have a special occasion at this time in the holy sacrament, an ordinance in which the Lord comes very near to his people, in which the greatest nearness may be enjoyed. The sacraments and death resemble one another. In the former, the Lord comes to us,

in death we go to him. We should labour so to manage the former, as that a sure foundation may be laid for safety and comfort in the latter. Here God appears on a throne of grace in Christ, the vail of Christ's flesh appears sacramentally rent, that you through it may draw near to God. And you must by faith pass through the vail this day, that you may get forward even to his seat, drawing near him as rebels accepting the King's peace, the offered indemnity through the blood of his Son, drawing near as supplicants, as servants of the house, to serve our Lord, to wait upon him, and behold his glory.

In these circumstances, your question, I presume, will now be, How shall we so manage this approach, as that it may be successful for the honour of God, our soul's good for time and eternity? If you manage right, you are made up for ever, and therefore your mismanagement will be an unspeakable loss. I shall farther explain unto you the apostle's directions in the text. I fear the hints already given to you as to the nature of drawing near to God, may not be sufficient to clear you in this matter; therefore, that ye may not walk in the dark, know plainly, in a word, that we draw near to God by faith, and our believing in God is our drawing near to him. Hence the apostle's advice in the text is not, Come in by faith, for this is the very coming itself, but, says he, "in full assurance of faith." So the scripture explains it, while it shews that that coming to the Lord, which is so much pressed on sinners in the Old and New Testament, is believing: John, vi. 35. "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh unto me shall never hunger, he that believeth on me shall never thirst." How does the sinner depart from God, but by unbelief?

lief? Heb. iii. 12. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Therefore it is by believing we draw near (*Greek*, come) to God. This is the great uniting grace which joins a sinner to the Lord while in this world. How can we come to God, but by believing? for this drawing near is a spiritual motion of the soul. Our souls indeed move towards God in spiritual desires; but if these be not completed by faith, which is the comprehensive motion, the soul still stands off from God. So also in love, this is set a-going by faith, and its motion is towards God, when the soul is brought near to God by faith: 1 John, iv. 16. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Now, the object of faith is Jesus Christ held forth in the word of the gospel, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, that is to say, God in Christ. See the sum of the gospel, 2 Cor. v. 18. 19. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Faith does not stand still in the vail, that is, his flesh, but goes through the vail, Heb. x. 20. to the Godhead, that is, within it, and there, only there, it rests, or can rest. Now, the persons of the Trinity being one, he who believeth in Christ the Son, believeth in the Father and the Holy Ghost: John, xiv. 9. "He that hath seen me," said Jesus, "hath seen the Father." More particularly, that you may take.

your aim right in this matter, I think drawing near by faith lies in three things, namely,

1. It lies in accepting God for our God in Christ. I say in Christ, for no other way have we him offered to us, nor can a soul in any other way accept him; out of Christ, he is a consuming fire. Thus, from the mercy-seat in Christ he offers the covenant, which faith accepts: Heb. viii. 10. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." And there, even in Christ, the soul takes him for its God, and gives itself away to him: Isa. xlv. 5. "One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Thus the sinner is joined to God in Christ by a marriage-union: Isa. liv. 5. "For thy Maker is thy Husband." (*Heb.* thy Makers is thy husband). 2 Cor. vi. 16. "For ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" and then we are near indeed.—Drawing near by faith lies,

2. In claiming God for our God in Christ. This is the very proper work of faith: Psal. xvi. 2. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, 'Thou art my Lord,'" at all times, but especially at a communion-table. What says the Lord to the soul then, but as he did to Thomas? John, xx. 27. "Be not faithless, but believing." Let us draw near, then, by faith, and answer, ver. 28. "My Lord, and my God." Faith has the word of the everlasting covenant to bear it out in its claim; it has the

the Redeemer's blood, which is the blessed cement to knit a believer to a holy God. In the sacrament, the body of Christ, in which dwells the fulness of the Godhead, is really and truly presented to their faith, by and with the sacred symbols. Is any thing more natural than that faith should claim as its own the gift which is thus put into its hand?—Drawing near by faith lies,

3. In improving according to our necessities, for time and eternity, the interest in God thus claimed, as in Psal. cxix. 94. "I am thine, save me," and throughout that psalm. Thus the soul feeds by faith, when persons suck in the sap of the fruits growing on the tree of life, when by faith they sit under his shadow; and this plainly lies in confidence and trust in our God for all, according to his word. It lies in believing the promises of the everlasting covenant, founded and ratified in the blood of Christ; not as devils may believe them, namely, that they shall be made out to some person, but believing them with application, namely, that they shall be made out to me, believing over the belly of devils, and all the mass of vileness, filthiness, and unworthiness which hangs about me. Believers should say, as in Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," &c.

It is the two last of these, I think, that the apostle here chiefly aims at, supposing the first as the attainment of his Christian Hebrews.

IN discoursing farther on this subject, I intend —To offer some directions—To propose some cases and questions, and—To offer suitable answers.

As to the directions, I begin with this,

1. *Draw near with a true heart to God.* If we come not with the heart, we do not come to God in a suitable manner. To draw near to God,
is

is foul-work, heart-work ; if, therefore, we come not with a true heart, we come not at all to him. A false heart in the matter of covenanting to God, is no heart, is at best but a half-heart to it ; and this is no heart in God's account : Prov. xvii. 16. " Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart in it ?" If you have not a heart for God in Christ, you will not get near him. Before Julius Cæsar was murdered, having slain a fat ox for a sacrifice, the heart was not to be found among the entrails. That communicant in whom a heart for the Lord is wanting, will doubtless be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord this day. Heartless sacrifices involve murder. A true heart is not a finless heart, but a sincere heart. Let us draw near, then, with a sincere heart. Sincerity is not a single grace, but it is the sum and soul of all the graces. Take it away from faith itself, and it is but a dead grace, as in Simon Magus, and those in John, ii. 23. 24. " Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself to them, because he knew all men." Sincerity is like the string in the beads about a person's neck ; when this is broke, then they fall all to the ground. We need not, however, seek this truth of heart through all the graces, for it is principally the truth of faith which is here meant ; it is believing, which is in its nature our drawing near to God ; and so it may be explained by what you have in Rom. x. 9. 10. " If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved ; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession

confession is made unto salvation." Poor soul ! if thou be coming back to thy great Master, though even laden with the stolen goods you ran away with from him, though you dare not say you are an honest servant, yet if you dare say before the Lord, you are honestly returning back again, then we may say to you, Draw near, and welcome.—But here, perhaps some will propose this

QUESTION. In what does the truth of our drawing near to God, or the sincerity of faith, consist ? For answer, I would observe a few things.

1. The soul draws near to God with a true heart, when it comes to God only in the true way, through the rent veil of Christ's flesh ; that is, when the soul has no confidence in believing, but in the blood of Christ : Phil. iii. 3. " For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." The person will stop eyes and ears, and say, I cannot look on God but as in Christ, I desire to hear none other, I have nothing whatever of my own to recommend me to Christ. Though perhaps the beggar-raiment of their reformation of life, what they have done and suffered for the cause of Christ, their earnest prayers, deep exercise, bitter tears for sin, and the like, look as well, and probably better than those of many of their neighbours ; yet they dare not for their souls bring a rag of them with them, to cover or commend them before the Lord ; but they leave them, yea, flee out of them, and from them, as absolutely naked, to the Lord Jesus himself, to get a covering under his righteousness.

2. The soul draws near to God with a true heart,

heart, when, upon a discovery of the glory of the Lord, it is thus subdued to this obedience of faith: Pſal. cx. 3. "Thy people ſhall be willing in the day of thy power;" when the practical underſtanding caſts the balance on the Lord's ſide, ſo that the heart ſays, "He is better to me than thouſands of gold;" or as in Phil. iii. 8. "Yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, my Lord;" in a word, when the ſoul draws near to God, to take up its everlaſting reſt in him, as its portion, to take him for all, and inſtead of all. With the heart man believes, when the perſon takes God for his God in Chriſt, not only for a reſt to the conſcience, that it thus may be quieted in him, but alſo for a reſt to the heart, that thus it may be ſatiſfied in him; and the perſon can accordingly ſay, Farewell, vain world; farewell, ſinful luſts; farewell, empty creation; welcome, welcome, God in Chriſt, for a covering to mine eyes, and a reſt to mine heart. Pſal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on the earth that I deſire beſides thee." The goſpel holds out Chriſt as the only ſatiſfying portion; faith firſt believes this teſtimony, then embraces him as ſuch. They who are only acquainted with terror as dealing with them, may be driven to God, but do not draw near to him with a true heart.—To illuſtrate this, I would propoſe the two following caſes.

Caſe 1. What will become of thoſe, then, who are driven to the Lord by terror? *Anſw.* What becomes of a ſhip which is drove into an undeſirable harbour by ſtreſs of weather? When the ſtorm is calmed, ſhe even leaves it, and puts to ſea again, as you ſee in Pſal. cvii. 24.—30. 'Terror may begin

begin the work, which a willing choice may crown. The poor soul may be like Noah's dove, drove away to the ark by a restless conscience; but when it comes there, the Lord may open a window, by which it may get such a view as to be drawn into it, though it was before only drove. Though the storm at first drove thee to the harbour, yet if thou be now captivated by the beauty of the place, so as that you are heartily resolved to make it the place of thy abode for ever, in fair weather or foul, and would, with a thousand good wills, that the vessel was burnt, that so you might never be in hazard of going again to the sea of this world; all is well, you are welcome to the shore of Immanuel's land: "Hos. ii. 14. "Therefore, behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."

Case 2. But, alas! I cannot purge myself of backwardness in coming to the Lord. *Ans.* Is that backwardness truly the burden of your spirit? do ye loathe yourself on account of it? Our Lord allows you to draw near with your burden on your back. The great Physician knows his patient comes to him with heart and good will, though his sickness makes him come very slowly, drawing, as it were, his legs after him: Matth. xxvi. 41. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Psal. lxx. 3. "Iniquities prevail against us: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away."—I now go on to observe,

3. That the soul draws near to God with a true heart, when it comes to him for sanctification, as well as justification, to be freed from the reigning and indwelling power, as well as from the guilt of sin: 1 Cor. i. 30. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness,

righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." This is a sign of that heart which is a true heart, a heart truly divorced and alienated from sin, though the poor soul cannot be wholly freed from it; an heart true to the great end of the mystery of Christ, his death, and his sufferings, which was "to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14.;—true to the great end of all gospel-institutions, Acts, xxvi. 18. "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus;"—true to the great end of faith, which is "to purify the heart," Acts, xv. 9.;—true to its own best interest, and the honour of God, which commences in time, and terminates in heaven in likeness to God: 1 John, iii. 2. "But we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." When this is obtained, the mystery of Christ is finished. Whosoever come in any other way, come with a false heart. They who have only use for the blood, and not for the water, which came out of Christ's side; who do not heartily desire universal holiness, but wish to conceal some secret morsel under their tongue; who come to God to bind themselves to holiness, if he will but save their souls, and pardon their sins, as if they could make themselves holy, if he would but make them happy; the faith of such persons is but a dream.

Thus the truth of faith is made out, the soul draws near with a true heart; for thus it comes away from self, the world, and sin, and draws near to God in Christ, and thus obeys the gospel-call.—As another direction, I would mention,

2. *Draw*

2. *Draw near to God in full assurance of faith.*

Are you put upon the right road, having a true heart? then advance forward, without doubting or wavering. Is your heart true? let it next be wrought up to full assurance, for in this lies all the importance of this second advice. It is a metaphor taken from a ship, carried with full sail before the wind. And thus, sinner, if, after you and I have been tossed up and down in the sea of this world, (a world lying in wickedness), by violent lusts, unsatisfied desires, and wearied out with disappointed expectations, yet after all could never find in it where to rest our foot, nay, not so much as sure anchor-ground for our hearts, but still an unfathomable depth of emptiness presenting itself to us, and now have at length discovered the port and harbour suited to give rest to a weary soul, even God in Christ, have our eye on it, and are steering our course straight towards it, let us spread out our sails, let us draw near with the full sail of faith, as our text might be read. This I would consider as more particularly directing us to these three important points.

1. To a taking God for our God in Christ freely.

2. To a claiming him for our own God boldly.

3. To an improving our claim of interest in him confidently, and without hesitation.

These I shall in their order a little enlarge upon. I say, then, that to draw near to God in full assurance of faith, is,

1. To take God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your welcome. Stretch forth the hand of faith, that ye may join hands with an incarnate God; the more vigorous that your aim be, you will take the better hold. Do not stand at the door, disputing and doubting whether to go forward or

not? if you cannot loose doubts, cut them with the sword of faith, and leap over them, Matth. xv. 24.—28. It is none other than Satan, and an unbelieving heart, which entertains the sinner before the vail, with disputes and doubts whether to go through or not. And if these can hold them up with that discourse till the door be shut, as it will soon be, they have their design. There are, without question, good grounds for this full assurance of faith;—such as,

(1.) God, in his infinite love and mercy, has suited himself for an approach by such as you. Had he intended to keep you off, he had only to have kept himself in his unveiled glory, and the rays of it from afar would have struck the guilty soul through with a thousand arrows, and kept him off for ever. But he has veiled himself with our nature, and that for us: Heb. x. 19. 20. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh.” Has he put on the vail, then, that guilty wretches may draw near him? Has he rent the vail of the flesh of his own Son in his crucifixion, that a door might be opened through his wounds to come to God? Has he done all this in vain? If not, why will you doubt your welcome through this new and living way?

(2.) God’s justice is satisfied, his honour is provided for, so that justice has nothing to object against your putting your hand to this claim. It is absolutely consistent with the honour of God to be thy God in Christ, for the man that is the Father’s fellow has done all this by his blood; and therefore the angel’s song begins with glory to God in the highest; after that follows peace on earth,

earth, and good-will to men, Luke, ii. 14. Hear the sacramental words, 1 Cor. xi. 25. "This is the New Testament in my blood." Is not the blood of the everlasting covenant sufficient to assure you? Is not the covenant in which God offers himself to you as your God, drawn with the blood of God? Behold, then, the blood of the covenant, and no more doubt your welcome.

(3.) You have his word for it. Kind invitations are breathed out to you from the throne of grace in Christ. Hear the tenor of the covenant, Heb. viii. 10. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." See how it is offered unto all to whom the gospel comes, Isa. lxi. 1. 2. John, vi. 37. Rev. xxii. 17. Nay, you are commanded to accept it: Luke, xiv. 23. "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." 1 John, iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Many are in other cases disputing, and doubting themselves out of their duty, but here salvation lies at stake. Will you, then, doubt your welcome to obey the command of God?

(4.) You must take God in Christ for your God, or you are eternally ruined. Debate the matter as long as you will, this is the course you must take, or the wrath of God will lie on you for ever. Miss this hold, and you sink assuredly into the bottomless pit: John, iii. 36. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Now, if you must do it, it is weakness and folly not to do it

with full assurance of faith. If a drowning man must seize a rope to draw himself to land, does not common sense say, the firmer he seizes it, he is the more safe? If the hand tremble, and be like to let go the hold, will he not wrestle against death? So, in like manner should we, with full assurance of faith, keep our hold of Christ, and thus draw near to God.—But here some may propose a

Question, How may we be helped to this full assurance of faith in taking God for our God in Christ? As to this I answer, Stedfastly believe the doctrine of the gospel, which is the mean which the Spirit makes use of to beget and increase faith: Rom. x. 17. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And therefore still hold by the word. I apprehend, if we would search to the root of the doubts, fears, and uncertainty in the matter of believing in Christ, we would find the root of most, if not all of them, is an error in the first concoction, an uncertainty as to the doctrine of the gospel. Therefore labour to be fully and feelingly assured of the doctrine of your lost state by nature, on the testimony of the word. Begin there, and ply your faith as to this doctrine. It is easiest, because an unenlightened conscience even goes along with it; but if I believe my lost state upon the testimony of that word, I am helped the rather to believe the way of my recovery on the testimony of the same word.

Believe ye, then, with full assurance, that you are in yourselves guilty creatures, bound over to the wrath of God for time and eternity, and that by no means ye are able to remove that guilt, by all that ye are capable to do or suffer? Believest thou this? It is gospel-doctrine, Eph. ii. 3.

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“ And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Again, Do you believe that you are altogether corrupt and unholy, and are utterly unable to make for yourselves either a holy heart or life, that you are no more able to subdue a lust, than to procure yourself a pardon, that the breaking of the power of sin is as far above thy reach, as the removing the guilt of it? Eph. ii. 1. “ And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Do you believe the doctrine of salvation through Jesus Christ, held forth in the gospel? You cannot believe in the Lord to salvation, but as you give an assent to this doctrine by faith. This is the bottom on which faith proceeds, when laying hold of God in Christ.—Do you believe, with full assurance, that there is no way to make miserable man happy again, but by the enjoyment of God as his own God? O for the full assurance of this! it would effectually determine those who are hanging on this day about the world’s door, and that of their lusts.—Do you believe that there is no other way to come to the enjoyment of God as our God, but through Jesus Christ, who was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem? Acts, iv. 12. “ Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” If so, his name would be precious. Do you believe that there is no way to be saved from guilt, but by his righteousness, and from pollution, but by his Spirit?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he took upon him man’s nature, and suffered in it to satisfy the justice of God, that he might thus by his blood bring sinners again to God, to enjoy him as their God? Eph. ii. 13. “ But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far

off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—Do you believe that the blood of Christ is the blood of God, and that therefore it is a cement truly sufficient to knit or join a holy just God, and any guilty sinner whatsoever, who comes unto God through him? This is gospel-truth: 1 John, i. 7. "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."—Heb. vii. 25. "Wherefore he is able also to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Believest thou this? If thou believest it not, how can it be expected that thou shouldst draw near to God, seeing the only way of access to God is to thy unbelieving heart not sufficient to bear the weight of a guilty soul? If thou sayest thou dost believe, then, to try this, I would ask thee, Dost thou believe that this blood is a cement sufficient to join thy guilty soul, even thine, to God? to bear thy weight, who perhaps thinkest there was never one upon it with such a load of guilt? If not, then thou dost not believe the doctrine of the gospel, Heb. vii. 25. already quoted.—If thou dost believe all this, then,

Do you also believe, that whatsoever guilty sinner will come to God through him, may have the benefit of that sufficiency of his blood, that is, that God shall be his God, that he shall have the righteousness of God, even God-man, to cover all his sins, the Spirit of Christ to sanctify him, and make him like God? This is gospel-truth, Isa. lv. 1.—3. Rev. iii. 18. and chap. xxii. 17. Do you believe this? If not, you cannot draw near to God indeed; it cannot be expected that you, who give no credit to his word, will venture on himself.—But if you say you do believe, then dost thou also believe, that if thou comest to God
through

through him, thou, even thou, shalt have this benefit? If thou stoppest here, then I do not know but devils go farther in believing than thou dost, namely, to believe this general proposition, without excepting so much as thee. But thou, monstrous dishonourer of the blood of Christ, and the truth of God, read thy sin, tremble, and repent: 1 John, v. 10. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." But if thou dost, with full assurance, believe this, then what remains, but that thou draw near with full assurance of faith? Take God in Christ for thy God, without in the least doubting of thy welcome.—This drawing near with full assurance of faith is in its nature,

2. To claim God in Christ as your God, without doubting of your title. Having taken him as your God, do not stand debating whether or not he is yours; only believe, believe he is yours: Jer. iii. 4. "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" What the better will you be of him, if he be not yours? John, i. 12. "But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." I must content myself at this time, only to offer two or three things on this exercise:—As,

(1.) When thou takest God for thy God in Christ with a true heart, canst thou doubt thy title, without dishonouring the blood of Christ and the truth of God? For these two do secure it. Dost thou not so far dishonour him, who is set over the house

house of God, when he has given thee the benefit of the covenant, even himself, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells, if thou doubtest of thy title to them, for so thou dost in effect question his commission and right. Glorify the Son of God, then, and honour the infinite virtue and merit of his blood, by claiming God as your God upon this ground. I know we are apt to think, we do but doubt the truth of our taking God in Christ as our God. But do we doubt of the offer? Do we doubt of our soul's saying Amen to it on any terms? Do we not? Take heed, then, that the doubt run not upon another ground, whatever our unbelieving heart may suggest.

(2.) When thou dost sit down at the table of the Lord, thy soul hungering for Christ, the bread and wine are given thee by his ministers in his name, and with his own words, "This is my body," &c. dost thou believe these words? If thou dost believe them, thou darést not, with many profane spectators and communicants, also look upon these sacred symbols as naked signs of Christ's body and blood, but must believe, that by, and with these signs, the body and blood of Christ, which were never separated from his Godhead since they were first united, are really and truly exhibited, and given to thee, to thy faith, and thou receiving the same in faith, art as really made partaker of his body and blood, as thou art of that bread and wine: 1 Cor. x. 16. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" What, then, should hinder thee to claim God as thy God in Christ, without doubting of your title, when you have a sealed gift of him made you by his authority before the world, angels,

angels, and men?—This drawing near with full assurance of faith is in its nature,

3. To improve your interest claimed, without doubting of success. Feed with a fear of circumspection; but the less unbelieving fear, the better. This you are to do still in the way of believing, believing the promises, without doubting of their being accomplished to you for time and for eternity, for grace and glory: Matth. xxi. 22. "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Rely on the word of grace, the covenant in his blood, that for as poor and mean as you may appear this day, ye shall be pillars in the temple of God, seeing he has said it; for as black and deformed as you are this day, ye shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. Is there a lust, or lusts, you would have subdued, believe, with full assurance of faith, the promise suited to that case, as in Mic. vii. 19. "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." And so in other cases.

What way can one imagine we should suck the sap of these promises, but by believing them, and so relying and trusting on the Lord according to his word? The heavenly treasures contained in them are unseen things, they are known to us only by the testimony of the word, and the inward sensation which they experience upon believing them. How, then, can we think to get the benefit of them, but in the way of believing them? Suppose some rich prince beyond seas, who can, nevertheless, at any time convey his treasures hither, should find means to get proclaimed among a company of poor people here, that, whosoever will take him, and him only, for their Provider, shall

shall be seasonably and suitably supplied out of his treasures. They never saw the prince, they know nothing of his treasures, but by the testimony of his word sent to them. The heralds commend the prince, they aver it is the surest way of supply to these who are poor. Some of these poor count these things idle tales, and go their way, one to his day-labour, to earn a penny, another to the begging through the country. When the supply comes to the country, have these any ground to expect a share? No; they did not believe his proclamation. But as for those who were so foolish in the eyes of their neighbours, but so truly wise, as to believe the proclamation, and venture their supply upon an unseen provider, and an unseen treasure, it lies on his truth and honour to see them abundantly supplied. I shall no further apply this, than to say, that God's truth and honour is most undoubted security: Rom. ix. 33. "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

To conclude, think not that I have been teaching you to presume, nay, but to *draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith*; not to lay aside humility, for the greatest humility is to deny ourselves, and obey the call of God, though it be an high calling. It is not humility, but unbelief, which is the spring of the true heart's doubtings in drawing near to God. They are but warts and moles in the face of Christ's bride, and so far mar her beauty; though he does not cast her off for them, if faith do but peep, as it were, out among the crowd of these deformities, as if she could see only with one eye: Song, iv. 9. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished."

ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." Matth. xiv. 31. "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt?" The rule is, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee." So little faith, little comfort; but, what is worse, little faith, little sanctification. Amen.

THE

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED *.

S E R M O N XXXVI.

HEB. x. 22.—*Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

IT is by no means only at a communion-table that we are to draw near to God, but also in all other parts of his worship; yea, in the whole of our conversation we must be drawing near, and keeping near to God, till we at length appear before him in heaven: I say *keeping* near; for certainly, the text points not merely to a drawing near, just for a start, and away again; but it is to draw near to the house over which Christ is set, as a house where we are to abide; and it is such a drawing near, so as not to draw back.

You may remember, I told you, drawing near to God is by faith, and that this lies principally in three things. 1. Accepting God as our God in Christ. 2. Claiming God for our God in Christ. 3. Im-

* Delivered, June 1715.

3. Improving, according to our necessities, for time and eternity, the interest in God thus claimed. Ye have had two directions offered for the right managing of this : 1. That you should draw near with a true heart ; 2. With full assurance of faith ; which I explained to consist in, (1.) Taking God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your welcome ; (2.) Claiming God in Christ as your God, without doubting of your title ; (3.) Improving your interest claimed, without doubting of success. I spoke upon the first of these three largely, namely, the taking God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your title. Upon the other two, little was said. I shall now speak to a case which I shall propose, and so proceed.

Case. How shall I know that I have drawn near to God in Christ with a true heart, and sincerely taken him for my God in Christ? *Answer.* The difference between the true and false heart in this point, may be discerned in the following particulars, viz.

1. The false heart draws near to God, as a neighbour only, as it were, to pay a visit, stays a little, and then goes its way again : Isa. xxvi. 16. " Lord, in trouble have they visited thee ; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." The hypocrite never takes up his everlasting rest in God. Though he leaves his own house to come to the house of God, yet he leaves his heart behind him ; and so he cannot stay. With the mixed multitude who came out of Egypt, Num. xi. 5. " They remember the fish which they did eat in Egypt freely ; the cucumbers, the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick ;" and they found the retreat to go back from whence they came.

2. The true heart draws near to God in heaven,

as the new-married wife comes home to her husband's house to dwell there all her days, never to go back again to her father's house : Psal. cxvi. 7. "Return to thy rest, O my soul ! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." It was a custom among the ancient Greeks, to burn, at the bridegroom's door, the axle-tree of the coach in which the bride came home, to shew she was never again to go away ; and if ye have drawn near to God with a true heart, taking him for your God in Christ, I will not say, that the axle-tree of the chariot in which you came to God is as yet burnt to ashes, but sure I am, there is a fire set to it ; and if it is once set in a flame at the door of the house of your new Husband, it is so because you had no mind to go again back. And whether this be so or not, you will know,

(1.) By the smoke which will be rising there. There will be a threefold smoke rising at the door of the house you have come to, if the axle-tree be on fire, and you have determined not to go back again to your former house.

[1.] There will be the smoke of fear as to drawing back. I mean not a faithless fear, which seizes those who look to the duties to which they are bound, but not to the strong God, whose strength is engaged by covenant to his people, for the performance of them. This is the fear which takes heart and hand from people, making the heart quaver, like a candle burnt to the socket, till at last it expires with a stench. This is the smoke of a fire from hell, blown up with hard thoughts of God, and of the sweet yoke of Christ, Matth. xxv. 24. 25. Rev. xxi. 8. It is the forerunner of apostasy ; but there is a fear of circumspection in the true heart, in opposition to that self-confidence with which hypocrites are blown up :

up: Prov. xxviii. 14. "Happy is the man that feareth alway, but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." He trembles to think of going back from God, has a horror at the thought. He walks softly and warily, as one afraid to be taken off his feet; and he holds the faster, the more he sees his hazard.—There is,

[2.] The smoke of self-loathing, for former sins and departures from God: Ezek. xxxvi. 31. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations." They that are near will remember with self-loathing what they were when they were far off: Psal. lxxiii. 22. "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before him." They who have not seen their wretched case while at a distance from God, they go back again quickly; for the sore that is not sufficiently probed, though scurfed over, will break out again.—There is,

[3.] The smoke of dissatisfaction with the corrupt nature, in that there should be so much as a principle of back-drawing, the least inclination in them to go away: Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They will be looking with an evil eye on the corruption of nature, which makes them capable of departing, and will be longing to be beyond the reach of temptations to depart from the Lord.

(2.) You will know by the flame that will be rising there. There being a live coal from the altar, there will be a threefold flame.

[1.] A flame of love to the house they have come to for the Master's sake, Luke, xxiv. 29. 32. The glory of that house cast open by the blood of

Christ, darkens all created excellency with them, so that their hearts say, "This is my rest." Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on the earth that I desire beside thee." They are like the servant, Exod. xxi. 5. who, from love to his master, would not go out free. They have made choice of God in Christ for their God; and when they reflect on the bargain, they do not repent their choice. If they had it to make a thousand times, they would not alter. —There is,

(2.) A flame of desires, desires to stay: Psal. cxix. 10. "With my whole heart have I sought thee; O let me not wander from thy commandments!" They see Satan and a corrupt heart standing ready to yoke, to carry them back to their father's house again; but they are persuaded in their hearts, while they are with God, they are where they are better, yea, where they are best; and they desire not to go back, they desire to stay, and therefore are denying the suits of ungodliness and worldly lusts, which would carry them back, Tit. ii. 12. —There is,

(3.) A flame of hatred against the fashion of their father's house: Psal. ci. 3. "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me." They loathed them, they therefore left them, and came away from them. They do not love them, and therefore hate to go back to them. They have abandoned the sweet morsel, and abhor to take it up again: Psal. xcvi. 10. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil; he preserveth the souls of his saints, he delivereth them out of the hands of the wicked." Those fashions wounded their consciences, defiled their souls, grieved the Holy Spirit, contradicted the law of righteousness; therefore they hate them.

Thus,

Thus, you see, those who have drawn near to God in heaven, have determined to abide there. They have taken God as their God, to abide by, and with him for ever. And hence we may conclude two things in regard to them.

1. That they are no more people of this world. Heaven was cast open to them by Jesus Christ, a way was made for them into the holiest of all, and they have drawn near by this way to God in Christ, to abide there. It is indeed true, they are yet in the world, but they are not any more of it, they are chosen out of the world, John, xv. 19. Though their bodies be still in this world, their souls have by faith taken wing, have left this for that world, which is not seen, and have got in within the vail.—Thus it is, for the god of this world is not their God. They have renounced the devil, no more to serve and obey him to their ruin, but to resist him as their enemy, and the enemy of their God. They are to have an irreconcilable war with him, till he be bruised under their feet.—The world's portion is not their portion, 1 John, ii. 15. 16. They look beyond things that are seen, which may fill the hand, but can never fill the heart. They seek after profits more solid, pleasures more pure and sweet, than the world can afford. They will not, like the men of the world, cry, "Who will shew us any good?" Psal. iv. 6. ; but as answering Christ's call, Song, iv. 8. "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse." What others take upon their back, yea, place in the chief room of the heart, they put under their feet, and are fighting with it, that they may overcome it. The way of the world is not their way: Rom. xii. 2. "And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." To be only neighbour-like, is not

their religion. They are pilgrims and strangers in the world, who will be distinguished by their way from the natives. For they who take the way of the world must perish with it.

2. They are people of another-world, they are of that world where life and immortality reign. They have had access into heaven while on earth, and they have drawn near to it by faith. Wonder not at this, for if there be a soul here who has drawn near to God with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, and taken God in Christ for their God, they may well be said to be in heaven, and to be creatures of another world. For,

(1.) Their Head is in heaven, even Jesus Christ, who is as really united to the believer, as the head of a living man is to his body. There is as real an union and communion betwixt Christ and them, as betwixt the head and the body: Col. ii. 19. "He is the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." This union the Spirit descending from Christ, and faith ascending from the true heart, constitutes; and this the sacrament seals.

(2.) Their heart is in heaven, for their treasure, their stock, and portion is there: Matth. vi. 21. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Their heart is divorced from the world and their lusts, it is away before them, in some measure, to the place where they themselves are to be for ever. They have got a view of the glory and treasures of the upper house, and after these their souls are breathing.

(3.) Their life is there, for Christ is there: Col. iii. 3. 4. "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with

with him in glory." Their principle of life is the Spirit of Christ, by whom they live. It is a hidden life indeed, hid from the world, often from themselves. They see not their dignity, it doth not yet appear what they are, but as really as they have taken God in Christ for their God, the Spirit of Christ dwells in them. And hence, their life can never be extinguished, for it lies not in the grace of God within them, but in that without them in Christ.

(4.) Their hand is in heaven, even faith, that long arm of the soul, by which it can reach from earth to heaven, even to his seat; for by it, as was shewn, we draw near to God. Faith penetrates through the vail, and rests not, till it rest in God himself, who draws near to us in his word, the word of the everlasting gospel.

(5.) Their conversation is in heaven, Phil. iii. 20. They are citizens there, their great trade is there. The King of heaven is their King, their Lord, Head, and Husband; and so they wait their orders from heaven, and do not take up with every thing which offers, according to the inclinations of their own corrupt hearts. The laws of heaven are their rule, for they are put in their mind, and written in their inward parts, Heb. viii. 10. They are not disposed to do as others do, but to hear what the Lord says to them. The word from heaven is their oracle, with which to consult in all their way. Their hope and expectation is from heaven. The work of heaven is their work, which is, to serve and to do the will of Christ's Father which is in heaven.—So much for the first thing, taking God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your welcome.—The

2. Thing in drawing near with full assurance of faith was, That having taken God for your
God

God in Christ, you claim him as such, without doubting of your title. I gave two observations on this, but it is too weighty a point briefly to pass over. It is a pity that a believer should so long stand afar from God, with his wishes, O that he *were* mine ! and that he should not draw near with full assurance, and say, He *is* mine in Christ.—To promote this exercise, I would have you to attend to the following considerations.

(1.) God allows you to claim him as your God. Satan, and an unbelieving heart, may contradict the claim, but God will never do it: The covenant runs in these terms, “I will be your God,” Heb. viii. 10.; and will he ever resist you when you plead his covenant? Did he not allow Thomas, formerly an unbeliever, to claim this, and say, “My Lord, and my God?” John, xx. 28. Seeing, therefore, you may do it, it is folly to slight such a glorious privilege.—Consider,

(2.) That God is well-pleased with you if you make this claim: Jer. iii. 4. “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?” Is not a father well-pleased to hear his child call him so? God is more loving than any father or mother upon earth. Though they may forget, yet he will not forget us, Isa. xlix. 15. 16. The Son of his bosom, who best knows what pleases him, teaches us to pray, Our Father; his Spirit, who searcheth the deep things of God, teaches the children to cry, Abba, Father. It is true, that he is not pleased when carnal professors claim him as their God, Hos. viii. 2. 3. Psal. l. 16. 17. But why should the children start back from their food, because the dogs are boasted away? If you are casting off the thing that is good, and are hating instruction, I am not advising you to call him Father; but have you taken

him in Christ for a rest to thine heart, to make thee holy, as well as happy? then claim him as thy God: Hof. ii. 23. "And they shall say, Thou art my God."—Consider,

(3.) That the saints of God, in former ages, have claimed God as their God: Psal. xvi. 2. "O my soul! thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord."—Song, ii. 16. "My beloved is mine, and I am his." And it is the usual way of scripture-saints, to plead their interest in God by faith. These things are written for our imitation. I observe the saints in scripture not only claiming God as their God in the sunshine days of their prosperity, but also in deep affliction; when the hand of God lay heavy on them, they expected good from him: Psal. xlii. 6. "O my God! my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." Was ever any more afflicted than Job, tempted even by his friends to quit his claim? yet he resolutely maintained it. The saints have done this also in deep desertion: Thus, Psal. xxii. 1. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The 88th Psalm begins with a believing claim. Why should it not be so, seeing afflictions and desertions are the trial of faith? nay, what is more, they claim God as their God in the time when sin, guilt, and backsliding, are staring them in the face, Ezra, ix. 6.—10.; for this opens the heart to kindly sorrow for sin, while unbelief locks it up. When the claim is altogether given up with, the heart may be broken into a thousand hard pieces, but it will never melt into godly sorrow.—Consider,

(4.) That this claim honours God. Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God, Rom. iv. 20. Faith honours the blood of Christ, the blood

blood of the everlasting covenant, when the soul, over the belly of felt unworthiness, claims God as its God upon the title given by this blood. It gives Christ the honour of the infinite virtue, value, and efficacy of his blood. Faith honours the truth of God in the promises of the gospel, when the soul, in view of the infinite disproportion betwixt God and his sinful creature, yet, on the credit of the word, puts in its claim to God himself.—Consider,

(5.) That it is in the strength of faith by which persons draw near when taking God as their God, but they come still nearer when claiming him as such: Job, xiii. 15. 16. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. He also shall be my salvation.” The stronger that the man is, he holds the harder, and the stronger that faith is, it comes the farther forward in the house of God. When Thomas got in his fingers, he cried, “My Lord, and my God,” John, xx. 28. for then his faith was as a giant refreshed with wine.—Consider,

(6.) If you dare not claim God as your God, how will you claim any benefit of the covenant? There is guilt lying on your soul, you come and claim a pardon; there is a lust too strong for you, you claim strength against it; in difficulties you seek light and direction. Now, how can you claim any of these, if you claim not God himself as your God? Can a man who has no claim to a woman, claim the benefit of a contract with her? “I will be their God,” is the great promise of the covenant, on which all the rest depend; give up your claim to this, and you can lay claim to none of the rest. If God be not your God in Christ, you have no right to pardon, peace, strength, &c.—Consider,

Lastly, That faith greatly advances sanctification.

tion. Faith is the great promoter of holiness. Acts, xv. 5. 9. "Purifying their hearts by faith." So the more faith which a man has, he will be the more holy; and with the more full assurance that he can claim God, he has the more faith, and so will be the more sanctified. Thus it is certain, that that claim which does not advance holiness, is but a delusion; for the claim of faith is still of this nature, Psal. xvi. 2. 3. Exod. 15. 2. "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation: my father's God, and I will exalt him." This is a great gospel-truth; I shall not launch forth into it now, but only mention you three things upon it.—I observe,

(1.) That the way to attain true holiness is, by drawing it from its fountain, God in Christ, Heb. viii. 10. 1 Cor. i. 30. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." There is a bastard sanctification, consisting of some acts of external obedience, wrought out of our own natural powers; but true sanctification is by improving those treasures of holiness which are in Christ, or God, in Christ: John, i. 16. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Now, how can we improve or make use of those treasures which are in God, if we cannot claim him for our God? But if we cannot claim him as such, we can come boldly to his throne to find mercy and obtain grace to help us in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. If the soul can say, God is mine, then may the person say, Light, life, and strength are mine, the promises are mine. They may suck freely at the breasts of all the gracious promises on record. In a word, when the soul can claim God by faith, it can come freely

freely to him for sanctification, and improve him for that end.—I observe,

(2.) That love to God is the fulfilling of the law; and the more love, the more holiness. Now, to claim God in Christ as our God, is the true way to attain true love to God; for it is faith which sets love a-going. Faith worketh by love, and so it sets all the graces of the Spirit in motion. *Mine* is a kindly word; though you live in a cottage, if you can say, It is mine, it will be sweeter to you than the king's palace, because it is not yours. See how the love of God is kindled in the breast of a guilty creature, 1 John, iv. 19. "We love him, because he first loved us." It is a hard work (to say no more) to love a God not believed in, not embraced as our God; for the greater and more glorious he is, he is the more dreadful an enemy. It is the word of the gospel which brings the glad news of the love of God in Christ. Is it not plain, then, that the more this be believed with application, the more will that love to God be inflamed, and consequently the soul more satisfied.—I observe,

(3.) That our hearts must have something of their own to satisfy themselves with. The greater part of the world hang on about the door of the empty creation, and suck the breasts of their fulsome lusts. Why do they this? Because God is not theirs, and they cannot want altogether. But let the heart once take God in Christ, and claim him as its own God, then it has enough. And the more the soul is persuaded of this, the less it will care for other things, but says, in effect, "I have all, and abound." A man will keep in his candles, if he be not persuaded the sun is up; but if the windows be opened, and he sees the shining

shining sun, he puts out his candles, he needs them no more.—Our heart has that piece of prudence, that it must fasten one foot before it loose another; and therefore, according as the claim to God is stronger or weaker, the claim to the world and lusts, will in like manner be proportioned.—Here I would propose, and say a word or two to three Cases.

Case 1. I am afraid of presumption. *Ans.* Draw near with a true heart, press only through the vail to make your claim. Claim for a rest to your soul, and for sanctification, as was said before; and there is no presumption. Have you taken him as your own God? Avow your claim to him as such: Dishonour not God by casting a cloak of pretended humility over your unbelief.

Case 2. But can such an unworthy creature as I make such a claim? *Ans.* If you will not, then I hope you will not claim pardon, grace, or heaven; but you will, you must quit your claim to all these at once, for you must not think to claim these from a God that is not yours in Christ. Will you then, without reluctance, quit your claim to all these? If not, then claim him, though unworthy. Why talk of unworthiness? Will you ever be worthy of him? No, no; the claim of faith is over the belly of felt unworthiness, and founded on the blood of Christ alone.

Case 3. I would have claimed God in Christ as my God, and I even did it; but Satan has got advantage already of me, and I had to quit the hold. Who ordered you to quit your hold even in that case? Not God, I am sure; for he saith, Heb. x. 35. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompence of reward;" therefore it has been Satan and your own unbelief.

ing heart. And are you not in a poor case for rising up again out of the mire now, when you have let go your hold of God, as your God in Christ? This is not the way to rise, your best course is, to act faith again, and renew that claim which you have formerly made, for grace, in order both to justification and sanctification, Ezra, ix. 6. Psal. lxxv. 3. Jonah, ii. 12.---I now come to the

3. Thing in drawing near to God with full assurance, which was, that you improve your claimed interest for all your necessities, without doubting of success. Christ has opened heaven to you; and if you have come in through the vail, taken God in Christ as your God, and claimed him as such, he would have you to be familiar in his Father's house, and want nothing which is there suitable to your condition; but to put out the hand of faith, with full assurance, that you are as welcome to the heavenly treasures as the blood that purchased them can make you; and that is, welcome to the full. I doubt not but this is the import of the text. Poor empty creature, thou canst not subsist without communion with heaven; but thou must drink of the fountain, before thou canst meddle with the streams; himself must be thine, before the least article of the furniture of the house can be thine; therefore thou must take God in Christ for your God, then you must claim him, and, having claimed him, be familiar with him, and all that is his, in the way of believing.—In explaining this, I shall shew,

I. How the believer should be familiar in the house over which Christ is set, and thus draw near with full assurance.

II. Why he should be so familiar.

I.

I. WE are to shew, how the believer should be familiar in the house over which Christ is set, and thus draw near with full assurance.--Upon this I observe, that he should,

1. Come and tell him all his wants freely, without concealing any thing from him, for this would argue distance and distrust : Song, vii. 11. "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field ; let us lodge in the villages." Faith has a most enlarged desire, it is always in want of something, and its work is to beg, to take freely without money and without price ; and for that reason it is pitched upon as the great mean of communion betwixt God and sinners ; Rom. iv. 16. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." And the stronger faith is, it spreads out the more wants, and spreads them out the more freely before the Lord, as to a friend. Do you want any thing as to which you cannot tell the Lord ? It argues either no real need, or else little faith. Strong faith is a free communer in heaven, and will conceal nothing, but tell all : Ephes. iii. 12. "In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him." (Boldness, *Gr.* telling all).—He should,

2. Come and seek all he needs, without blushing : Heb. iv. 16. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may find mercy, and obtain grace to help in time of need." Faith coming in within the vail, comes into a friend's house ; and the more free and familiar it is there, and the less reserved, the more welcome. There are two seekers that do not blush before the Lord in their asking : 1. A proud unhumiliated heart, whose sense of need is very small ; and these, for their shamefulness, get the door cast on

their face : 1 Peter, v. 5. " For God resisteth the proud." Luke, i. 5. " And the rich he sendeth empty away." 2. A strong faith, whose sense of need is very great, which drives away the unbelieving blushes out of the face ; and such shameless seekers never get a denial in heaven : Luke, xi. 8. " Yet because of his importunity, (*Gr.* shamelessness), he will rise and give him as many as he needeth."

There is a blessed shamelessness in faith with full assurance ; it makes persons very familiar in God's house. It can come there at any time, it keeps no set hours, it can step forward at midnight, (Luke, xi. 5.) when doors used to be shut, and knock at the gates, without fear of giving disturbance. It was a dark night to Job ; God had drawn a sable covering over the face of his throne to him ; yet faith goes forwards, and draws it by, Job, xiii. 15. 16. (quoted above). See also *Is.* lxiii. 15. 16. It can plead the relation of a friend to the master of the house. The believer stands in many relations to the Lord, and faith fixes on that relation which will serve its plea best. If the soul be under particular necessities, where it must have a friend's help, the soul will claim the help of God as its friend, notwithstanding the infinite disproportion between the relatives. And in this case, it can be very full in its demands : Luke, xi. 5. " Lend me three loaves." Possibly less might serve a friend on a journey, who is to tarry only a night, but strong faith is not to be dealt with scruply. It must have what will be enough and to spare, for it desires to be more than a conqueror.—Faith thinks no shame to complain of an empty house at home, Luke, xi. 6. and that it has nothing to set before this stranger. The report faith brings to heaven,
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is still of emptiness, for they that live by faith are always from hand to mouth, and never want an errand to the God of heaven for some supply or other.—Finally, It can confidently borrow, without one word of paying again. See the whole of our Saviour's parable, the design of which is to recommend importunity at the throne of grace, Luke, xi. 5.—10. This is the way of faith's trading with heaven, without money in hand, and without price to be paid. For faith just involves the soul in the debt of free grace, and can trade at no other market, for no other is suited for the bankrupt family of Adam.

3. He should even put out his hand, and draw to him, by believing the promises suited to his case, and this with a faith of application: Matth. xxi. 22. "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive them." It is the business of faith, to read the person's particular name in the general promise, and to fill up his own name in these promises, which are, as it were, God's blank bills and bonds, and then come forward with them even to his seat, with David's plea: Psal. cxix. 49. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." And this without doubting. They can never be familiar with heaven, who stand afar off from the promises.—Thou shouldst believe that the promises shall be made out; they are the words of truth, which shall have a certain accomplishment. And though the unbelieving world take them but for fair words, thou takest them for sure words, which are full of mercy, and shall not miscarry, but shall surely be accomplished at the set time: Psal. xii. 6. "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."—Again, believe that they shall

be made out to thee. What canst thou be the better of a falve not applied to thy fore, or of a promise which is not applied by faith to thy own soul. It is by the faith of application, that these breasts of consolation are sucked, and that the water is drawn out of the wells of salvation. And what other way can we be partakers of the sap which flows from them, but by thus believing, as was before shewn. And for this cause it is necessary to be well acquainted with the Bible, and to mark the promises, that, whatever be thy case, thou mayest have a word suited to it to plead with God, for the word is that by which influences are conveyed. And, seeing much lies in believing and applying the promises, take these two notes to clear your way in this exercise.—I observe,

(1.) That whosoever receives Christ, and takes God for his God in him, has a right to all the promises of the covenant suited to his case, and has a right to apply them. They meet all in Christ, for “all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us.” And so all of them may be claimed in him, even as he who marries a wife may plead all that is promised with her in the contract. It is with him that God freely gives us all things, Rom. viii. 32. Take Christ, then, and the promise is yours in him.—I observe,

(2.) That the promises are made primarily to Jesus Christ: Gal. iii. 16. “Now, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” He is the second Adam, the great contractor with the Father in the covenant of grace, and through him to all who are his, even as the promise of the first covenant was to Adam, and his seed in him.
And

And they were made to him on condition of his satisfying the demands of the law, which is now done ; so that, with respect to us, they are all absolute and free ; properly speaking, none of them are conditional. Some of them describe the qualification of these to whom they shall be accomplished, as Matth. v. 3.—10. which qualification is, however, wrought in them, in accomplishment of the leading promises, the promises of grace, such as Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27. “ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and 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, and do them.” But both the one and the other are pleadable only through Jesus Christ, being through him made absolute to those who are his ; so that in Christ you have a right to all that is suited to your case. Hence it is that promises, made to some particular saints, may be confidently applied by others in their circumstances, as growing all upon one root, which is our common Lord. Thus, God said to Joshua, chap. i. 5. “ As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee ; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” He says to every believer, Heb. xiii. 5. “ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Lastly, He should hang on about the Lord's hand till the supply come, and that confidently. This is that which in the scriptures is celebrated under the name of trusting, relying, staying on the Lord. The whole weight of all our wants is to be laid over on the Lord, and a confident expectation maintained, that he will supply them, according to his word. Trust reposed in a generous man is a strong tie on him to help and answer expectation.

expectation. Lot, Gen. xix. 8. would have any ill done to himself rather than to his guests, because, says he, "for this cause they came under the shadow of my roof." And they that trust in the Lord according to his word, shall never be ashamed. Thus, the believer should be familiar in the house over which Christ is set, and in this way draw near with full assurance.—Let us now,

II. SHEW why the believer should be so familiar in this house, improving his claimed interest for his necessities, without doubting of the success.—He should be so,

1. Because heaven is made home to him by the blood of the Son of God, and therefore no reason to doubt of welcome, Heb. x. 19. 20. That is a kindly word, which you have in John, xx. 17. "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." It is our Father's house, because it is Christ's Father's house; and where may one be familiar, if not in their father's house? It is the house prepared for them first by Christ's satisfaction, then by his intercession: John, xiv. 2. "I go to prepare a place for you." It is the house their Lord and Husband is set over; it is the house they came of, for they are born from above; and it is the house they are to dwell in for ever, nay, the Lord himself is their home: Psal. xc. 1. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." The Jewish Doctors called him *place*, because the only resting-place of the soul is in God, and to believers he is unquestionably their rest.

2. It is a pleasure to have full breasts sucked. The breasts of grace and goodness in God to sinners

ners through Christ, are full, there is nothing wanting, faith has only to suck, and to be satisfied. It is applied to the church, what you have in Isa. lxvi. 11. "That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory." The breasts are, as it were, held forth in the word of the gospel, which is our great privilege. There is all fulness in Christ, the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him, that so sinners might have access to God through the vail of his flesh, and be filled with all the fulness of God. The fulness in him is not the fulness of a vessel, to serve itself only, but the fulness of a fountain to be communicated, which still gives, and yet has enough. Well may we, then, draw near to God with full assurance of faith.—We should be thus familiar; for,

3. This is the great end for which sinners are at all brought to God through Christ, namely, that they may partake of his fulness. It is the great end of all the promises: 2 Pet. i. 4. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The communication betwixt God and man was interrupted by Adam's fall; it is opened by Jesus Christ, that influences from heaven may run freely, and that in him they may get all their wants made up. They may be assured of a cordial welcome when taking for their necessities these things which are brought in for this very end, that they may be supplied.

4. The Lord offers himself in the gospel for all, and the sinner who takes him aright, takes him for all, and instead of all, Matth. xiii. 45. 46. Now, if he offer himself for all, surely he intends that

that his people should improve their interest in him for all. He has taken them from all their former friends ; surely, then, as an affectionate husband, he will allow his wife to be familiar in his house, and take it very ill if she hang on about others for a supply of her wants. This familiarity our Maker, our Husband, allows us, and approves of.

5. Our Lord (if I may so speak) makes very familiar with his people, and this is a sign that he would have them to be so with him. Lodge they ever so meanly, he will lodge with them : Isa. lvii. 15. " For 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." He not only gives them, but he takes from them ; what provision from heaven is with them, he takes part of, though he needs nothing from them : Song, v. 1. " I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse ; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice ; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey ; I have drunk my wine with my milk : Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved !" He sometimes even will take from them what they would not part with to any but himself, and they will make him welcome to it, as he did with Job, chap. i. His sheep, asses, children, were taken from him, and little at all was left him. And if they act like themselves, they will rejoice that they have any thing, liberty, life, &c. to part with to him. But sure I am, the best of the saints can never so freely part with any thing to him, as he does to them.—They should be familiar ; for,

Lastly, They who use most familiarity with the Lord, improving their claimed interest, with
greatest

greatest confidence, come best speed at this throne : Matth. xv. 28. " 'Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith : Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' " Little faith is a narrow vessel, which brings in little from the fountain ; but great faith brings in much. Whatever the Lord's people may think of their doubtings of the promises, the word of God never speaks a good word of the believer's doubts : Matth. xiv. 31. " O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? " Doubts are not pleasing to God, for they shew the weakness of faith, and always in less or more contain some reflections on the blood of Christ, the truth and gracious nature of God. Augustus admitted the common people with their petitions so pleasantly, that it is reported he reproved a certain person, telling him that he presented his petition to him, as if he had been giving a halfpenny to an elephant. Humility may well consist with the confidence and full assurance of faith.

Now, to conclude all this, ye who have taken God in Christ as your God, learn this holy art of living by faith, claiming your interest and improving it for all your necessities. Alas ! sirs, for what end have we taken God in Christ for our God, if we do not live upon him ? John, vi. 57. " As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father ; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Why have we professed to enter into the house of God, by embracing the covenant, if we do not improve it for all we need ? Improve, then, the claimed interest for all ; and particularly,

1. For a rest to your consciences. Here David found a rest to his, when death and guilt together stared him in the face : 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. " Although,"

though," says he, "my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." If God be thy God, the righteousness of God is thine to cover thee, the righteousness of Christ, God-man. Thou art within that vail where the fiery law is closed up in the ark, and cannot reach thee. Confessing, mourning, repenting, are blessed and holy exercises, well becoming the child of God, and the more faith, the more of these, and the deeper will they be; but they, after all, are wholly insufficient for a rest to the conscience.—Improve the claimed interest,

2. For a rest to your hearts: Psal. cxvi. 7. "Return to thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Have you come to God through Christ? then rest thy heart in enjoyment of him. Is the world smiling on thee? beware, rest not on it, thou wilt soon find thy rest broken, thou wilt never rest soundly in the embraces of a smiling world, for the bed is shorter than thou canst stretch thyself upon. Is the world frowning? Are the cisterns dried up? thy created pillars taken away? Yet despond not, faint not, while God remains, Hab. iii. 17. 18. You who have taken God for all, you have a poor bargain of it, if you have not as much as can make you live without those things which may be taken from you. Look to your stock in heaven, look to the glorious promises; he who overcometh shall inherit all things.

Lastly, Improve it for sanctification, to be holy, as God is holy, to get strength for duty, and against corruption. Draw in your furniture for a holy life, from the fulness of him that filleth all
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in all. Believe, that you may be holy. Take, by faith, the promise with you, when you use the means of holiness. They know little of the property of faith, who use it only for the pardon of sin; it is the instrument of sanctification, as well as of justification: Acts, xv. 9. "Purifying their hearts by faith." If a lust is to be subdued, or a temptation resisted, &c. faith must run thy errand to heaven. Believe the promise of sanctification with application to thyself, believe it with full assurance that it shall be made out to thee; and in that confidence use the means appointed of God for thy sanctification, and so thou shalt succeed.—If any of you have set about gathering evidences for heaven, and have got them, these things may help you to keep them, and to increase them. Amen.

THE SAINTS GOD'S SERVANTS AND HIS
PROPERTY *.

S E R M O N XXXVII.

ACTS, xxvii. 23. *For there stood by me this night the angel of the Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve.*

THERE are two questions, which may be pertinently proposed to every one of you after this communion; and he who can satisfiyingly answer them, as Paul here does, and every child of God may do, it will be a pass which will carry him safely and comfortably through the world, by sea or by land, at home or abroad, among friends or enemies, and even at length into heaven.—The first question is,

Whose are you? Man, woman, to whom do you belong? Are you Christ's, or Satan's? Are you still your own, or are you the Lord's? Are you a child of God's family, or of the devil's? What countryman are you? Are you from above, and do you belong to the Lord of the better country?
or

* Delivered June 15. 1715, the Sabbath after the dispensation of the Sacrament.

or are you from below, and do you belong to the god of this world? What say you to this question, Whose are you?—The second question is,

What is your business? Certainly you have some business or other, you are either well or ill employed. What is your occupation? What course of life do you follow? What is the great design upon which you are set? Are you serving the devil, yourselves, your lusts? or are you serving God? What say you to this question, What is your business?

Paul, in the text, and in a few words, answers these two questions. He told those whom he addressed, that he was God's, and that God's service was his business; that his Lord and Master had sent him a very comfortable message in the dark hour which was now come upon them.—He was now in a ship, with many others, sailing for Rome; but a storm rises, continues many days, and all hope of being saved was taken away. Paul, notwithstanding, is easy and chearful; he brings good news to them, that there should not one life be lost in the cause. And, in the text, he shews them on what ground he went, namely, that of divine revelation, by the ministry of an angel.—You may here observe, that God's word of promise is sufficient security and encouragement in the darkest hour. The storm still continued, and was to continue, they were to make a narrow escape, the ship was to be lost; but amidst all this, the word of promise kept up his heart; and he had good reason for maintaining his confidence.

God is unchangeably true to his word. He cannot alter it, it shall not fail: Numb. xxiii. 19. "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and

shall he not make it good?" There is an impossibility of his word failing: Titus, i. 12. "He is God that cannot lie." So that faith has the surest bottom on which to stand, when standing on the promise, namely, the unchangeable truth of God.—There is nothing so difficult and hopeless, but God can bring it to pass: Luke, i. 37. "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Therefore he is able to make good his promise, though all creatures should conspire to render his working ineffectual, and whatever difficulties may be in his way.—In one word, the experience of the saints in all ages confirms this confidence: Psal. xii. 6. "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified." Many and various have been the trials of the saints, but they all held by the promise, and have at length set to their seal that God is true.—From this we may learn,

That their salvation is secured, who have been graciously brought within the compass of the covenant and the promise of salvation. "This," David said, "is all my salvation and all my desire," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Though they be in this world as on a boisterous sea, where the waves of indwelling corruption, temptation, affliction, desertion, are threatening to swallow them up; yet they shall get safe ashore; and though the body fall in pieces by death, the soul shall arrive safe in Immanuel's land.—If it should be inquired, How may a person know that he is brought within the compass of the covenant and promise? I answer, If you have truly and honestly come to Christ, and laid hold of him in the covenant, taken him as he offers himself in the gospel, if you have given up with all other lovers, and have taken up with him in all his offices, with a view to free you from the guilt,

guilt, from the power and pollution of sin, all is well; for he has said, John, vi. 37. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." Possessing him as the chief benefit of the covenant, you have all: 2 Cor. i. 20. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us."—We may further learn,

That it is true wisdom to live by faith in the promise of God, whatever storm be blowing: 2 Cor. v. 7. "For we walk by faith, not by sight." You must lay your account with storms. Never was there one in a ship, except the man Christ, whom the devil would more anxiously have drowned, than he would have done Paul at this time. But Paul is easy, even when on the boisterous sea, on the promise of God, while the rest were in a terrible alarm; Satan was not so much set against them. Unbelief and discouragement can in no case be useful. It is good to believe, whether we be tossed with a storm of raging corruption, as in Psal. lxxv. 3.; strong temptations, as in Luke, xxii. 31. 32.;—heavy affliction, as in Psal. xxvii. 13.;—or desertion, as in Psal. xxii. 1. Thus much for the connection.

In the text, Paul declares to the ship's crew, who for the most part were pagans, two things,

(1.) His intercourse with heaven: *There stood by me this night the angel of the Lord.* (2.) His special relation to the God of heaven: *Whose I am, and whom I serve.* The design of this declaration was, not only to comfort them, but to commend his God unto them, that they might also chuse him for their God and master. No doubt, in these days, ver. 20. there had been many prayers in the ship. They had called to their gods, but in vain; Paul had cried to

his, and had got a comfortable answer. He thence takes occasion to represent him as the God of salvation, who was able to make them all safe, notwithstanding the storm; as the Lord of angels; as one whose servant himself was, who was now so chearful, when they were so dejected. Proper methods these to commend his God to them.—I would accordingly take occasion to observe, that it is the duty of those who are the Lord's, to commend their God to others, that they in consequence may be prevailed on also to be his. There are two strong bonds to bind this on those who are the Lord's.—There is,

1. The love and duty they owe to God, who has done so much for them, and who would have all men to be saved. It is the more for the honour of God in the world, the more there are who join themselves to his service. This is an acceptable thing which we can do for God, to express our thankfulness, namely, to make conscience of discharging our duty, to lay out ourselves in advancing the interest of Christ and of religion in the world; that since he has brought us into his family, we exert our endeavours to bring others also into it.—Another bond is,

2. The love and duty we owe to mankind: Rom. xiii. 9. "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Those who are yet strangers to God, are our fellow-creatures, lying in the ditch of sin, swimming to the ocean of wrath, in which condition we also were before we were the Lord's; which requires from us a very serious concern to help them out of that state, Titus, iii. 1. 2. 3. And this is as natural as it is for one that has narrowly
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ly escaped drowning, to bestir himself to help his fellow who is in hazard of perishing.

The use and improvement I would make of this is, to call upon you, O Christians and communicants ! whosoever of you are the Lord's, to put your hand to this work, to recommend Christ and religion to others. You that are come out from among the devil's family, make it your work to prevail on others to come away also. Remember the Samaritan woman, who told her neighbours of Christ, and invited them to come to him : John, iv. 29. " Go thou and do likewise."—To stir you up to this work, I shall lay before you the following MOTIVES.

Mot. 1. What use are you for in this world, if you be not useful for God, and your generation, in this work to which you are called ? If you will do nothing for God, you but take up room on God's earth, and cumber his ground. The children of God are not so situated. They say, " For none of us 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."

Mot. 2. It is a dangerous thing to be an unprofitable servant in God's house : Matth. xxv. 30. " And cast the unprofitable servant into utter darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." An unprofitable tree may stand safer in a wood than in an orchard ; and what is quite unfit for the master's use, is fuel for the fire.

Mot. 3. It is the nature of true grace, and has been the practice of the saints, thus to lay themselves out for God and the good of others. Grace is communicative ; it is a well of water, from which many may be refreshed ; it is a holy fire
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to warm others. Accordingly, we find Abraham's grace working thus, Gen. xviii. 19. "For I know him," said God, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Thus also, we find David's grace, Psal. xxxiv. 8. "O taste and see that the Lord is good: Blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Thus also the spouse's grace, Song, v.; the woman of Samaria, John, iv. 29.

Mot. 4. You would thrive better yourselves, if you were more employed in this work: Prov. xi. 25. "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered himself." The spring runs, and the fire burns, the more freely that they get a vent; and they that use their talents thus for God, are in the high way to increase them: Matth. xxv. 28. 29. "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." A cold heart, without zeal for God's interest, and a sealed mouth, which cannot open for God, produces a back-going, withered condition.

Mot. 5. It is well laid out work. For either sinners are gained by it, as it often falls out: Song, vi. 1. "Whither is thy Beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy Beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee." In this case, the work is an abundant reward for itself: James, i. 27. "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction." But it shall not go so; for every soul thou doest good to, shall be as a jewel in thy crown: "They

“They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.” Thou wilt gain the blessing of those ready to perish; and if thou shouldst not gain thy point, yet thy work shall not be in vain: Is. xlix. 4. “Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgement is with the Lord, and my work with my God.”—But here some who are under difficulties may propose this

Question, How shall a person manage this duty? I answer, Follow after the copy we have in the text, in these three particulars.

1. Speak to the commendation of him and his service. The world have mean and low thoughts of God; Speak to his greatness, that the souls of others may be awed by it; to his goodness and loving kindness, that their souls may be stirred up to love him, hope in him, trust him. Speak to the advantage of his service, how comfortable, pleasant, and beneficial it is, Psal. xxxiv. 6. 7. 8.

2. Prudently communicate your experiences of his goodness to you. Tell what you have seen, heard, tasted, and felt of him, that others may be excited to wait on him. Tell it to those who are absolute strangers to God, when there is any hope of thus doing them good, as in the case of the text; but otherwise we must beware of casting these pearls before swine. Tell it to fellow Christians who need to be strengthened: Psal. lxvi. 16. “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.” And tell it even to those who see no beauty in ordinances: Zech. viii. 23. “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him

him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

3. Confidently avow your choice of God and his service before the world. Let them see that you have made your choice, and does not repent it. Say, with Joshua, chap. xxiv. 15. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The being ashamed of confessing the Lord and his way before an evil generation, does much hurt to religion; but a confident profession is a practical testimony to it.--To these three may be added,

4. A conversation becoming the gospel, and those principles which you profess.—In the text, The *first* thing we have is, Paul's intercourse with heaven, his communion with God: *There stood by me, &c.*

The *second* thing is, Paul's special relation to the God of heaven: *Whose I am, and whom I serve.*—We begin with the

First thing in the text, Paul's intercourse with heaven, his communion with God: *There stood by me this night, the angel of the Lord.*—In this several things offer themselves to our notice, which we shall shortly explain.—There is,

I. THE party employed to bring him the comfortable message from God: *The angel of the Lord.*

II. The peculiarity of this manifestation and intercourse with heaven.

III. The posture of the angel: *He stood.*

IV. The time of this manifestation: *This night.*

LET us then attend,

I. To the party employed to bring him the comfortable message from God: An holy angel, who appeared to him in the ship. This was often the privilege of the saints in the Old Testament, and sometimes

sometimes in the New, in the first times of it. We are not, however, now to expect such appearances. The sacred volume is completed, and we are not to expect new revelations. Angels are employed to serve for the good and benefit of those that are the Lord's. We know little of the ministry of angels, but the scriptures are plain, that this is the privilege of all who are his: Psal. xxxiv. 7. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Heb. i. 14. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." And the angels being invisible, we know not how much we are indebted to them for their ministry; we will know it better afterwards, when we will be in no hazard of abusing it.

The improvement I would make of this is, to point out the dignity and advantage of the children of God. Kings' children have honourable attendants; these, however, are only men. But if thou be a child of the family of God, angels attend thee. They have a concern for thy welfare, to promote it, as devils are trying to hinder it. And these angels will attend thee,—during thy life in this world. The scripture is plain, that God gives his angels charge concerning those who are his, to keep them while in the way. It is a promise of the covenant that has been sealed to us: Psal. xci. 11. 12. "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." As a father of a family charges the elder children with the care of the younger ones; so does God the angels, with the saints on earth, the young heirs of glory; and they diligently execute their charge, however little we know about it. This appears from the scriptures

tures already quoted.—The angels will attend thee at thy death, they will wait on thy soul removing from the body, and convey it away home to your Father's house in glory: Luke, xvi. 22. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." When the child comes out of its mother's belly into this world, some inhabitants here receive it, and take care of it; and when the soul of a believer comes out of the body, and is born into another world, the angels, inhabitants there, take it, and convey it away to their country. This honour have all the saints.—Let us attend,

II. To the peculiarity of this manifestation and intercourse with heaven.—*The angel stood by me.* They were all in the same ship, but none knew what passed betwixt the Lord and Paul; none saw nor heard the angel but Paul himself. And two things are here remarkable.

1. There were many strangers to God in the ship; but Paul was his own, and with him God keeps communion; but with none of them, though in the same ship with him.—Whence observe, that there is a secret conveyance of intercourse with heaven to those who are the Lord's, in the midst of a crowd of persons who know nothing of the matter. Many a time matters go on betwixt God and a gracious soul, as betwixt Jonathan and David, when they only knew the matter, 1 Sam. xx. 39. The Lord knoweth who are his, and who are not, however mixed the multitude may be, 2 Tim. ii. 19. Whatever fair appearances a hypocrite puts on, he can see through the disguise; and however iniquity prevail in his own, he can discern the pearl of faith and love in a dunghill of corruption. The arrow is shot at a venture, but the

the Spirit of the Lord directs it. Communion with God, and intercourse with heaven, lies in inward, not in external things: 1 Tim. iv. 8. "For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Every person might see who went to the table, what visible thing was done there, who received the bread and wine. But what passed in the retirements of the heart there, whose spikenard sent forth the smell, who received Christ into their hearts, whose faith and love were exercised, with whom the idol of jealousy was preserved, or who put the knife to the throat of it; the whole is a secret betwixt God and the soul itself.—The improvement of this is, to learn, that it is a sad thing to have been where that intercourse with heaven was, and to have had no share of it; to be persons whom God goes by, and comes by, manifests his grace on the right hand, and on the left hand, while they have no share of it. We have no ground to doubt but communion with God was enjoyed by some in that church-yard, and at the Lord's table. O! what was your share of it? If you have had none, it is a token, either that you were dead in your sins, and in a state of alienation from God, and not come out of the devil's family, though you were by profession among God's children: Amos, iii. 3. "Can two walk together, unless they be agreed?" Dead folk cannot converse with the living, nor dead souls have communion with the living God. Habitual estrangement from communion with God, is a black mark of a graceless state, 2 Cor. vi. 16. Let that stir you up yet to come out from among them, and leave the congregation of the dead, while yet there is hope.—Or it is a token, that ye were asleep, and all out of case for communion with

God. And if that was the case, O but it was ill-timed ! Song, v. 1. 2. Ye have slept a precious season, ye know not if ever it may return. Review, therefore, your carriage and way at this occasion ; awaken timeously, and repent, else you may come to get an awakening stroke from the Lord, which may go very deep : 1 Cor. xi. 30. “ For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”—Learn to bless God, be thankful, and walk worthy of your privilege, you who have had the distinguishing mercy of communion with God. To whom much is given, much also shall be required. Did he bring you into his banqueting-house ? Then follow on in the way of holiness, as strengthened by what you have experienced. Let not his grace bestowed on you be in vain.—Here a question may be proposed, How may a person know whether he had communion with God or not ? *Ans.* Communion with God consists in the Lord's vouchsafing the influences of his grace to the soul, and the soul's returning them again in the exercise of grace. There are many marks of grace. I offer you two distinguishing ones from the text.

Mark 1. The soul's giving itself wholly to the Lord, without exception of any thing, and standing to it : *Whose I am.* People may give their hand, tongue, many things of theirs to the Lord, but none but these who have communion with him, will honestly give themselves wholly, without exception of one lust, or one cross, to him ; and being deliberate, they stand to it. This is an evidence that the Lord has given himself to them, and they have received him by faith ; for man's heart will never give their all to the Lord, till it receive better.

Mark 2. Has religion now become your business ?

ness? *Whom I serve.* Have ye truly renounced the service of the devil, and of lusts, taken on the yoke of Christ in all its parts, making religion no more a by-hand work, to serve yourselves of it, but your chief work, your continual work, to serve the Lord in it? If you have had these, you have had communion with God; if not, you have not had it.—To this some may reply, But, alas! I have not had what I would wish to have been at. In answer to this, consider what is remarkable here: There were others who were the Lord's, besides Paul, in this ship; Luke, at least, whom, though the Lord left not without communion with himself in that dark hour, yet Paul only had the vision of the angel. You will accordingly observe, that every saint is not admitted to the same degree of communion with God, some enjoy more than others. All the disciples were not taken up to the mount of transfiguration, but only three of them. John was the beloved disciple, though Jesus loved them all, except the son of perdition. Some may be brought farther forward at one time, others at another time. Some may be full to the brim, when the enjoyments of others are very scanty. There is no reason to complain here; for,

(1.) Ordinarily God proportions his people's present lifting up to their former down-casting: Isa. xl. 4. "Every valley shall be exalted." Some need more communion with God in the way of conviction and humiliation, others in the way of comfort; but the heaviest heart, and the most humbled spirit, needs the greatest outletting of comfortable manifestations. And if God speak most comfortably to those who most need it, it is unjust to complain.

(2.) The greatest privilege is ordinarily followed

with the greatest piece of work, 1 Kings, xix. 7. God has hard pieces of service to put into some people's hands beyond others. Paul must appear before Cæsar for the defence of the gospel, and therefore stood in most need of this manifestation to comfort and fortify him.

(3.) 'The backs of God's people are ordinarily strengthened in proportion to their burdens; and therefore the more liberal feast that a saint gets, he may expect the greater trial. If we compare the life of Isaac and Jacob, you will observe, that the latter had the greatest enjoyments of God; but so also had he the greatest trials of the two.

As a suitable improvement of what has now been observed, let us, who have had communion with God in any measure, however small, not overlook the mercy, but thankfully entertain it. There is real communion with God in these two things. (1.) In longing desires after Christ: Psal. xxvi. 9. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." When the soul is touched with a desire of him above all persons and things, longing for the enjoyment of him as their portion, longing for his blood to sprinkle them, and his Spirit to sanctify them, it is an evidence of the Lord's discovering himself in some measure to that soul.—There is real communion with God, (2.) In real love to him, well-pleasedness with his covenant: Matth. xi. 6. "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." There can be no true love to Christ, which is not produced by his love to the soul: 1 John, iv. 19. "We love him, because he first loved us." And no heart will be truly satisfied with the covenant, with the tenor, benefits, and duties of it, but that which, by the influences of the Spirit, is framed in conformity
to

to it: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," Psal. cx. 3. If this has been your attainment, then cherish the spark. Quench not the Spirit. Satan will endeavour to rob you of it; but if it be tenderly watched and preserved, the Spirit will break out into a flame: Hos. vi. 3. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."—Let those who have had a more than ordinary meeting with God, and have been filled with consolation, admire God's mercy towards them, and prepare themselves for trials and temptations, which will try their strength. God's children are suffered to eat no idle bread. Watch, therefore, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. Carefully cherish and preserve what God has done for you, and improve it to your progress in sanctification. This is the true way to keep your candle shining.—Let us attend,

III. To the posture of the Angel. He *stood*, he did not sit down, because he was not to stay. This was an extraordinary visit to Paul, he was not to look for this as his ordinary entertainment from heaven. Extraordinary manifestations are what we cannot expect to be continued, without interruption, while we are here. God will have a difference betwixt heaven and earth. And as two summers are not to be looked for in one year, so a lasting heaven of comfort upon earth will not be found. Though the Lord may sometimes feed his people with strong sensible manifestations in this world, this is not their ordinary. They must for the most part live by faith, without extraordinary manifestations: 2 Cor. v. 7. "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Let Christians then lay their account with a struggling and

wrestling life, with the clouds returning after the rain. For we are as those who travel by night, with the light of the moon, which sometimes shines clear, at other times hides her head under a cloud : Psal. xxx. 7. "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."—We are,

IV. To consider the time of this manifestation : *This night*. It was a sad night in that ship, all hopes of being saved were lost, and then the Lord appeared to help.—This may lead us to observe, that when things are brought to an extremity, this is a special opportunity which the Lord takes to appear for those that are his. This is the promise : Deut. xxxii. 36. "For the Lord will judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." And agreeable to this has been the experience of the saints in many cases. Thus, as to the church of God in Egypt, their bondage was most hard, before the Lord delivered them. The reasons why the Lord does this are many.—Among others,

1. By this the hand of God appears most eminent in the deliverance. The more desperate that the case be, the love of God in thinking upon his people, his wisdom in contriving their deliverance, his power in bringing it to pass, appear the more conspicuous : Isa. xxxiii. 10. "Now will I rise, saith the Lord ; now will I be exalted, now will I lift up myself." He has the greater revenue of glory, by curing the disease when past all hope.—Another reason is,

2. That it brings the greater advantage to the saints : John, xi. 15. "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe." For hereby their eyes are opened to see their

their own weakness more, their patience is tried, their faith in God confirmed and strengthened, and their high thoughts of God and his perfections raised to a higher pitch.—As an improvement of this, I observe, that this affords ground of hope and comfort to the Lord's people, when matters are come to the lowest ebb with them, Zech. xiv. 7. Faith has ground to stand upon, when all things fail to sense. It is God's special time of beginning to work, when men can do no more. Thus Hagar at the well. Many a time the Lord makes the wheel of providence drive downward and downward, till we are almost at its extremity; and then is the turning point.

THE

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

S E R M O N XXXVIII.

ACTS, xxviii. 23. *For there stood by me this night the angel of the Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve.*

HAVING explained and improved the first branch of the text, I now come to the *Second* branch, namely, Paul's special relation to the God of heaven : *Whose I am, and whom I serve.* And this is the chief thing I would insist upon. And here Paul declares two things. 1. To whom he belonged : ' I am God's, I own no other Father, Lord, Master, or Proprietor.' The centurion might say, ' I am Cæsar's ;' but Paul avows a more honourable Proprietor. 2. What was his business : *Whom I serve.* He was on the service of that God to whom he belonged.

This word, *the Lord, whose I am*, is very important. There were four things implied in it.

1. A comfortable view of God's special interest in him. He was convinced, that whoever others belonged

belonged to, he belonged to God, that there was a saving relation betwixt God and him.—There is,

2. A recognising God's special interest in him. He had said it before at his first accepting of the covenant, 'I am the Lord's;' and he did not repent the bargain, but repeated it over again, 'I am his.'—There is,

3. An open profession of his special relation to God. He was not ashamed of his Proprietor, his Lord and Master; but he gloried in it, accounting himself happy in the relation.—There is,

4. A rejoicing in it, particularly with respect to this season of distress. As if he had said, The sea rages, the waves threaten us with death; but this is my happiness, I am the Lord's, in whose hands all these are.—From this subject I would take the following DOCTRINES.

DOCT. I. That it is the duty and interest of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord, to look on themselves as his.

DOCT. II. That those who are the Lord's ought to make, and will make, God's service their business.—We begin with

DOCT. I. That it is the duty and interest of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord, to look on themselves as his.

IN treating this point, I shall,

I. Confirm this doctrine.

II. Shew in what respects those who have given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant are to look upon themselves as his.

III. Assign reasons why it is the duty of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant, thus to look on themselves as his.

IV.

IV. Shew how it is their interest to look on themselves as the Lord's.

V. Conclude with some practical improvement.
—We are then,

I. To confirm the doctrine, That it is the duty and interest of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord, to look on themselves as his. This is evident, if you consider,

1. The laudable practice of the saints, who had given themselves away to the Lord. They go over the bargain again, hold by it, and look upon themselves as the Lord's: Psal. cxvi. 16. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds." And Psal. cxix. 94. "I am thine, save me." The spouse, Song, ii. 16. "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

2. The Spirit of God instructs them so to do. 1 Cor. vi. 19. 20. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God? And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." There is great weight in it, whose we look on ourselves to be. It is the sin of many, that they say, Psal. xii. 4. "Our lips are our own: Who is Lord over us?" This proceeds from Satan, and the corrupt heart. The Spirit of the Lord teaches his own to look on themselves as his.

3. The Lord looks on such to be his, by a special relation: John, xvii. 9. 10. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are *thine*. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and

I am glorified in them." Yea, he takes a pleasure to assert his interest in them; he calls them, and pleads with them, to own the mutual relation betwixt him and them: Jerem. iii. 4. "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

Lastly, The nature of the thing requires it, for they are his indeed. Honest covenanters with God, give themselves to the Lord: 2 Cor. viii. 5. "But first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." They yield themselves to him, so that they are his, and therefore should look upon themselves as such.—Let us now,

II. SHEW in what respects those who have given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant, are to look upon themselves as his.

I. They are to look upon themselves as his, in opposition to all his competitors. The Lord will not divide share in his covenant-people with any whatsoever: Isa. xxvi. 13. "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee, have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." He will admit no rival with him, but if ye take me, let these go. The soul, till it comes within the covenant, is in a restless case, like a bee going from flower to flower, or a bird from bush to bush. - The man has many masters and lords. But when come into the covenant, he breaks his league with them all, and is married to Christ, to live in undivided society with him: Psal. xlv. 10. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."

Believers, ye are not your own, and you must no more look on yourselves to be your own, 1 Cor. vi. 19. (quoted above). Have you given yourselves
away

away to him? Then you are no more at your own disposal. Faith is the souls coming out of itself to the Lord, that he may be all to us, and we as nothing. Away, then, with self-wisdom, it is but folly: Self-righteousness, nothing other than rags; and self-strength is pitiful weakness.

You must no more look on yourselves as the children of your natural father the devil. You have been too long at his beck, his captives, slaves, and drudges. You must now change masters, you must renounce the prince of darkness, having inlisted with the Prince of peace. They are contrary masters, and ye cannot serve both, Matth. vi. 24. Answer all temptations to sin with this, that ye have come out from among them, and therefore have nothing to do with the work or entertainment of the house of hell.

Believers, you are to look on yourselves as no more belonging to the world lying in wickedness: John, xv. 19. "Because ye are not of the world; but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Have you come away to Christ in the covenant? Then you have turned your back on the world, on its courses and ways, you must no more conform yourselves thereto, but to the heavenly Jerusalem: Rom. xii. 2. "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." You have put your hand to the plough, do not adventure to look back. You have left the society of the wicked, do not mix with them again: Psal. xxii. 7. "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."—Ye are no more for your lusts and idols, but for the Lord: Rom. vi. 16. "His servants ye are, to whom ye obey." Have you given Christ the throne? Then
your

your lusts must be mortified : “ For they that are Christ’s, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts,” Gal. v. 24. The offending right hand and eye must be parted with. These will return back to seek entertainment from you as formerly ; but remember, you must be as obedient children, “ not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance,” 1 Peter, i. 14. —Finally, consider yourselves as no more belonging to the law, or covenant of works, as a husband : Rom. vii. 4. “ Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” They who have laid hold on Christ, in the covenant of grace, are divorced from the law. So that, though you are to perform all incumbent duties, you are not to perform them under the influence of the first covenant, as seeking and procuring life and salvation by them ; but to express your thankfulness to him, whose you are, as being under Christ’s law of love.

2. They are to look on themselves as his universally, without exception or reserve of any thing. Whatever you are, whatever you have, whatever you can do, or suffer, all is the Lord’s ; for in that day in which the soul closes honestly with Christ, all is made over to him together. To be more particular. —Look, then, on your bodies as his, to be temples for his Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 19. with which to serve him. Even all the members of the body, are to be consecrated to the Lord, as instruments of righteousness unto God, Rom. vi. 13. You are to use your tongues in speaking for him, your hands in acting for him, your feet in going his errands. To abuse the body by intemperance, uncleanness, and the like, is to

defile the temple of God. To exhaust the body in worldly labour, so as to unfit it for bearing its part in the service of God, is sacrilege, a devouring that which is holy; for your bodily strength is the Lord's.—Look upon your souls also as his. The soul is the best part of the man, and it is given away to God when one enters into his covenant. It is purchased by Christ, as a precious thing; and ye are to have a peculiar care of it, and must not presume to lay it at stake, as many do, for the satisfying of a lust, who often forget to loose the precious pledge by repentance.—All the faculties of your souls are his.—Your hearts are the Lord's: Prov. xxii. 26. “My son, give me thine heart.” The world and our lusts have long divided our hearts betwixt them. They have been as a common inn, so throng with strangers, that the Master of the house had to lodge without. But, O remember! they are now the Lord's; that he must be the object of your choice, your love, your desire, and delight; and that all your affections must center in him whose your heart is.—Your will is also the Lord's: Acts, ix. 6. “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” You must learn to say, Thy will be done. Put away your self-will. The will of his commandments must determine your practice; the will of his providence, your lot. The long quarrel betwixt the Lord and you must now be at an end, namely, whether your will or his shall be done. His will must ever govern your will, and yours stoop to his.—Your conscience is his. It ought to be subject to him in all things, and to him only. Receive nothing in religion, in point of faith or practice, but upon the authority of God, speaking in his word; otherwise, you prostitute conscience to your lusts and the opinions of men: Matth. xxiii. 9. “And call no man

man your father upon earth : For one is your Father which is in heaven." With whatever pretences these things be supported, such as antiquity, strictness, &c. they are to be rejected, Col. ii. 20. 21. 22. Receive every thing held out in the word, however opposite it may be to your carnal reasoning, interests, &c. Your every thought should be brought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5. — Again, you must consider also, your worldly comforts and enjoyments as his. If you have given yourselves to the Lord, you have laid them all down at his feet, to be disposed of at his pleasure : Luke, xiv. 26. " If any man come unto 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." You will look on them now as the Lord's loan, which he may call back from you when he will. Look on them as what you are to improve for God. Your life, your liberty, honour, wealth, reputation, all is the Lord's; to be used for his honour, and willingly parted with at his call.—Your gifts and opportunities for serving God, are also his. The Lord has put them under your care, for the use of them, while the property remains in himself. You are but the stewards, and must use these talents for his honour ; he has given you them with this charge, Luke, xix. 13. " Occupy till I come." Have you a gift of knowledge ? Do good by it, use all your gifts and comforts, for your salvation-work, and for the good of those with whom you are connected—Finally, your time is his, Eph. v. 16. " Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Do not think you may fill up your time as you please in pursuit of vanities, or in following your lusts. No, you must make conscience of spending to

good purpose every inch of your time; you must be careful that you trifle it not away, doing nothing, or worse than nothing.

3. They must look on themselves as his for evermore; not merely for a time, but for all times, all cases, and all conditions: Psal. lxxiii. 23. 26. "I am," says the Psalmist, "continually with thee.—My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Remember, that your ears are bored to the Lord's door-posts, you have lifted up your hand to the Lord, and cannot go back.—You must, then, be his, without interruption: Deut. v. 29. "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments *always*, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" You must not be one day for God, another for the devil, nor take your religion by fits and starts, you must not suit your religion to times and companies.—You must be his, without apostacy and defection: Psal. cxix. 12. "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes *always*, even unto the end." You must make no term-day with Christ, but having loved your Master, you must resolve to abide with him for ever, to live with him, and to die with him, that thus you may be with him through the endless ages of eternity. And therefore your heart must rest in him, as an object which is completely satisfying: Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee." Have you not come into the covenant, because, having traversed the whole creation, you could not find rest to your souls there, and therefore had taken Christ as a covering to the eyes, and a complete portion to the soul?—Resolve, then, that nothing shall part
betwixt

betwixt the Lord and you ; that you will neither be boasted nor bribed away from him by the words, the smiles, the frowns, the reproaches, nor threatenings of the world : Song, viii. 6. 7. “ Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm : for love is strong as death ; jealousy is cruel as the grave : the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it : If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” Whatever storms blow, you are the Lord’s, you must not leave him, you must not be offended at his cross, but follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, through good report and bad report.—We now proceed,

III. To give some reasons, why it is the duty of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant, thus to look on themselves as his.—They are to do so,

1. Because they are his, in a manner the rest of the world are not. Our Lord has a peculiar title and interest in all who have honestly entered into covenant with him, John, xvii. 9. 10. (quoted above ; and why should not this be avowed ? —They are his, by a new creation : Is. xliii. 21. “ This people have I formed for myself ; they shall shew forth my praise.” There is not one soul, which has, in the way of believing, given itself to Christ, but it is made new by the power of regenerating grace. Hence every believer, who receives power to become a son of God, is said to be “ born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,” John, i. 12. 13. So that the Lord has the same right to the new creature, which he has to all by their first.

creation. Those who are new creatures, are absolutely his property; what in consequence they are made to be, it is all intended to be for his glory. —Again, they are his by redemption, applied to them. They are bought with a price. Jesus “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” They were captives to Satan, debtors to the law, and criminals to justice: He has given his life a ransom for them; and thus has bought them to himself. They could contribute nothing to a making up the price, he paid it all; and thus they are, on the best grounds, his wholly. —Finally, they are his by covenant: Heb. viii. 10. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts: And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” He has offered this covenant to them, they have accepted it; in its nature, it is a marriage-covenant, they are his spouse. They have submitted to his royal sceptre, they are his subjects. They have dedicated themselves to the Lord; they have made a gift of themselves to the Lord. They have thus lifted up their hands to the Lord, and so cannot draw back, but must in duty consider themselves as his. —They are to do so; for,

2. The honour of God requires it. Those who are servants to persons of high rank, are usually subject to bear the badge of their master; and those who are the Lord's are in the same manner bound: Rev. xiv. 1. “And I looked, and lo! a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.” It is to the dishonour

honour of our Lord, when we look on ourselves as our own, or are ashamed of acknowledging ourselves to be his : This cannot but reflect a dishonour on him ; even as the avouching ourselves to be his tends to his honour before the world.—We should do so ; for,

3. Our standing to the covenant requires it : Psal. cxix. 94. “ I am thine, save me, for I have sought thy precepts.” If we do not repent the bargain, but intend to hold by it, we must of necessity look on ourselves as his, having given away ourselves to him. If we refuse it, we do in effect retract our consent, recall the gift we have made of ourselves to the Lord, and after vows, make inquiry. We give up with the covenant, and deny our indenting with Jesus Christ.—We now proceed,

IV. To shew, how it is their interest to look on themselves as the Lord’s.—It is so, *First*, in respect of sanctification. *Secondly*, in respect of consolation.

First, In respect of sanctification. If you have given yourselves away to the Lord, you will henceforth look on yourselves as his only, his wholly, and his for ever ; and this will be of excellent use to promote your sanctification, and so be a notable mean of real prosperity to your souls.—As,

1. It will be an antidote against backsliding. The consideration of your being the Lord’s will make you say, with Jephthah, “ I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.” You will have many temptations to go back to former lusts ; both hell’s smiles and frowns will be used for that purpose. And there is a backsliding disposition in the best : “ My people,” says God, Hof. xi. 7. “ are bent to backsliding from me ; though they called them to the Most High,
none

none at all would exalt him." But O it is dangerous ! " If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38. Remember Lot's wife ; look on yourselves as the Lord's. This will be a mean to keep you with him, as the servant is kept with his master, whose ear was bored, and nailed to his master's door-post. This will let you see you may not, you must not go back.

2. It will afford an answer to every temptation. It will make you say, with Joseph, " How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?" Gen. xxxix. 9. As long as you are in the world, you will not want temptations ; and there is not a snare in the world but has some one friend or other to it in our hearts, some corruption which is nearly allied to it. And when they meet, it will be hard to keep the friends from close embraces, unless the soul will resolutely say, ' I am the Lord's, I am not at my own disposal ; whatever others may do, I cannot comply, for I have given myself away to the Lord, to fight under his banner, against the devil, the world, and the flesh. I am married to Christ, and therefore I cannot entertain other lovers.

3. It will be a spur to duty, 1 Cor. vi. 19. 20. (quoted already.) If we be the Lord's servants, we must serve him ; if we be married to Christ, we must exert ourselves to please our Husband ; if planted in the house of God, we must bring forth fruit : Mal. i. 6. " A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master." Our relation to the Lord will make us see that more is expected and looked for at our hands, than from those who have not entered into his covenant : Matth. v. 48. " Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

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4. It will blow the coal of your zeal for God, and make you of a public spirit, to devote all you are or have to the promoting of God's honour in the world: Phil. i. 21. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Were the impression that we are the Lord's more strong on our spirits, it would excite us effectually to take the part of God more vigorously against an ungodly generation, to stand up for his honour, his truths, and for the cause of holiness. The sense of the obligation of the covenants, by which these lands became the Lord's, wearing off the spirits of the generation, (though the matter of them, being moral duty, and nationally sworn to, leaves an inviolable obligation on all succeeding generations), is one great spring of the lukewarmness, the profanity, and backslidings of all ranks of persons in church and state at this day. And if unto this be added, the weakening of the impressions of our sacramental engagements to be the Lord's, which too evidently appears to take place, we may well say, What will the generation turn to? Shall men take bonds on them to be the Lord's, and afterwards look on themselves in effect as loosened from them? To this is owing the useflessness of persons for God, their insignificancy in the world as to any service for God. Some have a tongue which can speak well enough for themselves, but they will not move it in the cause of holiness. Some have authority, credit, and wealth, something or other by which they might be useful for God in their families, in their neighbourhood, in their congregation, to suppress sin, to encourage piety, to advance Christ's kingdom, the credit of his word and ordinances; but none of these things are their business. If they had the deep impression of themselves, and all which is theirs, being the
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the Lord's, they would see themselves obliged to employ for God whatever they are or have.

5. It will be a preparative for the hardest piece of service God may put into your hand. He puts into the hands of all, the cutting off of right-hand lusts, and plucking out of right-eye sins. If this impression wear off men's spirits, they will then stand and dispute the divine orders; they will debate with God, as if they had not already made the bargain; they will preserve these, as if in their covenant they had been expressly excepted. But, 'I am the Lord's,' would put an end to the dispute, and learn us to obey without quarreling, knowing we are in nothing masters of ourselves. Thus it did with Abraham, Gen. xxii. Heb. xi. 17. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that received the promises offered up his only-begotten son." You know not what hard piece of work for God may be put into your hand; but O think ye are the Lord's wholly, and therefore are to obey without reserve. You have put a blank into the Lord's hand, saying with Paul, Acts, ix. 6. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Whatever, then, he fills up must be welcome; and will be so, if you look on yourselves as no more your own, but as the Lord's.

6. It will reconcile you to your lot in private trials: Psal. xlvii. 4. "He shall chuse our inheritance for us." It may be, God takes from you the comfort you expected in your relations, he takes away your health, your substance, in a greater or less degree, your credit and reputation, in regard they are laid under reproach. But the man who can solidly say, 'I am the Lord's,' sits down resigned under all these, reasoning thus with himself, 'My comforts, my health, my wealth, and reputation, are all the Lord's, he may do with them

them as he will. I have put them all in his hands, to give or with-hold as he sees good. I am the Lord's, let him do with me as to him it seems good.'

7. It will determine you to the right side in public or private trials. When the Lord says, "Who is on my side?" while many are drawn away to side with sin and Satan, this will determine you to take part with Christ, his people, and cause. When a generation is associating together against God, it is good for a person to think with himself, that he is already disposed of to the Lord, while those who are not looking on themselves as the Lord's, are ready to fall in with the multitude going the wrong way.

Lastly, It will help you to suffer for Christ. This was what bore up Paul's heart, when he was a prisoner in that ship which was ready to be swallowed up in the waves. If you be the Lord's; your substance, your liberty, your life, are all the Lord's, and at his disposal. And the consideration of God's interest in them will help you to lay them down at his feet.—We shall now consider,

Secondly, This in respect of consolation. Your looking on yourselves as the Lord's will be of notable use for your consolation. He who can, on solid ground, say, 'I am the Lord's,' has thus a storehouse of comfort, more than if all the world was his. He who can say this, can express a great deal more than he who can say, A kingdom, a crown, an empire, are mine. Three marks of persons who can avow thus much shall be offered.

1. He who can say, My heart is the Lord's; he has the chief room in my affections above all persons and all things, may say, 'I am the Lord's.' Psa. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside

beside thee." 1 Pet. ii. 7. "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious." Hast thou seen a glory in him, which has so darkened all created excellency, that he reigns in thy affections? Thy heart is his captive, so that he is dearer to thee, than what is dearest in the world. Say then, I am his, for he has thine heart.

2. He who can say, 'My life is his,' so that thou makest it thy habitual endeavours, to live to him, not to thyself, not to thy lusts, Phil. i. 21. "For to me to live is Christ;" is it the great design thou hast in the world, to please him, to walk before him, unto all well pleasing in heart, lip, and life? and what is displeasing to him, is displeasing, and a burden to thee, whether it be in thyself or others: Say, 'I am his,' for thy life is his.

3. He who can say, 'My all is his,' art thou content rather to part with the whole of what is dear to thee, than to part with him and his way? and art thou resolved honestly to lay thy all down at his feet, to be disposed of in what way he orders? Say, then, 'I am his,' for thy all is his, Luke, xiv. 26.

Thus, you see who they are who may say, as Paul did, "God, whose I am." And he who can say this, he may, in consequence of it, speak these six comfortable words.

1. He may say, God is mine: Song, ii. 16. "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" for the covenant-relation is mutual: 'The Father is my Father, the Son is my Saviour, the Holy Ghost is my Sanctifier.' Nay, thou mayest run over all the attributes of God, and call them thine; thou mayest say, 'His power is mine to defend me, his wisdom to guide me, his mercy, grace, and love, all are mine. Even as a wife, in her right

to her husband, may call every thing which is his, her own.—He may say,

2. ‘All the promises and benefits of the covenant are mine.’ 2 Pet. i. 14. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the pollution that is in the world through lust.” In that day in which the soul gives itself to Christ, Christ gives himself to that soul; and with him they have all the promises and benefits of the covenant, as of the marriage-contract; so that the soul may say, ‘Peace with God is mine; pardon, and every blessing, are mine.’ They may read Christ’s Testament, and of all the precious promises in it, may say, ‘They are mine.’ 2 Cor. i. 20. “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us.”—They may say,

3. ‘I shall get safe through the world to the other side.’ John, xvii. 12. “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled.” Satan and the world may get back their own, though they have been pretending to leave them; but they never can get back so much as one of those who are truly the Lord’s. The bond of the covenant, savingly entered into, is a sure bond, it will keep them who cannot keep it.—They may say,

4. ‘I shall be cared and provided for in all cases and conditions.’ Surely God will care for his own, come of others what will. He will provide for those of his own house. He who feeds his birds, will not starve his babes: “Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waves there-

of roar, and be troubled ; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof : There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," Pſal. xlv. — They may ſay,

5. ' All I meet with in the world ſhall turn to my good : ' Rom. viii. 28. " And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpoſe." Art thou his ? Then every thing ſhall be for thy advantage in the end. The ſtones of affliction thrown at thee ſhall be as precious ſtones, and all the paths of God ſhall drop down fatneſs. — They may ſay,

Laſtly, ' All is mine : ' 1 Cor. iii. 21. 22. 23. " For all things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things preſent, or things to come ; all are yours, and ye are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's." For, having a right to Chriſt, they have a right to all things with and through him.

IV. I AM now to make ſome improvement.-- From what has been obſerved, we may learn,

1. How fooliſh thoſe are who cannot be perſuaded to give themſelves away to the Lord in his covenant. They neglect their great duty, they are blind to their great intereſt. Think on this, you who will be your own, and ſay, " Who is Lord over us ? " You will have your own will to be your law, and will not be the Lord's. It is but a poor affair, even though thou couldſt ſay, ' All the world is mine,' for God will ſay of you, " I never knew you." He will diſown you at death, at judgement, and through eternity. — Learn,

2. That it is the duty of thoſe who lay hold on
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the covenant, to receive also the seals of it; for thus we publicly acknowledge ourselves to be the Lord's. It is strange how those who plead their accepting of the covenant should live in the neglect of improving its seals. Among men, they who are in earnest for a bargain or contract, certainly will not refuse to ratify it. How is it, then, that persons are for the covenant of grace, and yet will not ratify it, by receiving the seals of that covenant?—Learn,

3. That such as have given themselves honestly away to the Lord, should look on themselves as his. Impress it on your spirits, ye are not your own, but the Lord's. Have you given your consent to Christ in the covenant? Then henceforth reckon yourselves to be his.—Look on yourselves,

(1.) As his habitation : Eph. ii. 22. "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Christ has called to you to open to him, promising to dwell in you. You have given consent to him, now look on yourselves as his habitation, and exert yourselves to drive out the old inhabitants. Consider yourselves as no more at liberty to harbour his enemies. Our Lord has made a purchase of two houses, and has made two journies, to take infestment and possession of them: (1.) Having purchased heaven for his people, he went thither in his ascension, to take possession of it for them : Heb. vi. 20. "Whither the forerunner hath for us entered, even Jesus, made an High-Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (2.) Having purchased the sinner for himself by his blood, he comes to the sinner's heart, to take possession of it for himself : Rev. iii. 20. "Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the

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door,

door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." To the former house he has ready access, having to do with a holy and just God: But not so to the latter; often his enemies are admitted in, and he is made to stand at the door, as if the house were not his own, because here he has to do with fickle creatures: Song, v. 2.

"I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night."—Look on yourselves,

(2.) As his temple, 1 Cor. vi. 19. (quoted above); a temple consecrated and set apart for the Lord, which, therefore, it is most dangerous to defile. Before the soul comes into the covenant, the man is Satan's work-house: Eph. ii. 2. "He is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." His heart is a forge of evil imaginations, a den of thieves. But, entering into the covenant, he is consecrated for a holy temple unto the Lord. Be careful, then, that your hearts and lives be a continual sacrifice of praise, Christ the altar, and thou the priest. Feast on the sacrifice slain for you, feed daily on Jesus Christ, and guard against pollutions of heart and life.—Look on yourselves,

(3.) As his confederates, or covenant-people: Heb. viii. 10. "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Remember, the covenant ye have entered into is an offensive and defensive league. You are to have common friends and common enemies with the Lord. Whoso are the friends of God, they must be your friends also, as Ruth said to Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people." Psal. cxix. 63. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts."

precepts." If you desire heaven, you must associate with those who are going thither, for a companion of fools shall be destroyed."—His enemies must also be yours : Psal. cxxxix. 21. 22. " Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee ? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee ? I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies." So also Psal. lxix. 9. " For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me."—Look on yourselves,

(4.) As his followers : Eph. v. 1. " Be ye, therefore, followers of God as dear children." Our Lord is given for a Leader, Isa. lv. 4. to lead his people through the world to heaven. Now, you are going through the wilderness, where it is hard, in many cases, to discern the right way, and where there are many to lead us wrong. The multitude goes the way to destruction, but do you keep your eye on your guide : Prov. iii. 6. " In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Observe his precepts, his example ; mark his footsteps, and follow them : 1 John, ii. 6. " He that faith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." Follow also the footsteps of his flock, and conform not to the world, to follow them : Rom. xii. 2. " And be not conformed to this world ; but be transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God."—Look on yourselves,

(5.) As his subjects, for he is your King and Lord, yea, your God and King, to whom you owe absolute resignation and obedience : Psal. xlv. 11. " He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." Christ has a kingdom in the world, and whoso have entered into his covenant are the subjects of that

kingdom. Observe, therefore, to live according to his laws, confederate not with his enemies, but be true to your King and Lord.—Look on yourselves,

(6.) As children of his family: 1 Pet. i. 14. “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.” Have you come out from among those of Satan’s family, and entered into the family of God? then walk as the children of God. Do not again mix with Satan’s family: Psal. xii. 7. “Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.” Avoid them, their company, and their ways, as you would shun a society infected with the plague: Acts, ii. 40. “And with many other words did he testify, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Strive to be like your heavenly Father; study to be obedient and dutiful children to him.—Look on yourselves,

Lastly, As his servants. So says the text. Our Lord has been amongst us, seeking servants to himself. Remember he is your Master, and you must apply yourselves to his work.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

S E R M O N X X X I X .

ACTS, xxviii. 23. *For there stood by me this night the angel of the Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve.*

HAVING considered and improved the first doctrine taken from these words, I now go on to

DOCT. II. That those who are the Lord's ought to make, and will make, God's service their business.—For illustrating this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What is that service of God, which is the business of those who are the Lord's.

II. I am to shew, what it is to make God's service our business, or when one may be said to do so.

III. I will confirm the doctrine. And then,

IV. We shall add the practical improvement of the subject.—We are then,

I.

I. To shew what is that service of God, which is the business of those who are the Lord's.

This is to be considered in respect, *First*, Of the matter ; *Secondly*, Of the manner of this service.

First, We are to consider the service of God, as to the matter of it. This is as wide and broad, as is the broad law of God ; therefore serving God, and keeping his commandments, are joined together. The servant's work is to do the master's will : Luke, xii. 47. " And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." I shall offer you some directions anent this service, that you may see what it is in respect of the matter of it.

1. There is salvation-work, and generation-work, which God puts in your hands, as the matter of your service.—There is salvation-work : Phil. ii. 12. " Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling." You must begin this work, carry it on, and work it out. Sinner, thou art in hazard of perishing, God calls thee to see to thyself, that thou perish not, and accounts it service to him that thou art concerned, and layest out thyself for thy own salvation. It is most necessary work, for the sinner's case is in this respect, like theirs, whom some punish, and oblige to work, by putting them into a house where the water comes in on them, where they must either work at the pump, or be drowned.—There is generation-work : Acts, xiii. 36. " For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption." There is something which God has put into every one of our hands, to do for him and his honour in the world ; the duty of our stations and relations, and the duty arising from some special

special occasions we have of honouring God. - It is our business to discern all this, to exert ourselves, and get it done before our time be done : Gal. vi. 10. " As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." If we do not, we are unprofitable servants, cumberers of the ground, and useless for God in the world.

2. There is an external and internal service to God.—External service, a service with the outward man : 1 Cor. vi. 20. " For ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." The whole man is God's, and therefore though internal service be preferable to external, yet God must have the one as well as the other. Here are to be taken in all external duties, of piety towards God, of righteousness and mercy towards our neighbour. These are a great part of our business in this world, if we be the Lord's servants. Our ears must be employed to hear his word, our eyes to read it, our tongues to speak to him in prayer and praise ; to speak of him and for him to men ; our hands and all our members to act for him in the world. There is—Internal service, we are to glorify him with our spirit, which is his : John, iv. 24. " God is a spirit ; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth" This is the soul of religion, and the chief part in the service of God, without which the other is but a lifeless, unacceptable carcase ; and therefore the character of a true servant is taken from it : Phil. iii. 3. " We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Are you the Lord's ? Then it must be your business to love him, to fear him, to believe and depend upon him, to obey
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and resign yourselves unto him. In a word, it is to keep the heart, and employ it in his service; it is to meditate on, rejoice and delight in him; suiting your will to his in all things, and consecrating the whole of your affections to him.

3. There is stated service and continual service. — Stated services are to be performed to God, at such and such times. Thus you are to serve him in secret in your closets, in private in your families, worshipping him morning and evening, Matth. vi. 6. Jerem. x. 25. If you be the Lord's, it is the least you can do, to pay thy homage to him, by thyself in the morning, when he gives thee a new day; and at evening, when thou art to enter into the darkness of the night. And if yourselves be the Lord's, you will also devote your houses to him, and pay him your homage in a family-capacity: Josh. xxiv. 15. "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Look on the morning-sacrifice in your family as the Lord's due, as well as the evening one. Job had as great a family, as large a flock, and as much work in hand, as any can pretend to, yet he duly observed the morning-sacrifice. Thus did Job continually, chap. i. 5. And then there is the Lord's weekly service in his own day, in the public duties and ordinances thereof. A piece of service this which those who are the Lord's will find themselves obliged to make conscience of, and not loiter away the day unnecessarily at home: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth," Psal. xxvi. 8. It was the godly Shunamite's practice, though she had a good way to go, 2 Kings, iv. 23. It was David's also, so that Saul knew, when he was absent, there was certainly some extraordinary thing kept him away, 1 Sam. xx. 26.—
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There is continual service : Acts, xxvi. 71. " Unto which promise, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." A Christian must never be out of his Master's work, he serves God in the interval of duties, as well as in duties. Hence we are ordered to pray always, and not to faint ; not that we are always to be on our knees, but are always to be in a praying frame. 'The Lord's servants will find no time in which to be idle, as long as the broad law is continually laying work to his hands ; he desires to " walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," Luke, i. 6. Whatsoever we do, we are to have an eye to God in it, and so to manage our worldly employments, as to tincture them all with religion : Colos. iii. 17. " And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." This is the walking with God recommended to us by the example of Enoch, Gen. v. 24.

4. There is doing-service and suffering-service.— There is doing-service. The Lord calls his people to act for him. As he said to Saul, Acts, ix. 6. he says to every one, " It shall be told thee what thou must do." He requires doing and working from all who call him Lord : Luke, vi. 46. " And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ?" They have much to do that are the Lord's. They have their hearts and lives to purify. And do what they will, they have always more to do as long as they are here : " Brethren," says Paul, Phil. iii. 13. 14. " I count not myself to have apprehended : But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." They have a great deal,

deal, which hath been wrong done, to undo by repentance. And in all, they have much opposition, little strength, and the Master urgeth haste ; so they have business enough.--There is suffering-service : Phil. ii. 17. " Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." The Lord calls his people to serve him in bearing of their burdens, taking up their cross and following him. And we will never want business of that nature, every day will have the evil thereof : Luke, ix. 23. " And Jesus said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." The Mediator himself, who was the Father's servant, his great service was suffering service ; and those who are his must not think to miss it. As he suffered satisfying justice, they must suffer for their trial, and the exercise of their graces. Thus, when we are under the cross, we are on service, and serve the Lord in a Christian bearing of our trials.

Lastly, There is ordinary and extraordinary service, of all the kinds before named.--There is ordinary service. There are pieces of work, which are the ordinary or every day's task of those who are the Lord's, as the bearing of ordinary trials, Luke, ix. 23. (above quoted), and doing of the ordinary duties of religion. It is ordinary service to fight the good fight of faith, every day grappling with temptations from the devil, the world, and the flesh. To be running the Christian race, making progress in sanctification, mortifying lusts, and the like.--There is extraordinary service, which God only sometimes calls his people to in holy providence. Thus he called Abraham, Gen. xxii. to offer up his son. There are few servants but they are obliged sometimes to do something beyond

yond ordinary, which will try their strength in a peculiar manner. Thus it is with God's servants; sometimes they meet with extraordinary temptations, or sufferings, and are called to extraordinary duties, to do for themselves, or to do for God. And truly there is the extraordinary duty of secret fasting and prayer, without which it is hard to live right : Zech. xii. 12. " And the land shall mourn, every family apart."—We shall now,

II. Consider the service of God, as to the manner of it. And unless it be performed in the right manner, God will not account it service to him, though ever so costly. If what we do, we would have the Lord to account it as service to him, we must perform it,

1. In obedience to, and under the sense of the commandment of God : Colos. iii. 17. (quoted above). What a person is prompted to, without any respect to the commandment of God, cannot be accounted as service to him, since it has no respect to his authority in the commandment : Psal. cxix. 6. " Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have a respect unto all thy commandments." We should learn to do good ; and what we do, we should do it because God commands it to be done, if we would shew ourselves his servants. We should pray, because God commands it. We should eat, because he has said, Thou shalt not kill. We should work, because he hath said, Thou shalt not steal. Now, doing what we do in this way, it will be all counted God's service.—In serving God, we are,

2. To aim at his honour and glory in it : 1 Cor. x. 31. " Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." We should make God, and not ourselves, he

chief end of all our performances, if we would have them accounted service to God ; for God will never be the rewarder of that work which has not himself for the end of it : “ Ye did not at all,” said God unto his ancient people, “ fast unto me, even unto me ; and when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves ?” Zech. vii. 5. 6. If we seek ourselves, our own profit and peace, as our chief end in what we do, God will reject our services. For a servant, if he should work ever so diligently, if it be to himself, not to his master, it cannot be acceptable service ; so also in this case. — In serving God, we are to do it,

3. Out of love to him : Heb. vi. 10. “ For God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and labour of love, which ye have shewed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” This love is to be the predominant motive of our service, and should be stronger than the fear of punishment, and hope of reward. God sees the heart, and no service but that which comes from the heart will be accepted of him : Col. iii. 23. “ And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men.” He cares not for the service of slaves, who do not serve him, but through fear of his wrath ; nor can he away with the hireling-service of those who serve him only that they may make their own advantage by it. The heart must be in it and at it, or it is no service in his esteem. — We are to serve God,

Lastly, In faith : Rom. xiv. 23. “ For whatever is not of faith, is sin.” Faith is an ingredient absolutely necessary in all service to God : Heb. xi. 6. “ Without faith, it is impossible to please him ; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is,
and

and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." And there is a threefold faith requisite here. (1.) The faith of God's command, requiring the duty, Rom. xiv. 23.; for if persons do not believe that God requires such a duty of them, it is not service to him. (2.) The faith of the promise of strength for the duty, by which the soul is carried out of itself to the Lord, for strength to perform it. We are commanded to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. ii. 1. Thus God's service is called walking in the name of the Lord: Zech. x. 12. "And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord." (3.) The faith of acceptance through Christ, by which the soul is carried over the work itself to Christ, to look for its acceptance only for his sake.—I am now to shew,

II. WHAT it is to make God's service our business, or when a person may be said to be thus employed. This will describe to you the person who may with confidence avow this claim, *God, whose I am, and whom I serve.*—In regard to such a person, I observe,

1. That God's service is his grand design in the world; he may have many works on the wheel; but this is the chief one: Psal. xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Whatever employment or trade a person betakes himself to, though he may at times put his hand to many other things; yet the work of his calling is still his chief business. Thus he who betakes himself to the service of God, will make this his chief

business. There are many things to be done; but there is one thing more needful beyond all other things, and this is the person's great object in the world. Like Mary, he attends to this, and makes choice of that good part which shall not be taken from him, Luke, x. 42.—Here, however, there may be proposed this

Question, How may a person know whether he makes God's service his grand design in the world or not? As to this, I answer,

(1.) What is it that thou seekest to obtain with the greatest eagerness and concern? Psal. iv. 6. 7. This is thy grand design, be what it will; for what the heart is most set upon, this the person will be most concerned about. Now, is it the service of God, in its various parts as above described, that your heart is set upon? then it is well, Psal. xxvii. 4 (quoted above). That person whose heart runs like a hare in pursuit of the things of this world, but moves like a snail in the things of the world to come, is not so. He swims like a feather in eternal concerns, never diving into them; but he sinks like lead in worldly ones, for these engross the whole of his attention.

(2). What is that the miscarrying in which lies nearest the heart? The person whose business is God's service, the miscarrying in soul-matters will lie most heavy upon him; but the miscarrying of other matters will be heaviest on others. What the heart makes its chief business in a greater or less measure, will be most grievous. Thus Job, when he lost all, chap. i. was distressed; afterwards, when the Lord withdrew from him, he was infinitely more affected.

(3). When God's service and other things come in competition, which of those must yield in thy practice? Luke, xiv. 26. "If any come to me, and

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." A person who has got a fore leg, will dispose of his body as may best suit it; but a person who has a tree leg, will cut and carve with it, as may best suit his body. If a person has the unmortified love of the world in him, so that it is to him like a living limb, all things else must yield to it; he will dispose of his religion, as may best suit his worldly interest, and will sacrifice his spiritual concerns to his temporal; and if God's service interfere with his worldly interest, he will juggle it by. But it is just the contrary with those who make God's service their business; in their practice, every thing else must yield to it. — I observe,

2. That the person who makes God's service his business, serves him with the whole man: 1 Cor. vi. 20. "For ye are bought with a price: Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." He not only lends his hand to the work, as a person would do who passes by accidentally; but sets his heart to it, as a person whose business it is. He looks on himself as wholly the Lord's, and therefore devotes himself wholly to him, in soul and in body, to be at his call. — It is the business of his mind, to know the Lord, and what belongs to his eternal peace, Song, i. 7. This is the grand inquiry with which he is taken up, What is the way I must take for another world? What is the duty God calls me to? What must I do to be saved? — It is the business of his will, to conform to the will of God in all things: Psal. cxix. 112. "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes, always even unto the end." In that day in which the

soul gives itself to the Lord, the person's will is surrendered a captive to the obedience of faith; and the great business afterwards is, to have it to follow the will of God, as the shadow does the body. —It is the business of his affections, which do all center in him: Matth. vi. 21. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The love of God is the comprehensive duty of the whole law; and where love is fixed on God, there all the other affections will draw after him. The soul will hate evil, will sorrow for what dishonours God, will rejoice in what is pleasing to him, and cheerfully obey what he commands.—Finally, even the body itself is for the Lord and his service: 1 Cor. vi. 13. "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." They who have truly given themselves to the Lord, will look on their bodies as for his service in life, to act for him, yea, and even in death to suffer for him, if he call for it. "So now also," says Paul, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." Phil. i. 20.—I observe,

3. The person who makes God's service his business, serves him in all things; that is, whatever be his business to which he is called to, he strives to act in it as serving the Lord. This is imported in that phrase: Psal. cxvi. 18. "I have set the Lord always before me." And we are called to it by these scriptures: Prov. iii. 6. "In thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Col. iii. 17. "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father, by him." A person who makes religion his business, will season all his business with it, and thus cast it into a religious mould. He will carry his religion

gion not only to his religious duties, but diffuse a strain of it even through his natural and civil business; and thus carry it with him to the field where he works, and to the market where he trades.—Here, again, may occur another

Question, How may a person serve the Lord in managing, and being employed about his worldly affairs? Answer, (1). Act from a sense of the command: 1 Cor. vii. 24. “Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God.” (2). Depend on him for direction: Prov. iii. 6. (quoted above). (3). Depend on him for success: Psal. cxxvii. 1. “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” (4). Acquiesce in his disposing of you as may best suit your spiritual interest. (5). Deal with men as if you were under God’s eye. (6). Be moderate in your pursuits, 1 Cor. vii. 29. 30. *Lastly*, Be suitably affected with the dispensations of providence, as they fall out to you.—I observe,

4. That the person who makes God’s service his business, scruples at no piece of service which God puts in his hand, but makes conscience of universal obedience: Psal. cxii. 6. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.” God’s servants are not allowed to be chusers; and a true servant of God will not chuse his work, but applies himself to whatever God carves out for him, even to fulfil all his will, Acts, xiii. 22. Be it doing or suffering work, his Master’s will being made known, he prepares himself to do it. The servant of God will not scruple at internal service, but apply himself to it, as well as external: Phil. iii. 3. “We are the circumcision, that worship God in spirit, that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Many will

will go about bodily exercise in religion, who are mere strangers to heart-work, and the serving God in their spirits. But this will never be acceptable, for these will always be accounted our masters who have our heart-service.—Such will not stop at painful and hard service. It is the mark of a slothful servant, to comply only with the easy pieces of religion: Prov. xx. 4. “The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold.” God commands thee to pluck out the right-eye lust; if religion be thy business, serve him in it. It was painful for Abraham to put the knife to the throat of Isaac; but it was his business to serve the Lord, therefore, when called, he was ready to obey.—Such will not stop at dangerous service, for whoso will come after Christ, must take up his cross, and will be contented to follow the Lord, whithersoever he goeth, Rev. xiv. 4. The Lord has so ordered it, that the way to heaven has many difficult steps in it, so that the fearful cannot walk therein, Rev. xxi. 8. But those who come there have courage for dangers in the way, and will follow him through the sea of this world, in a storm as well as in a calm.—Finally, such will not stop at costly service. The Lord calls his people sometimes in a special manner to this duty: Prov. iii. 9. “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase:” And forasmuch as their all is the Lord’s, it will be at his service. Sometimes they are called to suffer in these things, and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, Heb. x. 34. Sometimes to act for God therewith, as David did, when he bought the threshing-floor of Araunah, to build an altar unto the Lord upon it, 2 Sam. xxiv. 21. 24.—I observe,

5. That the person who makes God’s service his

his business, is constant and persevering in the service of God: Psal. cxix. 112. "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes, always even unto the end." A true servant of God is for his service at all times, in prosperity and in adversity. They who make God's service their business, will continue with it unto the end; and this is the character of a servant: John viii. 31. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." It is to such only that the reward of grace is promised: Rev. ii. 10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." They are constant in two respects.—They are so,

(1.) In that they do not give over his work, laying it down and taking it up when they please. They do not serve him by fits and starts, but labour to go on evenly in their way, Psal. cxvi. 8: (quoted above). The religion of many is like an ague, in which the patient has his hot and cold fits. Thus they go to and fro, one day for God, another for the devil. Whatever good mood they may be in at a time, they do not abide at it. Their goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. The whole of what they have from heaven, is as flashes, Psal. lxxviii. 34. The spirit of holiness rests not on them; the whole of what heaven has from them, is an over-leap into the holy ground, Job, xxvii. 9. 10. But though there are great changes in the frame of the saint, yet the habitual bent of his heart is still towards God. They are constant in this; for,

(2.) They never change masters again: Heb. x. 39. "But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving

saving of the soul." They never apostatise totally, nor finally. Those who do so will never see heaven: Luke, ix. 62. "And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Lot's wife was an emblem of apostates; God turned her into a pillar of salt, for a terror to all apostates. Those who are the Lord's will not be flattered away from him, by the allurements of the world and the flesh, which is one engine by which Satan makes many cast off God as a master, as did Judas and Demas. And there are many who have been blooming professors, who have by these means been led aside, till they cast off religion altogether. Nor will the true servants of the Lord be deterred from him, by the severities which they may meet with in the service of the Lord, Song, viii. 7. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." We read of some who, when they heard Christ's doctrine, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? John, vi. 60. Ver. 66. "From that time, many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." But where men have truly given themselves away to the Lord, and make religion their business, their religion will last to the end, whatever methods be used to extinguish it in any manner of way. We now come to the

III. GENERAL head, namely, To confirm the doctrine. Consider, there are two things here to be distinguished, namely, slight touches at the service of God, which the devil's servants may sometimes afford, who are far from God; and the making religion, and the service of God, our business and ordinary employment, which none will do but those who are truly and savingly the Lord's.

When

When Paul gave this account of himself, *whose I am, and whom I serve*, did he mean that now and then he was employed in the service of the Lord, and that it was only his by-hand work? No, surely he aims at no less than that it was the great business of his life, and that he was as truly fixed to the service of God as his chief business, as ever servant was to his master's work. Now, that God's service is the business of those who are the Lord's, is what I am to confirm. And therefore consider,

1. That the master's service is the business of a servant as a servant, so that no person can be accounted a servant of a person who does not make his service their business: Rev. xxii. 3. "And his servants shall serve him." An hireling who works one day to one, another to another, and another to himself, is not accounted a servant of his to whom he works. But the chief business of a servant is his master's business, as long as he is in his service. Now, they who are truly the Lord's are really and properly his servants; not only of right, but actually so, sealed in their foreheads, Rev. vii. 3. abiding by his service as their proper business in the world; and those who turn aside from it were never properly his servants: 1 John, ii. 19. "They went out from us, but they were not of us: For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: But they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not of us." Consider,

2. That they who are his, are his servants in a most strict sense, as being wholly and absolutely his, and in no sense their own, or at their own disposal: *Whose I am, and whom I serve*. They are not hired servants, who may go away at a term; but bought servants (by redemption), born servants (by regeneration.) Such Solomon had: Eccles.

Ecclef. ii. 7. "I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house." These are they we call servants, who are wholly in their master's power. And this relation to God, David, though a king, powerfully pleads: Psal. cxvi. 16. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: Thou hast loosed my bonds." But even these, among men, may be ransomed and made free. So the Hebrew servants were to be free in the seventh year, Exod. xxi. 2. Or if he would not be free, then, ver. 6. he was to serve for ever, that is, to the Jubilee, Levit. xxv. 40. But there is no term of service here, no ransoming. Since they are then his servants in this sense, how can it be otherwise, but that his service must be their business?—Consider,

3. That they cannot continue his servants, and yet have another master: Matth. vi. 24. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." They have chosen God for their master, they have renounced and given up with their old master the devil, they are kept by the power of God, that they can never again revive their old relation; and it is impossible that they can serve two contrary masters at once; but having renounced the devil, they cleave unto the Lord. And therefore, since every one makes either the service of their lusts, or the service of God, their business; and as they do not make the former their service, the latter must of necessity be it.—Consider,

4. That if it were not so, then the Lord would fall short of the grand design of their redemption, and making them his own, which cannot be. He has redeemed them by price, yea, and also by power;

power; and the end of both is, that they may serve God as his servants: Titus, ii. 14. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Luke, i. 74. "That he would grant unto us, 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." When the Lord sent Moses, to bring the children of Israel from the service of the Egyptians, it was not that they might live idly, and serve no more, but that they might change their master, and their work: Exod. iv. 23. "And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me." Thus it is also in the spiritual delivery.—Consider,

Lastly, That this making of God's service our business, is a distinguishing character of a person truly the Lord's. Of worldly men it is said, Phil. iii. 19. "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." But of the saints it is said, ver. 20. "For our conversation is in heaven: From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." What is a person's business, distinguishes him from many others; and religion, being our business, distinguishes us from the unconverted crowd, who are accounted workers of iniquity, though they be persons not estranged from religious exercises; because, though they do these duties, it is another thing that is their great business in the world, Matth. vii. 21. 23.—I come now,

IV. To make some improvement; and this,

1. In an use of information. Hence we may learn,

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(1.) That whoever are the Lord's, must apply themselves to the Lord's work and service : Luke, vi. 46. " And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ?" You were all baptised into his name and service, and some, of late, have been dedicating themselves to him in the sacrament of the supper. Think not that you are now at liberty, or that your work is over. No ; you are to begin your work, and perform your vows, and make out your service ; attend to it, then, with heart and hand, for he is a master who seeks and will have the heart.—We may learn,

(2.) That the hearts of God's honest servants, are reconciled to his work and service. It is not a force put on them ; but their choice, as that which they like the best. They are ready to resolve with Joshua, that they and their houses will serve the Lord, chap. xxiv. 15. It is not only their duty, that they must do it ; but their privilege and interest, that they have to do it. They will value themselves more on being God's servants, than they would on their being governors of a kingdom.—We may learn,

(3.) That those who make not religion their business, are none of the Lord's. They may be his by an external covenant-relation, but they are not members of his family, by a saving relation. Many take on with the Lord as a master, but they flight the bargain, and never enter home, but continue with their old master, which appears in not making God's service their business, Psal. lxxviii. 36. 37. God will pursue all such at so dreadful a rate, that it had been better for them, that they had never come under engagements to be his : 2 Peter, ii. 21. " For it had been better for them, not to have known the way of righteousness, than

than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." This writes death upon many as none of his.—Such as,

(1.) Those whose great business in the world is to serve themselves. When self-love is the predominant principle, self-seeking will be the great business: 2 Tim. iii. 2. "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous," &c. Phil. ii. 21. "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." How unlike the service of God are they, who will drive over the honour of God, the good of their neighbour, and the duty they owe to him, to serve themselves. These are narrow souls, not enlarged by God's grace, who make themselves their chief end, and lay not out themselves for the honour of God, and the good of their neighbours, as they have opportunity.

(2.) Those who are servants of men, instead of serving God: 1 Cor. vii. 23. "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." They subject themselves to men's lusts, subjecting their faith to other men's notions, and suiting their practice to other men's lusts. Thus they make idols of them, putting them in God's room: Matth. xxiii. 9. "Call no man your father, which is in heaven." Thus persons are time-servers, turning with the wind, according as the times turn, who think it their wisdom not to follow truth too hard at the heels, lest it dash out their brains. And such are company-servers, who will change themselves into any complexion in which the company is.

(3.) Those who are servants of sin: Rom. vi. 20. "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." The saints in-

deed often sin ; but they are not the servants of sin. Whoso are such are none of Christ's, but they serve the devil and their lusts. They sin against the gospel-remedy, going on in a state of unbelief and impenitency. They are not only infected with the plague of sin, but they slight the Physician with his remedies, namely, his blood and Spirit ; they will not have this man to reign over them, Luke, xix. 14. " Sin reigns in them like a king ; they readily obey it in the lusts thereof," Rom. vi. 16. and fairly yield themselves to it. They are in the snare of the devil, and are taken captive by him at his will. Do not think you can be servants of God, who are thus situated. No man can serve two masters.

Lastly, Those who make the Lord's service but their by-hand work, not their chief employ. These are religion's chance-customers, who will never enrich themselves with it.—And such are these who never make religion their predominant concern. The chief stream of their care and anxiety runs in another channel than the grand inquiry, What shall I do to be saved ? The things of time lie nearest their heart, not the matters of eternity.—Those who follow religion no farther than their other ends will allow of, who make it yield to their temporal interests, and embrace it only when those do not interfere with it, like the allowance Pharaoh made for religion, by calling idleness the spring of it, Exod. v. 17.—Those who confine their religion to their religious duties, and do not weave it into the whole of their conversation. Suppose one to be very exact in a due performance of secret and family-duties ; yet if he do not walk with God in the interval of duties, and carry his religion through his worldly business,
God's

God's service is not his business.—I would now improve this subject,

2. In an use of trial.

You may and should try yourselves, whether you be the Lord's or not. If you can say, 'It is God whom I serve,' ye may say, 'It is God's, whose I am.' If religion be your business, you are God's servants, and he will own you to be so. A servant of God moves two steps, by which he advances beyond others.

(1.) He serves God, and so goes beyond the profane careless generation in the world, who mind nothing but the world, the profits and pleasures which are in it : Phil. iii. 19. "Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, and who mind earthly things." As for the service of God, they are free of it, they are sons of Belial, and go without a yoke ; they are the serpent's seed, on their belly they go, and dust is their only meat ; the duties of religion they make no conscience of.

(2.) He makes God's service his business, and so goes beyond the formalist, who serves God, but makes not God's service his chief work. The hypocrite has always one thing, which goes above all other things with him ; but that is the world, or some one lust or other, not the one thing needful, which is the chief thing the servant of God is ever in quest of.

We have heard already the marks of a person who makes religion his business. Try yourselves by these, whether God's service be your grand object in the world, and if you serve him with the whole man &c. as described in the second head.—I come now,

3. To an use of exhortation.—I exhort you to evidence yourselves to be the Lord's servants,

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by

by serving him.—And with this design I beseech you,

(1.) To enter to his service, and serve him. Serve him in your salvation and generation work, in external and internal service, in stated and continual service, in doing or suffering service, in ordinary and extraordinary service. Put your hand and heart to the several pieces of service to which he calls you. And I would recommend in this case to you,

[1.] Be attentive to your Master's orders, and labour to know his mind, as to what may be your duty : Psal. cxliii. 2. " Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us." Consult his word, which contains his orders to his servants, and read the Bible as the book of your instructions. Take the providential hints of duty he gives you ; for he has said, Psal. xxxii. 8. " I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye." Be always willing to know his will, and make application to him by prayer, for the discovery of it in particular cases, especially such as are difficult ; do nothing with a doubting conscience.

[2.] Be willing servants, not refractory and wilful. Follow the example of Abraham, who obeyed, and went out, not knowing whether he went, Heb. xi. 8. The Master's orders being known, do not dispute them, but readily obey them. Choose not the work you will do, whether it be suffering or doing work, whatever the burden be, which he lays on you, bow your shoulders to bear it ; the cross he lays down, do you be ready
to

to take it up. For it becomes him to command, and us to obey.

[3.] Weary not of your work : James, i. 4. "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." However hard you apprehend your task to be, give not way to wearying of it : Gal. vi. 9. "And let us not be weary in well-doing ; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." We should think all light while we are out of hell. Impatience betrays us into the hands of the adversary, who is ready to offer his hellish help to those who are weary of the task God has laid on them ; of which we have dreadful instances, which may make all of us tremble, and resolve through grace to bear till himself give deliverance.

[4.] When you are checked for your mismanagements, or corrected on account of them, learn this property of a good servant, not to answer again, Titus, ii. 9. Murmuring under the rebukes of providence, is very unbecoming, and highly provoking in God's sight : Lam. iii. 39. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ?" They who enter into the family of God, must not think it strange that they have to submit to the discipline of the house. —I would exhort you,

(2.) To hold by his service, as the great business which you have to do in the world. Never give it over, but pursue it as the grand business of your life, for doing which you were sent into the world. You have many things to do : But this is the one thing above all other things, O ! give it the preference in your hearts and lives. Never reckon that your other business goes well, when this does not ; nor ill, when this goes well. Hold on it, till death loose you, and you have accomplished,

plished, as an hireling, your days.—As to this I would recommend to you,

[1.] Serve him honestly and uprightly : Josh. xxiv. 14. “Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth.” Let him be your only Lord and Master ; and while you profess to serve God, give not a secret-service to any idol ; for there is no hiding the matter from your heavenly Master. You are in God’s account, what you are inwardly in heart.

[2.] Serve him chearfully with heart and goodwill. He is the best of masters, and desires none to serve him for nought. To be heartless in his service, as if it were a drudgery, is very displeasing to him : Deut. xxviii. 47. 48. “Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things ; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things : And he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.”

[3.] Serve him fervently and zealously : Rom. xii. 11. “Not slothful in business ; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” Our God is the living God, and he requires his servants to be lively, their hearts stirring within them in his service. The greatest love which ever appeared being shewed by our Lord, this doubtless requires such a return.

[4.] Serve him diligently and laboriously : Acts, xxvi. 7. “Unto which hope, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.” Why should we grudge pains for him, who thought not his own life too much for us ? The servants of sin and Satan are indefatigable, alas ! that the servants of God should be so slothful.

ful.—To prevail with you in complying with this exhortation, I shall lay before you the following **MOTIVES**.

Mot. 1. If you be not the servants of God, you are the servants of the devil : John, viii. 44. “ Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” There is never a spare servant in this case. If the sinner depart from God, whose he is, and whom he ought to serve, presently Satan picks him up as a stray, and sets him to his work ; and his service is sad service.—To make this appear, you may consider,—(1.) His work is sin. Satan is the Egyptian task-master, who seduces poor mortals, who will not work out their own salvation. He puts another task in their hand, to work out their own ruin and destruction. And is not this the work about which most of the world are busy, who are twisting cords of guilt every day to bind their souls under God’s wrath?—(2.) His wages is death, eternal death : “ For the wages of sin is death,” Rom. vi. 22. Satan goes about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is the father of lies, has had a long trade of it, deceiving poor sinners, catching some with one bait, some with another ; that first he may be a prevailing tempter, and then a cruel tormentor, who, because he is beyond hope himself, would wish to have all the world as miserable as himself.

Mot. 2. God is the best of Masters, and his service is the best of service. This have all the saints witnessed, and so shall all of you, upon a full trial of it.—To make this good, consider,

(1.) That it is the most honourable service. He who serves God, serves him who is the fountain of all honour : Psal. xxxvi. 9. “ For with thee is the fountain of life : In thy light shall we see light.”

light" Surely it is far more honourable to be a servant of the Lord, than to be a mighty king. What great work is there at times to get into the service of great men, especially of kings and princes! but O! why so little to get into the service of the King of kings?—Consider,

(2.) That it is the most rational service: Rom. xii. 1. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Is he not our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, our universal Benefactor, and our covenanted God? Is there any who has that right to our service which he has? Can it be our interest so much to be in the service of any other as it is to be in his service?—Consider,

(3.) That it is the most pleasant and comfortable service: Prov. iii. 17. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." There is a joy in the service of God, even the hardest of it all, which, who so tastes of, will not exchange Christ's cross for the world's crown. Hear the psalmist's judgement of it: Psal. lxxxiv. 10. "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." How did Hannah rejoice after a prayer! the Eunuch after a sealing ordinance! If some find it not to be so pleasant, it is either because their nature is not renewed at all, or grace is low, and corruption strong.

(4.) Consider that it is the most advantageous service. Never was service forewarded, as God's service is. There is a reward in hand, which accompanies the work: Psal. xix. 11. "In keeping of thy commandments, there is a great reward."

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There is also a reward in hope,—the eternal weight of glory. They shall be Courtiers of the King of heaven in glory for evermore: Rev. xxii. 3. “And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads.” Amen.

GOD'S

GOD'S GRACIOUS CALL AND PRECIOUS
PROMISE CONSIDERED *.

S E R M O N X L.

PSAL. lxxxii. 10. *Open thy mouth wide, and I will
fill it.*

THE great design of the gospel, and of all gospel-ordinances, is to make souls happy, and for this end to bring them to God through Christ, in whom they may find solid and complete satisfaction. All men desire to be happy; they are conscious to themselves of wants, which the natural desire of happiness influences them to get supplied. But, alas! they apply to improper quarters, and suck at those breasts which can never fill them, even those of their lusts. Since Adam forsook God for the creature, mankind have been so intoxicated with creature-sweetness, that they stand as it were chained at the creature's door,

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immediately before the dispensation of the Lord's supper there.

door, begging satisfaction, even after a thousand denials. They cannot lift their eyes to the Lord, they cannot move their feet towards him, till grace break the bands of iron and brass with which they are held.

In the text, the Lord comes to sinners as thus situate, and outbids all others which they in their hearts and lives are following after; and he does this even while they will not look over their shoulder to him, from their madness on their idols. This is the scope of the text; for in this verse, the Lord pleads the grand purpose of love laid down, ver. 9. which is, that they should renounce all others for him, give up with their idols, and take him for and instead of all. And to enforce this, he thus reasons with them: 1. 'I have done for you what all your idols never did, and never could have done, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Where were all your strange gods, when Pharaoh refused to let you go? Deut. xxxii. 11. "So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Look to all the real good that ever you met with, and say, Was it the Lord or your idols that did it for you?—2. I will do and can do for you, what they cannot all do for you: *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it abundantly.* Many a time you have opened your mouths, and wide enough, to your idols; so wide that it has been no small pain to get them shut again; and yet they remain still empty for them, they were never filled. But says the Lord, *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* Where more particularly observe,

1. That there is an emptiness supposed in poor sinners, which needs to be filled. They have lost God, and a thousand worlds cannot fill up his

room. That man who has Christ in his heart, has enough to satisfy him, want what he will. And let a man have what he will, if he has not Christ in him, he has not what can satisfy him. All the devil's trash can never fill the heart; many an empty space is in that heart, where Christ is not; which plagues them with a dog-like appetite, which is never satisfied.

2. There is a fill proposed and offered to empty sinners. This is a soul-fill; a filling with all the fulness of God. This is the only thing which can fill the mouth of the soul, which is the mouth meant in the text; for it is an easy thing to find among the creatures a fill to the mouth of the body, which can hold but little; but the whole creation cannot fill the mouth of the soul. The Lord only can fill it, he only can satisfy and still the restless soul, and so make it, after many years, disappear, and fall asleep in the bosom of God; and after the most pinching straits, to say, "I have all, and abound."—We have,

3. The party communicating this soul-fill to the sinner: *I*, more generally, *I the Lord*, in opposition to strange gods. That fill you could never get from your idols, you shall have from me. More particularly, it is Jesus Christ, the second person, the great treasurer of heaven, and steward of the fulness of God. It is plain that it is the same Lord who brought the Israelites out of Egypt; and this was no other but Christ, who was known under the Old Testament by the God of Israel, *Exod. iii. 2.—8.* It was he who wrought that deliverance, as a type and pledge of the great redemption. It was he whom the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire did represent, even God veiled with flesh. He who brought them out of the land of Egypt, he whom they tempted in the wilderness,

wilderness, and this was Christ: 1 Cor. x. 19. "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."—We have,

4. The sinner's duty in order to this communication: *Open thy mouth wide*. The word here used is, in Gen. xxvi. 22. rendered *making room*. O the freedom of grace! only make room for a fill, and ye shall have it. Let the soul only, as an hungry infant, lay its mouth by faith on the breasts of Christ's consolations, and they shall flow abundantly. If the spiritual appetite be not wanting, ye shall have a fill; and what can be desired more? unless we would have him to force it upon us. Open thy mouth, do not keep it close, and say you will have none of him. Open to receive, and he will give. Open it wide, the wider you open, the more that your souls desire of him, you shall get the more. I cannot think the wideness in the text is intended to straiten the offer, but rather informs us, that there is a fulness in Christ, sufficient to satisfy the most extended desires of the soul.—From this subject, I take the following

DOCTRINE, That Christ Jesus can and will fill the soul whose mouth is opened wide to receive of and from him.—For illustrating this doctrine, I shall,

I. SHEW what it is to open the mouth of the soul wide to Christ.

II. How Christ fills the soul, so as no other can do. And then,

III. Conclude with some improvement.—We are then,

I. To shew what it is to open the mouth of the soul wide to Christ.—This opened mouth consists,

1. In a sight of wants. The soul must be
I i 2 brought

brought to a sight of its own emptiness, ere it will open its mouth for a fill from the Lord : Prov. xxvii. 7. "The full soul loatheth an honey-comb : But to the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet." The want of this was Laodicea's ruin. She thought herself rich, and increased in goods, and having need of nothing, and knew not that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. When Christ comes to the soul, he says to it, as he did to the blind man, "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" He makes persons sensible of their diseases, before he applies the remedy, that his free grace may thus be glorified. Jesus, by his word and Spirit, gives the soul a view of God in his glory ; and then the soul cries, I want peace with God ; a Mediator, a Christ to stand betwixt me and his consuming fire. He gives the soul—a view of the tribunal of God, before which it must soon appear : And then it cries, Ah ! I want a righteousness, a better righteousness than my own, a complete and everlasting righteousness, without which I can never appear with acceptance before this tribunal.—A view of his sins : And then he cries, Where shall I find pardon?—A view of what the law requires, and of what the sinner is in himself : And then he cries, Ah ! I am all wants. I have nothing of myself good, and can do nothing.—This opened mouth consists,

2. In a sense of need. Persons may see their want of those things, who are not pinched with felt need, but reign as kings without Christ, and say unto God, Job, xxi. 14. 15. "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him ? And what profit should we have if we pray unto him ?" But the soul whose mouth is opened wide,
says

says with the prodigal, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" Luke, xv. 17. They find that they are undone without Christ. The soul is pressed with that question, What shall I do to be saved? No happiness to the soul without the enjoyment of God, and no enjoyment of him, but through Christ the Mediator between God and man.—This opened mouth consists,

3. In a holy dissatisfaction with all things besides Christ. Cloathe a starving man with scarlet, fill his pockets with gold, and advance him to the highest honours; all this is not meat, and therefore he cannot be satisfied. And to the hungry soul there is none, nothing but Christ which can give satisfaction. They loathe their lusts, which they loved before. A thousand worlds will not satisfy the soul which sees its need of Christ. When the soul comes to itself again, after it has gone the round of the whole creation for satisfaction, it returns with the report, Eccles. i. 2. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." It finds at length that the bed is shorter than that one can stretch himself upon it.—This opened mouth consists,

4. In the soul's removing its desires from off vanities, and fixing them on Christ for satisfaction. Like the hungry infant, which has been sucking in vain at this and the other object which was nearest it, and could never rest; when the breast is put in its mouth, it opens its mouth, and fixes there to suck. The soul gives over the pursuit of happiness in lusts, he finds that gall and wormwood are now on these breasts. It ceases from hammering its happiness out of the law, and finds that there is no pleasing that rigorous husband; the ladder of their duties has so often broken with them, that they despair of ever climbing to heaven this way.

And so, like men out of breath, in seeking their happiness from other things than Christ, they lie down before the Lord, turning their eyes towards him, that he may take them up, and give them what in vain they have been looking for elsewhere. Their language is, Jerem. iii. 23. "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel."---This opened mouth consists,

5. In an assured expectation of salvation from Christ: Hosea, xiv. 3. "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods: For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Mat. xxi. 22. "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." The soul believes that Christ can do it; and so far believes he will do it, as that it ventures on him. Without this, the soul cannot open its mouth to Christ, but shuts it without hope. Though the hopes may be very faint, yet the trembling hand may receive Christ, and the quivering mouth may be filled.—This opened mouth consists,

Lastly, In a hearty willingness to receive Christ as he offers himself in the gospel. Christ says, "I am the bread of life;" the soul is well content to receive him as such, for all and instead of all. They fed on the husks before, and loathed the manna; now nothing relishes so well with them as the bread which came down from heaven. They are brought over all their objections against him, and are well content to venture their souls on him, as it is he alone who can fill them with all the fulness of God.—We now proceed,

II. To shew how Christ fills the soul so as no other can do: *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*

it. This promise imports four things.—It imports,

1. Such a suitableness in him to the necessities of the soul, as is to be found in no other. Sinners seeking a fill of the creatures, are but feeding on wind, which can never satisfy. There is no suitableness betwixt the desires of an immortal soul, and the produce of this earth: Isa. lv. 2. “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” What avail riches, honours, and pleasures, to a soul pressed with guilt! But Christ is suited to all the wants of the soul. Speaking of the excellence, suitableness, and fulness of his salvation, he says, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be cloathed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear: and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see,” Rev. iii. 18. His blood and Spirit will answer all cases which the soul can be in.—The words import,

2. That there is a sufficiency in Christ for all their needs: Col. i. 19. “It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.” There is enough in him to satisfy all the desires of the soul. Persons may travel through the whole creation, ere they find an object commensurable to the desires of their souls; but when the soul comes to Christ, it then and there finds an object, than which the soul, when extending its desires to the utmost, cannot crave more. Here, though our boundless desires should launch forth into this ocean, they shall never be able to reach the bottom, or find the shore.—The words import,

3. That there is a communication of this suitable

able sufficiency unto that soul which opens its mouth wide to receive it. Thus,

(1.) Christ gives himself to that soul, so that such an one may say, Song, ii. 16. "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" or, with Thomas, cry, "My Lord, and my God." They have him by the surest tenor of an indissoluble union: John, vi. 56. "He that eateth my flesh," says Jesus, "and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." A wicked man may have many poor *mys*, Dan. iv. 30. compare chap. ii. 47. But they cannot call God theirs; and besides, they want a thousand things more than what they have. But what want can they have who have Jesus, who is all in all?

(2.) Christ gives them all good with himself: Rom. viii. 32. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Psal. lxxxiv. 11. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Having a right to himself, they may write their names upon, and claim a title to, all that are his. They are rich, seeing they are married to Jesus, the heir of all things. No sooner does the soul close with Christ, than they get this right; and though they get not all presently in hand, yet they have all in hope; a hope of which they will never be ashamed.—The words import,

4. The soul's satisfaction upon that communication. In what measure the soul opens its mouth to Christ, in that measure Christ communicates of his fulness; for this is the standing rule, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee." And in what measure Christ communicates of himself to the soul, so the soul has that satisfaction. Accordingly the soul rests in Christ, and having enough

nough in him, never goes out, as it was wont, to beg at the world's door : John, iv. 14. " 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 to everlasting life." " It is enough," said Jacob, " Joseph is yet alive." When all the cisterns are dried up, the believer has enough. He can rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation, Hab. iii. 17. He can say also with Paul, Phil. iv. 18. " But I have all, and abound." I am full ; and no wonder, for the soul having Christ, has,

(1.) A fulness of merit to look to : 1 John, i. 7. " The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." When the soul looks within itself, it sees a fulness of guilt, debt, misery, and poverty. It sees heart, lips, life, and duties, all full of sin ; sins which tears of blood and rivers of oil cannot wash away. But, looking to Christ, it sees a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. The rock struck by the rod of justice, and the waters gushing out, and following them through the wilderness, a sea to overwhelm all their guilt ! Mic. vii. 19. " He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us ; he will subdue our iniquities ; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."—The soul sees,

(2.) A fulness of spirit in Christ to take away the power of sin. He hath the seven Spirits of God, Rev. iii. 1. When they look within themselves, they see a very scanty measure of the Spirit. When they look above them to their Head, they see it there without measure poured out upon their Head, to that very end that it may go down to the skirts of his garments, even to every member of his mystical body.—The soul sees,

(3.)

(3.) A fulness of grace in him, lodged in him as the common storehouse of all the saints: John, i. 16. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." If they want wisdom, or righteousness, or sanctification, they have it in him: 1 Cor. i. 30 "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." They have all in him; and seeing God treats with them no other way but as in him, they are complete in him, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, who is the Head of all principality and power."—I come now,

III. To conclude with some short improvement. And this only in an use of exhortation.

I would exhort you, then, to come to Christ with enlarged desires, that your souls may be filled. I direct you to one who can give your souls full satisfaction. Open your mouths wide, O communicants! Open your mouths wide, one and all of you, make enlarged demands from Christ the Saviour.—To prevail with you in complying with this exhortation, I offer you the following MOTIVES.

Mot. 1. Ye have many times opened your mouths wide to the world, and your lusts, but were you to this day ever filled? Prov xxiii. 5. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven." Have you not enlarged your desires as hell? If there had been any satisfaction which you could have got out of Christ, have you not squeezed so hard as that you would certainly have pressed it out? But you have never got it, and never shall get it there. Come, then, to Christ, and try him.

Mot.

Mot. 2. Has not the world and your lusts oft times rewarded your love with hatred? When you have been hammering for satisfaction at these things, have you not struck fire, instead of water, out of these barren rocks, and lain down in sorrow? O! if you had bestowed that strength of affection and desire on Christ, which you have on these things, ye had never been so rewarded.

Mot. 3. If Christ fills you not, you shall never be filled. Many have sucked at these breasts which you are on, but never one came speed; as little shall you: Eccles. ii. 12. "And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: For what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which has been already done." There was a sign of emptiness hung out at the creature's door in paradise, the tree of knowledge, of good and evil. And has that vanity which sin subjected them to since filled up that emptiness? No, no. Ah! you shall as soon grasp your arms full of shadows and dreams, as fill your souls without Christ.

Mot. 4. Consider that Christ can and will fill your souls, if you will only open your mouths wide, and receive him.—For consider,

(1.) That all fulness is in him: Colos. i. 19. "For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." He is the storehouse of all fulness; it dwells in him, it can never be missed there. The fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him bodily, Col. ii. 9. Can there be ever any want with him?—Consider,

(2.) That the fulness that is in him is to be communicated in him: John, i. 16. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." It is lodged there to be communicated from him to poor souls: Zech. xiii. 1. "In that day there shall be

a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." The fulness of Christ is not the fulness of a vessel, but of a fountain that casts forth its waters, and yet hath still enough.--Consider,

(3.) That it belongs to him, and to him alone, to distribute that fulness: John v. 22. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son." He is the great steward of the fulness of God. The keys hang at his girdle. Never any soul was filled, but whom he filled. The Father directs the hungry soul to his Son: Matth. xvii. 5. "This," says he, "is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: Hear ye him." The Spirit points you to Christ. And Christ is saying to you, what Joseph said to his father and brethren: Gen. xlv. 9.—11. "Haste you, and go up to my father, and say unto him, 'Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast. And there will I nourish thee, (for yet there are five years of famine), lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.'"—Consider,

(4.) That you have his word for it, that he will do it: Is. lv. 1. "Ho every one that thirsteth, ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." John, vi. 37. "All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." And you have the testimony of them who have gone before you: Luke, i. 52. 53. "He has exalted them of low degree.

degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things."

Here, however, there may be proposed this OBJECTION. Is it possible for a person to find satisfaction in such a course, turning his back on the world and its lusts? *Answer*, Come and see. The saints have found, and do find satisfaction, and this such as has made them despise the smiles and frowns of the world: Psal. iv. 7. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased: Heb. xi. 24. 25. 26. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: For he had respect unto the recompence of reward." Is there any perfection or sweetness in the creature but what comes from God? does not the whole creation shine with borrowed light? If so, then God must be more sweet, infinitely more sweet, than all the creatures, even if combined together. And does not the natural constitution of the soul, call for the enjoyment of an infinite good? It must then be the greatest reality.

Still, however, some may press this OBJECTION. But will he fill me who am full of sin? *Ans.* Christ fills freely, as freely as the rain falls, and the sun shines, without hire, and his fulness will wear out the fulness of sin: Isa. i. 18. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: Though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." Amen.

THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF THE
SPIRITUAL LIFE *.

SERMON XLI.

JOHN, vi. 57. *He that eateth me, even he shall live
by me.*

YOU have been eating the bread of the Lord : who those are who have done this may be already known ; happy are those who have ate that bread which is the Lord ; who these are must be discovered by the effects. Persons will readily look like their meat ; they who have ate Christ will look like Christ, seeing this food has a transforming virtue, there will be such a difference betwixt them and others, as that mentioned in Dan. i. 15. " Their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." Living bread will make living lively souls : *He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*— In which words we have,

1. The character and privilege of a believer : *He shall live*, viz. the life of God, from which others are alienated. To his natural life, common with others, by which he is distinguished from things without life, he shall have another of a more sublime nature, by which he shall rise superior to other men who are dead in sin, while they live a natural

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immediately after the dispensation of the Lord's supper.

natural life : He shall live spiritually and eternally.

2. We have the spring from whence the believer derives this supernatural life of his, in its beginning, progress, and continuation. It is not from himself, he is but a branch, not a root ; it is not immediately from God, as Adam's, but from the Mediator, Jesus Christ. The justice and holiness of God refused an intermediate union with the sinful creature, yet there could be no life but as proceeding from God, the prime Fountain of all, and there could be no communication of this life without union with him ; wherefore it pleased God to unite the human nature to the divine in the person of his Son, and so to make him the Mediator, the mean of the sinner's union and communion with the Father ; that he deriving life from his Father, they might again derive it from him. This is the import of the former part of the verse, in which Christ shews how he comes to be living bread. 1. He is fitted for giving life, seeing he lives by the Father, deriving life from the Fountain of life. 2. There is a divine appointment of him by the Father, by which he was ordained and set apart to be life-giving bread to his people.

3. We have the way how this life is derived from Christ to the soul, and this is by eating of him, that is, by faith. It cannot be understood of a corporeal eating, for this eating would not give life : John, vi. 63. " It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." Our Lord himself determines it to be believing, ver. 35. " He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." The word here used properly signifies a keen appetite, being the same as in Matth. xxiv. 38. and may denote unto us that greedy appetite which the believer has after Christ, his soul-food, and that there is no hazard of excess here, either in the appetite which ob-

tains, or in the continuance at this blessed work ; we may eat all the day long, and also in the night, and welcome. Yea, it is remarkable that it is not said, He that hath eaten, that has got a taste of Christ, and is satisfied ; but *he that eateth*, denoting a continuing action, such as he that breathes, lives. There must be a constant improvement of Christ as the Fountain of life, a living by believing : Gal. ii. 20. “ And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

4. We have the peculiar interest of the believer in this life : “ *Even he shall live by me.*” All others are, and will be dead while they live ; he, and only he, shall live ; for there is no life but from Christ, and none from him but by faith.—From the words I take this

DOCTRINE, That the believer lives by Christ, deriving his life from him by faith.—For illustrating this doctrine, I shall,

I. SHEW what is that life which the believer lives by Christ, and derives from him.

II. How the believer derives this life from Christ by faith. And then,

III. Conclude with some improvement.—We are,

I. To shew what is that life which the believer lives by Christ, and derives from him.—As to this I observe,

1. That the believer derives from Christ a life of grace, and lives by him, in opposition to that death in sin under which all unbelievers are : Eph. ii. 1. “ You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” The believer has infused into him an inward vital principle of action ;
formerly

formerly the whole powers of his soul were buried in the grave of sin, devoid of all life and sense in spiritual things. Now the dead are raised, the dry bones have come together, and stand upon their feet. The dead soul could never have infused life into itself, but would have eternally rotted in the grave of sin, if the Spirit of Christ had not entered into it, and Christ become the life of the soul: Psal. xvi. 11. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life." As the life of the body lies in the union of the soul with the body, so the life of the soul lies in its union with God through Christ. And as it was by eating, Gen. iii. 6. that mankind were separated from God, and laid in the dust of death, so it is by eating that the soul comes to be re-united to God, and to live again in Christ: John, vi. 53. 56. "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." —The believer derives from Christ,

2. A life of favour with God: Psal. xxx. 5. "In his favour is life." We are naturally dead in law, under a sentence of condemnation, the broken law has doomed us to eternal death: Gal. iii. 10. "Curfed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." But the sentence against the believer is reversed, he is no more a condemned man, but is justified: Rom. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Now he is a free man; who can lay any thing to his charge? "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" Can justice say any thing? it is satisfied. Can the law? it has got all its demands upon them in Christ: Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, ha-

ving been made a curse for us." What is become of those long accounts of their debts, subscribed with their own hands? Christ has blotted them out with his blood, put them out of the way, lest the criminal should fear that they yet may be read. The nails are driven through the writing, so that it is nailed to the cross, and hence will never appear more against them, Col. ii. 14. What has become of the face-covering, which was on the condemned man? Christ has destroyed in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations, Isa. xxv. 7. What is become of death which stood before him, ready to devour him? Ver. 8. "Christ has swallowed up death in victory." Glory, then, be to the Lamb, by whom we live. Ver. 9. "Lo, this is our God: We have waited for him, and he will save us: This is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." --The believer derives from Christ,

3. The new life of gospel-obedience and true holiness: Rom. vi. 4. 5. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we had been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." The believer is not now the man he once was, he is not only come out of the grave of his natural state, but he has cast off his grave-clothes: Col. iii. 8. "But now ye also put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." These reigning lusts are laid aside, for the Lord hath said, "Loose him, and let him go." He has put on Christ, personates him, as the beggar in borrowed robes represents a king on the stage. There is none resembles Christ in his life
among

among men, so near as the believer does ; for he labours to walk, even as he also walked. Now his obedience is universal. He has respect unto all God's commandments, Psal cxix. 9. His heart is enlarged in breadth and length to the law of Christ. He loves those ways which he formerly hated, and hates those which he formerly loved. His obedience is a cluster of vital acts in the soul, of all which Christ is the principle : Gal. ii. 20. " I am crucified," saith he, " with Christ ; nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." As Christ is the principle, so he is also the end of the believer's life : Phil. i. 21. " For to me to live," says he, " is Christ, and to die, is gain." O ! whence comes this new life ! sure it could never be struck out of vows, resolutions, and Christless endeavours, nor hammered out of the united force of the whole powers of the soul, called forth together as in a solemn day. But they have been planted together with Christ, Rom. vi. 5. (quoted above). Therefore they rise up with him, in the likeness of his resurrection. An eternal barrenness had shut up their womb ; but being married to Christ, who is risen from the dead, they now bring forth fruit unto God, Rom. vii. 4.—The believer derives from Christ,

4. A life of activity in grace, as springing water is accounted living water : Psal. lxxx. 18. " So will we not go back from thee : quicken us, and we will call upon thy name." Sometimes the believer is at a low ebb with his graces. Faith, the conduit-pipe, by which life comes into the soul, is stopped, and then all the flowers in his garden, the believer's graces, begin to hang down their heads, and wither. The weeds of corrup-
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tion begin to thrive. What shall become of the soul then? There is still one ground of hope, it is not like the false path of the hypocrite, laid short of the fountain, in which all communication is cut off, and this is the reason why their common graces go back, and never rise again; but the faith of the true believer remains still a bond of union betwixt Christ and the soul, and therefore says he, John, xiv. 19. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Christ puts in his hand at the hole of the door, his Spirit opens the means of conveyance, and influences again flow, which put quite a new face upon the soul: Hos. xiv. 7. "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." Christ speaks life, and thus the coldrife soul begins to glow: Luke, xxiv. 32. "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Fire is brought from the altar of burnt-offering, and this is set to the incense of their prayers which lay downwards before, and then they mount up like pillars of smoke.--- The believer derives from Christ,

5. A life of growth in grace; life, and more life: John, x. 10. "I am come," says Jesus, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Things which have life, grow in the growing time, and grace is of a growing nature: Prov. iv. 18. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The trees planted in the house of God, even the righteous, shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God,"

Psal.

Psal. xcii. 12. 13. They do not indeed grow always; and why, but because they do not eat always? they have their sick fits, when they lose their appetite, and then may they say, My leanness! my leanness! neither is their growth always discernible; they may notwithstanding be growing. The kingdom of God in the soul, is like seed cast into the ground, which springs and grows up, one knows not how, Mark, iv. 26. 27. But they grow sometimes; there are golden spots of time, when the dew of heaven lies on their branches, so that they will be adding a cubit to their spiritual stature. And all this is derived from Christ: Mal. iv. 2. "But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall." It is their being planted by the Lord which produces this;—their waiting on him: Isa. xl. 31. "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." And this growth which they have from him has a beauty, which that wants which arises from any other quarter. It is universal, regular, and proportionable: Eph. iv. 15. "But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up to him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." They are not as others, who, like the rickety child, have a big head, but a slender body; but all comes away together under influences from Christ. They grow inwardly in close walking with God, the soul cleaving more closely with Christ: They grow outwardly in good words and works, which are more communicative and edifying to others: They grow upwardly in heavenly-mindedness, and contempt of the world; and in the mean time also downwardly

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in humility and self-loathing.—The believer derives from Christ,

6. A life of comfort: As 1 Sam. xxv. 26. "Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be to all thou hast."—This life of comfort may be considered,

(1.) As it denotes the ordinary rest of the soul, in having something which satisfies it. The soul of man is a weak empty thing, which must have something to which it leans, and upon which it feeds. Those who want Christ, they lean to other things. The believer has something also upon which he stays his soul, by which he lives, and this is Christ; he feeds on him, satisfying his soul in him; and this, in opposition to the lusts of the world, without which the carnal world have no satisfaction, having never relished as much sweetness in Christ as in their lusts: But, "who-soever," says Jesus, John, iv. 14. "drinketh of the waters 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." They shall no more suck, as they were wont to do, their comfort out of these breasts, as in the day when their navel was not cut, Ezek. xvi. 4. They feed on Christ in opposition to outward comforts, or enjoyments in the world. I confess the believer may at a time lay over much stress on these, and then the comfort soon runs out. Psal. cxliiii. 3. 4. But his great stress lies always on Christ, and therefore he can stand without them on him. Though they all fail, he can, with Habakkuk, chap. iii. 18. "rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation." May I add, believers feed on Christ in opposition to inward precious enjoyments they have from him? Even good frames, enlargements, inherent grace, these are indeed too weak supports for the soul,
which

which is so weighty, upon which it may lean. The great stay of the believer is not the grace of God within him, which is a well whose streams are often dry; but the grace of God without him, in Christ, which is an everlasting fountain, to which they can never come wrong; therefore, Phil. iii. 3. "They rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."—This life of comfort may be considered,

(2.) As it denotes the lifting up of the soul from under discouragements and breaking dispensations, with which the believer is sometimes tryed. Sometimes they can sing in a prison, and their souls leap within them under outward pressures: Heb. x. 34. "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they have a better and an enduring substance." Whence is this joy derived? Paul tells us, 2 Cor. i. 5. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." Yea, but they often feel inward pressures, their discharge falls by, they lose sight of their pardon, and the law raises up a process against them for a debt already paid; God hides his face, the soul is wounded, and who can bear it? Yet after all, when they get to their feet again, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, the wounds of the soul are healed. Whence is all this? See Job, xxxiii. 23. 24. But what comes of the poor body? ver. 21. See ver. 25. Yea, the bones must say, Who is like unto thee?—The believer derives from Christ,

7. And lastly, Eternal life, which in effect is nothing other than the present life brought to perfection, and extended to eternity: 2 Cor. iii. 18. "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit

Spirit of the Lord." This is derived from Christ : "I am," says Jesus, John, vi. 51. "the living bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." By him it is they shall live for ever in glory, seeing he shall remain the eternal bond of union betwixt God and the saints, and the medium of communion : Heb. vii. 26. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth, to make intercession for them." Rev. vii. : 7. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.—We now proceed,

II. To shew how the believer derives this life from Christ by faith.—For this purpose consider,

1. That faith unites the soul to Christ, receiving Christ into the heart, as the meat we eat is received into our bodies, and incorporates with them : John, vi. 56. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." Seeing, then, faith makes us members of Christ, it must needs make us living souls, partakers of the same Spirit which actuates the Head. Faith knits the soul as a branch to the vine, whereby it partakes of the sap. And it lays down the soul at the Fountain of life, and knits it to Christ the Head of influences.

2. Faith applies Christ and his fulness to the soul for life according to its needs : *He that eateth me, even he shall live by me*, even as by eating, we receive the sap and strength of the meat for our nourishment. Christ offers himself as the Fountain of life, faith accepts, and on the acceptance applies him. Faith, as the mouth of the soul,
sucks

sucks here, and so lives by him, as he lives by the Father, Gal. ii. 20. (quoted above).

3. Faith presses the promises through which the golden oil runs : Psal. cxix. 49. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." All the influences of grace run in the channel of the covenant, which is the word of divine appointment, upon that bread which we eat by faith : Isa. lix. 21. "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." Each of these promises are full of the fulness of Christ to the believer. Sometimes they drop out at will to the soul : Isa. lxv. 1. "I am sought of them that asked not for me ; I am found of them that sought me not : I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." But it is not always so. What should a person then do ? He should go and press the sap out of them by faith, and put God to the fulfilling of his word : Ezek. xxxvi. 37. "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."—Against a complying with this advice, some may propose this

Objection, But I dare not meddle with a promise.

Answer, Then meddle not with life. Is a drowning man so fearful, that he dare not catch hold of a rope let out to draw him to land ? O no ! if your soul be content with Christ, though the promise be in your eyes like Moses's rod, which was turned into a serpent, take it by the tail, and it will be a rod of life to you.—Still the objection maybe, But the qualifications of the promise stave

me off. *Answer*, Go to Christ, in the free promise to all who will take him, Isa. lv. 1. John, vi. 37. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me : And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Many bar the door of the promises with bars of their own making, and then complain they cannot enter. Say not, If I had so much love, repentance, brokenness of heart, I would believe. If you be wise, you will believe that you shall get these things : Zech. xii. 10. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications : And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Acts, v. 31. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

4. Faith relishes the sweetness of Christ in general, and the sweetness of every part of Christ in particular : "Hearken diligently unto me," says he, Isa. lv. 2. "and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." And O this is life to the soul ! it makes the whole soul flee away from the world and lusts, after him. "O !" says faith, "thy spirit is good !" "O ! then," adds the soul, "lead me to the land of uprightness." "Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." His words are good, and are as the best of wine, when it goes down sweetly, it causes the lips of those that are asleep to speak, Song, vii. 5. Faith discovers Christ in his glory,—in the glory of his person ; and then all the world is but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of him.—In the glory

glory of his righteousness; then who can lay any thing to their charge?—In the glory of his Spirit; and then the strongest lusts will get an assault. The soul will triumph over them.---I come now,

III. To make some practical improvement of the whole. Here I confine myself to a short use of information and exhortation.

1. From this subject we may learn, that Christless sinners are dead withered branches, ready to be cast over the hedge. Ye live not at all, because ye live not by Christ. Ye have not taken him for the food of your souls, and therefore no other prospect presents itself to you, but a fearful looking for of judgement and of fiery indignation, ready to devour the adversaries.

2. This lets us see, who those are who will persevere and not apostatise, even those who eat Christ by faith. Some there are, who appear very lively at a communion or so, but they quickly wither; why? because they have not the living Spirit of God in them, they lie not at the fountain. The streams must be dry, when communion with the fountain is stopped. But those who are knit to Christ, and cleave to him, shall partake of his spirit, and so shall never fall away from grace, John, iv. 14. (quoted above).

I would conclude, exhorting you to an eating of Christ by faith, in order to your living by him. And therefore,

1. Study to make it appear that your greedy appetite after that dust, which is the serpent's meat, and the meat of the serpent's brood, is now blunted. Shew that you hunger and thirst no more after it. You must not now feed on the world and your former lusts. True, Christ finds his people with their navel cut, but he does not leave them so.

If

If you have tasted that sweetness which is in Christ, your lusts will now have no sweetness at all. But if indeed you find no sweetness in him, your lusts, it is likely, will be strengthened, instead of being weakened by this communion ; and this is dreadful, Prov. vii.

2. Derive your life from Christ, live by believing. It is a sad evidence of a decline, when there is no communication of the life of grace from him.

3. Live on Christ and learn to be content with him alone.

Lastly, Study to live to his glory : Phil. i. 1.
“ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”
Amen.

END OF VOL. II.

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